

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, for the sake of the promise of life in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup>To Timothy, my dearly loved son.

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

<sup>3</sup>I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. <sup>4</sup>Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. <sup>5</sup>I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also.

<sup>6</sup>Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power,<sup>[a]</sup> love, and sound judgment.

<sup>8</sup>So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. <sup>9</sup>He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. <sup>10</sup>This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. <sup>11</sup>For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>12</sup>and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me<sup>[c]</sup> until that day.

<sup>13</sup>Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

## True Heritage

A heritage is something that is passed down from generation to generation. You can see the heir in heritage and this is what one inherits. But a heritage is far more heirlooms and things. It's your individual history. It's where you come from. It's who you are as a person. Some families research their ancestry. They want to know more about their past so they'll submit their DNA to be entered into a database in order to find out their heritage. They want to know who they are in order to know more about themselves.

But not everyone wants to know who they are or where they are from. Some hate their heritage as something that was forced upon them and they turn away from it. It's a sad situation when one rejects who they are because society has deemed them guilty of existing. They're ashamed of who they are and they leave to blaze their own trail.

That's not what Paul wants for Timothy. Paul wants Timothy to embrace his heritage, hold firmly to it, and guard it. Timothy may not be related to the apostle Paul but he is connected to his ancestry through Christ. Timothy is deeply rooted in the truth that was passed on to him not through the apostle but through his mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice. But even then Timothy's heritage, his faith wasn't forced on him; it was given to him by God. His true Father in the faith is God who works through his word to create and sustain faith. This is the true heritage.

Over the past few weeks we've been looking at 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy. It was a letter full of sound doctrine from the Apostles Paul. His attitude is positive and he hopes to see Timothy soon. But some time has passed and things have taken a turn for the worst. It even appears that Nero has rounded up the apostle, taken him to Rome and he is currently in prison awaiting a trial that will lead to his death. This is Paul's last will and testament. This is what he is leaving behind for Timothy. The future looks bleak for the Apostle. We hear the voice of an exhausted apostle speak to us from the stress and suffering of decades of preaching the good news of Jesus.

Timothy was brought up in the faith. Paul identifies Timothy as "*my dearly loved son.*" He then notes Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice by name. Paul notes their role in Timothy's life as predecessors of the faith which now lives in him. Lois and Eunice passed on the faith to tiny Timothy, a living legacy. But it wasn't their

work alone. God was at work through them. This is God's gift. It is he who calls *with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*"

Paul points to God for everything. He is the source and he sustains Timothy in the faith. So what is Timothy to do? "*Rekindle the gift of God.*" It's Timothy's turn to remain steadfast. Undoubtedly Timothy knows what happens to a coal when it is taken away from the fire. The tendency of fire is to go out. It's the same thing that happens to a Christian when they are separated from Word and Sacrament. It happens when Christians are separated from one another through distance or death. Love grows cold and faith can starve. Paul urges Timothy not to let his heritage down by falling into cowardice and shame but rather to live the faith and all the more even if he encounters suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

Our situation is different from that of Paul. We're not in prison on trial because we preach Christ crucified and risen. But our situation may not be all that different from Timothy. Many of us were born into the faith. Our grandparents and parents brought us to church. Maybe we were even dragged against our will. We were baptized before we had any say in it.

The reason you were brought into the faith wasn't because of your parents. God was involved. Sure enough they loved you and wanted what was best for you. They clothed you, cleaned you, fed you and also cared enough to bring you the baptismal font. Your ancestors wanted God's name written all over your life. They loved you so much that they wanted you to know that you are loved by God. They shared the faith and that's what God tells parents to do. But God was the one at work through their words to create and strengthen faith. The Holy Spirit was at work creating and calling you to the one true faith.

But Children don't always respect their parents or the tough decisions they make. Sometimes they rebel. They reject their heritage and want to blaze their own path through life. They buy into the logical fallacy, "You're only a Christian because you were brought up in a Christian household." Some have even said, "I don't want to force my religion on them. I want them to make their own choices." First the logical fallacy... Instead of dealing with the issue of whether or not Christianity is true, the reason you believe is attacked. But how does the bias of my Christian upbringing make me incapable of knowing whether the facts of Christianity are true? If it's true that I am biased because of my upbringing then it must also be true for others, "You're only an agnostic because you were born in an agnostic household." Either Christianity is true or it is not. And if you believe it to be true why wouldn't you train up your children in the way they should go? Why wouldn't you want what is best for them? Why would you allow them to wallow in this world of uncertainty, like a ship at sea without rudder or anchor?

