



Sunday School Lesson for February 5, 2006
Released on February 2, 2006

"Be True to Your Christian Heritage"

LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

READ: 2 Timothy 1:1-18

TIME: A. D. 64

PLACE: Rome, Italy

GOLDEN TEXT

"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" (2 Timothy 1:5 NKJV).

LESSON'S AIMS

Examine a passage in which Paul called on Timothy to exploit the potential of his Christian foundations.

Learn the value of a good Christian heritage.

Identify some ways that Paul, Lois, and Eunice influenced Timothy's faith.

Explain how Paul's mentoring of Timothy can be a pattern for our church today.

Appreciate the benefits of a good background in the Christian faith and provide that same background for the next generation of believers.

Develop a plan for the week ahead to guard sound doctrine in our lives.

LESSON'S OUTLINE

Paul's Prayer: 2 Timothy 1:3-4

Timothy's Faith: 2 Timothy 1:5-8

The Believer's Calling: 2 Timothy 1:9-10

Paul's Legacy: 2 Timothy 1:11-14

LESSON TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:1-18

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, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 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,

4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,

5 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.

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

9 who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

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15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

16 The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain;

17 but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*.

18 The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day-and you know very well how many ways he ministered *to me*^[c] at Ephesus.

INTRODUCTION

It has been explained that *heritage* is something that is handed on from past generations; a legacy. If this is true, then *Christian* heritage also is faith that is handed down from past generations; this is a *Christian* legacy.

At the summarization of this lesson, the nation-and many others around the world--are mourning the death of a great African-American legacy, Coretta Scott King, the widow of The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Upon Dr. King's death, Mrs. King continued the dream of her husband-a dream of a world in which people could live and work and love independently of their skin color or economic status. This legacy of equality has continued through the efforts of The Kings' adult children and grandchildren, and will continue through the furthered efforts of countless others who labor for human rights. Like Paul, many such activists have lost their lives for the causes that they promoted and supported.

Today's lesson similarly shows how a soon to be martyred Paul is cheering on Timothy-the younger preacher and teacher-via a very endearing letter of encouragement and instruction.

BACKGROUND

The second letter to Timothy is among the most personal in the Bible and the most moving. Approaching death, Paul wrote his young protégé with stirring words.

As he wrote, Paul was a prisoner of Rome and due to be executed by beheading. What a horrible thing to be on death row awaiting your own ending. Even so, Paul urged Timothy not to be ashamed of him and his situation.

Paul described the work of Christ on believers' behalf. Not only did Jesus Christ save us, but He also gave us a calling. He abolished death and revealed immortality to those who call on His name in faith.

Paul reminded Timothy that this was the reason for his apostleship. Paul was called to reveal to men the truth about God and His Messiah. It was for this exact reason that he was imprisoned-because powerful men did not want to hear his message.

Has much changed today? We are still called on by God to share the message of faith and hope and love and forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ. We must fulfill our calling whether or not we have a captive audience. We must be true to our Christian heritage that was passed along to us by those who sowed good seed in our lives. The torch does not stop being passed. It is up to today's believers to keep Christ's legacy alive.

QUESTIONS

Q1. What did Paul mean about serving God from his forefathers with a pure conscience? (2 Timothy 1:3)

The mere expression "I thank God" (vs. 3) led Paul to make a point about God. By saying that he served God as his forefathers did, Paul was admitting that he was continuing in the faith that his godly ancestors-namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-had served.

We learn two important things from Paul by analyzing this expression. First, he sees no conflict between his service to God as a preacher of the gospel and the service to God given by ancestral Jews before Christ came. Later, in 2 Timothy 3:15, Paul made a similar reference to Timothy's Jewish upbringing. Judaism is the root from which the tree of faith in Jesus sprang (cf. Rom. 11:16-17). There is no necessary conflict between past service to God under the Old Testament and current service to God under the New Testament. In both cases true service to God is motivated by faith and love.

Second, we learn the importance of faith that is passed on from one generation to the next. Paul did not discover service to God by chance or accident. He was taught it and saw it modeled by his teachers.

Paul also said that he served God with a "pure conscience" even before he trusted in Christ. Paul obeyed God's commandments even before knowing Christ. This is not to say that Paul was not a sinner, for in places he has specifically revealed sins in his previous life (see Romans 7:7-8). From this we learn that a believer can live a life of obedience and, even though sin is not totally absent, be regarded as living with a pure conscience.

Q2. How does Paul's service to God with a pure conscience encourage us? (2 Timothy 1:3)

Paul's lifestyle of godliness is further evident in the next part of 2 Timothy 1:3. Paul revealed to Timothy that he prayed for him day and night. Not many people can say that they pray for someone day and night. Paul's great love, as well as his faithful commitment to prayer and obedience, is evident. If Paul could obey God with a pure conscience and pray day and night for the people most important to him, then so can we.

Q3. Why did Paul call Timothy's faith unfeigned? (2 Timothy 1:5)

The New King James Version of this verse translates *unfeigned* as *genuine* or in other words, *unhypocritical*. Paul remembered a quality in Timothy that stood out to him as valuable for his calling. Timothy had a faith wherein others saw him walking the talk.

Paul did not mean merely that Timothy genuinely believed in Christ. It goes without saying that followers of Christ are required to have genuine faith in Him. Yet faith is not just initial belief in and acceptance of the good news. Faith is also a continuing quality that we should have in increasing supply. Paul praised Timothy's faith as deep and genuine, qualities that came from the example and instruction of Timothy's mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois.

