

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 21 July 2018
Talk: 2
Occasion: Ridley college – ordinands’ conference
Book: 2 Timothy
Passage: Various
Title: How will you respond when people lose the plot?
Outline: **More joys and privileges of ministry**
Everyone deserted me # 1
but thank God for Onesiphorus
Quarrelling about words
Correctly handle the word of truth
The Lord knows those who are his
Gentle instruction
Everyone deserted me # 2
But the Lord stood by my side

1. More joys and privileges of ministry

- When I first arrived at Noosa... advent... Wednesday night studies... Eucharist followed by Christianity Explained...
- Two comments stood out for me... “are you saying Jesus was a real historical person?”
- Yes, - that’s exactly what I am saying... and I wouldn’t be a Christian if I didn’t think this was a real account...!
- The other comment came from a churchwarden....
- He said to me on week 4... that the penny had dropped for him when I spoke in week 3 about how the kingdom was something we **receive**, not something we can **achieve**!!
- ... so it’s been a great joy to give people assurance of salvation, and see people shift from a feeble trust in **themselves**, to a firm trust in **Jesus** and what he has done for them!
- At Tewantin one morning.... Ruth – St James King St in Sydney; father a priest in the UK... high church... all she’d known.
- Tewantin service very different – but she knew from Week 2 that this was where she needed to be...
- And that despite being a PK, serving on PC, being church treasurer, she’d never really understood what it was all about until she came to our church....
- Within three months – her conversion so solid – perhaps because of the background she’d had... I actually asked her to be a warden... which she did for a year before taking over as treasurer... She has just stepped down after 5 years, so she can spend more time as a Bible teacher!
- Husband Phil – didn’t come, then did come... then asked whether he could take communion... then Ruth and Phil came together to my Jesus Explained course... and on the feedback form, he indicated that he’d crossed the line... joined a small group...
- ... became key leaders in our congregational plant where Phil is now team leader of the welcomers!
- Yes friends... ministry is a joy and a privilege
- And people can be a great joy and delight and it’s a huge encouragement to see God working in people’s

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lives... //

- ...and yet... and yet...people can also be a pain... and can **try** you and will **disappoint** you and cause you **grief** and **annoyance!**
- So in this session, we're going to see what Paul had to say to Timothy about **people**.... //
- My title: "How will you respond when people lose the plot?"
- And the first thing we read is that in the midst of Paul's struggles is that...

2. Everyone deserted me # 1

- Look with at 1:15 - *you know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.*
- Throughout Paul's letters, we see that his personal relationships were very important to him...
- He speaks so warmly of people such as Luke, and Tychicus, of Silas and Onesimus...
- His closing greetings in Romans 16, mentions 33 names, 24 of whom were in Rome!
- He prayed for his friends regularly, as he reports. **Their** ups and downs were **his** ups and downs. "Who is weak and I am not weak?" he writes in 2 Corinthians 11.
- People, relationships and friendships, consumed Paul.
- So to read here, that 'everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me', would have been a huge blow to him.
- It's not a **literal** 'all'... though it must have **felt** like that... Timothy, Onesiphorus mentioned in the next verse were residents of Asia... but the defections were so staggering, that it felt like **everyone** had 'turned away from'.
- One commentator said that this is an 'exaggeration characteristic of **depression**'! //
- Two people he mentions by name – as if he's **particularly shocked** or **disappointed**... **Phygelus and Hermogenes**... **We** don't know who they are – but **Timothy** would have!
- Their desertion is probably a result of his **arrest**.
- That may have been evidence for some that God was not with him... surely if he had the resurrection life and the blessing of the Spirit, he would be enjoying **prosperity**, not locked away as a Roman **prisoner!** /
- Paul was **hurting**. Felt **alone**. //
- Friends, how will you **respond** when people **lose** the **plot**?
- Have you **already** felt **abandoned** – **deserted**... all **alone**?
- Perhaps in some conflict in parish – you're the **only** one who's taken a particular stand... you may have even fallen out with your **supervisor**... your **Vicar**...
- And you've been in **pain**... /
- If that has not **yet** been your experience in ministry, I can almost **guarantee** it will be!
- (Friday morning Bible study.... change... new family service family... **'we** grew up with the prayer book and didn't hurt **us**'... etc.... you've heard it before...
- One lady I didn't know all that well at this stage was getting steamed up in the corner... I was feeling all

