

## 1 TIMOTHY 1:1, 2

### THE YOUNG THEOLOGUE

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

“To Timothy, my true child in the faith:

“Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

**B**iographical studies can be about as exciting as watching paint dry. Nevertheless, the lives of people can prove to be most interesting, especially if they fought battles or successfully met challenges to which we can relate. Through their lives—the victories and even the defeats they experienced—we are instructed. Through them we can learn how to conduct our own lives. Such information is more than merely interesting—it is instructive.

The life of one man who lived almost two thousand years ago may not appear to be all that exciting, at least when viewed superficially. However, Timothy was chosen by the Apostle to the Gentiles to participate in the first missionary journeys. He was with Paul as that great man penetrated to the very heart of the Roman Empire, sending the Imperial eagle screaming from her nest. Timothy was present when the charge was made that the missionaries had “turned the world upside down.” He witnessed God’s incredible power to free people who were demonised and to liberate others from the power of darkness, delivering them into the glorious light of the freedom of Christ the Lord. Ultimately, he would live out his life as a pastor in a hard place, making a difference to the glory of God.

**PREPARATION FOR PASTORING THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS** — A Jewish girl named Eunice married a Gentile man. They lived in the city of Lystra. The young girl’s mother—Lois, by name—moved in with the young couple. This would not have been so odd in that earlier day, the mother-in-law or mother provided help with the household duties, and later when children were brought into the family she would provide care for them as well. Eunice had at least one child, Timothy, whose name means “Honouring God.”

Eunice and Lois attended the local synagogue, though it is unlikely that Eunice’s husband ever attended with her. The women instructed the lad Timothy in the Scriptures. Though all they had available was the Old Covenant, and likely they did not even have access to a copy of those scriptures for themselves, they had been taught to listen, and they undoubtedly did listen carefully as the Scriptures were read and discussed. They learned through listening and through repeating what they had heard so that the knowledge of the Holy One would be handed down from generation-to-generation. Just as they had learned, so they ensured that the child entrusted to them would learn of God, learn of the need to be righteous, learn of the grace and mercy of the True and Living God. So, from earliest days, the boy was instructed in the Word.

Life for Eunice, Timothy and Lois appears to have been pedestrian, perhaps even prosaic. Nothing out of the ordinary seems to have happened in their lives. Religion for them was quotidian, predictable. However, at some point, perhaps when the boy was a lad of ten or even as old as thirteen, two men came into the region of Derbe, Lystra and Iconium. In the synagogue at Lystra these men were declaring a novel message that had not been heard before.

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These two men declared that Messiah had come, that he had been born of a virgin and that He had lived a sinless life. Their message turned from the expected as the men spoke of His death—a death unlike others, though superficially just another death of a Jewish zealot at the hands of Roman occupiers. The preachers were adamant that this One whom they claimed to be Messiah had not been killed, but rather than He offered up His life as a sacrifice. In itself, such a story could not have excited much interest. However, the Good News of their message was that this wonderful man had not stayed dead. He had conquered death, rising from the dead, thus demonstrating that He was indeed the Son of God through that resurrection. He was witnessed by many people as He walked with them before ascending into the heavens.

The most exciting feature of the message the preachers brought was that just as Messiah had conquered death, so the life He now lived was offered to any who would receive it. Almost unbelievably, they insisted that the life offered was extended freely—no effort could secure this life, no merit would coerce that life—the life could only be accepted freely as offered.

I won't tell you that these preachers of this novel message were accepted without question. They had preached in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia. The response of those who heard them was not especially promising. The Jews, especially the Jewish leaders, were jealous when they witnessed the crowds that flocked to hear the message these men declared. The leaders attempted to interject themselves so they could set people straight, hoping that people would still listen to them and their myths, ensuring that they could continue in power.

However, the men boldly countered this attempt by saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

“I have made you a light for the Gentiles,  
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth”

[ACTS 13:46, 47]

The response of the Gentiles who heard what was said was powerful. Here is how one biographer described what happened, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region" [ACTS 13:48, 49].

