

2 Timothy 1:1-2 | “More Than a Greeting”
Preached on January 1, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 1.

Yes, you heard that right, we are actually going to be starting a new series in the book of 2 Timothy. *[pause]*

Now some of you may wonder what goes in my thinking when choosing what series to do next, and this morning I want to explain to you my thinking for this one. *[pause]*

My pastoral goal for 2023 is to emphasize discipleship and evangelism.

And we will get to those topics, but what I want to do with the first couple months of this year is to lay some foundational groundwork.

And 2 Timothy is helpful in that regard. *[pause]*

You see, 2 Timothy emphasizes the importance of the Word of God and the need for faithfulness even amidst suffering. *[pause]*

So if we are going to be committed followers of Jesus Christ, who are willing to live our lives for Him, then we will need the Scriptures to be our foundation, which we never swerve from. *[pause]*

And if we are going to be actively involved in what we are called and commissioned to do as disciples, then we need a mentality that is ready to be faithful, no matter what comes our way.

That’s where 2 Timothy is going to be helpful for us. *[pauseeee]*

So now that you know why I chose 2 Timothy, let me share with you a brief introduction to the book. *[pause]*

2 Timothy is one of the “pastoral epistles”.

That is, it’s one of the letters that Paul writes to his fellow workers who are pastoring churches, and he writes to encourage, challenge, and instruct them in their ministry.

So it’s written directly to a church leader, rather than directly to a church. *[pauseeee]*

As we go through this book, you’ll notice this, yet we will see that it’s still applicable to the church as a whole, even if you aren’t a pastor. *[pause]*

This specific epistle is of course written by Paul to Timothy, and it’s the second one that he wrote to him.

And it was probably written sometime around 64 to 67 A.D.

In fact, it is Paul's last letter in the Bible, as Paul is in a Roman prison, awaiting execution.

[pause]

You see, some of his fellow co-workers had deserted him, and others were in different cities on assignment.

And in the letter, Paul thinks he will die soon.

That's why the letter is more personal than the other ones he wrote, and has an extra sense of urgency to convey important matters to Timothy.

For he is desiring to prepare Timothy for a life of ministry and faithfulness once he is gone.

[pauseeee]

Timothy is a well-known co-worker of Paul, who joined Paul in his missionary work, and traveled around with him to many places.

He was one of Paul's prime workers, and Paul would often send Timothy to different churches to teach and encourage them. *[pause]*

During the time of the letter of 2 Timothy, Timothy seems to still be pastoring at Ephesus, or at least in the region of Asia Minor, and needs encouragement to persevere. *[pauseeee]*

So that's the very brief introductory remarks, but now let's see Paul's greeting to Timothy.

[pauseeee]

When you think about greeting cards, not all greeting cards are equal in our minds.

There are some cards that you get from people that aren't too memorable, but there are others that you never forget. *[pause]*

What makes the difference? Who it's from and what's written inside. *[pause]*

There may even be a card or two that instantly come to your mind when you think about special cards that you have received. *[pause]*

Maybe it was a card that you got from your spouse, written early on, where they wrote that love letter, describing their love for you.

Or maybe it was from someone who explained how thankful they were for you, and showed great appreciation. *[pauseeee]*

We all realize that not all greeting cards are the same, and a greeting can function as more than simply a basic greeting.

They can convey deep truths that impact our lives.

And that's how Paul's greeting to Timothy functions as well. *[pause]*

Paul gives the normal form of a letter of that day by giving the sender's identity, the recipient's identity, and a greeting.

And in these first two verses, we see what *appears* to be a simple greeting, but really, it's deeper than that - for it's more than a greeting. *[pauseee]*

So as Paul begins his new letter to Timothy, we notice some helpful items that are needed as we go into a new year.

First, we can have...

I. Confidence in God's Word.

I want you to just imagine young Timothy opening up this letter for the first time.

He probably has a lot on his plate, I'm sure discouragement sets in at times, and he needs some encouragement. *[pause]*

As he begins reading, the first words in the letter stick out to him.

It says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus." *[pause]*

Imagine the relief, the joy, and the confidence this brings to young Timothy's mind.

It's a letter from his spiritual father, mentor, and prime person that he looked up to. *[pause]*

He gets to receive further instruction and encouragement from Paul!

This isn't instruction and encouragement from some random Joe off the street, but it's from "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus." *[pause]*

You see, when Paul writes in his official capacity as apostle, he's writing with *authority*. *[pause]*

An apostle was someone sent and authorized by Jesus to speak with his authority.

