



Text: 2 Timothy 1:1-7<sup>1</sup> [p. 995]  
Title: (Part 1) *Promise, Faith & Spirit*  
Series: "*Fan the Flame*": Essential Lessons from 2 Timothy on Fighting the Fight, Finishing the Race & Keeping the Faith  
Location: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB  
Date: September 10, 2017

On June 14 of this year, Tim Farron, the leader of Britain's third party, the Liberal Democrats, resigned.

For some time Farron had been hounded by the British media to answer a question. The question was: Do you believe that homosexual practice is sin?

As an evangelical Christian, Farron had attempted to deflect his critics by affirming that we are all sinners. But the media wanted him to be specific: is homosexual practice a sin? And so on June 14, he resigned. In his resignation<sup>2</sup> he stated

"Journalists have every right to ask what they see fit. The consequences of the focus on my faith is that I have found myself torn between living as a faithful Christian and serving as a political leader.

A better, wiser person than me may have been able to deal with this more successfully, to have remained faithful to Christ while leading a political party in the current environment.

To be a political leader – especially of a progressive, liberal party in 2017 – and to live as a committed Christian, to hold faithfully to the Bible's teaching, has felt impossible for me."

Farron stated:

"There are Christians in politics who take the view that they should impose the tenets of faith on society, but I have not taken that approach because I disagree with it – it's not liberal and it is counterproductive when it comes to advancing the gospel.

Even so, I seem to be the subject of suspicion because of what I believe and who my faith is in.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> You can find the full text of his resignation statement here: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/blog/live/2017/jun/14/david-cameron-suggests-softer-brexite-as-may-weighs-options-politics-live?page=with:block-59417521e4b0240ef76147b0#block-59417521e4b0240ef76147b0>



In which case," he said, "we are kidding ourselves if we think we yet live in a tolerant, liberal society."

As a political liberal, Farron was more than willing, as he put it, to defend "the rights and liberties of people who believe different things to me." In fact, as a political liberal Farron had voted in favour of permitting same-sex marriage, even though as a Christian he believed homosexual practice to be displeasing to God. But that kind of liberal tolerance was unacceptable to many within his party and also to many within British society as a whole and I would add, to many around the world. More and more we are seeing the death of tolerance which, essentially, is the ability to agree to disagree. What we are seeing more and more is the imposition of uniformity and conformity. As Farron noted, we might be watching the end of liberal democracy in our world.

As he completed his resignation speech, Farron spoke of how he had joined the party as a 16 year old and how he loved his party and had loved being its leader.

"Imagine how proud I am to lead this party," he said. "And then imagine what would lead me to voluntarily relinquish that honour.

In the words of Isaac Watts," he said, "it would have to be something 'so amazing, so divine, (it) demands my heart, my life, my all'." And so, with those words, Farron's political life essentially came to an end.

Paul wrote to Timothy that

**"in the last days there will come times of difficulty." 2 Timothy 3:1**

He told Timothy that in the last days,

**"all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," 2 Timothy 3:12**

He challenged Timothy,

**"do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God," 2 Timothy 1:8**

As he concluded his letter, Paul was aware that his end was drawing close. He was in prison in Rome and his life was on the line and he wrote to Timothy:

**"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on**



**that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."  
2 Timothy 4:6-8**

Brothers and sisters, more and more we are facing the question: Can we live as faithful Christians while also fulfilling a role in society, or must we choose at some point between Christ and the world? Can we be faithful Christians and also be faithful teachers, doctors, policemen and women, lawyers, politicians, civil servants and the like?

This morning we sang,

**"Hallelujah, all I have is Christ  
Hallelujah, Jesus is my life."**

**"Now to be Thine yes Thine alone  
O Lamb of God I come I come"**

***Are we gripped by something 'so amazing, so divine' that it our  
demands our hearts, our lives, our all even at the expense of  
something else we love?***

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy to prepare him to make that choice. I've entitled this series,

**"*Fan the Flame*": Essential Lessons from 2 Timothy on Fighting  
the Fight, Finishing the Race & Keeping the Faith**

I believe this little letter contains important, crucial lessons for us if we are going to fight the fight, finish the race and keep the faith and I invite you to join us for the next ten weeks as we make our way through this letter.

Let's begin. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter one, verse one. You'll find the reading on page 995 of the pew Bible. As we read this morning I want you to take notice of three words: "promise," "faith" and "spirit." Those three words form the essential core of what I want us to think about together. Brothers and sisters, this is God's holy, inspired and authoritative Word.

