

Timothy, a Leader with a Legacy

Devotional Reading: Matthew 12:46–50

Background Scripture: Acts 16:1–3; Philippians 2:19–22;

2 Timothy 1:1–6; 3:14–16

Today's Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:1–6, 3:14–16

I. Sincere Legacy

2 Timothy 1:1–6

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day;

4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy;

5 When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

1. Like other ancient letters, 2 Timothy begins by sharing information that modern letter recipients would find on an envelope. *Paul* identifies himself as the sender and *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. The title “apostle” is significant for Paul because he was not present with Jesus during Jesus’

earthly ministry. Nonetheless, *God* is the one who commissions Paul by His *will*. Paul reminds the letter’s recipient that in *Christ Jesus* we find *life*. Jesus came “that [we] might have life, and . . . more abundantly” (John 10:10)—it is a *promise*.

2. Paul identifies *Timothy* as the letter’s recipient. He describes Timothy in affectionate and familial terms. Paul considers Timothy not only a *son* but one dear to his heart—he is highly cherished.

Grace and *peace* are traditional greetings found in many of Paul’s letters. In contrast, the standard salutation in non-religious Greek writing of the time was a wish for good health. Paul asks instead for marks of spiritual health: God’s unearned favor (*grace*) and an anticipation of wholeness in God’s restorative work (*peace*). Paul also adds the term *mercy*, which indicates a desire for God’s compassionate treatment. As a father in the faith, Paul desires the fullness of favor, compassion, and wholeness for his son.

3. This verse begins a sentence in Greek that stretches to the end of verse 5. It is customary in ancient letters to include a note of thanksgiving. Paul offers his gratitude to *God* and then connects his mention of God to the legacy of Jewish and Israelite ancestors (*my forefathers*). In other letters, Paul defends the continuity between his faith and the devotion of

Jewish predecessors: those “of faith” are “children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7–9). Here, he makes the connection more personal—he continues to serve the same God as his Jewish forebears. By reiterating his spiritual heritage, Paul emphasizes the importance of faith that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Paul also introduces the topic of *remembrance* as he describes the consistent prayers he offers for Timothy. He is reflecting upon their relationship from the vantage point of many years of fruitful association. Paul’s son in the faith comes to mind throughout the *night and day*. Such frequent prayers indicate deep and enduring love. They model a vital facet of spiritual mentorship: prayers of intercession.

4. Paul wants to *see* Timothy in person. There is no substitute for face-to-face interactions with our loved ones! In other epistles, Paul also expresses a longing to see his ministry partners (Romans 1:11; etc.). Typically, he intends to do the traveling, but in this case, Paul must rely on Timothy to come to him.

The phrase *being mindful* is translated elsewhere as a form of “remember” (Matthew 5:23; 26:75; Luke 23:42; 24:8; Acts 11:16). Paul may recall a previous moment of connection or refer to a message he received from Timothy. He may be acknowledging Timothy’s difficulties in opposition to false teachers and the backsliding of close companions (1 Timothy 1:3–7, 18–19).

Paul indicates that the resolution of his wish (and perhaps Timothy’s sorrow) shall come at their next meeting. Even without the physical attainment of Paul’s desire, his words speak *joy* and encouragement into a season of grief.

5. This verse ends the lengthy sentence that began in verse 3. Paul now purposefully remembers Timothy’s *unfeigned faith*. The adjective translated

as “unfeigned” means “without acting” or “without putting on a show.” Paul knows that Timothy’s faith is genuine, giving him confidence in his protégé. Moreover, Paul reminds Timothy that he has a legacy of faith from his *grandmother Lois* and his *mother Eunice*.

6. Paul changes the subject, now encouraging Timothy toward action. He asks Timothy not to let his gift drift into stagnancy. The Greek verb translated *stir up* can be used to describe nursing a flame—one nearly extinguished or burning low. Consider Newton’s First Law of Motion or Inertia: “An object in motion stays in motion.” The converse is also true—it takes energy and force to initiate motion in resting objects. Paul knows it is important for Timothy to keep his spiritual fervor animated. The spread of the gospel message needs ministers who remain active, alert, and passionate about the work of God in their lives.

