

Needed Courageous Christians

2 Timothy 1:1-7

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When you come to the second epistle of Timothy, it has a very special and unique appeal. Let me tell you why. First, tough times had fallen upon the Apostle Paul since he'd written his first epistle. When you come to 2 Timothy, I want to give you kind of a bird's-eye view of the whole setting. You're in what are called the pastoral epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. They are called pastoral epistles because they are written to pastors. They are written to Timothy and Titus. The chronological order of these letters is interesting—1 Timothy, Titus, and then 2 Timothy—and the reason being is that 2 Timothy is actually the very last letter or epistle that Paul ever penned.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, he was traveling as a missionary. Now, at the end of the book of Acts, Paul had his first imprisonment. Paul had two imprisonments. During his first imprisonment (Acts 28), he was what we call under house arrest. He was arrested because of religious reasons. There was an uprising in the temple in Jerusalem where the Jews freaked out and grabbed and brought him. He then appealed to Caesar, so he wasn't really arrested by Rome as a prisoner of Rome or as a problem to Rome. It wasn't really a political issue. It wasn't a national issue. Paul was a Roman citizen, so he was treated very fairly and justly. During his first imprisonment, he wrote what we call his prison epistles. They are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Then he was released and traveled around for some time. As he was traveling around, difficult days begin to take place.

To me, this is fascinating. It was about 64 A.D. At that time, Caesar Nero, the emperor of Rome, it's believed, set fire to his own city—the fire that burnt the city of Rome. Word went out that Caesar was responsible for it. He was motivated to be able to try to build a bigger, grander, and more glorious Rome; so to kind of deter the focus on him being the instigator of this fire, he blamed it on the Christians (this is a long story, very short, believe it or not). This was kind of late summer of 64 A.D., and by the fall of 64 A.D., persecution had broken out against the believers, against Christians. It was the great persecution under Caesar Nero, the first great Roman onslaught of killing and arresting Christians, and Christianity became an illegal religion in the Roman Empire.

Paul, being the leader of Christianity, was arrested a second time. This time he was arrested by the Roman government as being an insurrectionist and was against the government, so he was an enemy of the Roman government. It was a very serious charge. Now, where Paul was when he was arrested, we don't know for sure. Some say he was in Rome, some say Macedonia, some say he was near the city of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey, but he was taken to Rome and imprisoned. Paul's situation was dire. Paul had the knowledge and understanding...and we're going to see it. I'm going to develop a lot more of the background as we go through the epistle. We'll get it in its context of the four chapters.

Paul was in a dungeon known as the Mamertine Prison. We can't be sure he was in the

Mamertine Prison, but history and church tradition tells us that he was in the Mamertine Prison. The Mamertine Prison was actually believed to be a cistern where water first was. All it has is a hole in the roof with metal steel bars over the hole, and they would drop the prisoner through the hole. It was rat infested, slimy, dirty, cold, and a very bad place. The very last few days or weeks possibly that Paul had, it's believed that he was in this Mamertine Prison. (Do we have one more shot of that? Give me that other angle.) This is a picture of the roof of the Mamertine Prison which is outside the city of Rome, so you can get kind of a feel.

Paul wasn't under house arrest. He couldn't have his friends come to him. He couldn't receive guests. It was a very difficult time. All of his friends during this time, because of the danger of this being a political prisoner and most likely going to be executed, forsook and abandoned him. We're going to see that when we get to chapter 4. He says, "Only Luke is with me," so it was a very lonely, difficult, and dark time for the Apostle Paul. Here's this great man of God who served God so faithfully for about 30 years, ends his days on earth in this Mamertine Prison.

Just to give you a couple of references, look at 2 Timothy 1:8 where Paul makes reference to his imprisonment. He says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God," in other words, "Don't be ashamed that I'm a prisoner," and "Don't be ashamed of the gospel, and be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ." Look at 2 Timothy 1:16, another reference to this imprisonment. He says, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." Again, there was a contrast between his first imprisonment when he rented a house and had liberty to have guests and people come to him, though he was chained to a Roman soldier, but he was well taken care of. Now, he has to defend himself. He's abandoned by everyone, and he's in chains. He's in this Mamertine dungeon is what it really was. Look at 2 Timothy 2:9. Paul says, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." Go back to 2 Timothy 1:1. Paul was in prison. It was a very difficult, hard, and very dark time.