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alone... didn't know what she was going to say – and she suddenly thumped her fist down on the table and said **firmly, clearly, loudly**.... Well, if we **don't** change, there won't **be** a church here in 20 years!... I'm thinking – go Barb!). //

- CS LEWIS - "To love at all is to be **vulnerable**. Love **anything** and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to **no one**, not even an **animal**."
- We **must** love our people...
- Paul had given them his whole **heart**, his whole **life** – everything. Remember what he said to Thessalonians – that he had not only shared the **gospel** but his very **life**!!
- But **here**, now; everyone had **deserted** him. //
- Except – **Onesiphorus**... v16 – read
- He had searched for him in Rome until he found him...
- Difficult for Onesiphorus to find Paul because chances are he had never **been** to Rome... didn't know his **way around**... **Part** of the city had been **burned** by Nero... location of Paul's imprisonment kept **secret**... and **other** Christians may not have been ready to disclose his location to someone they didn't **know**. //
- But once he found Paul, he often refreshed him – **materially** – **spiritually**.
- How **kind** of the Lord to provide just **one**...
- And may it be that in those times when **YOU** feel deserted in ministry... let down... disappointed... all alone... may it be that the Lord raises up just **one**... just **one** who will look out for you and refresh you!

3. Quarrelling about words

- Will you turn with me now to ch 2 vv14ff.
- Remind people of these things.... He begins...
- Which things? The 'faithful saying' in the previous three verses.
- ...and v8 – *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead... for which I am in chains...* But God's word he says cannot possibly be chained. ... and therefore he's willing to go through anything for the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus...
- Takes us back to this morning's reflections... are you willing to endure **anything** so the **elect** will obtain **salvation**?
- **That** is what matters... the **glorious, liberating salvation** that is in **Christ Jesus!** //
- And therefore Timothy - *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*
- Live out the gospel in faithfulness so you have no need to be ashamed... and correctly handle the word of truth...
- Because there will be those who **won't**... their behaviour will **not** be in accord with the gospel; nor will they handle the word of truth **correctly**!
- So he speaks here of people 'quarrelling about words' v14; avoiding 'godless chatter' v16; and not having anything to do with stupid and foolish arguments v23.
- From my experience there are **two** types of quarrelling... one about things that **matter** and one about things that **don't**!

