

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday , May 24, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



Foundation for Faithful Ministry
2 Timothy 1:1-5

"¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I 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, ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵when 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 1:1-5 (NKJV)

Application Questions

- 1. Are American Christians too emotionally fragile when it comes to serving Christ? How can we avoid discouragement when we encounter criticism or disappointments in our service?*
- 2. How can a Christian know where God wants him/her to serve? What guidelines can direct us?*
- 3. Agree/disagree: Christians should view the retirement years as an opportunity for greater service for the Lord, not as a time to pursue more selfish pleasure.*
- 4. Why is it important for every Christian to realize that he/she is in the ministry? Is the concept of "layman" misleading?*

INTRODUCTION

When you know your time is short, what do you say to... tell those who you care most about? What would you want to say to your spouse, your children, your friends, The Apostle Paul knew his time on earth would soon be up, so he wrote to his young protégé, Timothy, about how to continue on without him – about how to grow a healthy and strong local assembly of believers organized for a common purpose... the glory of God.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said, "If you're not dead, God's not done using you."

Compare and Contrast of 1 & 2 Timothy

Key Verses in 1&2 Timothy:

1 TIMOTHY = 1 Timothy 3:15 - "I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

2 TIMOTHY = 2 Timothy 2:15 - "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Key Focus of 1&2 Timothy:

FOCUS OF 1 TIMOTHY = Guard sound doctrine and godly conduct in the local church

FOCUS OF 2 TIMOTHY = The Christian life includes risk and sacrifice, but it's more than worth it

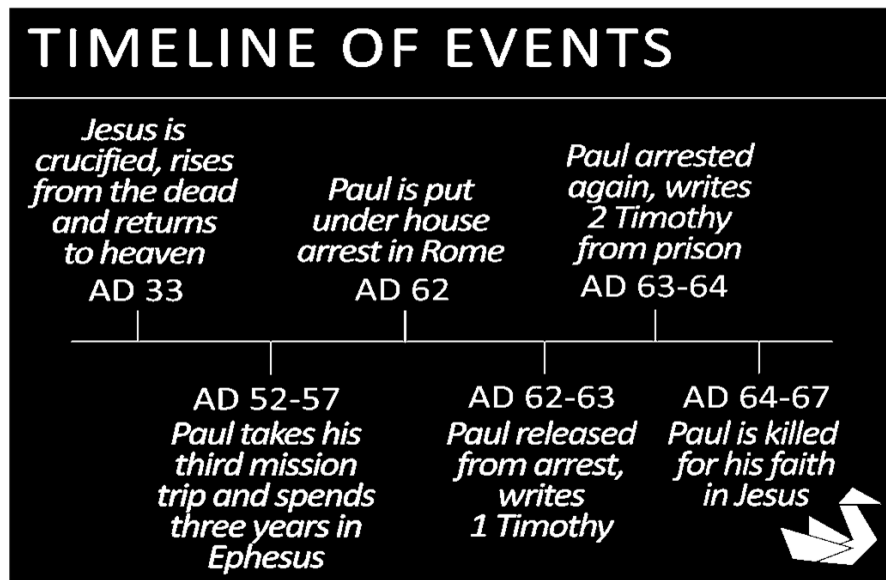
Paul's last letters to Christians tell us what we need to know about living faithfully:

- (1) Follow the good examples of those before you who have held on to faith in hard times
- (2) Rely on the authority of the Bible and learn how to handle it correctly
- (3) Follow trustworthy doctrine and avoid pointless arguments
- (4) God inspired the Bible and equips Christians to do His work
- (5) God will grow His Church
- (6) God provides people to lead us and help us take next steps in our walk with Jesus
- (7) Live above reproach – it will help the world understand the gospel

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

-2 Timothy 4:7

The following is an approximate calendar of events which will orient us to the position that the Second Epistle to Timothy occupied in the ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote this epistle around A.D. 67. Let's work toward that date in Paul's life to get the full picture of what was taking place in Paul's life when he gets to this point.