Second Timothy is the most personal of the prison epistles. There's an interesting contrast between 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. When Paul wrote 1 Timothy, he wrote to Timothy as an individual, but the content was more about the church, doctrinal content about the work in the church, and the ministry of the church. Remember he said, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Now, listen carefully. The focus shifts from not so much doctrine, the church, and how to set up the church, (remember he had the qualifications for the elders and how to deal with widows and all that stuff) but the shift now is to the man, Timothy. The letter is very warm and very personal; and he's trying to encourage him. Paul was going through a difficult time, and Timothy was going through a difficult time.

Timothy was naturally shy, timid. He was young and had bad health. He was dealing with apostasy and false teachers who had come into the church. Paul's going to have some things in chapter 3 to say about the signs of the last days—that apostates would come, the love of

many are going to turn cold, and people are going to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God and have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Timothy was going through a very difficult time, so the letter is more personal and directed toward Timothy in trying to encourage him to stay faithful to his call and faithful to the deposit entrusted to him of the gospel.

Paul is writing his last letter to Timothy, and it's his last will and testament to his spiritual son in the faith. Let me give you just four simple reasons...we could go quite lengthy tonight with the background and survey of the whole book, but from each chapter, let me give you a key verse which kind of tells us what 2 Timothy is about. Look at 2 Timothy 1:14. Paul says, "That good thing which was committed," or entrusted, "unto thee keep," or guard, "by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." That "good thing" that was entrusted to Timothy was the gospel, and he was to guard and protect the gospel. This is so apropos to the day and age in which we live in when we see people turning away from the gospel of Jesus Christ to another gospel which is not really gospel at all. He's to guard the treasure, the gospel; and we're to do the same.

Look at 2 Timothy 2:3 for another key verse. It's pretty hard to pick out which are the key verses here because they're all so marvelous. Paul says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Not only is he to commit the gospel to others, but he is to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. First, he is to guard the treasure; second, he is to endure hardness; and third, he is to continue in the things which he learned. Look at 2 Timothy 3:14. Paul says, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Paul had taught, mentored, and discipled Timothy; and he's now encouraging Timothy to continue. So, guard the treasure, endure hardness, and continue in the things which you have learned. All of these are kind of exhortations. They are actually imperatives. There are more imperatives in this short little epistle than in any other in the New Testament.

Lastly, and fourthly, is my favorite. I can't wait to get there. In 2 Timothy 4:2, this is actually my life verse, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." He goes on to tell Timothy why he should preach the Word because men will "...not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." We live in that day and age right now. This epistle is so important for us today. We need to guard the treasure deposited to us. God has entrusted us with His Word. We are to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, continue in the things that we learned (we are not to stray from them), and preach the Word. Obviously Paul is speaking to a pastor and telling him to proclaim God's Word, but I think every one of us as believers as well are to preach and to teach and to herald the Word of God.

Now, to encourage Timothy to be faithful, that's what Paul is doing in this second epistle, so I've titled it: Living Faithfully. Don't be discouraged. Don't give up. Don't quit. Be faithful and keep going. Paul gives Timothy and us four encouragements to keep him going and living faithfully. They are also applicable to us. There are two things we're going to learn. We're going to learn

how to encourage our own hearts, this should encourage you tonight to keep going; and secondly, I want you to see it as a pattern. These are four things that you and I can do for others in the body of Christ to help them to live faithfully, to live courageously, and to help them continue faithfully in the faith, so write them down.

