

A Mission With Passion II Timothy 1

Introduction

Today I want us to take a look at the Apostle Paul's words for his young student from the book of II Timothy. The message of 2 Timothy is one that will grab you and won't let you go.

Listen to the opening words of Paul in Chapter 1, " Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 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, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy 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. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2Ti 1:1-7 NKJV)

To grasp the message of this interesting letter, we need to consider its background. We know that II Timothy was Paul's final book. Many scholars consider this letter to be Paul's "last will and testament." Paul was incarcerated in a Roman prison when he wrote this letter. In verse 16, he specifically mentions his chains.

The precise details are hard to pin down, but the chronology goes something like this. At the end of the book of Acts, we see Paul under house arrest in Rome, but he can receive guests and teach and preach to them. But at some point, he is released and resumes his missionary ministry. Later, however, he is arrested again (probably at Troas) and charged with a crime. The crime may have been one of treason for preaching about the Kingdom of Christ. Jewish leaders would often twist the message of Christ's Kingdom to be an attack on the Roman emperor to silence the Christian message. So once again, Paul is sent to Rome for trial. But, this time, he is condemned to death. Tradition says he was beheaded by the emperor Nero in 66 A.D.

We also know that the church was facing a crisis at this time. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, the church spread rapidly across the Roman Empire during the first several years. Initially, there was limited resistance and persecution towards the gospel message. The church, for the most part, received a warm reception beyond Jerusalem, especially in the Gentile world.

But that all changed in A.D. 64 when Nero burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians. That began a wave of persecution for Christians across the empire. Suddenly, it became dangerous and sometimes deadly to be a Christian. As a result, many believers drifted into the shadows and became silent. It was no longer fashionable to mention your faith in public. Many of the fringe Christians no longer

wanted to be associated publically with other believers. Fear and panic began to grip the hearts and minds of those who were followers of The Way. It was more comfortable to declare your loyalty to the Empire and much safer not to get involved with Jesus or his followers.

False teachers also began to creep into the church and usurp positions of influence in many of the local churches. They claimed to follow Christ but denied the major tenets of the Christian faith. A surprising number of believers were taken in by their false teaching. False teachings made it easier to be a Christian without being offensive, political or having to suffer. From his prison cell, the Apostle Paul saw all these ominous developments and realized things would probably get worse before they got better.

During his final days, Paul was virtually alone in Rome. It's not surprising that very few came to his aid after Rome condemned Paul to death. Some who supported his earlier missions found convenient reasons to forget about him. Others, he sent away to minister in other areas (probably to spare them). Only Luke remained with Paul in Rome. For Paul, Timothy represented the up-and-coming generation of emerging Christian leadership.

Paul is much older now, and Timothy is his young and trusted colleague. Paul is in his late 60's while Timothy is probably in his early 20s. Timothy is deeply devoted to Paul. He's spent a lot of time with him, and they've faced many difficult situations together. Timothy seemed to have a sensitive, emotional, and somewhat timid disposition. He probably felt overwhelmed by the responsibilities being thrust on him. And he was undoubtedly overcome at the thought of his mentor's approaching death. In this final letter, we see Paul passing the torch of Christian leadership from one generation to another.

One of the most exciting Olympic events is the 4x1 sprint relay. Four runners combine to race 100 meters, passing the baton as each runner finishes his part of the race. Coaches say that the most critical moment in the relay race is not the beginning or the end of the race; it's the split second when one runner places the baton in the hand of the next runner. If there is a bobble, or if the baton is dropped, the race will be lost.

So it is with the Christian message. Each generation has a sacred obligation to pass the truth along to the next generation. Parents are responsible make every effort to see that their children follow the Lord. Church leaders must continually look to the future, or the church will die. The Christian movement is always only one generation from extinction. It's not enough to say, "I believe in Jesus." We must do what we can so that the next generation comes to believe in him as well. We must pass the truth along because we will not be here forever.

I. Never Give Up

It is always too soon to quit! That's how Paul felt even at the very end of his life.

2 Timothy is Paul's letter as a departing mentor to his dear friend, but it also contains a message for those in Christian leadership. Every serious Christian needs to heed these words. Those who face opposition in their service for Christ will find Paul's words, especially encouraging. The darker the days and the longer the adversity, the more tempted we are to despair. But Paul's view reminds us that the darker the night, the brighter the light shines.

On October 29, 1941, at the school he attended as a boy, Winston Churchill delivered his now-famous speech saying, "...never give in, never, never, never, never, in nothing, great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense." He went on to say, "Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy." Those were desperate times. He gave this speech before America entered the second world war when Great Britain was on her own. Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, and so many other nations had fallen in the wake of Hitler's blitzkrieg!

It's a truism that hard times bring out the best and worst in people. The Apostle Paul found it easy to say, "There's no turning back for me!" For true believers, it's always too soon to quit! 2 Timothy contains the final words of a man who knows his days are numbered. Some think Paul died within weeks of writing 2 Timothy. Paul knows the end is clear. He's fought the good fight and finished his work.

Never again will he preach to great crowds or challenge the intellectuals on Mars Hill. Gone are the days of sharing the good news about Jesus in Jerusalem's temple courts or preach on the streets of Corinth. There will be no more missionary journeys to Asia Minor and Greece. No more sailing the high seas or teaching Gentile converts across the Roman Empire. Those days are now gone forever. Paul's journey has resolved itself into a few remaining and simple tasks.

