

An Exegesis of 2 Timothy One

By, Pastor Larry E. Cross

The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy is the last that we read from the pen of this apostle, whom I am so bold as to suggest that he was the greatest of them all, at least when it comes to the tireless effort he put into the ministry. Paul is now in prison. Tradition has it that he is now in the worst of Rome's prisons. He is accused of guilt in a capital crime for preaching an "illegal religion." The only air and light which come into this cell enter through a hole in the dome of the ceiling. Night and day he is chained to a Roman soldier. He does not have the freedom of movement which he enjoyed during his first imprisonment in Rome when he had his own house and had a relative freedom of movement. We really should try to think ourselves into what all of this meant for Paul, who now expected that his life was about to end, and for Timothy; who was Paul's replacement in Asia, and for the Church, which had leaned so heavily on this apostle of the Lord, and for the Gospel, which Paul had so zealously proclaimed and which was now becoming the cause of his death. Would Timothy be adequate for the task? Would the Christians remain faithful to Christ in the face of the persecution which now had to follow the execution of this great advocate of Christ's Gospel? Would that Gospel itself prove itself to be that which Paul had proclaimed it to be, "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes?" (Romans 1:16).

It is to encourage Timothy for the hard times which lie ahead that Paul writes this letter, for Timothy will be instrumental in keeping the people of God faithful to Christ and his Gospel. by way of application, this letter serves as an encouragement to any Christian minister when days of persecution threaten.

Translation

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God in accord with the Good News of life, the one which is in Christ Jesus, ²to Timothy, my beloved child. Grace, mercy, peace from God the Father and from Jesus our Lord. ³I have gratitude to God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a clean conscience, as I ceaselessly have a remembrance of you in my petitions by night and by day, ⁴continuously yearning to see you, having remembered (and continuing to remember) your tears, in order that I might be filled with joy, ⁵having received a reminder of the unhypocritical faith in you, of a kind which lived first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I have been and continue to be persuaded that it lives also in you. ⁶For this cause I am reminding you to continue to fan to flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷For God did not give to us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of level-headedness.

⁸Do not, then, be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me his prisoner, but suffer evil with me for the Good News in accord with the power of God ⁹who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, the one given to us in Christ Jesus before the times of eons ¹⁰and now made clear through the appearance of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who indeed put death out of commission and flooded life and incorruption with light through the Good News, ¹¹into which I was placed, yes, I, as a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²For which cause also these things I am suffering, but I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have put my trust and still but it, and I have been and continue to be persuaded that he continues powerful to guard my deposit right up to that day. ¹³As a model of healthful words keep holding the ones which you heard at my side—hold them in faith and in love which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the excellent deposit by the Holy Spirit who lives in us. ¹⁵You know this, that all those in Asia turned away from me, of whom is Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain, ¹⁷but when he came to be in Rome he zealously sought me and found me. ¹⁸May the Lord grant that he find mercy at the Lord's side in that day—and whatever other things he did to serve in Ephesus you know better than

The Commentary

The Introduction, 1:1-5

In his customary fashion Paul immediately states who it is who is sending this letter. It is “Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God in accord with the Good News, the one which is in Christ Jesus.” Several things are worthy of note in this. First, some have said that these words are unduly still for a letter written to a personal friend. They question why Paul would call himself “an apostle” when he is speaking to his close friend and co-worker, Timothy. They look upon it as somewhat of a put-down for Timothy. We would rather say that Paul writes in this way because everything that he has to say in this letter he is saying because he is an apostle of Christ Jesus in accord with the Gospel and in the interests of that Gospel. He does not write simply as a friend. He writes with the full authority of no less than an apostle of Christ Jesus.

Paul says that he is an apostle “through the will of God.” This reminds us of his stronger words to the Galatians where he had to defend his apostolic authority so vigorously. There he says that he is “an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead” (1:1) and of his message he says “that the Gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (1:11-12). The will of man had nothing to do with his having become an apostle of Christ Jesus nor did, it have anything to do with his remaining an apostle of Christ Jesus to this very day. But an apostle he was, even in that dungeon in Rome. Even though the Good News of Christ Jesus has brought him to chains and close to death, Paul still opens this letter exulting in his calling!

