We begin a new series this morning in 2 Timothy. Anytime we start a new series, an obvious question is why this book as opposed to another book of the Bible?

In order to answer that question, I think the best place to start is to explore the setting of the letter. We’re told in verse 1 that Paul is the author and in verse 2 that Timothy is the recipient of this letter. Timothy is likely in Ephesus serving as Paul’s assistant to strengthen the church.\(^1\) And as we read the letter we find out that Timothy is up against some real challenges; there is false teaching in the church (2:14ff) and persecution is at hand (3:12).\(^2\) But it is not until 4:6 that we get the full picture of Paul’s situation as he writes the letter.

**2 Timothy 4:6–8 (ESV)**

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Paul is most likely in prison in Rome facing execution.\(^3\) Church history tells us he was beheaded under Nero, around AD 64/65.\(^4\) So, this is the last New Testament letter Paul wrote as he faces imminent martyrdom; this is his last will and testament.\(^5\) This setting of Paul’s imminent martyrdom must inform the whole letter.\(^6\) As Calvin has famously said, “…everything we read in this letter…should be seen as written not merely in ink but in Paul’s lifeblood.”\(^7\) When a man is writing in his lifeblood we ought to pay attention to what he says. What is Paul saying in this letter?

**Paul wants Timothy, and all those who read this letter, to stay faithful to the gospel**\(^8\) — the good news that Christ died for our sins. We are introduced to this in his greeting in verses 1-2. He introduces himself as “an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.” (This is our first clue that this letter is not just for Timothy, but for the whole church. He writes with apostolic authority, therefore all who read this letter need to listen, not just Timothy.)\(^9\) And he introduces

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\(^1\) Most commentators don’t view Timothy as the Pastor of the Ephesian church; he’s a temporary apostolic assistant. NB. all the references to Timothy in the NT: Acts 16:1; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 6:20; Philem. 1; Heb. 13:23.
\(^2\) Also NB. all of the references to suffering in this letter.
\(^3\) Most likely his second Roman imprisonment; cf. 4:16.
\(^4\) For a good discussion on this see F.F. Bruce, *Paul*, chapter 37 (in the church library).
\(^5\) Josh Harris, “Reminding and Remembering.”
\(^7\) Calvin, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, from the Introduction to 2 Timothy.
\(^8\) Josh Harris, “Reminding and Remembering.”
\(^9\) Another clue is found in 4:22, in the benediction: “Grace be with you [all].”
himself as an apostle “according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus;” in other words, he’s an apostle according to the gospel.

And through this letter Paul wants Timothy to receive “grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (v. 2). In other words, he wants Timothy to continue to receive the blessings he has been given through the gospel. But this isn’t unique in Paul; he frequently greets the churches with gospel words like these. But what is unique is his urgent plea throughout the letter for Timothy to guard this gospel whatever the cost (1:14).

Paul’s dying words are essentially that the gospel is of first importance and should be entrusted to others. In verse 12 we’re told that Paul was entrusted with this gospel, in verse 14 we’re told that Paul is entrusting this gospel to Timothy, and in 2:2 we’re told that Paul wants Timothy to entrust it to others. This is a burden of the letter; these are Paul’s dying words; Timothy is being entrusted with the gospel and God wants all of us to stay faithful to the gospel.

When I think of entrusting something I think of Intrust Bank, my bank here in Wichita. A bank is a place you can trust with your valuables. And money has value (though admittedly diminishing value in this economy and temporary value in an eternal economy). And things that have value should be protected, preserved, and hopefully passed on to others.

Some people that have a lot of money will put their money “in trust;” that is they’ll put their money into a trust fund. They don’t put the money under their mattress or in a shoe box because they want the money protected and secure so that someday it can be passed on to their loved ones. So they put their money in the bank because you can trust the bank with your assets.

Paul sees the gospel as so valuable that it is worth putting in trust (1:14); it is worth entrusting to a faithful man like Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17), in order to protect it from false teaching (1:14; 1 Tim. 6:20), to preserve it through faithful preaching (4:2), and to pass it on to future generations (2:2).

