

AN END TIME AGENDA



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Key verses: 2 Timothy 3:1-9

Introduction:

2:15 my call! Paul is now at the end of his life in prison in Rome awaiting death - executed under Nero A.D. 64. This letter is a fatherly call to Timothy his beloved son and co-worker to continue with gospel among Gentile churches despite suffering – to continue the fight of faith. Notice Paul 1. Knows Timothy's background and history, 2. aware of his current weaknesses and gifts, 3. Loves him as a son though not his biological father (I have no one else like him), 4. Knew where to place him within Paul's apostolic sphere of churches according to Tim's own gifts/grace -- he left him in Ephesus and Titus (another son) he left with tougher lying, lazy Cretans!

In chapter 3, he zooms out and because of his concern for the continuance of the gospel – he speaks about last days difficulties that will confront church in present and future - urges Timothy to understand this and keep leading.

Let's talk about the last days (our mission field). Let's talk about gospel (our message). Let's talk about Timothy (our Men/women) – Paul's agenda for last days.

1. Last days – since coming of Christ and until his return – there will be days of increasing danger and stress and global shaking yet days of great gospel opportunity and great advance of KOG + no rapture – Jesus said in this world will have tribulation!

There were difficult seasons and was severe persecution in early church – a large turning away from Paul and his teaching as false teaching came in A.D. 60 – Paul had warned Ephesian elders about it **Acts 20:29** 'I know after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away disciples after them'.

Is Timothy's mission field, our mission field. What look like? **People love 3 things: Lovers of self – lovers of money – lovers of pleasure more than love for God (idolatry).** God commands us to love him supremely and our neighbour as ourselves, but if you love yourself supremely – you will not love God or your neighbour. **The essence of sin is selfishness/selfie generation/pic front Aeroplane).** The heart of problem is problem in heart – disordered love of heart. We are born, Luther says, incurvatus in se, **curved in on ourselves as part of the fall** from God consciousness to the **hell** of self-consciousness – trusting in my flesh. Separation from his presence is literally what the fall is.

We are made as not in the **image of God (God looks like us and we look like God, though fallen)** and are meant to be **turned outward** towards God and one another.

When we ignore God and turn inward, we start loving things using people. Paul uses **19 words** describe challenges even touching Church -having form religion denying power God - religious/rebellious.

One could say today self-worship is world's fastest-growing religion – individualistic and collective cultures – see **gospel of selfishness** at work in SA over last 30 years and how God given us window opportunity with GNU - skills Ramaphosa.

Keller: In generations past and even in traditional culture today I found out who I am through my parents or community. But today in this **secular generation** where God's truth and moral absolutes are denied and rejected and traditional values and family is collapsing in society – we are developing a view of our identity unlike any other generation before us – we are saying, **I am going to decide who I am**, and to discover that I'm going to look inside myself and be true to who I really am – what makes me happy - my feelings – individual choice and group identity – - no one else can tell me who I am (not even my body can dictate gender) – so you have the birth of post modern or inward generation **where all I have left to trust is myself and reality gets reshaped into unreality.**

Basic Commandments of Gospel of Self – basic narratives of secularism:

Your mind is source and standard of truth, so trust yourself. [#theanswersarewithin](#).

Primary problem in West is post modern denial of truth Tod Huizinga FOCL Rom 1.

Your emotions are authoritative – growing trend to reject authority. [#followyourheart](#)

You are sovereign, so bend world around your dreams and desires. [#liveyourtruth](#)

You are the standard of goodness—so don't let anyone oppress you with the notion of being a sinner who needs grace. [#neverchange](#).

You are Creator, with creative power to craft your identity and purpose. [#authenticity](#).

Keller- more difficult reach post-Christian western culture than non-Christian culture:

1. No anxiety or concept of sin – why we talk about idolatry.
2. Secular culture is built to escape from Christianity with a negative view church.
3. Secular culture doesn't think it has faith beliefs -smart people know it does.

Loneliness and **confusion** and **identity politics** emerge – affects my worldview.

So many people are in a mess – the **world is in a mess** – sexuality and gender are in a mess and **young people and teenagers in particular are trying to navigate this toxic media mess on a daily basis.**

What is our response to this – what was Paul's response to Tim?

Timothy needs encouragement –still **young** 35 to oversee churches, prone to frequent **illness** – had stomach problems, and was **timid** by temperament (fragile), Paul encourages him and us **2 Big But's because desperate times call for radical measures:**

1. But we have the gospel (Our Message) Romans 3:21 'but now a way of getting right with God has been revealed through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel is about Christ! For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and justified by his grace as a gift through

the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation (a sacrifice that turns away his anger over sin) by his blood, to be received by faith”.

Romans 1:16 – the gospel has tremendous power to rescue people from sin and selfishness and put them right with God!

2 Tim 3 is there to show us WHY the gospel is needed. The gospel is the **only way** to get right with God – saved from this evil age through the gospel.

We are in last great missional phase of the church – the day of salvation.

