

Helpful Reminders

2 Timothy 1:1-7

Background

2 Timothy is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy, a young leader in the church at Ephesus. Paul probably wrote this letter in 67 AD while he was in prison in Rome, not long before his execution (4:6). Timothy is facing difficulties and opposition, and is in need of encouragement and exhortation.

Salutation

□ Read 2 Timothy 1:1-2.¹

1. Considering the great difficulties that Paul is facing (and Timothy too), how does Paul's mention of "the will of God" and "the promise of life"² help?³

Thanksgiving

□ Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7.

2. Paul is chained up in a prison. He is facing death. How can he be thankful? Does this mean that Paul is totally happy?

3. Though Paul is imprisoned as a criminal, he has a "clear conscience" (1:3). He is "not ashamed" (1:8, 11-12). Why?



4. Paul mentions his forefathers (1:3) and also Timothy's mother and grandmother (1:5). In a sense, both Paul and Timothy have a Judeo-Christian heritage.⁴ How might this be encouraging to Timothy?

¹ "apostle" - one commissioned by Jesus Christ as a representative (see Romans 1:1-5).

² "life" refers to the abundant, everlasting life found "in Christ," who is *the* Life, according to God's promise. We enter into this life when we receive Christ, but the full realization is future.

³ Paul is in prison (on "death row") as a result of being an apostle.

⁴ This does not mean that Paul's forefathers were Christians. However, they were Jewish, and Christianity is in continuity with the Old Testament faith. Apparently, Timothy's mother and grandmother were also Jewish (3:15), but became Christians before Timothy did (1:5; Acts 16:1). Even before they became Christians, they had taught Timothy the "holy Scriptures" (3:15), that is, the Old Testament. Still Timothy's family was not fully Jewish. His mother had married a Gentile, and Timothy had not been circumcised according to normal practice (Acts 16:1-3).

- ? Certainly, a Judeo-Christian heritage can be very helpful when a Christian's faith is challenged. What if a person does *not* have a Judeo-Christian heritage?⁵

Encouragement

- Read 2 Timothy 1:6-7.⁶

5. Paul reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God”⁷ that he received (1:6). How does one “fan into flame” his/her spiritual gift?

- ? As a Christian, what is *your* spiritual gift? Are you neglecting it, or are you fanning it into flame?



- 📖 “For God did not give us a spirit⁸ of timidity,⁹ but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline”¹⁰ (2 Timothy 1:7, NIV).

6. How can we actually benefit from the truth in verse 7? What do we need to understand and do?

- ? As a Christian, do you allow others who are *not* faithful to God discourage you in your service of Him? Is there something you feel God wants you to do, but you are afraid to do it for some reason? If so, verse 7 applies.

Reflection/Application

- Timothy could be encouraged in his vocation because his calling, abilities, purpose, life, and hope came from God. What about you? What is the basis for encouragement in your life? Consider Christianity's claim that true meaning, purpose, life (abundant and everlasting), and hope are found only in Jesus Christ.
- Christians, review the above questions (under *Encouragement*) and respond appropriately.

⁵ In the scope of Paul's ministry, the great majority of Christians *did not* have a Judeo-Christian heritage. This lack of common ground made some things more difficult. Still, the Gentiles (non-Jews) were generally more responsive than the Jews. Today, some of the least responsive and faithful people are those raised in a “Christian” culture, while many raised in other cultures (atheistic for example) are very responsive and faithful. Nonetheless, Christians are commanded to pass on the faith to their children. If Christians have not received a heritage, they need to start one!

⁶ “For this reason” – that is, “knowing that you have a sincere (genuine) faith ... I remind you to fan into flame...”

⁷ “gift of God” - the spiritual gift endowed to Timothy, perhaps the gift of evangelism and teaching (1:13-14; 4:5). In his earlier letter Paul wrote, “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Timothy 4:14, NIV).

⁸ spirit” – in this context, πνευμα is usually translated “spirit,” referring to “a person's attitude or disposition.” Some believe it refers to the “Spirit,” that is, the Holy Spirit (e.g. Fee, TNIV). Of course, a Christian's spirit (attitude and disposition) will be affected by the indwelling Holy Spirit!

⁹ “timidity” (δειλία – used only here in the New Testament). Fee and Mounce think “cowardice” is a better translation, consistent with its use in the Septuagint. “Cowardice” is “the terror that overtakes the fearful in extreme difficulty” – Gordon Fee, *New International Biblical Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 227. Paul is not necessarily implying that Timothy is a coward, but he says this to emphasize the good things that God *does* give – William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 478. Perhaps Timothy was not “shy and timid,” but he obviously needed encouragement to stand strong, be courageous, carry out his ministry, and not fear.

¹⁰ “self-discipline” (σωφρονισμος – used only here in the NT) – involving a sound mind or “wise head” (Fee, 227).