This is what is meant by entrusting the gospel to someone. And I think this, and all that is involved in this, is the main objective of this letter. Joshua Harris, pastor and author, says that the big idea of 2 Timothy is this: God calls us whatever the cost to enduring loyalty to the gospel. The gospel is powerful, but keeping it in trust requires perseverance because there will be persecution for all who are faithful to the gospel.

Now that we’ve established the setting and the purpose of the letter, let’s get back to our question; why are we studying 2 Timothy? I’ll list four reasons.

1. The gospel is of first importance. As you know the gospel is very important to me as your pastor. In fact I would say it is of first importance (1 Cor. 15:3). There is nothing more important than the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead,

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10 Adapted from Josh Harris, “Reminding and Remembering.”
11 Ibid.
12 While I share these reasons, their organization is adapted from Josh Harris, “Reminding and Remembering.”
according to the Scriptures. Without faith in this good news nothing else matters. But while I am thoroughly convinced that the gospel is of first importance, as a young inexperienced pastor who has just been given the baton of leadership within the last year, I want to continue to be grounded in the gospel myself and to cultivate a shared vision in this church for commitment to the gospel and all that is entailed in that.

2. The gospel must be passed on. We need to have a shared vision for passing this gospel along as well. While we are to protect the gospel, we’re not to keep it all to ourselves. We need to understand the importance of passing this first-importance message to future generations and proclaiming it boldly in our community and around the world. We have a stewardship in the gospel and we need to be reminded of our call to be faithful in our stewardship of it.

3. Being gospel-centered requires endurance. While we say we’re gospel-centered in this church I think we need to be reminded of what is entailed in being gospel-centered over the long haul. Being faithful to the gospel will involve persecution, suffering, and therefore will require perseverance and endurance. This book will help us to see what that looks like and know how to persevere in gospel faithfulness.

Paul knew. And through his letter, God calls us to be faithful to the gospel. But Paul is not like a hypocritical parent that says, “Do what I say not what I do.” No, the gospel he is entrusting to Timothy is a gospel that he preserved through faithful preaching, a gospel that he protected in the face of false teaching and intense persecution, a gospel that he intentionally passed on to future generations, and a gospel that he ultimately died for. He writes in his lifeblood; we ought to listen.

4. God is calling us to this letter. Those last three reasons are more obvious reasons we’re studying 2 Timothy, but there is another very important reason. I like 2 Timothy so much that I wanted to preach through it as my first book as your lead pastor, but came to the conclusion that the book of John was a better place to start. I think I made the right decision there, but you have to know that I can’t get away from this letter. I was first exposed to it in depth at a TGC conference in 2009. Then I led my Sunday night LBI class through it here in the Spring of 2011. Then Tom Macy preached 2 Timothy 4 at my installation service in August. Then in November of last year, Lucas and I went to a Simeon Trust preaching conference in Portland where we were given an assignment to prepare two sermons on 2 Timothy. So the bottom line is I can’t get away from this book of the Bible; through that I think God is calling us to study this letter and I want to be faithful to that call.

And so, Lucas will preach two sermons from 2 Timothy, Mike Andrus will preach three, and I will preach five. Now, without further ado, let’s begin looking at what is involved in being entrusted with the gospel. Please stand for the reading of God’s Word in 2 Timothy 1:3–7.

2 Timothy 1:3–7 (ESV)

3 I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 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, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

This passage is divided into two parts; remembering (vv. 3-5), and reminding (vv. 6-7). Hopefully this organization will be easy for you to remember.

**REMEMBERING**

Paul remembers three things. He remembers Timothy in general, he remembers Timothy’s tears, and he remembers Timothy’s genuine faith. These three things serve as the basis for his reminder for him to fan into flame the gift of God, which is the real burden of this passage.

