

Thanks to God for Timothy

📖 2 Timothy 1:1-7

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Last time we looked at the introduction and background of 2 Timothy. We were reminded of our method of studying any book of the Bible, the grammatical-historical hermeneutic. We looked at the corpus of literature that 2 Timothy is grouped with, known as the Pastoral Epistles, including Titus, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy. We looked at the author and concluded conservatively that it was Paul. As far as the location of Paul, he was imprisoned in Rome for the second time and the date was summer or fall of AD67. As far as the audience, Paul wrote to Timothy, his beloved disciple in the Lord. This man was Paul's protege and successor in this ministry and at the time was pastor of the Church at Ephesus. Paul's purpose in writing to him was to alert him to the fact that the end of his life was near and that the mantle of this ministry was now being passed to him. He needed to stand strong as a good soldier of the Lord despite Nero's vile persecutions of Christians. The entire enterprise of Christianity depended upon it. Therefore, the message is faithful endurance of apostasy that was taking place inside the Church as well as persecution from outside the Church, so that the truth of Christianity would be preserved for the next generation. The letter has several uniquenesses, including the fact it was Paul's last letter and it is intensely personal.

Today we pick up with the exposition of the first seven verses. In verse 1 the author, his office, the means by which he came into that office and the purpose of his ministry are revealed. **Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus.** The author of this letter is **Paul**. This is the same Paul who was converted on the Damascus Road. He authored 13 epistles. This is his last epistle, and therefore, his valediction, or farewell address. His name **Paul**, in the Greek, is *Paulos*, a Graeco-Roman name. His Israelite name was Saul. The man had two names, as did most Jews at the time. He used his Israelite name when he was among the Israelites and he used his Graeco-Roman name when he was among the Gentiles. And since he was the apostle to the Gentiles, he usually went by his Graeco-Roman name of **Paul**.

As far as his office, **Paul was an apostle of Christ Jesus.** The word **apostle** is *apostolos* and originally referred to a "naval expedition" or "ship sent out for departure." Josephus used it of ambassadors sent out by the authority of others (Antiquities 17, 300). This is the sense it is applied by Paul to himself and others in the NT. Therefore, an apostle is one sent in the authority of another, and thereby an "ambassador, a delegate, a messenger." As far as

apostles are concerned, there are two categories; the twelve and the others. The twelve included those who had been with Jesus from His baptism to His ascension (cf. Acts 1:21-22). Paul did not qualify for this category. Thus, Paul was not the twelfth apostle as is commonly taught. The second category is the others. These included those who had seen Jesus in His resurrection body. Barnabas was in this category. Paul was also. He said of himself, "Am I not an apostle, have I not seen the Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1). That Paul was of the other category is also clear from the fact that he had to prove his apostleship to many, especially the Corinthians; whereas, if he had been of the twelve he would not have had to go to such lengths. However, the only substantial difference between the two categories of apostles is that the twelve will sit on twelve thrones in the kingdom and rule over the twelve tribes of Israel, whereas the others will not have that privilege. But as far as speaking with authority, they all had authority when they spoke the word of God. And the authority of the apostle is that of the sender. Paul says he was sent by **Christ Jesus**. Therefore, he spoke in the authority of **Christ Jesus** and not his own authority.

As for the word order here, usually it is "Jesus Christ," but here it is **Christ Jesus**. Because of the alteration of order, you can see clearly that "Jesus Christ" is not His first and last name. Rather, Jesus is His name, and Christ is a title. The emphasis here is on his title, **Christ**. The title **Christ** means Messiah and Messiah means "anointed one." During the OT, all the kings were anointed and therefore all the kings were messiah's. But they all looked forward to the Messiah. Jesus is the Messiah, the one they all foreshadowed. **Jesus** is his personal name. It was given by the angel to Mary that she should name Him **Jesus**. **Jesus** is the Hebrew Yeshua and means YHWH saves or YHWH is salvation. Therefore, **Christ Jesus** means "the anointed one who is YHWH who saves." This is the One who sent Paul as His apostle. As for the thing of the sending, it is tied to his conversion on the Damascus Road when Jesus appeared to him in a light and commissioned him to bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel (Acts 9:15-16).

And the means by which Paul became an apostle is stated to be **by the will of God**. The word **will** is *thelema* and refers to what one wishes. In other words, what God wished was that Paul would be an apostle of Christ Jesus. And that this was **the will of God** is quite evident because before Paul became an apostle he was a student of Judaism who excelled beyond all of his contemporaries and was extremely zealous for the Pharisaic interpretations of the law and a persecutor of Jesus and His followers. But at the proper time, God called him by His grace so that he might preach Christ among the Gentiles.

