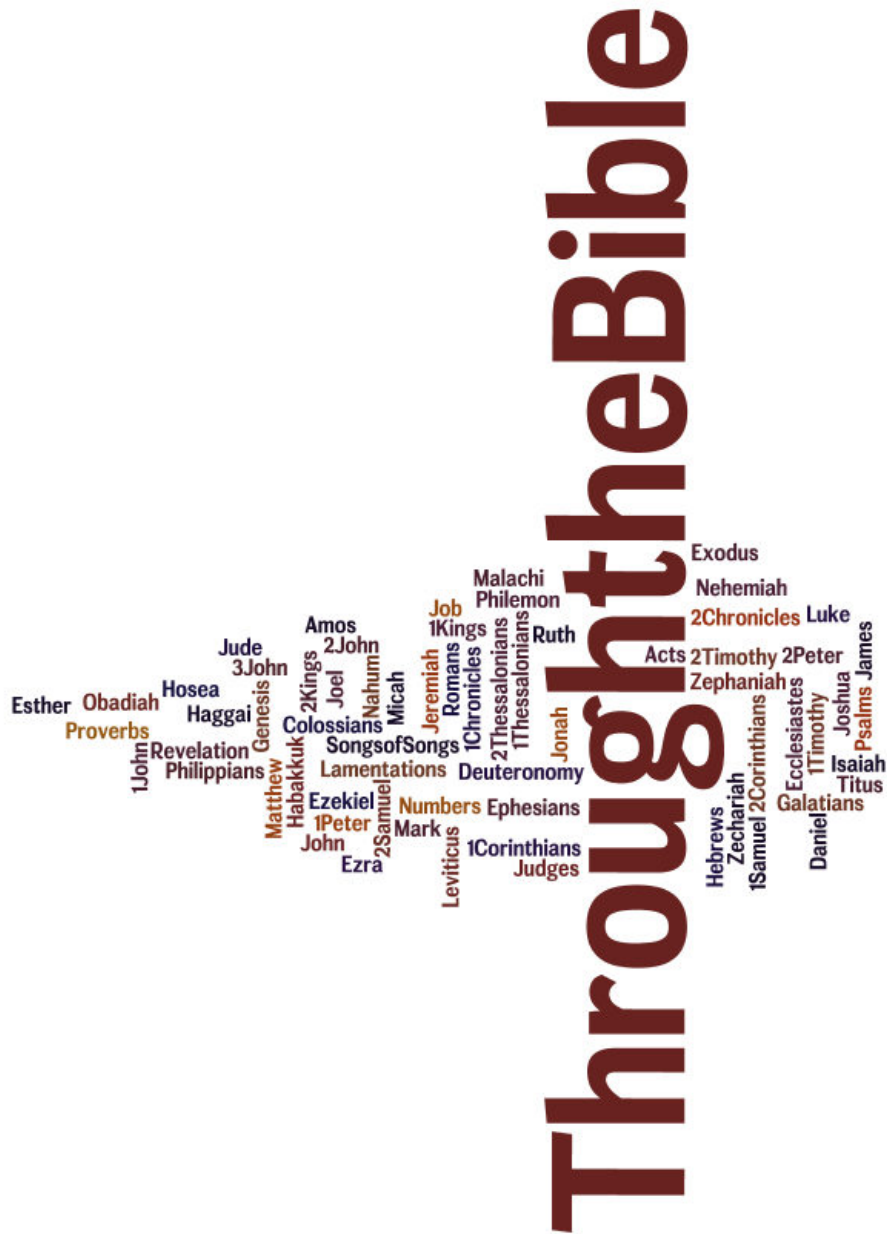




Cornton Baptist Church

Demonstrating God's love in action

in the community of Cornton



January 2014

I urge to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. (v.1)

Today is the start of a New Year. It is that time when many people often have a think about what resolutions they will make for the coming year. They sit down and consider how the past year has gone and what changes they would like to make in their lives for the coming year. I wonder if you have made any resolutions. The trouble with New Year resolutions is that we are very good at keeping them for a week or two but then we begin to forget them and carry on as normal.

I wonder if the Apostle Paul feels that the Ephesian believers are a bit like that. He starts chapter 4 by urging them, reminding them in all probability, *‘to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.’* In the preceding chapters he has reminded them of God’s grace and mercy and the many spiritual blessings they have in Christ. Now he comes to the point of challenging them to live for Jesus. The first section could be described as ‘sit’ and listen, this next section is more ‘walk’ in God’s ways, and he will finish in chapter 6 with ‘stand’ firm in Christ.

He calls for them to live worthy lives and then goes on over the coming verses to give some practical details for doing that. He speaks to them first of their relationship with other believers. He calls for them to love one another and bear with one another. And that is a great call for a church family. We are all different. We have different temperaments, different gifts, different abilities. But together we can be united and work for the cause of the kingdom. That unity begins in Christ from whom *‘the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.’*

This year let us commit afresh to loving one another and working together for the cause of the gospel in our local area. Let us determine to live worthy lives in Christ. And let us hold one another accountable and bring each other support during each new day.

Pray: for unity in your local church.

Reflect: how can I live a worthy life in Christ this year?

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. (v.1, 2)

One of the greatest joys of parenting toddlers and preschoolers is that they want to be just like Mummy or Daddy. They carefully observe their parents and then try to imitate putting on lipstick or mowing the grass. The phrase “when I get big like Daddy...” signifies the pinnacle achievement of life for a three-year-old boy! And in many ways we want our kids to be like us. We certainly hope they will look at our finer points and follow those through life.

Paul’s encouragement to the believers in Ephesus is to be just like God. He has spoken in the previous chapter about their walk and the challenge to put off the old self and to put on the new self in Christ. How can we do this? Well Paul says we do that by imitating God. We look to God and consider what he is like and what he teaches us through His Word. We are to not only imitate God but we are to live like Jesus and especially to live a life of love. Jesus showed his great love for us by laying down his life for us. He was willing to give up his life that we might live ours.

The call then is for us to be like Jesus. Just as our kids watch us and copy us, so we are to copy Jesus and live like him. We observe how Jesus answered his critics. We see how he responded to trouble. And we witness how he cared for others. And all the while we get a glimpse of the importance of prayer as he spent time often with his Father.

I’m not a great one for the wristband culture but the very letters WWJD do remind us to consider how Jesus lived and acted. Next time you face a difficult situation or come across someone needing help ask yourself ‘what would Jesus do?’ and then respond accordingly. We are to be his hands and feet, his lips and eyes and ears.