Q4. What are some possible reasons Paul repeatedly reminded Timothy to use his gift? (2 Timothy 1:6 and 1 Timothy 4:14)

Timothy is urged by Paul to rekindle his spiritual gift as he had experienced it when he first believed. His gift is not named. That he had to be reminded of it more than once suggests the possibility that Timothy was in some way timid or hesitant about using it. On the other hand, it may be that all of God's servants need to be reminded from time to time to make use of God's Spirit-given gifts. Paul may have been encouraging more than reminding Timothy.

It is a constant struggle for Christians to be diligent about our work for the Lord due to the human ups and downs of life. We are often tempted to slow down in our spiritual race, but we must hold fast and make a conscious effort to exert resolute effort to exercise our gift(s) for the building up of the body of Christ. The need for reminders or for encouragement from fellow saints to a fearful brother or sister to exercise his/her spiritual gifts is even more necessary today.

Q5. If gentleness is a godly quality, why did Paul say we should not be timid? (2 Timothy 1:7-8)

The principle that Paul gives us in these verses about fear is that God's empowerment emboldens or makes brave; it does not make us timid or nervous. Some might think that meekness and gentleness mean timidity, but the truth is that Christians are called to be selfless and yielding in matters of earthly value but bold and forthright in matters of eternal value. While we should give way to others, we should be daring and fearless in helping others know the truth and in using the spiritual gifts God has given us.

Q6. Why did Paul think Timothy might be ashamed of him? (2 Timothy 1:8)

Paul wanted to be encouraged in knowing that his sacrifice was not in vain. He knew Timothy was not to be ashamed of the message of Jesus or of his imprisonment, but in case this was the situation, Paul addressed the matter in verse 8. Though the message of Christ crucified may seem foolish to some, we should not be afraid to share it nonetheless. Likewise, when godly believers are subjected to scorn or persecution, we should not be ashamed of them.

Q7. What did Paul mean by our *holy calling*? (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

Because it is impossible for people to earn their salvation or their way into heaven, Paul reminds Timothy that their calling to God was holy just for this reason—man did not/could not do anything to earn it. It was God's *own purpose and grace which was given to man through Christ Jesus before time began*.

God's holy calling for us is His plan for our future, including transformation from death-bound, sinful creatures to perfect, glorious immortals fully reflecting His image. While Paul did not say *why* God chose us out of His grace, we do know that it was for His *own purpose*. We did not deserve the calling given to us in Christ, but God gave it to us anyway. Hallelujah!

Q8. How could God have given us a holy calling before we even existed? (2 Timothy 1:9)

God is God. He is big enough to do whatever it is that He wants to do, how and when He wants to do it. And because time was created for man's use and not for God's—because God created it, His transcending of time and its constraints should be highly imaginable.

This calling that God has granted us was given before the world even began. Although we were not alive to receive God's calling at that time, He already knew us. In this foreknowledge, God already loved us and ordained that we would be called to perfection and immortality.

Q9. How did the appearance of Christ manifest the plan of God to make us immortal? (2 Timothy 1:10)

God's divine love and foreknowledge was fully revealed in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. We saw in Jesus God's love for us, which began before the world was ever made.

Life and immortality were brought to light through the gospel, the good news. By gospel Paul meant the death and resurrection of Christ as well as the message to follow Christ and prepare for His kingdom. The death and resurrection of Christ are God's part in our salvation. Following Christ, which means believing in Him and being changed by that belief, is our part in salvation. Through this message of Christ's work and our participation by faith, we know that we have eternal life, which is immortality.

Q10. What was Timothy to hold on to after Paul was dead? (2 Timothy 1:13-14)

Knowing that his apostleship was about to end and be handed on to another generation of leaders, Paul was concerned that his work continue. Paul's legacy would be a thriving church spreading all over the Roman Empire and beyond.

Timothy was a key leader in this next generation. Before his death, Paul wanted to strengthen Timothy and prepare him. What preparation would Timothy need? Would there be some new areas of teaching to learn, new mysteries about Christ?

No, Timothy would not need to find new teachings. Rather, he needed to hold on to the sound teaching Paul had already shown him. The faith has been delivered once and for all to the saints (see Jude 3). The church's calling is to proclaim the truth without ever changing the message, even if methods and cultures should change.

Timothy was to carry the same message as Paul and deliver it to the next generation, who would deliver it to the next, and so on. The message came to you and me, passed down through the generations and confirmed in the pages of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

From his prison cell, Paul encouraged Timothy to recall his rich Christian heritage. He had a mother and a grandmother who loved the Lord. He had received a special gift from God when he was ordained. He had received great teaching from Paul. All of this provided the young man with a very solid foundation. Paul urged him to consider this and to move on from there.

You are challenged today to be thankful for your Christian heritage, and to seek to preserve that foundation for the next generation.

PRACTICAL POINTS

We should be very thankful if we have a solid Christian heritage in our family (2 Timothy 1:3-5).

We need to avail ourselves of the strength, love, and discipline that God has given us (vss. 6-7).

We should have no shame about our calling nor fear about where we are headed (vss. 8-10).

Anything we might suffer in Jesus' name will be well worth it in the end (vss. 11-12).

We have been entrusted with a precious treasure in the Spirit; we must guard it faithfully (vss. 13-14).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

You never know which of the teens of today will grow up to be the preachers and teachers of tomorrow, so invest your life in as many as you can.

PRAYER

God of truth, as You used Paul to pass on the heritage of Christian faith to Timothy, use us today to train and encourage the Timothys and Timothyettes You send our way. May we never

hoard the gospel, but may we share it freely. We pray in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

In next week's lesson we read Paul's counsel on personal conduct and relationships. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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