The twelve disciples and Paul were given this special authority to help set up the church in the beginning stages.

So Paul had a unique role, and when he writes, he writes with authority, and the people recognize his authority. *[pause]*

To emphasize this fact, Paul says that he's an apostle, "by the will of God." *[pause]*

Paul's apostleship wasn't something that he just decided to do one day.

He didn't even force himself into the apostle role, but if you remember, Christ amazingly appeared to him on the road to Damascus.¹ *[pause]*

God had specifically appointed him to be a chosen instrument to proclaim His name in the world.

There was no doubt about it in Paul's mind that his ministry was by the will of God, for God had miraculously intervened in his life. *[pauseeee]*

This reminder of who the letter was from would give Timothy confidence in what he was about to read.

It was from an apostle of Jesus Christ being a vessel to speak God's Word. *[pause]*

This is why we can have such confidence in the Word of God!

What we are reading this morning is not from some random person, but it's God speaking through Paul as his appointed messenger.

This is part of why we consider this letter from Paul to Timothy as God's Word.

It was God's will and purpose to use Paul as his instrument carrying His name to the world.

As Peter says, "For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."² *[pauseeeee]*

As you go through this new year, remember the confidence you can have in the Scriptures. *[pause]*

Just imagine all of the so-called "information" that you will be bombarded with this year in articles, news reports, blogs, and other statements.

A lot of times we don't know who or what to trust for facts are twisted, kept out, or embellished. *[pause]*

In our world of fake news that you can't trust - remember the good news that you can confidently trust!

You have the truth in the Bible in front of you.

This is your authority, this is what you can trust, this is what you can be confident in.

And it hasn't come to you by the will of man, but by the will of God. *[pauseeeee]*

If Paul's apostleship came by the will of man, we *could* doubt his words.

But it didn't.

¹ See Acts 9:1-16.

² 2 Peter 1:21.

God chose, used, and spoke through Paul to give us His Word - so will you trust it?

Will the Word of God be your authority this year?

Or will it be in the world, in their news reports, in their predictions?

If so, you will be disappointed continually.

Instead, turn to the Word of God everyday; may it be your hope and confidence! *[pauseeee]*

Speaking of our hope, look at what Paul says...

He says that his apostleship is “according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.”

[pause]

Paul’s apostleship was because of the life found in Christ, but also, his apostleship involved proclaiming the life found in Christ. *[pause]*

If you think about it, this is a succinct way to explain the Gospel: the promise of life in Christ.

We all sinned against God, and death reigned.

We were separated from God, and under the condemnation of death.

Truly, the wages of our sin was death.³ *[pause]*

But enter Jesus Christ.

He came to this world and died in our place, so that we could live.

He then rose again from the grave, assuring us eternal life. *[pause]*

John 5:24 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

And 1 John says, “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”⁴ *[pause]*

Instead of death, we receive life, but we only receive life *in Christ*.

As Paul says, this promise of life is found in Christ.

He is the only way, but have you trusted in Him to receive this life? *[pauseeee]*

We live in a world that is in slavery to the fear of death.

³ See Romans 6:23.

⁴ 1 John 5:12.

The reason is because to them this physical life is all that there is, and so they have no hope.
[pause]

This is why there is such an emphasis on safety, health, and prolonging life at all costs.

This is why fear reigns around every corner and around every event, and why the subtle message is: ‘just live your life to the fullest because this is all you’ve got.’ [pause]

The truth is that we can easily be deceived by this underlying message that this life is all that there is.

But we don’t have to live by fear, but we can live by faith in the promise of life in Christ!

That’s our hope! [pause]

This current earthly life is not all that there is for those who trust in Christ.

We have a solid hope because we have a solid Savior, who gives us life. [pause]

What confidence we can have knowing that God has promised us life in Christ!

The great news is that the gospel doesn’t merely offer life, but it promises it! [pauseeee]

It’s interesting that as Paul faced his imminent death while writing this letter, he couldn’t help but think of the life he had in Christ.

That was his hope!

His confidence in his role and the life found in Christ wasn’t diminished as his physical death crept closer, but he was ever so confident in them. [pause]

As you go through 2023, you may be faced with death - death in your own life, death in your family, death all around you - but where will be your hope?

With every year that passes, we are one year closer to our physical death, but will your confidence in the Word of God and the promise of life in Christ diminish? [pause]

Remember that the Word of God doesn’t come to you by the will of man, but by the will of God!

The promise of life doesn’t hinge on the faithfulness of man, but on the faithfulness of God.
[pauseeee]

Something else that stands out to me in these verses, and something that we can remember for the new year is...

