

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

2 TIMOTHY 1-2

Dateline: Rome, Italy - 62 AD. A cargo ship from Alexandria arrives with a special passenger: a man named *Paul, leader of Christianity, prisoner of Rome.*

Paul was arrested in Jerusalem for insurrection, and held for two years in the Roman stockade at Caesarea.

As a citizen of the empire it was his legal right to appeal. He opted to stand trial before Emperor Nero.

We have no record of his encounter with the Caesar, but I'm sure by the time Paul was done, it was Nero who felt like he was on trial... Count on Paul to present the ruling Roman with a compelling witness for Jesus.

Imagine the showdown in Nero's palace, *the apostle to the Gentiles stands before the king of the Gentiles.*

At Paul's conversion, Jesus had predicted that Paul would "bear (His) name before Gentiles, (and) kings."

Now the moment has come... The Apostle confronts the prince of the Gentiles, with the King of all kings.

Secular historians note a marked change in Nero around the time of his meeting with Paul - 62-63 AD.

Nero went nuts. He went insane. It's possible Nero's rejection of the Gospel helped to cause his demise.

Demon possession probably best explains his behavior. Nero ended up one of the cruelest rulers of all time. He even murdered his own wife and mother.

Nero was an egomaniac. He showed off by building stadiums and constructing pagan temples - *but Rome was out of room, and Nero needed more space.*

So on July 19, 64 AD a fire started in the woodsheds near the Circus Maximus. Later, it was reported that Nero's servants were seen running from the sheds where the blaze started. The fire engulfed the city. It raged for 10 days and torched 2/3 of downtown Rome.

Everyone suspected Caesar Nero to be the arsonist. He had burned his own city, just so he could rebuild it in honor of himself. "**Nero fiddled while Rome burned.**"

And when the fingers started pointing at Caesar Nero, he needed a scapegoat. So he blamed Rome's destruction on ***the Christians***. Nero launched a massive crusade to persecute the followers of Jesus...

He burned believers at the stake to light his parties. Nero clothed Christians in animal skins, and threw them to wild dogs - just to watch them get *mauled*...

Christians under Nero were crucified, executed by gladiators, and torn apart by ferocious lions. Nero's persecution of believers was *relentless* and *merciless*.

Finally, in 65 AD he arrested the two champions of Christianity - *Peter and Paul*. For Paul, it was his second arrest... That same year, Peter was crucified upside down. A few months later, Paul was beheaded.

At the moment, Paul's head is on the chopping block. He's in Rome's maritime prison... *I've been there*. It's a dungeon -

a cold, dark, damp cave. In Paul's day it was *rat-infested* and *sewer-infected*.

The prison that held Paul was just off the famous Forum. Paul could hear the mindless chants of pagan worship. He could smell sacrifices burning to idols.

Paul wasn't far from where the Coliseum would later be constructed. In years to come, the Coliseum would become a graveyard for Christians. The site might've been chosen because it was already a killing field.

Picture Paul... he's chained to a dungeon wall. He hears the screams of fellow believers being tortured for their faith. He knows at any moment he could be next...

Welcome to Rome! And in such dire straights what's his priority? *He writes a letter.* As he awaits a date with the executioner He pens his final words to a friend.

Verse 1, **"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus..."** Instead of fearing death, Paul is rejoicing over the promise of eternal life in Christ!

Hanging over his head isn't a gloomy cloud, but a glorious sunrise! Jesus guaranteed him eternal life!

He writes, **"To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.** Warren Wiersbe points out, **"Paul added "mercy" to his greetings to pastors – 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus. Paul knew that pastors need mercy!"**

And I couldn't agree more! A pastor always traffics in issues over his head. *Who am I to speak of God... to represent the Almighty?* It's a sobering responsibility.

James 3:1 warns pastors, *"Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment."* Pastors need to take heed, but I'm also glad that God tempers His judgment with mercy.

Be like God, and have a little mercy on your pastor!

Paul says in verse 3, *"I thank God..." He does what?*

Realize, jail for Paul isn't three meals a day, cable TV, and access to the prison library and weight room.

He's in a dungeon. The light is dim. The air is damp and cold. Paul poops in a can. If he eats at all it's because a brother on the outside shared with him a few scraps. The Apostle Paul is old, tired, about to die.

