

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-5

### REMEMBERING YOU

“I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”<sup>1</sup>

**S**ome memories haunt us; other memories bless us. Questions of what might have been often rob us of sleep. The same questions can, at other times, cause us to offer thanks to God. Memories of friendships that have been shredded cause us to mourn; and the intensity of sorrow seems unabated even though years have passed. Likewise, warm memories of friends whom we haven’t seen for years can still elicit a sense of joy.

The Bible says nothing of memory in Heaven. Perhaps memory is no longer needed in Heaven since “I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” [1 CORINTHIANS 13:12]. Contrast that knowledge to the fact that Jesus provides a disturbing account of memory in Hades which leads me to believe that in the lake of fire memory will haunt the damned.

You recall the account of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke Chapter Sixteen. “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead’” [LUKE 16:19-31].

Focus on Abraham’s response when the rich man pleaded that Lazarus might be sent to dip the end of his finger in water to cool the tormented man’s tongue. “Child, remember,” Abraham responded [LUKE 16:25]. Intensifying his torment, this damned man remembered. Among his memories were those of five brothers who apparently had adopted the same manner of life that he had embraced. He had lived without consideration of God; and they, also, lived without thought of God. At last, this man who had enjoyed wealth and who had no need for God, discovered compassion. He found compassion at last; alas, he discovered it too late. Though memories will haunt the damned, today, memories serve to encourage the redeemed.

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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.

I don't encourage focusing on the negative memories—little can be gained by doing so. Christians, to say nothing of outsiders, who hold on to bitterness, grudges and disappointments soon discover that their outlook on life is darkened—so black that it is nearly impossible to continue walking in the light. Negative memories fostered and fed on ultimately steal contentment and joy. We are well advised to focus on positive memories, especially memories that remind us of fellow labourers who have shared with us this holy Faith.

Paul focused on positive memories of shared service with fellow soldiers—memories that sustain him in the trial of his imprisonment and pending execution. Similarly, memories of those with whom we have shared the Faith serve to encourage us, to comfort us and to build us in this Faith. Three times in a few short verses, the Apostle refers to his memories of Timothy and how those memories now sustain him in his trials. These warm remembrances encourage the Apostle in his prayers for the young pastor of the Ephesian congregation. Drawing from Paul's statements, join me in exploring the dynamics of godly memories of fellow Christians.

**I REMEMBER YOU** — “I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.” For whom do you pray? When spending time in the presence of the Master, what names do you mention before His eternal throne? Perhaps you pray for family members. The most natural thing in the world is for Christian parents to pray for their children—pleading with God to keep them safe and that He will be their constant companion. As our children begin to spend time in the presence of the Master, because we have taught them of Christ the Lord, they will pray for us, their parents. As we name the names of those of our immediate family, we are genuinely moved at the memories that flood our minds. Undoubtedly, we pray for our siblings—our brothers and our sisters; and each time we mention their name, sweet memories are brought to mind.

I trust that we pray for fellow Christians, remembering their struggles and rejoicing with them in their triumphs. Though so many of our prayers for fellow believers mention health issues or seek wisdom to cope with the challenges of daily life, I do trust that we pray for God to richly bless fellow saints with wisdom to confront an unholy world, with strength to live holy lives and with His grace to maintain a godly walk through this fallen world. We discover the things that were important to the Apostle as he prayed for believers in that ancient world.

I do not say that health and financial well-being were unimportant to the members of the early churches; I do say that health and financial well-being were not paramount if the prayers that are recorded have any meaning. What matters seized the Apostle's heart when he prayed? An example of Paul's praying in which he invited others to join him is given in **ROMANS 15:30-32**. “I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.” We witness Paul's prayer and his invitation for others to join in that same prayer for deliverance and service.

The Apostle seems primarily concerned with the spiritual health of the congregations to whom he wrote. Here is an example that demonstrates what I mean. “We pray to God that you may not do wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for” [**2 CORINTHIANS 13:7-9**]. This dysfunctional church—their tendency to err, their proclivity for self-advancement and their self-exaltation, benefitted from Paul's constant prayers. He sought their full restoration to unity and to honourable service to glorify the Living God.

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-6

### REMEMBERING YOU

I want you to look at a few examples of apostolic praying by first looking to the Ephesian Letter. The first example is found in the first chapter. There, Paul writes to the churches that would receive this missive, “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” [EPHESIANS 1:16-23].

Because of God’s appointment as an Apostle, Paul was driven to pray for Christ’s glory. Though none of us can say that we have received appointment as Apostles, we should emulate the Apostle’s yearning for God’s glory. Paul reveals what motivates his prayer life when he writes, “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” [EPHESIANS 3:14-19].