**<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the  
promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,**

**<sup>2</sup> To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the  
Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**<sup>3</sup> I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience,  
as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. <sup>4</sup> As I remember  
your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup> I am reminded of**



your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. <sup>6</sup> For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, <sup>7</sup> for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

First of all, I want us to see that

***Paul's Gospel-infused greeting to Timothy points us to the foundational nature of God's promise of life in Christ (v.1-2)***

Whenever Paul began a letter he always began with a greeting. He would often make reference to his status as an apostle, as he did here in this greeting. He would often bless his readers with grace, mercy and peace and sometimes he would greet his recipients by name. There were some standard elements in his greetings. So when he departed from that standard, he did so for a specific purpose. The phrase,

**"according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus" 2 Timothy 1:1**

was a departure from the norm and its presence here is remarkable.

When Paul penned these words he was sitting in prison. It's believed by many scholars that he was confined to the Mamertine Prison in Rome, a prison reserved for those who were awaiting execution. It was a desperate place. It was a place where people went to await the end of their lives but for Paul, it was a place where he was awaiting life – eternal life! He knew his end was near:

**"the time of my departure has come." 2 Timothy 4:6**

But his mind was full of the promise of life in Christ!

The preaching of that promise had been the purpose of Paul's ministry as an apostle. God had set him apart to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. To the Colossians he'd written,

**"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3**

To the Philippians he'd written,

**"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21**



As he sat in that prison, knowing that his life on earth was soon to end, he set his mind on the promise of God that because he had believed in Christ he had a life that death could not touch. In fact, he was confident of Christ's victory over death in his resurrection that he could write to Timothy that Jesus had, in fact,

**"abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," 2 Timothy 1:10**

I love what John Stott wrote about 2 Timothy 1:1.

***"The gospel does more than 'offer' life; it 'promises' life to all who are in Christ. It says dogmatically: 'he who has the Son has life' (1 Jn. 5:12)."***<sup>3</sup>

The question for us this morning is this:

**If we have the Son, what are we willing to do without?**

Is God's promise of life in Christ so precious to us that we will suffer the loss of all things that we might have Him? Can we say with Paul,

**"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him" Philippians 3:8-9**

Secondly,

***Paul's faith-inspired remembrance of Timothy points us to the crucial task of nurturing sincere faith in Christ (v.3-5)***

Paul uses the word "remember" three times in these verses. He's sitting in a prison in Rome, many have deserted him (4:10), and he's "remembering" Timothy. As one Bible scholar put it, "it's a clear look into lonely man's heart...." <sup>4</sup> But although Paul is longing for companionship his heart is not despairing. He's remembering with faith.

**First of all, Paul remembered Timothy in prayer.**

**"I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day." 2 Timothy 1:3**

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<sup>3</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 25.

<sup>4</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 470.



We're not told specifically what Paul prayed for but we can discern from the rest of his letter to Timothy what was on his heart for Timothy: loyalty, faithfulness and perseverance in the Gospel.<sup>5</sup>

This morning many of you will not be concerned about how your faith in Christ will limit your career choices; your careers are over. Many of you are close to finishing your race. But let me challenge you with the task of praying, as Paul did, for those who must face "the times of difficulty" that lie ahead of the people of God. Pray for the "Timothys" who must pastor the church of Jesus Christ in the uncertain times that are coming upon us. I'm getting closer at the end of my race but my heart goes out to those who will follow me as pastors. Let's pray for the young men like Mike Lorusso, Josh Kary, Nate Wiens, Peter Shields and others who are still in training for pastoral ministry. Let's pray for the young adults who, because of their faith in Christ, may well be barred from professions and employment. Let's pray for them as Jesus prayed for Peter:

**"I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." Luke 22:32**

**Second, Paul remembered Timothy's "tears."**

**"As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy." 2 Timothy 1:4**

What "tears" Paul is referring to is uncertain. Timothy was one of the leaders of the Ephesians church who met with Paul in the city of Miletus. As Paul said farewell to them,

**"there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him," Acts 20:37**

But that had been years before the writing of 2 Timothy. His relationship with Timothy was so close that tears upon parting were probably a regular part of their relationship. Perhaps it was Timothy's tears that Paul has witnessed as Timothy shared with him the hardships faced by the Ephesian church or perhaps it was Timothy's tears when Paul had been taken off to Rome in chains.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the occasion had been, Timothy's tears spoke volumes about the depth of his relationship with Paul. Paul referred to Timothy as "my beloved child" probably because he had led Timothy to faith when he preached in his hometown (Acts 14:6,7) and he had discipled Timothy so that he grew to be an effective pastor.

