

Christian Courage

During the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), extreme nationalist Chinese fomented a campaign of terror against officials of foreign governments, Christian missionaries, and even Chinese Christians. After they surrounded a certain mission station, they sealed all exits except one. They placed a cross in the dirt in front of the opened gate and told the missionaries and students that anyone who walked out and trampled the cross would be spared. According to reports, the first seven students who departed trampled the cross and were sent on their way. The eighth student, a young girl, approached the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, carefully walked around the cross, and was immediately shot to death. The remaining 92? students, strengthened by that girl's courageous example, also walked around the cross to their deaths.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, for the promise of life in Christ Jesus:

² *To Timothy, my dearly loved son.*

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ *I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. ⁴ Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy, ⁵ clearly recalling your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice, and that I am convinced is in you also.*

⁶ *Therefore, I remind you to **keep ablaze the gift of God that is in** you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. 2 Timothy 1:1-7*

“Paul's object in writing is to inspire and to strengthen Timothy for his task in Ephesus.” (Barclay)

“*For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness...*” (v. 7) - “In extrabiblical sources that same Greek word for “fearfulness” is used to describe someone who fled from battle. It is a strong term for cowardice. Boldness, not cowardice, is a mark of the Holy Spirit.” (HCSB Study Bible)

What makes a warrior? What makes a soldier? His training? What good is all that training if he doesn't put it to use against the enemy?!

Paul is saying don't be afraid. Have courage in your walk, in your leadership, in your faith. Ultimately have the courage to...

Use God's gifts.

- Power
 - "In the true Christian there is power to cope with things, the power to shoulder the back-breaking task, the power to stand erect in face of the shattering situation, the power to retain faith in the face of the soul-searing sorrow, and the wounding disappointment." (Barclay)
 - Example: 3 a.m. phone call to go be with a grieving family that I did not know...

Use God's gifts with power.

- Love
 - "True Christian love, energized by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), enables us to sacrifice for others and not be afraid. The Spirit gives love (Gal. 5:22)." (Wiersbe)
 - In love we...
 - Share the Gospel
 - Help those in need
 - Maybe be a mentor in THRIVE
 - Weep with those who are hurting
 - Celebrate God's blessings!

Use God's gifts with love.

- Sound Judgment
 - Self-control, self-disciplined.
 - It is a tough word to translate.
 - "It describes a person who is sensibly minded and balanced, who has his life under control." (Wiersbe)
 - Of course who *REALLY* thinks they have life "under control"?
 - I feel like half the time my life is out of control!

- Paul is talking about here about not being prone to extremes.
 - You know what an extreme really is? An Idol.
 - Workaholic
 - Being lazy
 - Over-eating
 - Over-exercising
 - Over-spending
 - Being a tight wad
 - All forms of idolatry

Use God's gifts and use them with sound judgment.

- If you are going to be extreme about something, be extremely in love with the Lord.

Use God's gifts.

Have you ever been given a gift you didn't fully appreciate at the time & squandered it? Regret that?

- My grandparents gave me a 1996 Toyota Camry....
- I wasn't nice to that car.
 - I was stupid.

God has given you a gift. Don't squander it. Use God's gifts for the Kingdom!

⁶Therefore, I remind you to **keep ablaze the gift of God that is in** you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

Invitation:

The ultimate gift God has given to you, to me, to all of humanity...is his life on the cross. Through that he has given us redemption. Forgiveness. Peace.

CHRISTIANS COURAGEOUS!

2 Timothy 1

When Paul wrote the letter we know as 2 Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was now a prisoner in Rome and was facing certain death (2 Tim. 4:6). For one reason or another, almost all of Paul's associates in the ministry were gone and only Luke was at the apostle's side to assist him (2 Tim. 4:11). It was a dark hour indeed.

But Paul's great concern was not for himself; it was for Timothy and the success of the Gospel ministry. As in his First Letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged his beloved colleague to be faithful. As we have learned, Timothy was timid, suffered from physical ailments, and was tempted to let other people take advantage of him and not assert his authority as a pastor.

Paul sent Tychicus to replace Timothy at Ephesus so that Timothy might join Paul at Rome (2 Tim. 4:9, 12). God would soon move Paul off the scene, and Timothy would take his place and continue to give spiritual leadership to the churches. It would not be an easy task, but Timothy could succeed with the Lord's help. In his first chapter, Paul gave Timothy three essentials that he must possess to have success.

Courageous Enthusiasm (2 Tim. 1:1–7)

The ministry of the Gospel is no place for a "timid soul" who lacks enthusiasm. In fact, courageous enthusiasm is essential for success in *any* kind of work. Paul compared this attitude to stirring up a fire into full flame (2 Tim. 1:6). We must not conclude that Timothy was backslidden or lacked spiritual fire. Rather, Paul was encouraging his associate to keep the fire burning brightly so that it might generate spiritual power in his life. Paul gave Timothy four encouragements.

Paul's love (vv. 1–2). "Timothy, my dearly beloved son" is much stronger than "Timothy, my own son in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2). It is not that Paul loved Timothy less when he wrote that first letter, but that Paul was now expressing it more. As Paul's life drew to a close, he realized in a deeper way how dear Timothy was to him.

Paul's own circumstances were difficult, and yet he was greatly encouraged. For one thing, he was Christ's ambassador ("apostle"); and he knew that his Master would care for him. Whatever happened to him was in the hands of God, so there was no need to fear. Furthermore, Paul had "the promise of life" in Jesus Christ, and Christ had defeated death (2 Tim. 1:10). No wonder Paul was able to extend to Timothy "grace, mercy, and peace." (It is worth noting that Paul added "mercy" to his greetings when he wrote to the pastors—1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4. Paul knew that pastors need mercy!)

