



Sermon Study Guide

Questions from the Brink: May I Have Your Attention?

2 Timothy 1:1-2 – Sunday, September 1, 2013

**Study questions are in italics*

Introduction

- President Lincoln gave his last address on April 11, 1865. He spoke about Reconstruction. He had no idea that just four days later, John Wilkes Booth would kill him at Ford's Theater. Over a century later, Dr. King gave his final speech in Memphis, TN. He was shot and killed the next day, April 4, 1968. Both Lincoln and King deserve a place in the pantheon of American heroes. Yet even they are dwarfed by a small, Jewish man from Turkey whose writings turned the world upside down. We know him as the Apostle Paul.
- The letter we call 2 Timothy is Paul's final address. The authorities locked him up in a Roman jail. He knew his execution loomed. 2 Tim. 4:6, "the time of my departure has come." His words call for serious reflection. *If you had one more chance to speak, whom would you want to talk to and what would you want to say?*
- In 2 Timothy Paul encourages his disciple and, through Timothy, the church. It is a call to persevere in the faith. And in the opening verses, Paul drives home the point that our God speaks to us in the pages of Scripture. I want to unpack two big ideas from the opening two verses.

First, our God speaks an authoritative word of truth [Read 2 Tim. 1:1]

- Paul was sent by God to deliver a message about Christ. We see this in the fact that Paul calls himself an apostle, which literally means, "sent one." Paul was part of a select group of men who saw the risen Christ and were commissioned by God.
- Jesus handpicked 12 apostles to do miracles and preach on his behalf (see Matt. 10, Mark 3, Luke 6). When one of the first apostles needed to be replaced, Peter laid out the qualifications. The newest apostle must be one who knew Jesus intimately (see Acts 1:21-22). Matthias fit the bill.
- Saul of Tarsus was the least likely candidate to be an apostle. He was a persecutor of the church. And yet, Jesus made himself personally known to the Saul, and chose him to testify to his resurrection (see Acts 9:15).
- In 2 Tim. 1:1, it is no casual statement to say that Paul is "an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." Almighty God has set aside Paul to deliver a message straight from the heart of God the Father, by the power of God the Spirit about God the Son.
- Four implications of the fact that Paul is an apostle:
 1. God's Word is true. *What gives you confidence that the Bible is true? What difference does it make in your daily life that you can trust when you are reading Scripture you are reading the very words of God?*
 2. God's Word is authoritative. Paul's authority comes from the one who sent him. *Are there Christians who deny the authority of Scripture? How*

would you respond to someone who said, "I only follow the words of Jesus?" Does the fact that God's Word is authoritative ever keep you away from Scripture? Why or why not?

3. God's Word is to be studied carefully. Guilt is a lousy motivator to Bible study! Let's start with the conviction that God, the Creator of everything, has spoken in His Word. Not only that, if you are a Christian, He has adopted you into His family. In grateful response to God for speaking and saving, let's study carefully His Word. *How are you doing when it comes to personal Bible study? What are some challenges you face to studying the Bible faithfully and regularly? How has God used the church to help you study the Bible more and better?*
4. The careful study of Scripture should lead us to the praise and pursuit of Christ. When we rightly understand and read the Bible, we worship Jesus. The Bible is all about who Jesus is and what He did. As you read the Bible carefully, you become more aware of your sin and more aware of grace that comes only through Christ. *How can you tell when your Bible study is leading to worship? What can you do to help your Bible study lead to worship more?*

Second, our God speaks a timely word of encouragement [READ 2 Tim. 1:2].

- Paul cared for Timothy. He called him his "beloved child." But since Paul's words are God's Word, we can conclude that God cared for Timothy, too. Paul *and* God wanted Timothy encouraged.
- Paul encouraged Timothy with three simple words: grace, mercy, and peace. Grace is the unmerited favor we receive from God through the work of Jesus on the cross. Mercy is similar to grace. It's the help that comes to us from God when we are in dire need. Peace is the absence of conflict that grace and mercy make possible.
- In nearly all of Paul's other letters, he encourages the recipients by reminding them of God's grace and peace. But when he writes to Timothy, Paul also includes the word mercy. Why? Could it be that Paul knew Timothy needed a little extra encouragement? Whatever the reason, Paul went out of his way to stress God's mercy in Timothy's life. It's as if God, through Paul, is telling Timothy, "Don't be afraid. My mercy is here for you to help you in your time of need. I'm about to call you to a weighty task. You will feel ill-equipped and unprepared and overwhelmed, but don't be afraid. My *mercy* is with you. *I* am sufficient to meet your every need."
- Two practical questions in light of the encouragement found in verse 2:
 1. Do you care about encouraging your brothers and sisters in Christ? *What would it look like for you to be more encouraging to others? Why aren't you more encouraging? How does it feel when you are encouraged by others? What is the difference between flattery and gospel-centered encouragement?*
 2. Do you find encouragement in the Word of God? Ultimately, it is God who wanted Timothy to be aware of His grace, mercy, and peace. One role of Scripture is to encourage the believer. *Where do you go first for encouragement and why? When you are going through hard times, do you go to the Word to find encouragement, why or why not? What passages have you found particularly encouraging and why?*