Pray: asking God to help us be like Jesus in all we think, say and do.

Reflect: how can I imitate God today in my actions and speech?

Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (v.11)

At the end of last year our Sunday School children were learning about the armour of God. Each week they would come running back into church at the end of the service showing me their latest piece of armour as they went. They even learned a song to the tune of 'head and shoulders, knees and toes.' It went (I and I hope you are singing along now!) 'belt, breastplate, shoes and shield, helmet and sword.' They even did the actions pointing to each piece as they went. They are learning a valuable lesson at a young age.

Paul finishes his letter to the Ephesians with a challenge to stand firm in Christ and not to allow others to tempt them away. He gives a wonderful picture to them of a soldier putting on his armour. We are soldiers of God. The encouragement I would give is to put on this armour every day in life. Pray it through each morning (or even sing it through like our kids).

The 'belt of truth' pictures the belt that held all the pieces of a Roman soldier's armour together. For the believer, this refers to knowing the "truth" of the Bible. The breastplate protected a soldier's heart. Because we are covered in the righteousness of Christ, no 'flaming arrow' of the enemy can attack our relationship with Him. Our hearts are secure in Christ! The shoes were chosen to give better footing in battle. This gives the picture of standing firm knowing the truth but it also pictures being ready to go and share the truth and peace. The shield is not the little round shield, but it refers to the large, rectangular shield behind which a soldier could be safe from the fiery darts of the enemy. Our shield is faith – faith in Christ who has paid the debt for our sin. The helmet protects the head and so we have to protect our minds from Satan's attacks. And lastly the sword which was usually a short knife in the belt which was easy to grasp for close in fighting. Our sword is the bible, the Word of God. It is important for us to memorise it and call it to mind in battle. And lastly Paul says pray – and keep praying.

Pray: asking God to protect us from the enemy.

Reflect: on each part of the armour and how it is needed in your life.

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (v.21)

A young man came to W. E. Gladstone when he was Prime Minister of Great Britain and said, “Mr. Gladstone, I would appreciate your giving me a few minutes in which I might lay before you my plans for the future. I would like to study law.” “Yes,” said the great statesman, “and what then?” “Then, sir, I would like to gain entrance to the Bar of England.” “Yes, young man, and what then?” “Then, sir, I hope to have a place in Parliament, in the House of Lords.” “Yes, young man, what then?” pressed Gladstone. “Then I hope to do great things for Britain.” “Yes, young man, and what then?” “Then, sir, I hope to retire and take life easy.” “Yes, young man, and what then?” he tenaciously asked. “Well, then, Mr. Gladstone, I suppose I will die.” “Yes, young man, and what then?” The young man hesitated and then said, “I never thought any further than that, sir.” Looking at the young man sternly and steadily, Gladstone said, “Young man, you are a fool. Go home and think life through!”

What are you living for? Your answer to that question will determine the direction of your life. Paul, the great apostle, had a clear focus. He knew what he was living for. He knew the purpose of his life. And so whether his life was going to be short or long he knew what the purpose was and he would fulfil it. Paul summed the purpose up for himself in a few short words – verse 21 ‘*For to me, to live is Christ.*’ Paul was living for Jesus.

‘*To live is Christ*’ means to live in union with Him, so that He is my all in all; to exalt Him in all I do; and, to die to self so as to serve Him. F. B. Meyer said that Christ is “the essence of our life...the model of our life...the aim of our life...the solace of our life...the reward of our life.” Think of the prepositions that express relationship. We live in Christ...for Christ...by Christ...through Christ...and from Christ. He is the beginning, the middle and the end of life. He is truly the Alpha and Omega, the A and Z, and every letter in between. He is our all in all.

Can you say with Paul, ‘*For to me, to live is Christ*’?

Pray: asking God to give us strength to live for Jesus.

Reflect: is Jesus my all in all? How can I give him first place in my life?

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (v.4)

Missionary Doug Nichols was a patient in a tuberculosis ward in India in 1967. Patients and staff saw him as a rich American taking up space in their hospital. Their hostility was evident as they refused the gospel tracts he offered them.

One morning at 2 o'clock, a very sick Indian man struggled to get out of bed to go to the bathroom, but he was too weak to make it. Soon the stench from his bed filled the room. Other patients yelled at him. Nurses showed their anger for having to clean up the mess. One slapped him.

The next night the old man tried again to get up, but again fell backward. He began to cry. Doug, weak himself, went over, picked him up, and carried him to the bathroom and back to his bed.

What a change came over that hospital ward! One patient gave Doug a steaming cup of Indian tea, motioning that he wanted a tract. Nurses, interns, and doctors asked for booklets or gospels of John. And several eventually received Christ.

What changed their attitude? Doug exemplified the attitude of Christ who looked out for the interest of others. He '*made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant*' and '*He humbled himself*'. We are called to do the same in life. Paul wrote about the wonderful example set by Christ here in Philippians 2 and urged his readers to do likewise. In Ephesians 5:1 he had encouraged the believers to imitate God and now he urges them to have the same attitude as Jesus. That attitude is one of love and service, of self sacrifice. He goes on to say that they would '*shine like stars in the universe*' as they adopted this attitude and lived lives that were different from those around. Is your attitude like that of Christ?

Pray: asking God to help us have the same attitude as Jesus.

Reflect: how can I serve someone else today and show Christ's love to them?

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (v.13-14)

On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister became the first man in history to run a mile in less than 4 minutes. Within 2 months, John Landy eclipsed the record by 1.4 seconds. On August 7, 1954, the two met together for a historic race. As they moved into the last lap, Landy held the lead. It looked as if he would win, but as he neared the finish he was haunted by the question, “Where is Bannister?” As he turned to look, Bannister took the lead. Landy later told a Time magazine reporter, “If I hadn’t looked back, I would have won!”

The apostle Paul speaks of that here in Philippians 3. He is encouraging his readers to keep their eyes focused on the prize so as not to fall away. He says that they are to forget what is behind. It is so easy to look back and get caught up with past mistakes and regrets. Paul could so easily have done that. At the start of this chapter he has spoken of the way he used to live and the standards he used to seek to attain. He wanted to be the best of the best. But he soon realised it was all worthless – it was like dung compared to knowing Jesus. He doesn’t look back and regret a wasted life. He doesn’t look back and yearn to be back there. He says forget the past and move on.