First, Paul encouraged Timothy by giving him his love in verses 1-2. Write that down—by loving him and expressing his love to him. Look at it with me. It starts with, “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, my dearly beloved son,” there’s that endearing term, “my dearly beloved son.” In his first epistle it was just “my son.” Paul knew he was going to die. Paul knew he wouldn’t live much longer. Knowing that he wouldn’t live much longer, he began to realize how important relationships are. If you knew you only had one day left, what would you do? You’d spend time with the people you love, right? You’d be expressing your love to them. If you went off to work one day and knew that you weren’t going to come back, I think you’d kiss your wife goodbye that day. You’d say goodbye to your children. We never really know what might be our last day—I just thought I would encourage you. Every day, when you go to work, you never know if you’re going to come home. Guess what? It’s true. You never know. When you go to sleep tonight—I’ll encourage you some more, okay—you don’t know for sure you’ll wake up in the morning, so kiss your wife and kiss your husband and say good night to them because, you know, that might be your last kiss. Hug and kiss your kids. If you’re a mom or a dad, tuck them in bed, give them a kiss, and tell them that you love them. Spend some time praying and sharing with them.

Paul is very warm and loving toward Timothy because Timothy was timid and facing a lot of hardships and obstacles. Paul wanted to keep him going, so he calls him, “my dearly beloved son,” and then he does this in his opening salutation or greeting (it’s typical Pauline greeting but different to these pastors), “Grace, mercy, and peace.” In all the other epistles it’s grace and peace, but Paul knows that these pastors need a little extra dose of God’s mercy, so he throws in mercy. He gives him, “Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” Interesting. Three times Jesus is mentioned here. He’s mentioned in verse 1, “Jesus Christ,” at the end of verse 1, “Christ Jesus,” and at the end of verse 2, “Christ Jesus our Lord.” Paul is a man who was focused on the Lord, and he had a Christ-centered ministry.

Go back with me for just a moment, “Paul, an apostle.” Sometimes people wonder, “Why would Paul, writing this very, very warm letter, knowing he’s going to die,” some say it’s Paul’s last will and testament, Paul’s swan song, when you get to chapter 4 he says, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course...Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” He knew he was going to die. He knew he would be put to death. Tradition says that he was taken outside the city of Rome and beheaded. The minute Paul’s head left his body, he was wearing a crown in the presence of the Lord. Amen? He had that hope. But, why would Paul say an apostle? He’s writing to Timothy. Timothy knows he’s an apostle. The reason behind that is that it’s not just for Timothy, but it would also be read to the entire church. This epistle would be read to the church, and Paul wanted it to carry that authority.

The word “apostle” means one who is commissioned and sent out on an errand. It would be an

ambassador today. He's an apostle, and he was an apostle chosen by the Lord. He saw the risen Lord and was commissioned by the Lord. He had apostolic authority. I don't believe that there are apostles in that primary sense today. I think it's wrong for a pastor to claim to be an apostle to try to usurp authority over people and have some kind of apostolic authority. Now, there might be a secondary concept of apostleship in that you're sent out by God. In that sense, guess what? You're all apostles. Did you know that you're an apostle? You're commissioned and sent out by God. Missionaries are apostles. They are sent out by God. There were the first 12 apostles, then Matthias, and then Paul, one born out of due time; and they could actually write Scripture. They could speak with apostolic authority, but that chain is discontinued. There are church groups that like to put themselves over others by claiming to have in a direct succession apostles, and that's just foolishness. So, Paul's an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Whenever Jesus comes before the word "Christ," the focus is on His incarnation, on His humanity, the Man who is the Christ. Then, when it is turned around at the end of the verse, "Christ Jesus," the emphasis and the focus is on His Messiahship and, no doubt, His deity, who is the Man Jesus. Notice the little statement, and I'm going to come back to it, Lord willing, in verse 1, he says he's called to be an apostle, "...by the will of God, according to the promise of life." I believe that "promise of life" is the promise of eternal life that is ours in the gospel. This is why the gospel is so glorious. Do you know what the gospel promises us? It promises us eternal life. We all know John 3:16, right? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the same as eternal life, so when someone hears the gospel, believes the gospel, and trusts Christ, they have eternal life. They have everlasting life. This is the promise of life.

How fitting for Paul to open in verse 1 with that "promise of life" because Paul was facing certain death knowing he was going to die. At the end of the book he pleads with Timothy to come to me before winter. It was cold in that damp, dark prison cell. He says, "Bring my coat, bring my things, and bring my parchments. Come to me before the winter." Paul knew that he was going to die, and he was going to be passing the torch to his young protege, Timothy. Timothy was very young and inexperienced. Paul was very old, but he knew that it was time to pass the torch of ministry to this young man, so the "promise of life" is very significant.