It is definitely a Pauline usage to call the Lord by the name “Christ Jesus.” Hiebert says that the reverse order, “Jesus Christ,” is always followed in the epistles of Peter, John, James and Jude. We may say that Paul’s mind calls for the office of this Jesus as being the very Messiah, promised and sent by God, to be emphasized first, then following that with the personal name which the Christ was given by the angels. The Messiah is Jesus. The Christ is Jehovah who saves his people from their sins! It is as though Paul never ceases to be amazed that the God who promised to send the Messiah actually kept his word in the person of Jesus.

Now it is this Christ Jesus to whom Paul belongs. He has been commissioned by him personally to be his special envoy, his apostle. This came about through the will of God himself and it is completely in accord with the Good News of Christ Jesus, this “promise of life, the one in Christ Jesus.” As Lenski says, “If it were not for, this promise of life God would need no apostles at all, would not have willed to make Paul one.”¹

When Paul now, addresses Timothy as ἀγαπητῷ τέκνῳ it is a bit different than calling Timothy his “son.” He calls him his beloved child and we shall see that this whole section throbs with fatherly tenderness for Timothy as for his own child. In 1 Timothy 1:2 Paul had called Timothy my “true child in faith.” That makes us think that Paul was the one who had brought Timothy over from an Old Testament faith to a New Testament faith which embraced Jesus as the, promised Christ. Ἀγαπαῶ expresses that Paul has purpose which guides his love.

“Grace, mercy, peace!” There is no article. There is no connective. The quality of each is to be emphasized. How far-reaching and all-embracing these three little words are! “Grace” is the undeserved favor of God towards the sinner who had lost all means of approach to God. “Mercy” is the love which is moved by pity for the wretched, helpless, hopeless sinner who wallows in his sins with no power nor even will to help himself. “Peace” rests upon that objective peace which Christ has established between God and man and brings that subjective peace of soul which is ours only through the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus. All three come from God who is now truly our Father in Christ Jesus and from Jesus who is now truly our Lord whom we lovingly serve through faith.

Χάριτι ἔχω τῷ θεῷ should be translated “I have gratitude to God” rather than “I thank God.” This removes the difficulty of explaining for what Paul is thankful to God. “I am grateful” needs no object even though it is implied in all that follows,

A bit of a difficulty in interpretation is found in the προγόνων, “forefathers,” of verse 3. Who were they? It would be easier if we could say that they were the ancients, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. Then we would have no difficulty understanding how Paul, how claims to serve God “in a clean conscience from his

¹ *Interpretation of Second Timothy*, Lenski, p. 742.

forefathers.” However, most commentators agree, that this refers to Paul’s immediate forefathers and I see no compelling reason to disagree. I believe that Lenski does the best job of explaining: “Ἀπό προγόνων is not temporal so as to cover the whole of Paul’s lifetime since his birth. The preposition denotes derivation. The truth God whom Paul is now serving (present tense) in clean conscience he learned to know from his forebears... ‘I am serving’ is not ‘I have ever been serving’ from childhood onward.”² Hiebert makes this point: “(Paul) may be accused of teaching a new, strange, and illegal god in the empire, who could not be worshiped with a pure conscience because forbidden by law, but the God whom he is serving is the same God his forefathers have served and is even now officially recognized as the God of the Jewish people throughout the Roman Empire. Paul has not changed his worship, but it is Rome that has changed.”³

It amazes us that Paul is more concerned for Timothy than he is for himself. What would we do if we here sitting in that cold dark prison? I picture myself crying out in my despair for myself. Paul’s great heart cries out for Timothy. ‘When Paul says that he does so “ceaselessly... night and day,” this need not, mean that that is all that Paul is doing. It simply means that whenever Paul remembers Timothy he keeps right on sending up his petitions to God in Timothy’s behalf—and we can well imagine the long days and the long nights, this miserable apostle was spending in that dungeon! What would make those days come to an end? And how many of those nights were spent in peaceful, undisturbed sleep?

The present active participle, ἐπι ποθῶν, opens verse 4 with the expression of Paul’s continuing strong desire to see his beloved child Timothy one more time before death closes his eyes. What a comfort that would be for Paul in his extremity! I remember the great joy it brought to my father-in-law when those who had been faithful to Christ during his ministry would visit him in his old age. How that would have multiplied for Paul if he could only once more see this beloved child of a co-worked who had been at his side for so long and had experienced so much with him in their preaching of the Good News of Christ Jesus! When Paul calls to mind the tears Timothy shed, most likely when his beloved apostle and mentor was torn away by Roman soldiers, it makes him know Timothy’s love for him and desire Timothy’s presence.