But why does Timothy need to be reminded to fan into flame the gift of God? In verse 7 Paul tells Timothy that he has not been given a spirit of fear. The word translated as fear could just as well be translated cowardice. Implied in this reminder is the fact that Timothy is struggling with a lack of courage – he’s lacking courage to go to battle for and with the powerful gospel. Instead he’s being tempted to retreat.

But why is Timothy timid and lacking courage? The obvious answer is that he is facing some intimidating false teachers and the threat of suffering for the gospel. But I think there is more. And I think Paul’s “remembering” in verses 3-5 not only serve as the basis for the reminder he gives in verse 6, but also give us a bigger picture of some of the reason why Timothy needs to be reminded to fan into flame the gift of God.

We are first introduced to Timothy and his relationship with Paul in Acts 16:1. As Paul went to follow up with the churches he planted on his first missionary journey he meets Timothy, a disciple, at Lystra. And he recruits Timothy to be his assistant in ministry at this point. That’s helpful background information, but there is more there. In Acts 16:1 we are also told that Timothy’s mother is a Jewish believer and that Timothy’s father was a Greek (it is implied that he is not a believer).

So, Timothy’s dad wasn’t involved in developing the faith of Timothy. One is left wondering if his dad was involved at all. I’m convinced that not only do Timothy’s circumstances cause him timidity, but this man has some serious insecurities stemming from his family of origin, especially an absent father – if not absent physically and emotionally, absent in the very important role of spiritual leadership. In Ephesians 6:2 Paul commands fathers to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Timothy’s father didn’t do this.

Praise God that Timothy did have a spiritual heritage in the home though. His dad dropped the ball, but his mom Eunice and his grandmother Lois picked it up and ran with it. These godly women undoubtedly had a major impact, but I think Timothy was still struggling with issues related to his father, issues that caused him to be timid and afraid of standing up to these false teachers at Ephesus.

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13 Another interpretation is that only the last reminder of genuine faith is the basis.
14 George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles.*
Why do I say this? Listen to the way Paul addresses him. In 1 Timothy 1:2 he calls him his *true* child in the faith. In 2 Timothy 2:2 he calls him his *beloved* child. In 2 Timothy 2:1 he again calls him his child. Then listen to the affection in his voice as he writes to Timothy. He says that he remembers Timothy *constantly*. As he remembers the tears of their last parting he says he *longs* to see him. What is the purpose of all of this affectionate language? I’m going to offer an interpretation that I was introduced to me by John Piper. Some would consider it outside of the text, but I think it is here.¹⁵

I think Paul is saying, “I know your dad wasn’t there for you. I know you didn’t learn from your dad what courage in the faith looks like. I know you didn’t learn from your dad what it means to be a man (that is a real man – a man of God). I know this and I’m sorry; that’s not the way it’s supposed to be. But even though your dad didn’t show you, I’ve shown you; I’m your spiritual father. I’ve shown you what it looks like to have courage in the gospel and not to run from what God has called you to do. I’ve shown you what it looks like to suffer for the gospel. I’ve shown you what standing up to false teachers looks like. I’ve shown you what it means to follow Christ with bold humility. Follow me, Timothy, your spiritual father in the faith. You didn’t have a dad, but I’m him.

“And don’t discount the heritage you’ve had in your mother and your grandmother either, for through them you have come to genuine, unhypocritical, sincere faith. Your upbringing may not have been ideal, but your faith is the real deal. And now you have a heavenly Father who loves you. I know it’s been a hard road Timothy, but I believe in you. I believe that the genuine faith that dwells in you is sufficient to carry you on in the mission God has called you to. Have courage! *Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you... For you have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control*” (vv. 6-7).

I think much of Timothy’s timidity has to do with issues that stem from his family and that Paul is saying quit dwelling on that. Your situation may not have been ideal, but you’re the real deal. Grace and mercy and peace have come to you through faith in the gospel and that is the basis for being faithful to the gospel; be courageous!

Maybe I’m reading my own experience into this passage. My father wasn’t there for me to show me what it looks like to be a godly man who courageously and faithfully does what God has called us to do. And I’m sure there are hundreds of men and women here this morning who know this scenario too.