By the way, I do believe that Paul wrote 2 Timothy. Some people say that it was a forgery or not really a Pauline epistle. There's no doubt that Paul wrote this epistle. He's writing to Timothy. Now, Timothy is a young pastor and his name means one who honors God. He was a traveling companion of Paul, and I'll say more about him in just a moment. He was converted under Paul's ministry, probably during his first missionary journey. He lived in Lystra. He had a godly grandmother and mother who believed in Christ and became believers. Paul, on his second journey, picked Timothy up, and he became a traveling companion of Paul. Paul mentored and disciplined Timothy and then commissioned him to go to Ephesus. Most likely, we don't know for sure, Paul is writing to Timothy who is still in the city of Ephesus facing the opposition of false teachers and the difficulties there. He was an amazing person, and one of the cool things about Timothy, Paul says in Philippians 2, "For I have no man likeminded." In the King James

translation that word “likeminded” means of a kindred spirit. Everybody considers their own interests first; but not Timothy, he is likeminded. He wants to serve the Lord and will give himself for others. He’s writing to Timothy and uses this endearing term, “dearly beloved.” He refers to his love for Timothy and a reminder of God’s love for him.

Do you know what we need to do? We need to be more expressive in the body of Christ and with others of our love for them. We need to not feel so freaked out by that. You know, to be able to say, “I love you.” To be able to say, “I agape you.” They used that term in the New Testament. I think it’s really cool, they called each other beloved. That’s kind of mushy for us today to say, “Oh, beloved,” you know. It’s really a good term that they used for one another because it reminded them that God loves you and it reminded them, I love you. You know, if you want to keep somebody going during hard times you know what you do? You let them know you love them, and you let them know, “God loves you.” If you know somebody that’s facing difficulty right now and needs to be encouraged, write them a love letter. Write them a note, “I love you,” and we’re going to see, “I’m praying for you.”

This is step number one. Paul to encourage Timothy, to give him strength to be faithful to keep going, expresses his love. He uses the word charis, grace, God’s unearned, unmerited favor. We all need the grace of God. Then there is the mercy of God, God not giving us what we deserve. Lastly, is the peace of God. This is the Hebrew shalom. These greetings, the Greeks would say, “Charis,” grace, and the Hebrews would say, “Shalom,” which meant God’s peace. He wishes Timothy grace, mercy, and peace. The source of that is, “God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” We have Christ, we have Jesus, and kyrios, He’s our Lord. He’s the Messiah, He’s Jesus our Saviour, God or Jehovah who saves, and He’s our Lord and our Master.

In 1 John it tells us, “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God...He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” What does the Bible say? Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have,” what? Revival bumper stickers, right? That’s what it says in the Greek. No. It says that you have “love one to another.” Do you know what the birthmark of a true Christian is? Love. The Holy Spirit shed His love abroad in our hearts, so the point I want to make before I go to my next point is that we need to love each other and express our love to each other in order to encourage others. We need to be receiving that love and expressing that love. By the way, all of this takes place in the fellowship, the family of God.

Here’s the second thing Paul did to encourage his young protege Timothy, (and we could do it to encourage others) Paul prayed for him (verses 3-4). Paul says, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers,” some translations “as my forefathers,” “with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee,” Paul speaking of Timothy, “in my prayers night and day; 4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy.” Notice the things that Paul says in verse 3, “I thank God.” I’ve circled and highlighted that because Paul is in the Mamertine dungeon. He’s in a prison. He knows he’s going to die. He’s been arrested. Now, if you were in a dungeon and were going to be executed, would you be thankful? Would you have a thankful heart? It’s kind of cool that the Spirit of God puts the joy of God in our hearts, right? We talked on Sunday morning about the beatitudes and how to be happy, that

happiness isn't premised upon our circumstances. Here in this dungeon and knowing he's facing death, Paul says, "I thank God." This was kind of a normal opening for Paul as he would write letters. He would start with a greeting and then give a word of thanks. Paul had a thankful heart and says, "whom I serve," so he was serving God with a thankful heart; and we should serve God with a thankful heart even as his fathers had.