He then urges them to focus on the prize. Paul knew fine well that there was no point going backwards or standing still – he had to press on. He had to forget the past and move forward. And he knew what now lay in front for him – heaven. His desire now was to live for Christ and point others to Christ. And he didn’t just look forward but he pressed on. He did not meander through life but rather he strained himself to go ahead. He does not look to Jesus and think its all over and done with – he’s paid the price, my future is secured I can do what I want now. No, Paul says I am straining to be the best I can in Christ. Are you looking back or are you straining ahead?

Pray: thanking God for the hope of heaven before us.

Reflect: are my eyes on the prize and how am I straining toward it?

Do not be anxious about anything but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (v.6)

The story is told of a man who got a permit to open the first tavern in a small town. The members of a local church were strongly opposed to the bar, so they began to pray that God would intervene. A few days before the tavern was scheduled to open, lightning hit the structure and it burned to the ground.

The people of the church were surprised but pleased - until they received notice that the would-be tavern owner was suing them. He contended that their prayers were responsible for the burning of the building. They denied the charge.

At the conclusion of the preliminary hearing, the judge wryly remarked, "At this point I don't know what my decision will be, but it seems that the tavern owner believes in the power of prayer and these church people don't."

I wonder if that is like us at times – we say we believe in prayer but we rarely pray about the things that worry us or concern us. In fact turning to God in prayer is often a last resort rather than a priority. Paul is urging the believers in Philippi to pray. He tells them to pray about everything. In the big things and the little things come to God. Nothing is too big for God and nothing is too small for God. After all, he knows the number of hairs on your head. He says they are to pray and petition and present their requests before God.

As they come to pray he encourages them to come thankfully. In this act people think back to the ways God has blessed them in the past and it reminds them that he can and will bless them in the present and the future. And Paul says that the peace of God will touch their hearts as they have prayed. The first response to prayer is so often peace. We feel a burden lifted as we have shared it with God.

Pray: for a need in your life right now that you are anxious about.

Reflect: how can I pray with thanksgiving today?

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. (v.28)

Perhaps you remember the story about the elderly husband and wife who were both a little hungry. The husband said he was going to go get himself something to eat and asked his wife if she would like something.

“I think I’d like some Ice Cream with chocolate sauce and a glass of milk,” she said. “You’d better write it down or you’ll forget.” “I’ll remember,” he said. She shook her head and before long he came back and presented her with scrambled eggs, sausage and a glass of milk. She looked at him with disgust and said, “You forgot my toast!”

We forget many things at times don’t we. Names are favourite things to forget but there are other snippets of information we often forget and cannot draw to mind. Paul is keen to make sure the believers in Colosse do not forget who Jesus is. He has began this letter with thanksgiving and prayer – thanking God for their faith, hope and love before praying that they would live worthy lives. He then takes time to remind them of who Jesus is and all he has done. They know this but he doesn’t want them to forget it. And we should never tire of thinking on Jesus and his attributes and characteristics.

Paul reminds the Colossians that Jesus is their God – he is part of the triune God, the Godhead (v.15). He goes back to the beginning of time and reminds them that Jesus is our creator (v.16) – he was there with God in the beginning. Jesus is also our sustainer – he holds everything together (v.17). Paul then shares that Jesus is our head (v.18). He is the head of the church. And finally and importantly Paul says Jesus is our Saviour. Verses 19 and 20 speak of Jesus shedding his blood so that we can be reconciled with God our Father. What a wonderful Saviour we have. Paul is keen to ensure the Colossians don’t forget that. There is no one else we need or nothing else we can do. Jesus has done it all. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone so that God alone gets the glory.

Pray: thanking God for who Jesus is and all he has done for us.

Reflect: on who Jesus is and what that means to and for you.

Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness. (v.6-7)

We are now nine days into a New Year. I wonder how you are doing with any resolutions you made. Are you still keeping them? Still watching what you eat? Still exercising? Still reading the bible in a year? I think for many of us the commitments made are soon forgotten in the rush of life or we forget one day and then it becomes another and before we know it we have fallen flat on our face with them.

Paul is keen here in Colossians 2 to encourage the believers to keep going – to keep living for Jesus and following him. Temptations were all around the early church. The Jews were constantly trying to draw Christians back to the old rituals and traditions. Satan was tempting believers to give up on their faith. Paul is encouraging them to remain focused and to keep growing.

He starts by reminding them there was a beginning. ‘*Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord*’. It all begins with Jesus. It all starts with us recognising our sin and our need for a Saviour. It all commences with us coming to put our faith and trust in Jesus rather than in ourselves. Jesus offers us the opportunity to ‘*come follow me*’. I think it is good to remind ourselves of this often. Tim Keller suggests ‘the key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal and revival is the continual re-discovery of the gospel.’

It’s not just about the beginning though...there has to be ***a continuing***. ‘*Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him*’. We need to keep going; we can’t stop; we don’t get to the place of thinking we have made it – in fact if you ever get there let me assure you of one thing – you haven’t! Paul says they are to be rooted and built up in Christ. This speaks of getting to know Jesus more and more. We do that by reading his word and applying it to our lives. Keep at it.

Pray: asking God to help us get to know him better.

Reflect: what is the gospel? How were you saved?

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (v.12)

I wonder how many of us got new clothes as Christmas presents. Or how many, like my wife, went to the Next sale early on Boxing Day or some of the other sales over that period of time? We like new clothes. The latest fashions identify us as being hip and trendy, cool and fashionable. And each generation has a different set of clothes that identifies them and their era and status in life. We like new clothes at the start of a New Year.

As Christians we should be no different. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ we turn from our old way of living to a new way of living. The old sinful nature has to go and be replaced by Christian attributes and actions. We put on new clothes. And that is what Paul challenges the Colossians about next in Colossians 3. He reminds them that they have been saved from their sin by Jesus. He reminds them of the example Jesus set and he urges them to look to Jesus.

He then lists the things they are to turn from. The old clothes they are to throw out if you like. And it is a serious list. There is sensual sin which is that desire to please self in various ways and social sin which is the attitudes of anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language that we so often see around us.

Having listed the things to rid ourselves of Paul then shows us what to put on. We are to become like Christ. We are to show '*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*' He sums it all up by saying we have to put on love as it binds everything else together. Of course Jesus said the greatest command was to love God above all else and the second was like it: to love others as ourselves. When we love God we will not sin against him. And when we love others we will want the best for them.

Pray: asking God to help us be more like Christ.

Reflect: what actions and attitudes do I need to rid myself of today? What actions and attitudes do I need to clothe myself with today?