Some Key Date in Paul's Challenging Life:

- [c. A.D. 52-57]- Paul takes his third mission trip and spends three years in Ephesus
- [c. A.D. 58]—Paul was apparently arrested in Jerusalem
- [c. A.D. 61]—This is the approximate time that Paul arrived in Rome. He had spent these three years in prison, going from one trial to another before different Roman rulers
- [c. A.D. 61–62]—Paul underwent his first Roman imprisonment. We do not have this recorded in the Book of Acts, which breaks off at the very beginning of Paul's first Roman imprisonment
- [c. A.D. 62–63]—Paul was released from prison, and during this period he covered a great deal of territory. It was during this time that he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus from Macedonia
- [c. A.D. 63-64]—Paul was arrested again. Before his death he wrote 2 Timothy
- [c. A.D. 64-67]—Paul was beheaded in Rome.

The two verses that state the theme and sound the tone of this second epistle are these:

2 Important Verses in 2 Timothy:

- (1) **2 Timothy 2:15** - *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (KJV).*
- (2) **2 Timothy 4:2** - *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (KJV).*

You can, I think, emphasize one word in this epistle above other words. We might call this the key word in 2 Timothy...

KEY WORD IN 2 TIMOTHY = Loyalty

The word is loyalty. Let me show you how it break down throughout Paul second letter to Timothy.

Loyalty in 2 Timothy:

- (1) Loyalty in our suffering = 2 Timothy 1
- (2) Loyalty in our service = 2 Timothy 2
- (3) Loyalty in times of apostasy 2 Timothy 3–4:5
- (4) Lord loyal to His servants in desertion = 2 Timothy 4:6–22

Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:

- (1) **2 Timothy is Paul's last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul's "Swan Song." The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,"* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty–five references to individuals.
- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul's warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as "total desertion of the principles of faith." So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don't think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul's "Swan Song," his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21st century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

With that let's give the very basic background information for 2 Timothy... we'll lay the background through a few question we ask of the book...

Background Questions for 2 Timothy:

- (1) **Who wrote the book? = The Apostle Paul** - By the time Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy

had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. Since then, Timothy had ministered alongside Paul for the duration of both the second and third missionary journeys, in places such as Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. Timothy was not unfamiliar to the Ephesians when he settled in Ephesus to minister, having served there alongside Paul for a period of close to three years on Paul's third missionary journey. Paul wrote again to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of difficulties and trials.

- (2) **Where are we?** = **A prison cell Rome** - Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a dark and damp Roman prison cell, just before his death in AD 67. The Roman emperor Nero had been slowly descending into madness since his ascent to the throne in AD 54, a process exacerbated by the great fire of Rome in AD 64 that burned half the city. With the residents of Rome in an uproar, Christians became a convenient target for Nero, who used believers as scapegoats for his city's own lack of preparedness. Paul was one of those caught up in this persecution and was beheaded by Roman officials soon after writing this letter.
- (3) **Why is 2 Timothy so important?** = **Paul's last letter (his last words)** - The second letter to Timothy offers a picture of Paul at the end of his ministry, just before his death. Certain personal details in the letter reveal a man settling his accounts and preparing for the inevitable. At the close of the letter, Paul mentioned a significant number of people—some who had wronged him and others who had served faithfully alongside him (2 Timothy 4:9–21). It is as if Paul were giving Timothy a “state of the church” address, updating Timothy on the current state of their acquaintances and friends so that the young pastor could carry on after Paul's departure.
- (4) **What's the big idea?** = **Stay faithful to fight the good fight** - Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle's impending death. (Indeed, at some point after this letter from Paul, Timothy was imprisoned for his faith [Hebrews 13:23]). Paul knew that Timothy's task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul wanted Timothy to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5–6; 3:14–15). The most striking feature of Paul's encouragement comes when the aging apostle used a phrase that showed up prominently in his letter to Timothy four years prior. In that earlier letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). But in this letter, Paul turned that phrase on himself, writing that he had “fought the good fight . . . finished the course . . . [and] kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). What a great encouragement it must have been to the young pastor of the church at Ephesus to know that his mentor boldly modeled his perseverance in the faith, even to the point of death.
- (5) **How do I apply this?** = **What kind of legacy of faith will you leave?** - Second Timothy brings us to the brink of death, forcing us to consider its reality and how we might react when faced with it. Paul's response instructs us still today. His mind was not on himself,

dwelling on the injustice that had befallen him. Instead, trusting that God had him right where He wanted him, the aging apostle turned his attention to others, specifically to the church and to his young protégé, Timothy. Where do you hope your thoughts linger as you come to the end of your days?

Imagine that we are at a marathon race. Many contestants are lined up at the starting point, but one especially catches your eye. He's in his sixties, but he looks much older. You can tell that his body has endured many hardships. The thought flits through your mind that the old guy could die on the course. You wonder, "Why is he even in the race?"

