

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:2

### “TO TIMOTHY, MY BELOVED CHILD”

“To Timothy, my beloved child:

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

**W**e tend to rush past the introductions and greetings of the letters included in the canon of Scripture. Perhaps we modern believers imagine that we know all there is to know about those who were to receive the missive. Perhaps we imagine we need no further information to assist in understanding what was going on when the letters were written. I believe it is a serious error when we are in such a great hurry that we fail to think through these matters. Knowing to whom a letter was penned, knowing the situation they faced and knowing the impact the letter may have had will give us greater confidence in God’s work then and now.

**MEETING TIMOTHY** — Let’s refresh our memories of Timothy so that we can focus on his time with the Apostle. When we embarked on this extended excursus through the Pastoral Letters, I presented a study of Timothy.<sup>2</sup> That message was delivered almost two years ago. At the very least, a refresher study will be beneficial; it will help to ensure that we remain on track for our continuing studies through these letters.

Some five years have passed since Paul wrote the first letter to his erstwhile companion. When he wrote that first letter, Paul had been freed from prison; and he was anticipating going to Ephesus to visit Timothy [see **1 TIMOTHY 3:14, 15; 4:13**]. As he writes this letter we are now studying, the aged saint is imprisoned and facing imminent execution. Moreover, the weight of the churches presses more heavily than ever on his heart. Perhaps his relationship with Timothy has changed as well. We would hope that the love these men shared for one another has been strengthened; but Paul’s concern for the battles Timothy faces is growing more apparent.

You will remember that previously we learned that Timothy was the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish mother [see **ACTS 16:1**]. Apparently, the young man’s mother and grandmother were sufficiently concerned about his religious training that they invested time in him so he would at least be familiar with the Scriptures. We can guess that either his Gentile father did not object to his wife and mother-in-law training the boy in the ancient texts, or his father was for some reason removed from the life of the lad. Actually, nothing other than the fact that he was a Gentile is known of Timothy’s father.

It is probable that Paul met Timothy on his first missionary journey, but it was during the second missionary journey that Paul took Timothy with him. We read in the account of that second missionary tour, “Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek” [**ACTS 16:1-3**].

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Stark, “Timothy: The Young Theologue,” Sermon preached January 27, 2013, <http://newbeginningsbaptist.ca/clientimages/42652/sermonarchive/1%20timothy%201.01.%2002%20the%20young%20theologue.pdf>

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Since the brothers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy, it is probable that he lived in Lystra rather than Derbe. This information supports the idea that Timothy came to faith in the Son of God at some point during Paul's first preaching venture in Lycaonia and grew in faith prior to Paul's return to Lystra and Iconium. I draw this conclusion in great measure because the Apostle identifies Timothy as "my beloved child" here in our text and speaks of him as his "true child in the Faith" in **1 TIMOTHY 1:2**. When he wrote the First Corinthian Letter, Paul said he was sending "Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" [**1 CORINTHIANS 4:17**]. Focus on the fact that Timothy was sufficiently well-known to the saints to be recommended to Paul as dependable. This would indicate that the young man had been in the congregation and likely engaged in observable service for a period of time that permitted the assembly to recognise his commitment to the Faith.

Paul circumcised Timothy because the Jews knew his father was a Greek. This has occasioned controversy for centuries.<sup>3</sup> What it does say is that his mother and grandmother, committed to the Scriptures though they were, did not have sufficient influence to bring Timothy for circumcision at any point prior to meeting up with the missionaries. It is interesting because Titus was not compelled to be circumcised [see **GALATIANS 2:3**]. His mother and grandmother did, however, unite to instruct Timothy from childhood in the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup>

What appears to be a contradiction to some scholars is resolved by appeal to the Apostle's affirmation delivered to the Corinthians Christians. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings" [**1 CORINTHIANS 9:20-23**].

