BETWEEN HISTORY AND THE FUTURE

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I'm not so much concerned about how the Bible came to us as I am about whether the next generation will actually read it!

I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but my favourite verse in the Bible is 2 Timothy 2:2:

> *You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.*

Two things fascinate me about this verse. At heart I'm a teacher and trainer and the charge to pass on to others what I have learned is incredibly important and motivating to me. As someone interested in history, I'm intrigued by the way that Timothy and others kept Paul's command. From person to person, the Gospel message was passed on from the Middle-East two thousand years ago till it reached a teenage boy in a field in Northumberland. That's an awful lot of faithful witness! But the point of enjoying history is to learn from it.

I'm often asked to speak on the subject of how the Bible came to us. It's a wonderful subject, full of great stories and heroism. But...

Here in the UK, we have more translations of the Bible than anyone could ever need, but we see a generation growing up (including, all to often, in the Church) who know little about it's message. On the other hand, all round the world, there are people desperate to learn from God's Word, who don't have a translation available to them.

If we are to take Paul's charge to Timothy seriously, we will have to find ways to pass the Bible on to the next generation. Those working in the UK face different issues to those of us whose focus is more international, but the basic question is still the same. How do we pass on what has been handed down to us.

Let's thank God for those who passed the message on to us. Now, what are we going to do about it?