This only enraged the Jewish leaders more, and so they incited devout women and men of stature within the city to attack the two preachers. With threats, perhaps punctuated with blows from clenched fists, they drove them, not only out of the city but also out of the district! However, the two preachers merely shook the dust from their feet, as they had been taught to do [see MATTHEW 10:14; MARK 6:11; LUKE 9:5]. Doing this would serve as a testimony against the religious leaders; God would remember; and the preachers went on to Iconium.

The reception in Iconium was not much better, however. Though they were able to preach for a period, when a great number of both Jews and Gentiles believed the message they delivered, unbelieving Jews incited some of the Gentiles in that city. Despite preaching the message of life, and even witnessing to the message with signs and wonders performed at their hands, the preachers were forced to flee for their lives when an attempt by both Gentiles and Jews was made against their lives. The design was to mistreat the preachers, even to stone them. However, the missionaries learned of the plans and fled before the unbelieving people could carry out their evil proposal. The missionaries fled to cities of Lycaonia, specifically arriving at Lystra. Here they would have a powerful ministry, though it seemed a failure at first.

Early in their time in Lystra, the missionaries encountered a man who had been crippled from birth. In fact, he had never walked. Well, here is the story as told by a biographer. “There was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, said in a loud voice, ‘Stand upright on your feet.’ And he sprang up and began walking. And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.’ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them” [ACTS 14:8-18].

Do you remember the problems these preachers faced in Antioch and in Iconium? Their problems with Jewish religious leaders from those two cities weren’t over yet. These religious leaders had followed the missionaries to Lystra, where they persuaded the crowds that the missionaries were frauds and charlatans. The excited people were enraged. After all, they had treated these men like gods, and the preachers had refused the honours proffered. Therefore, they must be devils. The crowds seized Paul, likely because he was the chief spokesman. They stoned him and dragged him out of the city where they dumped his body like a dead animal. They were convinced that he was dead, and, truthfully, it appears that he was actually dead.

The disciples gathered around him, no doubt mourning what appeared to be a tragedy. Abruptly, the Apostle stood up on his feet. Together, no doubt in awe, the disciples and the Apostle re-entered the city. The next day, the preachers left for Derbe. They left behind a few disciples, disciples who had received no extensive training in the truths of the Word, but followers of Jesus as the long-anticipated Messiah, nevertheless. Among those disciples were Lois and Eunice, and their young son, Timothy. We can imagine that Timothy heard the message and believed since the Apostle refers to him as “my beloved and faithful child in the Lord” [1 CORINTHIANS 4:17] and addresses him as “my true child in the faith” [1 TIMOTHY 1:2].

Lois and Eunice appear to have instructed the young man in the truths of God’s Word as they themselves studied to discover what was written concerning the Messiah. Clearly, the young man was advancing in the Faith, for when the Apostle next visited Lystra and Iconium, the young man was recommended to Paul. By this time, Timothy would have been between fourteen and sixteen years of age. The first mission was around A.D. 47 to 48; the second mission was conducted over the period from A.D. 50 to 52. From this point forward, Timothy would be a companion and a colleague to the Apostle Paul.

Preparing for ministry that would include the Jews, Paul arranged to have the young man circumcised so as not to give offence to the Jews. Timothy, unlike Titus, was considered Jewish because his mother was Jewish. The wisdom of Paul’s move is seen in the fact that Timothy’s presence was not controversial among the Jews, and it set the stage for the decision of the Jerusalem Council not to require Titus to be circumcised [see GALATIANS 2:3]. It would appear, then, that Paul was planning for maximum effectiveness in Timothy’s service to the Lord.

By the time the first Pastoral Letters were written, the young man would not have been much more than twenty-three years of age. In the time between joining the missionary band and the first of the Pastoral Letters addressed to him, the young theologue had accompanied Paul on two missionary journeys, enjoying considerable trust that allowed him to carry out a number of critical duties necessary to extend the Faith throughout the Empire.

