

THE CALLING OF A GOOD MINISTER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, several years after his first letter, some things had changed (1) Paul no longer was a free man, but now he was waiting for his execution by Nero - 1:16-17; 4:6. (2) Paul had alerted Timothy to the false doctrines being taught at Ephesus in the first letter - 1 Tim 1:6-7, but now it is evident that some members had embraced these false doctrines - 2 Tim 1:15; cf. Act 20:29-30. (3) His first letter was more official, but this one was personal, encouraging Timothy to be a good minister of Christ by the calling of the Spirit dwelling in him.

Paul showed his love and tender concern for Timothy in this letter (1:1-5). He consistently prayed for Timothy and recalled the tears he shed when they last parted. He expressed his heart's desire to see Timothy again for the joy it would give him before he departed this life. He also recalled the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother, which was passed on to him by their faithful teaching (cf. 3:15).

Paul challenged Timothy to rekindle the fire of the gift God gave him so he would have power, love and sound judgment in his ministry (1:6-7). Paul exhorted him not to be ashamed of the gospel, nor of him (1:8a). Then he gave him three commands: first, he was to become a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel (1:8b); second, he was to hold to the exact form of the revelation given to him (1:13); and third, he was to guard that revelation from falling into error by the power of the Holy Spirit (1:14). It was important that Timothy obey Paul's commands lest he apostatize like Phygellus and Hermogenes (1:15). Instead he was to be like Onesiphorus who remained faithful and refreshed Paul many times (1:16-18).

I. Paul Pondered the Grace of God — 1:1-5

A. Paul the Apostle — 1:1

1:1 — "Apostle of Jesus Christ" - An apostle was one who was specially sent on a specific mission with the proper equipment. Paul had been specially sent by Christ to do His work of spreading the Gospel.

"By the will of God" — He had not placed himself in this position but God had chosen him - cf. Gal 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1.

"According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" — God promises eternal life to those in Christ, who conquered sin, death and Satan, which gives them strength to rescue sinners from Hell.

B. Timothy the Son — 1:2-5

1:2 — In this case, Timothy was the recipient of Christ's life and power.

"Beloved son" — Literally, it is a "beloved child." This is a tender and affectionate greeting.

"Grace, mercy, and peace" — See notes on 1 Tim 1:2. These are divine blessings which come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 — Paul was thankful he was able to serve God with a pure conscience as his forefathers had done. As Paul served God, he was a man of continual prayer. He prayed for Timothy night and day. He told believers at Thessalonica to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thes 5:17). He must have prayed as he walked from city to city and sailed through stormy seas; he must have prayed as he preached to unbelievers and instructed new believers; he must have prayed as he wrote letters to strengthen churches and

made tents to supply his needs; he must have prayed as he faced the whips and stones of Jews and the rods and prisons of Gentiles. Paul not only preached, but he also prayed.

1:4 — "Your tears" - He was reminded of Timothy's tears when they had parted and anticipated joy if he could see him one more time. Timothy's tears touched Paul's heart because they testified of his love for him.

1:5 — "Call to remembrance" - This Greek noun for "remembrance" indicates that something happened to Paul in Rome that caused him to be reminded of Timothy's faith. This word only occurs here and in 2 Pet 1:13; 3:1.

"Unfeigned faith" — Timothy's faith was genuine; it was without hypocrisy. His faith was the result of his godly training. Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice had been devout Israelites who trained him in the Jewish faith from his infancy (3:15). It appears that all three of them received Christ when they heard the gospel from Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:1ff). As a result, Timothy was ready to travel with Paul when he returned to Derbe and Lystra on his second missionary journey (16:1-3).

II. Timothy Was to Practice the Gift from God — 1:6-12

A. The Remembrance of Timothy's Gift — 1:6

1:6 — He was to "stir up" the gift of God. He was to continue doing the work he had been doing, but to do it more fervently. It does not imply that he had fallen into sin yet, but he would if he failed to keep using his gift.

"The gift of God" — This refers to a special gift given to him to fulfill his duties as a minister for God (cf. 1Tim 4:14).

B. The Richness of Timothy's Gift — 1:7

1:7 — Negatively: God had not given him a "spirit of fear" (timidity or cowardice). Positively: God had given him three rich sources of blessing by this gift.

"Power" — Timothy was enabled to do God's work with victory in trials so as to defeat Satan in his life.

"Love" — Timothy loved Christ and had a compassion for the lost. "Love" would temper the "power" of any harshness in his ministry.

"Sound mind" — This gift referred to discipline or judgment. He was able to give sound judgment as the pastor of the church, which is often the difference between success and failure.

C. The Result of Timothy's Gift — 1:8-11

1:8 — "Be not ashamed" - Paul exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed of testifying for the Lord (objective genitive), even though it would bring suffering. Nor was he to be ashamed of Paul who was in prison.

He was to be a willing partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel. If that happened, and it was likely to happen, God would give him power to endure his suffering.

1:9 — God had saved him by His power and God had called him to live a holy, fruitful life by His power and grace. God did not save and call him according to his works, but according to His own purpose (Jn 15:16). God's grace in salvation by Christ was planned before the creation of the world (cf. 1 Pet 1:20).

1:10 — "Made manifest" - This grace was fully made known at the first coming ("appearing") of Jesus Christ when He lived a sinless life, took our place to die on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead, never to die again, to provide us eternal life.