Paul's prayers (vv. 3–4). What an encouragement to know that the great apostle was praying for him! Paul, who knew Timothy's weaknesses and problems, was able to pray definitely and with a real burden on his heart. His praying was not routine; it was done with compassion and concern. Knowing that he would soon die, Paul was anxious that Timothy join him at Rome for those last days of fellowship and ministry. This would bring joy to Paul's heart.

We must not assume that Paul tried to defend his evil actions before his conversion by claiming he did it all with “a pure conscience.” After all, he was guilty of causing terror among Christians, forcing people to blaspheme by denying Christ, and agreeing to the murder of Stephen! It is true that Paul thought he was serving God (see John 16:2), and that he was in spiritual ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13), but these facts cannot guarantee a pure conscience.

Paul had known God from his earliest years because he was “an Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil. 3:5). His ancestors had given him the orthodox Jewish faith. But when he met Jesus Christ, Paul realized that his Jewish faith was but preparation for the fulfillment Christ gave him in Christianity. He did not serve God with a pure conscience “from his forefathers,” as the *King James Version* says. Rather, he heard about the true God from his forefathers; and *now* he was serving that God with a pure conscience. The fact that he had a pure conscience helped give power to his prayers.

Paul’s confidence in Timothy (v. 5). Paul did not think that Timothy’s tears were evidence of failure or insincerity. Paul was sure that Timothy’s faith was genuine, and that this faith would see him through in spite of the troubles he was facing. Apparently Lois, Timothy’s grandmother, was the first one in the family won to Christ; then his mother, Eunice, was converted. Timothy’s father was a Greek (Acts 16:1), so Eunice had not practiced the orthodox Jewish faith. However, Timothy’s mother and grandmother had seen to it that he was taught the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15); and this was great preparation for the hearing of the Gospel. When Paul came to Lystra on his first missionary journey, that was probably the occasion for Timothy’s conversion. When Paul returned on his second journey, he enlisted Timothy into Christian service.

Paul had watched Timothy’s life and service during those years they were together. He was certain that Timothy’s faith was genuine. In fact, Timothy’s heritage was a great one; for he was reared in a godly home, trained by a wonderful apostle, and given marvelous opportunities for serving the Lord.

God’s gift to Timothy (vv. 6–7). Paul reminded Timothy of the time God called him into service and the local church ordained him. Paul had laid his hands on Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14). Through Paul, God had imparted to Timothy the spiritual gift he needed for his ministry. The laying on of hands was a common practice in apostolic days (Acts 6:6; 13:3), but no believer today has the same authority and privileges that the Apostles did. Today, when we lay hands on people for the ministry, it is a symbolic act and does not necessarily impart any special spiritual gifts to them.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to serve God, and through Him we can overcome fear and weakness. The word *fear* in 2 Timothy 1:7 means “timidity, cowardice.” The Holy Spirit gives us power for witness and for service (Acts 1:8). It is futile for us to try to serve God without the power of the Holy Spirit. Talent, training, and experience cannot take the place of the power of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit also gives us love. If we have love for lost souls and for the people of God, we will be able to endure suffering and accomplish the work of God. Selfishness leads to fear because, if we are selfish, we are interested only in what we will get out of serving God, and we will be afraid of losing prestige, power, or money. True Christian love, energized by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), enables us to sacrifice for others and not be afraid. The Spirit gives love (Gal. 5:22).

He is also the One who gives self-control (“a sound mind”). This word is related to the words *sober* and *sobriety* that we often meet in the pastoral letters (1 Tim. 2:9, 15; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 6,

12). “Self-discipline” is a better translation of “sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). It describes a person who is sensibly minded and balanced, who has his life under control. The *Amplified Version* reads, “calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control.”

Timothy did not need any new spiritual ingredients in his life; all he had to do was “stir up” what he already had. Paul had written in his first letter, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (1 Tim. 4:14). Now he added, “Stir up—stir into flame—the gift of God.” The Holy Spirit does not leave us when we fail (John 14:16); but He cannot fill us, empower us, and use us if we neglect our spiritual lives. It is possible to grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19).

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?¹

1. Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus (verse 1)

In styling himself ‘an apostle of Christ Jesus’ Paul is advancing a considerable claim for himself. He is in fact ranking himself with the Twelve whom Jesus personally selected out of the wider company of his disciples. To them he gave the special title ‘apostles’ (Lk. 6:13), indicating that he intended to send them out on their mission to represent him and to teach in his name. In order to equip them for this role, he arranged for them to be ‘with him’ (Mk. 3:14). They would thus have unrivalled opportunities to hear his words and see his works, and so be in a position to bear witness to him and to everything they had seen and heard of him (Jn. 15:27). He also promised them an extraordinary inspiration of the Holy Spirit to remind them of what he had taught them and to lead them into all the truth which he had not been able to teach them (Jn. 14:25, 26; 16:12, 13).

To this select group Paul claims that he was later added. He saw the risen Lord on the Damascus road, which gave him the qualification every apostle needed, to be a witness to the resurrection (Acts 1:21–26; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8, 9). Indeed, his Damascus road experience was more than his conversion; it was his commissioning as an apostle. Christ said to him: ‘I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles—to whom I send you to open their eyes ...’ (Acts 26:16–18). For the Lord’s words ‘I send you’ were *egō apostellō se* ‘I apostle you’, that is, ‘I appoint you the apostle to the Gentiles’ (cf. Rom. 11:13; Gal. 1:15, 16; 2:9).

This commissioning Paul could never forget. He defended his apostolic mission and message against all his detractors, insisting that his apostleship came from Christ and not from men (*e.g.*

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 240–241). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Gal. 1:1, 11, 12). Even now, at the moment of writing, humiliated by men and awaiting the emperor's pleasure, this common prisoner is a privileged apostle of Christ Jesus, the King of kings.

Paul goes on to describe his apostleship in two ways, reminding Timothy of both its origin and its object.