Paul also served God with a pure conscience. Note those three things—he served with a thankful heart, he served the Lord, and he was serving with a pure conscience. What an important thing that is to do—when we serve, we have a clear and a pure conscience. "...that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee," and the point I want to make is that he was praying, "in my prayers night and day." That phrase actually means I'm praying ongoingly, habitually, and continually. The Bible tells us to do what? Pray without ceasing. The Bible says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Some say, "Oh, come on. You can't tell me that Paul prayed without ceasing and that he prayed night and day." Yes, I can because that's what the Bible says. Now, I'm sure that not every millisecond Paul was praying, but he was in a constant attitude of prayer. He was always talking to the Lord. You know, as you go about your business, as you drive a car, even on the crazy busy freeway—as a matter of fact, when you're on the freeways—you'd better be praying. When you're working and doing other things, you can constantly be thinking of people, lifting them up and praying, talking to God, communicating with God. Paul had a prayer list, and Paul prayed for people. We ought to have a prayer list as well. You can put me on the top of your prayer list, and you can pray for me. I need prayer. You can pray for others in the church.

How do we encourage one another? We express our love and we pray prayers. You tell people, "I love you, and I'm praying for you." That's the way to keep them going. That's the way to be a recipient of encouragement, too, and to keep going and praying; so Paul says, "I pray for you without ceasing, night and day."

Notice this in verse 4, "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." I wish I knew more about the background of verse 4. We know that Paul was in prison and Timothy was in Ephesus. We know they loved each other, and it was an interesting spiritual father-son relationship. Paul was quite older than young Timothy, yet he loved this young man. He adopted him as a spiritual son in the faith. It would seem as though the context here is that perhaps Timothy was there when Paul was arrested. We don't know for sure, but it could be that he was there when he was arrested and he saw Paul, his father in the faith, chained up by the Roman soldiers and shipped away.

Now, when Paul met with the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20, he wasn't arrested, he wasn't in chains; but it's a very moving scene where he meets with these pastors on the beach at Miletus where they knelt down and prayed. Then it says they hugged each other. Do you know what the Bible says? They sobbed convulsively. You have these grown men...by the way, Paul was a man's man. Timothy was a little bit timid and a little bit soft, but Paul was a man's man. He was a real man's man, a real heroic heart. Paul was a man who could weep. It's not unmanly to weep. It's not unmanly to have tears. These, by the way, are Christian tears. They weren't

weeping because of sickness or loss of health or that their sandals were too tight and hurting their feet or some silly thing. They were weeping because they loved each other so much. You can imagine that they were torn apart and realized that they might not see him again. So, Paul says, "I just remember the tears that you had shed, Timothy, and I want to see you so that I might be filled with joy." As I mentioned in the last chapter, Paul appeals to Timothy, "Would you come and come quickly. Would you come before winter? Would you bring my cloak and parchments and books that I left. Bring them to me." What a picture this is of this father-son relationship between Timothy and Paul as he saw his tears, and I think of the bond that we can have in the body of Christ. I think of the love that we can have as brothers and sisters in Christ. What a blessed thing that is. Don't take it lightly.

I think that too many Christians don't take seriously enough the importance of the family of God. The older I get, the longer I'm around, the more I value relationships. It was a little over six years ago God called me to leave a congregation that I had been the founding pastor of as a very young man. I was there for 39 years. I still see the tears. I still feel the tears that were wept the day I stood in the pulpit and announced that God was calling me to another ministry. I'm crying, the congregation is crying, and we cried for quite a while as we hugged, embraced, and said our goodbyes. I think about the bond of love that we have in the body of Christ, the family of God. It's one of the things that keeps us going, by the way. You can't be alone. You need the fellowship. You need the encouragement, so there's the love, the prayers, and there's even the tears that Paul makes mention of that he saw that Timothy wept.