Romans 13:11-12, ‘And you are to do this knowing the time because the hour for you to be woken out of sleep is already here, for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far gone, the day is at hand’. **Sleeping beauty awakes...**

1.1 Gospel is the great alternative to gospel of self. In Gospel there is movement from God to me by Grace and my response to God – turning in Repentance/faith.

Good news is the **gospel gives me a new ID** by grace – in which **a new self is born** – now accepted in beloved - a new creation – received from God not achieved by me!

The **great movement** and power of the gospel is the **dismantling of gospel of selfishness** as I look away from myself because I realise I’m fallen and sinful and I look to God in Christ for forgiveness and life. **I look away from myself to him for salvation, and I keep looking away from myself to him for life and growth and purpose.**

Jesus said whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. **I lose my life** for his sake but discover I gain something far better..

God often works in opposites – his ways are not our ways. **Faith looks away from itself** – is an ever-increasing persuasion of heart about God’s goodness and will and not my will getting done.

Galatians 2:20 ‘I have been crucified – and salvation means **I straighten up into Christ** from my crooked sinful posture and turn my face upward to God in a new father-son relationship. Awareness of union with Christ delivers us from **idolatry self**.

Me in Christ and Christ living in me **my new position** which I daily affirm in a narcissistic age of selfishness. And as I abide in him **my ongoing condition** is I am increasingly delivered from former habits and sin that can never satisfy.

Ephesians 4:22 – 24 “to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, and to put on the new self-created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness’.

This is good news indeed – Jesus offers you a **new identity through the gospel** – through his death and resurrection. I find my identity and dignity not in looking inside myself but to God who can remake you and give you a new ID as a **free gift** through faith in Christ– is better than any personal or family or clan or tribal or cultural or racial or identity politics we’ve seen particularly in KwaZulu Natal with rise MK-identity politics.

The gospel will change your destiny and the daily focus of your life from practising the **presence of me** to practising the **presence of God** who now watches over you – in him I now live and move and have my being. A journey **upwards and outwards not inwards and downwards** into myself. Christ pulls me out of myself and my **little story** and the entrapment of an idolatrous of life of self-worship and death, and into his **big story** and the wonderful gospel activities of the father, son and Spirit.

It's an identity that is not oppressive but brings **true freedom and makes things right between you and God** – it removes burdens of sin/transgressions and a **broken self-image/iniquity and guilt – what I've done and shame of who I've become** – it helps you discover the person God wants you to be and will bring you greatest happiness and glorify God – the gospel works and **is truly life changing**.

An identity not based on my feelings because that can change this afternoon, it's not based on **your choices** because that's a huge burden if have already make bad choices, but based on **faith in who God says you are**. You will reach your greatest potential in Christ and fulfil your deepest desires through the wonderful purposes God has for your life. God's word will reaffirm goodness of **authority** – God's word of truth. He will reaffirm the goodness of the **physical world** and especially the **body** in a world where life is increasingly lived in non-physical world called internet or Metaverse/AI.

Must keep gospel at centre and applying it prophetically to surrounding culture so people see their need of Christ – not just throwing old sermons or spiritual principles out there hoping we hit something. **The gospel doesn't change but culture does and therefore fresh application of the gospel is needed!** (If we don't communicate the gospel into this changing narrative – we become irrelevant to society). We need to understand the surrounding secular gospel and **remove its clothes** so people can see its nakedness and then lift up the beauty of Christ and call people to repentance and faith to him and find their true aspirations and desires fulfilled in Christ. **That's our task – it requires thinking about society and biblical and missional engagement.**

Part of having a theological Vision – how we apply gospel in today's society.

What they taught in the early church – Paul laid gospel foundations into every church (what I teach in all churches) and this teaching was part of Timothy's basic on job training/curriculum. **Paul grounded him doctrinally with apostolic doctrine and modelled it through his life not just in church meetings.** Not just believing but obeying Christ's teaching as **Christ commanded** in Great Commission. **Hearing about Christ, receiving Christ, learning Christ and being taught truth in him through renewing our minds.**

Later Paul reminds him of this 2 Timothy 1:12-13, 2; 2, 3:14 – 16 and other epistles. Christ crucified and risen - essential apostolic doctrine applied to life!! Needed **desperately** today in many Charismatic Churches.

Certain areas become **centres for gospel Training for an entire region** such as happened in Jerusalem Acts 2:42 (devoted apostolic teaching), Antioch Acts 11:26 (at least 1 year), Corinth Acts 18:9-11 (18 months), Ephesus Acts 19:10 for (2 years), Rome Acts 28:31.

And we shouldn't attempt to accomplish this digitally, online – (important as backup) as primary physical strategy. God's method is to work through living voice empowered by Spirit with real people in real places.

Paul says to Timothy hold onto the word of gospel because all Scripture is God breathed and fan into Flame the gift of Spirit that is in you.

At conversion Spirit is in you (Rom 8:9) but in Bap in Spirit is when Spirit comes upon you and empowers you and gives you gifts to use to advance Gospel!

