

MAXIMISE YOUR POTENTIAL – Sunday 29th January 2017

3: THE POTENTIAL OF THE GOSPEL

Try to imagine what the relationship was like between Paul and Timothy. Bear in mind the very different backgrounds, personalities and experiences.

Why do you think that the relationship worked so well? Are there lessons for us to learn from their successful partnership in spreading the gospel?

Paul is writing his final communication. What stands out for you and surprises you in the first chapter of this letter?

The call of Paul is captured in the words *'Do not be ashamed.'* It comes within the context of heresy (false teaching) that was rampant through Asia Minor; there were those believers who had abandoned Paul; and on top of those pressures, there was the direct persecution from Emperor Nero.

If anyone in your group has time before your meeting, do a quick Google search on what it was like during the reign of Emperor Nero for Christians and compare it with the ISIS aggression against believers in Syria. Is there much difference?

1. DON'T BE ASHAMED OF THE LORD v.8

What are the kind of circumstances that we can find ourselves in where we have been 'ashamed to testify' of the Lord? How have we coped with that kind of experience? It appears that Timothy struggled with boldness. Boldness was one of the hallmarks of the early Church – see, Acts 4.13; 4.29; 4.31. Boldness is not equated with arrogance but a quiet confidence because of personal conviction of what you believe and know.

2. DON'T BE ASHAMED OF PAUL & HIS SUFFERINGS v.7

'or ashamed of me his prisoner.'

What do you think Paul was referring to in this kind of statement?

2Tim 1.15 is a little indication.

Let us never forget the suffering church. 200 million Christians are under some form of persecution in 105 countries around the world.

3. DON'T BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL v.9ff

There is a holy calling upon our lives. The gospel is the power of God, as Paul says in Romans 1.16 *it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.*

THE GOSPEL IS GRACE IMPARTING v.9

It is all about grace – the free unmerited favour of God upon us.

How do we explain to people when sharing the gospel that 'salvation is free', it comes not from what we are able to do but what God has done for us in Christ?

When we track the purposes of God in our lives, we see that it reaches back into eternity past.

THE GOSPEL IS DEATH DESTROYING v.10a

What astonishing power there is in the gospel!

In what way would you explain that Jesus has obliterated death?

THE GOSPEL IS LIFE GIVING v.10b-11 *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

In what way do you think this sustained Paul when he was awaiting execution?

There is life in the future. But, back to the now of Paul's life, he celebrates how he exercises his gifting as a herald, apostle and teacher. The three primary gifts that Paul received from God were constantly being fanned into flame.

THE GOSPEL IS TREASURE DISPLAYING v.12

I am not ashamed because I know whom I have believed....

Take time within your group to unpack this verse.

The gospel was like a treasure that had been entrusted to Paul but it was not to be hidden away in some bank vault but placed on display for all to see. Paul staked his life on the gospel and that is why he was prepared to pay the ultimate price in suffering and sacrifice.

It is important that you never lose sight of the potential of the gospel.

Let's maximise the potential of the grace imparting, death destroying, life giving and treasure displaying gospel.

FOR YOUR OWN NOTES: