

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy
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2 Timothy 1:1-18

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

3 Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

5 I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. 6 This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

8 So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. 9 For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. 10 And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. 11 And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.

12 That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

13 Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. 14 Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.

15 As you know, everyone from the province of Asia has deserted me—even Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16 May the Lord show special kindness to Onesiphorus and all his family because he often visited and encouraged me. He was never ashamed of me because I was in chains. 17 When he came to Rome, he searched everywhere until he found me. 18 May the Lord show him special kindness on the day of Christ's return. And you know very well how helpful he was in Ephesus.

Do you have *that* dream? The one where you are standing in front of a group of people – and you're naked? Eesh. That's no good. I don't have that one, but I sometimes dream that I'm late and can't get there, and everyone is waiting on me, but somehow they can see me and hear me but I can't get there... wait...

We don't like to be embarrassed or ashamed. We don't like to show up to the party under or over-dressed. We don't like to show up to the 80s Dance Party with 90s gear on. Or wear cutoffs to the funeral. We like to act and dress appropriately. Or we should. That's normal. This is fairly low-level shame. Many of us, most of us, have far deeper shame about things that have happened to us or our family. Things we don't like to talk about. Maybe they're inappropriate. Maybe they're so shameful we hide them forever, which isn't good for us to do.

Paul is in prison for preaching the gospel. Timothy might be tempted to be ashamed of his mentor. That would seem natural. Who wants to be friends with a criminal? So Paul writes Timothy a second letter, this time from jail. The first letter was more of a church leadership manual, but this one is intensely personal. It was meant to be read in and to the church, but it is directed straight at Timothy, and we get to look into this relationship of two leaders of the church.

After Paul's greeting to Timothy, which is an amazing greeting filled with the gospel message and in which he reminds the people of his role and position as an apostle, the next three paragraphs form the three main points.

Cultivate the Gift

Paul's emotions boil over when he's writing to Timothy. He remembers him constantly in his prayers. He remembers Timothy's tears. He longs to see him that he might be filled with joy. He remembers Timothy's sincere faith, and where it came from. It came from Timothy's family – his mother and grandmother. It seems that Timothy's father wasn't a Christian, but he had been raised in a Christian home and taught the faith by these two amazing women.

From this paragraph, we can see that Timothy had four major influences. The first was his mother and his family. To be raised in a godly home is a blessing beyond price. If you have been raised in one, you should be exceedingly thankful. If you haven't, when you become married and parents, you can start a new legacy in your house. Hang out with godly couples and parents and observe how they live, fight, love and raise their kids. We desperately need godly home and covenant children.

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For this series, I used commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy from Hughes, Stott, Knight, MacArthur, Ryken, and Clinton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

Timothy also benefited from excellent spiritual friendship, especially noted here with Paul. It's not secret that friends influence us the most after family. Paul was a teacher-friend-mentor to Timothy. Paul didn't abandon him, but longed to see him and prayed for him without ceasing, and he wrote to him. This had a powerful effect on Timothy, and it strengthened and sustained him because Paul believed in him and loved him, even though they were not naturally alike in their disposition. What are your friends and mentors like? Are they encouraging you to love and walk with God? Are they strengthening you? Or do they pull you down?

One mentor who has meant a lot to me (among many) was Billy Dempsey. Billy met me when I was a college senior at Mizou, and he was the new RUF campus minister starting the work there. He'd hang out with me, and I can remember telling him a lot of things he was doing wrong – I was way out of whack. But he still loved me for some reason. I never did join his group, but he'd still stay in contact and see how I was doing. He encouraged me to go to seminary and be an RUF campus minister. I don't know why, or what he saw in me then, but I so appreciate how he believed in me and stood by me. We need that. We need people who love us and champion the good in us.

Paul didn't only have people. The third influence on Paul's life moves from indirect means to direct means from God. Paul reminds Timothy of his faith and his gift, both of which were given to him by God. We don't know exactly what this gift was, but it seems to be Timothy's gift as a pastor and minister. That is what has been given to him through the laying on of hands. And of course we know that our faith is a gift. Paul himself speaks of this in Ephesians 2:8-9.