There's a third way that Paul encouraged Timothy (and that we can encourage others to keep going) in verse 5; that is, Paul expressed his confidence in Timothy. This is kind of interesting. He expressed his confidence in Timothy. You know, if you know that someone believes in you, trusts you, then it gives you encouragement to keep going on. Paul says, "I remember your tears, and I want to see you that I might have joy," but (verse 5) "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois," and this is where we get this insight to the family heritage of Timothy, "and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded," Paul said, "that in thee also." Paul was saying to Timothy, "Look, you have a rich, godly heritage. You have an unfeigned faith. It's genuine. It's sincere. It's real. I believe in you, Timothy. I have confidence in you." One of the things that can keep you going is if people have faith in you and people believe in you, and it's important to express that to others to give them confidence.

I love that phrase "unfeigned faith." The word "unfeigned" means that it's genuine, sincere, real, without mixture. We find in the New Testament the word sincere. The word literally means without wax. That means that there's no phoniness. There's no hypocrisy. It's authentic. It's genuine. There are no substitutes. There's no mixture there. It's the real deal. "Your faith is genuine. It's sincere. It's authentic, and I believe in you."

How is it that Timothy could be such a great man of faith? Well, he had a godly parent and grandparent. Specifically, he mentioned his grandmother and mother. Some theorize, and it's a good theory but we can't be dogmatic, that his dad wasn't a Christian. We don't know that, but

we do know that his dad was a Gentile. There were questions whether in the early years that his mother was that devoted as a Jew to marry a Gentile. I don't know. You'll have to ask her when you get to heaven, but obviously she came to faith and her mother came to faith. The point I want to make is that parents have great influence. Grandparents have great influence. Never underestimate the influence of a grandparent. Maybe your children aren't walking with God and you have grandchildren, well, you can be an influence on them.

I believe that I was influenced by my grandmother. I had a godly mother and a godly grandmother, but my godly grandmother had a great influence on my life. I remember, when I was growing up, the birthday cards. I lived in San Bernardino; she lived in Yucaipa. She would always send me birthday cards. I would see her every few weeks, but she would always write the same Proverb in Proverbs 1, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Don't go with sinners. Happy Birthday, John." She would just remind me every year, "Don't follow the sinful crowd." Man! That stuck with me when I got into junior high and high school. There were times I'd find myself in a worldly crowd and I'd remember my grandmother's birthday cards. That Scripture came back to haunt me and to bug me. I could never throw them away, by the way. I kept them in my sock drawers. I would come home from the worldly crowd and would open the card and read that passage, and the Spirit of God would convict me. That was from my grandmother. It wasn't from my mom, it was from my grandmother. So, Grandmothers, pray for your grandchildren and send them birthday cards with Scriptures in them because you never know what kind of an influence you can have upon them.

Timothy had a godly grandmother, her name was Lois; and he had a godly mother, her name was Eunice. We're going to see in a bit of this epistle that they taught him the Scripture from the time he was a child, so they had a great influence on his life. So, parents have a great influence. There was also the influence of the mentor, Paul the Apostle, as it indicates, "and I am persuaded that in thee also," Paul's influence and encouragement on this young man Timotheos or Timothy.

Let me give you the last thing Paul did to encourage this young man Timothy, and then we'll give it a wrap up. He reminded Timothy that God had given him a gift. So, he expressed his love, gave him prayers (he told him, "I'm praying for you;"), he expressed his confidence ("I believe in you;"), you have unfeigned faith and I believe in you, and he said, "God has gifted you," (verses 6-7). "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up," this is one of the main themes of the book of 2 Timothy, or fan into flame, "the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. 7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Paul encouraged Timothy by reminding him, "Timothy, God has gifted you."

We need to understand that when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, every Christian has been given a gift, whether you know what it is or not, whether you realize it or not. Every Christian has been given a gift. Paul makes that clear in Corinthians that the Spirit gives sovereignly to whomever He will. Now, we don't have all the same gifts. You might have multiple gifts, you might just have one gift; but you have at least one gift. Here's three guidelines for the gifts of

the Spirit. I shared it the other day. All the gifts that God has given you, use them in love, use them for others to build them up, and you use them for the glory of God. They're not for you to show off with or for you to brag about. They're for you to use in love for the benefit and blessing of others, to build them up, to encourage and strengthen them, and for the glory of God.

