

Books of the Bible

II Timothy

Corey Gilcrest

July 14, 2024

This is Paul's final and most personal letter, written to Timothy, his dear worker and protege, from Paul's prison cell in Rome. Now he is on his death bed but we're not sure exactly when he wrote this. It was in the middle of a court trial that is not going well and he doesn't think he will survive. Hence, he talks a lot about suffering.

Timothy is in Ephesus and Paul wants him to come to Rome and bring his coat but first he wants him to deal with corrupt teachers in Ephesus.

He mentions Timothy's mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice, who had immersed him in Scriptures early in life.

II Tim 1:6 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.

II Tim 1:18 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.

This is a call for Timothy to reject shame, which is hard to do. I usually just feel it and it's painful. This shame is that which is associated with the Gospel and also, for Timothy, his association with Paul and the negative stigma associated with his imprisonment. Paul mentions two people specifically who have rejected him. Please don't be too quick to judge these two, however. (more later).

II Tim 2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Be strong! If you watch TV commercials, you will notice overt (manipulative) encouragement to do certain actions. This, however, is encouragement to call forth the strength that has already been given you.

This brings several rhetorical questions for us:

- How have you been strengthened by the grace that is from Jesus?
- How is this strength different from human strength?
- What does it look like to find strength from Jesus rather than yourself?
- Have you felt a moment of strength that came from somewhere other than yourself?

Paul realizes his request for Timothy is a costly and risky.

My son Isaac has been talking about baptism giving you special powers. When he first told me about this, I was hesitant but I think this is actually what Paul is talking about. Following Jesus is not easy and requires everything you have.

Paul compares this challenge in three ways:

- Soldier
- Athlete
- Famer

I most closely relate personally with the athlete metaphor. Paul wants us to demonstrate what it takes to train as a metaphor to follow Jesus. When I trained for a marathon, I had to sacrifice sleep, time, and maintain my commitment to my wife, Colleen, who signed up with me. I had to endure injury, setbacks, and laziness (my biggest setback) and to trust that God gave me my body and that He alone gives me my strength. When I was done, Colleen told me the joy of the Lord is my strength (**Neh 8:10**). I am not claiming to understand what it means to suffer under social or government persecution but the highest example of this is Jesus who suffered crucifixion. Similarly, Paul was suffering in a Roman prison. Hardship and sacrifice are inherent in the Christian life.

II Tim 2:11-13

**11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;
12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;
13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.**

God's love for our world has opened up new hope through Jesus's death and resurrection. For us who risk following him, he promises life. To those who reject him, God will honor their decision and do the same. But their and our faithlessness will never compel God to abandon his faithfulness. Paul calls Timothy to be faithful knowing it may come with a cost.

Before coming to Rome, Paul wants Timothy to confront the corrupt teachers in Ephesus whose teaching was spreading like a cancer, especially in the women. We don't know a lot of details except that these teachers were following the belief that the resurrection has already taken place:

I Tim 2:17-18

17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

The problem was that the church had abandoned their future and instead embraced a hyper-spiritualized Christianity that was disrupting their daily lives. Paul wants Timothy to raise up faithful leaders who will teach the real good news about Jesus and read the Scripture over each other.

II Tim 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

In contrast, Timothy is to keep his focus on the core storyline of the scriptures (the Hebrew Bible). The point of the Scriptures is to tell a unified story that leads to Jesus and offers wisdom to the whole world. This is the Superpower!

II Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...

Paul also refers to the Spirit's role in writing the scriptures. By reading these scriptures, God's people will be prepared to do good. It is powerful to have the scriptures read over you: I enjoy this every day with my Bible app. This is powerful!

Paul thinks he will die and wants Timothy to arrive before winter. He doesn't want to freeze in his prison cell and therefore needs his coat. He makes a quick plug for Alexander who was probably behind Paul's arrest. He has been abandoned to death and his only source of comfort is Jesus's presence who stands with him and waits to deliver him even if he dies. His life was marked by persistent suffering and struggle and pain and loss. These are topics we have talked about a lot here at the Village: Paul is saying "I get it." Following Jesus is uncomfortable, awkwardly vulnerable, and tense. These are not a sign of Jesus's absence: instead, it's precisely in these places that Jesus's love becomes most tangible.

Have you had a dark night of the soul where you experienced this?
Do you long for Jesus to draw near to you right now?

Takeaways:

Paul wants Timothy to keep **feeding the white hot flame** of God's gift of unashamed courage to speak openly of Christ and suffer for the Gospel. Timothy must FEED this flame, otherwise he will die and have no hope.

