

2 Timothy 1:3-7

Paul has been imprisoned in Rome and is expecting to die soon. Timothy was leading the church in Ephesus. What would you expect Paul to want to say to Timothy?

Read the entire book.

Now read 1:3-14.

2Tim 1:1-2: How is this greeting different from Paul's usual greetings, and why?

What does Paul mean by "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus"?

2Tim 1:3-7: What encouragements does Paul offer to Timothy?

How does Paul want Timothy to act (in accordance with his gift)?

How do we similarly encourage each other?

How do we apply Paul's instructions to our own lives?

2 Timothy: Introduction

1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are called the “pastoral epistles”. The pastoral epistles were written to individuals in positions of authority in the church in order to instruct them in how to lead and teach. The books have a strong focus on “sound doctrine”, a phrase found nowhere else in Pauline epistles. The language used differs from the language of Paul’s other epistles, probably reflecting a different scribe (Luke?) and a different purpose.

STRUCTURE	
1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-14	General encouragement
1:15-18	How Paul was dealt with
2:1-4:5	Church leadership
4:6-21	Paul’s life
4:22	Final greeting

Possible Pauline chronology: After being released from house arrest in Rome in AD 62, Paul travels through Spain on his fourth missionary journey. After spending a few months there, he hears of trouble back east and returns to fix the problems. Being old and having too many problems to deal with alone, Paul appoints two of his faithful disciples, Titus and Timothy, to shepherd the newly planted church in Crete and the church in Ephesus, respectively. Paul travels through Colossae and some other of his eastern churches, through Achaia to Nicopolis and on through Macedonia. On this trip he dictated 1 Tim and Tit to Luke. From Macedonia he heard of problems in Asia and sailed back to Troas, where he was violently arrested at the instigation of Alexander the coppersmith. Christians were zealously persecuted because they were falsely accused of starting a fire in Rome in 3 years earlier, and Paul was handled brutally by his captors, and was forsaken by every friend except for Luke. From prison in Rome in the fall of 67 AD he dictated 2 Tim, and was executed within half a year of writing the epistle. Timothy visited him in prison, and may have been present at his execution.

Concerning Timothy: Timothy’s mother and grandmother were godly Jews who brought Timothy up to be a godly man. His father was a Greek who did not figure significantly into Timothy’s life. Timothy was spoken highly of in Derbe/Lystra, was circumcised and became Paul’s disciple at Paul’s second visit to the region, ca. 51 AD. Timothy travelled and ministered with Paul. Paul wrote several letters with Timothy, sent him on missions to different churches, suffered with him, called him his “son,” saying, “I have no one like-minded”. Timothy himself was imprisoned and released under heavy Christian persecution. Timothy is mentioned in 9 of Paul’s 12 epistles, in addition to Hebrews and Acts. Though he made a lasting on the organization and outworking of the Ephesian church, Timothy was in the long run unable to turn the hearts of the Ephesians back to God, leading to the eventual destruction of the church in Ephesus.

2 Timothy is Paul's final instruction to Timothy. It's a passionate exhortation to Timothy about how he was to continue guiding the church in Ephesus - both by living a godly life himself and by helping others to do the same. As Calvin said about the emotions contained in this epistle, it is "written not with ink but with Paul's own blood".

When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he was in jail (2Tim 2:9, 1:8). But unlike Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, at which he was treated well and was sure he would be released (Acts 28:30-31, Phil 1:19-26, Phm 9, 22), in 2 Timothy Paul had no freedom and didn't even have warm clothes (2Tim 4:13, 21). Furthermore, even his friends forsook him

(2Tim 4:10, 16, 1:15). This likely reflects the situation during the bloody persecution of Christians under Nero after 64 AD.

2Tim 1:1-2 Paul identifies himself, as he usually does, as **an apostle of Jesus Christ**. This apostleship gives Paul the authority by which he writes. He further writes **according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus**. As a man who was soon expecting to die, Paul was focusing on the life that is to come. In fact, he seems to view this life as something entirely in the future - it is a promise to be fulfilled. Compared with that life, then, what we are living now is no life. As he says in v10 it was Christ who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel - that is to say, before our salvation by Christ we cannot be said to have been truly alive. Stated another way, mortality will be swallowed up by life (2Cor 5:4).

To Timothy, a beloved son in the faith. We looked at Paul's relationship with Timothy in the introduction. **Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.** Though Paul's usual greeting is "grace and peace", he now adds mercy. I do not think much is to be made of this - "mercy" is a natural addition to "grace" and "peace", and they all complement each other. The same triad is found in the openings of Titus and 1 Timothy. It is Paul's wish that Timothy receive grace, mercy, and peace from the Father and from the Lord. These two titles, "Father" and "Lord", reveal what Paul means by "grace, mercy, and peace". Grace from a father is a loving relationship, kind gifts, and faithful care. Mercy from a father is forgiveness of sins and pity in hardships. Peace with a father, if Paul was thinking of the Hebrew "shalom", speaks of the wellness of a relationship - not only the absence of strife, but the presence of harmony. Grace from a lord, or a master, might be a gift, good wages, or general kindness. Mercy might be the forgiveness of slackishness, a good work environment, and surmountable tasks. Peace would again be the good fellowship between them, as Paul desired between Onesimus and Philemon. Paul's greeting in v2 could be discussed at length, for upon meditation its awesomeness is ever increasing.