But as the race gets underway, you're amazed that the old man holds his own. In fact, he even pulls in front of the pack. And to your utter astonishment, as you stand at the finish line, you see him sprinting far ahead of his competitors. As he comes across the line, you expect him to collapse in a heap. But, instead, he turns and trots back to an earlier point in the course where a younger man in his late thirties seems to be losing steam. The older man jogs alongside the younger man, saying, "Come on, you can make it! Hang in there! Don't quit!"

If that really happened, I would want to know, "What does this old guy have that I lack?" If I heard that he was going to speak on his training secrets, I'd show up and take notes. Clearly, the old man knows something about endurance. He is an example of how to finish well. I didn't make up that story. It really happened, but in the spiritual race, not in an actual marathon. We read about it in Paul's second letter to Timothy. The apostle was in his sixties, but his body bore the marks of much suffering. He was in a cold, damp dungeon in Rome, about A.D. 67, awaiting execution at the hands of the cruel madman, Nero.

There were numerous reasons that he could have been discouraged.

- In 2 Timothy 1:15, he writes, *"all who are in Asia turned away from me."*
- In 2 Timothy 4:10, he mentions Demas, whom he had formerly called a "fellow worker" (Philemon 24). But now he had deserted Paul, "having loved this present world."
- In 2 Timothy 4:14, he warns Timothy about Alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul much harm. Perhaps he had been responsible for Paul's arrest and imprisonment.
- In 2 Timothy 4:16, he pathetically writes, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me." Only Luke was with him (4:11)
- Not only that, but as the aged apostle awaited execution, he saw many serious errors infiltrating the churches. Hymenaeus and Philetus had gone astray from the truth, teaching that the resurrection had already taken place, thus upsetting the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:17-18).
- Other ungodly false teachers were entering households and captivating weak women weighed down with sins (2 Timothy 3:6).

- Paul knew that the day was soon coming when professing Christians would not endure sound doctrine, but would pile up teachers in accordance with their own desires to tickle their ears, turning from the truth to myths (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Bishop Moule said in speaking of Paul's world when we wrote 2 Timothy says, "*Humanly speaking, Christianity trembled on the verge of annihilation.*" (Studies in II Timothy [Kregel], p. 18). Huh! Don't we feel that way sometimes today? There truly is nothing new under the sun... there might have even been worse days than the ones we facing today... as least just as bad (if not worse).

★ **Think of it...if there was ever a prime candidate for discouragement, Paul was it!** Who could have blamed him if he had said, "I've had enough! I've given this thing more than my fair share of effort! I'm going to retire!" We would expect him to be a bitter, pessimistic, discouraged old man, his hopes and dreams shattered by overwhelming disappointments and setbacks. And yet we find him sprinting across the finish line and then jogging back to Timothy, who is pooping out, saying, "Come on, Timothy, keep going! Be strong! You can make it! Don't quit!" When this guy speaks about endurance in the Christian life, I want to listen!

We live in a culture where pastors are bailing out of the ministry in droves. A recent newsletter in reported that...

- 1,500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches
- 70% of pastors constantly fight depression (70%)
- 50% are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but they have no other way of making a living. They feel trapped and are despondent.

Not only pastors, but also many Christians, have burned out in serving the Lord. They have been wounded by criticism or conflict in the church. Some drop out of church entirely. Others attend occasionally, but that's all that they do. They don't want to risk getting hurt again. So they don't get involved in serving the Lord.

I suggest that any discouraged pastors and Christians need a good dose of 2 Timothy. It's a very personal letter, Paul's last, written to his beloved son in the faith, who was timid by nature. He probably felt inadequate for the tasks facing him. The problems were overwhelming. It looked as if Paul was about to be executed, and the mantle would fall on Timothy. William Hendriksen (*New Testament Commentary, I-II Timothy & Titus* Baker], p. 218) nicely sums up the dominant theme of the book, "Timothy, do not be ashamed, but by God's grace exert yourself to the utmost, being willing to endure your share of hardship in preserving and promoting sound doctrine."