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (v.2)

Five young college students were spending a Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famed C H Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the doors to open the students were greeted by a man who asked, ‘Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?’ They were not interested for it was a hot day in July. But they didn’t want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway, a door was quietly opened, and their guide whispered, ‘This is our heating plant.’

Surprised, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly closing the door, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Haddon Spurgeon. When God’s people pray amazing things happen. God hears from heaven and pours his blessing on his people. Spurgeon recognised the importance of prayer and indeed the priority of prayer.

And so does Paul. As he gets towards the end of his letter to the Colossians Paul urges them to keep praying. He calls for them to be faithful in prayer. They are to devote themselves to praying. That word for devote can also be translated continue steadfastly. That means we are to keep on praying. We are not to give up. We are not to give up because we find it a struggle. We are not to give up because we are scared of the answers God will give. We are not to give up because we do not see immediate answers. We are to keep on praying.

He says that they are to be watchful and thankful as well. Paul says we are to be awake and alert when we pray. We are to be alert to what is happening around us and to be praying for that. We are also to look for answers to prayer and be thankful for those. And lastly he urges them to pray purposefully. Find out what you can be praying for others and pray specifically for that. Keep praying.

Pray: giving thanks for answers to your recent prayers.

Reflect: how can I pray more purposefully for others this coming week?

We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. (v.3)

“I can’t imagine a happier life than the one I have now,” says Lilya, a divorced mother of three. Given her background, this is remarkable. Born in an atheist home in Moldova during the Soviet era, Lilya had never heard about Jesus Christ. After her divorce, she ended up living with an abusive boyfriend. She left him and moved to her mother’s village where she met Christians who loved her and shared God’s Word with her. Now she, her mother, and her three sons attend church each week. Lilya exclaims, “I want to tell others about His boundless love! I want to tell them how God freed my heart.”

Lilya’s story shows why testimonies are such powerful evangelistic tools. Faith, love, and hope can’t be seen physically in the way that height, eye colour, or hair style can be. Yet these three qualities are clear evidence of lives changed by the gospel. In the opening verses of 1 Thessalonians, Paul praises God for such evidence of the gospel among the Thessalonians.

We learn of their repentance in verse 9 where they turned from idols to follow Jesus. That is where true life change starts. We all have to come to that point in our lives where we realise we are sinners who need a Saviour. At that point we repent of our sins and turn to confess Jesus as Lord and crown Him Lord of our lives. From there the Holy Spirit begins the work of ongoing sanctification – we are works in progress. They then followed the example set by mature believers (v.6) and have become a model themselves of how to live for Christ (v.7).

As a real sign of their changed lives Paul noted their work and labour and endurance. They had experienced the love of Christ in their lives and sought to share that with others. Paul sees their faith in the way they live, he sees their love in how they act, and he sees their hope in the way they persevere and keep going despite persecution.

Pray: thanking God for your salvation.

Reflect: how are faith, hope and love evident in my life?

We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. (v.4)

The American pioneer evangelist Peter Cartwright spent 70 years in the work of the Lord and always preached the Word of God without fear or favour. One Sunday he was asked to speak at a Methodist church in the southern part of the United States. During the song just before the message, the pastor whispered to him that Andrew Jackson (president of the USA) had just entered the sanctuary. He cautioned Cartwright to be very careful of what he said lest he offend their famous guest. The evangelist, however, knowing that *'fear of man will prove to be a snare'* (Proverbs 29:25), was determined not to compromise the truth. He also knew that great leaders need the Lord as much as anyone, so he boldly proclaimed the gospel. In fact, halfway through his sermon he said, "I understand that Andrew Jackson is present in the congregation today. If he does not repent of his sins and accept Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, he will be just as lost as anyone else who has never asked God for His forgiveness."

Instead of becoming angry, Jackson admired the preacher for his courage. He listened with keen interest to the message and felt such deep conviction that after the service Cartwright was able to lead him to the Lord. From that moment on, the two became the best of friends.

Paul knew what it was to be under pressure. He speaks to the Thessalonians reminding them that despite strong opposition (v.2) they dared to preach the gospel. He explained that they sought to please God and not men (v.4) His desire was to do the Lord's will and preach the gospel. And it worked, for there were many believers now in Thessalonica because of Paul's preaching. In fact they had become imitators of God's church and were enduring suffering now because of it.

We at times feel we need to please others but the only person who matters is God. Better to please him and spend eternity with him than please men and end up apart from God for ever. Take courage.

Pray: asking God for courage to share your faith with another today.

Reflect: do I seek to please men or God?

For this reason when I could stand it no longer I sent to find out about your faith. (v.5)

I remember the first time our kids went away on summer camps and school weekend trips. We prepared them for going, helped them pack and told them to enjoy themselves. I don't think we were prepared for it. At many points during those days we would think about them, wondering what they were doing, hoping they were OK, praying that they were enjoying themselves and were not miserable. We worried because we could not see them or talk to them. And that was only for a few days.

Paul writes telling the Thessalonians that he was worried and concerned for them. He and his compatriots had to leave quickly and were suffering for the faith. They longed to go back to them but didn't want to take trouble with them. They were concerned about these young believers – concerned that they would be tempted and have given in. Paul's ministry of strengthening and encouraging the Thessalonians implies that the Jewish opponents were likely trying to persuade these young believers to abandon Christianity and to convert to Judaism. Some may have been tempted by this possibility as a means of avoiding persecution. Once again, however, we see that the real entity behind such temptation is not human, but Satan, whom Paul describes here as "the tempter" (v.5).

After a period of worrying he sent Timothy to them in order to strengthen them and encourage them (v.2). He loved this church even though he had only been with them for a short time. And he was delighted to hear the report back that all was well. They are standing firm in their faith and in the Lord (v.8) and that thrills Paul. He goes on to pray for them that they would continue to walk blamelessly before the Lord (v.13).

I wonder who it is you are concerned for and worry about. Maybe its family who have left home or friends on the mission field. We learn from Paul that we should pray for them and encourage them.

Pray: for those on your heart today that God would strengthen them and protect them.

Reflect: how can I encourage a missionary friend today?

For God did not call us to be impure but to live a holy life. (v.7)

In its opening weekend, the movie Sex and the City was the number one movie in America, earning nearly \$56 million. The movie brought to the big screen the popular TV series that followed the lives and loves of four New York City women. Known for its graphic discussion of the largely extramarital sexual antics of these women, the series offered a window into many Americans' attitudes about morality and sexuality. In many ways this series both reflected and shaped American culture with permissive attitudes towards sex. It transferred very easily to British television and cinema and also reflects our sexualised culture.