When Paul continues with the aorist in verse 5, ὑπόμνησιν λαβών, “having received a reminder,” it leads us to think that there was something that happened in Rome which reminded Paul of Timothy’s un hypocritical faith. When he saw it, he immediately thought of his beloved child in faith. Timothy’s was a special, faith in Paul’s estimation. There was nothing of hypocrisy, or play acting, in that faith. It was a straight-fo naard faith, a faith like that of a child, and therefore it was a model faith.

Varying views are expressed concerning Paul’s meaning when he speaks of this faith first dwelling in Lois and in Eunice. Some take Paul to mean that Lois and Eunice were brought to faith in Jesus as the Christ at an earlier date, perhaps shortly after or in connection with Pentecost. They have trouble with Eunice being a true and faithful believer because of her marriage to a Greek, that causing her excommunication from the Jewish synagogue. However, in chapter three Paul himself states that Timothy’s faith dial not begin when he was an adult but that he had received it “from infancy” through instruction in “the holy Scriptures” (3:16). Who did that instructing? Was it not Lois, his grandmother and Eunice, his mother? “Un hypocritical faith” dwelled in both of them already at that time. In fact, this was the true Old Testament faith. Paul did not say this much about his own forefathers. He could not. They were Pharisees. They sat in Moses’ seat but they had mixed in errors with the truth. Timothy’s forefathers were Israelites in the truest sense of the word. When Paul came to Lystra and spoke to Loin and Eunice and Timothy, he did not have to teach them that the promised Christ would be a savior from sin. They already believed that on the basis of Old Testament Scripture. All that Paul had to do was to preach Jesus as the Christ and they believed it.

Exhortations to Steadfastness in the Ministry

The Essential Qualities of the Steadfast Minister, 1:6-18

A. The zeal of the minister, vv. 6-7

² Op. cit., p. 746.

³ *Second Timothy*, E. Edmond Hiebert, p. 29.

Now comes Paul's appeal to Timothy for zeal. It is based on the foregoing. For some reason, various commentators like to make out as though Timothy should really be called "Timid-thy." They point to his tears, to his supposed permitting the flame of his gift to have become but a smoldering ember, and to his supposed "spirit of cowardice" (v. 7). But are tears unmanly, or are they simply unmacho? And did Timothy permit the flame of his gift to grow weak, and does Paul infer that Timothy has displayed a "spirit of cowardice?" The first is answered by the present tense in the infinitive in ἀναζωπυρεῖν. The present is continuing action. Paul thus reminds Timothy to continue to do something which he has been doing and is doing at the present time. There is absolutely no need to conclude that Timothy was doing less. Here is another example where commentators on the Scripture need to remember the Eighth Commandment of God. I rather suggest that we do well to think of that man of God today whom we consider to be the very best example of a strong leader in the Church and then ask whether or not he needs and would appreciate an encouragement such as this one from Paul.

I must confess that I have difficulty in defining what the χάρισμα was which Timothy was to continue, fanning into flame. Lenski defines it as his office, "the ability to preach, to teach, to admonish, and to supervise such work in the churches, for which God gave him both the office and the field when he was ordained or formally installed into his Asian work by the laying on of the hands of Paul and of the elders."⁴ 1 Timothy 4:14 explains that this was done "through prophecy" when the elders laid their hands on him. My problem is the διά in διά τῆς ἐπιθέσεως τῶν χειρῶν μου. How can it be taken in any other way than expressing means or a channel? Perhaps one of our more august Greek scholars has a ready explanation for this. I only raise the question as to whether our historic rejection of such a thing as apostolic succession is leading us to believe something less than what the Scripture says.

This also offers opportunity to make comment on a pet peeve. If we are going to speak of "laying on the hands" in our services of ordination and installation of our pastors, then should we not actually lay our hands on the heads of the candidates in such a way as to touch them? Hovering over the head is not laying on. Perhaps we are afraid that we will muss up a pretty hair-do, or worse, get our hands greasy.

