

“Passing On The Torch”

A Study of 2 Timothy

“Don’t Give Up!”

2 Timothy 1:1-18

In 66 A.D. Paul is again in prison. But the circumstances now are very different from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16-31). In his first imprisonment Paul was merely under house arrest and people could freely visit him and he had the hope of eventual release. But now he is in a cold Roman cell (4:13) (tradition suggest it is the Mamertime prison in Rome), he has been abandoned by almost everyone (4:10-11) and he had no hopes that he would leave his cell alive (4:6-8). 2 Timothy was probably Paul’s last letter. Many people consider it his *“last will and testament.”* What we have recorded here are the final words of a dying man who knows that his days are numbered. Many people think that Paul died within weeks of writing 2 Timothy.

More than anything, the letter of 2 Timothy is a changing of the guard. Paul is passing on the torch of ministry to Timothy. One of the great spectacles of the Olympic Games is the passing of the torch. The passing of the torch is symbolic. One person has fulfilled their duties and responsibilities and now those same duties and responsibilities are passed on to the next person and so on and so on until the work is completed. Paul has finished his turn of carrying the torch of the gospel of Christ. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim.4:7) Now it is Timothy’s turn to carry the torch and finish his leg of the race. Paul’s final letter is a passing of the torch from one generation to the next.

The purpose of the letter is to challenge Timothy to stay the course, to persevere in the faith, to not give in or give up. This letter is for everyone who is tempted to quit. It is a reminder that *“it is always too soon to quit!”*

Paul begins with his usual words of greeting, verse one, “ 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, a beloved son:Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

After his salutation and greeting Paul summarizes his instructions to his son in the faith in five concise statements.

First, Remember Your Spiritual Heritage (vv. 3-5)

“I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, (4) greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, (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.”

Verse three reveals three things that characterized the life of the Apostle Paul as he comes to the close of his life; a thankful heart, a clear conscience, and a prayer filled life. What a way to end a life and what a motivation and example for Timothy and for us!

Verse five discloses Timothy’s spiritual heritage. We all have a physical heritage and whether we know it or not our ancestors continue to impact our lives even today. Our last names bear our ancestors mark, tell to some degree our where our ancestors originated. Even our health is connected to that of our ancestors.

Our spiritual heritage consists of those people who helped to lead us to Christ and all those people who have helped to mature in our faith. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

What Paul is reminding Timothy of is the origin of his faith. Timothy’s spiritual heritage goes back at least two generations. His grandmother, Lois, came to faith in Christ and passed that heritage on to her daughter Eunice, who in turn passed in on to Timothy.

We all have a family tree. We all have a spiritual history –whether good or bad. Paul says (v. 5) that what he remembers about Timothy is his “genuine faith.” The word translated “genuine” (*anupokritos*) is literally

unhypocritical, that is without pretense or deceit.

Second, Rekindle Your Spiritual Gift (vv. 6-7)

“Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (7) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

Paul did not say, “*Start the fire,*” but rather “*Stir up the fire that is already burning.*” Another way to say it is, “*Start now using the gifts God has given you!*”

The gift of God spoken of in verse six refers to the general categories of spiritual gifts that Paul explains in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. God has sovereignly given each believer certain abilities according to his own will, completely apart from any merit or qualification.

Fear is a common human fragility but as Paul points out in verse seven it is not given by God. It is supplied by the enemy. But rather verse seven tells us that in contrast God has given us “... power and of love and of a sound mind.” The gift of God is “power” (*dunamis*) (Acts 1:8), “Love” (John 13:34) and “a sound mind,” literally self control.

Third, Refuse To Be Intimidated (vv. 8-12)

“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, (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, (10) but 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, (11) to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. (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.”

We can understand why Paul wrote these words. There are times for all of us when we are tempted to be ashamed of our faith.

A young preacher in Zimbabwe expressed it this way, “I’m a part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit’s power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made; I’m a disciple of HIS! I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.... I won’t give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus” [R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit. (Wheaton, Ill.:Crossway Books, 2000) p. 182-183.]