2Tim 1:3-7 In this section Paul reminds Timothy of his past, both his relationship with Paul his parents, and his call to ministry, in order to encourage him to persevere. Paul first reminds him of his relationship with Paul. This relationship is a longstanding, emotional, passionate one.

I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did. Paul's pure conscience (cf. Rom 9:1, Acts 23:1, 24:16, 2Cor 1:12, 4:2) was important to him, and he encouraged others to live the same way (Rom 13:5, 1Cor 8:7-12, 10:25-29, 1Tim 1:5, 3:9, 4:2, Tit 1:15). Having a pure conscience is to Paul a sign of godliness. Not that he never sinned, but that he always confessed (cf. Acts 23:1ff) and served God well (2Tim 4:7). Paul served God this way after the pattern of his forefathers - or literally "from my progenitors". Paul's faith and good conscience were the same as Abraham's, Joseph's, Josiah's, and the rest of the godly forefathers (cf. Acts 24:14, 26:6, 28:20). Paul draws on his own ancestry here, and will soon remind Timothy to do the same.

As without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day. Though the grammar might suggest it in some translations, Paul is not saying that he thanks God that he remembers Timothy, but that he thanks God for Timothy when he remembers him - and he remembers him in his prayers "night and day". Paul was so encouraged by Timothy that the mere thought of him evoked praises toward God. He praised most of the churches he wrote to in similar ways (Col 1:3ff, Phil 1:3ff, Eph 1:15ff, 1Cor 1:4ff, Rom 1:8ff, 1Thess 1:2ff, 2Thess 1:3ff, cf. Phm 4ff). It must have been a great encouragement for Timothy to hear that Paul, for whom he had great respect, thanked God for Timothy.

If this is true of our relationships with others, we are sure to encourage them by letting them know. If this is not true of our relationships with others, it is likely that the problem is that we don't thank God for others as we should - unless we think we have no one to be thankful for.

Paul prayed **night and day**, thus following in the footsteps of David, Jesus, and doubtless countless other godly men. I will not belabor the point.

Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy. It should not surprise us, based on Paul's relationship with Timothy, that he longed to see him. Timothy's **tears**, because they are mentioned in this particular context, are tears on Paul's behalf - being saddened by Paul's sufferings. This is in stark contrast with the **joy** that Paul would experience if he got to meet Timothy again. With this very personal note Paul is dealing with the "elephant in the room". Doubtless Paul, in prison, is more worried about Timothy and is more concerned about exhorting him than he is about taking care of himself - yet he knows that Timothy, upon receiving this letter, is likely to be distracted by his concern for Paul unless Paul wrote a bit about himself. Indeed, it might even have been cruel of Paul not to include details about how he was doing and how Timothy could help him. More on this in chapter 4. In this verse, though, Paul contents himself with writing about his relationship with Timothy specifically.

When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Timothy's father was a Greek, but his mother (and therefore most likely his grandmother also) was a Jew (Acts 16:1). His father isn't mentioned here, so it is likely that his mother stood for his upbringing and teaching him the scriptures from an early age (2Tim 4:15). The same way Paul compares his service to God with the service of his forefathers, so Timothy is reminded of his mother and grandmother for good examples of faithful, godly behavior. A Christian parent is a great blessing. Note that Paul does not remind Timothy of himself as Timothy's spiritual parent - though a great role model and a personal mentor is great, these cannot replace the blessings of a godly upbringing. But Paul doesn't stop there - he is "persuaded" that this godliness is in Timothy as well. This word "persuaded" is taken by some to mean that Paul isn't completely sure. Yet this word is not intended to make the statement less certain, but more certain - as the same word does in v12.

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Having reminded Timothy of his relationship with Paul and his godly upbringing, he now reminds Timothy of the gift of God that was given to him. This gift is mentioned elsewhere as well as being given "by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership" (1Tim 4:14). Strengthened by "the prophecies previously made concerning you", Paul had previously charged him to guard Ephesus against false teachers (1Tim 1:18). And now Paul encourages Timothy to "stir up" this gift of God. Because it is a gift of God, it is not something that needed to be given by God again - it needed only to be "stirred up", or literally, "rekindled". This same word is used in the LXX of Jacob's spirit being "rekindled" when he heard of Joseph being alive (Gen 45:27). This need not mean that Timothy had all but forsaken his duties - but, as a weak human vessel acting with God's mighty gift, one must always rekindle the zeal and purity of one's mission. It is possible, as some have suggested, that Paul suspected Timothy was getting distraught and was starting to falter - but though this word in itself gives some support for such a theory, there is little elsewhere to commend it.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. This "giving" of the spirit is reminiscent of the "gift" of God in the previous verse - God does not give a gift without also giving the ability to use it the right way - that is, with power, with love, and with a sound mind. Some take this word "spirit" as referring to the Holy Spirit, as in Rom 8:15-16. Yet though the wording is similar to Rom 8:15, it is more likely that "spirit" here refers to the attitude of a born-again mind (as the word is used in Phil 1:27). It is not the spirit of fear (the fear of man, the fear of death, the fear of pain, the fear of sin) that God has given us - we have nothing in this world of which we need to be afraid (cf. Mt 10:28), but rather the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. That is, realizing the power of God and the power we are given from God to exercise our gifts on His behalf. And the love of God, both for God and for men, with which we think, speak, and act in all things. And a sound mind, with which we know wisdom and discern the proper way with which to exercise our love and God's power.