

PAUL, THE APOSTLE PSYCHOLOGIST

Chapter One

Excellence: A By-Product of Discipline

Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy during his first imprisonment in Rome in A.D. 62/63. During that imprisonment Paul had full reign of a rented house.

His second letter to Timothy was written during his second imprisonment in Rome under Nero in A.D. 66/67, during which time he was kept in a dark, cold dungeon. By this time Paul knew most of his work was done and that his life was about over. Paul wrote about his situation in 2 Timothy 4.

2 Timothy 4:6-8:

⁶ For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand. ⁷ I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! ⁸ Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on his appearing.

At the time Paul wrote this letter he was concerned about the churches because of the persecution of Christians under Nero, so he wanted to pass along some final instructions to this church in Ephesus of which Timothy was the pastor. Ephesus was the capital of the province of Asia, and the location today is in the country of Turkey.

2 Timothy 1:1-18 (NASB):

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

² To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.

⁵ For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

⁶ For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

⁸ *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,*

⁹ *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*

¹⁰ *but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*

¹¹ *for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.*

¹² *For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*

¹³ *Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁴ ***Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.***

¹⁵ *You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

¹⁶ *The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;*

¹⁷ *but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—*

¹⁸ *the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*

Now before we begin we would like to introduce you to a fellow who really understands what it means to be humble. He is a computer expert who was on a shuttle flight from Buffalo, N.Y. to Cleveland, Ohio. It was a very small plane which could seat about eight passengers, but there were only two additional passengers beside himself on board, a minister and a Boy Scout.

“The pilot came back to the cabin and said that the plane was going down and there were only three parachutes and four people. The pilot added, ‘I should have one of the parachutes because I have a wife and three small children.’ So he took one and jumped. The computer expert said, ‘I should have one of the parachutes because I am the smartest man in the world and everyone needs me.’ So he took one and jumped. The minister turned to the Boy Scout and with a sad smile said, ‘You are young and I have lived a rich life, so you take the remaining parachute, and I’ll go down with the plane.’ The Boy Scout said, ‘Relax, Reverend, the smartest man in the world just picked up my backpack and jumped out!’”¹

¹ Michael P. Green, ed., “Pride,” in *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989),

This is not what we believe Jesus had in mind when he taught that His followers should all be humble. In verse 7, Paul reminds Timothy that although humility is a very important characteristic for a Christ follower, we do not have to be timid because we have been equipped by the Holy Spirit with power and love and discipline (verse 7).

“The power of prayer has never been tried to its full capacity in any church. If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let the whole church answer God's standing challenge: *‘Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.’*”
(Jeremiah 33:3) —J. Hudson Taylor²

When in Chicago, we passed a saloon. The keeper was outside rolling a hogshead of beer along the street. We passed on but the man with whom I was walking turned, went back and said, *‘My friend, God loves you. Did you know that?’* The saloonkeeper said, *‘God loves me? Do you know who I am? I am the saloonkeeper. Does God love saloon-keepers?’* ‘Yes,’ said my friend, *‘God loves saloon-keepers. He hates their business, but He loves them!’*³

“*‘Pistol’* Pete Maravich was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1987. He rewrote the NCAA scoring records as a collegiate player, averaging 44.2 points per game in his four years at Louisiana State University. During his ten year professional career, Maravich averaged 24.2 points and 5.4 assists per game.

When asked the reason for his excellence, Maravich called himself a *‘basketball android’* as a boy. He explained, *‘I even took a basketball to bed with me until I was 14 years old. I would just lie there in bed throwing it up and doing fingertip drills. When I was 8 and 9 years old, I would dribble the ball 2-1/2 miles into town and 2-1/2 miles back. When I got a little older, I would dribble it into town while riding my bike. Whatever I did, wherever I went, I had the basketball with me. It just became an*

WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 287.

² Ibid.

³ Walter B. Knight, *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1956), s.v. “Love of God,” WORDsearch CROSS e-book.

extension of my hand. Any wonder he became a magician with the basketball?

“Excellence in any area is not automatically achieved. Excellence is a by-product of discipline. Discipline provides the impetus to repeat an activity until it becomes ingrained in our lives as a habit.”⁴

Now, with these illustrations fresh in our minds, let us begin with verse 1 of 2 Timothy chapter 1, and see just what it is that Paul wants Timothy to remember.