The incentive to zeal is presented in verse 7: "For God has not given to us a spirit: of cowardice, but of power and of love and of level-headedness." This spirit is the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Negatively, it is not marked by cowardice or fearfulness. We might say the opposite. It is marked by bravery or fearlessness. Positively, it is marked by power and love and level-headedness. Think of how necessary those three will be for Timothy when Paul is gone: Think how much the Christians will look to Timothy to display just these. They will be tempted in weakness to run away from Christ who appears disgraced one more time in the death of a leading apostle. They will need all-of-the love that Timothy will be able to show them as he continues to keep them with their Savior. And everything he does will have to be approached with level-headedness and a balanced mind.

B. The courage of the minister, vv. 8-12

Negatively, the appeal for courage is stated thus: "Do not then be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (objective genitive = the testimony about our Lord) nor of me his prisoner." The verb is in the aorist, not the present. Once again this backs up the truth that Paul is not suggesting that Timothy is now ashamed but that there will be strong temptation to become ashamed when Paul is executed for "the testimony of the Lord" as a perpetrator of an illegal religion. This verse surely brings out that Paul is already feeling the wrath and the stigma of going up against the Roman emperor, but he does not admit that he is Nero's prisoner. He is the prisoner of the Lord. It is in accord with his Lord's will. It is in behalf of his Lord Jesus Christ. It is in behalf of the Good News of Jesus Christ which Paul loves, for which he has lived and for which he is ready to die. What

⁴ Lenski, p. 754

is happening should move Timothy to be proud both of Christ and of his message and of his apostle rather than ashamed.

The positive is this, “but suffer evil with me for the Good News according to the power of God.” The preposition, “with,” in the verb associates Timothy with Paul in his suffering. I take the “power of God” to mean that God will supply the power necessary for bearing up under the coming persecution that follows upon Paul’s execution for the Gospel’s sake.

A twofold incentive to courage is given to Timothy in the truths of the Good News and in the personal example of Paul.

Actually, the next verses, 9-11, form the continuation of one sentence, closely attached to the fore-going. The two aorist participles give timeless emphasis to the fact of our salvation and our call to faith having happened. This God who has the power to carry Timothy through suffering with Paul is the same God who has already “saved us and called us with a holy calling.” The order of the words in this phrase struck me over against the Baptist way of asking a person, “Are you saved?” For them to be correct the order would have to be reversed, but it is not. God saved us and then he called us. The salvation is, then, that objective salvation which he worked for the whole world in Christ Jesus upon Calvary. I also take the dative to be a dative of means so that Paul says that God “called us with a holy calling.” It was an effective calling, for Paul and Timothy are now both believers in Christ. It was a holy calling, both because of its source, the holy God, and because of its purpose and effect, it separated Paul and Timothy from the ungodly world, made them God’s saints in Christ, and set them on the path of godly living out of that faith in Christ.

This calling could not be “according to our works,” because not a single work of Paul or of Timothy was holy in and of itself. Therefore it had to be purely “according to God’s own purpose and grace, the one given to us in Christ Jesus before the times of eons.” How far back does this “purpose and grace of God” go? Jesus is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). In timeless eternity, before there was such a thing as time, God knew his own gracious purpose which he would accomplish in the person of his own dearly beloved Son. “Salvation...calling... purpose... grace... they are all bound up 100% in Christ Jesus.”

What God purposed in eternity he has shown clearly in time. “But now (this purpose and grace) has been made clear through the appearance of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who indeed put death out of commission and flooded life and incorruption with light through the Good News” (v. 10). We could never have known God had he not revealed himself to us. Now he has made it absolutely clear that he is not a God who expects us to save ourselves but that he has proven his perfect grace by that Savior whom he has sent, Christ Jesus. How did he do it? He put “the” death “out of commission.” It was that well-known death, that specific death which we know as our greatest source of fear and trouble—that death which is our spiritual and eternal separation from our God. What does that death mean, even to a capital prisoner like Paul, when there is faith in that Savior, Christ Jesus, who also “flooded life and incorruption with light through the Good News?” Life is the opposite of death. “Whoever believes in (Jesus) will never die” (John 11:25). The Good News which Paul and Timothy have been proclaiming right along has caused “life and incorruption” to bask in brilliant and warming sunlight. In Christ, Paul will live and not die forever. In Christ, Paul has God’s promise of incorruption for this body of his which so soon will be horribly mistreated by men. It will rise gloriously on the Savior’s great day!