II. The closeness of our spiritual family.

It really makes a difference how people address us in letters.

If someone writes, “Hello Sally,” that comes across differently than saying, “My dearest Sally,” doesn’t it? *[pause]*

Words matter, and words can display either our closeness to someone or our distance.

And that’s what we see with how Paul writes to Timothy, for he is very intentional about what he writes. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to imagine Timothy reading this next part.

He’s probably lonely, discouraged, and needs encouragement from Paul.

And he reads, “To Timothy, my beloved child.” *[pause]*

He didn’t just say, “To Timothy.”

He didn’t just say, “To Timothy, my fellow worker,” or “To Timothy, my friend.”

Timothy was certainly those things, but deeper than that, Paul saw Timothy as his beloved child. *[pause]*

Imagine how that touches young Timothy’s heart.

Here was Paul, who he looked up to, and needed encouragement and direction from.

And Paul doesn’t come across as an aloof boss commanding him to do things, though Paul could have done that since he was over Timothy.

But rather, he talks to him as a loving father would to his beloved son. *[pauseeee]*

It’s important to remember that they were not biologically father and son, but rather, they were father and son in the faith.

Paul was like a father figure in the faith to Timothy, and Timothy was like a son in the faith to Paul. *[pauseeee]*

This is how our relationships in the church are supposed to be like!

In fact, family-like relationships in the church are to be *the norm*. *[pause]*

Back in 1 Timothy 5, Paul highlighted how Timothy was to treat those in the church, when he said...

“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”⁵ *[pause]*

Even Jesus made it clear that his true family were those who followed Him.

⁵ 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

In Matthew 12, Jesus' mother and brothers wanted to speak to him, but what does he say? “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?”

And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.’⁶

[pause]

What was Jesus saying other than that his physical family didn't take priority over his spiritual family. *[pause]*

Being a child of God, and following Jesus Christ our Lord is the most important, eternal reality in the universe.

Sharing biological similarities doesn't compare.

It is in Christ that you can actually have the deepest and strongest relationships in the world because you are genuinely children together of God the Father. *[pauseeee]*

Why do we act like fellow Christians are not our true family?

We act like they are friends, co-workers, or acquaintances, but how often do we treat them as brothers and sisters? *[pause]*

Just recently there was some controversy over the fact that many churches were canceling services on Christmas Day.

And one reason that some of them did this was because they saw Christmas as a “family day”. *[pause]*

But what truth were they neglecting? The church *is* your family! *[pauseeee]*

Timothy was Paul's beloved child in the faith.

He was near and dear to the heart of Paul.

Paul loved him as a father would a child. *[pause]*

Because of our common faith in Christ, we become brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yet to have a closeness in our relationships with one another, we need to cultivate those relationships over time. *[pause]*

Just think of your own family: you become closer and closer over time only when you spend time together, and foster that closeness. *[pause]*

So what does that mean for us as a church?

⁶ Matthew 12:48b-50.

We need to be *intentional* with our relationships. *[pause]*

Closeness doesn't just miraculously appear.

I'm sure the closeness between Paul and Timothy took some time to build. *[pause]*

So how could you intentionally become more close with others in the church?...

How about intentionally talking to people more?

How about reaching out to them during the week, and asking them about their life?

What about taking someone to breakfast, or inviting them over for lunch after church?

Don't just stop with one time, but continue building that relationship. *[pause]*

As you go to the store, why not take them with you?

As they do some yard work, why not do it together and go deeper in your relationship? *[pause]*

The closeness of our spiritual family can be such a great, encouraging thing that helps us to continue on in faithfulness. *[pause]*

For Timothy, he needed to hear from Paul, and hearing Paul call him "my beloved child" would be such an encouraging thing to hear.

No matter how distant Paul was physically, he was still close because they had built a relationship of closeness. *[pauseeee]*

As you look ahead to this new year, remember your spiritual family.

Remember that we are called into this family, and we need to foster closeness in this family - this is to be the norm of your Christian life. *[pause]*

Think how the closeness of this family can motivate and encourage you on in faithfulness in 2023. *[pauseeee]*

I don't know what you will encounter this year, but if you have hard days ahead, remember that you have a family here at First Baptist.

We can encourage one another, and stir one another on to love and good works.⁷ *[pause]*

But also remember that this year, and every year to follow, you need to intentionally cultivate your family relationships in the church.

Think of ways and pursue ways that deepen the closeness of your relationships with others here at First Baptist.