Now the purpose of Paul being an apostle is stated to be **according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus**. The words **according to** are a bit cumbersome. The Greek is *kata* and it is with the accusative **promise**. This is often generically translated as "according to," signifying some standard or basis. However, it would be more appropriately translated by its fourth meaning, signifying "for the purpose of." And therefore, it should be translated, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, for the purpose of the promise of life in Christ Jesus." Since the **promise of life** is the promise of eternal life **in Christ Jesus**, essentially it means that Paul's

purpose was to spread the gospel of eternal life found only in Christ Jesus. Which just happens to be the exact commission he received from Jesus on the Damascus Road.

In verse 2 we have the audience, his relationship to Paul and an extension of blessings from God and Christ through the apostle Paul. **To Timothy. Timothy** was a convert through Paul's preaching in Lystra on his first missionary expedition, along with his mother and grandmother. Paul's relationship to Timothy was one of a **beloved son. Timothy** had become to Paul what a **son** becomes to a father, **beloved**. The reason is because Timothy traveled and ministered with Paul extensively. Lastly in verse 2, the apostle extends **grace, mercy and peace** to Timothy **from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord**. These are what Timothy will need to be supported in his ministry while under Nero's persecutions. First, **grace**. In this context, **grace** is divine favor that one is not obligated to dispense. The lexicon says, "In Christian epistolary lit. fr. the time of Paul χάρις is found w. the sense (divine) *favor* in fixed formulas at the beginning and end of letters."¹ It is found that way in this letter, both at the beginning and end. Second, **mercy**. The Greek word is *eleos* and refers to divine kindness or compassion, in the sense of protection. Paul is extending divine protection to Timothy during these persecutions. Third, **peace**. In a period of persecution such an extension of **peace** would be very meaningful to Timothy. The reference is to internal peace. And all three; grace, mercy and peace, come **from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord**. The statement is significant because it does two things; First, it distinguishes between **God the Father and Christ Jesus**. These are two distinct persons. But second, it connects them as the source of **grace, mercy and peace**. And this is to show that while the Father and Jesus are distinct persons, they are in One and the same God.

Now we come to verses 3-7, Paul's thankfulness for Timothy. In these verses the key word is "remember." Paul was encouraging Timothy to remember the past by reminding him that there has always been a generation of faithful believers who have carried the torch forward. Paul's ministry was almost over, he would soon face death. Timothy needed to take the torch forward to the next generation.

In verse 3 Paul begins with the word thanks which gives us the title for this section. **I thank God**, Paul says. However, the word **thank** is from *charis*, the word for "grace." This is a bit strange to most, but the word "grace" has several meanings. The fifth meaning in the lexicon is "a response to generosity." In other words, Paul is responding to God's generosity, and is therefore thanking Him for it. It could be translated either, "I thank God" or "I have gratitude toward God," the latter being preferable. What he had gratitude to God for is described in verse 5 as Timothy's "sincere faith." And Paul undoubtedly connects his faithfulness with the faithfulness of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice; such that this was a family that had three generations of faithfulness. And what Paul is doing is stirring up that faithfulness in Timothy who was apparently shrinking back in fear of Nero's persecutions.

Having stated that He has gratitude toward God, he describes God as the one **whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did**. This is interesting, because evidently Paul did not see his service of

God as any different than that of his Jewish **forefathers**. Considering that all of the Jewish forefathers were not believers, we must conclude that Paul's reference to his **forefathers** is to the believing Jewish remnant. And as a member of the believing remnant, Paul was able to **serve** God **with a clear conscience** in the same **way** as the former believing remnant. Paul could do this because his sins had been washed away, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb so there is no more positional guilt before God.

But the all-important question in all of this is, "Why is Paul telling Timothy his history?" Obviously Timothy already knows these things. What Paul is doing is reminding Timothy that every generation has the faithful, that former generations had the faithful and that he himself was faithful and that now Timothy is to be faithful, so that faithfulness is passed on from generation to generation.

Further, he says in verse 3 he is giving gratitude to God **as** he **constantly remembers** Timothy **in his prayers night and day**. What more could Paul do in a cold dark dungeon of Rome than to **pray**. Duane Litfin, in the Bible Knowledge Commentary, said, "Sitting chained in a Roman prison there was little else Paul could do but pray; and Timothy, perhaps Paul's closest companion, ministering to the church that Paul probably knew best, was no doubt the single most common object of his petitions."² The idiom of **constantly remembering** is the expression **night and day which** reflects Paul's Jewish background. This would encourage Timothy. We should remember that while it's important to pray for others, it's also important to tell them you are praying for them, because when you do it encourages them, it shows you are thinking about them and it shows that you care about them. Paul always told others he was praying for them and often what he was praying for them. This is an important thing to do as a member of the body of Christ.