But we must remember that we have a heavenly Father who loves us and has given us power through his Spirit and his gospel to obey him. And we do have plenty of godly examples in the church of what courageous faithfulness to God’s calling looks like. For me that was Joe Bahr in high school. It has been Wes Penner since I’ve been in Wichita. And it has been Mike Andrus since I began as a pastor. These men have been spiritual fathers to me. There are dozens of people like this in this church who can be that for you as well.

Regardless of whether you see what I see in this text or think that I’m reading into this passage, I think there are some points we can all agree on before we move to verses 6-7.

First of all here is what I think the summary of verses 3-5 is. **Grace is received through genuine faith in the gospel.** This is irrespective of your situation. The gospel comes to all and is no respecter of persons. And grace comes to all of us through faith in the gospel.

Secondly, I think we each have a responsibility to pass on this gospel to others in our families and in the church. **This is grounded in this text.** Paul continually commends his own example to Timothy to follow, as his spiritual father. And more than once he refers to Timothy’s spiritual heritage in his own family (cf. 3:14-15). Paul even grounds his own service to God in the faithfulness of his ancestors in verse 3 of our text. So in light of that, let me offer four applications.

1. **Fathers:** You have the primary responsibility to raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Don’t drop the ball. If you want to know more about what is entailed in that come and talk to us. I’m not perfect at it, but I’m committed to it and God has called us to do this.

2. **Mothers:** You have a responsibility to help your husband in this calling. You have no idea the impact you are currently having on your children. The only question is what kind of impact?

And to the many of you who are doing this job alone for whatever reason, be encouraged. There are countless giants of the faith that would point to their mother as a critical person in shaping their spiritual life (e.g. John and Charles Wesley and John Piper).

3. **Grandparents:** Don’t underestimate the role you can play in discipling your grandchildren. You too can be like Lois. Pass on the gospel.

4. **All Disciples:** You don’t have to be a parent or a grandparent to make disciples. Jeremy is fond of articulating the mission of the church in this way: be disciples that make disciples. We are all called to make disciples. As the Navigators say, “Where is your Timothy?” Who are you being a spiritual father or mother to? And where’s your Paul? Even if you have a good heritage in your family, we all need more people in our lives who are teaching us to obey all that Christ has commanded. Pass on the gospel.

We’ve seen Paul’s remembering of Timothy. Now let’s look at his reminder to him in verses 6-7.

**REMINING**

2 Timothy 1:6–7 (ESV)

> 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, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

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16 You can watch a video of our recent “Take It to the House” event [here](#).
In verse 5 Paul remembers that Timothy’s faith is genuine; regardless of how he came to faith he has received the grace of God. On this basis he now reminds Timothy to fan into flame the grace gift of God.

I’d like to ask two questions about these verses. First, what is the gift Paul is referring to? Secondly, how do we fan our gift into flame?

1. **What is the gift?** The gift he speaks of is Timothy’s spiritual gift, which for Timothy is most likely the gift of teaching and preaching the gospel. But this verse has broader application than simply to preachers and teachers.

All who have by faith received grace have also received a grace gift (Gk. *charisma*, “grace thing” or “grace gift”) otherwise known as a spiritual gift. That spiritual gift is to be used to build up the body of Christ. Or to put it another way, your spiritual gift is to help the gospel go deep in God’s people and wide to all peoples. So those who have received grace from God through faith in the gospel are also given a grace gift to be used courageously for God in promoting the gospel.

Your gift may not be the gift of teaching or preaching the gospel; it may be the gift of service, or of encouragement, or of discernment, or administration, or leadership, or of learning, or of generosity, etc. The point is, if you have received grace through faith, you have been given a gift and that gift is to be courageously used as you seek to be faithful to the gospel.

How do we find out our gift? There are assessment tools, but I would say the best way is simply by serving in ministry. As you serve you will begin to discover what you’re gifted at and others will affirm that.