Its origin was 'the will of God'. He has used identical words (*dia thelēmatos theou*) at the beginning of both his letters to Corinth and of the two prison letters to the Ephesians and Colossians. Indeed, in nine out of thirteen of his letters, including his first (to the Galatians) and his last (this one to Timothy), he refers either to the 'will' or the 'call' or the 'command' of God by which he had been made an apostle. It was his sustained conviction, from the beginning to the end of his apostolic career, that his appointment as an apostle had come neither from the church, nor from any man or group of men. Nor was he self-appointed. On the contrary, his apostleship originated in the eternal will and historical call of almighty God through Jesus Christ.

The object of his apostleship concerns 'the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus'. That is to say, he had been commissioned as an apostle first to formulate and then to communicate the gospel. And the gospel is good news for dying sinners that God has promised them life in Jesus Christ. It seems particularly appropriate that, as death stares the apostle in the face, he should here define it as a 'promise of life'. For this is what it is. The gospel offers men life—true life, eternal life—both here and hereafter. It declares that this life is 'in Christ Jesus', who not only said he was himself the life (Jn. 14:6) but, as Paul will soon elaborate, actually 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (10).

The gospel does more than 'offer' life; it 'promises' life to all who are in Christ. It says dogmatically: 'he who has the Son has life' (1 Jn. 5:12). Indeed, the whole Bible may fairly be described as a divine promise of life, from the first mention of 'the tree of life' in Genesis 3 to the last chapter of the Revelation in which God's redeemed people eat of the tree of life and drink of the water of life freely. Eternal life is a gift 'which God, who never lies, promised ages ago', but has now made known through the preaching of the gospel (*cf.* verses 9, 10; Tit. 1:2, 3; Rom. 1:1, 2).

This, then, is how Paul introduces himself. He is an apostle of Christ Jesus. His apostleship originated in the will of God and has issued in the proclamation of the gospel of God, namely 'the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus'.

2. Timothy, Paul's Beloved Child (verses 2–8)

Paul calls Timothy here 'my beloved child' and elsewhere 'my beloved and faithful child in the Lord' (1 Cor. 4:17) presumably because he had been the human instrument of Timothy's conversion. Certainly the reason he could describe the Corinthians as 'my beloved children' was 'for I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel' (1 Cor. 4:14, 15). We assume, therefore, that when Paul visited Lystra on the first missionary journey 'and there ... preached the gospel' (Acts 14:6, 7), Timothy both heard and embraced the good news, so that, when Paul re-visited Lystra a few years later on his second missionary journey 'a disciple was there, named Timothy', who had already made such progress in the Christian life that 'he was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium' (Acts 16:1, 2).

To his 'beloved child' Paul now sends his usual greeting of 'grace ... and peace', though adding in both letters to Timothy 'mercy' as well. We may be sure that this threefold greeting is no mere

epistolary convention. For these are pregnant theological words. They tell us much both about man's sorry condition in sin and about God's great love for him all the same. For if grace is God's kindness to the undeserving, mercy is shown to the weak and helpless who cannot help themselves. In the parables of Jesus it was mercy which the good Samaritan showed to the brigands' victim and which the king extended to his servant who was so deeply in debt that he could not pay (Lk. 10:37; Mt. 18:33). And it was mercy which had converted Saul of Tarsus, the old blasphemer and persecutor. 'I received mercy', he had written in his earlier letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:13, 16). 'Peace', on the other hand, is reconciliation, the restoration of harmony to lives spoiled by discord. We may perhaps summarize these three blessings of God's love as being grace to the worthless, mercy to the helpless and peace to the restless, while 'God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord' together constitute the one spring from which this threefold stream flows forth.

There follows a very personal paragraph, in which the apostle assures Timothy that he constantly remembers him. 'I remember you constantly in my prayers,' he says (3). 'I remember your tears' (4). 'I am reminded of your sincere faith' (5). And whenever I remember you, Timothy, 'I thank God' (3).

This last point is significant, It indicates Paul's recognition that it was God who had made Timothy what he was. Timothy was not an apostle like Paul. They used to make this plain when they wrote letters to the churches together, *e.g.* to the Colossians: 'Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother ...'. Timothy was a Christian brother. He was also a Christian minister, a missionary, and an apostolic delegate. And God had been at work in his life to make him all these things. Directly or indirectly in this paragraph Paul mentions the four major influences which had contributed to the shaping and making of Timothy.

a. His parental upbringing

Paul refers in this paragraph both to his own and to Timothy's ancestry, to his 'forefathers' (3, literally) and to Timothy's mother and grandmother (5). This was right, for every man is to a great extent the product of his inheritance. The most formative influence on each of us has been our parentage and our home. Hence good biographies never begin with their subject, but with his parents, and probably his grandparents as well. True, no man can inherit his parents' faith in the way that he inherits facets of their personality. But a child can be led to faith by his parents' teaching, example and prayers.

Now Timothy had had a godly home. Luke tells us that he was the son of a mixed marriage, in that his father was Greek and his mother Jewish (Acts 16:1). Presumably his father was an unbeliever, but his mother Eunice was a believing Jewess who became a Christian. And before her his grandmother Lois had evidently been converted, for Paul can write of the 'sincere faith' of all three generations (5). Perhaps grandmother, mother and son all owed their conversion to Paul when he brought the gospel to Lystra. Even before their conversion to Christ, however, these godly Jewish women had instructed Timothy out of the Old Testament, so that 'from childhood' he had been 'acquainted with the sacred writings' (3:15). Calvin's rather delightful comment is that Timothy 'was reared in his infancy in such a way that he could suck in godliness along with his mother's milk'.¹

Paul could say much the same of himself. He was serving God 'with a clear conscience', as his forefathers had done before him (3). Of course his faith became richer, fuller and deeper when God had revealed Christ to him. Yet it was still substantially the same faith as that of Old Testament believers like Abraham and David, as he had argued in Romans 4, for it was the same God in whom they had all believed. No wonder he had been able to affirm to Felix the procurator: 'I worship the God of my fathers' (Acts 24:14; cf. 26:6). We need to remember this when we are witnessing to Jewish people today. A Jew's conversion to Christ is not in any sense an act of disloyalty to his forefathers; it is rather the fulfilment of his forefathers' faith and hope.

