

1. Stir your stumps - Brother!

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[0 : 00] Well, we come now to our reading from the Bible, and if you'd like to turn with me to Paul's second letter to Timothy, I would be grateful.

You'll find that on page 995 in our church Bibles, 995. The three letters, which are known as 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, are all written by Paul.

2 Timothy is the last of the three, and collectively they're known as the pastoral letters, because they have a lot to say about the life and work of the pastor, but they have much else to say too. So 2 Timothy, and I'll read the first chapter.

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

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.

[1 : 20] As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I'm sure, dwells in you as well.

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.

Therefore, 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, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.

But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

[3 : 02] You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Homogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. Well, this is the very word of God, and may it be a blessing to our hearts tonight. Amen.

Well, let's turn together to Paul's second letter to Timothy, page 995. And as I said a few minutes ago, this is the last of Paul's letters, a remarkable and final document from his pen, written just before, perhaps weeks, months before he was executed.

Now, my plan, God willing, is to work through the second letter to Timothy over the next few weeks under the title, Stiffening the Church's Spine. Now, I've chosen that title because throughout this letter, Paul the Apostle is calling upon Timothy to be a brave soldier of Jesus Christ, to be willing to endure suffering for the sake of the gospel, and to keep on preaching the gospel, whatever else happens, whether he's feeling optimistic and confident or not.

[4 : 41] But this letter, as far as its application is concerned, doesn't simply have something to say to Christian leaders. It has a lot to say to the church as well.

And as we read it today, while it certainly will, I trust, stiffen the spines of pastors and preachers, it will also help all of us, all the people of God, to rethink our priorities and to remind us of some of the

things that we're up against in today's world.

And friends, we all need this. If you're at all like me, your tendency will be to fall asleep on the job, to be at your post, you might say, and yet dreaming.

There you are, look at me, there you are in the trenches with your rifle and bayonet at the ready, and yet you're asleep. Now friends, just look at my spine for a moment.

Don't you think my spine is in great need of remedial attention or stiffening? And you see, this letter will stiffen my spine, and it will stiffen the collective spine of St. George's Tron Church as well.

[5 : 49] We need stiffened spines today. We need resolution and determination in the 21st century. I'm not just, when I say that, I'm not just talking about our temporary difficulties with the Church of Scotland.

All that will be over soon, in a year or two or so. I'm really talking, I'm thinking much further ahead. The determined work of the Lord's Church is needed on a big scale as we do battle for the gospel and for the truth in the modern world.

Paul speaks to Timothy here as to a soldier engaged in warfare. And we need to read the letter as soldiers in our own generation who are willing to fight for the Lord.

In fact, anyone who's trying to live the Christian life without that kind of battling engagement will find this letter very distasteful. Now, a little bit later this evening, I want us to look at just the first seven verses of chapter one.

I don't think we're going to get further from that this evening. But first, I'd like to say something about the letter as a whole, so as to give us some idea of its historical setting and its flavor. And to say something about Paul and Timothy.

[6 : 59] Now, Paul, as you will know, was converted on the road to Damascus in about the year 34 AD, give or take a year or so. And Paul was then active as a missionary apostle for about the next 30 years.

He had a tremendous life. And those 30 years of Paul's work, and not least the letters that he wrote and the sermons that he preached recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, they have profoundly affected the course of Christendom.

Not just the churches, but the nations in which the churches have been strong. And Paul's life was a roller coaster of a life, an extraordinary mixture of joys and sorrows.

He traveled, he preached, and he taught incessantly to Jews and Gentiles alike. He planted churches. He encouraged and organized a great team, a network of fellow evangelists and workers. And Timothy was one of his chief lieutenants. Paul suffered violence frequently at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles. He was beaten up. He was stoned.

[8 : 06] He was imprisoned several times. He was shipwrecked at least four times. He knew periods of great encouragement in his work, and he knew periods of discouragement so deep that, as he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he almost despaired of life itself.

Sometimes Paul preached the gospel with confidence and boldness, and sometimes with knocking knees and fear and trembling. And one of his abiding legacies to the church, to us, is that he exemplifies the Christian life.

