

## *Sincere faith*

(2 Timothy 1:3–5; reading: Hebrews 11:1–16)

Paul begins his letter to Timothy with thanksgiving to God, his typical practice in writing to believers (except the Galatians). For many he gave thanks for their faith, as he does here for Timothy (1:5). Faith is critically important, since without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebr 11:6). This word of thanksgiving is not simply to teach about prayer or about giving thanks, but to add to Paul's encouragement to Timothy to continue in that faith and run the race which Paul had run. In three different ways within his thanksgiving, Paul also encourages Timothy's faith.

### *I. Paul offers a model of service expressing his own faith.*

#### 1. He served God.

His ministry was an act of worship, just as the OT priests served in the temple. Cf. Rom 15:16.

#### 2. He served God as his forefathers did.

Paul had models of faithful service to follow, such as those described in Hebrews 11. None were perfect or sinless, but they lived by faith.

#### 3. He served God with a clear conscience.

Paul had pure intentions and no guilt from failing in that to which he had been called.

Believers are encouraged to know what they believe and why, so that they can worship God in serving Him in whatever capacity He places them, and to do so with a clear conscience.

### *II. Paul reveals a relationship that encourages continued faith.*

#### 1. His relationship is expressed in prayerful intercession for Timothy.

His "prayers," which referred to specific requests brought to God, were constant for Timothy and with thanksgiving. Cf. Phil 4:6.

#### 2. His relationship is expressed in his feelings for Timothy.

He longed to see Timothy (cf. 4:9, 21) and remembered Timothy's own feelings. Seeing Timothy would bring him joy.

Relationships can be important in encouraging other believers to continue in faith.

### *III. Paul reminds Timothy of his heritage that obliges such faith.*

"Remembering" is a key concept in these verses (3, 4, 5, 6). Here as Paul remembers, he implies that Timothy should remember as well.

#### 1. Remember your heritage.

There had been a sincere faith in Timothy's grandmother and mother before him (cf. 3:15; Acts 16:1), despite her Gentile pagan husband. Others deserted under difficulty. They had not.

#### 2. Remember my confidence in you.

There was an enduring character to their faith, in that it had residence in them. Of this Paul was certain, from the first good reports (Acts 16:2) through his faithful company despite persecution and suffering (cf. 3:11).

Remember what God has done in your life and what He has done in others before you. Encourage others in the same way.

Timothy had already demonstrated exactly what he needed for the challenges ahead, a sincere faith. For that Paul was thankful, and he wanted to encourage Timothy to continue on.

We can be encouraged in similar ways and encourage each other as well (cf. Hebr 10:24–25). It begins with sincere faith in Christ as Lord and Savior and continues in constant reliance upon Him in all of life.