

Trust and Encouragement

Lesson for February 12, 2023

Unit III: God's Call and Its Responsibilities

Scriptural Background: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Printed Text: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Key verse: *"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus."* (2 Timothy 1:13)

CBS News anchor Dan Rather admits he was always fascinated by the sport of boxing, even though he was never good at it. "In boxing you're on your own; there's no place to hide," he says. "At the end of the match only one boxer has his hand up. That's it. He has no one to credit or to blame except himself." Rather, who boxed in high school, says his coach's greatest goal was to teach his boxers that they absolutely, positively, without question, had to be "get up" fighters. "If you're in a ring just once in your life--completely on your own--and you get knocked down, but you get back up again, it's a never-to-be-forgotten experience. Your sense of achievement is distinct and unique. And sometimes the only thing making you get up is someone in your corner yelling."

Reader's Digest

In this week's lesson, Paul urges Timothy to both remember his calling and do the work he was called to do. Like the boxer, those called and chosen by God must continue to "get back up" and do the work regardless of what happens.

Key Terms

1. **Called** (verse 9) – Summoned; invited; sent for. To be called by God is to be chosen by God for certain purposes. When a person is aware of that call and surrenders to it, he or she starts living out God's purpose for him or her.
2. **Faith** (verse 5) – Belief; trust; confidence; fidelity. The closest that the Bible comes to offering an exact definition is Hebrews 11:1 – "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." From this particular passage we see that the central feature of faith is confidence or trust. In the Bible, the object of faith is God and his promises.
3. **Power** (verse 7) – Might; strength; force. The biblical description of power relates primarily to God and people. Power is an inherent characteristic of God (Rom 1:20). It is the result of his nature.

Lesson Background

Second Timothy is the last New Testament letter written by Paul. Paul writes these words while awaiting execution by Rome. Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Second Timothy, however, finds Paul once again in a Roman prison (1:16; 2:9), apparently rearrested as part of Nero's persecution of Christians. Unlike Paul's confident hope of release during his first imprisonment (Philippians 1:19, 25-26; 2:24; Philemon 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6-8). In his first imprisonment in Rome before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for a lot of connection with people and ministry (Acts 28:16-31). Paul writes to Timothy in order to encourage him. Paul is facing the worst of all hardships: his own impending death. So, he encourages Timothy to stand strong in his faith, with a reliance on the written Word of God. This letter echoes many of the themes Paul uses in his other letters.

The last words of people are particularly treasured by their loved ones. In 2 Timothy, we have the last known words to flow from the apostle's pen. In a very real way, this epistle represents Paul's last will and testament. If ever there was a time to set the record straight, it was then. If Paul was going to make any complaints, he would have to make them then, for he was at the end of his life. However, in this letter, there is not one word of apology, explanation, caution, or complaint. Paul used his last letter to deliver five exhortations to his son in the faith, which in summary tell Timothy to "keep on keeping on" just as he had told him all along.

Second Timothy claims to have come from the pen of "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1:1). Though widely contested, both internal and external evidence support this claim. The style, vocabulary, and contents of the epistle are in keeping with what would be expected of the apostle when he knew he was near the end of his life (4:6). He had four purposes in writing:

1. To exhort Timothy in his ministry at Ephesus.
2. To warn Timothy of trouble both inside and outside the church.
3. To request Timothy to come to Rome to visit him in prison and bring certain personal effects to him (4:5-13; 21).
4. To instruct all the churches in Timothy's territory.

Lesson In Depth

I. Remember the Call/Work (2 Timothy 1:3-6)

The introduction covers verses 1–2 and includes the author (Paul) and information about him, the recipient (Timothy), and information about him, followed by a brief greeting. This was a common form for ancient letter writing and often used by Paul. Paul thought much about his spiritual family – about Timothy, a beloved son; and about his true forefathers, those Jews before Paul's time that genuinely followed God with a pure heart, not in the self-righteousness of the Pharisees.

Without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day: Timothy was on Paul's prayer list. Paul made it a regular practice to pray with a list and to at least mention in prayer those who were precious to him. Prayers night and day also shows how much Paul prayed. Whenever it was night or whenever it was day.

Greatly desiring to see thee: Because of Paul's affection for Timothy and the urgency of the hour in Paul's life, as he faced death, Paul had an intense yearning to see Timothy again (4:9, 13, 21).