So as we follow him and allow him to teach us, we learn not only the doctrine of the Christian faith, but also the shape and pattern of the real nitty-gritty Christian life, its bruises and tears and weariness, as well as its delights and exaltations.

And Paul teaches and exemplifies the life of Jesus to us. To learn Paul is to learn Jesus, if I can put it like that. As we study Jesus in the four gospels, we learn Jesus.

And as we study Paul, we learn Jesus. Now here in 2 Timothy, Paul is in prison. You'll see he mentions in verses 16 and 17 of this first chapter that his friend Onesiphorus searched for him in Rome earnestly and eventually found him in chains.

[9 : 32] The year is probably 64 AD, and it was in that year that the Roman Emperor Nero ratcheted up his vicious persecutions against the Christian church.

And Paul seems to be aware as he writes this letter that although the Lord had so often rescued him in the past from his persecutions and imprisonments, he doesn't expect to be rescued this time. And you'll see if you turn over to chapter 4, verse 6. He says there, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. In other words, my time is up. That's what he's saying. And we can pick up one or two other clues from this letter about Paul's

circumstances.

It was probably written in the early autumn. Now you'll see that. Let's turn again to chapter 4. Have a look at chapter 4, verse 13. Because in that verse, Paul asks Timothy to bring, when he comes to see him, to bring a cloak that he left with a friend called Carpus at Troas.

[10:39] So he was beginning to feel the cold, I guess. And at chapter 4, verse 21, he says, do your best to come before winter. So it was probably about September. I guess winter in Rome wouldn't quite have been like winter in Aberdeen or Stornoway.

But an extra cloak would have been helpful to him. And Paul is also conscious that he has very few friends with him. Look again at chapter 1, verse 15.

You are aware that all who are in Asia, that means Asia Minor, really modern Turkey, the western end of modern Turkey. You're aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Homogenes.

Homogenes. It's possible that Paul was arrested in Asia Minor and perhaps when Nero's men came to pick him up, his Christian friends showed a clean pair of heels lest they should be arrested too. And again, turn to chapter 4. Even more poignantly, he felt almost alone in Rome. Look at chapter 4, verse 9. Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, one of his fellow workers, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

[11:50] Crescens has gone to Galatia. Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. And then verse 16 in the same chapter. At my first defense, my first judicial process, my first trial, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.

So not many of his friends have stuck by him. And that's one of the main reasons why he is so keen for Timothy to come and be with him. Look at chapter 4, verse 9. Do your best to come to me soon. And verse 21. Do your best to come before winter. And look back to chapter 1, verse 4. Chapter 1, verse 4.

As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. And yet despite all this, despite the fact that various friends have deserted him, Paul doesn't feel utterly alone.

Humanly, he has very few friends. But going back to chapter 4, I'm sorry to flick you backwards and forwards, but have a look at chapter 4, verse 17. He's just given us that sad verse 16.

[12:59] At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. But, verse 17, the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me, the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

So Paul is not wringing his hands here in self-pity. His confidence in the Lord, as ever, is triumphing over his bleak human circumstances.

There's a lesson for all of us in that, isn't there? That confidence in the Lord can triumph over the worst of circumstances. Now, what about Timothy? Who was he? And why did Paul value him so much?

Well, we first come across Timothy in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 16. No need to turn this one up, but let me just read the first three verses of Acts, chapter 16, which record the early days of Paul's second missionary journey.

In terms of modern geography, think Turkey, western central Turkey. So here we go, Acts 16. Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy.

[14:05] Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer. But his father was a Greek. Timothy was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium.

And Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. And sure enough, there and then, Timothy joined Paul and Silas. He kissed his mother, Eunice, goodbye. And off he went as one of Paul's missionary band.

Luke also seems to have been with them. They then very soon went to Greece. There's that moment in the Acts of the Apostles where they reach the coastal town of Troas and in a vision at night, a man of Macedonia appears and beckons to Paul and says, please come across the sea and help us.

And Paul and Timothy and Silas, his traveling companions, go across there and they begin to preach the gospel there in Europe. first of all at Philippi. Then they go further westwards to Thessalonica.

And this explains why both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians begin with the words Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians. Those were the three men who'd been there and

evangelized them.