On Paul's second journey, when the Apostle was forced to flee Berea for his own safety, Timothy, together with Silas, was left behind to strengthen the believers, establishing them in the Faith [ACTS 17:14]. The two missionaries did join Paul in Athens, but the mission was fast-paced. Timothy was sent back to encourage another nascent congregation—the church in Thessalonica. He was dispatched there in order to establish these new believers, encouraging them to stand firm in this holy Faith despite severe persecution [1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-9]. After spending some time with this assembly, the young servant would return to Paul, who was by then in Corinth [ACTS 18:5], with a report that proved to greatly encourage the Apostle. On the basis of the work Timothy and Silas conducted and the report they brought to the Apostle, the Letters we know as 1 THESSALONIANS and 2 THESSALONIANS were sent to these persecuted saints.

During his third missionary journey, Paul conducted an extended ministry in Ephesus. During the more than two years he spent in Ephesus, the Apostle sent Timothy, together with another helper named Erastus [ACTS 19:22], to Corinth to deal with the problems that vexed that troubled congregation [1 CORINTHIANS 4:17]. It would appear that Timothy was unsuccessful in resolving the problems the Corinthians faced; so, he returned to Paul in Ephesus. Perhaps he failed in this ministry because he was overly timid with the Corinthians, or perhaps it was because of his youth. Whatever the case, Paul intervened with a stern caution to the Corinthians: “When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers” [1 CORINTHIANS 16:10, 11]. The task assigned was a big task, and many otherwise competent and capable servants of God have failed similar tasks. Later, Paul would send Titus, who appears to have been more forceful, to deal with the Corinthians. This time, the younger minister appears to have been successful in turning the Corinthians from their mad dash into disunity and insignificance [2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-16].

Timothy accompanied Paul on his final journey to Jerusalem [ACTS 20:4], though there is no indication that he was present with the Apostle on the journey to Rome that would result in shipwreck before reaching the Eternal City. The young minister by this time would have witnessed the power of God demonstrated in multiple instances through the hand of the Apostle. You will perhaps recall how Paul confronted the Corinthians with strong words that Timothy could readily have verified. Paul wrote, “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” [2 CORINTHIANS 12:12]. Timothy had witnessed the power of God exercised through Paul even raising the dead on one occasion [see ACTS 20:7-12].

Despite his failings, and they are several, Timothy enjoyed the confidence of the Apostle. No less than six of Paul's letters include Timothy as one of the authors.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Timothy was undoubtedly present with Paul when he wrote to the Roman Christians from Corinth, since he is identified as being present in ROMANS 16:21. The fact that two of these letters were composed by Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome would indicate that Timothy was sufficiently trusted and respected that he would share Paul's hardship during imprisonment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 2 CORINTHIANS; PHILIPPIANS; COLOSSIANS; 1 THESSALONIANS; 2 THESSALONIANS; PHILEMON

<sup>3</sup> PHILIPPIANS and COLOSSIANS

**PROBLEMS FACING THE YOUNG PASTOR** — It will be beneficial to remind ourselves of the challenges facing this young minister. The same challenges face almost every young servant of the Lord God. Many accept the challenge quickly; others are more reticent and take longer to discover how to meet the challenges of service.

The ancient author Eusebius provides some ancient perspective of the apostolic churches. Though they were moving away from the firm foundation of the Apostles by the time he wrote, he was nevertheless able to compile information that would be otherwise lacking for later students of the Word. Writing about A.D. 325, Eusebius reported that Timothy served as the first overseer of Ephesus. If this is accurate, and there is little that would suggest otherwise, he would have been appointed to that position by none other than Paul himself [see **1 TIMOTHY 1:3**].

Whatever we may say about Timothy, we cannot say that he lacked fortitude. He had accompanied the Apostle during numerous conflicts, even sharing his first imprisonment in Rome, as has been previously noted. It was from Rome that Paul sent Timothy to Philippi. It was during this time that Paul wrote the Philippians, “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me” [**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-23**].

Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letters to Timothy. He could not be present to provide guidance for the young theologian, who was by this point a young man of perhaps twenty-three to twenty-six years of age. However, by this time in his life Timothy had more practical experience than most ministers in their thirties will have in this day. He had persevered with Paul through two missionary tours. He had accompanied the Apostle to Jerusalem when the Apostle was seized and his life threatened. He had conducted multiple independent tours to troubled churches as the Apostle’s emissary, succeeding in his ministry to some and failing in his ministry to others. These various services had given Paul opportunity to observe Timothy, discovering his weaknesses, but also recognizing his strengths.

I need to speak a positive word for Timothy at this point. To anyone reading **2 TIMOTHY**, it is evident that Paul is passing the torch to the younger minister. That in itself is a powerful commendation for Timothy, that Paul should think so highly of him. Whatever flaws may be noted, we must never lose sight of the fact that the Apostle to the Gentiles had confidence in him. Each servant of God is afflicted with deficits—some more glaring than others, some more detrimental than others, some more recalcitrant than others. Each of us carries the marks of our fallen nature in greater or lesser measure; Timothy was no different in this regard.

Let me speak of a few of the young minister’s strong traits before we discover the challenges he faced. Timothy was marked by sensitivity, affection and loyalty—traits that are not only necessary for success in the Christian life, but characteristics that are enviable. Turn your minds again to the words we read but moments ago, thinking of the Apostle’s commendation of Timothy to the Philippians. “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy’s proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me” [**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-23**].

Add to this commendation the memories of the Apostle in his final letter to Timothy. “As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy” [2 TIMOTHY 1:4]. Clearly, Paul was fully aware of Timothy’s tenderness, his compassion. In this same letter, Timothy’s character is again on display as the Apostle recalls his steadfastness. “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” [2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13].

Paul continued in this positive vein as he recalls the young man’s preparation for service. Paul wrote, “As for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” [2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17].

Whatever else may be said of Timothy, he understood the rigours of ministry; his was not theoretical assessment of the challenges facing the servant of Christ. As an aside of considerable importance to the people of God, know that the minister of Christ will face challenges most believers will never be called to face. Know that the conscientious minister of Christ will fight battles most people will never be called to endure. He will observe the darkness of fallen mankind; and if he serves acceptably, he will witness the glorious light of the Gospel of Christ as it sets the prisoner free. He will be marked by weary hours groaning over the sins of the people, weeping for those who wander from the flock and standing firm against those who would act as wild boars in the vineyard of the Lord. He will not often permit you to see, but he wears black crepe beneath his coat, he wears sackcloth beneath his robe. The wounds he bears will seldom be witnessed by those to whom he ministers; but you may be assured that because he is the servant of the True and Living God, he knows what it is to be wounded in conflict. In the same way, he will know what it is to be deserted by all in the day of battle, left to face the enemy alone; and he will do all this, because he is appointed by God to this task.

Timothy faced a strange heterodoxy that had infested the church in Ephesus. It was a kind of legalism [1 TIMOTHY 1:6, 7], not unlike what contemporary Christianity appears to be devolving into in this day. Moreover, that church was marked by a tolerance of a speculative theology based on myths and genealogies. Again, much of what Paul inveighed against is seen again among the churches of our Lord in a new guise. At the time Paul wrote, ecclesiastical organisation was developing, and Timothy would be called upon to supervise the appointment of qualified individuals. People could not be permitted to imagine that elders and deacons were merely elected; they would need to meet the qualification of personal godliness.

Paul would urge Timothy, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching” [1 TIMOTHY 4:13]. This could be an indication that Timothy was inclined to avoid mental exertion. Ministers are to be students of the Word; then, filled with the Word, they are to preach expository messages, equipping those who listen to apply the Word in daily life. As we have just witnessed, the minister must prepare for public service, for “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” [2 TIMOTHY 3:16, 17].

One of the multiple plaques my daughter Rochelle has made for my study is one that presents a quote from Spurgeon. It reads, “It is blessed to eat into the very soul of the Bible until, at last, you come to talk in scriptural language, and the spirit is flavoured with the words of the Lord, so that your blood is Bibline and the very essence of the Bible flows from you.” To this day, and until Christ returns, that remains the first task of the servant of God. Our responsibility is not merely to preach and teach—it is to be prepared so that we can preach and teach! We who are servants of the True and Living God are not simply charged to evangelise; we are responsible to live holy lives so that we can evangelise! We are to be pure, and thus prepared to serve.