Mindful of thy tears: Paul perhaps remembered this occurring at their latest parting, which occurred after a short visit to Ephesus, following the writing of 1 Timothy, and prior to Paul's arrest at Troas (see note on 4:13), and his second imprisonment in Rome. Years before, Paul had a similar parting with the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:36-38).

Paul, facing death, wanted to see his beloved Timothy one more time. Any parent, facing death of the body, longs to see their children one more time. He knew that to see Timothy would bring him great joy.

He also, was concerned at the grief that Timothy would experience at his death. He thought, perhaps if he could see him one more time, he could comfort Timothy. His prayers were partly that Timothy would not weaken in the faith, when he was executed.

Filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you: It made Paul genuinely happy (**filled with joy**) to remember the faith of faithful men like Timothy, who loved and served Jesus and His people.

Which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice: Timothy's **genuine faith** was due, in no small measure, to his godly upbringing and the influence of his grandmother and mother. Paul is reminding Timothy that his faith has never faltered. He knew the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother had been strong, and that same faith had been instilled in Timothy. Lois and Eunice were both Jews and Christians; Jews by birth and Christians by faith.

Timothy and his family came from the ancient city of Lystra, where Paul visited on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:16-20). When Paul and Barnabas were there, God used Paul to miraculously heal a crippled man – and the people of the city began to praise Paul and Barnabas as Greek gods from Olympus, even starting to sacrifice a bull to them. Paul barely restrained them from doing so, and soon enemies of the gospel had turned the crowd against the missionary evangelists, so they cast Paul out of the city and stoned him. Yet God miraculously preserved Paul's life, and he carried on.

On Paul's second missionary journey, he came again to Lystra – and there met a young man who had come to Jesus and was devoted to serving the Lord (Acts 16:1-5). This young man was Timothy, and he is described as having a mother *who believed, but his father was Greek*.
iii. So, Timothy's mother and grandmother were believers, but his father was not (at least not at first). In the Roman world, fathers had absolute authority over the family, and since Timothy's father was not a Christian, his home situation was less than ideal (though not necessarily

terrible). But his mother and grandmother either led him to Jesus or grounded him in the faith. God wants to use parents and grandparents to pass on an eternal legacy to their children and grandchildren.

When Paul left Lystra, he took Timothy with him (Acts 16:3-4). This began a mentor-learner relationship that touched the whole world.

I am persuaded is in you also: It wasn't enough that this **genuine faith** ("Unfeigned" means genuine or sincere) was in Timothy's grandmother and mother; it had to be in Timothy **also**. Our children, once of age to be accountable before God, must have their *own* relationship with Jesus Christ. Mom and dad's relationship with God will not then bring eternal life.

The phrase **genuine faith** could be literally translated, *unhypocritical faith* – that is, faith that is not an act. It was for real, not just in appearance. This is a significant theme of the Book of James.

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God: Timothy was a gifted, valuable man for the kingdom of God; but he seems to have had a timid streak in him. For this reason, Paul often encouraged him to be strong and bold.

It may be that Timothy was somewhat timid, but it is also true that he had large and heavy responsibility as the overseer of God's work in Ephesus and the larger area. There were many Christians in many congregations meeting over a whole region (Acts 19:9-10 and 17-20). Perhaps Timothy was a man of normal courage who had enormous responsibility.

If it was true that Timothy was the kind of man who avoided confrontation, it was good that he saw Paul's example. Paul was a man of deep love, but also a man who never shied away from confrontation. A significant example was when he publicly rebuked the Apostle Peter (Galatians 2:11-21). Timothy already *had* a shepherd's tender heart for the sheep; Paul wanted to develop within him the boldness necessary to really lead and protect the flock.

In 1 and 2 Timothy there are no less than 25 different places where Paul encouraged Timothy to be bold, to not shy away from confrontation, to stand up where he needs to stand up and be strong. Because of who Timothy was and the responsibilities he had to bear, this was what Timothy needed to hear.

Therefore I remind you: People are at all different places. For some, the last thing they need to hear is, "You need to be bolder" because that is not their problem. Many others come from the place where they need to hear, "**Stir up the gift of God which is in you**; be bold, get going, go for it." Timothy was of this second type.

Some who *appear* bold really are just good at pretending. They use a confrontational, in-your-face attitude to mask a lot of pain and insecurity. They need to become really bold and secure *in the Lord*, instead of pretending and hiding behind a mask of false courage.