Yet he *"thanks God."* *There's no grumbling, no murmuring, no whining, no focusing on himself, no concern about his own plight, no worries about his future...* He's full of praise and **gratitude** to God.

Remember the pilgrims who got off the Mayflower?

Life in the new world was tough. The first year these people made seven times more graves than huts, **yet they decided to set aside a day for thanksgiving.**

It really is all about perspective...

Paul says he thanks God, *"whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did..."* Paul is concluding his

ministry with no regrets. His conscience is clear. He's taken no shortcuts. He's served God with integrity.

Paul served God and prayed for Timothy... “as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy...” Timothy is on the outside shedding a tear in prayer for Paul, while Paul is on the inside praying for his friend, Timothy!

And when he thinks of Timothy, he can't help but remember his family. Verse 5, “when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” Notice, only “*genuine faith*” is detected by kids in their parents.

Kids, have an innate radar, a *baloney meter*, that filters out the phony. Parents, your child is impressed by your relationship with God only if it's a *genuine faith!*

Acts 16:1 tells us Timothy's dad was not a believer.

But both his mom and grandma were sincere Christians with a vibrant faith. And these two ladies had a had a profound impact on Timothy. This should be a great encouragement to our single moms - and ladies who are married to unbelievers. Single parents can raise children with prevailing faith and godly character.

I hope **all** parents realize their top priority should be their child's spiritual formation and development. So what if you teach your kid to read and write, sharpen their athletic skills, send them to college, turn them into good citizens... if in the end they die and go to Hell.

Christian Psychologist James Dobson comments, “I urge you as parents of young children to provide for them an unshakable faith in Jesus Christ. This is your most important function as mothers and fathers. How can anything else compare in significance to the goal of keeping the family circle unbroken in the life to come?” We need to pass down our faith to our kids.

And realize you don't pass along faith like you pass down curly hair and big feet. *Faith is not genetics or germs.* Breathing on your child won't make them a Christian. Even proximity to other Christians is no assurance they'll become Christians themselves.

Passing down spiritual values is like a quarterback passing to his split end. It's a voluntary act on both ends... The quarterback picks the *right timing* - throws the ball to the *right spot* - tosses it with the *right touch*. A pass completion requires **timing, targeting, touch...**

And even a perfect pass has to be squeezed by the receiver and pulled into his chest. Likewise, faith is a personal decision. We use *timing and targeting and touch* to convey God's truth, but the kid has to pull it in.

Paul continues, “**Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.**” “*Timid Timothy*” was how he was known to his friends. According to 2 Timothy 4:5, Timothy's gift was evangelism. He had a knack for communicating his faith to unbelievers. But because of his fears and inhibitions he'd allowed his spiritual gift to lie dormant.

He needed to blow off the dust, and put it to use.

Ever gotten out of a swimming pool on a cool day?

Once you dry off and warm up it's awfully hard to make yourself go back in. This was Tim's problem...

He'd gotten out of the struggle - *it started as just a break from serving God*. But now that he'd dried off he was having a hard time getting back into the water.

Timothy needs to grit his teeth, stir up a desire, dive back into the pool. *Perhaps you've taken a break from being involved?* Now you're having a hard time easing back into the water. Stir up your gifts and dive back in!

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” If the Spirit of Jesus courses through your spiritual veins, He'll drive out fear with a supply of **power**, and **love**, and **wisdom**.

Some folks **fear failure...** Don't be overcome. God's Spirit gives His people **power** to succeed. The Greek term for **“power”** is **“dunamis”** or **“dynamite.”** The Holy Spirit is a source of boldness and spiritual dynamic.

Other folks **fear people...** Yet the Spirit counters this fear with love. Perfect **love** casts out fear. What Jesus did for mankind overshadows what man can do to us.

Still other folks are **fearful of the unknown...** This is why a **sound mind** keeps us fixed on what's sure and certain. It fixates on God's Word and His promises.

In Luke 9:55 Jesus turned to James and John and rebuked them, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of..." Let's not make the same mistake...

Our world today is controlled by fear... *fear of failure, fear of people, fear of the unknown.* But God has given us a spirit "*of power, and of love, and of a sound mind!*"

Verse 8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God..." Timothy had gotten discouraged by looking at Paul's plight. *His mentor was in chains.*

But Paul tells him, "*do not be ashamed...*" He's the prisoner of Jesus, not Rome. Evil men can chain Paul, but not the gospel. It's "*the power of God.*" Timothy is involved in a movement that will overtake the world and determine the destiny of all men for all time.

