Timothy, a Leader with a Legacy

2 Tim 1:1-6; 3:14-16
SS Lesson for 08/23/2026

Devotional Scripture: 1 Tim 1:1-5

OUTLINE

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The persecutor-turned-apostle Paul is responsible for writing a large percentage of the New Testament epistles. He wrote letters to churches and individuals. "Writing" is a flexible term for an era without mail service, widespread literacy, or inexpensive paper. Several of his letters list coauthors: Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1); Timothy (2 Corinthians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1); and Silas together with Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Paul also employed the help of specialized scribes, perhaps relying heavily upon them when he was confined in Rome. The writing secretary (called an amanuensis in Latin) sometimes carried the letter to its destination, delivering and interpreting the contents. For example, see the commendation of Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7. As far as we know, Paul had no children and never married. He had a sister and nephew (Acts 23:16), so he was an uncle. Scripture gives us little information about Paul's parents, but we know he received high-level religious education, learned tent-making as a trade, and was a Roman citizen. We know he studied under the famous rabbi, Gamaliel, in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Paul's relationship with Gamaliel as a spiritual father may have influenced his decision to consider Timothy as a son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2). Since Paul's production of letters involved Timothy to a large degree and he thought of Timothy like a son, it is fitting that Paul would write to him when they were apart. Even as Paul endured imprisonment in Rome and his day of martyrdom drew near (around AD 67), he continued planning correspondences. Paul wrote two letters to Timothy while the younger man served as a pastor in Ephesus. Through them, he offered guidance, reassurance, and encouragement. Eventually, Paul requested that Timothy visit him in Rome and "bring … the scrolls [and] especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:9, 13). In some ways, 2 Timothy reads like a last will and testament, sent from a spiritual father to a spiritual son (4:6; compare Philippians 2:22). As any father would, Paul wished to see Timothy again before he died.

Though Timothy is often perceived as a youth, he was approximately 40 years old when he received Paul's second letter. Paul first met Timothy while traveling through Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). According to Acts 16:1, Timothy's mother was Jewish, but his father was Greek. Strict Jews considered such a relationship dangerous and sometimes even sinful (compare Nehemiah 13:23-27; Ezra 9:1–10:44). Greek culture placed fathers as the head of the household (paterfamilias), and therefore, the one responsible for decisions regarding matters of religion. Timothy's Greek paternity is evident in his lack of circumcision, which, as a Jew, should have occurred on the eighth day of his life (Acts 16:3; Leviticus 12:3). However, Timothy possessed some education in Jewish faith by way of his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Much of Timothy's further ministry education and training came from the time he spent with Paul while they served as missionaries planting churches across Macedonia.

Key Verses: 2 Tim 1: 5

When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

A Sincere Legacy (2 Tim 1:1-6)

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
3 I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,
4 greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,
5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.
6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Legacy through prayers (1-4)

Prayers that seek the increase in faith (1 Thess 3:10)

10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Prayers for all the saints (Eph 6:18)

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Prayers for the rescue from harm (Rom 15:31)

31 Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,

Prayers for enlightenment (Eph 1:18)

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Prayers for empowerment (Eph 3:16-19)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Prayers to live a godly life (Col 1:10)

10 And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,

Prayers for an open door (Col 4:3)

3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

Legacy through faith passed on (5)

Faith passed that reveals the righteousness of God (Rom 1:17)

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Faith passed that leads to salvation (Acts 11:13-14)

13 He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. 14 He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'

Faith passed through believing the gospel (Gal 3:2)

2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

Faith passed through the preaching of the gospel (1 Peter 1:12)

12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Legacy through a Gift of power (6)

Power of the Holy Spirit (Zech 4:6)

6 So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.

Power to overcome (Luke 10:19)

19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.

Power to be witnesses (Acts 1:8)

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Power to speak wisely (1 Cor 2:4-5)

4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

A Continued Legacy (2 Tim 3:14-16)

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,
15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

Legacy from Mentors (vs. 14-15)

Mentors that provided sound teaching (2 Tim 1:13-14)

13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Mentors that presented the word of God as it actually is (1 Thess 2:13)

13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Mentors that presented the truths of the faith (1 Tim 4:6)

6 If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

Mentors that follow Christ (1 Cor 11:1-2)

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.

