

**Text:** 2 Timothy 1:1-5

**Title:** Paul's Last Letter

**Truth:** Paul greets his beloved son in the faith.

**Date/Location:** Sunday May 15, 2016 at FBC

## Introduction

Paul is writing to Timothy at Ephesus. He is writing sometime after A.D. 64 when Nero blamed Christians for the burning of Rome and made their religion illegal. It was without question that Paul was, humanly speaking, a leader of the Christian movement, so he was arrested and incarcerated. He was expecting imminent death (2 Timothy 4:6).

2 Timothy has a mix of solemnity in the face of death and trust in the sovereignty of God. Paul includes the normal greetings, like in all of his letters, but many significant 'final words' are included as well. The letter gives the younger Timothy, who by now is at least in his 30s if not older, some parting instructions that will carry him and those following him through their ministries.

## I. Greeting, v. 1-2

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.

### A. From Paul

A. Apostle of Jesus Christ, with the authority to command in God's place.

Paul was not only a spiritual father to Timothy, he was a spiritual superior to him. He did not exercise that authority with hubris, but rather did so with humility.

B. According to the promise of life – this promise of life is found in the gospel, and the gospel is the standard of Paul's message, mission, and life. What the gospel says is this: you who are the living dead (spiritually—in sin) can have eternal life through Jesus Christ. You cannot have it any other way. Someone may say they don't want Christianity because they want life NOW, in this world. That's what the spiritually dead person always says. The wise person looks beyond this life to the Giver of Life and the end of life.

## B. To Timothy

1. He is a son in the faith, meaning that Paul saw him as a product of his ministry. Timothy was a believer before Paul brought him into service (Acts 16:1), but Paul had such an influence on his life that he considered himself like an adoptive father to Timothy.
  2. I think it is necessary here to comment about the non-transferability of apostleship from Paul to anyone, including Timothy. Paul could not pass down apostolic credentials to Timothy even if he wanted to. If he were going to do something like that, this is the book where we would expect it to happen, or at least to be sealed and finalized. But we see nothing of that sort here.
    - a. Such credentials are not transferable or inheritable, for they include commissioning directly by God; seeing the resurrected Christ; and working of miracles. No indications are given in Scripture that there is a succession in any of these things. You cannot pass down an eyewitness experience or encounter. The working of miracles by individuals has obviously ceased long ago after the NT canon was completed.
    - b. Having this clearly in mind saves us from the cultic claims of succession from the apostles or first pope, which go along with extra-Biblical and anti-Biblical doctrines and requirements laid upon the flock which are far from the will of God for His people.
    - c. This "non inheritability principle" has broader application than just to the apostolic ministry. Not much regarding Christianity is inheritable. For instance, you cannot inherit faith, salvation, or spiritual gifts from your parents. They may be able to "catch" or pass down doctrinal truth, passion, and confidence. But spiritual "parents" are better described as examples. Such things come ultimately from *another* source—not a human source—the Bible and the Spirit of God.
    - D. This helps us to understand that we do not become Christians when we are born into a Christian family. No one is physically born as a Christian, despite how many might say they are 'christian' because they are not Jewish or Muslim or Buddhist or whatever. We have to be born of God *ourselves* through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot rest on the faith of our parents.
- C. Salutation. Paul gives fairly standard New Testament greeting to Timothy, wishing for his spiritual health. Grace, mercy, and peace are at the heart of Christianity, and they come equally from God the Father and the Son.

## II. Thanksgiving, v. 3-5

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 in you also.

- A. Paul probably has lots of time for prayer and so he does so constantly, day and night. He gives thanks to God concerning Timothy because of the memories Paul has of him and his mother and grandmother.
- B. Paul also has time to reflect also on his service to God. He gives us a wonderful example to follow: someone who serves God, always striving to have a pure conscience. On this concept of service and conscience, see Acts 23:1, 24:16; Romans 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; Hebrews 13:18.
1. How could *Paul* have a pure conscience, when he admits that he persecuted the church (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Philippians 3:6)? This is the power of the gospel of Christ. Yes, it is true that he did those things, even approving of the murder of Stephen (Acts 8:1). But he was subsequently washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 6:11). So it can be with you and your sins. Don't dwell guiltily on all your past sins, supposing that grief can repay debt. It can never repay the debt of sins. Acknowledge your sins; confess them; repent of them; and move ahead, living better for the Lord.
  2. The conscience is an important thing in our lives. It is an integral element of our mind. The word or idea is used at least 30 times in the New Testament. Basically, the conscience is the internal mechanism that all humans have which convicts us that we have done something wrong or affirms that we have done right. In too many cases the conscience is inoperative because it has been badly damaged by unbelief and sin, or it is misinformed so as to be poorly operational. We must ask God to help us to be sensitive to sin and properly informed in God's Word so we know what true right and wrong is.
  3. Notice that Paul connected his service to that of his forefathers, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was following their faith, not a totally different, illegal new faith. Christianity is organically connected to the Old Testament Mosaic system—not modern Judaism—but true Old Testament religion.

- C. Paul wants to see Timothy very much. The situation of Paul now is very tenuous. Here's what apparently happened:
1. He was released from the Acts 28 imprisonment.
  2. He traveled about some more and ministered with Timothy. He was in Ephesus, it appears, after being there years earlier in Acts 20.
  3. From Ephesus, he traveled into Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). At this point he may have left Timothy behind, and the occasion was a very emotional thing. Paul remembered those tears that Timothy shed. This was like it had been in Acts 20:36-37 years earlier for the Ephesian elders.
  4. The evidence indicates Paul may have had to leave Troas quickly—perhaps in fear of his life, or under arrest (2 Tim. 4:13, because he left his cloak there, and important books).
  5. In any case, he was re-arrested and jailed under much worse conditions than his first imprisonment. Compared to his earlier house arrest (Acts 28:17 and 30-31), this new situation was cold and isolated (2 Tim. 4:11, 21).
  6. He was, humanly speaking, desperate to see Timothy again. They were closest of friends and ministry partners. Notice 2 Tim. 4:9, 11, 13, and 21 along with 1:4. It appears that because Paul knew that the end of his life was very near (4:6, 17), and he was almost totally alone, he wanted company and encouragement.
- D. How can Paul used words like "filled with joy" in this circumstance? I believe he would rejoice to see Timothy face to face again, and to have the benefit of the supplies he would bring. These simple pleasures bring joy even in the face of execution.
- E. Paul gives thanks at the remembrance of Timothy because of Timothy's genuine faith—which Paul is convinced is real—and because of Timothy's godly family. His mother and grandmother were faithful Jewish women, and they evidently became Christians when Christianity became disclosed to the world after the resurrection of Christ.

## Conclusion

There is no explicit instruction in these verses. But there sure is a great example. And here is a reminder that a godly heritage is a blessing—both for Paul and for Timothy. Let us serve God like the best of our forefathers and mothers without fear of death.

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