

KEEPING THE FIRE ALIVE

2 Timothy 1.1-7

The major change situationally between 1 & 2 Timothy is that Paul was imprisoned and facing martyrdom (2 Timothy 1.16-17, 2.9, 4.6-8). If this was the Mamertine Prison, conditions were terrible (Sallust, The War against Catiline, 55; Plutarch, Life of Marius, 12). He requested a cloak, presumably for warmth (2 Timothy 4.13). Paul was lonely as no one stood by him at a recent trial (2 Timothy 4.16). Demas deserted for his “love for the present world” and Alexander did Paul “great harm” (2 Timothy 4.10, 14). To make matters worse, the church in Ephesus was struggling and Timothy was weak.

This is an epistle written during a time of suffering. That word appears in each of the 4 chapters (2 Timothy 1.8, 2.3, 2.9, 3.12, 4.5).

Paul wrote from a position of weakness to Timothy in a position of weakness.

In trial, remember all that has encouraged us along the way

Paul never forgot his own calling and the “promise of life” (2 Timothy 1.1).

He is convinced that his faith in Jesus is entirely consistent with his Jewish upbringing. The Father of Jesus is the same as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (2 Timothy 2.3).

He remembers Timothy and what an encouragement the young man has been to him in the faith (2 Timothy 1.2). The pastoral epistles make a strong case for intergenerational relationships within the church.

Paul reminds Timothy of the faith of his mother Lois and grandmother Eunice (Timothy’s father was an unbelieving Gentile). We must recall the godly influence of those who have gone before.

Paul reminds Timothy that God had established and equipped him for leadership in the church and Christian service.

In trial, press forward with God’s power, love, and self-control

“Do not be afraid” is the most repeated command in Scripture (2 Timothy 1.7). This tells us we are prone to worry and that we must rehearse this truth.

Paul reminds Timothy that natural talents are never enough to execute Christian mission. Every Christian must rely on God’s power for the real work to be done. God endowed Timothy with gifts for ministry.

In this sense, we see how often God used unimpressive people to advance His mission. God uses people only insofar as they admit their need.

Power – God changes hearts by His Spirit through His Word. We can think of how God converted the Philippian jailer when all seemed lost (Acts 16.25-40).

Love – Christians remain “others minded” in such a way that expects nothing in return.

Self-control – As we resist the world, the flesh, and the Devil, will we remain level-headed and Christ minded in all situations (2 Timothy 4.5, Cf. Acts 24.24-27)?

If we don’t keep the fire alive, it will die out (1 Timothy 1.6).

Key Ideas: Keep ministering with God’s gifts.

Application Questions:

What is the significance of Paul’s greeting in this letter (2 Timothy 1.1-2)? What truths does he communicate from the start?

What do these verses tell us about the value of a God-honoring home? How about intergenerational faithfulness?

What does Paul mean by a spirit of “power, love, and self-control”? Why is each of these important as we follow Jesus?

How can we “fan into flame” the spiritual gifts that God has given us (Cf. 1 Peter 4.10-12)?