

Prayer

All our praise belongs to You, Lord Jesus Christ
Receive it with our thanks.

All the glory in the heavens is Yours, Holy Father
Receive it with our love.

All power and authority in the world is Yours Holy Spirit
Use it as You will.

Thank You Lord God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Amen.

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Seas

We will pray this week for a number of issues to do with the sea. Water covers a vast amount of the world's surface, and yet we must pray that it is respected and well treated.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks to God for Christian friends and fellowship
- Continue to pray for the world economic situation
- Pray for those who maintain the safety of our coastlines

Meditation

All around us, people are rushing about doing normal things,
Keeping themselves going with the regular things of life;
Shopping, looking after children, visiting relatives and friends:
Travelling in cars, phoning on mobiles, eating snacks.

All around us, somewhere just beyond our usual horizons
Are people just about holding on, keeping their lives going
Despite the break-up of families or the death of loved ones;
Not knowing what they are doing. Lost, and looking for help.

All around us, God is breathing His Spirit, and Jesus is alive,
Just waiting to be found and offering the strength and help
People need to overcome all the trials and tribulations of life;
Will you share with them the Good News that His help is at hand?

Bible Study - 2 Timothy 1:1-7

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, ² To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³ I thank God (whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did) when I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day. ⁴ I long to see you again (recalling your tears) so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, also lives in you. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to stir up the gift of God that is within you through the laying on

of my hands; ⁷ for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and of love and of self-control.

Review

If we read the beginning of 2 Timothy after reading 1 Timothy, we are left to wonder what has happened. It is not that Paul fails to speak with love and affection to Timothy, because the opening verses of this letter certainly do this; it is not that Paul has any specific axe to grind about Timothy being remiss on a theological point, far from it. Nevertheless, the tone of the letter is different, and it seems that something problematic has happened and Paul has found it necessary to write again to encourage and support his protégé. The first hint of what is going on comes in the greetings; Paul's regular greeting of 'grace' and 'peace' is joined by one significant other word; 'mercy'. There is therefore a hint that Timothy's ministry had not been as successful as was hoped and there were problems; and these reflected in some way on his leadership, so Paul called in a kindly way for God's mercy on his beloved friend. We will only discover the truth of this if we read through the rest of the letter, but the opening of it sets the tone.

Is there something wrong? Other features of the beginning of the letter are what we might expect. Paul mentions his desire to see Timothy again in much the same way that he expresses a desire to see friends again in other letters (see Romans 1:11f. etc.); he talks about constant prayer for Timothy (see Phil 4:1 and 1 Thess 1:2 etc.), and he commends his faith (1:5). The second hint that there is something amiss is found however in the two phrases in brackets within the text. Some Bibles do not use brackets for them, some use dashes instead, but it is clear that in the Greek original that these two phrases are secondary thoughts added to what Paul says, and they interrupt the flow of the sentence. This is exactly the circumstances under which we would use brackets in English, which is why I have used them here. The first of these phrases is in verse 3 in which Paul says of God, 'whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did'. The second phrase is in verse 4 where Paul interrupts his comments about longing to see Timothy again with, 'recalling your tears.'

We can never know exactly what the problem was, but it does appear that something prompted Paul to add comments to his flow of thought about his heritage of faith and about Timothy's weeping. Does this point to Timothy's failure to be a strong and commanding man in 'presence' and leadership? Does this suggest that Timothy was not as convincing in his defence of the 'heritage of faith' as Paul hoped? Theories have abounded since the second century, but nothing has ever been made clear about this, and most people simply reckon that Timothy had a great deal to live up to as Paul's protégé, and was probably a weaker man, physically and mentally. It is interesting, however, to note that the conclusion of the opening of the letter has Paul reminding Timothy of his calling and commission (through the laying on of hands - 1:6) and also Paul's comment; 'for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and of love and of self-control'. This is a fascinating comment in its own right, but it is at least worth considering in the light of what we have just said, that despite his deep love for Timothy, Paul was chastising him for his timidity and lack of self control.

A spirit of 'power and love and self-control' Verse 7 stands out in the opening of 2 Timothy as a great and memorable verse. Certainly, it is a quick and simple phrase to learn and contains considerable wisdom. There are indeed times when we need to read this scripture to ourselves or to each other by way of rebuke and challenge, because we have not given an example of the spirit filled life that is lived by the power of the Holy Spirit, or we have lacked either love or self-control. At other times, these are words which

encourage us to be bold and live by the power and authority of God in the world, to show love in all we do and to exercise self-restraint in all things to the greater glory of God.

Looking closely at the text, this great phrase come closely attached to the verse which goes before it, which reads, 'For this reason I remind you to stir up the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands.' This was clearly said to Timothy and refers to a specific event, but for us, it reminds us that if we have been commissioned by God to do a task for Him, in particular through the laying on of hands, then we have a great resources at our disposal through the Holy Spirit. For although the Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned here, it is the Spirit who supplies us with the strength and ability to do God's will, and the fulfilment of any calling in the Kingdom of God must surely be accomplished by the Spirit. It is quite reasonable to say therefore that this text indicates to us the significance of 'power', 'love', and 'self-control'; and they are not simply additional targets for a Christian aiming for holiness, but the result of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer.

Certainly, I do not believe that Paul wanted Timothy to merely add these to the 'list of things to do'; he wanted Timothy to show the fruit of being a man of God. Therefore, they are for us the evidence of God at work rather than yet another list of spiritual aims and objectives, but still challenging and thought-provoking!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group whether you agree that the opening of 2 Timothy seems to indicate a problem.
2. In what ways does Paul bless Timothy in the opening of his letter?
3. What does verse 7 mean to you? What do each of the key words mean to you, and how do they overcome timidity?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I have always thought that this passage, especially verses 6 and 7, calls God's people to be bold and take courage. This is the heart of the message, and verse 7 sets out markers by which we know whether we are in the right place before the Lord or not. If we lack power, have trouble loving others and have little self-control, then we certainly know that we are not in the right place before God. Alternatively, if we are able to experience these things, then something very different is happening, and the Lord is at work.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *Is it easy to 'worship the Lord with a clear conscience' (see verse 3)? What thoughts enter your mind as you worship? Ask the Lord to help you enter into worship with all spiritual energy and vigour.*
- *Is weeping a sign of weakness? In what ways is weeping a sign of strength? Discuss this in any group you attend within your church.*

Final Prayer

Glorious and faithful Lord, cover my life with the protection of Your love. Keep the enemy at bay, save me from my sin, and keep me from worldliness and temptation I pray; In Jesus' name, my Saviour and Redeemer, AMEN