Timothy was quite obviously young when he first accompanied the missionaries. Fifteen years after he accompanied Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey Paul cautions, "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" [**1 TIMOTHY 4:12**]. Moreover, he was spared imprisonment with the missionaries in Philippi, probably because of his youth! The divine text seems to indicate that Timothy was a teenager when he first travelled with Paul. If so, it speaks well of his maturity (especially when contrasted with John Mark, see **ACTS 15:36-38**).

Paul did invest considerable trust in Timothy despite his youth. Though Timothy is not named as being with the missionaries in Thessalonica [see **ACTS 17:1-9**], he was with them in Berea, indicating that he had been present in Thessalonica. After the Thessalonian Jews came to Berea to stir up the people there against the missionaries, Timothy remained with Silas in Berea while Paul journeyed on to Athens [**ACTS 17:14**]. From Athens, Paul sent to Berea, requesting Silas and Timothy to come to him in Athens [**ACTS 17:15**]. As they were travelling, Paul moved on to Corinth, and Timothy and Silas met him there [**ACTS 18:5**; see also **1 THESSALONIANS 3:6**]. When Paul wrote both the First Thessalonian and the Second Thessalonian letters, Timothy was with him in Corinth [see **1 THESSALONIANS 1:1**; **2 THESSALONIANS 1:1**].

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<sup>3</sup> See Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1-3)? Patristic Exegesis, Rabbinic Law, and Matrilineal Descent," Edited by Victor Paul Furnish, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 105 (1986); Christopher Bryan, "A Further Look at Acts 16:1-3," Edited by Victor Paul Furnish, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107 (1988)

<sup>4</sup> Note that the underlying Greek for "whom" in 2 Timothy 3:14 is plural, indicating that both Eunice and Lois were involved in his religious training.

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During the third missionary tour, Paul remained in Ephesus while Timothy was sent to address problems in Corinth. This is mentioned in the First Corinthians. “I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church” [1 CORINTHIANS 4:17; see also 1 CORINTHIANS 16:10].

Before he left Ephesus, the Apostle sent Timothy, together with Erastus, to Macedonia [ACTS 19:22]. Paul would later join him there. While in Macedonia, Paul wrote the Second Letter to the Church of God in Corinth. In that letter, he names Timothy as present with him and sharing in the service before the Lord [2 CORINTHIANS 1:1; see also 2 CORINTHIANS 1:19]. The following winter, while he was in Corinth, Paul wrote the Letter to the Saints in Rome. In that letter, Timothy is named as the Apostle’s “fellow worker” [ROMANS 16:21].

Timothy accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. We read, “After the uproar [in Ephesus] ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus” [ACTS 20:1-4].

Timothy appears to have shared Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome and may have accompanied the Apostle as he travelled via ship to Rome. The basis for this statement is as follows. We consider the Letters to the Philippians, the Colossians and Philemon to have been written from Rome during Paul’s first incarceration in that city. Timothy is specifically named in each of these missives. “Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons” [PHILIPPIANS 1:1]. Later in this letter, Paul speaks of his desire to send Timothy to Philippi to minister to the saints in that city. “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” [PHILIPPIANS 2:19, 20]. The testimony concerning Timothy in these verses is high praise indeed. In similar fashion, the Letter to the church in Colossae is a shared missive from “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother” [COLOSSIANS 1:1], as is the more personal letter to Philemon [see PHILEMON 1:1]. Thus, we can be certain that Timothy was with Paul throughout this first imprisonment.

What we learn of Timothy from the Pastoral Letters is that he was relatively young, assuming oversight of the congregation at about twenty-five years of age. Timothy appears to have been somewhat shy, and even at times somewhat hesitant to be forceful in his ministry. Though he appears to be sincere and devoted to the Faith, he often seems intimidated by his opponents. At times, the young man could even be said to be frightened by the teachings of those opposed to the Faith. This trait was perhaps manifested in his inability to resolve problems in the Corinthians congregation, necessitating Paul sending Titus to complete the work.