The instrument that God was using was frail, timid, shy, discouraged, and ready to give up, so Paul is writing words of encouragement. "God hasn't given us the spirit of fear. God's given us power," or "God's given us love. God's given us a sound mind," and "You can do it, Timothy." He's cheering him on. He's encouraging him on. "...stir up," what does it mean to stir up? The word "stir up" means to fan into flame. We're not to conclude by this that Timothy was backslidden, some have and that's a mistake. It doesn't mean, "Timothy, you're backslidden. Get right with God." It really is to convey to Timothy, "God has given you a gift, keep it going. Keep it active. Keep using it." It's kind of like the use it or lose it philosophy. Do you know that? If you don't use the gift God's given you, then you're going to lose the gift that God's given you, so you need to keep it active. Keep using it. It's a great responsibility when God gives you a gift, whatever that gift is—maybe it's the gift of giving, maybe it's the gift of encouragement, maybe it's the gift of teaching, maybe it's the gift of showing mercy, maybe it's the gift of helps—whatever gift that God has given you, you use it. Don't bury it. Don't hide it. Don't neglect it. Don't get distracted. Don't go away from it. God's called you to do something, be continually using it. The stirring up, as I said, the imagery there is that of stirring a flame that has gone to embers.

In the home we have down here in Murrieta, I don't have a real firewood fireplace, which I miss, but I remember when we used to build fires in our fireplace. You couldn't just leave it alone. If you start a fire in a fireplace and just leave it alone, it starts to die out. Right? You have to fan it a little bit. You have to adjust it and put more wood in it. You have to make sure the flue is open. You have to make sure everything is right and kind of get it started up again or it dies down. That's kind of the way it is in our service to the Lord. We have to keep fanning the flame. There are three things you need to do to do that. You need to pray, read God's Word and submit to the will of God in your life, and stay in fellowship and ministering to other people. You can't use the gift God has given you if you divorce yourself from other people. So, you pray, get in God's Word and build yourself up, and get connected with other people. That's how you keep fanning the flame and the embers in the fires that God has given you, and you use your gift by faith.

Notice what God has given to us (verse 7). This is a classic and very well-known and popular verse, but a lot of times it's interpreted out of context. "For God hath not given us," first the negative, what God hasn't give to us, "the spirit of fear." The word "fear" is timidity or cowardice. The question is, and I won't get too sidetracked but I found this of interest and fascinating to me today as I studied, whether the word "spirit" in verse 7 is to be capitalized with a capital "S," meaning the Holy Spirit or it's rightfully a small "s" meaning our human spirit. I may be wrong. I can't be dogmatic, and it could go either way, but I think that it's consistent and a good interpretation to say that it should be capitalized. Even some real good Greek scholars indicate that the "S" there should be a capital "S," that it's a reference to the Holy Spirit. We do

know the gifts God gives us are from Whom? The Holy Spirit. They are spiritual gifts, so you have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, but the distributor of the gifts is the Spirit of God; and he does distribute them as He wills.

Let's take it from the perspective that it is the Holy Spirit, "God hath not given us the spirit," which is the Holy Spirit, and it doesn't bring us to fear. It doesn't create fear. It doesn't cause fear. The word "fear" is the word timidity. It could relate to the word anxiety, but that's not from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't bring fear into our hearts. Remember, Timothy was what? He was timid. He was shy. He was apprehensive. Remember Paul had to say, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers." "Timothy, I know you're young and I know there are older people than you, but God's called you. Get out there and do the work of the Lord, and don't be intimidated."

I want to make an application for us tonight. Maybe God has given you a gift and maybe God has called you, but you're timid. You're like Timothy. There are still a lot of Timothy's in the church today. Maybe God is speaking to you about a ministry that God has called you to but you're afraid and you're pulling back and you're timid. You need to fan it into flame. You need to stir up that gift. You need to use it, in love, for the good of others and the glory of God. Don't be afraid. It's interesting, if God can use Timothy, God can use you and me. You know what else Timothy had? He had health problems. Paul said, "...but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." I'm encouraged by that, not because I want to drink wine, by the way. That didn't come off right, did it? I'm encouraged by that because I know what it's like to suffer physically. I know what it is to preach through pain. I know what it is to have a body that doesn't function right, and I know what it is to get discouraged and think, I can't preach anymore. I can't do this anymore. I don't have the strength. I don't have the stamina. I don't have the ability.