The voice of the devil calls us to doubt what we've been called to. He wants us to question whether or not we are saved. He wants us to doubt the gift that God gives and to not use it. He wants you to look elsewhere, (even looking to your heart, your feelings, your emotions) anywhere but to the gift that has been entrusted to your care. The devil wants to take away your certainty and place it in your work, your decision, your faith not the one true faith handed down by the saints.

Scripture and Paul have a way of talking about the faith. This faith isn't one's personal inner religious experience. The true faith is a witness to what actually happened. It's a heritage. Paul pointed to Jesus. He saw Jesus in glory. He spoke of the things he had seen and heard. "*This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*"

Paul points to the evidence. He reminds him of "*the gift.*" He draws on the indicative of what he knows. The undeniable fact that Jesus came into this world, lived a perfect life, suffered as an innocent victim, and was killed at the hands of lawless men. God raised him overturning their judgment. God raised him proving to us that sin had been atoned. Jesus is alive and this gospel message has been implanted in Timothy. Jesus *has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light.* This does not prevent Christians from tasting death but it has lost its sting.

That's why Paul has no regrets. He knows why he is suffering. The temporal difficulties are daunting but they pale in comparison to the eternal glories that are waiting. *"and that is why I suffer these things. But, I am not ashamed."* In Romans Paul tells us, *"I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of those who believe."* Paul is filled with gratitude at the end of his life. He is content even in death. He has a clear conscience. At the end of his life Paul knows that he can still trust God. *"God is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day."* God is with Paul and won't allow anything to harm his child. This trial will cost Paul his life but it cannot take away the life won for him in Christ. It cannot take away this gift and that is what Paul wants Timothy to know.

This is what he wants to put on deposit in Timothy and God to guard. It's the one true faith. Timothy alone is not up to the task. Success depends on God. *Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain (Psalm 127:1).* Paul calls Timothy not to fear but to power, love, and self-control. His task at hand involves preservation not innovation. Don't be swept from one extreme to the next. You have a solid, firm foundation which has been passed down to you. Don't be ashamed. This is our heritage. Share in the suffering.

That's Paul's call also to us. We are reminded that we are forgiven. We are then pointed back to God's work for us. Here in his word and sacrament he brings us these gifts. We are baptized not into a church or denomination but into Christ. There in baptism we see most clearly that salvation is by grace alone, unasked, unforced, unearned. Paul writes, *"He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began"* (2 Timothy 1:9). Before the foundation of the world was laid, when we could do nothing good – we were chosen by grace in Christ to salvation, according to God's purpose (FCSD XI 43)

This is our heritage. It is the truth passed on down to us. We stand on the shoulders of giants like that of little ladies Lois and Eunice. We not only inherit a doctrine but a responsibility to teach how that doctrine was rediscovered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We need not be ashamed of who we are but to fan the flame and keep that fire burning. Rejoice in your heritage. Join together with the Christian church this is what you've been brought in to. You're not alone! Sing her hymns of old and rejoice in the traditions that have been handed down. They're not too Catholic if it is the truth embrace it and stand firm.

We might be afraid of the future, the economy, a diagnosis, or even death. We may be afraid for those we leave behind. But we know one who has the answers. Jesus calls us to cast our cares on him for he cares for you. He tells us not to worry about what to eat or drink because he knows we need them. Death is not abandonment. Through it God calls us to our eternal reward. The Gospel is God's power to bring life from death. We are safe in Christ no matter what may come our way (suffering does not nullify God's grace) and he is able to guard what he has entrusted to us for that day. That is our heritage. That is what we will inherit and one day I hope your children pass that on to your children's children.

That was your parent's faith. That is the faith. You have no reason to be ashamed of that. They loved you and wanted to make sure that it was your faith too. But it wasn't their doing. It was God at work through them. It's his heritage that he has brought to you. Amen.