The last time we hear of Timothy is in the Letter to Hebrew Christians. An obscure reference is found when the writer says, “You should know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon” [HEBREWS 13:23]. This letter, likely written sometime after Paul had written Second Timothy, informs us that Timothy had been imprisoned and then released. He was known to the saints, which would be consistent with the knowledge that he had served so many of the congregations in the Apostle’s stead. The writer, not likely to have been the Apostle Paul as he was executed during his second imprisonment, speaks of his intent to bring Timothy with him for a visit with the persecuted believers.

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This knowledge leads to the suggestion that Timothy was imprisoned with Paul when he came to Rome to minister to the aged saint. It seems likely that the young servant did go to Rome in response to the Apostle's plea. There, though it can only be conjecture, I assume Timothy was himself incarcerated and released at some point prior to the writing of Hebrews.

We hear no more of Timothy in the New Testament. His name does not occur elsewhere in early Christian literature. Though he seems to have been unknown for his service after Paul's death, it seems right to say that his name is known in the precincts of Heaven. He served under difficult circumstances and for an extended time. He merits our commendation and admiration.

**RELATIONSHIPS** — As you read the verse that is today's text, it becomes immediately obvious that Paul esteems Timothy highly. To be sure, the Apostle is capable of speaking quite pointedly in either of the Letters to Timothy that has been included in the canon of Scripture; however, forthrightness obviates neither his love nor his respect for the younger preacher.

Compare the greeting in this latter letter—"To Timothy, my beloved child," with what Paul wrote in **1 TIMOTHY 1:2**—"To Timothy, my true child in the faith." Superficially, there doesn't appear to be that much difference between the two greetings; perhaps one could argue that we should not attempt a distinction. To be certain, either greeting speaks of a positive relationship and of warm feelings between these two men. However, the greetings do differ, and in light of the intent of the two letters we should be cautious not to ignore the differences.

In the first letter, Paul is concerned for the spiritual health of the congregation in Ephesus; he is concerned that Timothy provide sound oversight. However, he does not betray particular urgency such as he does when he recognises that his life is threatened. Consequently, the Apostle seems to focus on the expectation that Timothy will continue the presentation of the truth that he learned from time with the Apostle. Thus, we observe that the letter is addressed "To Timothy, my true child in the faith" [**1 TIMOTHY 1:2**]. It is as though Paul is seizing the opportunity from the very first words to emphasise the necessity of doctrinal integrity.

The greeting employed in this later letter is tenderer, though urgency impressed by the knowledge that he will shortly be executed is apparent throughout the letter. Paul seems to exercise care to ensure that Timothy will remember the tender, fatherly concern and trust that Paul has demonstrated throughout the years of service they have shared.

These greetings beg for a closer examination of the relationship between the mentor and his student. We've already witnessed how Paul selected Timothy to accompany the missionary team during his second tour. From this time until he was haled to gaol under the charges of the Jews, Timothy was the Apostle's constant companion and his assistant sent to aid the churches.

The relationship Paul enjoyed was comparable to that of a father and son. This is inferred from the text and from the greeting in the earlier missive to Timothy. However, this is plainly stated elsewhere. Writing the Christians in Philippi, Paul spoke of his relationship to Timothy. "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" [**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-22**].

Paul trusted Timothy; and Timothy served as an apostolic legate. Functioning as the Apostle's emissary, Timothy was vested with responsibility to direct the nascent congregations. This entailed significant responsibility and conferred great authority on the young man. Effectively, it implies that in his late teens or early twenties, Timothy provided guidance, under the tutelage of the Apostle, for the churches as they initiated ministry in their several situations.

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During or soon after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, Timothy was sent to Philippi. As we have now seen several times, in the Letter to Philippian Christians, Paul spoke of his intention to send the younger man to Philippi. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you" [**PHILIPPIANS 2:19**]. Though it is impossible to trace Paul's journeys from this point, it was during this period that he appointed Timothy to serve as overseer for the Church in Ephesus. This is the reason Paul wrote, "As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith" [**1 TIMOTHY 1:3, 4**].

