

Entrusted

2 Timothy 1:1–14

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Introduction: From Narrative to Letter

This morning we turn a corner. For many months we have been working through 1 Samuel — a long, sprawling Old Testament narrative full of war, kingship, betrayal, and the surprising grace of God. Now, in this season before the holidays, we shift to a very different kind of writing. We are moving into one of Paul’s letters — specifically, his second letter to Timothy.

Before we open the text, it is worth spending a moment with Timothy himself, because the letter will only make sense once we understand the man receiving it. Paul first met Timothy in the town of Lystra. Timothy’s father was Greek, but his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were Jewish believers — women of sincere and deep faith. The people of Lystra spoke well of the young man, and so Paul invited Timothy to join him and Silas on the road. Timothy went, and he proved faithful. Over the years that followed, Paul would send him to some of the most difficult and important congregations in the young church: Berea, Macedonia, Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus. Timothy became a pillar of the early Christian movement.

If you read Paul’s letters carefully, you will notice something striking: many of them are not from Paul alone. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and both letters to the Thessalonians list Timothy as a co-sender. The opening of Philippians says it plainly: “*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons*” (Philippians 1:1, NIV). Timothy is not merely Paul’s assistant — he is a co-author of portions of our New Testament.

And yet there are two books in the Bible addressed *to* Timothy rather than *from* him — 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy, both letters from Paul to his beloved younger colleague.

The Situation Behind the Letter

The first letter, 1 Timothy, finds Timothy stationed at the church in Ephesus and dealing with a genuinely difficult situation. There were false teachers spreading heretical doctrine. There was disorder in the gathered community. There were spiritually immature people jockeying for

positions of authority. And the surrounding culture — shaped so profoundly by the worship of Artemis — was bleeding into the way the church worshiped God. It was a mess, and so 1 Timothy is a technical letter: precise instructions about false teaching, theological clarifications, guidance on church order, criteria for eldership.

But 2 Timothy is different in tone. It is written several years later. Paul is now in Rome, in prison, in chains. And when he writes to Timothy this time, it is not primarily a manual for managing congregational problems. It is a pastoral letter from a father to a son.

Reading between the lines, it seems that the problems Paul addressed in 1 Timothy were not resolved. The false teachers were still there. The internal power struggles had not gone away. Getting the bylaws right, as it were, had not fixed the church. And now there were new troubles layered on top of the old ones: people were leaving — not simply moving to another congregation, but leaving the faith altogether, returning to the lives they had lived before. The dark clouds of coming persecution were gathering on the horizon. Where 1 Timothy has relatively little to say about suffering, 2 Timothy is saturated with it — written, after all, by a man who is himself sitting in chains.

All of this — the persistent dysfunction, the departures, the approaching storm — had taken its toll on Timothy. Reading between the lines again, one can sense a man who is discouraged, worn down, and quietly wondering whether any of it has made a difference.

It is into that weariness that Paul writes this letter. His message to Timothy is, in essence: *Stay in the fight. Keep seeking the Kingdom. Keep doing what is good. Don't quit. You have made a difference.* And at the heart of everything Paul says is this single, urgent call: *Be faithful to what God has entrusted to you.*

The Parable in the Background

Earlier in our service we read from Matthew 25 — the parable of the talents, in which a master entrusts his servants with portions of his wealth before departing on a journey. This theme of entrustment runs like a thread through the teaching of Jesus. Whether the image is talents, a vineyard, minas, or seed sown in the soil, the unspoken question pressing through every parable is the same: *What will you do with what God has entrusted to you?*

Will you bury it in the ground? Will you let the worries of life choke it out? Will you let the weeds strangle it? Will you turn what was entrusted to you inward, using it only for yourself? Or will you be faithful — bringing the gifts God has given to bear for his glory and his purposes?

The message of 2 Timothy is Paul calling Timothy back to that faithfulness. And it is a call that reaches us as well.

Let us now hear the opening of that letter. Listen for these themes as Paul writes:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

— 2 Timothy 1:1–14, NIV

What Has Been Entrusted?

Verse 6 says: *Fan into flame the gift of God.* Verse 14 says: *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.* Which raises the obvious question — what exactly is this gift? What is the good deposit? What has Timothy been entrusted with?

As you might expect, this question has generated considerable discussion across two thousand years of church history. Is the gift a unique personal calling to ministry? Is it the Holy Spirit himself? Is it the grace of God? Scholars have not always agreed.

There is, however, a curious word play embedded in the Greek of this passage that opens things up considerably. Bear with me for a moment, because I think the original language genuinely enriches our understanding here.

In the early church, one of the most important symbols was the Chi-Rho — the letters X and P — representing the first two letters of the Greek word *Christos*, Christ. But that same XP stem appears at the beginning of several other crucial Greek words. *Charis* (χάρις) means grace — the free, unearned gift of God. *Charisma* (χάρισμα) means a spiritual gift freely given. *Charizomai* (χαρίζομαι) means forgiveness freely granted. And *chairō* (χαίρω) means joy. These are not unrelated words that happen to share a few letters. They are a constellation of gifts that flow from Christ himself — grace, forgiveness, spiritual gifting, joy — all bound up in the person and work of the one whose name begins with that same XP.