This is Paul's last message to Timothy.

When I was 17, I was misdiagnosed with cancer (true story). I had an image of what chemo and surgery would be like for me. I stayed up late crying about all I was going to miss: I thought I would die. It turned out that my issue was benign. However, this was like a wake-up call for me. Paul wants Timothy not to wait for a wake-up call but to start now. I started on a spiritual journey at age 17: I searched for the goodness I knew was out there. I eventually arrived at the foot of the cross where God offered me his Spirit and grace.

Another story: I was on a backpacking trip where it rained off and on and we wanted a campfire. Our kindling and matches were wet when the rain had stopped. I ended up using my backpacking stove, screwed onto my gas canister, and tipped it into the campfire area. It worked and caught fire but then started to go out. My friend fanned it with his hat which I didn't think would work but it did. Keeping

something going requires **fanning the flame** and often requires **community**. **Fan your faith until it's white hot!** Keep feeding this unashamed courage to speak openly. You being here today shows that your flame is at least lit in some way. Or maybe you want a flame: Paul's message is to receive his gift and then to utilize his gift to receive more. Paul wants ministers to be **white hot, not slothful** in zeal (**Rom 12:11**) but boil in spirit.

God gave not fear but courage because vs. 8 says not to be ashamed: **Fear is NOT TO BE ASHAMED**. We are to share in the suffering for the Gospel. God has given this gift of **feeding the flame** to Timothy and also to us.

I've been meditating on this gift of sharing this Gospel with my family. I could ask them if they have considered the afterlife or as them "Is Jesus Christ your lord and savior?" These can be offensive, yet even Jesus does not tell us to approach others this way. Instead, he says:

Matt 28:16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

He doesn't say to go and fear-monger (believe in Jesus or go to hell) but he tells them to make disciples, baptize, and encourage. He tells Peter to **Feed his Sheep**:

John 21:17 The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Imagine God laying hands on you: "Little one, despite your biases, weakness, doubts, and timidity, you will speak for me unashamedly and courageously and you will suffer for my gospel."

The person in my life who is dedicated to avoiding the gospel message, this is the one I am called to love as a shepherd. What would a shepherd do for a lost sheep? Paul wrote this letter to Timothy and for us because the **flame of unashamed courage** is always being *smothered by the pleasure of the world which seems innocent yet it's deadly*. For me it's laziness. The deceptions and distractions of the enemy easily get us down.

Paul mentions suffering 14 times in this letter: Following Jesus is not the easy road.

Mark 8:34-35

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **35** For whoever wants to save their life^[a] will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

The act of doing this doesn't come from within: *it can only come from God*. This is not a pulling-yourself-up kind of bravery: we need to trust that God will provide for us what we cannot provide for ourselves. This comes from humility and daily acceptance. I wouldn't wish a botched diagnosis on any of you but I do hope that you have an awakening moment in your life that moves you to great things and leads you to share the gospel with your family and co-workers and your neighbors. May the bravery come from God who promises great courage. May you be like Peter who comes back to Jesus in humility even after denying he never knew Jesus, seeking wisdom and direction from God's own son.

God's grace is essential: Paul always starts and ends each book with a blessing of grace. That's why our pastors offer this to us every Sunday. God gave us the gift of his Word and Jesus gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit that comes with the blessing of grace.

I Cor 2: 12,13

12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. **13** This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

Village, when you speak on behalf of the Gospel it will be difficult. You might even consider that you are suffering! Consider Paul's life which had not been easy yet still he was not ashamed of sitting in prison and he doesn't want us to be ashamed either. The one who entrusted us with this is powerful. Even in a supportive community, it might seem that only Jesus is our comfort. Paul had this happen when he had to wait for companionship and his coat while he was up against inevitable suffering and likely death. If this is where you are, may you be reminded that you are surrounded by people who are also suffering but are willing to walk alongside you. We have a Healing Chair, Pilgrim Groups, pastor prayer, and even conversation around a meal tonight. Sometimes it's hard to talk about hard things at dinner but I encourage you to assess those deeper parts of your heart.

Lastly, once more, keep **feeding the white hot flame of God's gift**. God will reward our choice to accept his courage. Take heart and don't be afraid.

II Tim 4:17-18

17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. **18** The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus's Directive to us:

Embrace your Doubt: Receive God's Courage and Proclaim the Gospel.

Let's go back the questions we asked at the beginning:

- How have you been strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus?
- How is this strength different from human strength?
- What does it look like to find strength from Jesus rather than yourself?
- Have you felt a moment of strength that came from somewhere other than yourself?