Between his appointment to serve in Ephesus and the time spent in the first missionary venture into the European subcontinent, Timothy had assumed greater responsibilities on behalf of the Apostle. He took part in organising the collection for the Church of Jerusalem, though he may not have accompanied Paul there at the first. We read of Paul sending Timothy to receive the collection in Acts. "Now after [the initial ministries in Ephesus] Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, 'After I have been there, I must also see Rome.' And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while" [**ACTS 19:21, 22**]. After Paul was sent to Rome in chains, Timothy rejoined him, as we witness through the greetings recorded in the Prison Letters (Philippians, Colossians and Philemon).

There is the suggestion of defects in Timothy's character. Certainly, instructions in these Pastoral Letters would indicate that Paul was aware of such; but Paul's love for the young preacher and Timothy's dedication to fulfil the assignments he received gave hope that none of the effects would permanently mar his service. Clearly the Apostle did not view any defects in Timothy's character as terminal; he entrusted him with great responsibilities. Paul admonished Timothy out of a heart of love. His purpose was not to expose the young preacher's flaws; rather, the Apostle sought to guide him so that he would avoid injury to himself or to the church.

The First Letter to Timothy could indicate areas which concerned the Apostle. He seems to have possibly believed Timothy's fervour was flagging. He cautions him as on this one occasion. "This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" [**1 TIMOTHY 1:18**].

Again, Paul urges the young preacher to stand firm when he writes, "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 4:14-16**].

Cautioning Timothy of the danger of being a lover of money, Paul concludes with a stern admonition that applies to all Christians to this day. "As for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen" [**1 TIMOTHY 6:11-16**].

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It is reasonable to say that Paul cautioned Timothy not to be harsh toward other believers [see **1 TIMOTHY 5:1, 2**]. Likewise, it is reasonable to say that the young preacher may have been influenced by the false teachers to embrace principles of asceticism requiring Paul to provide somewhat enigmatic instructions to drink a little wine in the First Letter [**1 TIMOTHY 5:23**]. Either situation would have required Paul to address the deviation from the practise of the Faith.

Clearly, it appears that timidity held potential for trouble in Timothy's life. The Apostle wrote, "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control" [**2 TIMOTHY 1:7**]. To be certain, brashness is not boldness; but timidity is not gentleness. Finding the balance between firmness and gentleness is not something that occurs naturally; and young ministers will benefit from instruction as they discover the balance point for their life and ministry.

It does appear that Timothy at one point felt he had suffered quite enough. Thus, the Apostle encouraged him, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" [**2 TIMOTHY 2:3**]. It would be unfair to castigate the young preacher for this unless we have ourselves endured for some time trials and assaults from those about us. It is bad enough when unbelievers assail the man of God; when the assaults come from fellow saints, it is well-nigh impossible to bear.

Let me step aside from the study itself for a moment to observe that if a young preacher is not teachable, it is doubtful that he will ever accomplish much of a lasting nature among the churches. The young minister that is not malleable, the preacher who is unwilling to receive instruction from those who have walked ahead of him, is destined for great trouble. The church that accepts such a preacher—bone-headed, refusing to grow or learn from those who seek his good, is bound to experience rough times at his hands.

I have spent a significant portion of my ministry before the Lord teaching younger ministers. I have a deep love for young servants of the Saviour. I long for them to succeed. Some whom I have been privileged to mentor have succeeded admirably, serving successfully in difficult places, building the faithful and growing strong churches. To my sorrow, I have witnessed others who were determined that they had already arrived. Unwilling to accept guidance, they only needed others to get out of the way and let them lead. Those who continued holding such attitudes never accomplished much. Fortunately, they have been in a minority.

There is another aspect of today's study that I must consider. Those who share the labours of Christ in the assemblies of the Lord share a camaraderie that is enviable in the world. Those who have worn the uniform of their nation as a member of the armed forces respect others who have worn the uniform of their own nation. There is a closer bond still between those who served together in the armed forces. Those who have shared the hardship of combat share a special bond that cannot be explained—that bond can only be experienced. Similarly, those who have shared in the service of the Master share a bond that bespeaks mutual respect and love.

