

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 Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my dear son:

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

³ I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying 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 Christ Jesus*. 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 . . . to the full” (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*. In other letters, Paul defends the continuity between his faith and the devotion of Jewish predecessors: those who “have 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. 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). Typically, he intends to do the traveling, but in this case, Paul must rely on Timothy to come to him.

The term *recalling* is a form of “remember.” Paul may remember 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 *sincere faith*. The adjective translated as “sincere” 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*.

There is little information about Lois and Eunice in Scripture. In a broad sense, Paul credits Timothy's faith to his Jewish mother and grandmother, who taught him the truths of God from the Old Testament. It may not have been easy for Lois and Eunice to teach Timothy about God since Timothy's father was Greek (Acts 16:1). Timothy's mixed heritage (the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek man) makes him a living parable of Christ's reconciliation, which brings Jews and Gentiles together as one people.

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 *fan into flame* is used to describe nursing a spark—one nearly extinguished or burning low. 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 “your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” In both places, the *laying on of . . . hands* is significant. The purposeful gesture could refer to the transference of a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. However, it certainly refers to Timothy's ministerial commission. By placing their hands upon Timothy, church leaders granted him authority, endorsed his ministerial leadership, and affirmed his call.

II. Continued Legacy 2 Timothy 3:14–16

¹⁴ **But as for you, continue in what you**

have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

14. Paul encourages Timothy to persist. It is one thing to learn something, and it is another to be entirely confident (*convinced*) of its truth. The verb translated *become convinced 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, who is *Christ Jesus*. Paul encourages Timothy to remember the incredible 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 righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (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 *God-breathed* and *useful*. First, the message is from *God*. The single word translated *God-breathed* 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 Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” 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 (*rebuking*), 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 what is right and just and fair—every good path” (Proverbs 2:9).

Involvement Learning

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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

I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you 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.