

2 Timothy 1:1, 2

by St. John Chrysostom

Paul's letter to Timothy emphasizes the importance of love, faith, and virtue, and encourages Timothy to stir up the gift of God and to live a life of charity and community.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:17, Romans 8:24, 2 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches on Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, written to console and encourage Timothy amidst his grief and the challenges of leading the Church. Paul expresses his deep love and concern for Timothy, commending his unfeigned faith inherited from his family. He urges Timothy to stir up the gift of God within him and reminds him that God has given us a spirit of power, love, and a sound mind, not of fear. Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of maintaining faith, zeal, and alacrity in serving God, even in the face of trials and sorrows, as true consolation and joy come from God's promises and grace.

Transcript

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Jesus Christ, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is the reason of his writing this second Epistle to Timothy? He had said, I hope to come unto you shortly 1 Timothy 3:14, and as this had not taken place, instead of coming to him, he consoles him by a letter, when he was grieving perhaps for his absence, and oppressed by the cares of the government, which he had now taken in hand. For even great men, when they are placed at the helm, and are charged with the direction of the Church, feel the strangeness of their position, and are overwhelmed, as it were, by the waves of business. This was particularly the case when the Gospel was first preached, when the ground was everywhere unturned, and all was opposition and hostility. There were, besides, heresies commencing from the Jewish teachers, as he has shown in his former Epistle. Nor does he only comfort him by letters, he invites him to come to him: Do your diligence, he says, to come shortly unto me, and, when you come, bring with you the books, but especially the parchments. 2 Timothy 4:9-13 And he seems to have written this Epistle when his end was approaching. For he says, I am now ready to be offered up; and again, At my first answer no man stood with me. 2 Timothy 4:6-16 To set all this right, he both offers consolation from his own trials, and also says,

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.

Thus at the very commencement he raises up his mind. Tell me not, he says, of the dangers here. These obtain for us eternal life, where there is no peril, where grief and mourning flee away. For He has not made us Apostles only that we might encounter dangers, but that we might even suffer and die. And as it would not be a consolation to recount to him his own troubles, but rather an increase of his grief, he begins immediately with offering comfort, saying, According to the promise of life which is in Jesus Christ. But if it is a promise, seek it not here. For, hope that is seen is not hope. Romans 8:24

Ver. 2. To Timothy, my dearly beloved son.

Not merely his son, but, dearly beloved; since it is possible for sons not to be beloved. Not such, he means, are you; I call you not merely a son, but a dearly beloved son. As he calls the Galatians his children, but at the same time complains of them; My little children, he says, of whom I travail in birth again. Galatians 4:19 And he bears particular testimony to his virtue by calling him beloved. For where love does not arise from nature, it must arise from the merit of the object. Those who are born of us, are loved not only on account of their virtue, but from the force of nature; but when those who are of the faith are beloved, it is on account of nothing but their merit, for what else can it be? And this especially in the case of Paul, who never acted from partiality. And further, he shows by calling him his beloved son, that it was not because he was offended with him, or despised him, or condemned him; that he did not come to him.

Ver. 2. Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

These things which he before prayed for, he again invokes upon him. And observe how, at the very beginning, he excuses himself for not having come to him, nor seen him. For his words, Till I come, and, Hoping to come to you shortly, had led Timothy to expect his coming soon. For this he excuses himself, but he does not immediately mention the cause of his not coming, lest he should grieve him mightily. For he was detained in prison by the emperor. But when at the end of the Epistle he invited him to come to him, then he informed him of it. He does not at the outset plunge him into sorrow, but encourages the hope that he shall see him. Greatly desiring to see you, and Do your diligence to come unto me shortly. 2 Timothy 1:4, and 4:9 Immediately therefore he raises him up, and proceeds to praise him.

Ver. 3, 4. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I might be filled with joy.