In Paul's opening greeting and in his expression of thanks to God for Timothy (1:1-5), we see the foundation for a lifetime of faithful ministry. When I say *ministry*, I'm not referring

only to those who are called into so-called full time ministry. Paul himself would not qualify, since he often had to work to support himself in ministry. Rather, I'm referring to the biblical truth that *every* Christian is saved to minister according to his or her gifts. If you're a Christian, you were saved to serve, as we will see more next week. So you need to lay a solid foundation so that you will not burn out or drop out of the race.

A firm foundation for faithful ministry rests on knowing God's call on your life through the gospel.

Our text makes three points about this gospel foundation:

3 Important Points in the Foundation for Faithful Ministry:

- (1) The gospel brings us into a **personal relationship** with the **Father** through **faith** in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- (2) The gospel brings us into close, **life-changing relationships** with other **believers**
- (3) The gospel brings us into a life of **service** according to God's **will** and **gifts**

Let's take a look at each of these as we introduce this 2 letter to Timothy from Paul...

THE GOSPEL BRINGS US INTO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD

Paul begins (1:1-2), ***"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."*** In verse 5, he also mentions the sincere faith that he is sure dwells in Timothy. These words reveal three vital truths about the gospel:

3 Vital Truths About the Gospel:

1. **The gospel gives us the promise of life in Christ Jesus** - Paul was facing death, but he was focused on the promise of life in Christ Jesus (see also, 1:10). Christianity is not primarily a matter of religious rituals or a moral code to live by, although it does give us God's moral standards. Rather, Christianity is a matter of experiencing new life in Christ Jesus. By nature and by our many sins, we all were spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). Dead men do not need in the first place to hear about a better moral code to live by. They need *life!* They need God to raise them from spiritual death to spiritual life. The eternal life that God gives centers on knowing Him personally through His Son. Jesus said (John 17:3), "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." Or, as 1 John 5:11-12 puts it, "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." Paul says that this life is a *promise*. God is the Promiser. Paul mentions God three times in the first three verses. The promise is as reliable and secure as God is faithful. If God promises new life in Christ Jesus, then we can count on it, even when we're in a dungeon facing an unjust execution, when former friends have deserted us and spread falsehoods about us. This promise of life comes to us *in Christ Jesus*, whom Paul also mentions three times in verses 1-2. The other New Testament writers always use the order, Jesus Christ. But Paul, especially in

his later writings, often writes, Christ Jesus. Bishop Moule (p. 30) suggests that this order breathes a certain feeling of worship and intimate affection towards the Lord. It emphasizes His office as the Anointed One (=Christ, Messiah), embodied in the human Jesus, who revealed the Father to us. The mention of Christ Jesus our Lord in conjunction with God the Father, as the source of grace, mercy, and peace, is a strong affirmation of the deity of Christ. Clearly, for Paul, Christ Jesus was central. He *is* the gospel. To know Him is to have eternal life. Paul the persecutor had become Paul the apostle because God had intervened in his life, giving him eternal life according to the promise in Christ Jesus.

2. **This life comes to us by God's will through sincere faith** - Paul's conversion and his calling as an apostle both happened at the same time. When God struck down Paul on the Damascus Road, He told Ananias, whom He sent to restore Paul's sight (Acts 9:15), "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine...." Paul's salvation and his calling as an apostle were not by his human choice, but rather, by God's will and choice. Of course, salvation is received by faith. But the reason we believe in Christ is that before the foundation of the world, God willed to save us. I'm not making this up! Read Ephesians and you will see it clearly. Paul says (Eph. 1:4), "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He adds (1:5), "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." He repeats (1:11), "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will." Or (Eph. 2:8-9), "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Paul recalls (1:5) the "sincere faith" within Timothy, which first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice. Timothy's father was probably not a believer, but God used his godly grandmother and mother as links in the chain that led to Timothy's salvation. They taught him the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15), but then God used Paul's preaching to bring Timothy to saving faith. "Sincere" means, "unhypocritical." There is such a thing as hypocritical or false faith, but Paul was convinced that Timothy's faith was the real thing. It had to be *Timothy's* faith, not the faith of his grandmother or mother. God may use godly parents or grandparents to bring us to faith in Christ, but no one gets saved apart from sincere personal faith in Jesus Christ. By the way, these words should encourage any mothers who may be trying to raise your children without the help of a believing husband. Even though God's best is to have a godly father and mother training their children in the Lord, His grace and power can work in imperfect situations. Train your children in the Lord and pray for the influence of a godly man, who could take your sons further in the Lord, as Paul did with Timothy.
3. **The gospel brings us the benefits of God's grace, mercy, and peace** - We saw these three qualities in our recent study of 2 John. In Paul's writings, this threefold blessing occurs only in 1 & 2 Timothy (the addition of "mercy" in Titus 1:4 lacks solid manuscript support). Why did Paul add "mercy" in his letters to Timothy? I think it was because as he drew near to the end of his life and ministry, Paul was ever more aware of the reality of God's mercy to him, the sinner (1 Tim. 1:13-16). God's *grace* is His undeserved favor

