

SCRIPTURE FOCUS	2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18	DATE	07.14.19
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LESSON SUMMARY	Believers have the dual responsibilities of stewarding the gifts God has given them and remaining faithful to the true gospel.		

All scripture taken from NIV

ENCOUNTER THE TEXT

1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

In 2 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy, a young co-laborer in ministry. While they share a vocation, it is clear that the relationship between Paul and Timothy moves beyond the sphere of mere superior/subordinate. For Paul, Timothy is a “dear son” in the faith whom Paul longs to see. More than this, Paul speaks of his “dear son” with approval; Timothy has “sincere faith” that was passed to him from his mother and grandmother. From these opening words, we learn that Paul is playing the proud spiritual father figure to a young man in the faith.

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

To this point Paul has expressed his fondness for Timothy, his spiritual son. Now he moves to exhortation. As is the case with any good father figure, Paul wants to see Timothy do well as he pursues God’s call on his life. Also like a good father figure, Paul doesn’t shy away from giving Timothy hard advice for living well.

Paul’s advice concerns a “gift from God” that Timothy received “through the laying on of [Paul’s] hands.” This language of “gift” is reminiscent of Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor 12:1-31, and Eph 4:1-16, all of which speak of spiritual gifts that Christ pours out on his people. The idea here is that every Christian is empowered to some kind of ministry within the church. For Timothy, though his gift is not specifically explained, the “gift of God” is related to his enablement for ministry, perhaps in the realm of teaching or leadership. Whatever the case, Paul, who was instrumental in Timothy receiving this gift (Timothy received it as Paul “laid hands” on him in prayer), encourages Timothy to manage the gift well. As the following lines show (vv 7-8), Timothy has reason to be “timid” in exercising his gift, for it may well lead him to a place of suffering.

Blessedly, Timothy is not left to face these concerns alone. Rather, the very Spirit who enables the gift is also the Spirit who empowers Timothy to be powerful, loving, and self-disciplined. These are the characteristics that Timothy needs to “fan into flames the gift of God.” While the Greek word for “fan into flame” can refer to rekindling a dying fire, it can also speak of stirring up a healthy one. In this case, it would seem that Paul is not reprimanding Timothy for neglecting his gift. We can’t ultimately know the thought behind Paul’s usage. I suspect that Paul is aware of the real temptation toward timidity that Timothy faces. In the face of this temptation, Paul tells his young charge to not only to simply avoid timidity but also to fan his gifts for leading God’s people into a hot fire.

8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

Here is the other side of Paul’s exhortation. If Timothy is to fan his gift into flame, he must not be ashamed of the gospel it supports. Moreover, he also should not be ashamed of Paul, who is suffering for that same gospel. It is telling that Paul feels the need to offer this bit of instruction. Why tell a “dear son” in the faith to not be ashamed of you? Because shame might be a natural reaction to your suffering. After all, wouldn’t God’s approval and blessing keep a person from suffering? Though we sometimes fall into this kind of thinking, it simply is not scriptural. Jesus himself told us that his followers would be hated by the world. Far from being a suffering failure whom God has rejected, Paul is a faithful follower of Jesus who endures suffering through the power God provides. Paul’s call to Timothy is to embrace the same fate if it should come his way.

9 He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Why should Timothy do as Paul suggests? Because he has been saved and called by God not because of what Timothy has done but because of who God is. This same grace that propels Timothy forward to faithfulness existed and was extended before time began and has now become manifest in the work of Christ. In light of this grace, Timothy should be faithful to Paul’s teaching. This is what Paul means when he speaks of guarding the “good deposit.” Importantly, Timothy isn’t the only one “guarding” in this scenario. Like Paul, Timothy can be confident that God himself is guarding Timothy for ultimate salvation regardless of the consequences he will face for sticking to the truth.

15 You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16 May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17 On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. 18 May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

Paul has just told Timothy not to be ashamed of Paul's suffering. In this passage we find that other Christians have had to make the same decision. Phygelus and Homogenes have apparently left Paul (we are unsure of the circumstances), while Onesiphorus stood by Paul, going so far as searching for and finding Paul when the apostle was imprisoned in Rome. All of these people are known to Timothy, and they stand as positive and negative examples of his own choice regarding Paul.

TEACH THE TEXT

In 2 Timothy 1, Paul encourages Timothy in two directions. First, Timothy should steward the spiritual gift(s) that God has given him. Second, Timothy should remain faithful to the pure gospel that he received from Paul. Far from being instructions that are only applicable to ministers, these admonitions fit well into the lives of all believers.