[15:13] So therefore, they were writing back to them. And if we ask how on earth Timothy might have become a Christian at a little place like Lystra, which was about as busy as a haracle or Kinloch Bervi.

The answer is that Paul had been at Lystra only a few months previously on his first missionary journey. We have the record of that in Acts 13 and 14. And when Paul addresses Timothy here in 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 2 as my beloved child, that phrase almost certainly means my child in the faith brought to birth by my preaching.

So Paul was the one who'd been instrumental in Timothy's conversion. Then soon afterwards, Paul had invited Timothy to become one of his fellow missionaries. And thereafter, they'd been very close associates for many years, at least 15 years and possibly longer than that.

But not only did Paul help Timothy to become a Christian, not only did he enlist him as a fellow missionary, he also taught him and trained him over the years.

And I think here it's worth me asking you to turn up Philippians chapter 2 and verse 19 if you would. Just a few pages back, page 981 in the big Bibles. Philippians chapter 2 because there's a paragraph here which sheds a lot of light on the relationship between Paul and Timothy.

[16:39] So Philippians 2 verse 19. And remember, Philippi was one of the very first towns that Paul, Silas, and Timothy had been to with the gospel. So Philippians 2 19.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me. And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. Now just keep your eyes on that little passage for a moment.

And let's notice two things about Timothy here. First of all, in verse 22, Paul sees himself and Timothy not so much as teacher and apprentice, but as a father serving with his son.

[17:40] Now in the ancient world, most sons would learn their trade from their fathers, working with them for many years until finally the son would succeed the father as the fully qualified tailor or shoemaker or whatever.

And this is the way that Paul thinks of Timothy, not as a trainee, but as a son, my beloved child. But then secondly, look at verse 20 here.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. That is some word of commendation. Paul rated Timothy. He rated him as a man who really cared for younger Christians. Isn't that verse 20 a challenge to all of us? So if we can turn back now to 2 Timothy 1. This is a really close relationship that we're dealing with here. And if we look at 2 Timothy 1, verse 4, I think we can catch a glimpse of the kind of love that there was between these two men.

So 2 Timothy 1, 4, Paul says, As I remember your tears, I long to see you. Tears shed at parting.

[18:51] Tears possibly shed at the very moment of Paul's arrest. Because if Paul had been with Timothy at the moment that Paul was seized by the Roman police, you could understand Timothy shedding tears at the thought that he might never again see Paul on earth, as indeed he might not have done.

So, why does Paul write this letter to Timothy? Let me suggest three reasons. First, as we've seen already, he writes simply to ask him to come to be with him, to come to him at Rome.

If possible, bringing the cloak and the parchments, which he also mentions in chapter 4, verse 13. And above all, bringing himself so that he'd be able to be with Paul and stand by Paul and give him support when his final trial came.

So that's the first reason. Please come. But secondly, Paul writes this letter to stiffen Timothy's spine. In other words, to urge him to take courage, to play the man and to keep at the work and never to give up his responsibility to guard the gospel so that it should not be distorted, to suffer for the gospel like a soldier on active service, to continue in the gospel and the scriptures and to proclaim the gospel.

And those four verbs, guard, suffer, continue and proclaim. They're really the four great charges or commands contained in this letter and we'll look at them over the coming weeks and I trust we will feel their force.

[20 : 25] And then thirdly, Paul writes to Timothy like this because he knows that his own life and work is finished and Timothy needs to carry on. not that Timothy's role will be exactly the same as Paul's.

Let me read to you the very first verse of Colossians and I think you'll see what I mean. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother to the saints at Colossae.

You see, Paul is an apostle. Timothy is not. Paul is one of that small foundation band who were personally authorized by the Lord to be the inspired teachers of the church.

But Timothy is not an apostle. He's one of a very great band of brothers and sisters who served the Lord's church from the first century AD until the Lord's return. So Timothy, along with many others, is to carry on this work of the apostolic gospel after the apostles themselves have gone.

Well, now here's another question before we get into a little bit of the text and this is an important question. How are we today to read 2 Timothy? Does 2 Timothy apply to us?