'I thank God,' he says, 'that I remember you,' so much do I love you. This is a mark of excessive love, when a man glories in his affection from loving so much. I thank God, he says, Whom I serve: and how? With a pure conscience, for he had not violated his conscience. And here he speaks of his blameless life, for he everywhere calls his life his conscience. Or because I never gave up any good that I purposed, for any human cause, not even when I was a persecutor. Wherefore he says, I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief 1 Timothy 1:13; all but saying, Do not suspect that it was done of wickedness. He properly commends his own disposition, that his love may appear sincere. For what he says is in fact, I am not false, I do not think one thing and profess another. So in the book of Acts we read he was compelled to praise himself. For when they slandered him as a seditious man and an innovator, he said in his own defense, Ananias said to me, The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see that Just One, and should hear the voice of His mouth. For you shall be His witness unto all men of

what you have seen and heard. Acts 22:14-15 In the same manner here, that he may not, as if he had been forgetful, have the character of one void of friendship and conscience, he justly praises himself, saying, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you, and not simply that, but in my prayers. That is, it is the business of my prayers, that which I constantly continue to perform. For this he shows by saying, For this I besought God day and night, desiring to see you. Mark his fervent desire, the intensity of his love. And again, his humility, how he apologizes to his disciples, and then he shows that it was not on light or vain grounds; and this he had shown us before, but again gives proof of it. Being mindful of your tears. It was natural for Timothy, when parting from him, to mourn and weep, more than a child torn away from the milk and from the breast of its mother. That I may be filled with joy; greatly desiring to see you. I would not willingly have deprived myself of so great a pleasure, though I had been of an unfeeling and brutal nature, for those tears coming to my remembrance would have been enough to soften me. But such is not my character. I am one of those who serve God purely; so that many strong motives urged me to come to you. So then he wept. And he mentions another cause, and that of a consolatory kind.

Ver. 5. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you.

This is another commendation, that Timothy came not of Gentiles, nor of unbelievers, but of a family that served Christ from the first. Acts 16:1-3

Which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice.

For Timothy, it says, was the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed. How a Jewess? How believing? Because she was not of the Gentiles, but on account of his father, who was a Greek, and of the Jews that were in those quarters, he took and circumcised him. Thus, as these mixtures of Jews and Gentiles took place, the Law began gradually to be dissolved. And mark in how many ways he shows that he did not despise him. I serve God, he says, I have a true conscience for my part, and you have your tears, and not your tears only, but for your faith, because you are a laborer for the Truth, because there is no deceit in you. As therefore you show yourself worthy of love, being so affectionate, so genuine a disciple of Christ; and as I am not one of those who are devoid of affection, but of those who earnestly pursue the Truth; what hindered me from coming to you?

And I am persuaded that in you also.

From the beginning, he means, you have had this excellency. You received from your forefathers the faith unfeigned. For the praises of our ancestors, when we share in them, redound also to us. Otherwise they avail nothing, but rather condemn us; wherefore he has said, I am persuaded that in you also. It is not a conjecture, he means, it is my persuasion; I am fully assured of it. If therefore from no human motive you have embraced it, nothing will be able to shake your faith.

Ver. 6. Wherefore I put you in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands.

You see how greatly dispirited and dejected he considers him to be. He almost says, Think not that I despise you, but be assured that I do not condemn you, nor have I forgotten you. Consider, at any rate, your mother and your grandmother. It is because I know that you have unfeigned faith that I put you in remembrance. For it requires much zeal to stir up the gift of God. As fire requires fuel, so grace requires our alacrity, that it may be ever fervent. I put you in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, that is in you by the putting on of my hands, that is, the grace of the Spirit, which you have received, for presiding

over the Church, for the working of miracles, and for every service. For this grace it is in our power to kindle or to extinguish; wherefore he elsewhere says, Quench not the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 For by sloth and carelessness it is quenched, and by watchfulness and diligence it is kept alive. For it is in you indeed, but do thou render it more vehement, that is, fill it with confidence, with joy and delight. Stand manfully.

