

Rekindling Your Spiritual Gift **(2 Timothy 1:1-7)**

Times had changed—significantly! During a previous house arrest in Rome, Paul enjoyed limited freedom and relative comfort. He was able to entertain guests and boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30-31). At that time he fully expected to be acquitted (Philippians 1:19). In fact, early church tradition indicates that Paul was released from house arrest and carried on further missionary activity before being arrested a second time under Nero’s orders. This time Paul’s conditions were far from comfortable. He was now imprisoned in what was likely a damp, dark, disease ridden cell where he anticipated his martyrdom. Times had changed. However, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ had not changed. Instead, the gospel was still changing lives. Paul, the veteran missionary of that gospel, wrote a second letter to his beloved protégé Timothy challenging him to remain strong in the faith even in the face of persecution. Second Timothy is, therefore, a book of passion and compassion from a mentor to a younger spiritual leader in the church. Its pages inspire God’s people today to serve Him as everyday missionaries. In the opening sentences of this personal epistle, Paul describes Timothy’s spiritual heritage and encourages him to fan into flame his spiritual gift. We serve Jesus Christ best when we serve with perpetually renewed passion.

Introduction—God prepares us for His work through significant relationships (1:1-2).

The first two verses of 2 Timothy contain a personal word of greeting from Paul to Timothy. This brief introduction sets the stage for recognizing the importance of relationships. God arranges for His people to sharpen one another. Those He has placed in our path contribute to our spiritual growth and effective service.

God calls us to our specific roles based on His will and our relationship with Jesus Christ (1:1).

According to the practice of his day, Paul begins his letter by identifying himself as its author. While some may question Paul’s authorship of this epistle, we can accept his authorship with good reason, supported by early church tradition. Paul describes himself as an “apostle of Christ Jesus,” that is, one who was sent by and with the authority of Jesus Christ. Paul’s apostleship was determined by the will of God. Paul didn’t orchestrate this calling; it came from God Himself. Paul’s apostleship had as its focus the “promise of life” in Christ Jesus. In the face of persecution and approaching martyrdom it’s not surprising that Paul’s thoughts turned to eternal life, the assured and endless life of those who place their faith in Jesus. This promise of

life is, in fact, “in” Christ Jesus. To be “in” Christ Jesus refers to our mystical, spiritual union with our Savior (John 15:4; Ephesians 1:13). We have an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

God often grants us His grace through deep spiritual ties with one another (1:2).

Our relationship with Jesus Christ links us to other believers as a part of God’s family. Paul referred to Timothy as his “dear son.” Paul had a significant spiritual influence in Timothy’s life and came to view this young man as his own son (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:2). Therefore, Paul extended to Timothy a blessing of “grace, mercy, and peace.” These blessings flow “from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” We, too, experience grace, mercy, and peace through significant spiritual relationships in our lives. It’s through our relationship with Jesus Christ and our relationships with other Christians that God prepares us for His work.

**Reflection—God prepares us for
His work through life experiences (1:3-5).**

God shapes our hearts through relationships and through life experiences. Three times in these three verses Paul refers to remembering. He records his personal reflections on some of these life experiences in relationship to his friend Timothy.

Remembering in prayer—our prayer lives contribute deeply to our spiritual stamina (1:3).

First, Paul states that he remembered Timothy in prayer, that is, he spoke often to God about Timothy. Paul’s prayers included thanksgiving to God. Our prayers should always reveal grateful hearts. Paul describes God as the object of his worship—the term for worship sometimes carries the connotation of service. Paul had worshiped God from his “forebears” with a clean conscience. His Jewish upbringing provided a solid foundation for his eventual faith in Jesus Christ. His conscience was clean, that is, he now stood in a right relationship with God due to his relationship with God’s Son. With this strong foundation Paul “remembered” Timothy in his prayers. Paul prayed “unceasingly” (Luke 7:45; Romans 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 5:17). He prayed “night and day” for his young friend. There can be no doubt that prayer produces spiritual stamina, both in the one praying and in the ones for whom we pray.

Remembering through tears—our hardships contribute deeply to our spiritual stamina (1:4).