In verse 4 Paul continues saying, **longing to see you**. This would also show Timothy that Paul cared for him. On the other hand, it shows Paul was lonely. Litfin said, "Even the great apostle at times became lonely, discouraged, and in need of support from fellow Christians."³ In fact, we all need support from other Christians. And without it we can become lonely and discouraged. There is nothing abnormal about feeling lonely when we are cut off from fellow believers we love. Further, he says, **even as I recall your tears**. Paul remembered Timothy's tears, most likely when he saw Paul being arrested at Troas.⁴ The tears expressed Timothy's love and fondness for Paul and Paul still recalled that image in his mind. Finally, Paul concludes with the reason he longed for Timothy to come to Rome and see him, **so that I may be filled with joy**. Paul was in a cold, dark dungeon, but seeing Timothy would fill him **with joy** he was lacking. And sometimes a visit from a friend, a phone call, an e-mail is all we need to **be filled with joy**. So it's important we do those things on a regular basis.

In 1:5 Paul, in prison and unable to see Timothy, could only recall Timothy's faithful family heritage. **For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well**. Paul is turning now to Timothy's faithful heritage and the link in his family was the sincere faith that his grandmother and mother had. The word **sincere** that modifies faith is from the word *anupokritos* which means "without pretense" and therefore, genuine. Timothy had a genuine

faith. He was not merely acting like he had faith as so many do when they go to church or are in public. Timothy had a real faith. He really believed the things in the word of God. And this genuine faith had **first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and** then in his **mother Eunice, and** now Paul was **sure it** was in Timothy **as well**. The word **sure** is from *peitho* and means “convinced” or “persuaded.” Paul was not doubting that this faith was in Timothy, he was convinced it was in him. That meant that Timothy was the third generation of his family who had sincere faith.

Now some have wondered why Timothy’s father and his faith is not mentioned. Acts 16 says that his father was a Greek. Because his faith is not mentioned it probably indicates he was not a believer. But his mother and grandmother were, and it is better to have at least one believing spouse in a marriage than it is for neither of them to be believing. As we see here, these two women passed on their spiritual heritage to little Timothy when he was a boy so that he became faithful. This is critical to the survival of Christianity. Turn over to 2 Tim 3:14 to see how it happened. “You [Timothy], however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” Who did he learn these things from? His grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. So both these women taught Timothy the truth. Paul goes on in verse 15, “from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” What are the sacred writings Timothy was trained in? The OT Scriptures. And these women went over and over these truths, the truths of Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Call of Abraham and the Covenant, the Exodus, Mt Sinai, etc...and through these things Timothy gained the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The principle is the importance of parental training of children in the truths of Scripture. It is a discipline they must engage repeatedly and diligently. Scripture is the main thing the parents are trying to instill in their children, lest Christianity go extinct. And it is something most Christian parents do not do today, because they are entrusting that to someone else, and that someone else may be well-intentioned but they are usually not there except about an hour a week. So Paul is reminding Timothy that the main place that teaching takes place and salvation takes place is in the family. And what he is trying to do is stir up Timothy to continue living faithfully, which was what he was shrinking back from now that Nero’s persecutions had begun.

In 1:6 Paul now states his reason for reminding him of his forefathers faithfulness, his own, and Timothy’s grandmother and mother. He says, it is **For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands**. The words **kindle afresh** are from a word which means to ‘cause to blaze again.’ When a fire is about to go out, one must “fan the flame” in order to get it to blaze again. Litfin said, “he urged the young minister **to fan into flame**...his God-given ability for ministry. God’s gifts must be used if they are to reach and maintain their full potential.”⁵ This fire was going out in Timothy’s life because he was not attending to it. He was shrinking back. One of the critical principles in the Christian life is not just to discover your spiritual gift or gifts for ministry, but to continually use them, lest you lose the ability. In this sense a spiritual gift is like a talent, in that if you do not exercise it, you lose your ability. If I stopped teaching the word of God, my

ability to teach it would diminish. As it is, because you support this ministry, I am able to devote my whole attention to the study and teaching of the word and continue to develop my gift. In that way, hopefully the teaching of the word here improves throughout my whole life. But we are all in danger of letting our gifts fall out of use. That is what Timothy had done. He had backed down from teaching the word of God and confronting false teachers because he feared the persecutions of Nero. He didn't want to end up in prison as Paul had, so he backed off being so bold. Now he needed to fan back into flame the gift of God which was in him. His cause for not exercising his gift was Nero, but your cause could be any number of things. No matter what it is, the important thing is **to fan back into flame the gift of God which is in you**. And this points up something almost never taught with regard to spiritual gifts. Almost all that is ever taught is how to find your gift. But I find that to be a quite natural discovery. Just serve in the assembly and you will find your gift or gifts. But here what is taught is that you must continually use your gift or you will lose your ability to use it well. And too often I find people who say, "I've already done all that serving, I have put in my time, it is time for someone else to serve." Really? That does not seem to be the attitude of Paul. Paul expected you would continually use your gift until the end of your life, just as he did, here only in letter form, since he was in prison. That's faithful endurance. So if you have stopped using your gift, if you think it is time for someone else to do it, you are saying you don't want to keep running the race, you do not want to finish your course. But you're race and your course are not complete until you die. What you need to do is fan into flame the gift or gifts God has given you and start using them. If you don't use it you'll lose it. That is what Paul was encouraging Timothy to do and that is what I am encouraging you to do.

