

### Paul's Appreciation, Care and Concern for Timothy

#### 2 Timothy 1:3-7

2 Timothy 1:3-7: *"I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, <sup>4</sup> greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, <sup>5</sup> when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*

#### Background Notes

Verses 3-7 form Paul's "section of thanksgiving" in this letter to Timothy. A greeting at the beginning of a letter, followed by a "section of thanksgiving," was typical of letters in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In this section of thanksgiving, Paul gave thanks to God for Timothy, his younger fellow worker.

Besides being thankful for Timothy, Paul prayed for him regularly - night and day (v3)! He longed to see Timothy again so that they might experience the joy of Christian fellowship together: *"...greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy"* (v4). The "tears" that Paul remembered were probably tears shed by Timothy when they were suddenly separated at Paul's arrest - the arrest that led to Paul's imprisonment in Rome.

Timothy had a godly mother, Eunice, and a godly grandmother, Lois (v5). (I can really identify with Timothy here, because my godly mother's name is Eunice!) What a blessing! When reading verse 5, a logical question might come to your mind: if the faith first dwelt in Lois and Eunice and then in Timothy, when did Lois and Eunice become Christians? There are several possibilities.

One possibility is that they were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost described in Acts 2. Jews came for the festival from all over the Roman Empire, and maybe Eunice and Lois were two of the 3000 converts following Peter's sermon that day. Or maybe they were saved soon after Pentecost, through the ministry of converts who returned home to their area. Another possibility is that they became Christians through the ministry of the apostle Paul, either through Paul's early ministry in his home territory around Tarsus, or on his first missionary journey. Then Lois and Eunice led Timothy to the Lord.

Most likely, the scenario is as follows: Lois and Eunice were godly Jewish women who were exercising true faith in the God of Israel even before they heard the gospel. They taught Timothy the Hebrew Scriptures when he was a young child.

In 2 Timothy 3:15 Paul said about Timothy, *“from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

So Lois and Eunice were faithful Jews, like the godly forefathers mentioned by Paul in verse 3. They were like Abraham, like Moses, and like Deborah. They were waiting for the Messiah, like Anna and Simeon. When Paul came to their area, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ in the synagogue, they immediately received this further revelation from God, and by faith they recognized Jesus as the Messiah. They put their trust in Him for salvation, and at the same time or shortly thereafter Timothy did as well.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Spiritual gifts are given, but they must be stirred up.

Verse 6: *“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”* The picture in the phrase *“stir up the gift”* is of a small fire that needs to be encouraged to burn more brightly. A campfire or a fire in your fireplace needs periodic poking or fanning to keep it burning well. That’s the picture the apostle used in verse 6. *“Fan the flame”* of your gift to help it grow. Spiritual gifts are given – they’re gifts! But ***they must be developed*** - and that’s our responsibility.

We believe that Timothy was given the spiritual gift of pastor and teacher. In 1 Timothy 4:14 Paul said to Timothy, *“Do not neglect the gift that is in you which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”* Most likely the Lord conferred Timothy’s spiritual gift upon him at Lystra, when he joined Paul’s missionary team (Acts 16). In association with God giving Timothy this spiritual gift, a prophecy was made, with a formal “laying on of hands” by Paul and the elders of the church. This formal occasion or commissioning was the norm in apostolic times.

We believe the Bible teaches that spiritual gifts are given today at the time of salvation. When you become a Christian, you not only receive forgiveness of sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but your spiritual gifting is part of your “package of salvation.” Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. 1 Peter 4:10 says, *“As each one has received the gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* Notice - ***each one*** of you has received a gift.

However, the primary point here is that while spiritual gifts are given to us, we are responsible to stir them up. Just as natural talents must be developed and used, so it is with spiritual gifts. You may have musical talent as a pianist or a guitarist, but you must spend time and effort to learn and practice and play your instrument before that musical talent can be effective and useful. In the same way, spiritual gifts must be stirred up - or they are useless and ineffective.