Returning to Timothy, the first influence on him was his parental upbringing, and in particular a mother and a grandmother who were sincere believers and who had taught him out of the Scriptures from his childhood. Today also anyone who has been born and bred in a Christian home has received from God a blessing beyond price.

b. His spiritual friendship

After our parents it is our friends who influence us most, especially if they are also in some sense our teachers. And Timothy had in Paul an outstanding teacher-friend.

We have already seen that Paul was Timothy's spiritual 'father'. Having led him to Christ, however, he did not abandon or even forget him. No. He constantly 'remembered' him, as he says repeatedly in this passage. He had also taken him with him on his journeys and trained him as his apprentice. When they had parted on the last occasion, Timothy had been unable to hold back his tears. And now, remembering his tears, Paul longed 'night and day' to see him again, that he might again be 'filled with joy' (4), longed (Bishop Handley Moule renders *epithōn*) with 'homesick yearning'. Meanwhile, he was praying for him without ceasing (3), and from time to time wrote him letters of counsel and encouragement, like this one.

Such a Christian friendship, including the companionship, the letters and the prayers through which it was expressed, did not fail to have a powerful moulding effect on young Timothy, strengthening and sustaining him in his Christian life and service.

I thank God for the man who led me to Christ and for the extraordinary devotion with which he nurtured me in the early years of my Christian life. He wrote to me every week for, I think, seven years. He also prayed for me every day. I believe he still does. I can only begin to guess what I owe, under God, to such a faithful friend and pastor.

c. His special endowment

Paul turns now from the indirect means God used to shape Timothy's Christian character (his parents and friends) to a direct gift which God had given him. 'Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands' (6). What this gift of God's grace was, this *charisma*, we do not know with any certainty, for the very good reason that we are not told. We have no liberty to go beyond Scripture. Nevertheless, we can hazard a guess, so long as we recognize its tentative nature. What is clear, both from this verse and from a similar reference in 1 Timothy 4:14, is that the gift was bestowed upon him when Paul and certain 'elders' (probably of the Lystra church) laid their hands on him. Both verses mention the laying-on of hands and seem to refer to what we might call his 'ordination' or 'commissioning'. If we are right

so far, then the gift in question was an 'ordination gift', a gift related to his ministry. Paul may indeed be referring to the ministry itself, to which by the laying-on of hands Timothy was set apart. Certainly the offices of pastor and teacher, like those of apostle and prophet, are designated gifts of God's grace (Eph. 4:7, 11). So Dean Alford may be right to say that 'the spiritual gift is that of teaching and ruling the church'.¹ Or the reference may be to the gift of an evangelist, which work Paul will soon urge Timothy to do and so fulfil his ministry (4:5). Or again, since the apostle proceeds at once to refer to the kind of spirit God has given us (7), he may be alluding to a special endowment or anointing of the Spirit which Timothy received at his ordination to equip him for the work to which he had been called. Speaking for myself, I think it is safest to describe Timothy's *charisma* in Alfred Plummer's words as 'the authority and power to be a minister of Christ'. That is, it included both the office and the spiritual equipment needed to fulfil it.

We learn, then, that a man is not only what he owes to his parents, friends and teachers, but what God himself has made him by calling him to some particular ministry and by endowing him with appropriate spiritual resources.

d. His personal discipline

Indeed, all God's gifts—natural and spiritual—need to be developed and used. Our Lord's parables of the talents and the pounds illustrate clearly the duty of service, the reward of faithfulness and the danger of sloth. So Paul tells Timothy in his first letter not to 'neglect' his gift (4:14) and in his second letter rather to 'kindle' or 'rekindle' it (6). The gift is likened to a fire. The Greek verb *anazōpureō*, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, does not necessarily imply that Timothy has let the fire die down and must now fan the dying embers into flame again. The prefix *ana* can indicate as much a stirring *up* as a *re*-kindling. It seems, then, that Paul's exhortation is to continue fanning it, to 'stir up that inner fire' (JBP), to keep it alive, even ablaze, presumably by exercising the gift faithfully and by waiting upon God in prayer for its constant renewal.

Having issued this appeal, Paul immediately adds his reason: 'for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control' (7). We have already considered the problems of youth, ill health and temperament with which timid Timothy had to battle. He appears to have been a very shy and sensitive creature, to whom responsibility was an onerous burden. Perhaps he was also fearful of spiritual excesses and extravagances. So Paul is obliged not only to urge him to keep stirring up his gift, but to reassure him that he need not be diffident about exercising it.

Why not? Well, because 'cowardliness has nothing to do with Christianity'. Or, as Paul expresses it, because of the Spirit God has given us. Notice that, though a particular spiritual gift was given to 'you', Timothy, the gift of the Spirit himself has been given to *us*, to all of us who are in Christ. And this Spirit God has given to us all is a Spirit not of 'timidity' but of 'power and love and self-control'. Since he is the Spirit of power we may be confident of his enabling as we exercise our ministry. Since he is the Spirit of love we must use God's authority and power in serving others, not in self-assertion or vainglory. And since he is the Spirit of self-control we must use them with seemly reverence and restraint.

So far we have studied what the first seven verses of the letter tell us about these two men, Paul and Timothy, and their making. Paul claims to be Jesus Christ's apostle 'by the will of God', as previously he had said it was 'by the grace of God' that he was what he was (1 Cor. 15:10). And a whole complex of factors had made Timothy what he was—a godly upbringing, Paul's friendship and training, God's gift to him and his own self-discipline in stirring it up.

