

2 TIMOTHY

GUARD THE GOSPEL

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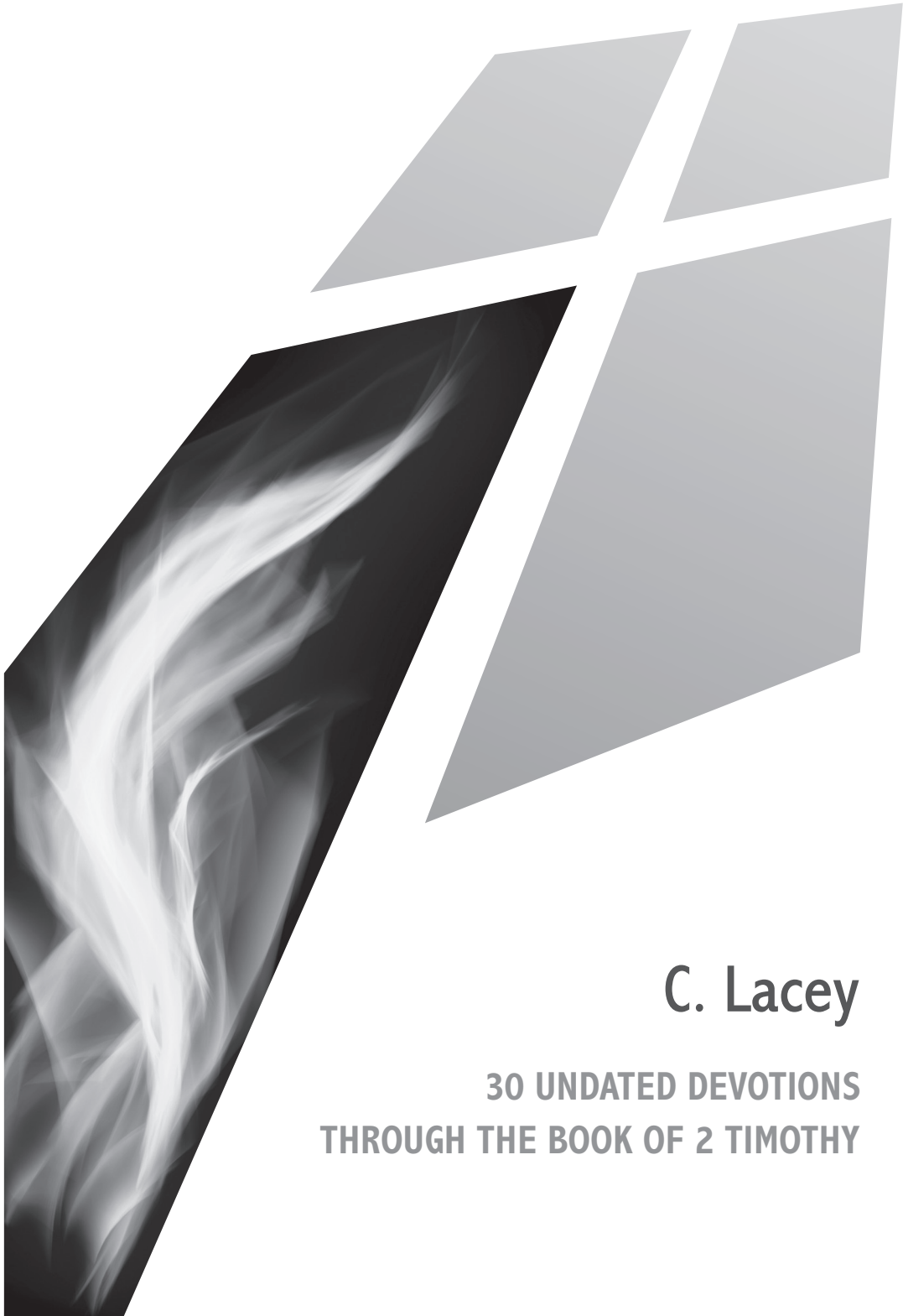
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Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com

Website: www.10ofthose.com



C. Lacey

**30 UNDATED DEVOTIONS
THROUGH THE BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY**

This is the Apostle Paul's final letter. He writes from a Roman prison, awaiting execution. This isn't the house arrest we read of in Acts 28, but a more severe imprisonment. 2 Timothy 1:16 tells us he is in 'chains' and 2:9 describes him as being 'chained like a criminal'. As a Roman citizen, he will most likely be beheaded. He knows he is about to die, so he writes to Timothy – his spiritual son and missionary companion – urging him to continue in gospel ministry.

Paul writes as 'an apostle of Christ Jesus' (1:1). He is a messenger speaking on Christ's behalf and with Christ's authority, so his words deserve careful attention – by Timothy, and by us. He was made an apostle 'by the will of God'. He didn't appoint himself and he wasn't appointed by a church. God set him apart to proclaim 'the promise of life' – to declare the gospel hope of eternal life to dying sinners.

Paul begins his letter with a gospel-focused greeting. He reminds Timothy of the extraordinary blessings he has in Christ – 'Grace, mercy and peace' (v. 2). As followers of Jesus, we share these same blessings. Once we were his enemies, separated from him by our sin. But now, in Christ, we have been forgiven and reconciled to him. We can know this peace with God because of his great mercy and grace.

Timothy will need to remember these gospel realities as he leads the church in Ephesus – a prosperous, cosmopolitan city where the church is vulnerable to complacency and false teaching. We too need to remember the grace, mercy and peace we have been given through Jesus' death and resurrection. We need this good news to be central in our hearts and minds if we are to continue sharing the gospel faithfully in our culture.

REFLECTION

How does knowing you have peace with God impact your day-to-day life? Take some time to thank God for the mercy and grace he has shown in forgiving your sins. Ask him to keep reminding you of the gospel blessings he has given you in Christ.

Paul is devoted to prayer. All his letters show his faithfulness in praying for people and churches. Even at the end of his life, alone in prison and facing death, he continues to pray for others. At this point we may expect Paul's prayers to be more focused on his own circumstances. We might expect him to ask God for relief from discomfort, release from prison or rescue from execution. But verse 3 shows he continues to pray regularly and persistently for others – including Timothy.

Paul is a godly leader and mentor. His prayers show his dependence and trust in God to equip and sustain other believers. Paul knows only God can do this, so he prays 'constantly' (v. 3). This is a challenge for those of us involved in teaching or mentoring younger Christians. In the busyness of preparing talks or Bible studies, youth events or church programmes, it can be easy to neglect prayer. But Paul's effectiveness in discipleship stems from his commitment to prayer. His prayers are fuelled by his love for Timothy and his concern for gospel ministry. In a similar way, our love for other believers should result in us praying for them.

Both Timothy's mother and grandmother were women of faith, but genuine faith can't be inherited – it must be personal. So Paul thanks God

for saving Timothy and giving him a sincere faith. In our prayers, we should thank God for his saving work in the lives of other believers, and we should pray persistently for him to save those who don't yet know him. As we pray, we acknowledge God's power and sovereignty, and we show our humble dependence on him.

Even in chains and anticipating execution, Paul continues to serve God – through his prayers. Our circumstances don't exclude or excuse us from being involved in gospel ministry – we should always be faithful in prayer. Paul was no less a servant of the gospel praying in a Roman prison than when he was church-planting in Asia!

REFLECTION

How committed are you to praying for other Christians? Think about your small group; those you serve with at church; your church leaders; mission workers; and your wider church family. Who could you commit to pray for regularly? Ask God to help your prayer life become more other-person centred.