Second, Paul refers to remembering Timothy’s tears. Paul longed to see Timothy again. His heart ached for his son in the faith. The form of the verb “having been reminded” indicates that something prompted Paul to reflect on Timothy’s tearful separation from his mentor. Paul’s mind flooded with thoughts of that situation. Possibly Paul was arrested in Timothy’s presence.

Certainly Timothy knew at their final meeting that he might not see his mentor again. But Paul hoped to see Timothy one more time and to experience the fullness of joy that only such a reunion could produce. Our hardships—separation from friends and family, trials in life—contribute to our spiritual stamina. God strengthens us in and through difficult circumstances.

Remembering faith—our spiritual heritage contributes deeply to our spiritual stamina (1:5).

Third, Paul remembered Timothy's faith. Again, something prompted Paul to reflect on Timothy's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, a faith that Paul described as "sincere," literally "unhypocritical." This unhypocritical faith resided deep within Timothy just as it did in the hearts of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. These godly women, Jewish in background, were early followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:1). They probably became followers of Jesus under Paul's ministry during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:21). Timothy may also have put his faith in Jesus at that time. By the time of Paul's second missionary journey Timothy was a maturing believer (Acts 16:1). Although Timothy's father was a Gentile and no mention is made of his father's spiritual life, Timothy's mother and grandmother fostered faith in Timothy. Paul could state without reservation that Timothy was a man of faith. We should never underestimate the importance of parents, grandparents, and other significant family members who helped us grasp the essentials of faith at an early age. In addition, parents and grandparents have an enormous privilege in leading their children to faith in Jesus Christ.

**Courage—God prepares us for
His work through spiritual gifts (1:6-7).**

Having remembered Timothy in prayer, remembered his tears, and remembered his faith, Paul now reminded Timothy to perpetually renew his spiritual passion. God had gifted Timothy, and Timothy needed to courageously use that gift.

We need to constantly rekindle our spiritual gifts (1:6).

Because Timothy was a man of faith, Paul could remind him to "fan into flame" the gift of God. The verb form here indicates an ongoing, perpetual action. We need to constantly rekindle our spiritual gifts. Like stoking a fire or stirring up the embers of a flame, we need to tend our gifts. Timothy had received a gift from God—a "grace gift," one or more spiritual gifts or abilities for service. This gift that resided in him came, as Paul said, "through the laying on of my hands." In 1 Timothy 4:14 Paul stated that the elders of the church had participated in this laying on of hands as well. It may be that Timothy received his gift through this means or that the church expressed its recognition of his divinely bestowed gift in this way. Elsewhere in the New Testament the bestowal of spiritual gifts seems to occur at the moment of salvation and by

the sovereign will of God's Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7), and this may have been the case with Timothy. But merely possessing spiritual gifts doesn't guarantee that we'll use these gifts to their full potential. For this reason we must constantly rekindle our gifts. How do we do so? Active service, like physical exercise for the body, keeps us in shape spiritually. Likewise, prayer and the study of God's Word will stir up our gifts, stoke the fire, fan the flame. God has gifted us for His work, and we serve best when we serve with perpetually renewed passion.

We need to amplify the spiritual virtues of power, love, and self-discipline (1:7).

Timothy may have naturally possessed a timid disposition. In fact, in comparison to the zeal and boldness of Paul most Christians would appear timid. However, Timothy was a faithful servant who faced countless challenges as a church leader. Paul rightly challenged Timothy to be courageous in his leadership. Timothy would face persecution outside the church and confrontations within the church. But God, Paul assured Timothy, has not given His people a spirit of cowardice or timidity. Here the word "spirit" likely refers to our human disposition rather than the Holy Spirit. God has not given us a spirit of cowardice but one of power, love, and self-control. Power refers to our God given ability to face difficult situations without backing down. Love provides the proper attitude that we must maintain toward others even in the face of opposition. Self-control balances power and love by guiding us toward a prudent path—the term expresses the idea of sound judgment. This virtue, coupled with courage, power, and love, is essential for church leaders. So, God prepares His people for His work through significant relationships, life experiences, and spiritual gifts. We, as His people, need to perpetually renew our passion—to rekindle our gifts—to be most effective in His work.