In principle, it is the same with all God's people. Perhaps the most striking thing is the combination in both Paul and Timothy of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, those two facts of revelation and of experience which we find it difficult to reconcile and impossible to systematize into a tidy doctrine.

Paul could write of God's will and assert that God's grace had made him what he was. But then he would at once add: 'and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me' (1 Cor. 15:10). That is, he added his labour to God's grace, although, to be sure, it was God's grace which inspired his labour.

Timothy was similar. His mother and grandmother could teach him out of the Scriptures and lead him towards conversion. Paul could actually bring him to Christ, befriend him, pray for him, write to him, train and exhort him. And God could give him a special gift at his ordination. But still Timothy must himself stir up the divine gift within him. He must add his own self-discipline to God's gifts.

We are no different. However much (or little) we may have received from God, either directly in natural and spiritual endowment or indirectly through parents, friends and teachers, we must still apply ourselves in active self-discipline to cooperate with God's grace, to keep fanning the inner fire into flame. Otherwise, we shall never be the men and women God wants us to be, or fulfil the ministry he has given us to exercise.²

Timothy, my beloved son: (1:1–2a)

The first principle of godly and successful motivation is that of authority, as seen in the opening declaration by **Paul** that he was **an apostle of Christ Jesus**. As explained in the Introduction, Paul's apostleship already was well understood by Timothy. It is mentioned here by way of reminder that, despite their close and loving relationship, Paul ranked above Timothy in spiritual authority because he brought the Word of the Lord and was writing in that capacity.

Intimacy does not preclude authority. The relationship of love that parents have with their children does not preclude their authority over their children. A parent-child relationship of love without authority is doomed to tragedy for the entire family. No matter how cordial a working relationship may exist, a business cannot succeed if employees refuse to recognize and submit to the employer's authority over them.

² Stott, J. R. W. (1973). [*Guard the Gospel the message of 2 Timothy*](#) (pp. 23–33). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Although they shared a deep friendship, Paul's loving salutation to Timothy carried the full weight of his apostleship. *Apostolos* (**apostle**) literally means one who is sent out, "a messenger," as it is sometimes translated (See, e.g., 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). But in the New Testament it more commonly carries the connotation of ambassador, a representative who carries with him the authority of the one he represents. It is used in that sense of the twelve disciples Jesus called during His earthly ministry (Luke 6:13; 9:10) and of Paul, whom Christ called from heaven after His ascension (See Acts 9:3–15; 22:6–14; 26:13–18). The Lord used the verb form of *Himself*, as "Jesus Christ whom Thou [the Father] hast sent [*apostellō*]" (John 17:3), and in the book of Hebrews Jesus is called "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (3:1).

As an **apostle of Jesus Christ**, Paul stood in the place of Christ and spoke the Word of Christ, and he did so **by the will of God** the Almighty Father. Paul writes Timothy not merely as a dear friend but as a divinely commissioned ambassador of God the Father and God the Son. He is not offering brotherly counsel but declaring divine truth with firm authority.

He does so according to, meaning "in conformity to," the gospel, here called **the promise of life in Christ Jesus**. Paul's calling to serve the will of God as a messenger of the Savior was to be discharged by proclaiming the saving good news that those who are dead in sin can find life **in Christ Jesus**. A favored phrase of Paul was **in Christ Jesus**, which signified his own and every believer's union with our Lord and Savior through participation in His death, resurrection, and eternal life. Jesus is Himself "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), and He gives the divine **promise** that "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16) and "have it abundantly" (10:10). Those who claim that promise in faith can claim with Paul that Christ "*is our life*" (Col. 3:4, emphasis added).

Every worthy father deeply desires an unbreakable and rich relationship with his children. In the same way, Paul not only desired but experienced and expressed the intimacy of bonding love that he shared with **Timothy**, his **beloved son**. And just as this intimacy did not preclude authority, neither did authority preclude intimacy. As a loving spiritual father, Paul spoke with apostolic authority to his son in the faith. That authority gave Timothy a strong incentive for obedience.

ALTRUISM

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (1:2b)

Although commonly expressed as a greeting, these were not just words but the expression of a genuine desire for God's best to be reality in the young preacher's life. Timothy was to be motivated by Paul's altruism, his unselfish concern for and devotion to the welfare of others. Like every believer, his young protege[ac][ac]e was saved by divine **grace**, the unmerited favor of God's providing forgiveness and justification. The apostle wanted his son in the faith to continually live in divine **mercy**, the inexpressible blessing of deliverance from the misery that sin deserves and creates. He also wanted Timothy to continue in full **peace** of mind and heart, the inner tranquillity produced by divine grace and mercy. He wanted Timothy to have the best that **God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord** offer to redeemed sinners: grace to cover sin, mercy to overrule misery, and peace to dominate life.

If we want to truly motivate other believers, we must, like Paul, have genuine, loving, and unqualified concern for their full spiritual blessing. In addition to their recognizing our authority under God, we want our brothers and sisters in Christ to know that they are loved by us without reservation. This, too, elicits response.

APPRECIATION

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, (1:3a)

A third principle of godly and successful motivation is appreciation. Not only was Paul a blessing to Timothy, but Timothy was a blessing to Paul. **I thank God** for you, the apostle assured him, saying in effect, “I am grateful for what **God** has done for me through you.” While Paul was incarcerated in the dark, damp, dangerous, filthy, and stinking Roman prison, he nevertheless rejoiced that the Lord had given him the privilege of knowing and discipling Timothy. He was not bitter or resentful. He had no anger or hatred for those who placed him in prison or for the hardened and brutal criminals who were beside him. He did not lament the unjust and cruel execution he knew soon awaited him. His thoughts were on his sovereign **God** and on memories of his beloved son in the spirit, with whom he had spent so many blessed hours in mutual service of **God** and whom he likely would never see again in the flesh. Only the Lord could give such an unbelievably beautiful perspective!