to those who deserve His wrath. His *mercy* is His compassion to those who are in misery because of their sin. His *peace* is the result of being reconciled to Him because of His grace and mercy. These blessings come to us freely from God the Father who sent His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, to die for our sins.

Ask yourself, “Have I experienced new life in Christ according to God’s promise? Do I know personally God’s grace, mercy, and peace? Because of God’s sovereign will, do I now personally have sincere faith in Christ Jesus?” If you can answer yes, then you have a foundation for serving Him, no matter what trials it may bring into your life. You are not your own. “For you have been bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:20). God’s call on your life through the gospel is the foundation for a life of faithful service.

THE GOSPEL BRINGS US INTO CLOSE, LIFE-CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

This opening greeting oozes with Paul’s deep feelings of love for Timothy, whom he calls “*my beloved son.*” He constantly remembered him in his prayers and he longed for the joy of seeing him, even as he recalled Timothy’s tears on their last parting (1:3-4). Notice verses 3-4 of our passage, “*³I 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, ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy.*” We don’t know whether Timothy got to Paul’s cell before the sword fell.

Beyond Timothy, this short letter mentions many others that Paul knew and loved. There were **Onesiphorus** and his household (1:16-17), **Crescens**, **Titus**, **Luke**, **Mark**, **Tychicus**, **Carpus** (4:10-13), **Prisca**, **Aquila**, **Erastus**, **Trophimus**, **Eubulus**, **Pudens**, **Linus**, **Claudia**, and all the **brethren** (4:19-21). Paul was not a lone ranger Christian! Each of these dear brothers and sisters in Christ meant something to Paul. The relationships that they shared had changed them all.

Often when I counsel with someone who is struggling with a personal problem or a difficult sin, I ask, “Do you have a ‘Christian support’ group?” “Do you know any other brothers in Christ who could meet with you each week and help you in the things of the Lord?” Sadly, the answer is often, “No.” That’s not right! The Christian life is not just you and God. It is you and God and God’s people. You may be thinking, “It’s God’s people who are my problem!” That may be so. In fact, Paul mentions many people in this letter who had caused him grief (1:15; 2:17; 3:5-9, 11, 13; 4:3, 10, 14, 16).

Let me give you some “help” for when you are struggling as a Christian (with personal problems, difficult sin, spiritual struggles).

Helpful Hints for Christians Who Struggle:

- (1) **Remain committed to the church and God's Word** – Sometimes when we are struggle our inclination is to retreat from the church (“They’ll just judge me anyway!”) and God’s Word (too conviction). We may find ourselves ourself wanting to retreat from spiritual things and the things that make us feel worse about ourselves and what we may be going through, not wanting to be confronted with our struggles. **It’s only as you remain committed to God’s people in a local church and work through your problems in accordance with His Word, that you will grow as a Christian and have a foundation for serving Him.**
- (2) **Look for wise and godly Christians you can trust** - Try to look for both a Paul and a Timothy in your life. Ask God for an older man (or, a woman for women) who can be a friend and an example of godly maturity in your life. And, look for a younger man (or, a younger woman for women) that you can help to grow in Christ. These relationships that we form through the gospel should cause us to thank God and to pray continually for one another (1:3).
- (3) **Recognize and rely on the support group God has placed around you** – And if you “truly” have none, get connected to a strong, New Testament, Bible preaching/teaching church that will offer you strong support group

So, the gospel brings us into a personal relationship with the Father through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. It also brings us into close, life-changing relationships with others. Finally,

THE GOSPEL BRINGS US INTO A LIFE OF SERVICE ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL AND GIFTS

Notice **verses 1-3** again, *“¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, ²To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. ³I 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.”* Paul was called to be an apostle by the will of God. None of us are apostles, but each of us has received a spiritual gift that God expects us to use to serve Him in some capacity (1 Pet. 4:10-11). **There should be no benchwarmer Christians.** As Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12, there aren’t any spare parts in the body. He wasn’t talking about a “spare tire,” of course! But except for that, we need every part of our bodies to function.