Paul spoke of the hardship of apostolic life on several occasions. Writing the Corinthians in the Second Letter, the Apostle spoke of some of the hardships he faced in his service before the Master. "As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything" [**2 CORINTHIANS 6:4-10**]. Note the second person plural pronoun "we"; remember that this letter is from Paul and Timothy [see **2 CORINTHIANS 1:1**].

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Later, in this same missive, Paul was even more pointed in revealing life as a servant of the Risen Saviour. “Whatever anyone else dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:21-29]? Again, remember that Timothy shared the Apostle’s hardships because he shared his life. Paul’s trials were at a minimum witnessed first-hand by Timothy. More likely, Timothy had experienced with the Apostle the indignities and dangers which the Apostle names.

Though somewhat milder in tone, note that in the First Letter to the Corinthian Church Paul defended his service before the Lord Jesus and to the churches. He asks the Corinthians, “Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk” [1 CORINTHIANS 9:4-7]? Though Timothy was not present in Corinth when Paul wrote this letter, he had shared the Apostle’s life for quite some time. This particular letter was written from Ephesus; and from Ephesus Paul had dispatched Timothy to address problems in the congregation [see 1 CORINTHIANS 4:17 (HOLMAN CHRISTIAN STANDARD BIBLE)].

Though Paul viewed Timothy much as a father would view his son, these men had shared hardships and danger. The shared trials created a far stronger bond than might otherwise have been enjoyed. Others had begun well with the Apostle; along the way, many had dropped out. John Mark proved to be immature and quit the team before conditions became rough. On the first missionary tour, John Mark had accompanied Paul and Barnabas as far as Pamphylia. Perhaps it was the prospect of facing brigands as they journeyed inland, or perhaps it was the fear of different cultures, or perhaps it was even a sad case of homesickness—in any case, Mark returned home. Because he had turned back from the hardships entailed by the task, Paul was unwilling to take him again, hoping, perhaps, that the youngster would mature [see ACTS 15:36-39].

Mark apparently did mature sufficiently that Paul would request him by name in the final missive to Timothy. However, even as he requested Mark’s presence, he recites a pitiful litany of names who could no longer tolerate the difficulties and discomfort. Paul specifically identifies Demas as being “in love with this present world,” a love so great that he deserted the Apostle and departed for Thessalonica. Crescens had gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia, apparently sent to minister on behalf of the Apostle.

Obviously, Paul had a higher opinion of Timothy, for he reminds him of the shared trials. “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” [2 TIMOTHY 3:10, 11].

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For all this, Paul felt the urgency of the ministry of Christ and sought to press it on Timothy. “Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith” [2 TIMOTHY 3:1-8].

Because of the exigencies that must assuredly arise from conditions in the Last Days, Timothy (as well as all who preach the Word) is challenged in the final missive to stand firm in the work God has assigned. “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].

**BLESSINGS** — “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” When you read the letters included in the New Testament, do not read them so fast that you fail to see what is written. Some blessings pronounced are so common that we fail to see them. “Grace, mercy and peace” is one such blessing. Grace and peace are pronounced as blessings in every letter from Paul that has been included in the canon of Scripture. To Timothy, he departs from his standard by pronouncing the blessing of “mercy.” Grace and peace are so common that we treat it much as we might treat a greeting in an Email—the one that says, “Hello!”

It is almost without fail that Paul says that the grace and peace that he seeks for those to whom he writes will be “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>5</sup> In these closing moments, think on the blessings Paul pronounced on Timothy. These blessings that Paul pronounced upon Timothy and the service he was offering up before the Lord are significant. The blessings were necessary and powerful—they are still necessary and powerful to this day if our service before the Lord is to be effective.

