

THE WORD FOR TODAY

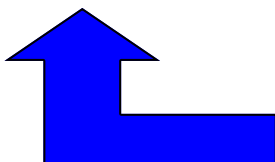
THE LORD'S GRACE (Paul's First Letter to Timothy, Chapter 1, 12-19)



Paul was writing to his young friend Timothy, whom he had left to care for the church at Ephesus. Paul realised that he might not be back in Ephesus for some time. Timothy had been Paul's constant companion and helper on his travels, and with him in Rome during his first imprisonment, and Paul had a very high opinion of him, but this was Timothy being thrown in at the deep end as it were. He was suddenly being left to care for what was an important growing church, in which there were a number of people spreading false teaching. Paul wanted to make sure that he was prepared. He uses his own personal testimony to encourage Timothy's faith. This passage speaks to us today at Liberton Kirk as we seek to flourish as a church while we wait for a new minister to be appointed. We need to be reminded of just how much Jesus can mean in our lives and to be prepared to tell others just what a difference he makes.

Follow the words of this passage, beginning on the north wall of this little building. We usually walk round the church building, pausing at the various benches, but since there is so much scaffolding, and benches have been displaced, we are confining the Word for Today to the benches at the front of the church, with two verses on each bench. Follow the numbers at the top right of the boards from 1 to 7 and read them in the right order! We use the New International Version of the Bible, which you can find on the internet under Bible Gateway. Use the benches to pause and think.

The whole "Word for Today" can be found on the church website, www.libertonkirk.net



Turn immediately left to find the first Bible extract on the bench

“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service.”

1

Paul was forever grateful that Jesus was prepared to accept him into his service. Once he had discovered and accepted Jesus as his Lord, he was eager to work for him, but not sure that he would be acceptable.

We can forget sometimes what a privilege it is to be a Christian and to be trusted by Jesus to do his work in the world—to be his hands and feet now that he is no longer living on earth. Yet he not only trusts us, but gives us all the power we need from the Holy Spirit within us. We have no excuse! More than that, we could miss out on the fullness of life which Jesus promised!



***Lord, keep me from ever thinking it a chore to serve you.
Help me to realise that it is a privilege.
Thank you for giving me the courage and strength I need.
Thank you for the joy and fulfilment which come from serving you.***

(No. 2 (and No. 3) is on the bench straight ahead of you near the East Door of the church)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Even though I was once a blasphemer
and a persecutor and a violent man,
I was shown mercy because I acted
in ignorance and unbelief.”***

2

Paul, as a fanatical Pharisee, had indeed been a violent persecutor of Christians. He was sincere in his Jewish faith and in his pursuit of those he saw as dangerous heretics, but he was relentless. He was pursuing Christians when he was on his way to Damascus and Jesus stopped him in his tracks. Yet Jesus was willing to forgive him—something he would always find amazing.

Knowing Paul’s story is such an assurance to us, as it would be to Timothy. Even the worst of sins is not beyond God’s forgiveness, if we are genuine in our willingness to admit it and to change.



***Lord, I am truly sorry for the things I have done which have hurt you.
I know I don’t deserve your forgiveness but I ask it now
with a plea that you will help me not to stray again.***

(Turn the board over to find No. 3)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

3

What a lovely word “grace” is! With God it comes in abundance too—it is poured out plentifully, bringing mercy to the deserving and the undeserving. Such riches freely given.

With that wonderful grace comes the gift of faith. How could we not believe in a God who deals so graciously with us? A God who lifts our burden of guilt, welcomes us into his family and makes our life worth living. In turn that faith gives us the ability to love—to try to emulate the love that took Jesus to the cross to save us—to keep the commands Jesus said were the most important, loving God and our neighbour.



Lord, pour out your grace on me too, I pray.

Deepen my faith so that I have that assurance that will help me to stay close to your ways.

Give me love in my heart for all I meet who are in need.

(Walk along the front of the church to find No. 4 (and No. 5) on the central bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Here is a trustworthy saying that
deserves full acceptance:
Christ Jesus came into the world
to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.”***

4

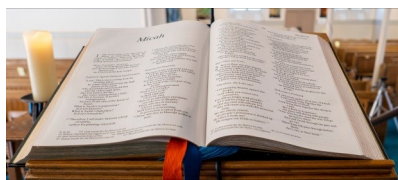
What a difference it makes in radio and television programmes if the presenter is really enthusiastic about their subject. You get drawn into it and find yourself getting enthusiastic too. Paul is very enthusiastic about Jesus and he wants Timothy to be the same—this phrase *“Here is a trustworthy saying”* is repeated elsewhere in his letters to Timothy. In his letter to the Romans he says *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Doesn’t it draw you into that conviction too?

Perhaps we should be more inclined to speak out with enthusiasm about what Jesus means in our lives? There are many who are looking for some good news they can call their own.



***Lord, I want others to know how much it means
to me to have you in my life.
Help me to share my feelings so that they might come to know you.***

(Turn the board over to find No. 5)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“But for that very reason I was shown mercy
so that in me, the worst of sinners,
Christ Jesus might display his unlimited
patience as an example for those who would
believe on him and receive eternal life.”***

5

Are you a patient person? Very few of us are. Here we are reminded of the infinite patience of Jesus with his sinful people: there is no-one who cannot be forgiven if they truly want to turn to him; there is no-one who cannot be used by him to work for his kingdom.

Can we try to have the same patience, forgiveness and restoration for people who wrong us?



***Lord, your patience with this sinful soul is astounding.
Thank you for your willingness to forgive and to re-instate.
Help me to follow your example, I pray.***

(Walk past the main West door of the church to find No. 6 (and No. 7) on the bench)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

***“Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible,
the only God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever.
Amen.”***

6

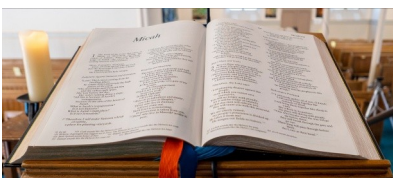
Paul's gratitude overflows often into an outburst of praise. It's a good lesson for us—how often do we pause just to praise God for who he is? He is indeed an amazing God, wonderful beyond our imagining, deserving of all the praise and honour we can give him.

How good it is to shout that out to him. Forget all the things we want to ask him to do for a short while—just praise him for what he is.

***Wonderful, amazing,
awesome God, I
worship you.
Your creative power is
immense, and yet you
love everything you
have made, even me.
I come to you humbly
to praise you and give
you all the glory.***



(Turn the board over to find No. 7)



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, 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.”

7

Hold on to faith and a good conscience—what very good advice to all of us! Faith makes life worth living—there is a future to look forward to. Sometimes life can seem like a battle, but faith can be what sees us through.

A good conscience means that life is a good fulfilling life, of value to us and to those we meet. Conscience is like God’s Holy Spirit working in us, nudging us in the right direction, telling us when we are wrong. Is it worth ignoring it and risking shipwreck?



***Lord, help me to hold onto my faith whatever life throws at me.
Help me to hear you speaking through my conscience and to follow you more closely day by day.
Lord, be my anchor and keep me safe.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

Photographic Credits:

The Bible image on all panels is by Gary Ross

Other photographs are by Ruth Davies