[21 : 40] Now, we do need to ask that question because on the face of it, we're holding here an ancient document written in Greek almost 2,000 years ago by a man who knew nothing about us at all.

He didn't have us in mind. I mean, if you'd said to Paul, do you know anything about the British Isles? He would probably have said a little bit. Swamps, wild boars and barbarians and not a place to touch with a sterilized barge pole.

I wouldn't want to go there on holiday. Look at it like this. What could a letter written in 64 AD possibly have to say to us? You think of the way we treat other documents from a similar period. We would consider them totally beyond our ken. I remember when I was a schoolboy studying for A-level Latin. I had to read Julius Caesar and Cicero. Not all of Julius Caesar or all of Cicero but bits and pieces and poets like Virgil and Ovid who date from much the same era as the New Testament. Those men seemed to me like men from planet Zog. Interesting in a way, yes, but utterly remote from the life of a British schoolboy whose interests centered upon rugby and fish and chips.

[22 : 55] Now, you know I'm going to say that 2 Timothy does apply to us. You know that's coming. But we need to ask how and I think it works something like this. Paul and you and I both live in the same era of history, namely the last days.

That is the whole period between Christ's first coming and his return. So we, just like Paul and Timothy, look back to the cross and resurrection and we look forward to the second coming of Jesus.

And not only do we live in the same era, but we hold and believe exactly the same gospel message that Paul held and believed. And this gospel message that Paul and we held and believe is based on the same foundation, which is the Hebrew Bible, what we call the Old Testament.

And this gospel message held in common by both Paul and us concerns the same central figure, Jesus of Nazareth, who we believe, just as Paul did, is God and man and the only Savior given by God to the human race.

And we belong to the same church that Paul belonged to. And the Holy Spirit who gave new life to Paul is the same spirit who gives new life to believers today.

[24 : 13] Do you see all these things that we have in common with Paul? The same era, the same gospel, the same Old Testament scriptures, the same Savior, the same church, the same Holy Spirit.

And we could add the same God and Father, the same hope of heaven as Paul had, the same baptism, the same joys, and the same struggles with sin, the world, and the devil.

In other words, Paul and Timothy are our brothers. We have so much in common with them. And to read a document like this is almost like being in the same room as these two Christian men.

It's almost as though Paul is sitting here in a leather-backed armchair and Timothy is sitting here in another leather-backed armchair and you and I are sitting there with them and we're listening to their conversation.

I know we only hear one side of it. We hear what Paul says to Timothy. We don't hear what Timothy says to Paul. But we can immediately relate so much of what Paul says here to our own lives and our own situation.

[25 : 13] He's writing to Timothy about Christian leadership so we can learn about the responsibilities and difficulties of Christian leadership as we listen to this letter.

And Paul has a lot to say in this letter about the world, about the hostility of the non-Christian world towards the gospel so we can learn about that very subject as we study these chapters.

And in 2 Timothy we learn quite a bit about the church. We see something of Paul's network of beloved friends and fellow workers, some of whom let him down and deserted him.

So 2 Timothy will teach us as well about the church and how it works. In a word, this letter will illumine our situation. It will teach us to stiffen our spines as Timothy had to stiffen his.

It will teach us to understand Christian leadership and thus it will enable us to pray for our leaders and to identify the kind of people who should be our future leaders.

[26 : 17] Some of whom are sitting here. Guard the gospel, suffer for the gospel, continue in the gospel, preach the gospel. Those are the four great commands of 2 Timothy.

And I suspect that when Timothy received this letter and read it through carefully, his reaction would have been to get up from his desk and say, right, with the help of the Lord, I shall do as Paul commands me.

Will I be a man or a mouse? I must go to Rome. I must visit him. I must organize my life and the life of my Christian friends and the churches that I'm responsible for along the lines that he's teaching me here.

Now, I don't think it's fanciful to picture Paul reacting like that. And I say that because at the very end of the epistle to the Hebrews, just as the author is about to sign off, he says this, you should know that our brother Timothy has been released.

Now, what does that imply? It implies that he has been imprisoned. In other words, he has been prepared to suffer for the gospel. He had not kept his head below the parapet praying for his own personal safety.