Legacy from Scripture (16)

Scripture that is perfect (Ps 19:7)

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Scripture that provides understanding (Ps 119:104)

104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Scripture that proclaims the whole will of God (Acts 20:27)

27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

Scripture that prepares and builds up the Church (Eph 4:11-13)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Gregory Brown

God's Word Makes People Wise for Salvation

You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Interpretation Question: In what ways does the Bible make people wise for salvation?

1. Scripture teaches our need for salvation.

Man was originally made in the image of God (Gen 1:27)—to be righteous just like God. However, man continually fails at this. Romans 3:23 says, "For all fall short of the glory of God." This means we fail to be like God in our actions, thoughts, and emotions. Scripture not only commands our actions but our heart. The greatest command is to love God with all our heart, mind and soul, and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. The reality is that we have never loved God with all our heart and mind, and we often, if not always, fail to love others as ourselves. Man continually falls short of God's glory—both in action and heart.

This failure has tragic consequences: Romans 6:23 says, "For the payoff of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our God is righteous and just, and the just punishment for sin is eternal judgment. This is the state of all mankind—under the wrath of God (John 3:36) and therefore in need of salvation.

2. Scripture teaches God's plan of salvation.

After the sin of the first humans—Adam and Eve—God initiated a plan to save man. When Adam and Eve sinned, instead of immediately killing them, God clothed them with animal skin—implying that he killed an animal (Gen 3:21). From the beginning, we see the doctrine of substitution. Someone else could take man's just punishment for sin. We saw that with the death of the first animal, and then, later God explicitly institutes animal sacrifice. For the nation of Israel, a perfect lamb would be sacrificed once a year on the Day of Atonement; the lamb took the death that ever person in Israel deserved for their sins. However, this lamb was only a picture of the perfect Lamb that would one day come and take away the sins of the world.

In the Gospels, John the Baptist sees Jesus Christ—God's Son, who took on flesh—and says, "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Christ lived the perfect life that we couldn't live, and he died on the cross for our sins. Then he rose from the dead—proving that God accepted his sacrifice for the sins of the world (Rom 4:25).

In order for a person to be saved, he must put his faith in Christ (2 Tim 4:15). John 3:16 says, "For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." Romans 10:13 says, "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Scripture teaches the plan of salvation so that all can come to Christ and be saved. One day Christ is coming again, and those who have rejected him shall be judged eternally in a real place called hell, and those who have followed him, shall dwell eternally with him (John 3:18).

Why should we continue in Scripture? We should abide in it because it teaches the way of salvation—no other book does. How can we neglect or despise it?

Are you abiding in it?

Application Question: Share your conversion experience. How did the Word of God make you wise for salvation?

God's Word Is Inspired

You, however, must continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you… Every scripture is inspired by God

Secondly, Timothy should continue in God's Word because it is inspired by God. "Inspired" can also be translated "God-breathed" (v. 16 NIV). It means that every word of the Bible literally comes out of God's mouth.

When Paul said "scripture," he refers both to the Old Testament and the New Testament books that were already complete (cf. 1 Tim 5:18, 2 Peter 3:15-16). At that point, the only NT books not completed were 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude, and John's writings.[2] However, we are correct to now apply it to the completed Canon.

Interpretation Question: How did inspiration work in referring to the writing of Scripture?

The Bible obviously has two authors—both man and God. When Paul says, "continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you" (v. 14), there is some controversy over whether the "who" is plural or singular. The earliest, and therefore, best manuscripts translate it as plural; "who" would then refer to Paul, Timothy's mother and grandmother, and possibly others. However, the majority of manuscripts translate it as a singular, referring to Paul. If the singular is correct, as many commentators believe (because of internal evidence, cf. 1:13-14, 2:2, 3:10)[3], Paul would be referring to his apostolic authority as a reason Timothy should be convinced of the Scripture's reliability.[4] The apostles were especially called to give God's revelation (cf. John 14:26, 16:12-13). Either way (plural or singular) would include the apostle Paul. He was a divinely chosen, apostolic author, as were the prophets, other apostles and their associates. These divinely chosen authors, like Paul, convinced Timothy of the reliability of Scripture. In addition, when the Canon was recognized by the church, apostolic or prophetic authorship and/or acknowledgment was one of the primary considerations. It helped convince them of which books were part of Scripture (cf. v. 14).