Timothy’s *gift* is not formally stated but may refer to his leadership, teaching, or shepherding abilities. Later in the letter, Paul also mentions this gift (1 Timothy 4:14). There, Paul calls it “the gift . . . which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.” In both places, the *putting on of . . . hands* is significant. The purposeful gesture could refer to the transference of a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, like those listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7–10. However, it certainly refers to Timothy’s ministerial commission. By placing their hands upon Timothy, church leaders granted him authority, charged him with the responsibility of ministry leadership, and affirmed his call.

II. Continued Legacy

2 Timothy 3:14–16

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been

assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

14. Paul encourages Timothy to persist. It is one thing to learn something, and it is another to be entirely confident (*assured*) of its truth. The verb translated *been assured of* is from the same root as the word for “faith.” The things Timothy knows fill him with faith. Remembering and trusting in his education will allow confidence and steadfastness to remain in motion. Just before this verse, Paul reminds Timothy that he is also full of endurance and tenacity. Now he reminds Timothy that his teachers are trustworthy, and that Timothy knows the integrity of his mentor.

15. Paul returns to the idea that Timothy learned the Scriptures and truths of God from his mother and grandmother. What Paul calls *holy scriptures* cannot refer to a complete Bible as modern Christians understand it, since Timothy’s childhood came before most of the New Testament was written. Paul is referring to the Old Testament, particularly the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, which Paul frequently quotes in his letters.

Paul gives a theological reason for Scripture as the basis for *faith*: Scripture’s contents make a person *wise* and lead toward *salvation*. Salvation comes to fruition through the Messiah, *Christ Jesus*. Paul encourages Timothy to remember the tool that he has in his ministry toolbox: long-term knowledge of God’s Word.

16. Paul still has the Old Testament in mind as he speaks of *all scripture*. Paul was masterful at demonstrating the truth of the gospel from texts like Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by faith” (quoted in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11). Now we may extend the same principles to the New Testament, including the letters of Paul! Second Peter 3:15–16 describes Paul’s letters as containing wisdom, as with “other scriptures.”

Paul names two essential truths that apply to Scripture: it is *inspire[ed]* and *profitable*. First, the message is from *God*. The single word translated *inspiration of God* is also translated as “God-breathed” and is a rare compound word. It is possibly original to Paul. This type of original language use is like Shakespeare and other gifted writers who adaptively invent language to communicate new ideas. Paul uses this word to describe the God-giveness of Scripture. Timothy can trust the Scriptures because God is the life force behind them. As 2 Peter 1:20–21 explains, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” God’s Word is entirely true because God cannot lie, but God works through human agency, using human writers.

Second, Paul affirms Scripture’s utility. It is helpful for teaching reliable *doctrine* about God and our proper response to Him. Scripture serves as *reproof* by identifying wrong and sinful behavior, giving *correction*, and describing the right way to live. Scripture demonstrates how to live in holiness according to the standard set forth by God. By knowing God’s instructions, Paul recognizes that Timothy will “understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path” (Proverbs 2:9).

Involvement Learning

Timothy, a Leader with a Legacy

Into the Lesson

Reflect on the mentors and family members who have deeply formed your faith. Write as many names as desired.

Our lesson today revolves around Timothy and the spiritual mentorship he received from his grandmother Lois, mother Eunice, and the apostle Paul.

Key Text

When I call to remembrance the
unfeigned faith that is in thee, which
dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois,
and thy mother Eunice;
and I am persuaded that in thee also.
—2 Timothy 1:5

Into the Word

Read 2 Timothy 1:1–6. Write down every word or phrase about passing along the faith. Make notes beside these words or phrases about lessons learned.

Write down ideas about how families may pass on faith. From your experiences and knowledge, list additional tips or principles for bringing up children to know and serve the Lord.

Write down ideas about how grandparents may play a significant role in passing faith to grandchildren. From your experiences and observations, list additional ideas or tips in helping grandchildren discover the Lord.

Write down ideas about how your congregation may encourage its younger people.

Read 2 Timothy 3:14–16. List things Paul wants Timothy to know about Scripture.

Into Life

List one or two things you think would encourage new believers or children in their faith.

Thought to Remember

Remember your faith heritage and trust Scripture's instruction.