Spiritual Gifts

When it comes to spiritual gifts, key scripture texts are Romans 12:3-8, 1 Cor 12:1-31, and Eph 4:1-16. While each of these passages holds its own important insights, 1 Cor 12:1-31 is probably the best place to go for general teaching on spiritual gifts. In that passage we learn:

- All Christians have been gifted by the Spirit. (v 7)
- The gifts are given for the common good of the church. (v 7)
- There a variety of different gifts. (v 4)
- All gifts are distributed among Christians by the Spirit himself, and the Spirit is at work in all of them. (vv 4, 11)
- All of the gifts are necessary in the church, though some are more public than others. (vv 12-26)

In 1 Cor 12, the emphasis is on how the gifts work together due to toxic dynamics in the Corinthian congregation (some Christians were overly proud of their gifts, while other Christians were ashamed of theirs). In 2 Timothy, the emphasis is on how individual Christians can steward the particular gift(s) that God has given them. For Timothy, the gift had to do with leading a congregation, perhaps teaching or leading (I suspect both). Other gifts named in scripture are prophecy, service, teaching, encouragement, giving, leadership, showing mercy (all from Rom 12), messages of wisdom, messages of knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, discernment between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues (all from 1 Cor 12), apostleship, prophecy, pastoring/teaching, and evangelism (all from Eph 4; these four are spoken of in connection with the people who possess them: apostles, prophets, pastor/teachers, evangelists). Importantly the above list is not necessarily an exhaustive, though it is widely descriptive. As we approach 2 Timothy, we learn that while the Spirit distributes these various gifts, individual Christians are responsible for their use.

In the passage at hand, the word picture of fanning a fire into flames is used to describe Timothy's own stewardship of his gift(s). This metaphor implies that gifts can lie dormant like dying coals or be dynamic like a roaring fire. The difference between the two is all up to Timothy. If he allows timidity or fear to guide his use of the gifts God has given, they will lie dormant and unused. On the other hand, if he embraces the power, love, and self-discipline provided by the Spirit, he can use his gift(s) mightily and dynamically for the sake of his congregation. These three characteristics (1) help Timothy rise above fear and paralysis (power), (2) move Timothy to use his gifts for God and on behalf God's people (love), and (3) use his gift(s) systematically and on purpose (self-discipline). The same characteristics can drive the use of gifts by any believer. In the end, we are responsible for the gifts God has given us. I think here of the Parable of the Talents or Bags

of Gold in Matthew 25. While the parable is not explicitly about spiritual gifts, its emphasis on faithful stewardship of the resources God has given us certainly matches Paul's message to Timothy in the present context.

The True Gospel

In 2 Timothy 16-18 let us know that the Ephesian congregation (Timothy is a church leader in Ephesus) is having problems with "godless chatter" that "destroy(s) the faith of some," referring to false and/or unedifying teaching. The problem with this kind of teaching is that it distorts the beautiful truth of the gospel and leads people down inappropriate rabbit trails. Sometimes, this amounts to bickering over unedifying theological points. Other times, it amounts to robbing people of hope by distorting the gospel itself. While the second kind of godless chatter is certainly more severe than the first, both are toxic when introduced to church life. Rather than leading people to the love and hope the gospel inspires, they lead Christians to dissension and loss of faith.

In Timothy's case, he must remain true to the gospel as he received it in order to teach it faithfully as part of his leadership of the church. On a more personal note, Timothy must see the gospel clearly if he is to appreciate it properly in his own life. This second aspect of Timothy's faith is applicable to all Christians. To a lesser extent, so is the first because we all "teach" by reminding one another of the truth of the gospel.

All this talk of the gospel, poses an important question: what exactly is the true gospel? Paul offers one definition in 2:8: Jesus Christ raised and descended from David. This gospel telling highlights Jesus' defeat of the powers, inauguration of new creation, and fulfillment of Israel's story. In our context, I might offer a definition that goes like this:

God, because of his goodness (and not ours), is putting the broken world back together through the work of Christ. Deliverance from both God's judgment and the oppressive powers of this world are available to any and all people who place their faith in Christ.

Ultimately, the gospel is the story of salvation through Jesus. Approaching that story from different angles produces different descriptions of that same story. All descriptions, however, must agree on the following points:

- Jesus was a real man of Jewish descent who was also God the Son.
- Jesus lived a perfectly faithful life.
- Jesus really died on a cross.
- Jesus really rose from the dead.
- Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus provides a way for all people to be made right with God.
- Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God through Christ defeated the rebellious powers of the world.
- Salvation has begun with the first coming of Christ and will be completed at his return.
- All of this flows from God's grace and not from human performance or merit.

Bringing it Together

Proper stewardship of spiritual gifts and adherence to the true gospel are necessary tasks for all Christians. The first makes us faithful servants of God, while the second empowers us to see the world rightly and hope well.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Vv 1-5

1. How would you describe Paul's relationship to Timothy?

Vv 6-7

1. What do we know about spiritual gifts?
 - a. Where do they come from?
 - b. What are they for?
 - c. Does everyone have one?
 - d. Are some more important than others?
2. Why do you think Paul felt the need to tell Timothy to fan his gift into flame?
3. How can we know what our own spiritual gifts are?
4. What are reasons that we might be timid or afraid in using our own gifts?
5. How can we fan our own gifts into flame?
 - a. Why are power, love, and self-discipline important for us to fan our gifts into flame?
6. What is at stake in our decision to fan or not to fan our gifts into flame?

Vv 8-13

1. Why was it important for Timothy to hold onto the true gospel?
 - a. What was at stake?
 2. What is the gospel?
 3. Why might we waver in holding to the gospel?
 4. What are ways we can remain true to the gospel?
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Explore the Bible Curriculum, Summer 2019 Leader Guide.

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