With that in mind, look at what Paul says God has given, what he has entrusted to Timothy — and to us.

The Gifts God Has Entrusted to Us

First, we have been entrusted with the gospel message. Verse 8: *Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.* You and I carry something remarkable — the message of what God has done in this world, the news of his sending of the Son, who reveals the Father and dies so that we might know God. We are here today because people who came before us were faithful to what had been entrusted to them and passed it on. God did not entrust the gospel to the internet, to academia, or to professionals. He entrusted it to the church — to ordinary believers. That is both a stunning privilege and a serious responsibility.

Second, we have been entrusted with God’s redemptive work in the world. Verse 8 again: *Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.* When Paul calls Timothy to share in his suffering, he is not simply asking for companionship in hardship. He is calling Timothy into something larger — the ongoing redemptive mission of God in the world. The church, the *ekklesia*, the called-out body of Christ, is the primary vessel God has ordained to carry that work forward. And as Christ himself suffered in accomplishing our salvation, so we will suffer as we carry his work into the world. That suffering begins, most fundamentally, with a realization: it is not about me. It begins with self-surrender, a willingness to set aside comfort and reputation, a readiness to be misunderstood or opposed. Paul puts it powerfully in Philip-
pians: *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing*

in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10–11, NIV).

Third, we have been entrusted with salvation. Verse 9: *Who has saved us.* Consider the breadth of what that word *saved* contains. We are saved from the penalty of sin — from death and condemnation. We are saved from the bondage of sin — from the deadly habits and patterns that once held us. We are saved from the debt we could never repay. We are saved from being forever defined by our past failures and wrongs. We are saved from a life of separation from God, from the despair and darkness that comes with that separation. But notice: we are not only saved *from* something. We are also saved *to* something.

Fourth, we have been entrusted with a holy life. Verse 9 continues: *Called us to a holy life.* Salvation is not only rescue — it is transformation. It is a calling into a new kind of existence, a changed life that begins now and presses forward toward what God intends for us.

Fifth, we have been given life and immortality. Verse 10: *Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* Notice those two words — *life* and *immortality*. There is a fullness of life available in Jesus Christ that begins in the present and cannot be extinguished. It is imperishable. It does not end.

Sixth, we have been given the Holy Spirit. Verse 14: *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.* This is perhaps the most staggering gift of all. God himself, in the person of his Spirit, takes up residence in his people. The Spirit convicts us of sin, teaches us, brings comfort, and is the very power of God working within us — God’s own presence, given to us.

How to Fan the Flame

These, then, are the gifts God has entrusted to us. The question the entire book of 2 Timothy is pressing toward is: *How do we fan them into flame, rather than burying them in the ground as the servant in the parable did?*

Paul gives us a foundational answer in verse 7: *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.*

These three qualities — power, love, and self-discipline — describe the spirit in which the entrusted gifts are to be lived out.

Power, properly understood, is not bullying or forcing your will on others. It is courage. It is the refusal to be ashamed, the boldness to proclaim the gospel and to live the life Christ calls us to, even when that is costly or uncomfortable.

But power alone is not enough. There are people who are bold and courageous in a way that bludgeons rather than blesses — so fearless in their proclamation that they beat others over the head with the Bible, because their boldness has no love in it. Paul insists the two belong together. Power and love. Boldness and genuine concern, compassion, tenderness for the person in front of you. You cannot be courageously silent about the gospel because you claim to love people. But neither can you batter people with truth while bypassing their humanity.

And then there is self-discipline — a faithfulness to the life God has called you to, a life shaped by his holiness. Because what will ultimately rob the gifts of their power is the gap between what we say and how we live. It is painful — and, frankly, damaging to the mission — when the lives of believers contradict the gospel they profess. Our words and our lives must match. The truth we have been entrusted with must be visible not only in what we say but in who we are.

A Word to New Baptist Church

This passage is not only a word for Timothy in Ephesus in the first century. It is a word for us — for New Baptist Church, here and now, as we ask the questions that every congregation must eventually face: Where do we go from here? What are we called to do?

The beginning point is right here, in these fourteen verses. We are called to fan into flame what God has entrusted to us. That means being passionate about his Word — knowing it, studying it, proclaiming it. It means being passionate about following Jesus, not merely claiming his name. It means being passionate about his redemptive work in our community — taking seriously that we are the vessel through which God intends to work in Huntington. It means allowing his redemptive work to go on in our own lives, not pretending we have already arrived. And it means trusting the leading of his Holy Spirit in the days to come, even when the path is not yet clear.

We have been entrusted with something extraordinary. May we be found faithful.

Amen.