To be appreciated, encouraged, and told that God has wonderful plans for them is a great motivation for young men and women who serve the Lord, and Paul’s statement of appreciation for Timothy must have given that young servant of the Lord great confidence. Timothy knew Paul’s words were not empty. First of all, he knew that Paul’s integrity would not allow him to flatter. Timothy also was well aware that he and Paul had come to know each other intimately in their many years together. They had traveled together, eaten together, ministered together, and doubtless suffered together for the sake of the gospel. At the time this letter was written, Paul doubtless knew Timothy better than any other person.

The appreciation that Paul spoke from his own heart must therefore have profoundly touched Timothy and placed on him a great sense of responsibility to live up to the high expectations of his spiritual mentor. The young disciple knew that this dear friend and peerless saint in the cause of Christ was facing imminent death. Yet, even during his last painful and uncertain hours, he thanked God and held up before Him a young pastor who, although incomparably trained in the gospel, had yet to fully prove himself in the difficult areas of the Lord’s service.

In the midst of unimaginable physical misery, Paul not only continued to praise God but did so with deep gratitude from a guiltless mind and heart. With full conviction and truthfulness he could testify, “**I serve** the Lord and continually stand before Him **with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did.**” *Latreō* (Serve) was sometimes used of godly worship or even priestly service. Standing falsely accused by the Jewish leaders before Felix, the Roman governor in Caesarea, Paul said, “According to the Way which they call a sect I do serve [*latreuō*] the God of our fathers” (Acts 24:14). Speaking of true children of God, whether Jew or Gentile, Paul assured the Philippian believers: “We are the true circumcision, who worship [*latreuō*] in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

As the aging apostle stood near death, he could testify that his **conscience** did not accuse or condemn him. His guilt was forgiven, and his devotion was undivided. “After careful self-examination,” he said, in effect, “I can say with sincerity that, although I am not perfect, I am living in holiness before the Lord.” He wanted Timothy to have no doubt that he endured his present physical afflictions, as he had countless others, because of his unswerving faithfulness to the Lord, not as a consequence of unfaithful, ungodly living.

Although even the most spiritual believer cannot know his own heart with complete certainty or understanding, it not only is possible but expected that, like Paul, every Christian have a **clear conscience**. This was a vital matter to Paul, who often refers to his conscience. When defending himself against the lying attacks he experienced in Corinth, he responded with an appeal to the highest human court, the conscience. His defense was: “For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you” (2 Cor. 1:12; cf. Acts 23:1).

In his first letter to Timothy he wrote, “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5), and we are to hold “to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (3:9). In that same epistle he said that “the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” (4:1–2). To continually reject God’s truth causes the conscience to become progressively less sensitive to sin, as if covered with layers of unspiritual scar tissue. Paul’s conscience was very clear and very sensitive, and he responded readily to its convicting voice.

Paul does not explain whom he meant by **forefathers**, but he obviously was speaking of godly men who had lived in former times. Unlike Timothy, Paul had no godly heritage from his immediate family. He had an impressive *religious* heritage, but he utterly discounted that as so much rubbish (Phil. 3:4–8). It therefore seems more probable that he was referring to the patriarchs, prophets, and other Old Testament saints. It is also possible that he had in mind the other apostles and the many other godly believers in the early church who preceded him in faith.

APPEAL

as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, (1:3b)

A fourth element of motivation was Paul’s constant appeal to the Lord on Timothy’s behalf. It is hard to imagine the strength and encouragement that Paul’s intercession gave to his young friend as he ministered in Ephesus and other parts of Asia Minor without Paul’s companionship.

The adverb *adialeiptōs* (**constantly**) refers to that which is unceasing, without interruption. We can be sure that Paul’s saying **I constantly remember you** was not hyperbole. The apostle had used the same word in exhorting Thessalonian believers to “pray *without ceasing*” (1 Thess. 5:17, emphasis added), and he was himself accustomed to doing no less. He already had assured those believers of his unceasing prayers and concern for them (1:2–3). Using the same word, he assured the church at Rome that “God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of

the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how *unceasingly* I make mention of you, always in my prayers” (Rom. 1:9–10, emphasis added). He gave similar assurance to believers in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:4), in Philippi (Phil. 1:3–4), in Colossae (Col. 1:3), and to his dear friend Philemon (Philem. 4).

Prayers is from *deēsis*, which in the New Testament always carries the idea of genuine entreaty and supplication before God. It was used by the angel who assured the godly father of John the Baptist, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition [*deēsis*] has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John” (Luke 1:13). Later in that gospel the word is used of the disciples of John the Baptist, who were said to “often fast and offer prayers” (5:33). It was used by Paul of his “prayer to God” for the salvation of his fellow Israelites (Rom. 10:1) and by James of “the effective prayer of a righteous man [which] can accomplish much” (James 5:16).

At first glance, the reference to **night and day** seems redundant and somewhat inappropriate. It seems redundant because, by definition, **constantly** means around the clock, and inappropriate because it is likely that Paul and his fellow prisoners could not distinguish one hour from another in that dungeon. But he doubtless used the phrase **night and day** in the way it is often used today, as a figure of speech expressing continuity. He simply wanted to reinforce his devotion to Timothy.

There is no better way to motivate other believers to consider their accountability to be faithful and to move their hearts in service of Christ than to continually hold them up before the Lord in prayer—and to tell them of it.

AFFECTION

longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. (1:4)

A fifth principle for motivating other believers, especially those we may be discipling, is to love them and to express genuine affection for them. Paul greatly missed Timothy’s companionship and was **longing to see** him. **Longing** is from *epipothēō*, a verb denoting intense desire or yearning for. Later in the letter he reflects the same aching desire, imploring Timothy, “Make every effort to come to me soon” (4:9), and “When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus... [and] make every effort to come before winter” (vv. 13, 21).