Notice, Paul points out Timothy’s gift was in him through the laying on of hands. This is most likely referring to Timothy’s ordination (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14). While our gifts come from God solely they are also recognized by the church. Sometimes, when a person is in leadership, recognition is public and official, as in the ordination or installation of a pastor or voting in new elders, deacons, etc. But not all gifts are given public or official recognition; however, ideally our spiritual gifts will be recognized by others in the church in due course.

I encourage you to begin by serving in ministries in the church and seeking to minister to those in the world you live in on a regular basis. As you do that you’ll get a sense of what you’re gifted in. Then ask others who know you well what they see in you.

2. **How can we fan the gift into flame?** We have to actually use our gifts if we want them to fan into flame. But the problem is, we are like Timothy and often lack the courage to use our gifts to fulfill our ministry. Some in this world are afraid they will actually lose their life, but that is not the case for most of us. Some are afraid they will be rejected by man if they serve God. And some fear that our gifts really aren’t that great and that God couldn’t really use us. And so in fear we let this flame the Holy Spirit has put in us get so small that nobody can see by our light and nobody is warmed. So what do we do if we’re afraid to use our gifts?

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17 Ed Welch, *When People are Big and God Is Small*, chapters 3 & 4.
It is interesting how commentators disagree so much on what the gift is Paul is speaking of in verses 6-7. Some say it is spiritual gifting for ministry, as I have said. Some say it is actually the gift of courage. And many others say it is actually the gift of the Holy Spirit. Maybe I’m too much of a simpleton, but I don’t see the conflict. I think it is all three, in a sense.

Those who have placed their faith in Christ have received grace and they have received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual grace gifts to all people who have placed their faith in Christ (that’s what verse 6 is talking about). But the Holy Spirit’s ministry continues after conversion and after giving spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit who gave the gifts also gives the ability to use those gifts in service to God and Christ’s church; he gives the gift of power and of love and of self-control (that’s what verse 7 is talking about).

So how do we fan our gifts into flame? We use them, yes, but we use them in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Grace gifts must be used in the power of the Holy Spirit.** We don’t have the power in and of ourselves. We’re not adequate in our natural abilities. But the Spirit that dwells in us makes us adequate. That’s why Paul was so emphatic in telling Timothy that he was sure his faith was genuine. If our faith is genuine we’ve all received grace and we’ve all received grace gifts and we’ve all received the Spirit who empowers our grace gifts and makes them effective. We need to step out in faith and use those gifts and trust that as we use them the Holy Spirit who gave them will also make them effective in building up the body of Christ.

Are you lacking courage to use your gift like Timothy? Pastor Kent Hughes has encouraging words for you. “The marvelous fact is, the Timothies of this world make perfect receptacles for the Spirit’s power when they turn to him.”

God is the one who supplies what we need to fulfill our ministry. We don’t have what it takes. But God does. Oswald Chambers put it this way:

> “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.”

Mike Andrus has said that if what we are called to do is actually from God then it will always be bigger than us. That way God will be required to do the work through us. And when God does the work, God gets the glory. You don’t have what it takes in and of yourself. But you do have what it takes to fulfill your ministry if you have been given the Spirit of power through faith in Jesus Christ.

My friend Alex Kice, who is known by his group of friends as the expert at building fires, is also the only guy I know who actually uses a bellows to fan a fire. Maybe there’s a connection.

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18 Kent Hughes, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.*
19 Oswald Chambers quoted in Kent Hughes, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.*
As you use your spiritual gifts which have been given by the Holy Spirit it is like using a bellows on a fire. The air that comes out of the bellows is the Spirit of God; it is the “air” we need for courage because he is the Spirit of power. When we use our gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit we fan into flame our gift. And as that happens our flame will grow larger and people will see Jesus more clearly and be warmed by our ministry. Courageous use of our gifts is critical if we desire as a church to be faithful to the gospel.

Sermon in a sentence: If we have received the grace of God through faith, then we must courageously use the grace gifts we have received from God’s Spirit of power.

Benediction

Act 20:29-32 (ESV)

29 I [Paul] know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
References