"Who has abolished death" — Jesus took away the power of death. His death paid for the sins of all people so death no longer is the enemy of believers, but it is the friend of believers. Death is a servant that ushers believers into the very presence of God.

"Life and immortality" — Jesus Christ gives life to the believer's spirit and immortality to the believer's body (it will be resurrected at the Rapture and never again experience corruption). These truths are brought to light by the gospel.

1:11 — "Appointed" - God appointed Paul to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this gospel to the Gentiles. As a preacher, Paul publicly declared the Word of God. As an apostle, he was sent with authority from God to authenticate the New Testament Scriptures as the very words of God. As a teacher, he was to instruct believers to know the Word of God. Although he was raised as a strict Jew, God appointed him to work among the Gentiles.

1:12 — "I also suffered for these things" - Paul suffered greatly from strict Jews for his work with the Gentiles. His preaching was mocked, his teaching was misquoted, his work was undermined, and his life was endangered for his work with Gentiles. He knew Whom he believed. He had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and knew Him well. For that reason he was not ashamed of Him or of His gospel.

"I am not ashamed" — Even though Paul suffered for being the apostle to the Gentiles, he was not ashamed of his calling, because God had called him to serve Him in this ministry. This was a positive example for Timothy to follow (cf. v. 8).

"I know Whom I have believed" — Paul knew that Jesus Christ was God and he had a divine calling to minister to the Gentiles. So if all the Jews stood against him, he would stand with Christ against all the Jews, even though he loved them.

"I am persuaded" — He was persuaded that Christ would "keep" (guard) the deposit. There are two ways to translate this phrase which affects the deposit. It could be translated, "which was committed to me" or "which I have committed to Him." If the first translation is correct, then the Gospel or his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles is the deposit. If the second translation is correct, then the deposit could refer to his life or his salvation or his ministry or his rewards. The context speaks about Paul's Gospel (v. 10) and it speaks about his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles (v. 11). Since context is a very important principle in translating the Scriptures, it is best to consider the deposit to be what Christ had given to Paul, namely the Gospel and his call to be an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was convinced that Christ was able to safeguard the deposit against all opposition from Jews or Gentiles.

"Against that day" — This has reference to the day when he would "appear" (be manifest) before the judgment seat of Christ for the work he had done in his body, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor 5:10).

III. Timothy Was to Protect the Gospel of God — 1:13-18

A. Commands to Timothy — 1:13-14

1:13 — First, Timothy was to "hold fast the form of sound words."

"Hold" — He was to continue to hold the sound words of Scripture. He was not to change any doctrine that he had learned from Paul to accommodate the false teachers. He was to grip firmly the doctrine "once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Paul was one of the apostles appointed by Jesus Christ to deliver the doctrine to the believers. Teachers that deviated in any way from the doctrine delivered by Paul were false teachers.

"Form" — It could be translated "pattern; model; outline." It is dangerous to change the teaching of Scripture. It will bring eternal ruin to all who listen.

"Sound words" — Healthful words which lead to spiritual life. The words refer to the words of scripture in the original language - Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Even in those languages, words have a variety

of meanings, so Scripture must be compared with Scripture to find the correct meaning, which becomes biblical doctrine. Bible doctrine produces life while the doctrines of false teachers produce death.

"Faith and love" — The way to hold on to the form of sound words is to live by them and to testify of them in faith and love which can only be done in Christ Jesus. People who claim to hold to sound doctrine, but never tell sinners about their need to receive Jesus Christ are fooling themselves. They are not holding sound doctrine, because they are not proclaiming it.

1:14 — Second, Timothy was to keep that good thing which had been committed unto him.

"Keep" — It means to guard. As Christ would guard a deposit given to Paul (v. 12), so Timothy must guard the deposit given to him.

"Good thing" — The Gospel is the good thing deposited to him, just as the Gospel was deposited to Paul (1:12). He was to guard the Gospel message from any change due to the error of false teachers. He was to guard it as a precious treasure entrusted to him.

The Holy Spirit, who lived in Him, would enable him to guard the Gospel. In Paul's case, He was persuaded that Christ would keep the deposit. In both cases a divine Person was there to guard the Gospel from being extinguished. Paul knew he was soon to be executed, so he was persuaded Christ would guard the Gospel. As for Timothy, he was responsible to work with the Holy Spirit in guarding the Gospel.

B. Examples for Timothy — 1:15-18

1:15 — Bad examples: Phygellus and Hermogenes had both turned away from Paul in his time of need when they could have helped him. In this way they failed to guard the gospel.

1:16-18 — Good example: Onesiphorus had not been ashamed of Paul but had helped him many times. By remaining faithful to Paul, he guarded the gospel. He was a blessing to Paul in four ways:

First, "he oft refreshed me" — He helped Paul's spirit, just as his name suggests.

Second, he "was not ashamed of my chain" — Many fled from Paul when he was imprisoned, but not Onesiphorus. He was courageous. He was a good example for Timothy to follow (cf. v. 8).

Third, he diligently looked for Paul while he was a prisoner in Rome and found him. This was no easy task and it was dangerous to be associated with a person that was about to be executed as a believer. Paul prayed that the Lord would reward Onesiphorus for his faithfulness "in that day." This is another reference to the day when believers will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Fourth, Onesiphorus had been a continual blessing to Paul, even going back to the days when Paul was in Ephesus. His good works were well known, especially to Timothy.