Stir up the gift of God which is in you: Timothy could not be passive and just let it all happen; he needed to be bold and to **stir up the gift of God which is in you**. Some have gifts given to them by God, but those gifts are neglected. They need to be stirred up and put into action.

This reminds us that God does not work His gifts through us as if we were robots. Even when He gives a man or a woman gifts, He leaves an element that needs the cooperation of their will, of their desire and drive, to fulfill the purpose of His gifts.

Some are waiting passively for God to use them; but God is waiting for them to stir up the gifts that are within them. Some are waiting for some dramatic new anointing from God, and God is waiting for them to stir up what He has already given.

Stir up: This has the idea of stirring up a fire to keep it burning bright and strong; a fire left to itself will always burn out, but God wants us to keep our gifts burning strong for Him.
i. “The Greek *anazopureo* (*stir up*) means either ‘to kindle afresh’ or ‘to keep in full flame’.
There is no necessary suggestion, therefore, that Timothy had lost his early fire, although undoubtedly, like every Christian, he needed an incentive to keep the fire burning at full flame.”
(Guthrie)

Which is in you through the laying on of my hands: God used the **laying on of hands** to communicate spiritual gifts to Timothy. This is not the only way God gives gifts, but it is a common way – and a way that we should never neglect. It is a good thing to have others pray for us and as that God would give us gifts that might be used to bless and build up the family of God.

II. **Work the Call – Do** (2 Timothy 1:7-10)

God has not given us a spirit of fear: Paul saw the timidity that was in Timothy; Timothy knew the fear he sometimes felt. God wanted Timothy to know that this fear wasn’t from the God he served; he needed to know that **God has not given us a spirit of fear**.

We all face situations where we feel timid and afraid. For some, speaking in front of others makes them fear; others are afraid of confrontation, others of being made to look foolish, others are afraid of rejection. We all deal with fear.

The first step in dealing with such fears is to understand that they are *not* from God. It is a significant step to say, “This isn’t God making me feel like this; God hasn’t given me this.” Perhaps it is from personality, perhaps a weakness of the flesh, perhaps a demonic attack – but it isn’t from God.

But of power and of love and of a sound mind: The second step in dealing with such fears is understanding what God *has* given us: a spirit of **power and of love and of a sound mind**.

God has given us a spirit of **power**: When we do His work, proclaim His word, represent His kingdom, we have all His power supporting us. We are safe in His hands.

God has given us a spirit of **love**: This tells us a lot about the **power** He has given us. Many think of **power** in terms of how much we can control others; but Jesus' power is expressed in how much we can love and serve others. On the night before the cross, *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands* – and what did He do with all that power? He humbly washed His disciples' feet (John 13:1-11).

God has given us a **sound mind**: The ancient Greek word here had the idea of a calm, self-controlled mind, in contrast to the panic and confusion that comes in a fearful situation.

Not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love: We don't need to accept what God has **not** given us (**a spirit of fear**), and we do need to humbly receive and walk in what He *has* given us (**a spirit... of power and of love and of a sound mind**).

Paul wrote this to Timothy because boldness matters; without it, we can't fulfill God's purpose for our lives. God's purpose for us is more than making money, being entertained, and being comfortable; it is for each of us to use the gifts He gives to touch His people and help a needy world.

Fear and timidity will keep us from using the gifts God gives. God wants us each to take His power, His love, and His calm thinking and overcome fear, to be used of Him with all the gifts He gives.

Therefore: Paul has just told Timothy about the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind, with courage, that is the birthright of every believer in Jesus Christ. Now he told Timothy *how* to let what God gave him guide his thinking.

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord: If Timothy took the courage God gave, he would not be **ashamed of the testimony of our Lord**. We often fail to understand that it wasn't easy to follow a *crucified* Master.

Today, we have sanitized Jesus and disinfected the cross, making it all safe. But in the day Paul wrote this, it would seem strange indeed to follow a crucified man and call him savior.

ii. Think of Jesus' teaching; if you want to be great, be the servant of all; be like a child, like a slave, like the younger, like the last instead of the first. This is a testimony some would be **ashamed** of.

Paul knew that the plan of God in Jesus Christ seemed foolish to many; but he also knew it was the living, active, power of God to save souls and transform lives. Paul would not be **ashamed** of it, and neither should Timothy – or us today.