We can have great families. We can have great friends. But our faith and our callings are still gifts from God. Families and friends certainly help, but they don't promise, they don't prove, they don't assure you of salvation. God has to give it. He works in families. He works in communities. And he works in individual life after life. Do you have this gift?

Timothy's fourth resource was personal discipline. He was to take what God had given him and fan it into flame. That takes knowledge and skill. It takes some work. It doesn't just happen. Think of going camping. You make a great fire and have delicious s'mores. You go to bed. Of course you can't sleep in – it's camping. So you get up. It's a little chilly. Your six-year-old daughter or friend or cousin is with you. She saw you make the fire in the first place. She helped you. You made the kindling, set the sticks around in a teepee, lit the paper and added the wood. But you don't have any of that now. How will you do it?

She sees you bend over the fire. You spot a spark. You only need now a few sticks and you put them around the spark. And you blow on it. Slowly and steadily, and soon the spark becomes fire again. The six-year-old is amazed. You made fire out of nowhere it appears. You fanned it into flame.

So it goes with our gifts. They were given by God, and they were given miraculously. But we still work on them. We still bend over and blow on them so they'll be flames again.

We can do this because we haven't been given a spirit of timidity, but of power, of love and of self-discipline. We've seen Timothy's resources, and now we see how he can make the most of those resources. He can because he has the Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives and works in Christians, bring out good things in their lives, convicting them of sin and helping them along the way.

This Spirit is a spirit of power. We all know power can be corrupt, but we have to have power, decision making, protection, and a sense of direction. Leaders have and wield power. They have the ability to change situations. Leaders have the power to lead and have others follow, to speak words of wisdom, and to bring healing and hope.

This Spirit is a spirit of love. Timothy is to use his gifts to lead in love. Power without love becomes destructive or even demonic. "The power of the gospel flows from the fact that God gave his son for our sake, thereby establishing a claim on our answering love and loyalty."²

And the Spirit is one of self-discipline or prudence. This means thinking clearly and shrewdly what needs to be done and how best to do it. Leaders begin with their own lives, but it applies to the ordering life of the community of God's people. "Levelheadedness and self-mastery, will keep the Christian calmly focused on the power and love that the Spirit provides, so it makes perseverance in life and ministry possible."³ We need to look out our lives and lead ourselves before we lead others.

What gets in the way of our leadership then, of using our gifts well? Timidity. Fear. Cowardice. A lack of confidence. But fear and timidity aren't from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't give us this fainting quality. He doesn't give us cowardice, nor fear to shrink from duty. The Holy Spirit breathes power into the weak.

Do you feel weak? Are you afraid? You need the Holy Spirit. You need to take hold of your gift of sincere faith and you calling as a Christian and fan it into flame. I see many Christians who are scared to do anything for God or people. They won't lead a Bible study or speak up in class or make a friend. But you should have confidence. Sure, you should have a real confidence, and know that you need help and may not do everything right. But God will show up. The Holy Spirit will help you. In power, in love and in self-discipline. Not in fear.

² Wright, 85

³ Towner found in Hughes, 175

No Shame in the Gospel

The next thing Paul writes is to tell Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel. What is the gospel? Paul spells it out for us in this beautiful paragraph. *9 For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. 10 And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News.*

This is the sort of paragraph that should stir your soul. We have been reading about widows, elders, deacons and church structure. We've woven the gospel in and through all along. But here it is plain, simple and glorious. Paul brings us a Christmas message – the good news is God saved us. Salvation has come! Glad tidings of great joy for unto a son is born! Unto us a Savior is given and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, King of Kings!

God saved us. That is huge. Do you realize people need saving? That we are desperately wicked and hate God in our own natures? You have offended a holy and perfect God and deserve a just and swift punishment. And yet, God saves. Why?

Not because we deserve saving. We deserve wrath and condemnation. But, from the beginning of time, he has planned to save his people in order to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. "For God gave us his own purpose of grace in Christ before we did any good works, before we were born and could do any good works, indeed before history, before time, in eternity."⁴ His saving comes out of how own loving and merciful heart. It has nothing to do with our merit our good works. It's all of God from beginning to end. That is incredible. That strikes a blow at our pride, for we all want to do something to be accepted. We hate being thought of as incompetent, as ignorant, as incapable. And yet, in terms of saving ourselves, that is what we are.