The Thessalonians also came out of a culture that endorsed immorality. Young men were expected to be sexually active before marriage, and married men frequently had mistresses. In large cities, temple prostitution was common. Then, like today, the idea of sexual purity seemed ridiculous.

Paul, however, is offering some very practical advice to them. He has reminded them of the instructions he and his colleagues previously gave to them (v.1) which they have taken on board and are living out. He encourages them to do that more and more in the days that lie in front of them. Paul knows the city is immoral and wants them to guard themselves against falling into sin. He speaks very plainly about controlling their own bodies and resisting the temptation to satisfy themselves in sexual sin.

Our culture is just as strong in telling us that it is OK to satisfy your sexual desires in any way you want. Pornography is so easily accessible and can be looked at in the secret of our own rooms. The call to purity today is as needed as it was when Paul wrote these words. Let us say no to the devil's temptation and lies. Let us guard our bodies and our minds from sexual sin. If need be get filters on your computers. Ask someone to be an accountability partner. Pray for strength then flee from sin.

Pray: asking for strength and help to live a holy life.

Reflect: what can you put in place to guard against sexual sin?

You know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (v.2)

In the late 1980s, Korean pastor Lee Jang-rim predicted that Christ would return on October 28, 1992. Thousands of his followers sold their houses in preparation. When the date passed uneventfully, some committed suicide. Lee was later imprisoned for stealing \$4 million from his parishioners. A few years later, predictions of Christ's return abounded in anticipation of the Hale-Bopp comet in 1997. Nearly a century earlier, Charles Taze Russell, the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses, used intricate Bible studies to claim that Christ would return in 1910, which he later changed to 1914, and then again to 1929.

The remarkable sales of the Left Behind series, written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, have put a spotlight on both the interest and anxiety many feel about the return of Christ. The results of a recent poll posted on the series' Left Behind revealed that nearly 50 percent of the respondents were "anxiously awaiting" Christ's return. Three out of ten said that they hoped Christ would return in their lifetime - but not yet. Two out of ten said that they were unprepared and were afraid that they would be left behind when Jesus Christ returns for His church.

People are interested in dates and times. Since Christ's ascension, there's been no shortage of predictions of the year - or in some cases, the very hour - of His return. Today's passage cautions against such efforts. Jesus never gave us specific date and time information. The bible is clear that *'the Lord will come like a thief in the night.'* That reminds us that he will take us by surprise. We will not know until that exact moment.

None of this negates the fact that we should be ready for his coming. We know Christ will return one day so let's be ready for that. That means we should be living for him at all times. The Thessalonians were urged to *'encourage one another and build each other up'* (v.11) as they waited. Sounds like good advice for us to follow.

Pray: for others in the church family.

Reflect: how can I encourage someone else today?

Therefore among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. (v.4)

The following is an excerpt from the diary of George Muller, who founded orphanages in Victorian England. August 18, 1838: I have not one penny in hand for the orphans. In a day or two again many pounds will be needed. My eyes are up to the Lord. Evening. Before this day is over, I have received from a sister five pounds. She had some time since put away her trinkets, to be sold for the benefit of the orphans. This morning, whilst in prayer, it came to her mind, I have this five pounds, and owe no man anything, therefore it would be better to give this money at once, as it may be some time before I can dispose of the trinkets. She therefore brought it, little knowing that there was not a penny in hand, and that I had been able to advance only four pounds, fifteen shillings and five pence for housekeeping in the Boys' Orphan-House, instead of the usual ten pounds.

Muller was later to look back on the period from August 1838 to the end of 1846 as the time when the greatest trials of faith were experienced in the orphan work. They were not years of continuous difficulty: rather there tended to be a pattern of a few months of trial, followed by some months of comparative plenty. Muller never asked for money or made the needs of the orphanage known. And every time God was found faithful in providing for all their needs.

The Thessalonians are commended here for a similar kind of perseverance and faith. They were clearly going through trial but they remained faithful to God. Paul thanked God because their faith in their heavenly Father was greatly enlarged; their love toward one another was growing; and their courage in the face of their enemies was persisting. These new Christians were suffering persecution from both the Jewish and Gentile communities because of their faith in Jesus the Messiah. Yet they remained faithful. The challenge for us is to show the same faith and perseverance in our day.

Pray: use verse 11 as a basis for praying for a fellow believer today: *that our God may count you worthy of his calling and that by his power he may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.*

Reflect: do I faithfully trust God to provide for all my needs?

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. (v.15)

Henry Dempsey was flying his 15 passenger Beechcraft 99 turboprop from Lewiston Maine to Boston. At 4,000 feet he heard a noise in the back of the plane where the rear stairs are. He turned the controls over to his co-pilot and walked back. The plane hit turbulence knocked him against the door and it fell open. Dempsey was sucked part way out, fell face down on the steps and grabbed for something - anything that might save his life. He caught a railing and held on.

The co-pilot thought he had fallen out and diverted the flight to a nearby airport. When he landed they found him with his face 12 inches off the runway and with his hands so tight around the rails that his fingers had to be pried open.

That is the type of grip we need to have when it comes to the word of God. We are called to hold on to the teachings in God's Word. We are to read it and follow it and apply it to our lives. Even when the world around would call us fools for sticking to the bible we are to hold it dear.

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to stand firm and hold tight. He teaches them in about the future rebellion against the truth and the coming of the antichrist (v.3). He also warned in his letters that there was a present danger and that the church must guard God's truth and not turn from it.

We live in days when people are only too happy it seems to disregard God's truth and to turn from it. We have seen that in recent times with the whole gay minister debate. Challenges to ignore God's Word or change it will come more and more. The challenge for us is to hold on for dear life. Let us be like the psalmist and say '*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*' (Psalm 119:11)

Pray: for strength to hold tight to God's Word.

Reflect: do I hold tight to the teaching of Scripture?

We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. (v.11)

The European cuckoo bird is a freeloader. When spring comes, it doesn't construct a home for its yearly brood. Instead, the female invades the nest of some unsuspecting bird and lays her egg there. The cuckoo's offspring is left to be hatched and cared for by its "foster parent."

While still featherless and blind, the intruder soon dominates the nest by pushing the rightful occupants over the edge to their death. Then it monopolises all the attention of its new parents.