One of the few times that Paul requests specific prayer for his personal situation is given in the closing words of this Ephesian Letter. To get the context, let’s pick up on what the Apostle is saying as he issues a series of imperatives. “Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak” [EPHESIANS 6:17-20].

In other Prison Letters Paul wrote of his own prayers for the respective congregations. To the Philippians, Paul wrote, “It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” [PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11]. Though this congregation was the source of rich joy, the Apostle sought even greater blessing for the people. He wanted the saints to overflow with knowledge and discernment. How do you pray for this congregation? What is your prayer for the churches of this community? Here we have a model for prayer for the saints.

“From the day we heard [of your faith and of your love], we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” [COLOSSIANS 1:9-14]. Here is encouragement to pray for fellow saints serving among the churches of our community!

I do not wish to tire you, but I must note that even in his earliest letters Paul revealed his prayer life for fellow believers. The Letters to the congregation in Salonica were arguably Paul's earliest letters to have been included in the canon of Scripture. In the First Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, "We pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

"Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints." [1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13]. Paul prayed for opportunity to serve the Thessalonians and for God to increase their love and their holiness. Undoubtedly, this is a worthy prayer for any Christian. Do you pray for love to grow and to abound in this assembly? Do you plead with God that we will become a holy people? Such prayers speak of our understanding of God's character and of His desire for His people.

In the Second Letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle spoke again of his prayers for them. The context of his prayer is the knowledge of Christ's return to judge the wicked and to receive His redeemed people. Thus, Paul prays, "To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" [2 THESSALONIANS 1:11, 12].

One very personal missive from the Apostle is that which was sent to Philemon. In that letter, Paul wrote of his prayers for Philemon. "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ" [PHILEMON 4-6].

The prayers cited were those offered up by the Apostle. Perhaps you would discount them because you are not an Apostle, nor an elder. However, Paul wrote of the sort of prayers each believer should offer up to the Master. Here is one example of his instruction to the Corinthian Christians. "We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many" [2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11]. Here he urges these believers to join in praying for strength to fulfil the ministry God gave. Indeed, pray for one another [see JAMES 5:16]; and as you pray for one another, pray for those who serve you in the Faith [see 1 THESSALONIANS 5:25].

To the Church in Colossae, Paul wrote these instructions, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak" [COLOSSIANS 4:2-4]. The concept to take away is to pray for courageous declaration of the Faith and for God to advance His Kingdom.

In his Second Letter to the Church in Salonica, the Apostle urged these persecuted saints to pray for safety for the missionaries and for the Word of God to advance. "Brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith" [2 THESSALONIANS 3:1, 2].

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-6

### REMEMBERING YOU

You will recall that just a short while ago we concluded studies in the First Letter to Timothy. During studies of that particular missive, we were confronted with the apostolic command to pray for those in authority. Failure to obey this command is to the detriment of the Faith. You no doubt remember the Apostle's command. "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" [1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4].

Do you question whether Christians in that ancient day were ever sick, or if their finances ever ran low, or whether their marriages were under stress? The things that elicit prayer from contemporary saints seem unknown to the prayers of the churches of the apostolic era. What did seize the attention of the saints in that day was Christ's glory, the spiritual welfare of the churches and courage for the saints to live holy lives marked by love! Concern for God's glory and for the advance of His churches are obviously matters that are of concern to the Lord Christ. If we will adopt the example of the Apostle as our model for prayer, such concern will dictate our own requests.

I remember you! I remember to pray for your advance in this holy Faith. Whether I should be free of pain or whether I should be called to endure sickness, pray that I will be faithful to the call I received. Whether I should be free of financial need or whether I should be required to struggle to live free of want, pray that I will glorify God through my choices and through my life. Whatever I may be called to endure in my daily life, pray that God will work effectively in my life to increase my love for all the saints and to enable me to live a holy life. Above all else, pray that Christ the Lord will be glorified in me and that His message will be trumpeted throughout the land.

**I REMEMBER YOUR TEARS** — "As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy." An amazing transformation takes place in our lives as we pray for one another—we begin to love one another earnestly from a pure heart [see 1 PETER 1:22]. In the original language, verses three through five are one sentence. This reveals something of the intensity with which the Apostle was writing this letter, one memory leading to another in succession. Paul was imprisoned, isolated from all those who might otherwise have comforted him. Near the end of this missive, he speaks of isolation, save for Luke. All the others who had been with him were either away conducting necessary ministries or they had deserted in the hard time. Now the aged Apostle is keenly aware that he needs comfort because his time on earth is rapidly ending.