Secondly, when Paul says all Scripture is "God-breathed" or "inspired by God," he is referring to God's authorship. In fact, God actually began writing the Bible himself; he wrote the Ten Commandments with his own hand. We see this in Exodus 31:18: "He gave Moses two tablets of testimony when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, tablets of stone written by the finger of God."

But not only did he write the Ten Commandments, 2 Timothy 3:16 teaches that every word of Scripture is "inspired by God"—even though it was written by human authors as well. Wayne Grudem provides insight:

All the words in the Bible are God's words. Therefore, to disbelieve or disobey them is to disbelieve or disobey God himself. Oftentimes, passages in the Old Testament are introduced with the phrase, "Thus says the LORD" (see Ex. 4:22; Josh. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:18; Isa. 10:24; also Deut. 18:18 – 20; Jer. 1:9). This phrase, understood to be like the command of a king, indicated that what followed was to be obeyed without challenge or question. Even the words in the Old Testament not attributed as direct quotes from God are considered to be God's words… The New Testament also affirms that its words are the very words of God. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter refers to all of Paul's letters as one part of the "Scriptures." This means that Peter, and the early church, considered Paul's writings to be in the same category as the Old Testament writings. Therefore, they considered Paul's writings to be the very words of God. In addition, Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:18, writes that "the Scripture says" two things: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain" and "The laborer deserves his wages." The first quote regarding an ox comes from the Old Testament; it is found in Deuteronomy 25:4. The second comes from the New Testament; it is found in Luke 10:7. Paul, without any hesitation, quotes from both the Old and New Testaments, calling them both "Scripture." Therefore, again, the words of the New Testament are considered to be the very words of God. That is why Paul could write, "the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37).[5]

Interpretation Question: How can it be possible that Scripture has two authors—both God and man? What was the process?

Peter gives us a hint in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

Above all, you do well if you recognize this: No prophecy of scripture ever comes about by the prophet's own imagination, for no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Peter says the prophecies of Scripture did not come about by a prophet's imagination or human impulse, but men were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be carried along by the Holy Spirit?

In Acts 27:15, the writer, Luke, uses the same phrase to describe a ship being carried by a storm. Look at what he says: "When the ship was caught in it and could not head into the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along."

In the same way the ship was "driven" by the storm, so the authors of the Bible were "carried" by the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture. The Holy Spirit drove them along in the writing of the content and also kept them from error. The writers were there; they were thinking and writing, but they were being moved by the Spirit.

In John 16:12-13, Christ said:

"I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come.

God sent the Holy Spirit to inspire and bring to remembrance all the words that Jesus said. The Holy Spirit would not only bring things to remembrance, but he would teach the writers of Scripture further revelation. This is how the New Testament and the Old Testament were written: the Holy Spirit moved upon men to write the actual words of God. Timothy was to continue in God's Word because it is inspired by God. We should also continue in it.

Application Question: What does the inspiration of Scripture mean? Why is the inspiration of Scripture so important?

(Adapted from URL:https://bible.org/seriespage/10-why-abide-god-s-word-2-timothy-314-17)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Timothy had a surrogate parent and mentor in Paul. Paul lived a life worthy of imitation and spent significant time reaching out to his son in the faith to encourage and support him. Through Paul's writings, we learn essential truths about Timothy that help us identify him as a faithful witness of Christ. Timothy's rich heritage of faith was passed to him by his mother, grandmother, and spiritual father. Strong parental influence in faith is an incredible blessing. May we all find the mentors we need for steady growth in discipleship, and may we, in turn, develop into devoted mentors ourselves! Timothy's example shows us that spiritual heritage comes from various places. If you lack spiritual support from your family of origin or extended family, don't dismiss the power of relationships built out of a church family. God gave Timothy a gift, a church leadership position, and beloved relationships. He had a spark implanted in him that remained burning. Timothy had endurance, a long memory, diligent trust in God, and supportive, helpful companions on the journey. He didn't succumb to discouragement in the face of hardship and opposition. However, Timothy's success didn't come through individualistic means. He submitted to relationships that supported him through tough times.