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- So here – you get those like Hymenaeus and Philetus... their ‘godless chatter’ is actually very serious – they’ve departed from the truth (v18) because they say the resurrection has already taken place.... They are actually destroying the faith of some! That’s very **serious!**
- **Hymenaeus** is a serial **offender** - in 1 Timothy 1:20, Paul says he had to excommunicate both him and Alexander. Here’s he’s teamed up with a **new** sidekick... Philetus...
- Friends, the more you ground your people in the **truth** of the Lord Jesus – the more they’ll recognise when the likes of **Hymenaeus** and **Philetus** come around!
- When someone says ‘the resurrection has already taken place’ – they have an **over-realised eschatology** – when you’ve **faithfully handled** the word of **truth** with your people – then they will **recognise** when something doesn’t fit with the Bible’s teaching... they’ll be on **alert**... because they **know** the **truth**...
- That’s why your Bible teaching – from the **pulpit**, in **study groups**, in **small groups**, in **private**... will be **vital!**
//
- Here’s a **challenge** though.
- How will you ensure that **you** are not among those who depart from the truth?
- That’s one of my questions for you this morning ///
- The **other** type of argument... and I’ve been involved in quite a **few**... is about how **morning tea** is served, how **loud** or what type the **music** is...
- this type of argument is not about **doctrine**... it’s about personal **preference**... **taste**...
- ...It’s about the way **we’ve always done** it vs some new way;
-it’s about ‘we tried that **last** century and it didn’t work’...
- ...it’s about the colour of the **paint** for the **renovations**...
- ...or about anything else that **doesn’t matter** in the end! //
- And these type of arguments/quarrels are just as harmful – **damaging**.
- The **former** type – the teachers **themselves** have departed from the truth – and they **destroy** the faith of others...
- The **latter** – about more **trivial** matters – will not only produce **quarrels** and **more** quarrels – and hurt and division – but in the end – the evil one v26 – will **entrap** so that he might use them to do his **will!**
- **Serious!**
- **You** are the one who has to be the grown up!!
- V22 - *Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace*
- In your youthful enthusiasm (!) - you’ll be **impatient** that this can’t be fixed right **NOW!** (You know how long it takes to turn a large ship around? 11kms. Many seaworthy churches have been swamped/sunk by impatient church leaders!)
- (When first at Noosa... some wanted me to change everything in the first few weeks... I said more than once... give it time.... Only this year – after 8 years – do I have the 930am service something near where I want it to be...)
- In your **enthusiasm** – you might be more **harsh** than you should be... some people just can’t **see** the issues...
- Sometimes in your **youth** – you’ll just feel the need to **win** the **argument**...
- But **you** have to set the example and model **godly behaviour**. Don’t get caught up and **emotionally involved yourself!**

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- V22 again - *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace*
- V23 - *Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments*
- V24 - *the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.*
- V25 – this is a **teaching** issue: *Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...*
- Susan - kids – **teaching** opportunity...
- And see who is **behind** all this!! – v28: And we are reminded of the **spiritual warfare** in which we are engaged... and all the **armour** of God has **given** us...
- Brothers and sisters - many a serious **division** or out and out **conflict** in a church could have been avoided if only people took a step **back**...
- Staying off the **email** and the **texts**...
- Determined to be **gracious** and **gentle** and **kind**...
- Saw the **teaching opportunity**... and patiently waited for people to come **around**...!!
- I'm sure you can think of conflicts you've either **observed** or have been right in the **middle** of... which may have had a **very different outcome**... if someone had **read** these verses and sought to put them into **practice**.... !
- **How will you respond when people lose the plot?? //**
- *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace,*
- don't be quarrelsome, but *be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful*

4. Everyone deserted me #2

- But there's a second reference in this letter to everyone deserting him...
- Turn over to the final chapter... Someone to read vv9-18
- Before we get to v16 – note – Demas – deserted Paul – **why** – v10? Because he **loved** this **world**!
- That will be your experience. Someone whom you think is going **well**... has **responded** to your ministry... and one day you'll find that they **disappear**... and it will be because they loved the **world**
- musician in a church I was at... involved over 3 years... suddenly pulled out... kids... involved in sporting activities on Sunday morning...!
- **Alexander** – did Paul a great deal of harm v14.
- Why? Because he **strongly opposed the message**. So – some – the attractions of the **world** will take them off – **OTHERS** – will oppose you because you **stick** to the **truth** of God's word... the **exclusivity** of Christ... the **authority** of the **Scriptures**...
- So – now v16 - *at my first defence, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.*
- In the Roman judicial process, there was a preliminary defence hearing... to see if you would stand trial... and there was no witness or advocate to stand with or for Paul. Luke and Tychicus may have been away on missions... but no one from the Roman church was there. We do not know why – perhaps they feared the Roman authorities.