Now it's the last phrase in verse 6 that has caused a lot of discussion, **the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands**. The idea some have is that some gift was passed from the apostle to Timothy through the laying on of hands and that this continues today. The Roman Catholic Church took this and ran with it, saying there is apostolic succession in the office of the pope. They see a transferral of Christ's authority to the apostles who then transferred this authority to others in the never-ending succession of popes, such that the pope is viewed by them as the vicar of Christ, the substitute of Christ on earth, and therefore infallible in his pronouncements. However, there is really nothing like that heretical doctrine stated here. All that is stated is that God gifted Timothy with the gift of teaching through the laying on of Paul's hands. How this happened historically, was in Acts 16 Paul discovered this disciple named Timothy and he wanted Timothy to go with him and be a part of his teaching ministry. When he did he laid hands on Timothy to indicate that Timothy was now his partner in teaching. Timothy already had the gift of teaching. What the laying on of hands did is partner him with Paul in his teaching ministry. J. Vernon McGee said, "Timothy was a partner with Paul; he shared with him the gift of teaching the Word of God. I am of the opinion that Paul intended for his mantle to fall upon Timothy."⁶ Now that Paul was about to die, he is reminding Timothy that he is to be the successor of his ministry. Paul had fought the good fight, he had just about finished his race. It was now time for Timothy to take up the race where

Paul left off. The letter is, therefore, Paul's passing of the baton to Timothy. And the concern of Paul was that Timothy would not take the baton because he was too timid and fearful of ending up in prison.

So in verse 7 Paul tries to encourage him to take the baton and continue running. **For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.** The word **timidity** is *deilia* and means "cowardice." God has not given us a spirit of cowardice to be in fear and terror. But Paul's impression was that Timothy was acting cowardly. This put into jeopardy the passing of the baton to the next generation. Being a coward is, therefore, inconsistent with what God has given us. "Instead **God gives a spirit of power** (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4), **of love** (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5), **and of self-discipline** (cf. 1 Tim. 4:7). These three virtues, each supplied by the Holy Spirit, should characterize Timothy."⁷ But for them to characterize Timothy, he would have to live by faith. The Christian life does not happen automatically, as is evident by the need of Paul to write this letter to Timothy to stir him up to live by faith. The theology of Lordship Salvation says that if you are really a true believer, you will automatically demonstrate it by fruit. But that is plainly incorrect from the fact that Paul instructs Timothy to fan the flame of the gift God had given him and to abandon the fleshly response to worldly powers that be and live by the Spirit whom He has given us who produces **power and love and discipline.**

Wiersbe summarized verses 3-7 well, "Timothy had every reason to be encouraged and to have spiritual enthusiasm in his ministry. Paul loved him and prayed for him. His experiences in life had been preparation for his ministry, and Paul was confident of the genuineness of Timothy's faith. The Spirit within him would give all the power needed for ministry. What more could he want?"⁸ Or need? And the same is true for us. We may face difficult times in this country, many believers have and are facing persecution, but we pray for one another and our heritage tells us to endure with faithfulness these persecutions. The Spirit of God will give us all the power, love and discipline we need if we rely upon Him.

What can we learn. First, recalling the faith of previous generations is a good tool to stimulate faithfulness. Second, telling people you are praying for them is encouraging and important. Third, spiritual gifts must not just be discovered, but exercised continually. Otherwise you will lose your ability and effectiveness using your gift. Fourth, you have all the power you need to minister your spiritual gift residing in you, in the Holy Spirit. So don't be afraid to minister, that is what you are here for. All believers are to minister and the thing they are to minister is their spiritual gift and the means is positive volition by purposefully relying on the Holy Spirit. Fifth, the importance of passing on the truth to the next generation is vital to the survival of Christianity.

lit. = literal(ly); literature (references to [scholarly] literature)

fr. = from

w. = with

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago:

¹ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1079.

² A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 750.

³ A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 750.

⁴ A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 750.

⁵ A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 750.

⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary: The Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy/Titus/Philemon)*, electronic ed., vol. 50 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 95.

⁷ A. Duane Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 750.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 241.