

1 Timothy 1:12-20

One of the treasures of the letters to Timothy is the insight they give into the relationship between an older believer and his protege. Many Bible readers think that Timothy was somewhat timid by nature. The evidence for this is the many encouraging words directed to him by Paul, telling Timothy to fan his gift into flame, that God has given us a spirit not of fear (2 Tim 1:6-7), and to take a little wine for what may be nervous stomach (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul may even advise the Corinthians to take it easy on Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10-11).

Other commentators hotly dispute this view of Timothy. They point out that Timothy is Paul's companion through many dangers and his chosen deputy to visit distant assemblies, even those with difficult and contentious issues like the divisions in Corinth or the false teaching here in Ephesus. We never see Timothy falter in his service for his spiritual father and mentor, his faithfulness to the Lord, or his duty to the church.

Can both pictures of Timothy's character be genuine? Yes – if we understand that our spiritual gifts may not be our natural gifts, and that the strength the Lord supplies differs from the weaknesses inherent in our frail selves. So the Lord could say to Timothy as he did to Paul, "My

January 22, 2020

grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). To God be the glory!

And let's not forget than even those who appear to be going along just fine need some encouragement at times. "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all" (1 Thess. 5:14).

Notes

1:13 Blasphemy can mean harshness against men in addition to God (even angels or Satan).

1:15 This is one of five "trustworthy sayings" in the pastoral epistles. It is thought they were common adages among Christians of the time.

1:17 This short burst of praise is known as a doxology, from Greek *doxa*, "glory" and *logia*, "word, saying." Paul's epistles are full of doxologies. He seems to have been a bubbling cauldron of worship and praise, ready to boil over and glorify God at any time. May we be like that!

1:20 Hymenaeus reappears in 2 Timothy 2:17, apparently having failed to learned his lesson. Alexander may be the coppersmith of 2 Timothy 4:14, but it was a common name.

1:20 Handing over to Satan is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5. Here, it most likely does not refer to putting out of the assembly, which may be our duty in some cases, but an apostolic act unique to the early church.

Fill in the blanks:

1. Before his conversion, Paul was devoted to jailing and executing _____.
2. Despite his fierce hatred and opposition, God showed mercy because Paul acted out of _____.
3. Paul calls himself the chief or foremost of _____.
4. Jesus Christ displayed _____ in His dealings with Paul.
5. Paul tells Timothy to wage the good warfare while holding _____ and a good _____.

For study and discussion:

6. How might Paul's account of God's dealings with him connect with the previous portion about the law?

7. Are sins excused if they are committed ignorantly or in unbelief, as in verse 13?

8. How does Paul encourage others who may have committed grave sins in their lives?

9. Is verse 17 speaking of the Father or the Son?

10. What would a shipwrecked faith look like?

11. We are not told when the prophecies of verse 18 were delivered, or by whom, or what they said. (There is no reason to assume the occasion was the laying on of hands of 2 Tim. 1:6.) What a boost to Timothy's courage, to remind him that the Spirit Himself had foreseen and foretold his ability to meet the challenge he faced at Ephesus. How about you? Are there any prophecies about *you* as a Christian that can give you assurance when you face uncertainties and trials? (Read 1 Peter 1:10-12 for an indication that at least some O.T. prophecies were looking forward to you. Don't overlook the N.T. either.)