[27 : 25] The Romans had arrested him at some point and locked him up just as they had done to Paul before him. So he had proved to be courageous. Courageous Timothy. Not timid Timothy, as some commentators have suggested.

All right, friends, let's turn last to the text for a final few minutes. And I've just got two points to bring to you. The first one from verses 3 to 5 and the second from verses 6 and 7.

So first, from verses 3, 4, and 5, let's notice just how much Paul loves Timothy. How much Paul loves Timothy.

He doesn't use the word love in those verses, although he has referred to Timothy as my beloved child back in verse 2. But if we ask, why does he say what he says in verses 3, 4, and 5?

Surely the answer is that he wants to tell Timothy that he thinks the world of him. If anybody thinks that Paul was all brain and no heart, a passage like this will quickly set the record straight.

[28 : 27] Look at verse 3. I thank God as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Night and day. I rarely pray for anybody more than once a day.

Do you? But Paul prays for Timothy night and morning because he thinks so highly of him. And look at verse 4. I just can't wait to see you.

I long to see you because to see you again, he says, will fill me with joy. And why does he mention Timothy's tears in verse 4? Remembering your tears.

Do we just gloss that over and dismiss it as Mediterranean emotionalism? Do we just say, well, of course, we're very British and tears are quite off limits. When we part from a friend, we shake hands.

All we need to say is all the best, Carruthers. See you in Vladivostok. No, it's not like that, is it? Do you remember how one of the psalmists, I haven't looked up which psalm it's in.

[29 : 25] Somebody tell me afterwards. One of the psalmists says to God, you have put my tears in a bottle. Meaning, Lord, you have not forgotten my sorrows and the things that I've had to endure that made me cry.

That's the same here. These tears were precious to Paul because they spoke of their long years of hard gospel work shared together. And then look at verse 5.

Why should Paul suddenly bring in Timothy's grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, at this point. Surely, that takes us back to the tea table at Lystra 15 or more years previously when Timothy's family had entertained Paul and Silas, the traveling missionaries.

Paul is remembering Eunice, how she brings the goat stew and flat bread to the table while old Lois, the grandmother, is sitting there in the corner of the room with the book of Leviticus spread out on her knees and asking Paul questions about the Day of Atonement and the problems of mildew.

Paul knows this family. He loves this family, doesn't he? Timothy isn't just a colleague working with him under the terms of a business contract. And this expression of love that Paul makes in verses 3 to 5, surely it's this that undergirds and gives great force to the commands or charges that Paul is about to give Timothy as the letter develops.

[30 : 50] So these commands to guard the gospel, suffer for it, continue in it and preach it, they're given enormous extra potency by being based in a deeply loving relationship.

Now doesn't this love that Paul has for Timothy teach us about our own gospel collaboration and our relationships within the Lord's Church? Let me give you an example.

One of the highlights of my regular program is to come to the church staff meeting on a Wednesday afternoon. It's not a long meeting, just an hour or so, and we sit, the staff, not that I'm on the staff exactly, but a few greyheads like me are invited in to join the thing.

And we sit around a great big long Ikea pale wood table in the very top floor of the halls down there. At the head of the table sits Willie, our minister, and around the table there are usually about 14 other people.

One or two, as I say, older people like me, but mostly much younger people, our associate ministers and our church apprentices. These bright faces sitting around the table. Willie presides at the head of the table and holds forth about some aspect of theology or practical pastoral work, and then everybody chips in, adds comments and questions.

[32 : 07] So essentially, it's a training session. Minds are being sharpened, and practical plans are being discussed and developed. But it's not just a business meeting. I'm very much aware of that.

There's a lot of love there. I don't mean sentimental love. It's practical, no-nonsense love. But it's the loving commitment of fellow gospel workers to each other. It's that loving commitment and brotherhood and sisterhood which lies behind the pressure to get out there and do the work of the gospel, which is often hard and demanding work.

Well, there's the first thing. How much Paul loves Timothy as father to son. And that's a great model for us in our own gospel collaborations. Let's develop that kind of relationship with each other.

