

Fact Sheet for **“Who Is Your Timothy?”**
2 Timothy 1:15-2:13

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Paul, in his first letter to Timothy as well as in this letter, had been warning Timothy against cowardice, shame, self-indulgence, and infidelity. Instead Paul encouraged Timothy to courage, love, self-discipline, boldness, and faithfulness. You can see overtones of all of these in the verses we will be looking at this morning. 2 Timothy 1:15-18 actually go with 1:3-14. In those earlier verses Paul encouraged Timothy to never be ashamed of the Gospel, nor of Paul himself (see 1:8). He then encouraged Timothy to share in suffering for the gospel. Paul himself received a mixed reaction from some people.

1:15 ¶ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

They were ashamed of Paul and his imprisonment. Think for a moment about the emotional toll it takes on those who do their best to minister well for the Lord but are sorely criticized by other believers for their ministry. But another individual in Paul's life was not ashamed of the apostle's imprisonment.

16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me-- ¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!-- and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

So I've included these verses 15-18 from 2 Timothy 1 as a reminder of what came earlier in this second letter to Timothy. They add context to what Paul wrote in chapter 2. Paul knew that Timothy, as he shared in suffering for the gospel, may experience similar reactions from people. But Paul encouraged Timothy to keep on task none the less.

2:1 ¶ You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

These have been two of the favorite memory verses for many Christians down through the years. Draw your strength in ministry from God! Teach God's Word! Invest your life in faithful people who will carry on the ministry after you! Look for those who are willing to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in the ministry. This is what Paul was doing with Timothy.

Remember from last week that Paul was near to his own death. Timothy would carry on the ministry after Paul was gone. Who is your Timothy? Who are you investing in? Who are you training?

Paul then gives three of his favorite illustrations to Timothy to drive these instructions home.

A Soldier

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Ministry will sometimes not be nicey-nice. You need to be prepared for that. Suffering seems to be part of the picture. It happened to Christ, and it happened to Paul.

⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

An Athlete

⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

A Farmer

⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

This seems to be something that Timothy was struggling with. The false teachers at Ephesus were after the financial stipends that came from teaching in that day (see 1 Timothy 6:3-10). But these words to Timothy were a reminder that receiving financial support in the ministry was quite proper. Read 1 Timothy 5:17-18. The OT quote there is from Deuteronomy 25:4. In an earlier letter to the Corinthians Paul discussed the setting aside, by personal choice, his own right to financial compensation in ministry, even though it would have been quite proper (1 Corinthians 9). In that discussion he quotes this same verse from Deuteronomy 25:4. Paul's encouragement to Timothy was to accept that compensation.

⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Verses 8-10 echo several of the thoughts we have heard from Paul already, as well as some others.

⁸ ¶ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Look at verse 10 a little more closely. Wayne Grudem, General Editor of the ESV Study Bible, wrote in his Systematic Theology, "He (*Paul*) did not argue from the fact that God had chosen some to be saved (*the elect*) that nothing had to be done; rather, he concluded that *much* had to be done in order that God's purposes might come about by the *means* that God had also established. Indeed, Paul was willing to endure "everything," including all kinds of hardship and suffering, that God's eternal plans might come about. A hearty belief in God's providence is not a discouragement but a spur to action."¹ Paul then quotes from what may have been part of a baptismal ceremony.

¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; ¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself.

The first two of these are positive, the last two are negative. The first expresses the thoughts Paul wrote about in Romans 6:3-4. The second would be a reminder to Timothy to endure suffering for the gospel. The third reminds me of 1 Timothy 4:1. These would be those who were not really believers in the first place. They professed Christ, but only temporarily. The fourth shows that Christ's faithfulness to Christians is not contingent on their faithfulness to Him.

There is certainly a lot that we can apply in this passage, but let me focus on one of those applications. Who is your Timothy? We can have our own ministry in God's kingdom and be faithful at it, but who will come after us? Who are we building into? Who are we training to follow us in ministry? Look at Paul's heart in this letter. Paul knew that he would soon go to meet the Lord and Timothy would remain. He had built into Timothy for years and now was giving him some final instructions. Jesus did the same with the eleven disciples. Think too of not just building into one Timothy. Think about building into several (see 2 Timothy 2:1-2.) This is the ministry of multiplication. Think about how to do this in your ministry.

Who is your Timothy?

Or better yet, who are your Timothys?

¹ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, pp. 335-336 (parentheses mine).