Ver. 7. For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

That is, we did not receive the Spirit, that we should shrink from exertion, but that we may speak with boldness. For to many He gives a spirit of fear, as we read in the wars of the Kings. A spirit of fear fell upon them. Exodus 15:16? That is, he infused terror into them. But to you He has given, on the contrary, a spirit of power, and of love toward Himself. This, then, is of grace, and yet not merely of grace, but when we have first performed our own parts. For the Spirit that makes us cry, Abba, Father, inspires us with love both towards Him, and towards our neighbor, that we may love one another. For love arises from power, and from not fearing. For nothing is so apt to dissolve love as fear, and a suspicion of treachery.

For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: he calls a healthy state of the soul a sound mind, or it may mean sobriety of mind, or else a sobering of the mind, that we may be sober-minded, and that if any evil befall us, it may sober us, and cut off superfluities.

Moral. Let us then not be distressed at the evils that happen to us. This is sobriety of mind. In the season of temptation, he says, make not haste. Sirach 2:2 Many have their several griefs at home, and we share in each other's sorrows, though not in their sources. For one is unhappy on account of his wife, another on account of his child, or his domestic, another of his friend, another of his enemy, another of his neighbor, another from some loss. And various are the causes of sorrow, so that we can find no one free from trouble and unhappiness of some kind or other, but some have greater sorrows and some less. Let us not therefore be impatient, nor think ourselves only to be unhappy.

For there is no such thing in this mortal life as being exempt from sorrow. If not today, yet tomorrow; if not tomorrow, yet some later day trouble comes. For as one cannot sail, I mean, over a long sea, and not feel disquietude, so it is not possible to pass through this life, without experience of sorrow, yea though you name a rich man; for in that he is rich, he has many occasions of inordinate desires, yea, though the king himself, since he too is ruled by many, and cannot do all that he would.

Many favors he grants contrary to his wishes, and more than all men is obliged to do what he would not. How so? Because he has many about him who wish to receive his gifts. And just think how great is his chagrin, when he is desirous to effect something, but is unable, either from fear or suspicion, or hindered by enemies or by friends. Often when he has succeeded in achieving some end, he loses all the pleasure of it, from many becoming at enmity with him. Again, do you think that they are free from grief, who live a life of ease?

It is impossible. As a man cannot escape death, so neither can he escape sorrow. How many troubles must they endure, which we cannot express in words, and which they only can know by experience! How many have prayed a thousand times to die, in the midst of their wealth and luxury! For luxury by no means puts men out of the reach of grief: it is rather the very thing to produce sorrows, diseases, and uneasiness, often when there is no real ground for it. For when such is the habit of the soul, it is apt to grieve even without a cause.

Physicians say that from a weak state of the stomach arise sorrows without any occasion; and does not the like happen to ourselves, to feel uneasy, without knowing any cause for it? In short, we can find no one who is exempted from sorrow. And if he has less occasion for grief than ourselves, yet he thinks otherwise, for he feels his own sorrows, more than those of other men. As they who suffer pain in any part of their bodies, think that their sufferings exceed their neighbor's.

He that has a disease of the eye, thinks there is nothing so painful, and he that has a disorder in the stomach, considers that the sorest of diseases, and each thinks that the heaviest of sufferings, with which he is himself afflicted. So it is with sorrow, each thinks his own present grief the most severe. For of this he judges by his own experience. He that is childless considers nothing so sad as to be without children; he that is poor, and has many children, complains of the extreme evils of a large family.

He who has but one, looks upon this as the greatest misery, because that one, being set too much store by, and never corrected, becomes willful, and brings grief upon his father. He who has a beautiful wife, thinks nothing so bad as having a beautiful wife, because it is the occasion of jealousy and intrigue. He who has an ugly one, thinks nothing worse than having a plain wife, because it is constantly disagreeable. The private man thinks nothing more mean, more useless, than his mode of life.

The soldier declares that nothing is more toilsome, more perilous, than warfare; that it would be better to live on bread and water than endure such hardships. He that is in power thinks there can be no greater burden than to attend to the necessities of others. He that is subject to that power, thinks nothing more servile than living at the beck of others. The married man considers nothing worse than a wife, and the cares of marriage. The unmarried declares there is nothing so wretched as being unmarried, and wanting the repose of a home.