To be a Christian means you have to understand and even embrace that. You aren't a Christian because you are good, or because you have good parents, or do good things or believe good thoughts. You are a Christian because God saved you in grace through Christ. That's why. He planned to do this even before you were born, that's how unconnected your good works are from the equation. Titus 3:5 says, *He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.*

Salvation is more than forgiveness. It is the pardoning of our offenses and also the accepting of us as righteous in God's sight through Jesus Christ. We are forgiven our sins, our wrongs, and we are set for holiness and righteousness. Christ breaks the power of death and immortality and gives us life, peace, love and righteousness.

It's hard to get our minds around this. But our hearts long for it. We need saving. Jesus Christ accomplished this in real time and space. It didn't "just happen." This salvation is absolutely connected to Jesus' life work and his substitutionary death. It is all validated by his resurrection. This paragraph then speaks both of Christmas and of Easter. Jesus came, he appeared. And he died and was raised again on the third day. That proves everything is true! Jesus broke the power of death, the power which we see all the time all around us. We see it when people hurt other people. Breaking up even. Divorce. Rape. Murder. Theft. My car was broken into last week. That is death, a taste of it for me. Sickness. We're all the time praying for people who are sick and dying. In the past month I've prayed for a student who contracted West Nile disease. Another student was in fight and was run over by a car. A woman in our church is battling cancer. A grandson of a woman in our church has some strange eye disease that the doctors can't figure out. A father-in-law is going through stroke recovery therapy. And on and on and on.

Is there any hope in any of that? In our death and sickness? In our longings, dashed hopes and depressions?

The Bible says yes there is. There is peace coming. We have foretastes of it now. You can be right with God. You can have peace with him. You can be saved from destruction. We can be saved from spiritual death. We still live in an age with physical death, but that will go away someday. How do we know? Because Jesus conquered death. O death, where is your sting? Christians can hate death but we don't have to fear it. We can look it in the eye and know death is not the answer, nor is it the end.

Paul was doing this. He was in prison at the end of his life. He was looking into death and thinking of salvation and glory. I pray you and I can do the same.

This paragraph sets the scope and sequence of salvation for us:

1. Salvation is an eternal gift to us in Christ of God's grace.
2. There was a space and time, historical appearance of Christ to abolish death by his death and resurrection.
3. There is a personal call to sinners through the preaching of the gospel. This is when you became a Christian.
4. There is ongoing moral sanctification of believers by the Holy Spirit.
5. There will be a final heavenly perfection in which all that is promised is consummated.

That is big stuff. That's the world you're living in. It could make our heads spin. But it's not meant to baffle our curiosity even though we can't understand it. To engender deep humility and gratitude for it excludes all boasting. Also brings peace and assurance, for nothing can quit our fears for our stability like the knowledge that our safety depends ultimately not on ourselves but on God's own purpose and grace."⁵

⁴ Stott, 36

⁵ Stott, 36

This is what we sing of when we sing the hymn, *Awake My Soul*

1. *The image of God invisible The firstborn of all life Before and within, He holds it all in One name, one faith, one Christ*
Chorus: *No one is good enough To save himself Awake my soul tonight To boast nothing else*

2. *I trust no other source or name Nowhere else can I hide This grace gives me fear, and this grace draws me near And all that it asks it provides*

Bridge: *No seam in this garment All my rags to hide No less than your love For Jesus is mine*

3. *When I stand on the edges of Jordan With the saints and the angels beside When my body is healed and the glory revealed Then still I can boast only Christ*

No one is good enough himself. There is no other source to go to. No other place to hide. When you look into the face of this God, you should fear him. He is just and good. He will not let sins go unpunished. He will make all things right. He is holy. But he is also gracious. He loves his people. He draws them near. All that he asks, he also provides. He's like that.