Timothy should forget about Paul's chains, and recall God's salvation. Verse 9, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." Presently, Paul is in prison, but the purposes and grace of God have been at work "*before time began.*" His point is, "*Don't trip up over momentary troubles, and lose sight of God's eternal purposes.*"

And keep your eyes on Jesus, verse 10, "(God) has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to

light through the gospel...” Paul is a jailed prisoner, but His Savior is risen and victorious!

And Paul’s goal is to serve him, come what may... “to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” Paul’s hope, faith, and calling burn so hot they can’t be doused by a temporary trial.

It reminds me of the two boys on the Bayou - they’d treed a bobcat. One fellow was to climb the tree and shake the limb - the other was to bag the bobcat.

But when the cat hit the ground - fur and skin and blood started flying. The boy in the tree shouted, “Can’t you grab a little ole bobcat?” His partner replied, “*I can grab him alright. My only problem is letting him loose...*”

And this is the issue with the gospel. Once you grasp it and its power, there’s no letting go. Paul would rather *lose his head to a sword than turn loose of the Gospel.*

Several years ago an Alabama school bus driver named Charles Poland was shot to death trying to protect the kids on his bus from a crazed man seeking a hostage. Poland was hailed a hero in Dale County.

When his wife was interviewed, she spoke of nights on the porch when she and Charles would sip coffee while they watched the sun set. She quoted the reporter their favorite Bible verse. It’s 2 Timothy 1:12...

“For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

Lydia Poland commented of this verse, “That is what I hold onto right now. God knows. He is the only one who can bring closure to my heart...” Paul too, suffered inexplicable trials... Life isn’t always fair. What we sometimes have to endure doesn’t always make sense, yet Paul held on to the hope that’s in Christ.

He was persuaded, come what may, Jesus assured his ultimate triumph... Lydia had the same confidence.

And notice Paul doesn’t say, “*I know WHAT I have believed.*” It’s “*WHOM I have believed.*” Christianity is not just faith in a set of doctrines or principles. It’s faith in a person! Paul’s confidence was in the risen Christ.

He was persuaded that no matter what happened to him “*to-day,*” or “*on any other day*” - on “*that Day,*” when his life was over, Jesus would stand by his side, and obtain for him the mercies and favor of God!

Paul charges Timothy in verse 13, “*Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*” Here’s a really good gift - a “*pattern of sound words... that promote faith and love.*”

If you’ve been blessed to sit under a steady stream of solid Bible teaching - a “*pattern of sound words*” - you have been the recipient of a truly marvelous gift.

Richard Niebuhr once said, “*The great Christian revolutions come not by discovery of something that was not known*”

before. They happen when somebody takes radically something that was always there."

We don't need new truths, but a faithful reminder of all that's biblical... we need a "*pattern of sound words.*"

Verse 15, "This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." These were former, fair-weather friends who abandoned Paul when it got tough to be his friend.

When Paul was *jailed*, they *bailed* on their support.

Timothy knew them. Here, Paul points them out.

Whereas verse 16, "The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me." "*Onesiphorus*" means "*profit-bearing*" - and this man was certainly *a profit*, or *a blessing*, to Paul.

Onesiphorus' mission to Rome reminds me of Alvin Straight's journey to Wisconsin. Alvin lived in Iowa. He was 73 years old. His eyes were so poor he couldn't get a license, and he doesn't trust buses and planes.

So when his brother had a stroke, and Alvin wanted to be at his brother's side, he cranked up his 1966 John Deere lawn mower - and drove 200 miles from Iowa to Blue River, WS, to be console his brother.

This was the dedication of Onesiphorus. Paul's spiritual brother traveled from Ephesus to Rome - a more difficult

journey than Alvin's. He found Paul in prison, and stayed by his side to lend him his help.

Paul says of Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day - and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus." Some people give off airs. Others pollute the air. (They're stinkers.) But Onesiphorus was a breath of fresh air. *Let's seek to refresh one another!*

Chapter 2, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Here's the golden rule of growing a Church.

I could go out and win people to Jesus, then spend time with each one helping them to grow. In my lifetime I could perhaps win a few hundred folks to Jesus.