As a matter of fact, I'll be a little personal with you, this afternoon I was listening to me preach this text from 25 years ago. You should've heard the youthfulness in my voice. I was playing it off my phone and my wife walked into the room and said, "Is that you?!" I said, "It used to be me, but it ain't no more!" I mean, there was just a youthful vigor and an energy in my voice. I thought, Whoa! Where has that all gone? As I read this passage, it so encouraged me again that God uses broken vessels. God uses timid people. God uses people that have to be encouraged, "Come on! Don't be afraid. Trust the Lord! God's given you a gift. I love you. I'm praying for you. You can do this." We need to receive that encouragement, and we need to be givers of that encouragement.

I want to break it down for you to know that God hasn't given you the spirit of timidity or fear, but there are three things that He has given you. First, power. That word in the Greek is the word dynamis where we get our word dynamite. God's given you the power, so if you feel weak and inept and unable, God is your power. God uses weak instruments, and by His Spirit, He empowers us. All ministry must be done in the power of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, He gives us love. The word love is the word agape. This is a divine spiritual love that comes from the Holy Spirit. You can read about it in 1 Corinthians 13. We need to love the unlovely and love the

lost. We need to serve God with love. Thirdly, "...and of a sound mind." This is a verse I know quite well. My dad used to quote that when I was a boy. He's gone to be with the Lord, but I remember he used to always quote that, that God gives us a sound mind. Maybe he was afraid of losing his mind, I don't know, but he said, "God gives us a sound mind."

The word "sound mind," I want you to understand it, carries the idea of clear thinking and the idea of self control, so it's tied in not only with our mental thinking and our minds being sober-minded, clear-minded, clear thinking, but it also carries the idea of that we have self control. Some translations have, "God has given us power and love and self control." What good would love or power be if we didn't have self control? So, he's telling us that the Spirit of God, which all Christians have, brings to us His dynamis power, His agape love, and His clarity of mind which brings control to the way we live. The person that has this sound mind, by the way, is a person that thinks clearly. It also speaks of moral clarity—your mind is thinking clearly on moral issues. The point I want to make is that Timothy was weak and frail and that's who God would use.

Oswald Chambers said, "God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources." God uses us. Now, if you think you're something, then you have to come to learn you're nothing for God to use you; but if you understand you're nothing, and you're humble, and you surrender to God, then God can use you.

Remember when God called Moses from the burning bush? What did Moses do? Did he say, "I've been waiting, where have You been? I've been out here a long time. You should've called me a long time ago. I'm ready to rock and roll." Moses said, "Lord, please, get somebody else. I finally have a wife and a house and I'm a shepherd and everything's quiet and comfortable. I'm 80 years old. Call Aaron, my brother. I can't speak very well. He's a good speaker. You call him." God said to Moses, "No. I'm calling you." If anyone tried to get out of the call, it was Moses. It's interesting that God had to prove that God would work through Moses in his ministry, so he had Moses take the rod that was in his hand (don't you love that story?), that stick, and He said, "Throw it on the ground." He threw it on the ground and it turned into a snake. He went, "Aaarrggh!" and freaked out. I would, too. There's a snake crawling on the ground and God says, "Pick it up." I would've said, "You pick it up. I ain't picking it up!" Moses obeyed God, reached down and picked up the serpent, and it turned back into a rod. The question tonight is: What's in your hand? What gift and ability does God want to use of yours? Little is much when we put it in God's hands and in our hands when we trust the Lord.

Let me wrap this up with three things that we can do to help people. First, we can pray for them. Secondly, we should mentor them. Thirdly, we should encourage them. Three simple things to do: pray for them, become a mentor to them, and encourage them. That's what Paul did. He encouraged him to "...stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." Amen?