3. Second BUT: 2 Timothy 3:10 but you, Timothy, is what I'm also trusting in... (the men/women in upcoming generation).

3.1 Paul's hope was gospel and next generation leaders. But **gospel**, but **Timothy**.

Paul didn't just leave behind churches, but he left behind a **generation of disciples/workers he had fathered and raised.** They are hope of future. Paul recruited him - Timothy didn't

volunteer! Paul knew he **had to build generationally** not just locally and regionally.

Not just Timothy but Titus and others **4:9 – 12, 19 – 20 – younger bomb squad.**

He said you've seen my life, heard gospel, been fathered and **trained on the job by me**, not in Bible school – now take the baton and run. Paul trained him to train others. **Paul trusted younger generation leaders to lead!** Not just in congregations – were **leading them.**

In Africa by 2100 50% of world's population under 14 will be in Africa and third of all people on earth. One of the most transforming moments in history of Christianity. Need to be training missionaries not just teaching members-a truly missional church.

3.2 Notice: He gave them local leadership and instruction on what to **teach** locally – to confront false doctrine, confusion about law and grace, character criteria eldership (church about only place left that requires this), appoint leadership, gender issues, who were real widows needing support and who weren't real widows, to command the rich to be generous - - rich people don't like being commanded, and avoid people who were religious and rebellious.

3.3 Showed them how to live – Life Skills. To follow in Paul's footsteps because Paul had modelled something of his life. Tough assignment. Copying the spiritual lifestyle of Paul. **Not just an information transfer or degree but a transformation of life** so Christianity is not just seen as a bunch of teaching but a **life.**

This stuff is caught not just taught. **Young people don't want a programme they want you.**

They have been **over entertained** and **under fathered/discipled by men and women.**

Timothy owed a spiritual life to Paul. Paul encouraged Timothy personally and publicly – men need to talk from our emotions (Philippians 2:19 – 20 "I hope to send Timothy to you for I have no one like him who genuinely cares for your welfare)– why men need to talk from their emotions not just about them. Raised him up to go beyond him.

3.4 Mission: Paul had connected Tim to his **apostolic grace** of preaching Christ – laying Gospel foundations, pioneering church planting in unreached areas and overseeing a family

of churches called the **Pauline churches**, so Timothy was pastoring locally but connected with Paul trans-locally. They were not just leaders of the local church with a congregational focus, but also connected to a trans-local vision with a pioneering apostolic focus – reaching into the surrounding mission field.

Why he could say 4:2 “do your best to come to me soon – Crescens is in Galatia and Titus in Dalmatia – bring Mark for he is useful to me – Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus’. They didn’t see Paul through a pastoral lens as ex-senior pastor of Ephesus now working elsewhere. Paul enlarged his world. Without A/P vision elders easily become managers and without the local church, trans-local gifts lack resources and prayer to reach nations.

They were in a society of believers being persecuted by state. 1 and 2 Timothy were written under Nero’s reign (1:8 + 2:3). It’s why Paul describes the **desperate times** in last days so that Timothy will have a global focus even in Paul’s absence (we called to bless the world) not just managing local nuts and bolts of church life – and do work of evangelist not just to pastor flock. **Touching the church and touching the city.**

3.5 Prayer: He’s informing Timothy so the Church could pray for him and connect to the mission – Timothy knew his movements without Twitter. He was pulled into a far bigger world involving finances, deployment and prayer.

4. Finally we believe the return of Jesus will be preceded by an onslaught of evil in which the world will be shaken to its moral and physical foundations – and **simultaneously the gospel will be preached to every nation and people group and a new radical generation of disciples will arise and spearhead the mission of God.**

Scripture is calling us to prepare for it.

But **we have the gospel...** A gospel worldview the changes everything.

But **we have you Timothy... where are the Gospel workers?**

Prophetic word to Christian Centre Abbotsford By Craig Botha on 17 March 2024 at the 9am service:

...I feel the Lord would say to you even today, even in this season there’s a **shift that He wants to bring** and if we can picture this church as being on a battlefield. The Lord would say **to those in the front line, those older warriors, men and women in the front line, that have been doing battle for decades;** you’ve kept the faith, you’ve run the race, you fought the fight, you’re still there.

But the Lord would say to you **I want you to change your battle formation, I want you to fan out to the right and to the left. I want to bring gaps between you, because behind you are a younger generation that have been watching and following and learning and the time has come says the Lord when they need to be pulled into the gaps and they need to walk alongside you and then walk ahead of you.** And even those in this church and there are **others in this city, there’s a younger generation that God is calling to possess the land in this new season and it won’t be primarily through the older generation. It will come through a younger generation.**

And I call you to fan out and to pull others behind you into the gaps that they may walk past you and ahead of you into the future, into all I have for you, for I have land for you to conquer, I have cities for you to reach, I have much for you to do. But it needs a change of battle plan, it needs a change of formation, for I am with you says the Lord and you are a faithful people. But the time has come for a shift in your formation. And for the **young people**, God would say to you, **this is a time for you to step forward and step into the gaps and take the battle forward for the Lord**, in Jesus' name.