When I served among the black churches in Dallas County, we would sing—how we would sing. The singing was not like that of the white churches. The cadence was slow and syncopated; it allowed the singer to savour the words, emphasising what was sung. That is the way we should read what Paul has pronounced as a blessing.

Grace speaks of the undeserved love we have received. Though we were sinners, God, through Christ the Lord, extends favour to sinners. It is grace by which we are saved; and it is by grace that we serve. It is not promotion through man’s effort; it is appointment by God Himself. Whatever our position within the assembly, we hold that position by grace. Those who come to faith, come by the grace of our God and Saviour. We are saved by grace and we serve by grace. Don’t pass this blessing too quickly; rather savour the beauty of all that God has given you. Think of the fact that it was extended freely and without effort on our part.

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<sup>5</sup> See **ROMANS 1:7; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3; 2 CORINTHIANS 1:2; GALATIANS 1:3; EPHESIANS 1:2; PHILIPPIANS 1:2; 2 THESSALONIANS 1:2; 1 TIMOTHY 1:2; 2 TIMOTHY 1:2; TITUS 1:4; PHILEMON 4**



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Mercy is the quality not included in the salutations of the other Pauline letters. Mercy is an emotional blessing, speaking of the compassion of God toward those who suffer because of sin. Mercy would have been especially important to Timothy. Grace was necessary because he would need to know that God had appointed him and that his appointment was independent of man. However, in light of the pressures he had faced throughout his service with the Apostle and because of the opposition he was then facing in Ephesus, Timothy needed mercy. He needed to discover and draw deeply from God's compassion to those who suffer because of their sinful nature. All of us to greater or lesser degree suffer because of sin; thus, we desperately need mercy. What we often receive from the saints is condemnation; but we need mercy. Fortunately, God extends mercy and not censure.

Perhaps Timothy was equivocating; the text of these letters could be interpreted to mean that he was beginning to question himself and his service. If he was beginning to equivocate, it is likely that he wasn't even aware that he was being moved. Few of us are aware when we are beginning to be shaken from our sure foundation. The constant pressure of the wicked begins to wear and our souls are eroded. At such times we desperately need the mercy of the Lord.

Then Paul pronounces peace on his erstwhile compatriot. In the midst of the storm, our souls long for peace. The concept of peace is twisted and perverted by many today, but peace speaks of confidence in the midst of pressure. Peace speaks of wholeness, of completeness of life. Because this is true, peace can be found only in Christ the Lord. Truly did Augustine write, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee."

Of course, all that Paul pronounces for the beleaguered soul comes from "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." If I pronounce a blessing of grace, mercy and peace while pointing you to the church, I will have lied and done you a grave disservice. If I pronounce a blessing of grace, mercy and peace, urging you to labour in Christ's service in order to secure that blessing, I will have sought to deceive you. There is grace; it is in "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." There is mercy; it is found in "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." There is peace; but it will be found only in "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Therefore, I point you to "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

John Kitchen has neatly summed up the blessing Paul pronounced. "In this trinity of blessings 'grace' points to God's dealing with sin and guilt itself, 'mercy' points to God's concern for the misery and pain that sin creates, and 'peace' points to the reordering of the chaos sin leaves behind."<sup>6</sup> Paul could have insisted that Timothy address the failings that he would shortly address. However, the Apostle began with a blessing. That is what we need—blessing, not censure. We need to hear that God is gracious and powerful to speak to our weary souls. We know we are sinful and broken; we need to hear the voice of the Master calling to each of us, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" [**MATTHEW 11:28-30**].

You know that Christ died because of your sin and that He conquered death by rising from the dead. Now, God offers life through receiving this Risen Lord of Glory as Master of your life. The Word of God invites us, "If you agree with God that Jesus is Master, believing with all your mind that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be set free. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with the Father, and with the mouth that one openly agrees and is set free." The Word offers this promise, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Master shall be saved" [see **ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**]. Be saved today. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Kitchen, *The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors* (Kress Christians Publications, The Woodlands, TX 2009) 302-303