The selfish habits of the cuckoo family sound a lot like the irresponsible behaviour that existed among believers in the early Thessalonian church (v.11). Those who sponged off others, lived undisciplined lives, and did no work were warned by the apostle Paul to change their ways. Their refusal to work involved more than just being allergic to perspiration. They were referred to as busybodies and disorderly. That means that as well as not working they caused bother for others.

Paul uses the example of himself and the other apostles to show that hard work harmed no one and that it was right to work for your keep. He says that they were not idle when they were with them (v.7), nor did they eat food without paying for it (v.8). The challenge is to work hard as for the Lord. We get weary in our work at times and want to give up, but we can stay the course if we understand that we're working for our Lord and ultimately for His eyes only (Ephesians 6:7). It doesn't matter what job you do, work at it as if you are working for the Lord.

Michelangelo, painting in some obscure corner of the Sistine Chapel, was asked by one of his helpers why he lavished such attention on a part of the ceiling no one would ever see. He replied, "God will see."

Pray: for strength to work hard and set a good example to others.

Reflect: do I work as if it is for the Lord?

...so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. (v.18-19)

On April 10, 1912 the R.M.S. Titanic left her berth at the harbour in Southampton, England. This was the maiden voyage for the 882 foot long ocean liner that had been billed as unsinkable. She carried with her 2,228 passengers and crew. Most of the passengers had paid thousands of pounds to sail on that great luxury liner. Four days into the voyage, on April 14, 1912 severe ice warnings were received for the area through which the Titanic was sailing. These warnings were ignored and the Titanic maintained her course for New York harbour. At 11:40pm the Titanic struck an iceberg on the starboard side of her bow. She began to take on water at an alarming rate and within three hours the Titanic and 1,523 of her passengers were at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. Only 705 of the original 2,228 persons survived that great shipwreck.

Since 1912, people have tried to figure out what happened to bring about the demise of a ship call unsinkable. Most people would agree that the tragedy was a mixture of many things including negligence, apathy, greed, pride and incompetence. In other words, the tragedy could have been avoided had all the proper steps been taken by the captain and crew of the Titanic. But, since those steps were no taken, a tragic loss of life occurred on the cold night in the North Atlantic.

Here in 1 Timothy 1 Paul is warning Timothy of the dangers of turning from the truth – he says that some have rejected God and his ways and have ‘*shipwrecked their faith.*’ Timothy is encouraged to avoid this by ‘*holding on to faith and a good conscience*’. In this context, faith refers to the essentials of our Christian beliefs, doctrines such as salvation by grace through Christ Jesus. Some have been teaching false doctrine (v.3) and Timothy is to warn the believers to stay clear of them. In order to avoid shipwrecking our faith we too ought to hold on to faith and a good conscience.

Pray: for God’s protection on your life.

Reflect: how can I avoid shipwrecking my faith?

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority. (v.1-2)

In 1787 a convention was called in the United States to revise the Articles of Confederation. For weeks delegates reviewed ancient history and analysed modern governments, searching for insights. But nothing suited the infant nation.

Finally, a distinguished gentleman named Benjamin Franklin rose and said, “In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth and scarce able to distinguish it when it is presented to us, how has it happened that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings?” Mr. Franklin believed there was a sovereign God who could provide guidance to those who sought it.

Prayer ought to be at the heart of our lives. We should be praying daily for all kinds of things that go in our lives and also praying for others beside. And yet, like the folks in the story, prayer to God is so often the last resort for us. The apostle Paul knew the importance of prayer and the place of prayer in our lives. Here in 1 Timothy 2 he urges Timothy to be a man of prayer.

Paul suggests that prayer is to be a priority (*‘first of all’*) and that Timothy should be praying for everyone. He says that he should even be praying for kings and for those in authority. When was the last time you prayed for the Prime Minister or the Scottish First Minister? Paul says in verse 3 that God longs for all people to be saved hence as we pray we ought to be praying for people’s salvation. How great would it be if our national leaders were born again Christians?

Pray: for our Queen and for our politicians.

Reflect: do I regularly pray for our national leaders? Why not?

They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. (v.10)

An Australian travel writer touring Canada was checking out of the Spokane Hilton, and as he paid his bill to the manager, he asked, “By the way, what’s with the Indian chief sitting in the lobby? He’s been there ever since I arrived.” “Oh that’s ‘Big Chief Forget-me Not’,” said the manager. “The hotel is built on an Indian reservation, and part of the agreement is to allow the chief free use of the premises for the rest of his life. He is known as ‘Big Chief Forget-me Not’ because of his phenomenal memory. He is 92 and can remember the slightest detail of his life.” The travel writer took this in, and as he was waiting for his cab decided to put the chief’s memory to the test. “’ello, mate!” said the Aussie, receiving only a slight nod in return. “What did you have for breakfast on your 21st birthday?” “Eggs,” was the chief’s instant reply, without even looking up, and indeed the Aussie was impressed.

He went off on his travel writing itinerary, right across to the east coast and back, telling others of Big Chief Forget-me Not’s great memory. One local noted to him that “How!” was a more appropriate greeting for an Indian chief than “ello mate” On his return to the Spokane Hilton, six months later, he was surprised to see ‘Big Chief Forget-me Not’ still sitting in the lobby, fully occupied with whittling away on a stick. But, remembering his friend’s advice he greeted Chief Forget-me Not in the more appropriate fashion. “How?” said the Aussie. “Scrambled,” said the Chief.

It is important to test people before elevating to them to certain positions within church leadership. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul gives us a list of criteria - character qualities and attributes – needed for a church leader (whether that be elder or deacon). When it comes to the list for deacons he suggests that they should first be tested before being allowed to serve as a deacon. This service allows the church to see the complete character of the person in question. It must be evident that Jesus Christ has taken hold of their life from the inside out if they are to be selected for this ministry.

Pray: for our church leaders.

Reflect: do we test our leaders before appointing them?

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. (v.7)

When Dean Karnazes completed the 26.2-mile New York Marathon in November 2006, it marked the end of an almost impossible feat of endurance. Karnazes had run 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days. This exceptional athlete's ultra-endurance feats include: running 350 continuous miles, mountain biking for 24 hours straight, and swimming across San Francisco Bay. That level of fitness requires relentless, dedicated training.

I'm not sure many of us are that committed but for some we do go to the gym regularly or the swimming pool. We are told that if we exercise regularly it is good for our health.