When we take our eyes off the goal of building one another, of comforting one another and of encouraging one another, we cease to love one another. The transformation is tragic—we begin to focus on our own desires and seek our own benefit rather than the welfare of others. We have each been disappointed in fellow saints at one time or another. Perhaps we unconsciously put them on a pedestal and they didn't live up to our expectations—few people ever live up to our ideals. Disappointed, as inevitably people will disappoint, we wrote off those who once stood shoulder-to-shoulder with us in the heat of the battle. Or perhaps some believer in a fit of pique declared that she no longer wished to walk in this pilgrim path with us. We make such rash statements, burning bridges rather than building bridges, never realising that we may well need to cross that particular bridge again. If we burn a bridge, we need to be certain that we will never need to cross that bridge again. Since none of us are infallible, we cannot make such assertions, however.

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-6

### REMEMBERING YOU

Among the tragic results of such imprudent and impetuous declarations is that we dishonour Christ, injure fellow believers and isolate ourselves. We were once built up, encouraged and comforted by our fellow saints; but because we have exalted our desires over those of the One we call “Master,” we will leave the relationship in ruins. This is nothing less than the exaltation of “self” over Christ and His will. Worse still, we no longer accept the ministry of others to build us, to comfort us or to encourage us—our soul grows barren, desolate, depleted. Greater still is the tragedy that we so readily justify our impulsive behaviour.

Undoubtedly Paul could have focused on deficits in Timothy’s character or in his ministry—each of us is aware of times when our conduct was less than sterling. In either of these Pastoral Letters Paul addresses, if only tangentially, issues that were problematic, instances in which Timothy was not fulfilling the ministry he had received. However, Paul chose to remember Timothy’s tears; he brings to memory the love they had shared for so long—love growing out of shared hardship and out of shared victories. A likely reference for Timothy’s tears could be found in Paul’s First Letter to Timothy. In the opening words the Apostle 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” [1 TIMOTHY 1:3].

One must wonder whether this is perhaps even a reference to Paul’s meeting with the Ephesian elders at Miletus? We can’t be certain, but that is surely possible. You will recall the record of that meeting. Paul had sent to Ephesus for the Ephesian elders to come meet him as he journeyed to Jerusalem. After pointedly addressing his concerns for their service in a hard place, Doctor Luke recorded the tender, moving scene of parting. “When [Paul had finished speaking], he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again” [ACTS 20:36-38].

I appreciate something that was written many years ago in comment on Timothy’s tears. “Tears, the flower of the heart, indicate either the greatest hypocrisy or the utmost sincerity. Turning tears into ridicule is a proof of the depravity of our age.”<sup>2</sup> The expression of our deepest feelings was more common in a bygone day than is true of this day. We’ve somehow been indoctrinated the last several generations that tears are evidence of weakness, when in truth tears can be evidence of great strength. Those who care deeply and who are prepared to sacrifice in order to build up will be easily moved to shed tears for those whom they love.

Those who love the Saviour will be passionate when speaking of Him and when pleading with sinners. A Baptist divine of another generation observed, “It is greatly to be feared that much of the preaching of modern times has lost its depth and power. The plow does not run deep enough. There is no deep conviction of sin. There is no mourning for sin such as we find set forth in Zechariah 13. We find our way to a modern profession of religion, dry-eyed. There is no weeping in it. And hence, feeling ourselves to be but little sinners, we need only a little Saviour.”<sup>3</sup> Those words were written over a century ago. Nothing has changed in the interim. Honestly, when did you last witness a lost person weeping over sin? When did you last discover that your own eyes were moistened as you pleaded with a loved one to receive the gift of life in Christ the Lord? We preachers do a terrible disservice when we allow ourselves to be so detached or dispassionate that we are unmoved by the plight of the flock and of the lost.

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<sup>2</sup> Johann Albrecht Bengel, **Gnomon of the New Testament**, M. Ernest Bengel and J. C. Steudel (eds.), James Bryce (trans.), vol. 4 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh 1860) 291

<sup>3</sup> B. H. Carroll, **An Interpretation of the English Bible: James, Thessalonians, Corinthians, Volume 13**, J. B. Cranfill (ed.), (Broadman Press, Nashville, TN 1948) 43-4

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-6

### REMEMBERING YOU

Paul taught the elders in Ephesus to minister through tears—no doubt Timothy was included among those so taught. As evidence of this, recall Paul’s reminder to these elders. “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” [ACTS 20:18-21].