Or I could win a few people, and help them grow; then teach those few to win others and help them grow; who then could win others and help them grow...

Suddenly, the exponential effect kicks in. The impact swells to thousands, not just hundreds. It's the difference between $2+2+2+2 = 8$, and $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 16$.

DL Moody put it this way, "I would rather set ten men to work, than to do the work of ten men." Ten people can accomplish far more than just one person.

The word "*disciple*" means "learner" - and every Christian should be learning and growing in Christ.

Yet the disciple doesn't simply remain a learner. The learner should become a teacher. I'm teaching you the Bible from week to week in hopes that you'll go out and teach others, and they'll teach others... etc., etc.

And when people grow in Christ they encounter hardships. Satan attacks. This means disciples need to cultivate endurance. And in the next verses Paul uses three analogies to help us add *fortitude to our faith*.

Paul points to three occupations - **soldier, athlete, farmer...** A **soldier** leads **a streamlined life**. An **athlete** a **structured life**. And a **farmer** lives **a sustained life**.

Notice, first **the soldier**. **"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."** Warfare is a full-time, 24/7 preoccupation.

When you're fighting for survival and freedom you don't have time to mow the lawn, or tend the flower beds. Your total attention is directed toward the battle.

And spiritually we're involved in a battle. Thus we can't allow ourselves to get distracted by secular cares. Sure we've got to go to work, and be good stewards of our stuff, but don't take your eyes off the battle!

All Christians need to develop a wartime-mentality.

Life is short. The stakes are high. We need to streamline our lives, and make sure we've put first things first. Robert Moffat said, **"We'll have all eternity to celebrate our victories, but only**

one short hour before sunset in which to win them.” Be a good soldier!

“And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

One name... **Lance Armstrong**. *Was there ever a bigger fall from grace?* Stripped of seven Tour de France championships for cheating... for blood doping. Lance Armstrong will forever bear a stigma of shame.

So what if you achieve a moment of glory, only to be disqualified later. And the same is true spiritually. In Christian ministry, **The ends never justifies the means**. When a Christian takes shortcuts, or finds loopholes, or manipulates to achieve it's a tainted victory.

Obviously, for an athlete's efforts to be meaningful he has to play by the rules - and likewise for a Christian. Our desire to accomplish great things for God should never override our commitment to do it God's way. **God's work should always be done God's way**.

And finally, verse 6, “**The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops.**” A farmer has to eat from his harvest to sustains his strength as he works.

And while we *ministry for the Lord* we also need to be *nourished by the Lord*. If we're always *putting out* spiritually, and never *taking in*, we'll eventually *dry up*.

The farmer who's *overworked* and *underfed* runs out of steam, and likewise a Christian. God's servant needs to eat what he feeds others. **Eat your own feed!**

Paul wraps up these analogies, “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.”

“Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.”

You can chain the messenger, but not the message!

It’s been said of the Bible, “It out-lives, out-lifts, out-loves, out-reaches, out-ranks, out-runs all other books.” You can’t hold down the truth of God’s Word!

Verse 10, “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Paul could endure persecution knowing that through his sufferings others would hear the Gospel and come to be saved.

“This is a faithful saying...” The “*faithful saying*” Paul is about to utter is one of several in his pastoral letters. The others... 1 Timothy 1:15, 4:9, and Titus 3:8.

These “*faithful sayings*” were liturgies used in the worship of the early church. The church recited these declarations of faith as reminders of vital truths.

Here’s a taste of the earliest Christian worship. They spoke in unison, “For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”

Notice the rhythmic, easy-to-memorize way early Christians recited crucial elements of their faith...

And the paradoxical structure added to it... *if we die, we'll live... if we endure, we'll reign... if we deny Him, He'll deny us... if we're faithless, He remains faithful...*

Each of these statements teaches an essential truth on which the early Christians lived their lives...

First, note **the positive reminders...** “If we die, we'll live” - Trust in the crucified Christ to put an end to your sin, and He'll give you new life spiritually... “If we endure, we'll reign...” - Endure hardship knowing that your faith will earn for you authority in God's Kingdom..

Then **there's two negative reminders...** “If we deny Him, He'll deny us...” If a man denies Christ, the Lord has no choice, “I never knew you, depart from Me...”