But, why does Paul emphasize his apostleship in a letter to Timothy, who knew full well that Paul was an Apostle?

3 Possible Reasons Paul Mentions His Apostleship:

- (1) **A reminder to those who did not know of his Apostleship** - Some suggest that it was because Paul intended for these pastoral letters to be read more widely, and he wanted all of his readers to be reminded of his divine appointment as apostle.

- (2) **To defend himself against attacks** - Many were attacking Paul, saying that a true apostle would not be imprisoned. Paul wanted Timothy and others to recall the dramatic story of how God had appointed him to this office of apostle.
- (3) **A reminder of his calling** - He also was emphasizing to Timothy that he had not volunteered for the job. Rather, he had been drafted! Timothy was faltering in the race. Maybe he was thinking, as every pastor has, “I’ll bet there is an easier line of work to get into! Maybe I should consider a career change.” But Paul says, “I am an apostle *by the will of God*.” I’m not in this line of work because I went to a guidance counselor who said, “Your aptitude tests show that you’d make a good apostle.” It wasn’t my career of choice. Rather, it was the will of God.

Why does Paul mention serving God with *a clear conscience* the way his *forefathers* did in verse 3? *“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.”*

2 Reasons Paul Reminds Timothy of His Clear Conscience and Forefathers:

- (1) **As a reminder he was dying for his faith** - Paul was about to lose his head for the faith. At such times it’s important to remember that you’re dying for the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Elijah, and all of the other faithful men of God in history. You’ve been handed the torch and you’ve got to carry it faithfully and hand it off to those who come after you. Like Paul was doing with Timothy
- (2) **As a reminder that Christianity was not a new cult, but a fulfillment of all of God’s promises** - Both Nero and the Jews were persecuting Christianity as a new cult. Paul is saying, in effect, “This is not a new cult. This is the culmination and fulfillment of God’s promises to the Jewish fathers. They looked forward to the promised Messiah. Christ Jesus is the promised Messiah, in whom we also believe.” So Paul was making the point that he was in the mainstream of the history of God’s purposes as revealed in the Old Testament, but now fulfilled in Christ.

If you’re feeling like dropping out of the race, read about the heritage of godly men in the Bible and in church history. They have persevered through incredible trials, disappointments, loss of loved ones, persecution, and martyrdom. *As I’ve said before, I’ve learned more by reading Christian biographies than from any other source, except for the Bible itself (which also has many biographies).*

Paul mentions *servicing* God with *a clear conscience*. “Serve” means to serve as an act of worship. “Clear” is literally, “cleansed.” It does not imply perfection, but it does imply walking in reality before God, confessing your sins to Him and to those you have wronged, so that you don’t fall into hypocrisy. Paul knew that God examines the heart (1 Thess. 2:4), and so he lived to please God on the heart level (2 Cor. 5:9). He knew that soon he would be standing before God, to give an account of his ministry. So will each of us.

CONCLUSION

Are you running in the race, serving God in accordance with the gifts He has bestowed on you? You may say, "I'm retired. I've already put in my time." But there's nothing in the Bible about retiring from serving God. Paul was an old man in jail, but he says, "God, whom I *serve*" (present tense). God doesn't have a retirement program!

Some Common Excuses We Make for Service:

- (1) **Not qualified** - You say, "I don't feel qualified to serve." Neither did Timothy. He was in over his head. So was Paul. He exclaimed, "Who is adequate for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). ***Remember if God calls you He qualifies you... you are qualified***
- (2) **Not physically fit enough** - You think, "But I'm not in the best of health." Neither was Timothy. He had frequent stomach and other ailments (1 Tim. 5:23). ***Remember that God can work in and through us despite our weaknesses, handicaps and suffering***
- (3) **To introverted** - You say "But I'm shy and introverted. I don't have the personality to lead." Neither did Timothy. ***Remember that God is not concerned with your ability, but your availability***
- (4) **Over critical people** - You say "But I tried serving and people criticized me." Yes, talk to Paul. Here's this old geezer, sprinting across the finish line, and then he comes back to you as you're ready to drop out of the race. ***Remember God can shut the mouths of lions***

Paul says, "If God has called you through the gospel and given you new life in Christ, then you've got to hang in there. Don't drop out! Keep going! Eternity is just ahead. Then you can rest."