I recall your tears, the apostle says, perhaps referring to their time of last parting, following a brief visit to Ephesus sometime after writing his first letter to Timothy and before he was arrested at Nicopolis and taken prisoner to Rome. Paul had a similar bond with the elders in Ephesus. When they came out to meet him on the beach near Miletus, “he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more” (Acts 20:36–38).

Although he doubtless realized he might never see Timothy again, even the remote prospect of such a reunion **filled** Paul **with joy**. Knowing the apostle’s deep love and yearning to see him again surely filled Timothy with joy as well and inspired still greater commitment to follow in the footsteps of his beloved teacher and friend.

AFFIRMATION

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. (1:5)

The final principle of motivation Paul alludes to is that of affirmation. In the two previous verses Paul mentions his remembering Timothy in prayer and recalling his tears. Now again he reflects on their intimate association, this time being **mindful of the sincere faith** within Timothy.

Anupokritos (**sincere**) is a compound word, composed of a negative prefix attached to *hupokritēs*, from which we get the obviously related English word *hypocrite*. Timothy's **faith** was completely genuine, unhypocritical, without pretense or deceit. In his previous letter to Timothy, Paul had written, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere [*anupokritos*] faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). In his second letter to the church at Corinth, Paul used the term to describe his "*genuine love*" (2 Cor. 6:6, emphasis added). Peter used it in his admonition to all believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a *sincere* love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22, emphasis added). James used it as the final qualification of "the wisdom from above [which] is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, *without hypocrisy*" (James 3:17, emphasis added).

Timothy had a heritage of **sincere faith within [him], which first dwelt in [his] grandmother Lois, and [his] mother Eunice**. The reference to **Lois and Eunice** suggests that Paul knew those women personally and perhaps was instrumental, along with Barnabas, in winning them to Christ during his first missionary journey, which had taken him through Timothy's home area of Galatia (See Acts 13:13–14:21). They probably were Jewish believers under the Old Covenant who immediately received Jesus as their Messiah, Savior, and Lord when they first heard the gospel from the lips of Paul. By the time of Paul's second journey, the women had led their grandson and son to the Lord, and he already had become "well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2). Timothy was Paul's indirect son in the faith who had come to belief through the witness of his **grandmother Lois** and his **mother Eunice**, who had been led to faith directly by the apostle. Through them, he had "from childhood... known the sacred writings which are able to give [him] the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

Some years ago I was involved in a discussion regarding the choice of a man to take up the leadership of a well-known Christian organization. In looking over the list of prospects, I commented that it was interesting that every one of those men had a godly pastor for a father. The Lord has, of course, raised up many faithful leaders, including Paul, from ungodly and even godless families. But a high percentage of the great men throughout church history have come from godly homes. Timothy's father was an unbelieving Gentile (Acts 16:3), but his mother and grandmother were believers of great godliness. Paul commends them for the immense influence for good they had on Timothy and for the **sincere faith** that the apostle was **sure** to be **in** Timothy as well.

And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, and found me—the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus. (1:6–18)

During the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), extreme nationalist Chinese fomented a campaign of terror against officials of foreign governments, Christian missionaries, and even Chinese Christians. After they surrounded a certain mission station, they sealed all exits except one. They placed a cross in the dirt in front of the opened gate and told the missionaries and students that anyone who walked out and trampled the cross would be spared. According to reports, the first seven students who departed trampled the cross and were sent on their way. The eighth student, a young girl, approached the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, carefully walked around the cross, and was immediately shot to death. The remaining 92? students, strengthened by that girl's courageous example, also walked around the cross to their deaths.

The second section of 2 Timothy 1:6–18 focuses on the believers' not being ashamed of Jesus Christ. Paul founds this appeal on the motivations for serving Christ he has presented in verses 1–5. **Those six motivations were to generate in Timothy the pervasive attitude of not being ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ, the underlying attitude that is indispensable for effective ministry in the kingdom. The positive expression of that attitude is courageous, unapologetic witness to and obedience of Him, no matter what the cost or consequences.** It is the attitude that refuses to equivocate, vacillate, or compromise and that does not hesitate to be confrontational when necessary.

David expressed the attitude of courageous witness in these words: "I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation; behold, I will not restrain my lips, O Lord,

Thou knowest. I have not hidden Thy righteousness within my heart; I have spoken of Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation; I have not concealed Thy loving kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation” (Ps. 40:9–10). He would always speak for the Lord without restraint or reservation. Another psalmist declared, “My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness, and of Thy salvation all day long; for I do not know the sum of them. I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord God; I will make mention of Thy righteousness, Thine alone” (Ps. 71:15–16). Still another psalmist testified, “I will also speak of Thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be ashamed” (Ps. 119:46). Nothing could withstand the commitment of those saints to speak of God’s grace and righteousness.

No matter how gifted a person may be, or how well trained, biblically literate, astute, or articulate, and no matter much opportunity or privilege he may have, if he lacks spiritual courage and commitment, he will not speak and act effectively for the Lord.

Paul is calling for a level of commitment that says, “I don’t care what the world thinks, says, or does. I know what God has mandated for me to be and to do, and that is what I determine, by His power, to be and to do. Whatever the consequences, I will boldly stand for Christ.” The apostle specifically mentions that theme three times in this passage (vv. 8, 12, 16), because it is the heart of his message to the young pastor Timothy. **It is a call for him to have an uncompromising, unflinching commitment to proclaim Jesus Christ, regardless of the danger or difficulty.**

As Christians, most of us must confess to being ashamed of the Lord at some time or another, afraid of what people might think and of how their opinions might affect our popularity in school, our social standing, or our success in business. Perhaps we were afraid they would wonder why our lifestyle is often inconsistent with our faith. Yet we must also confess that the risks we have faced were much less serious than those Timothy faced, which included physical persecution, imprisonment, and possible death.