⁷ A reference to Hebrews 10:24.

Don't just expect other people to do it, but you do it.

We are called as a family together in Christ, but will we act like a family? *[pauseeee]*

As we look at these beginning verses of 2 Timothy, we notice one more thing that will be needed in 2023.

Remember...

III. The comfort of our God.

How do you start your letters or emails?

We usually begin with some sort of greeting, right?

We might say, "I hope you are doing well."

Or, "I hope that you are having a great day."

Well Paul takes the spot where a basic greeting usually was and turns it into a greeting infused with theological comfort. *[pause]*

What does he say?

"Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." *[pause]*

These are the blessings that Paul wishes upon Timothy, and they are blessings upon blessings! *[pauseeee]*

First, he wishes *grace* for Timothy.

This is God's grace, which is the kindness of God for undeserving people.

So grace can include anything that God kindly and lovingly gives to undeserving sinners.

This is why grace can even include his empowering work in us, for he is giving us something that we can't produce on our own. *[pauseeee]*

Paul desires for God to continue to rain down grace in Timothy's life, and that's what we need as we go through life.

As we face suffering, trials, and hardship this year, we need God's grace. *[pause]*

When you are discouraged, remember the encouraging grace of God.

When you feel weak, remember the empowering grace of God.

Grace isn't only something experienced at salvation, but it's experienced everyday thereafter. *[pauseeee]*

We are needy people, who need the continual kindness and gifts of God in our lives!

So in 2023, remember the grace of God that flows to you, for it comes “from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” *[pauseeee]*

The second blessing that Paul wishes upon Timothy is *mercy*.

Mercy is the compassion of God upon helpless, guilty people.

In mercy, He deals with us in compassionate ways. *[pauseeeee]*

In this year, you will face situations where you are helpless.

You will make mistakes and fail, but God’s mercy is flowing to you.

He is compassionate with you in your situations, He is forgiving, He is kind.

In your sorry situations, you will “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need,”⁸ for you have a Father and a Lord, who is a well of mercy that never runs dry. *[pauseeee]*

The third blessing that Paul wishes upon Timothy is *peace*.

Because of Christ, we can have peace with God.

Our relationship is no longer hostile, but restored.

We don’t have to wonder if God is for or against us because Christ has reconciled our relationship with God.

We were enemies, but now we are His beloved children. *[pauseeee]*

What a comforting truth to remember in 2023!

No matter what comes our way, no matter what failures we have - our standing with God never changes, if we have trusted in Christ alone. *[pause]*

Yet not only do we receive peace with God, but we receive peace in the midst of our chaotic world.

Our secure salvation, our living hope, and our ever-present Savior remind us that we can go through even the most turbulent times with peace.

Why?

Because He, who is the source of peace, gives us peace and therefore our hearts don’t have to be troubled; we don’t have to be afraid.⁹ *[pauseeee]*

⁸ Hebrews 4:16.

⁹ A reference to John 14:27.

Grace, mercy, and peace.

Blessings upon blessings come to us from God our Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

And since they come from God, then you can rest assured that these blessings will continue as you go through each day this year. *[pauseeee]*

All the comfort that you need is found in God.

Grace? You got it, for He gives it out of love.

Mercy? It comes to you in your helplessness.

Peace? It's pouring into your hearts from the Spirit. *[pause]*

Remember that the comfort of God is always available, if only you would look to Him. *[pauseeee]*

Paul's greeting was short, yet it was more than a greeting, for it's a reminder that...

We have all that we need from the Lord as we go through 2023!

The clarion call of the world will say, "You are enough," and that you have all that you need in yourself.

But don't be duped by that feel-good message.

For when you face some of your hardest times this year, you will feel empty, drained, incompetent, inadequate, and burnt out.

You will come to the end of yourself, and realize that you don't have everything you need in yourself.

But you do have all that you need in the Lord. *[pause]*

Yet here's the question: will you look to Him this year?

He has given us His Word and the promise of life, will you be in His Word and trust His Word this year?

Will it be like your food and water that you need each day to go on? *[pause]*

He has given us each a spiritual family of brothers and sisters in Christ here at First Baptist, but will you cultivate closeness with others?

We can help one another to be encouraged and faithful this year. *[pause]*

And God has given and continues to give us grace, mercy, and peace.

We are definitely in need of those three things, so will you look to Him for those things no matter what you go through? *[pauseee]*

What great comfort that we have for the unknown ahead. *[pause]*

I don't know what you will face this year - there's a lot of unknowns, isn't there?

But remember what you do know and what you do have in the Lord.