One church I served had experienced a serious dearth of biblical preaching for years. When I arrived, I requested book shelves to be placed in the study. The committee to which I made the request responded in astonishment, “You have shelves in the study now.” The shelving to which they referred consisted of cinder blocks and two four foot pieces of 2X6 boards. I patiently explained that I would require shelving on at least three of the walls of the office, as I would be moving in most of my language resources, many of my commentaries and not a few of the books I would require for addressing deficits of the congregation. I frequently heard from people who came into that office, “I’ve never seen so many books. Do you really need so many books? No minister we’ve ever had needed that many books.” Perhaps that paucity accounts for the multiplied difficulties that congregation had faced for many years. Perhaps that accounts for the refractive attitude toward the ministry of the Word displayed among those saints.

Timothy’s primary work was to preach the Word, heralding the message of life and teaching as God provided opportunity. This is still the principle task of the elder to this day. In addition to this, Timothy was charged with pastoral responsibilities that have not been rescinded to this day. The Apostle wrote, “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” [2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5].

It is likely that Timothy was timid when those to whom he declared the truth were hostile. He seems to have shrunk from confrontation, as revealed in this cautionary statement to “be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus” [2 TIMOTHY 2:1]. This view is strengthened by the charge in the opening words of that final letter. “Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” [2 TIMOTHY 1:8-13]. More pointed still is the Apostle’s charge, “[Because you have been thoroughly trained in the Word from childhood], 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” [2 TIMOTHY 1:6, 7].

On behalf of ministers of Christ, I am compelled to say that he shall face many foes today. There are those who profess the Faith, but seek an easy place that does not demand anything of them. Such people will resent the preaching of the Word. There are those who, whether professing faith or not, seek to be affirmed. Even though they are libertine and wanton in their conduct, they want to not only be proclaimed as okay, but also to have their behaviour accepted as normal. There are those delicate souls who resent the narrow confines of the Faith; they want to be liked by this pagan world—such people detest the minister of Christ who dares expose the sinful nature of mankind, and especially their own spiritual sloth. The minister of Christ will be opposed by small-minded people who imagine the Faith to be a means to grab power. The minister of Christ must resist all such people, reminding them of the mercies of God and warning them to cease sinning against the Risen Saviour. Therefore, the minister of Christ must not be timid when declaring the Word. Though wicked people rage and bluster, the man of God must stand firm. To complicate the matter, he must stand while displaying a gracious and gentle demeanour, even toward such wicked individuals.

Bolstering this concern that Paul may have held for Timothy is that warning he wrote, “Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers” [1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16].

The context in which the Apostle penned that warning was in contrasting what was preached and the conduct of Timothy’s life. The danger of living a double life is very real; therefore, the minister of Christ must always “keep a close watch on [himself] and on the teaching” [1 TIMOTHY 4:16]. Legions are those who bear the title “Pastor” who preach one way and live another. Many professed ministers of the Word call for a holy life, yet live lives that are undistinguished from the denizens of this dark world. Both conduct and doctrine must be watched. So, Timothy was made aware of yet another potential peril.

It is also possible that Timothy struggled against youthful desires. He was but a man; he would struggle against desires, just as all people struggle. We all have longings which, if not controlled, will rule over us. Few conditions are more dangerous to the child of God than that arising from passions ruling over him. Paul found it necessary to caution him, “Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” [2 TIMOTHY 2:22-26].

Do not imagine that Paul was thinking only of sexual desire. Though such may have been in view, he could have as easily been speaking of the desire to accumulate wealth. Perhaps you will recall these words the Apostle penned when concluding his first letter to Timothy. “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” [1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19].



Similarly, Paul could have cautioned the young minister against the desire to gain power over others. Though authorised to exercise authority over the flock of God, no minister can be coercive or harsh in directing the work of the Lord if he will fulfil the appointment he received. He must manage without compelling, though he must be prepared to act decisively when the flock is threatened. Though written of Christ as our High Priest, the words penned by the writer of the Letter to Hebrew Christians could easily have been spoken of the elder of God, “No one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God” [HEBREWS 5:4].