The most familiar example in the New Testament of being ashamed of Christ is Peter’s denial during Jesus’ trial before the high priest Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council. All the disciples fled when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:56), but Peter returned and followed “Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest” (v. 58). While waiting there, he three times denied being Jesus’ disciple or even knowing Him (vv. 70–74). As soon as a cock crowed, “Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, ‘Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times.’ And he went out and wept bitterly” (v. 75).

That vivid account makes Peter’s denial an easy target for reproach. But, as mentioned above, every Christian knows that he, too, at times has been guilty of denying the Lord, though perhaps not as publicly or dramatically. The encouraging truth we gain from Peter’s experience is that, just as we can be ashamed of the Lord as he was, we also can be forgiven and restored by the Lord as he was. When, after the resurrection, Peter three times affirmed love for Him, Jesus three times acknowledged that the love was genuine, although weak, and He charged Peter with care of His flock, the church (John 21:15–17). A few weeks later, during the feast of Pentecost, Peter fearlessly proclaimed before a great crowd in Jerusalem,

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and

foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”... And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:22–24, 40–41)

Peter continued to preach the gospel in Jerusalem without compromise and without fear. Peter was brought before the very Council where his Lord was falsely charged and outside of which he had denied Him. But on this occasion Peter was a different man. When he was commanded to stop preaching, he declared with John, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

As with Peter, it is only when we move from shame and fear to ardent conviction and bold commitment that we become useful in the Lord’s service.

It is possible that Timothy had become somewhat fearful or apathetic in his ministry. The difficulties and opposition he encountered at Ephesus, both from within and without the church there, may have taken a toll on his courage. His spiritual fire may have cooled. In this second letter to Timothy, Paul gives only one commendation, saying, “I am mindful of the sincere faith within you” (1:5). The remainder of the letter is devoted to exhortation. Although he does not accuse Timothy of sin, he gives many admonitions (See 1:8; 1:13; 2:1, 15, 22; 4:1–2, 4:5).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus made clear the cost of discipleship for those who are faithful and unashamed. “Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men,” He said, “I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32). He then gives the sobering converse of that promise: “But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (v. 33). In Mark’s account, Jesus spoke the same truth even more poignantly: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

A person who refuses to openly proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior gives evidence that he does not belong to Christ, no matter what claim is made for being a Christian. True discipleship is costly. A nominal Christian who will not even “confess [Jesus] before men” surely will not pay the price that faithful, ongoing discipleship can incur. “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,” Jesus said, “and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it” (Matt. 10:37–39). The mark of a true follower of Christ is willingness to put his very life on the line. From the prospect of eternity, however, that is a small price. “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?” Jesus asked rhetorically, “For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36–37).³

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (pp. 1–12). Chicago: Moody Press.

THE SALUTATION (1:1–2)

The salutation of 2 Timothy (1:1–2) is very similar to that of 1 Timothy. Paul addressed Timothy as his “son” and used the threefold benediction of “grace, mercy, and peace.” In other respects the salutation of 2 Timothy resembles Paul’s other epistles. Paul noted that his apostleship was “by the will of God,” as in the two Corinthian epistles, Colossians, and Ephesians. He used his familiar “in Christ” language to express the certainty of life eternal through union with Christ.

FOLLOWING GOOD EXAMPLES (1:3–2:13)

The opening section of the epistle presents a series of models for Timothy to follow in his ministry. The first model is that of his forebears (1:3–5). The form is Paul’s customary opening thanksgiving and prayer. The emphasis is on Timothy’s predecessors in the faith, whom he is called upon to emulate. First there is Paul himself (v. 3). His “clear conscience” was because he had been faithful to God in the discharge of his ministry. The mention of “forebears” in verse 3 probably anticipates verse 5 with its reference to Timothy’s grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. According to Acts 16:1, Eunice was a Christian. Second Timothy 1:5 indicates that Lois was as well. They were from Lystra and were probably converted along with Timothy during the course of Paul’s first missionary journey. Before their conversion Lois and Eunice seem to have been pious Jews who trained Timothy in the Scripture from the time of his infancy (2 Tim. 3:15). They had been models of faith in God throughout Timothy’s childhood. Paul knew Timothy well. He needed no proof of Timothy’s faith. But we all need to return periodically to our roots in order to renew and fortify our faith, and Paul was calling Timothy back to those roots.

When Paul spoke of Timothy’s “tears” in verse 4, he probably had in mind their parting when Paul left Timothy behind in Ephesus and moved on to Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3). In any event, verse 4 presents at the very outset of the letter Paul’s major expressed purpose for writing: he wanted to see Timothy. Things were not going well in Paul’s imprisonment. He knew that the “time of [his] departure” was near (4:6). He wanted to see Timothy one last time before his death (4:9).

The example of Paul (1:6–14). Throughout the letter Paul presented himself as a model for Timothy. Paul had been Timothy’s mentor from the very start. He reminded Timothy of his own personal role in kindling the gift of God through his laying hands on him. This is usually seen as a reference to Timothy’s ordination, the same occasion as when the elders laid their hands on Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14). But in the Book of Acts the laying on of hands is also connected with conversion and the receipt of the Spirit at that time (cp. Acts 9:17; 19:6). Paul may have been reminding Timothy of the time when he first believed and received the gift of the Spirit. In that light, verse 7 may not be referring to Timothy’s human spirit but to God’s Holy Spirit. Paul

would have been calling Timothy to yield himself to God and to the power of his Spirit. Verses 6–7 thus form an *inclusio* with verse 14, where the Spirit is explicitly mentioned.⁴

⁴ Polhill, J. B. (1999). [*Paul and his letters*](#) (pp. 429–430). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.