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<sup>5</sup> William D. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 469.

<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), 172.



Brothers and sisters, one of the most important ways we can nurture mature faith in our young adults is through the kind of personal relationship that Paul clearly had with Timothy. Our young men and women need mature mentors who will enter into deep relationship with them to help them develop a deep walk with Christ. They need to know mature believers who have stood faithful to Christ over many years and through many trials.

**Thirdly, Paul remembered Timothy's "sincere faith."** He wrote,

**"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." 2 Timothy 1:5**

We know little of Timothy's father. Luke tells us that,

**"Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek." Acts 16:1**

The way the words "believer" and "but" occur together has led scholars to the conclusion that Timothy's father was not a believer. And of course, Paul does not mention him as part of Timothy's spiritual foundation here in this passage. In 2 Timothy we learn his mother's name: "Eunice." And we learn that his grandmother, Lois, was also a believer. And we learn that they had nurtured faith in Timothy from an early age. Paul encouraged Timothy to stay faithful to the Gospel because he had learned it from two people he loved and respected: his mother and grandmother. Paul wrote,

**"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:14-15**

Moms and dads, teach your children the Bible. Evangelize them. Lead them in worship. There is a profound connection between the development of a strong faith in our children and our own practice of our faith. The Bible affirms it:

**"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:4-9**



Ruth and I were visiting with my parents and my sister & brother-in-law in Ontario a few weeks ago while we were on holidays there. We were all sitting together and having a scattered sort of conversation. My dad, who is suffering from progressive memory loss, was just sitting, not connecting with what we were talking about. But then my brother-in-law, who is also a pastor, and I got talking about a Biblical theological issue and all of a sudden my dad jumped into the conversation. Talking about the Bible is just a natural subject for him. For as long as I can remember, my dad and I have talked Bible. We used to wash dishes after supper, and talk Bible. We used to go fishing at the cottage, and talk Bible. One of the reasons I ended up in pastoral ministry is because my dad nurtured a love for the Bible in me. Moms and dads, talk Bible with your kids and pray that God will form Christ in them!

**Finally,**

***Paul's Spirit-filled reminder to Timothy points us to the need for active dependence upon the Holy Spirit (v.6-7)***

Because of Paul's conviction that Timothy's faith was genuine and deep, he wrote,

**"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." 2 Timothy 1:6-7**

Timothy's faith was not failing; Timothy faced a challenge. When Paul asked him to "fan into flame" his faith it wasn't because his faith was sputtering. It was because things were heating up around him and Timothy needed to pour on the gas! But Paul was absolutely confident that the Spirit of God would enable Timothy to meet whatever challenge he faced.

Timothy faced some challenges from his own personality, but don't we all? Don't we all experience the weaknesses of our strengths? Humanly speaking, aren't we all unqualified to be servants of Christ? Of course!

But consider some of Timothy's human limitations. **He was:**

- **prone to frequent bouts of illness (1 Tim 5:23).**
- **a young leader in a culture that deferred to the aged (1 Tim 4:12).**
- **uncomfortable when it came to social situations.** Paul advised the Corinthians:

**"When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. So let no one despise him. Help him on**





**his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers." 1 Corinthians 16:10-11**

But none of these limitations mattered because Timothy had the Spirit of God and had been equipped by the Spirit for ministry.

In the "times of difficulty" that lay ahead, Timothy was going to need **the Spirit's power** so that he could minister. But Jesus had promised

**"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8**

And Timothy was going to need **the Spirit's love** to love his enemies as Jesus had loved those who persecuted him. And he was going to need the assurance of God's love for him in those times when he was alone with only God to sustain him. But, he didn't need to worry because, as Paul wrote to the Romans,

**"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Romans 5:5**

And Timothy was going to need **the Spirit's self-control** when he was tempted to lash out against those who opposed him. Paul would tell him later in this letter:

**"the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness." 2 Timothy 2:24-25**

Timothy was going to need the Spirit's help in order to be a servant who reflected the character of Jesus. But, of course, is exactly why the Spirit is given to us:

**"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23**

As John Stott observed, "humanly speaking, Timothy was hopelessly unfit"<sup>7</sup> to be "the Lord's servant." But with God's Spirit, nothing could stand in his way! And brothers and sisters, nothing can stand in the way of God's Spirit when fanned into flame in the lives of God's people.

Isaac Watts wrote,

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<sup>7</sup> John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 19–20.



**When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.**

And to God be the glory. Amen

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Song of Response: Jesus (Tomlin)**
- **Benediction**