I wonder though if we pay the same attention to our spiritual health. Are we found daily in prayer or regularly in reading God's Word and applying it to our lives? Paul encourages Timothy here in this chapter to be involved in godly training so as to keep him from falling for godless myths and old wives' tales. What's involved in godly training? Well Paul lists three couplets here I believe for us. We are to read and learn (v.6). We are to be a people who are found often in God's Word. We are getting close to the end of a 3¼ year program of daily readings. We have read a lot and hopefully have learned a lot. Keep it up.

Paul then says that Timothy is to command and teach what he himself has learned (v.11). One of the best ways of utilising our learning is to share it with others. Chat about what God is teaching you with others and spur one another on to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24). And finally Paul says walk and witness (v.12). We are to set an example to others by our life – our speech, our love and our actions.

In order to do this consistently we have to keep up the training. Keep reading, keep praying, keep applying, keep living it out in practice.

Pray: for God's help in training ourselves to be godly.

Reflect: am I involved in regular training to be godly?

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. (v.17)

Three small boys were bragging about their dads. The first boy said, “My dad writes a few short lines on paper, calls it a poem, sends it away, and gets £25 for it.” “Well, my dad,” said the second boy, “makes dots on paper, calls it a song, sends it away, and gets £100 for it.” “That’s nothing,” declared the third boy. “My dad writes a sermon on sheets of paper, gets up in the pulpit and gives it, and it takes four men to bring in the money!”

I smiled when I read that. Paul writes about care and provision for widows and elders here in 1 Timothy 5. He is offering very practical instructions to Timothy for the church to follow. The chapter begins with a word about due respect for all people whether young or old, male or female. In fact the point Paul makes is that we are all family within the church and so we should treat older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers and younger women as sisters. What do you do with your family? You love them and care for them and look out for them. And so we ought to do the same within the church family context.

And Paul then gives that a very tangible feel as he speaks of caring for the widows in their midst. He wants those who have served God faithfully to be looked after. This is a challenge for us as we see more of our own folks advancing in years and also as we see some within our church community struggle financially. Our task is to care for them and support.

Paul then speaks of elders and particularly pastors who preach and teach. His point is simply that they too should be looked after by the church family. We ought to be praying for our pastor and supporting them the best we can. In the midst of that he says that they should be rewarded fairly for their efforts in leading the church family.

Pray: for your pastor and his family.

Reflect: how can I practically support the widows in our midst?

But godliness with contentment is great gain. (v.6)

Coming down the stairs one morning, a British gentleman by the name of Lord Congelton overheard his cook conversing with one of the other servants. “I would be perfectly content,” the woman declared, “if I just had five pounds!”

After pondering the matter, Lord Congelton decided to help his long-time employee. He pulled her aside later in the day and gave her a five-pound note - a fairly substantial sum at the time. The surprised cook thanked her employer profusely, whereupon Lord Congelton departed.

But once outside the door, Congelton paused to see what, if anything, the woman would say. Surely, he reasoned, she would express her thankfulness to God. A second or two passed and Congelton heard the woman cry out, “Oh, why didn’t I say ten pounds?!”

Like Lord Congelton’s cook, many Christians find it difficult to be content. Typically we focus, not on what we do have, but on all that we lack. It doesn’t help matters when we are bombarded daily by advertisers whose sole purpose is to make us dissatisfied with our current possessions and hungry for their newest products and latest models. Even our children are targeted all day long with commercials designed to make them want the latest toy.

Paul warns us here in 1 Timothy 6 about the dangers of discontent. He reminds us that possessions and riches are temporal – they wouldn’t last forever nor will we (v.7). No matter how much we accumulate, we will leave it behind when we die. He reminds us that the desire for more leads to ‘ruin and destruction’ (v.9). The challenge is to be content with what we have (v.8) instead of always looking for more.

Pray: giving thanks for what you have.

Reflect: am I content with what I have or do I always want more?

I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. (v.5)

John Wesley is renowned as a great evangelist. Charles Wesley, his brother, also preached the gospel and penned numerous hymns, including “And Can It Be” and “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” But their significant Christian contributions should be considered in light of the influence of their mother, Susanna Wesley. Mother of 19 children, she endeavoured to teach her sons and daughters Greek and Latin and instruct them in the faith. One biographer said, “John Wesley and Charles Wesley, as children consciously or unconsciously will, applied the example and teachings and circumstances of their home life.”

The godly impact of parents and grandparents can be seen in the life of Timothy. This preacher and missionary was valuable in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the early church. He was dearly loved by the apostle Paul and considered indispensable in ministry (Philippians 2:22). Scripture takes care to note that Timothy inherited a rich legacy of faith that helped to prepare him for his calling.

As Paul begins his second letter to Timothy he takes time to thank God for him and to remind him of his upbringing and calling. Now whether Timothy was beginning to lag a little or whether Paul felt he just needed some encouragement to keep going, Paul’s words are reminder to Timothy to keep going. He urges him to remember his sincere faith which he learned from his mother and grandmother. Parents, we have a vital role in our kids’ lives – keep living out your faith in full view of your kids.

Timothy had also been called and gifted to serve God and make him known among the nations. Paul reminds him to ‘*fan into flame the gift of God*’ which is in him. Are we using the gift(s) God has given us?

Pray: giving thanks for godly parents and grandparents.

Reflect: how can I use the gift God has given me within the local church?

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (v.15)

People use the Bible in all sorts of weird ways. You've probably heard the story of the guy who felt he needed some guidance from the Bible, so he opened it at random, closed his eyes and put his finger on a verse: "Judas went out and hanged himself." He thought, "That can't be God's will for me," so he tried again: "Go thou and do likewise." He knew there must be some mistake, so he tried once more: "What thou doest, do quickly!" It can be dangerous to use the Bible in the wrong way!

While we chuckle, it's no laughing matter when people really use the Bible improperly. In 2 Timothy 2:14, Paul tells Timothy to solemnly charge those under his pastoral ministry '*before God*' that if they misuse the Bible, it will lead to ruin. We get our word "catastrophe" from the Greek word for "ruin." Paul means ultimate spiritual ruin! He names Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had gone astray from the truth, upsetting the faith of some with their misuse of the Bible!

Instead Paul urges Timothy to remain true to God's Word. He calls him to be a workman who knows and applies and teaches God's Word well. He wants him to be approved by God. An approved worker diligently studies the Word and seeks to apply it to their own life. They shun '*godless chatter*' and they know that false doctrine is dangerous and they will oppose it.