Every time the preposition εἰς occurs in this section it gives difficulty in translating. I still see action in it, but I do not find a good way to express that in English, so I have simply translated verse 11: “into which I was placed, yes, I, as a herald and an apostle and a teacher.” Paul is giving none of this encouragement to Timothy as an ordinary Christian. It all comes from one whom the heavenly King appoints as his “herald” to make public proclamation in his name, as his “apostle” especially commissioned as his envoy, as his “teacher” to make clear to all the message of that heavenly king.

“For which cause also these things I am suffering, but I am not ashamed for I know whom I have and do still trust and I am persuaded that he is able to guard my deposit right up to that day” (v. 12). Paul had suffered other things for the sake of the Good News earlier in his career. Never had he suffered any worse or with greater prospect of dying. When things looked most dismal for him, it was not a thing but a person who kept Paul going. It was the one in whom he had been believing till now and in whom he was still believing (perfect tense).

Paul is no more ashamed of Christ Jesus now than he was years earlier when he had written to the Christians in this same Rome: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

It seems best to understand *παραθήκην* as the deposit which is entrusted to Paul rather than that which Paul entrusted to God. This is the way that Paul uses the same word in verse 14 and in 1 Timothy 6:20. Then Paul is talking about the Gospel and is saying that he is persuaded that his God remains powerful to preserve that Good News of Christ even though one of his chief spokesmen is killed. The Message of Christ will remain right up to that day when Christ Jesus makes his next appearing. What a comfort and encouragement to Timothy and to those Christians who would otherwise be filled with anxious fears when the news of the death of the beloved apostle, Paul, had reached their ears!

C. The fidelity of the minister, vv. 13-18

Verses 13 and 14 hold two exhortations to fidelity. “As a pattern of healthful words keep holding the ones which you heard at my side—hold them in that faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” It is at least interesting that this verse is used by the commentators to both prove and disprove the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. First, the more liberal view: “*ὑποτύπωσις* means an outline sketch such as an architect might make before getting down to the detailed plans of a building. The importance of this ‘pattern’ (as RV, RSV) cannot be over-emphasized. It means that the apostle claims his own teaching to be no more than a starting point. As White puts it, ‘It happily suggests the power of expansion latent in the simplest and most primitive formulas of the Christian faith.’”⁵ The opposite viewpoint is expressed in these words: “With good reason it can be insisted that we have here an argument for the verbal inspiration of Paul’s writings. Certainly this statement of Paul argues strongly against the modern appeal for an expression of truth in new forms. The apostolic pattern or form must be regarded as important.”⁶ Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* does not have a lot to say on the word. It simply describes “the proclamation of Paul (as) a *model* of sound preaching.” (VIII, 250). Even if we take that to mean something like an architect’s blueprint, would we want to build a building contrary to the blueprint?

Once again the present tense of the verb says that Timothy has been doing faithfully what Paul now exhorts him to continue to do. Paul’s words had been “healthful.” Words disagreeing with the teaching of Paul would be the opposite. It reminds us of the extreme words of Jesus when he says that false prophets rip and tear the unsuspecting sheep (Mt. 7:15). The words which Timothy had heard and seen written down while he was at Paul’s side now serve as the pattern of his preaching and they are to continue to serve as the pattern of his preaching because they are the words of one who has been appointed a “herald and apostle and teacher” of and for Christ’s Gospel. How Timothy needed to keep on holding onto those words in the trials to come!

He is to keep holding on to those words “in faith and love, the one in Christ Jesus.” Not just in faith. Not just in love. In faith and in love! I suspect that members of the Wisconsin Synod often do a better job of holding onto Scripture truths “in faith” than they do “in love.” How many controversies might not have been averted if both sides had followed this encouragement from Paul! Faith and love do not mean refraining from controversy when it must be met. Faith and love define how to meet it when it comes. This faith and love must be “in Christ Jesus” if there is to be success, and such faith and love guarantees the success.