2 Timothy 1:1

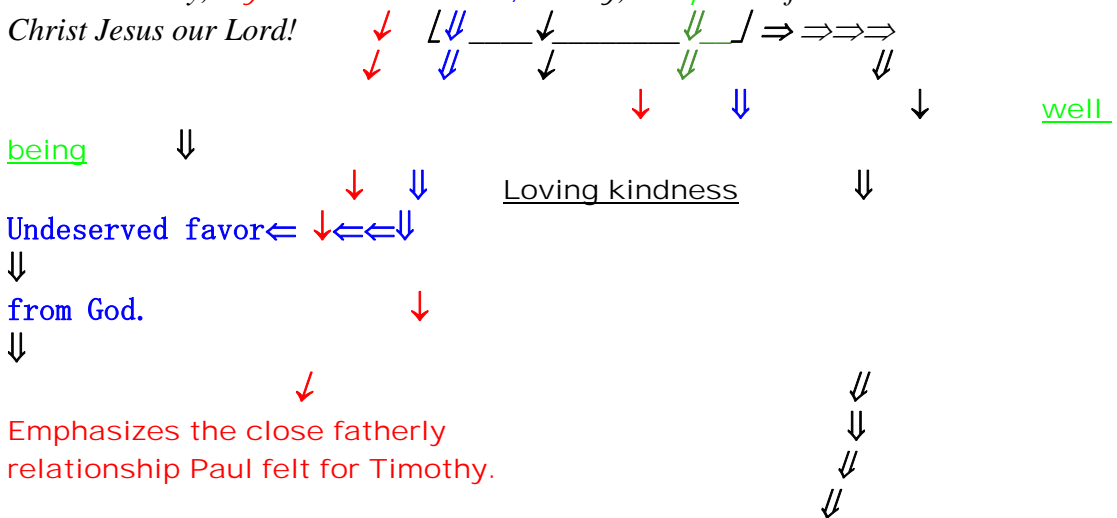
*From Paul, an **apostle** of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to further the promise-of life in Christ Jesus.*



Apostles were appointed to preach and explain the Good News that eternal life is available to all who will receive it through faith in Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 1:2

*To Timothy, **my dear child**. **Grace**, mercy, and **peace** from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord!*



Emphasizes the close fatherly relationship Paul felt for Timothy.

What more could you ask for in life? There can be no greater gifts from God for those who open their hearts and minds to God and Jesus, and if you then ask to understand God's truth, God will give you that understanding.

As in his first letter to Timothy Paul here calls himself an apostle of Christ Jesus, which is what Jesus called him to be. Paul belonged to those first teachers of the New Testament

⁴ [Brian Harbour, *Rising Above the Crowd*. Nashville: Broadman, 1988, p. 61] Brian L. Harbour, ed., “Discipline,” in *Notable Harbour Illustrations – Volume 9: 125 Illustrations*, WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: “Discipline”.

Church that had been taught and equipped with an unusual number of gifts for the work of founding Christ's Church in the world. Paul was not interviewed for this position, nor did he major in Apostolic Behavior in college. Paul was placed in this position by God and it had nothing to do with what he wanted. God took control of Paul and sent him on a journey that he would never have thought possible. He therefore performed the duties of this office, not for his own feeling of importance, but for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teaching others how joyful life can be when they live it for Christ and obey what He teaches them. A life which God originally intended for man from the very beginning, a life which was brought down to the earth by the Son of God,⁵ the life which we shall enjoy in its richest measure in eternity,⁶ that is the life which is proclaimed in God's Word, that is the content of all preaching by the apostles. It is the life in Christ Jesus, for without Him there can be no true life. Having thus characterized his office and given a summary of his preaching, Paul addresses Timothy as his beloved son, with whom he was united in the bonds of a most cordial and fatherly love.^{7 8}

Paul's greeting here in his second letter to Timothy is identical with that of the first letter: "*Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Lord.*" One who has been reconciled to God by the grace of God and by faith can with full confidence know the assurance of the merciful love of God in Christ for him/her. Further that person can be convinced that the peace of God which passes all understanding is the guaranteed gift of God to all that believe. Having been justified by faith, having become one who has been given the gift of the grace and mercy of God, we have peace with God, a peace that we are given by God only because of the sacrifice the Lord Jesus Christ was willing to suffer for us.

⁵ John 1:4; 1 John 1:2

⁶ Colossians 3:3-4; Galatians 6:8; Romans 5:17,

⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:20-22.

⁸ – *New Testament Volume 2*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 398-400.