Paul also pointed to the example he had provided throughout his ministry in Ephesus. “Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears” [ACTS 20:31].

Honesty compels me to become pointed in this matter. When did you, dear mother, last pray over your lost son with tears? When did you last warn your daughter of the perils of putting off salvation? Does the peril of hell no longer exist? Is it because you love your own comfort more than the eternal welfare of your child? Dad, when were you last moved to tears at the thought that your daughter is ill-prepared to stand before the Lord God? When was the last time tears moistening your eyes as you pleaded with your son to believe the message of life? We play with our children, acceding to their desire to be entertained though we ignore our responsibility of providing them guidance to be men and women of character. Our example to them says that their amusement is more important than life in the Saviour. We excuse our negligence, mewing that they are only young once. Are we vainly trying to recapture our own youth through neglect of the Faith and through giving in to the childish desire for amusement?

What we should remember about fellow saints is the love we share as believers in the Son of God. I don’t mean to imply that we should feel all warm and fuzzy; I do mean that we should have a healthy respect for the commitment to Christ we have shared. When we recall the sacrifice we have shared with others, we may well be moved to tears. As we recall the days when we stood together in a great contest, we will sense a deep love for such people. We should esteem one another because of Christ the Lord. There should be a sense of gratitude that we have walked this believers’ path together.

This is the consistent message of the New Testament. Refresh your memories with a brief review of some of the commands that are issued in the Apostle’s letters. “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” [ROMANS 12:10].

Drawing the Second Letter to the Church of God in Corinth to a conclusion, Paul wrote, “Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” [2 CORINTHIANS 13:11].

Among the earliest letters Paul wrote is the Letter to the Christians of Galatia. In that letter, Paul warned the erring believers, “You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another” [GALATIANS 5:13-15].

In the Ephesian Encyclical, the Apostle pleaded with the Christians who would read that missive, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” [EPHESIANS 4:1-6].

Permit reference to two of the earlier letters from the Apostle that have been included in the canon of Scripture. Either of these references is to the saints in Salonica. In his first missive, Paul commended these saints when he wrote, “Concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more” [1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-10]. They were doing the right thing in revealing God’s love to one another. However, Paul urged them to keep on loving one another. This was all the more vital in light of the persecution they were experiencing. In light of potential persecution that we may experience as Christians, I encourage you to love one another deeply—begin now and make every effort to excel in this business of loving one another.

When he wrote the Second Letter to the Church of the Thessalonians, Paul was prompted by the Spirit to write again of their love for one another. “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing” [2 THESSALONIANS 1:3]. Expressing our love for one another gives evidence of the faith that undergirds such love.

Consequently, revealing love for one another is still the standard for demonstrating a transformed heart. Remember Jesus’ words: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” [JOHN 13:34, 35].

Let me conclude this point by pointing to the imperative as voiced by other Apostles. Peter commands those who would name the Name of Christ, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” [1 PETER 1:22, 23]. Ponder the thought that we are commanded to “love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” What does this mean?

Again, the Big Fisherman reminds followers of the Master, “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” [1 PETER 4:8]. To be sure, love covers the sins of others, but love covers our own sins! When we love earnestly from a pure heart, people don’t squander time thinking about our failures—they are focused on the love of Christ revealed through our shared faith and service.

John is spoken of as, “The Apostle of Love.” The reason for giving him this title is because of his insistence that the people of God truly love one another and not merely talk about loving one another. Here is one pointed command that was included in his first missive. “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” [1 JOHN 4:7-11].

One final encouragement to love earnestly from a pure heart is a command that has been included in the Letter to Hebrew Christians. “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” [HEBREWS 10:24, 25]. If there exists one major deficit among the people of God, it is that we have exalted self to the exclusion of fulfilling the divine call to love one another. The unanswered question is how can we say we love one another when we neglect joining with one another in worship?



**I REMEMBER YOUR GENUINE FAITH** — “I am reminded of your sincere faith.” The constraint of time compels me to focus on this final matter. Paul spoke of Timothy’s sincere faith. Pondering Timothy’s open expression of love for him, the aged Apostle received a blessing in the form of a memory of Timothy’s sincere faith. What is not immediately apparent in our English tongue is the emphasis in the original language indicating that Paul is focused on the qualitative nature of Timothy’s faith. The adjective Paul used speaks of that which is without hypocrisy.<sup>4</sup> The faith to which Paul refers is dictated inwardly—it does not arise from external motivations. Creating this sort of faith in the lives of those to whom he ministered had been Paul’s goal. That this was the case was revealed in his earlier letter to Timothy when Paul wrote, “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” [**1 TIMOTHY 1:5**].