Nor of me His prisoner: If Timothy took the courage God gave, he would not be ashamed of Paul the **prisoner**. It wasn't easy to support an *imprisoned* apostle.

Note that Paul considered himself a prisoner of *Jesus* (**nor of me His prisoner**). Paul saw himself not as the prisoner of Rome, but as a prisoner of God. Paul saw God as the Lord of every circumstance, and if he was free, he was the Lord's free man; if he were imprisoned, he was the Lord's prisoner.

But share with me: It wasn't enough that Paul told Timothy to not be ashamed of him and his chains; he also invited Timothy to **share** in all of it.

We **share... in the sufferings** in the same way Paul spoke of in Romans 12:15: *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* We identify with our suffering brethren across the world through prayer, through a heart of concern, and through wise action.

According to the power of God: Paul actually suffered **according to the power of God.** The power of God is always there, but it is not always there to *remove* the difficulty. Sometimes it is there to see us *through* the difficulty.

In one sense, it was strange for Paul the prisoner to write about the power of God – the power of Rome in some ways seemed a lot more real. But God's power has been vindicated by history; the Roman Empire is gone, but the gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul lived to preach lives on.

Who has saved us and called us: We come to God as a response to His call in our lives. We did not initiate the search; we do not find God, He finds us; so we must respond to His call when we sense it.

Not according to our works, but according to His own purpose: This explains *why* God called us. It wasn't anything great we were, or anything great we had done, but because it fit in with His purpose – because He wanted to.

Grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began: God directed His gracious work towards us when we only existed as a fact in God's knowledge. Just as a couple lovingly plans for a baby before the baby is born, so God planned for us.

Before time began reminds us that **time** is something God created to give order and arrangement to our present world; time is not essential to God's existence. He existed before time was created and will remain when time ends, and we live on in eternity with Him.

But has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ: The appearing of Jesus revealed the purpose and grace of God. Jesus fulfilled the eternal plan of God; Jesus truly shows us what God and His plan are all about. That's why we can never know Jesus too much.

Who abolished death: Because of the appearing of Jesus, death isn't death anymore. In regard to believers, it is called **sleep** – not because we are unconscious, but because it is pleasant and peaceful. Death does not *take* anything from the Christian; it graduates them to glory.

Someone suggested that the Christian has no place for the letters "RIP" on his tombstone because "Rest in Peace" does not adequately describe our eternal fate. They suggested instead the letters "CAD," signifying "Christ Abolished Death."

And brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Because of the appearing of Jesus, we know more about **life and immortality** than before. The understanding of the after-life was murky at best in the Old Testament; but Jesus let us know more about heaven – and hell – than anyone else could.

Jesus brought the truth about our immortal state to life through His own resurrection; He showed us what our own immortal bodies would be like and assured us that we would in fact have them. Jesus is therefore a more reliable spokesman regarding the world beyond than anyone who has a near-death experience.

Through the gospel: The good news of who Jesus is and what He did for us can be thought of as links connected together in a beautiful chain of God's work.

God's plan of salvation began for us in eternity past before **time began**.

1. It continued with the **appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ**.
2. It came to us when He **saved us and called us**.
3. It continues as we live our **holy calling**.
4. It will one day show itself in **immortality** – eternal life.

When we consider the greatness of this message, it is no wonder Paul called it **the gospel** – *good news*. It is good news that God thought of you and loved you before you even existed; good news that Jesus came to perfectly show us God, good news that He called us and saved us, good news that He gives us a holy calling, and good news that He shows us and gives us eternal life.

This message was worth prison to the Apostle Paul.

Lesson Summary

In today's lesson, Paul wrote that he remembered Timothy in his prayers, and he would like to see him, but circumstances did not allow this to happen. He remembered Timothy's tears and wanted to comfort him. Paul knew that Timothy was of great faith, and this made Paul happy. He even said it reminded him of the faith Timothy's grandmother and mother had.

Paul told Timothy to fan the flame of faith and to not be ashamed. He was supposed to spread the word without fear of testifying and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He said that God had given him the gifts and he must use them.

Jesus saved mankind and called them to live a holy life. He invited Timothy to join him in suffering, because as Paul wrote, he was in prison. Paul said that he was appointed as an apostle, a herald, and a teacher. Therefore, he pressed on to do his work in Christ.