What does that do for your soul? Are you ashamed of this? Does it feel too base, too low for you? Does it seem stupid to believe in something like this, like a man coming back to life? It is tempting to be ashamed of the name of Christ to whom we are called to witness, the people of Christ to whom we belong, and the gospel of Christ, which we are to spread.

Paul had been announcing the royal message which clashed with the message of the Royal Empire, Caesar as Lord, the promise of his power to save the world, the prospect of his royal appearance in a city or province that obeyed his rule. Paul was out of favor with the power brokers of the day.⁶

It is true for us. The gospel goes against what our society teaches and values today. Will we stand with Paul? Will we stand for Jesus?

Paul gave his life for this message. He was an apostle, preacher and teacher. We don't have apostles any more. They were for the writing of the Scriptures. They are to guard the pattern of the sound words that they have heard from Paul and the rest of the Bible. The Scriptures are a treasure that has to be guarded. And followed. We cannot make up our own stuff. We aren't looking for new theologies and beliefs. We are guarding the good and the old, the ancient and the mysterious. The natural or unregenerate man hates to have to admit the gravity of his sin and guilt, his complete helplessness to save himself, the indispensable necessity of God's grace and Christ's sinbearing death to save him, and therefore his inescapable indebtedness to the cross.... Many preachers succumb to the temptation to mute it.

The essence of this, the good deposit, is that God saves sinners. What does that do for you? Does the Holy Spirit leap in you when you hear this? Or are you bored? I pray that our souls will be awakened to sing tonight. That instead of boasting in all the other things we could boast in, we would boast in nothing else save Christ alone. Even when we are in heaven, or especially when all things are made right, we will boast only in Christ.

Many people, even us sometimes, are ashamed of this. Let's stand in our weakness and in God's strength. Let's stand for the gospel. "All through history, God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."⁷

Sharing in Suffering

Our last point is the last paragraph of 2 Timothy 1, but its title comes from back in 1:8. *8 So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News.* The ESV translates it "but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God."

Not everyone was excited to do that. Paul writes that all in Asia turned away from him. That these two men Phygelus and Hermogenes turned away from him. You have to wonder about these two men. Why did they turn away? They were ashamed of Paul? They were ashamed their leader had been put in prison? They were moving away from the gospel and onto some of the heresies and problems Paul spoke of in 1 Timothy? We don't know. All we know is their names are right here for all of time as abandoning Paul.

But not Onesiphorus. He stood by Paul. In fact, he went to Paul, searching for and finding him in prison. Paul says he was refreshing. He certainly was not ashamed.

Onesiphorus got it. He saw his need for mercy and from that, he went out of his way to be merciful. Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. Paul prays a great prayer for this man – that he will find mercy from God. We tap into the heart of God when we show mercy to others. Why? Because he has shown mercy to us.

We tap into the heart of God when we suffer, when we share in the suffering of the gospel. We don't serve a God who just stays apart from his people. We serve a God who suffered. Who came down, was born in a stable, who had no home, who lived meal to meal, who was practically unemployed, who was hated and persecuted, who was unjustly accused and suffered incredible injustice, shame and humiliation. Who died the death of a criminal while all those who had cheered for him left him. That is real suffering.

⁶ Wright, 89

⁷ Oswald Chambers, found in Hughes, 177

And when we follow him, we also embrace suffering. We cry a lot. We weep for our sin. We mourn. We are poor in spirit. We are meek. We are mistreated and misunderstood.

But – but there is something else. Along with the suffering, there is joy. Paul starts his letter with this joy. He says grace, mercy and peace from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is God's kindness to the undeserving. What joy we receive when we are loved like this despite and amidst our sins.

Mercy is shown to the weak and helpless who cannot help themselves. What joy we receive when we get this sort of help, when we are made right and given such status.

Peace is reconciliation, the restoration of harmony to lives spoiled by discord. What joy we received when we are no longer at war with God, ourselves and our brothers and sisters.

There is suffering because we serve a Suffering Servant. There is joy because we serve a God who delights to help his people.

This is the gospel. These are the clothes that are appropriate to wear. To leave the house without these clothes is to go naked and to be embarrassed and inappropriately dressed. But to go with these gospel clothes on is to dress rightly.