The merchant thinks the husbandman happy in his security. The husbandman thinks the merchant so in his wealth. In short, all mankind are somehow hard to please, and discontented and impatient. When condemning the whole race, he says, Man is a thing of nought Psalm 144:4, implying that the whole kind is a wretched unhappy creature. How many long for old age! How many think youth a happy time! Thus each different period has its unhappiness. When we find ourselves censured on account of our youth, we say, why are we not old?

And when our heads are hoary, we ask whither has our youth flown? Numberless, in short, are the occasions of sorrow. There is one path only by which this unevenness can be escaped. It is the path of virtue. Yet that too has its sorrows, only they are sorrows not unprofitable, but productive of gain and advantage. For if any one has sinned, he washes away his sin by the compunction that comes of his sorrow. Or, if he has grieved in sympathizing with a fallen brother, this is not without its recompense. For sympathy with those that are in misery gives us great confidence towards God.

Hear therefore what philosophy is taught by the example of Job in holy Scripture! Hear also what Paul says: Weep with them that weep; and again, Condescend to men of low estate. Romans 12:15-16 For, by the communication of sorrow, the extreme burden of it is lightened. For as in the case of a heavy load, he that bears part of the weight relieves him who was bearing it alone, so it is in all other things.

But now, when any one of our relatives dies, there are many who sit by and console us. Nay, we often raise up even an ass that has fallen; but when the souls of our brethren are falling, we overlook them and pass by, as if they were of less value than an ass. And if we see any one entering into a tavern indecently; nay, if we see him drunk, or guilty of any other unseemly action, we do not restrain him, we rather join him

in it. Whence Paul has said: They not only do these things, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans 1:32 The greater part even form associations for the purposes of drunkenness. But do thou, O man, form associations to restrain the madness of inebriety. Such friendly doings are beneficial to those who are in bonds or in affliction. Something of this kind Paul enjoined to the Corinthians, alluding to which he says, That there be no gatherings when I come. 1 Corinthians 16:2 But now everything is done with a view to luxury, reveling, and pleasure. We have a common seat, a common table, we have wine in common, and common expenses, but we have no community of alms.

Such were the friendly doings in the time of the Apostles; they brought all their goods into the common stock. Now I do not require you to bestow all, but some part. Let each lay by him in store on the first day of the week, as God has prospered him, and lay it down as a tribute for the seven days. In this way give alms, whether more or less. For you shall not appear before the Lord empty. Exodus 23:15 This was said to the Jews, how much more then to us. For this cause the poor stand before the doors, that no one may enter empty, but each may do alms at his entrance.

You enter to implore mercy. First show mercy. He that comes later owes the more. For when we have been first, he that is second pays down more. Make God your debtor, and then offer your prayers. Lend to Him, and then ask a return, and you shall receive it with usury. God wills this, and does not retract. If you ask with alms, He holds himself obliged. If you ask with alms, you lend and receive interest. Yes, I beseech you! It is not for stretching out your hands you shall be heard! stretch forth your hands, not to heaven, but to the poor.

If you stretch forth your hand to the hands of the poor, you have reached the very summit of heaven. For He who sits there receives your alms. But if you lift them up without a gift, you gain nothing. If the king, arrayed in purple, should come to you and ask an alms, would you not readily give all that you have? But now when you are entreated through the poor, not by an earthly but a heavenly King, do you stand regardless, and defer your gift? What punishment then do you not deserve?

For the being heard depends not upon the lifting up of your hands, nor on the multitude of your words, but upon your works. For hear the prophet, When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear. Isaiah 1:15 For he ought to be silent, who needs mercy, and not even to look up to heaven; he that has confidence may say much. But what says the Scripture, Judge for the fatherless, plead for the widow, learn to do good.

Isaiah 1:17 In this way we shall be heard, though we lift not up our hands, nor utter a word, nor make request. In these things then let us be zealous, that we may obtain the promised blessings, through the grace and lovingkindness, etc.

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