

Letters For Leaders – 2 Timothy (Part 8)

The four letters we are studying in this series were written by the Apostle Paul, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are PERSONAL, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul has had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he feels at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

When Paul wrote the letter we know as 2 Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was in prison in Rome and facing certain death (4:6 – “the time of my departure is at hand”). He MAY have been in prison when he wrote the other letters we have studied in this series; he definitely WAS in prison this time. Almost all of his associates in ministry were gone, and only Luke was at the Apostle's side to assist him (4:11 – “only Luke is with me”). It was certainly a dark hour in his ministry. But Paul's concern was not for himself; it was for Timothy and the church.

So he could spend some final days with his son in the gospel, Paul asked Timothy to make the journey to Rome (4:9 – “do thy diligence to come shortly unto me”) and sent Tychicus to Ephesus to look after the church during his absence (4:12 – “Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus”). We don't know what they shared in those personal conversations, but this epistle really serves as Paul's “Last Will & Testament” for us. Paul doesn't know if he will survive until Timothy arrives, and either way, Timothy is about to move into a season in his ministry where he will not have the Apostle Paul to guide him. As a result, the instructions he receives here are both priceless and powerful for young leaders.

2 Timothy 1:1-5 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

As the end of Paul's life draws near, it's obvious he is expressing more than ever the LOVE he has for the people God has brought into his life. He thinks about Timothy constantly (especially their last tearful parting – 1:4), and gives Timothy the greatest gift that any person can give another person – **PRAYING FOR THEM**. He reminds Timothy of his godly HERITAGE from his mother and grandmother – because, like us, **Timothy doesn't need a new METHOD, but an old MESSAGE.**

2 Timothy 1:6-7 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

When Paul tells Timothy to “stir up” his gifting, the Greek word means “to rekindle a fire.” It's easy to get into the routine of ministry and let the fire go out, so we need to constantly add “fuel” to our spiritual passion. God has not given us a spirit of **FEAR** (“deilia” – “timidity”), but has equipped us with **POWER** (“dynamis” – “spiritual force, miraculous power, DOING power”), with **LOVE** (“agape” – “God's love working through us”), and with a **SOUND MIND** (“sophronismos” – “self-discipline, self-control”). We need ALL of these to do ministry effectively! Timothy didn't need any new spiritual ingredients in his life; all he had to do was “stir up” what he already had. “Neglect not the gift that is IN THEE” (1Timothy 4:14)! By the way, this is why we practice “laying on of hands” in the church (1:6) – because there is a spiritual impartation from one person to another.

2 Timothy 1:8-11 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

There was a time when many young leaders wanted to associate with the great Apostle because his ministry was so successful. But now that Paul is in prison, most of them have forsaken him – it is too shameful and too dangerous to associate with him any longer. He writes, “Timothy, don't YOU be ashamed of me!” But although Paul's circumstances are extremely difficult and discouraging, here he is encouraging Timothy to embrace suffering for the Lord (1:8)! Paul has confidence that everything happening to him – even prison – is for God's own “purpose and grace.” After all, Jesus “abolished death” and “brought life and immortality” (1:10) – the worst the Roman government can do put Paul to death, and even that won't stop the gospel that he preaches!

2 Timothy 1:12-14 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

No matter how many people were ashamed of him or turned against him, Paul was not ashamed! He had absolutely no regrets. He knew that he was suffering for the cause of the GOSPEL, not for any real wrongdoing. And the gospel is not just a DOCTRINE – the gospel is a PERSON in whom he had believed! Paul's confidence is in the JESUS he knows!

When Paul says, "he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (1:12), he is saying, "God is able to guard the work I have been doing until the day of my death or His return, because HE gave me this commission, and I have done everything through HIS power." **This is not MY church; this is GOD'S church!**

Because of the confidence he has in the gospel, Paul exhorts Timothy to "hold fast" to the teaching he has received (1:13), and to "keep" it by the power of the Holy Ghost (1:14). The word "form" (1:13) means "a pattern, an architect's blueprint, a plan for imitation." The doctrine originally delivered by the Apostles is the standard by which all teaching is to be judged. There is ALWAYS pressure on the church (and young leaders) to compromise the message of TRUTH for the methods of the world. Only through the Holy Ghost will we be able to discern the difference and "hold fast." Paul is exhorting Timothy to be "**LOYAL TO GOD'S WORD!**"

2 Timothy 1:15-18 This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Sadly, many Christians had deserted Paul in his hour of need (1:15). The seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3 were all in the province of Asia, and Paul had stayed nearly three years in the provincial capital of Ephesus and evangelized the whole area (Acts 19, Acts 20:31). And yet, everyone had now "turned away" from the aging Apostle (1:15).

That's why the kindness of Onesiphorus was so refreshing (1:16). He not only helped Paul in Ephesus; he sought him out in the Roman prison and was "not ashamed" of being associated with a prisoner (1:16). We know little about this man, but he will have a great reward "in that day" (1:18)! Paul appreciates those who are "**LOYAL TO GOD'S SERVANT!**"

It was certainly a dark hour for the Apostle Paul. How he would have loved to be free to preach the Word, but he was in a Roman prison and would soon be martyred. It was up to Timothy to step into leadership.

IT IS TIME FOR A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS TO STEP UP!