But now, secondly, from verses 6 and 7, Paul stirs or begins to stir Timothy up for the work. In verses 6 and 7, it's here that Paul begins to press Timothy to get on with the job.

But notice just how closely the pressure of verses 6 and 7 is tied to the love expressed in verses 3 to 5. I say that because verse 6 begins for this reason.

[33 : 22] In other words, because I love you, because I long to see you, and because I love your family, and I know about their faith, because of all we have shared together over the long years, fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.

Don't sit back now and fall asleep and allow the fire to die down. It's hard to know exactly what Paul means in verse 6 by the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Paul may be referring to the same event here, laying on of hands, that he writes about in 1 Timothy chapter 4 where he mentions the gift given to Timothy when the council of elders laid their hands on him.

And that's probably a reference to some kind of commissioning or ordination that was carried out years before by Paul and the elders of Timothy's home church at Lystra. But whatever it means, Timothy has been commissioned and a gift has been given to him.

Possibly a specific gift of evangelism such as Paul mentions in this letter at chapter 4 verse 5. But quite possibly this gift is simply the task and responsibility of being a Christian leader and preacher.

[34 : 31] The ministry of the gospel which Paul is going to describe so eloquently as the letter unfolds. So we may not know precisely what Paul means by this gift of God but we can be sure that Paul is robustly encouraging Timothy to get on with his work of preaching and evangelism and leadership.

And verse 7. Let's look at that for a moment. This verse illuminates the inner life of Timothy and of all who follow in his footsteps. For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

That is a unique verse in Paul's letters. He doesn't speak quite like that anywhere else. And it opens up a choice to Timothy and those who follow him.

And the choice is this. Either I shall allow a spirit of fear to rule my life or I shall act in line with the gift of God which is to live in a spirit of power and love and self-control.

Isn't that a challenge? Great challenge. And who is it written to? Not to a total novice. Timothy would have been at least 35 years old at this stage and possibly 40.

[35 : 47] And he had been an active gospel worker for at least 15 years. The need to fan the flame and to live in a spirit of power and love and self-control. It's not just for the beginner.

It's for every Christian at every stage in life. You'll see the word spirit in verse 7. It's printed with a small s in our Bibles. But it may well be that Paul actually means the Holy Spirit here.

I think that makes a bit more sense of the verse. Because the Holy Spirit is a spirit of power.

Remember Jesus' words. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses.

And looking at the other two words there, love and self-control, we know from Paul's teaching in Galatians that the Holy Spirit produces in Christians the fruit of love and self-control or self-discipline.

Let's notice two words here. Verse 6, gift. Verse 7, gave. And in both verses, it is God who is the giver.

[36 : 50] So Paul's message to Timothy is, use what you've been given, my brother. Don't be a fearful snail who withdraws into its shell the moment somebody sneezes.

Don't withdraw, Timothy, from being an active gospeler because you're fearful for your safety or for your reputation. Now to apply this, there is a message here for preachers and teachers.

Young ones, middle-aged ones, and very mature ones. And that is that we must keep at it. But there's a message for all Christians because all of us are called to be active gospelers, praying for the work, encouraging others, including the leaders, showing hospitality, as Lois and Eunice certainly did, and vigorously supporting the ministries of the Lord's people.

Not all Christians are evangelists, not all are speakers, but all Christians are involved in the great evangelistic mission of the Lord's people. Well, I'm going to stop in just a moment, but let me end like this.

Paul loves Timothy, and on the basis of that love, he pushes him out into the world where the north wind is going to catch him in the face.

[38 : 04] But Timothy is equipped with a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-discipline. And Timothy is our brother.

we're like him so we can follow in his footsteps as he followed in the footsteps of Paul who followed in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. for this reason, writes the apostle, 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. Dear Father, we thank you so much for this great gift given to Christians, your spirit.

we confess that sometimes we are fearful. It's our human nature, fearful to stand up for Christ.

Sometimes we are ashamed. But we pray that you will help us more and more to follow this teaching of the apostle Paul and that we should know in our own lives what it is to live by the spirit of power and love and self-discipline.

[39 : 21] And we pray that the life of our church, therefore, will bring much honor and glory to the Lord Jesus and the gospel. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.