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- No one there to **speak for him, defend him**, no-one there even to say '**hang in there Paul, you're doing fine**'.
- **Whatever** the reason – it's somewhat **pathetic** or **scandalous**... here is the great **missionary** of the 1st century, who had been through **so much** to bring the gospel to the **Gentiles**... standing at the **end - alone**, before the **Roman court**!
- Can we enter into **Paul's world** a little and imagine how he **felt**? To a certain extent – **devastated**.
- And yet how does he respond?
- *May it not be held against them!*
- No bitterness. Just a prayer for **forgiveness**, after the pattern of the **Lord Jesus** – *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*.
- And then he has **this** great testimony v17 - ***But the Lord stood by my side***.
- In fact he was **not alone**. The **Lord Jesus** was **with him** – **right** at his **side**.
- He was **conscious** of his **presence**.
- He who was his **great advocate** before the **Father**. The very one who had **died** and been **raised** for his **sin**. The one for whose **cause** he was in **chains**. The **Lord** of the **universe** – the **maker** of **heaven** and **earth** – was with him. What a **TESTIMONY!** //
- we don't know **what** is around the corner for you in ministry.
- I trust it will be great **and wonderful, fun and fulfilling, exciting and stimulating** as you see the Lord at work through you.
- But I'll be **surprised** - as you are doing the **Lord's work**, and as you are engaging in the **great spiritual warfare** – I'll be surprised if there aren't some **hard times**.
- There may be times like for Paul when you feel **very alone**.
- Someone has complained that the music's too **loud** again... or that the young people have left the **kitchen** in a **mess**...
- Or there are significant **doctrinal** issues between you and your ministerial **colleagues**... and some **split** in the church...
- Perhaps there is a **fall out** with a volunteer – and you feel there is no one there you can **talk to, open up to; no one** who will **understand**.
- But ***The Lord stood by my side***.
- Perhaps you are **ill**. Sick for weeks... or come down with a debilitating **disease**.
- But ***The Lord stood by my side***.
- Perhaps the work just meets a **brick wall**. No one has the same vision as **you do**. No one seems as **burdened** about it as **you do**. You feel **abandoned**.
- But ***The Lord stood by my side***. **That** will be your **story**.
- **Why I am so sure?**
- Because of the **promises** in **Scripture** we can **claim** together. ***The Lord is my Shepherd, there's nothing I want. I will be with you, even to the end of the age. I lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord – the Maker of heaven and earth....***

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- **Cling** to such promises.
- There may be times when you are tempted to ask – well – **HOW** is the Lord present with me in all this?
- At that time you must say – **I trust you. I know you. You are here.** My training rector: “you must bully your feelings with the facts...”
- ***The Lord stood by my side*** – what a **great testimony** of Paul’s.
- **And** what a great testimony of **yours** it will be! //
- But you may have noticed that the Lord wasn’t just **passively** standing by... Paul says *The Lord stood by my side and **gave me strength** so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.*
- Paul was **strengthened** to **proclaim** the **gospel**.
- He won’t just be with you to **hold** your **hand**.
- He will be with you to **bless** the **work**... and to see that the **Good News** **advances!**
- **Despite brick walls** and **other blockades**, the Lord will be **with** you to **strengthen** your hand so that **more** and **more people** will see your good works, **hear the gospel** and **glorify** your **Father** in **heaven**.
- **How do I know?** Because **he** is even **more interested** in **that** great end than **you** are!
- **How do I know?** Because its **implicit** in the promise of Matthew 28 that the Lord himself will be **part** of the work he sent his disciples **out to do**.
- **How do I know?** - because when you *give yourselves **fully** to the work of the **Lord**,... you know that your **labour** in the **Lord** is not in **vain**.*///
- Friends, because the **Lord** is true to his **promises**, your testimony will be that the Lord **stood by your side** and **strengthened** you so that the message might be **fully proclaimed**.
- And no **matter** what Satan throws at you in your ministry, you will be **safe**... as Paul said here “*and I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.* “ //
- **THE LORD STOOD BY MY SIDE**
- **To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.**