How do you stir up spiritual gifts? Get more involved in Christian service! When you get involved in serving the Lord, you’ll not only discover what your spiritual gift is, but you’ll also be stirring up your gift. Spiritual gifts are given, but they must be stirred up!

## 2. Spiritual character is given, but it must be developed.

Verse 7: *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind [or self-discipline].”* It appears that Timothy was not a bold, upfront, “go-get-’em” kind of Christian. Apparently he was timid, and he tended to hold back even when he should step forward. So Paul reminded Timothy that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

This is God’s Word to us today as well. God has given spiritual character to us, too. God gives us courage. God gives us power. God gives us love. And God gives us a sound mind, or self -discipline.

But like our spiritual gifts, these **spiritual character traits must be developed**. For example, suppose you have a problem witnessing to your neighbor, or a fellow student, or someone you work with. You’ve had plenty of opportunities, but you’re scared. Perhaps you’re afraid that they’ll laugh at you for believing those “myths and legends” in the Bible. Here’s the point. **God** did not give you that spirit of fear! All the spiritual character and courage you need to be an effective witness is available to you - but it must be developed.

How do you do it? Just do it! Just get out there and get started! Start small. Ask your neighbor what they think about the moral conditions of this country - that’s a pretty good icebreaker! Or maybe you could give some literature to a fellow worker, or student, or a neighbor, and then ask them about it a few days later. And guess what? You may find that not only does a conversation open up, but you’ll be developing courage.

Courage is there, and it’s available for you! When you start to develop it, you’ll find that love for others is available, too – and strength, and power. Those spiritual character traits are available!

Courage in witnessing is just one example. Whatever spiritual character trait you need, for whatever situation the Lord allows you to be in - you will find that whatever is needed is available: courage, love, moral strength, emotional stability, and self-control.

Are you in a situation right now where you could use any of these spiritual character traits? Any and all of these character traits are available - but you must start to develop them - and continue to develop them - by using them for the Lord.

2 Peter 1:5-7 says, *“Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”* We are to **use all diligence** to add all these Christ-like character traits to our lives. And this is done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5 says that all these things are given - but 2 Peter 1 says that **we need to use diligence** to develop these traits and to add them to our faith.

So we are to work at developing our spiritual character traits. Spiritual character is given, but it must be developed.

## Practical Applications

### 1. You can always pray!

The apostle Paul was a very active Christian, but that Christian service activity was suddenly cut short when he was thrown into prison. What did he do when he found himself in prison? Did he have a “pity party”? Did he sit around in his cell, doing nothing? No! Even in prison, Paul continued to do whatever Christian activity he could! He wrote letters and he prayed.

You can always pray, and verse 3 tells us that Paul had an active prayer life. He prayed night and day, without ceasing! So no matter what your situation is, no matter what your age is, no matter where you are - ***you can always pray***. How I thank the Lord for older Christians I know, who are praying for me in my ministry. They might not be able to do much physical activity in their stage of life, but they can pray. And they're praying!

What situation are you in now? You may be in the “senior” category now. Maybe you can't do a lot of physical activity any more - but you can pray. And perhaps you can write letters. I challenge you to start writing encouraging notes or letters or emails to younger Christians! And pray! ***You can always pray!***

### 2. It's OK to cry!

In verse 4, notice that Paul didn't reprimand Timothy for crying: “...*remembering your tears...*” Perhaps Timothy was parted from his beloved spiritual father suddenly and roughly, at the time of Paul's arrest. Timothy may have thought he would never see Paul again on this earth. It was an occasion for tears.

We ***should*** cry in appropriate situations. It's the way God created us. He gave us this particular way to express our sad or grieving emotions - so it's OK to cry.

It may be hard for some of us to cry when we should cry. Maybe we've always been told that “only babies cry,” or that “it's not ‘manly’ to cry.” Well, Ecclesiastes 3:4 tells us that ***there is a time to weep***. Our Lord wept at the graveside of His dear friend Lazarus (John 11). The Ephesian elders wept when they parted from Paul on the seashore (Acts 20:37-38). There *are* appropriate times to weep – so it's OK to cry!