Verse twelve says, “I know whom I have believed.” He did not say, “*I know what I have believed,*” although Paul as well as any Christian alive knew what he believed. He authored at least thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. He did not say, “*I know how much I have believed,*” even though that is true. And he did not say, “*I know when I believed,*” although he could have told exactly when he came to faith in Christ. Nor did he say, “*I know why I believe,*” although that was true as well. Christianity is first and foremost about a relationship with Christ, so Paul said, “*I know who I have believed.*”

The verb "know" (*oida*) carries the idea of being absolutely convinced and void of all doubt. Paul is saying, “*While some may laugh, mock, ridicule, deny or even doubt the power and reality of The Gospel, as for me, my friend, I "know" without the shadow of a doubt that the One I preach and die for is real. He's here. He's alive. I've seen Him. I've heard Him. And I'm on my way to meet Him. As we all are, really! And my faith in Him is simply unshakable!*”

The last part of verse twelve says, “and I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.”

What is Paul talking about? What did he "committed to him" for God to keep a "keep" or guard over? He has entrusted his very life and service. When you give your life over to God, you "commit" it "to him". When you offer Him your time, strength, money, service and your abilities out of love and devotion for Him, He takes it very seriously. It's not in vain. And you can be sure of His reward "until that day".

What "day"? The day spoke of is when we appear before His Judgment Seat. Not to account for our sins, but to account for our service given throughout our Christian lives. (Rom.14:10, 2Tim.4:8, 2Cor.5:10)

Fourth, Recommit Yourself To The Truth Of the Gospel Message (vv. 13-14)

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (14) That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

We do not have the right to change the gospel to suit ourselves. We are to hold fast the truth as it has been given in the Word of God. We are to hold it, guard it and then proclaim it! When we start to water down the truth of God’s Word, we end up creating doubt on every major doctrine. That is why some denominational groups are no longer sure that Jesus “is” the only way to Heaven, support homosexuality as an alternative live style and approve abortion on demand as every woman’s right. It is the duty of every generation – of every local church – to “keep” and “guard” the sacredness of the Word of God.

Fifth, Refresh Yourself In The Encouragement of Others (vv. 15-18)

“This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus` and Hermogenes. (16) The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; (17) but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. (18) 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.”

Paul no doubt felt like the man in the ancient fable of “The Two Travelers and the Bear” who had a fearful encounter with a huge bear. “One traveler, in great fear, shimmied high into a tree, giving no thought to his friend. The other, with no chance to go anywhere, remembered that bears often lose interest in the dead and so fell to the ground feigning death. The bear came alongside and nuzzled and sniffed at his face and ears. Thinking the man to be dead, the beast ambled away. When the bear was long gone, the man up in the tree climbed down and asked his friend what the bear had whispered to him, ‘because’ he said, ‘I noticed his mouth was long at your ear.’ The other said, as he stood dusting himself off, ‘It is not secret he told me. What he said was tha I should be careful about keeping company with those who, when danger arises leave their friends in the lurch.’ ” [R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit. (Wheaton, Ill.:Crossway Books, 2000) p. 185. quoting Clarence Edward Macartney. The Women of Tekoah and Other Sermons on Bible Characters (New York: Abingdon Press, 1995) p. 64-65]

It is important to remember that no matter how hard we work and pray, there are always some who will turn against us. In the case of Paul, he mentions two names – Phygellus

and Hermogenes. It seems very possible that some of the very people whom he had poured his life into were not there when he needed them.

Yet even though some fall away, when times get tough others step up and respond in faith – like Onesiphorus – who when he heard that Paul was in prison, came to Rome and searched until he found him. Notice the spiritual character of this man;

- He Was Not Ashamed Of Paul's

Imprisonment (v. 16) "He...was not ashamed of my chains"

- He Was An Encouragement To

Paul (v.16) "for he often refreshed me"

Conclusion

As we contemplate the importance of *"passing the torch to the next generation"* we have to realize that the battle

- Is too important to ever quit.
- Is too important not to use our spiritual gifts!
- Is too important to be ashamed of our faith.

Is too important to not to stand fast in the gospel.