The pastor is a workman in God's Word. The Word is the workman's tool for building, measuring and repairing God's people. The preacher and teacher who use the Word correctly will build their church the way God wants it built. Pray for your pastor as he undertakes this role. And check what he teaches regularly against God's Word to ensure he is handling it well.

Pray: for those who teach God's Word that they would handle the word of truth well.

Reflect: do I handle the Word of God correctly in my own study and life?

...because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (v.14-15)

The story is told of Karl Barth, a great theologian of yesteryear. He was giving one of the closing lectures of his life at the University of Chicago, School of Divinity. At the end of the lecture, the president of the seminary told the audience that Dr Barth was not well and was very tired after giving the lecture, and though he thought Dr Barth would like to take questions, he probably could not handle the strain. Then he said, ‘therefore I’ll just ask one question on behalf of us all.’ And turning to Barth he asked, ‘Of all the theological insights you have ever had, which do you consider to be the greatest?’

This was a remarkable question to ask of a man who had written tens of thousands of pages of some of the most sophisticated theology ever put on paper. The students sat with pads and pencils ready. They wanted to jot down the premier insight of the greatest theologian of their time. Karl Barth closed his eyes and thought for a while. Then he smiled, opened his eyes, and said to the young seminarians, “The greatest theological insight that I have ever had is this: Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!”

Barth knew his Saviour Jesus. And he knew him through his knowledge of the Scriptures. He had read them and studied them for many years. Everything he did in life had come from his reading of Scripture. Everything he taught in life was based upon his knowledge of Scripture.

Paul encourages Timothy to continue in what he knows here in 1 Timothy 3. He reminds him that he has known the Scriptures since infancy and the knowledge he gains from the Bible has made him wise for salvation. The Scripture contains what he needs for living life. It contains words to teach, rebuke, correct and train for righteousness.

Pray: thanking God for His Word which makes us wise for salvation.

Reflect: how well do I know the Bible?

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness. (v.7-8)

Alfred Nobel opened his newspaper one morning in 1888 and was shocked to read his own obituary. The fact was that Nobel's brother had died, and a careless reporter had put the wrong man in the story. The incident left Nobel deeply disturbed for more than the obvious reasons.

Through the erroneous obituary, he saw himself as the world saw him - a wealthy Swedish industrialist whose most enduring legacy was the invention of dynamite. Resolving to do something that would uphold his cherished ideals, Nobel used a portion of his great wealth to establish prizes that would reward people whose work benefited humanity. The Nobel Prizes were first awarded in 1901, and today they are still considered the most esteemed prizes in the world.

The soul-searching that Alfred Nobel underwent as he reviewed his life is the same kind of self-examination Christians need to make regularly. Paul urged the Corinthians, '*Examine yourselves*' (2 Corinthians 13:5). Paul did not need to do too much soul searching. His second letter to Timothy was written near the end of his life. People become more reflective the older they get and the nearer to death they come. Paul had nothing to worry about. Ever since the day he met the risen Lord on the Damascus Road he has lived for Jesus and sought to present others mature in Christ as well.

Now he is able to write to Timothy affirming that '*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*' He is confident he has done his best in the Lord's service. And now, having looked back at all he has done, he is able to look forward, confident that that he is about to receive the goal of his faith – spending eternity with the Lord. There he will receive the crown of righteousness.

How are things going in your life and service? Are you as confident as Paul? Have you put your trust in Jesus and are you serving him well?

Pray: for strength to keep serving God well.

Reflect: can I say with Paul that '*I have fought the good fight*'?

An elder must be blameless... (v.6)

In the early months of the year 1999, the world watched as the U.S. Senate deliberated the fate of former President Bill Clinton. Although the impeachment charges against the President were controversial, the real question had to do with whether character had anything to do with national leadership. No doubt the discussion of character will continue to be raised in future political campaigns, but the matter should be settled once and for all when it comes to the leadership of the church. God's Word is very clear that those who provide spiritual direction in our congregations are to be people of excellent character.

Paul speaks of this in letter to Titus. He gives a list of qualifications for eldership and this list is similar to the list in 1 Timothy 3. I do not know why they are not identical, and have not read anyone who answers that question. The lists are probably not meant to be exhaustive. Five items in 1 Timothy are lacking in Titus, whereas the list in Titus adds five items lacking in 1 Timothy. The significant thing about both lists is that except for the ability to teach God's Word, both lists focus exclusively on godly character, not on spiritual gifts or other abilities. Both lists begin with "above reproach" or as it is also translated "blameless", and both lists emphasise a man's home life.

When it comes to serving as a leader (pastor/elder/deacon) within the church, the person's character is as important if not more important than their skills. It is vital that the person who leads is above reproach. Their private life should mirror their public life. People want to see consistency in people's lives.

One of the important tasks of an elder is that they hold firmly to the Scriptures so they can encourage others with good doctrine and can pick out false teachers and refute them (v.9). We should ensure that our elders and deacons are those who know God's Word well and live it out in practice.

Pray: for your church leaders.

Reflect: are my church leaders above reproach?

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. (v.7)

An evangelist preached a strong message on the text, “You shall not steal.” The next morning, he got on a bus and gave the driver a dollar bill for his fare. Counting his change, he discovered that he had received a dime too much. He could have thought, “No big deal,” and pocketed the dime. But instead, he went to the driver and said, “You gave me a dime too much.”

The driver said, “Yes, I know. I did it on purpose to see what you would do. Last night I was in your audience and heard your sermon. I’ve always been suspicious of Christians. So when I recognised you this morning, I thought, ‘If he practices what he preaches, I’ll go hear him again tonight. But if he keeps the dime, I’ll know he’s a fake.’” The man did go back to the meetings and was wonderfully saved. A ten-cent testimony won him to the Lord.

People watch our lives and conduct. People are not interested in folks who say and do one thing on a Sunday then act completely differently for the rest of the week. They want to see that we practice what we preach at all times.

Here in Titus 2 Paul is encouraging Titus to teach well according to Scripture. His teaching would be marked by three characteristics: integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech. As he does that he is also to set the right example by how he himself lives, acts and speaks. The Greek term translated “example” originally referred to the hollow imprint that was used to make a mould of something. Later it came to signify a prototype or a model. Titus himself was to be a model for the kind of self-control he commanded others to exhibit. He was to live out the principles he taught to others by ‘*doing what is good.*’ This way people would hear his teaching and follow it because Titus himself followed it.

Pray: for strength to set the right example as you live your life under Christ’s rule.

Reflect: do my actions and speech show that I am a follower of Christ?