Focus on that affirmation for a brief moment. Paul is testifying that true doctrine and genuine ministry must always aim at and find their fulfillment in producing love.<sup>5</sup> Timothy’s love, displayed in his tender heart at the thought of not seeing the Apostle again, arose from his sincere faith. The surest evidence that faith has been feigned among many who profess to follow the Lord is that they can so casually leave the fellowship of believers! If their faith was genuine, they could not easily dissociate themselves from service among the faithful. True faith stands firm in the face of disappointment and hardship; imitation faith will continue until challenged, or until disappointed, or threatened. It is the hardships and vicissitudes of life that prove the reality of who we are and the reality of what we have believed.

The older man is facing a violent end to mortal life, and he confesses that he yearns to see Timothy that he might be comforted. At the time when so many who could have been a comfort had been exposed as holding insincere faith, the Apostle is comforted by the knowledge that he has produced at least one faithful individual with untrammelled faith. Paul will speak of some “who have swerved from the truth” [**2 TIMOTHY 2:18**] and of others who have “opposed the truth,” men who were “corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith” [**2 TIMOTHY 3:8**]. However, the condemned saint is comforted in the thought that his service has produced at least one faithful individual who honours God. Of the younger pastor, Paul will testify, “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” [**2 TIMOTHY 3:10, 11**].

Timothy’s faith stood contrasted in bold relief to the greater portion of Christians in the Roman Province of Asia. The aged saint writes to Timothy, “You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me” [**2 TIMOTHY 1:15**]. Timothy’s faith would be contrasted to believers in general. “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me” [**2 TIMOTHY 4:16**]. In particular, Paul exposes some by name as having deserted the Faith and having deserted him. “Hymenaeus and Philetus ... have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some” [**2 TIMOTHY 2:17, 18**]. Finally, he will speak specifically about one other individual who had worked exceptionally closely with him, but who had deserted in the hard time. “Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” [**2 TIMOTHY 4:10**].

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<sup>4</sup> James Swanson, **Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)** (Logos Research Systems, Inc., Oak Harbor, WA 1997)

<sup>5</sup> For an excellent summation of the Apostle’s point, see John A. Kitchen, **The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors** (Kress Christian Publications, The Woodlands, TX 2009) 47

## 2 TIMOTHY 1:3-6

### REMEMBERING YOU

Here is the lesson to take home—*authentic faith does not quit*. Don't allow yourself to dissemble before such a statement by blustering that no one can judge you. While it is true that no one can see the heart, all can see the reality of what is in the heart by how an individual responds to life itself. Everyone will witness either our exaltation of self or our love for the brotherhood of believers by whether we are committed to Christ and His people, or whether we pursue what gratifies our own desires. It is distressingly easy to excuse our own failures by pointing to the failures of others. In Timothy, Paul recognised a fellow believer who had stood the hard tests and could now be expected to stand firm together with the Apostle. For this reason, Paul writes to urge him to come quickly to lend some comfort in his final hour of trial.

The only mention of joy in the Pastoral Letters is in our text today. The Apostle pleads, "As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy" [2 TIMOTHY 1:4]. Paul's yearning for the comfort from seeing Timothy will prompt him to urge the younger servant to hasten to journey to Rome. "Do your best to come to me soon" [2 TIMOTHY 4:9]. Again, Paul will write, "Do your best to come before winter" [2 TIMOTHY 4:21]. The Apostle's request for Timothy's presence is a reminder to all who read his words that ministry is difficult business often fraught with more tears than cheers.<sup>6</sup>

We remember slights and disappointments far longer than we remember joys; we feel such injuries more deeply than ever we remember joys. Yet, it will be the joys that comfort at the end of life. Let us determine that we will begin now to foster the attitude that enables us to remember the joys that accompany those with whom we share this holy Faith. Pastors and servants of God will have far more disappointments from those to whom they have ministered than the members of the flock will ever experience against the shepherds. If they do not guard themselves, pastors will grow bitter and cynical rather than loving and tender-hearted toward the people of God. God alone can remove the sting that accompanies hardship and disappointment. Because this is true, I urge each believer to seek God's grace so that life is not marked by darkness and our character does not grow acrimonious, acerbic or bitter. Let us seek out those fellow believers who are true to the Faith. Let us each determine that we will be true to the Faith and a true friend to those who share this holy Faith. Let us be friends to those who are faithful. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> Kitchen, op. cit. 307