I have invested considerable time speaking of the possible perils to Timothy’s service. I do not want you to assume that Timothy did not enjoy the Apostle’s confidence. Although he was nearing death and had been abandoned by numerous followers, such as Phygelus, Hermogenes, Demas and Alexander [see 2 TIMOTHY 1:15; 4:10, 14], the Apostle expressed unqualified confidence in the young theologian. Undoubtedly, that confidence had to have made a formative impression on the young minister; and it would have served as an enduring inspiration to him until he himself would be removed from this life.

Perhaps because of his youth, it would appear that Timothy avoided imprisonment when Paul and Barnabas were imprisoned in Philippi. Neither does it appear that he was imprisoned when Paul was first imprisoned in Rome; perhaps, he didn’t even make the journey with the Apostle, though he does appear to have joined him in Rome later. However, a day would come when the erstwhile companion of the Apostle would discover firsthand what it meant to be imprisoned. Drawing the Letter to Hebrew Christians to a conclusion, the writer pens these words, “You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon” [HEBREWS 13:23]. It seems almost a mark of the calling of God on His servants in the early days of the Faith that they would bear the imprimatur of imprisonment. We are reasonably certain that Timothy concluded the race with every bit as much honour as his mentor. He did stand firm against the enemies of the Faith. He did declare the message of life. He did fulfil the ministry he was assigned.

**PRAISE FOR TIMOTHY** — The opening words of the chapter make it apparent that Paul loved Timothy. The missive is addressed to “Timothy, my true child in the faith.” Then, the aged Apostle pronounced this blessing on the young minister, “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” [1 TIMOTHY 1:2]. They were not mere words, but a prayer for the young theologian to enjoy the best that God had to offer. In 1 TIMOTHY 1:18, Paul refers to Timothy as “my child.”

Throughout both of these letters, Paul used a special term to describe the responsibility that the elder bears. Though he applied the term to himself, he also pressed the term on Timothy. There is significance to his determinate choice. The term, *parathēkē*, is translated twice by our English word “deposit” and once by our English term “entrusted.” In 1 TIMOTHY 6:20, Paul writes, “O Timothy, guard the *deposit* entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge.’” Then, in 2 TIMOTHY 1:14, the Apostle writes, “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good *deposit* entrusted to you.” Of himself, Paul writes, “I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been *entrusted* to me” [2 TIMOTHY 1:12]. It is a unique term used only in these three instances in the apostolic writings; it is as though Paul is equating his own ministry with that of Timothy. Paul was essentially transferring the mantle to Timothy. Thus, all the admonitions we have noted, flowed out of the concerns the Apostle had because he had faced the same challenges.

Now, the aged Apostle stands on the verge of eternity. Shortly, he will be forced to kneel on Roman flagstones and a swordsman, lifting a sharp sword will, with one swift blow, end the earthly life of the aged saint. In his final days, the old man seeks refreshment from those who had ministered to him. To whom will he turn for companionship? Who will prove sufficiently trustworthy to come into the presence of his captors to minister to the old man?

Listen again to what the weary saint writes to the young theologue who had shared so many hardships with the Apostle. “Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” [2 TIMOTHY 4:9-18].

It is not self-serving to encourage you that if you have a minister who is faithful to the Word, a man who stands firm in the challenges of life and who endeavours to walk worthy of the calling he has received, support that man. Stand with him. Don’t desert him when the hounds of hell bark and howl. If that minister seeks the welfare of your soul by declaring the full-gospel of Christ the Lord, he is worthy of your prayers, worthy of your attention, worthy to be emulated. Follow such a man just as he follows Christ the Lord.

If one hears this message who is a minister of the Risen Son of God, let that one take courage from the life and ministry of Timothy. Just as Timothy served in the hard place, standing firm, so you, also, can stand firm in the hard place. Let the people of God united to advance the cause of the Master. Amen.