And the last line in the liturgy is often misinterpreted, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” Folks often use this to gloss over their faithlessness. “See, even if I stop having faith in Jesus, He'll remain faithful to me.” That's not what Paul says!

If you're faithless, He does remain faithful, but it's not *faithful to a faithless person*. He remains faithful to His Word. God tells us salvation is by grace through faith, thus if you have no faith, He can't make exceptions.

He's got to be true to Himself and what He's said! *The last line of the liturgy is a warning not a comfort!*

Verse 14, “Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.” Pastors who don’t teach the Bible, but instead major on worldly wisdom are in essence dealing in *“words to no profit.”*

Which brings about *“the ruin of their hearers.”*

In contrast Paul commands Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The phrase translated *“rightly dividing”* means *“to cut straight.”* This Greek word was used to describe a farmer in his fields plowing a straight furrow - or a carpenter cutting a board at an exact angle...

We all, and particularly a pastor, needs to be diligent in our interpreting of God’s Word. Exactness is required. A haphazard or sloppy approach is an insult.

Carpenters have a slogan, that should speak to how we interpret the Bible. *“Measure twice, cut once.”*

Before a carpenter makes a cut he slows down, double-checks, rethinks, then he stabilizes the board.

The cut is made only after painstaking precision. The slightest slip or miscalculation can produce a disaster. *And the same is true if we misinterpret the Scripture.*

Verse 16, “But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” Why is it foolish, empty speculation spreads like wildfire, while sound doctrine flows through the church like molasses.

Paul says, **“And their message will spread like cancer.”** False doctrine - or superstition - or misguided conjecture tends to metastasize in the Body of Christ, like a cancer does in a human body. This is why it has to be cut out as soon as possible. You can't put it off.

And Paul points to two examples. **“Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth...”** Recall in 1 Timothy 1:20 Hymenaeus was the person who's faith had been shipwrecked. Paul had to deliver him to Satan to learn not to blaspheme.

And here was his error, **“saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”**

Hymenaeus must've denied a literal resurrection of our physical bodies, concluding that people were free to indulge their fleshly appetites in immoral ways.

Paul counters him in verse 19, **“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”**

Verse 20, **“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.”** If you attended a state dinner at the White House you'd probably dine on expensive china. The oldest presidential china was purchased by James Monroe in 1817. The plates are decorated with a presidential eagle. They're priceless.

But if you toured the kitchen you'd also find regular dishes - maybe even paper plates and plastic cups - dishes that get soiled and tossed out regularly.

Vessels of honor... and vessels of dishonor...

And you'll find the same in the house of God.

There's the pure teaching of God's Word, served up on plates beautifully embossed with the seal of God's Spirit. *Vessels of honor* rightly divide the Word of God.

But you'll also encounter impure doctrine, from unreliable vessels. This speculation is *dishonorable*.

Paul says in verse 21, *"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."* The Greek name *"Timothy"* meant *"God-honoring."* Paul wants his young protégé to live up to his name in how he cares for and handles God's Word.

And we too, need to rightly divide God's Word. This is why I hope you'll come on Wednesday nights, and deepen your Bible knowledge. Be a vessel of honor.

Then verse 22, *"Flee also youthful lusts..."* Ronald Reagan once said, *"Middle age is when you have two temptations - and you choose the one that will get you home by 9:00 PM."* In contrast, Timothy was a young man, and therefore vulnerable to all the temptations of youth - *sex, power, greed, vanity, popularity, pride...*

Timothy needs to flee anything that might draw him *from Christ* or ruin his effectiveness *for Christ*.

Recall how Joseph reacted to Mrs. Potiphar's sexual advances? He didn't try to be polite, or let her down gently... *He **raced** from her embrace!* That's how young men should handle temptation - sprout wings and flee!

But there's another old saying, "Most people who flee temptation usually leave a forwarding address."

That's why Timothy should flee *temptation*, and in its place "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Verse 23, "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife." What difference does it make *how many angels fit on the head of a pin?* Some issues make good argument, but nothing else!

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition..." A servant of the Lord corrects others while watching his own step.

Nobody has perfect doctrine. We all have blind spots, areas where we can learn. We need humility...

"If God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." Notice, when a person comes to his senses, and escapes the snare of Satan, it's the result of God granting repentance.

Only God's Spirit can truly change a person's heart. *Thus, we pray for those ensnared... and for you...*