The next exhortation follows closely: “Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who continues to live in us” (v. 14). Like Paul (v. 12), Timothy has been entrusted with the Gospel as a “deposit” from God. Paul had expended himself guarding that deposit and was ready “to be poured out like a drink offering” (4:6) and to go on to receive his “crown of righteousness” (4:8). Now it would be up to Timothy. Not only should he hold onto Paul’s words but he should guard the Good News of Christ against attack from any quarter. Though Paul would no longer be with him, the one who had upheld Paul would be with him. Timothy could count on the Holy Ghost “who continues to dwell in us.” What mightier help could we want than to be assured that God lives

⁵ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 132.

⁶ Jones, *The Epistles to Timothy*, pp. 61-62

within us? He who possessed the power to create Christian faith in our hearts has the power to sustain that Christian faith even until death—even to a death as a criminal for Christ as was Paul’s death.

Paul now closes this chapter with a negative and a positive example of fidelity. The negative: “You know this, that all in Asia of whom is Phygelus and Hermogenes turned away from me.” I used to think that this was over a doctrinal dispute. Now I apply it to the simple fact that they did not stand by Paul when he needed their presence and support so very desperately. Here Paul was dragged away in their presence or in their knowledge. They did not have the courage to let it be known that they were his followers. They feared the consequences. They feared the earthly loss which might come. Who were “all of these”? The “all” is not absolute, for that would include Timothy who was in Asia. I am not sure exactly how defensible this is in the Greek, but I take it that this “all” is “all of those who were characterized by Phygellus and Hermogenes.” We know no more of these two men than this.

The positive example of fidelity is Onesiphorus. Paul prays mightily for this man and for his family, for he showed mercy on the Lord’s prisoner and did not fear the personal or family consequence. “May the Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me (ἀναψύχω = lifted my spirit up) and was not ashamed of my chain, but when he came to be in Rome he sought me out zealously and he found me!—may the Lord give to him to find mercy at the Lord’s side in that day!—and whatever other things he did in service in Ephesus, you know better” (16-18).

Here was a brave man and a kind man. A man of faith! He also knew in whom he had believed and had entrusted his own and his family’s welfare into the hands of his God and Savior. How else could Onesiphorus have been ready to do such things, to go to such lengths, in showing his Christian love and concern for Paul? Maybe he was in Rome on business. Maybe he made the trip simply because the Lord’s apostle was in prison. Either way, he went to great lengths just to see Paul. Paul was not now living in a house which was easy to find. He was thrown away in the inner chambers of one of Rome’s most hated prisons. He was a prisoner of no less a personage than the emperor of the vast and mighty Roman Empire. It took the best of Christian fortitude and faith for this man to make inquiries in Rome concerning the whereabouts of Paul. He kept right at it until he found his beloved teacher and apostle! And once he had found Paul, he returned often and refreshed Paul! Just think what that meant to Paul! He had no one else with him except Luke. What a joy that a Christian would do what Onesiphorus was willing to do!

Paul prays the prayer for Onesiphorus that I hope someone prays for me: “May the Lord give to him to find mercy at the Lord’s side in that day!” According to your preference, you may take the first “Lord” to refer to the Father and the second to the Son if you think that it is too cumbersome to have both speak about the Son. I believe that they both speak about the Son before whom Onesiphorus will stand on the day of his appearing.

If Phygellus and Hermogenes are the negative examples of faithfulness, Onesiphorus is a wonderful positive example. Timothy was well-acquainted with both the negative and the positive. Paul reminds him of the example of Onesiphorus so that he keeps a well-balanced mind also in this case and is not overwhelmed by the negative example of so many Christians in Asia.

With this, we shall leave for now the Lord’s apostle in his prison. I trust that, although we have not made many personal applications to your own ministry, you have received a real lift from this apostle whose faith and joy in Christ Jesus and in his wonderful Good News shines so brightly from that dungeon. Who of us has suffered like a Paul? Who of us have needed encouragement quite so acutely as did Timothy? If Paul’s encouragements lifted Timothy—and obviously they did, for the Christian Church still marches mightily on with its precious deposit, the Good News of Christ Jesus—then surely our faith in Christ and in His Gospel, our courage to contend for that Gospel, and our zeal for that Gospel shall find the same up-lifting and renewing power that Timothy’s did when he received and read and re-read many times this blessed second letter from his Lord’s herald and apostle and teacher, Paul. May God grant us all the faith and fortitude and zeal that one need to carry on the work of modern day Timothies in Christ’s Church!

I thank you for the privilege of speaking these words to the ministers of Christ!

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