He now wants to make sure the message lives on after he is gone. He is eager to make sure the baton passes flawlessly to Timothy. He wants to make sure Timothy is ready and knows what to do when it's his time to carry the baton.

It's irresponsible not to pass on to others what you live for. It's equally irresponsible for one generation not to make ready for the next generation. It's our duty to try and make this world a little better place than we found it! And, there is no retiring from making provision for your faith in Jesus Christ to be passed on.

You cannot save your children or grandchildren or anyone else for that matter. Only Jesus can do that! But we do have a holy calling to protect the faith and make sure those around us know how deeply committed we are to God. Your faith, hope, and love for God will always have an impact on those around you when you embrace the Christian mission with an intense passion.

This letter is for all those tempted to throw in the towel and quit living and sharing their faith. This letter reminds us that the gospel is worth the battle and that God is always faithful to equip us, strengthen us, and help us to uphold the truth of His word.

Chapter 1 tells us how Paul begins to pass the torch. In a very personal way, Paul begins by telling Timothy that he has confidence in him and calls him to stand firm even if it means suffering for the sake of the gospel. You can only stand firm when steadfastly anchored to what you believe. So Paul adds, "Timothy, remember your heritage."

II. Remember Your Heritage.

In verse 3, Paul says that he served God just as his forefathers did, with a clear conscience.

Paul also reminds Timothy of his sincere faith, which he says, first lived in your grandmother Lois and then in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." He appeals to Timothy to remember the wonderful spiritual heritage that goes back at least two generations. His grandmother Lois was a godly woman who picked up the torch of truth and handed it down to her daughter Eunice who passed it on to Timothy.

We all have a heritage, a family tree. We all have a spiritual history—whether good or bad. You may have several generations of Christians in your family, or you may be a first-generation Christian. But we are Christians because someone influenced us with undeniable faith that caused us to come to Christ.

The New Testament truth is no one comes to Christ entirely on their own. God always uses a Paul to find a Timothy. Remember your spiritual heritage, and never abandon your faith in Christ.

III. Resist Resentment and Complaining

Sometimes resentment and complaining begin to creep into your life when things don't go the way you want them to. But, there is no resentment from Paul and no complaining over his faith journey even though it hadn't been easy. Paul's life in Christ was full of suffering, persecution, and difficulties. But he never complained about them. He wasn't even concerned about his present circumstances or his imminent death.

Even at the end of his life, Paul is peering into the future, and He is delighted to see Timothy's emerging leadership. That's not always easy for the older generation. How would you feel if you knew that God has already chosen your replacement? "Have you ever prayed for those who will one day take your place?" Have you thanked God for the young people God will raise up to do the work you are now doing?

By God's grace, each of us will have the privilege of passing the baton to the next generation. Time itself guarantees that we all will have our day, and then our day will pass, and others will come to take our place. There is no time for resentment or complaining. We must do our work while we have the opportunity and mandate

to do it. Then, one day, God will raise up other hands which will hold the helm, other voices that will speak and preach, other feet that will make the journey, and other hearts and minds that will set the agenda.

God is always looking for young people who will take up the mission of sharing Christ with a passion. We need young people today, who see Christian faith as God's hope for saving those whose lives are being destroyed by sin. We need young people who realize that church is a place to learn the ways of Christ and Christian living, not a place for fun and games.

That was the Apostle Paul's goal; To train young minds and hearts and voices. That is the great challenge of leadership in every generation. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, King David, Daniel, The Disciples, the Apostle Paul, and on and on, from generation to generation, they took up the challenge. Each of them carried the torch of faith to their own generation and then passed it on.

Acts 13 says, "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay." (Act 13:36-37 NASB)

One thing this coronavirus has caused me to do during these days is to re-evaluate my call and my purpose as a Christian in this 21st century. I wonder if there is more as a church, we could be doing to fulfill the Great Commission to take the gospel message to all the world. Time runs backward for no one. To the Corinthians, Paul said, "Behold, now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation." (2Co 6:2 NASB)

The coronavirus may have changed our world, but it has not changed our faith! Resentments and complaining will never change things, but faith in action will!

Conclusion

If Paul were here, he would challenge everyone one of us, "To stir up the gift of God which is in you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." (2Ti 1:1-7 NKJV)

Life will throw a lot of things at you. Pay attention to all of it, but don't believe everything you hear. If you listen to the wrong advice, you will become resentful and complaining and wander off into the darkness.

Listen to the advice from the Word of God. God says, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word will never pass away." Remember your Christian heritage. Never abandon your spiritual moorings. Hebrews 12 says, "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble. See that no one is sexually immoral, or godless like Esau, who for a single meal, sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done." (Heb 12:15-17 NIV)

One of the most godless persons in scripture is Esau. Even though he had great light and every possible opportunity to know and follow God, he chose the wicked way of the pagans. He knew God's word; he heard God's promises. He saw God's miracles and lived with God's people. Yet, he willfully turned his back on God, despised his heritage, and abandoned his faith.

The Apostle Paul, however, turned to God and chose to spread God's light and love to anyone and everyone who would listen. His message to us is, "Never give up and never turn back!" Adversity will come, temptations will come, sufferings will come, but, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Rom 8:37 NIV)

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