

Main Idea: We learn from Paul’s example in 2 Timothy 1:3-7 how to pray for a discouraged friend. Paul says he “remembered” Timothy in prayer. Remembering someone in prayer involves three responsibilities.

- I. Remembering someone in prayer involves being intentional (3).
 - A. Paul did so by expressing thanks.
 - B. Paul did so as part of his service to God.
 - C. Paul did so night and day.
- II. Remembering someone in prayer involves being interested (4-7).
 - A. Paul remembered Timothy’s tears (4).
 - B. Paul remembered Timothy’s faith (5).
 1. Faith is more than agreeing with some facts about Jesus.
 2. Faith is trusting in the person and accomplishments of Jesus.
 - C. Paul remembered Timothy’s giftedness for ministry (6).
 - D. Paul remembered Timothy’s timidity (7).
- III. Remembering someone in prayer involves being an intercessor.
 - A. What Timothy needed, Paul asked God to provide.
 1. Let your faith show.
 2. Use your God-given gifts.
 3. Don’t give in to your fears.
 4. Exhibit the power, love, and self-control God has given you.
 - B. What Timothy needed, Paul affirmed God had provided (4:22).
 1. Timothy needed the presence of the Lord.
 2. Timothy needed grace, and so do we.

Take Inventory: We can’t remember what we don’t know.

1. Let’s make sure we know the Lord.
2. Let’s make sure we know the Lord’s servants.
3. Let’s make sure we are talking with the Lord about what we know.

Do God’s people ever struggle with discouragement? Let’s be honest. Not only do they, but sometimes they/we struggle to the point of wanting to throw in the towel.

If you are such a person, please know that the Bible offers you tremendous hope, for it’s filled with promises from God Himself, promises that can dispel discouragement and bring joy, regardless of circumstances. But my intent this morning isn’t to talk to the discouraged person, not directly anyway. I want to address the *friend* of the discouraged person and explore this question. *How do you help someone you care about deeply, a hurting brother or sister in Christ, who is struggling with the hardness of life?*

According to God’s Word, there are several ways we can help. We can help by coming along side and listening and bearing burdens (Galatians 6:1). We can help by encouraging that person (1 Thessalonians 5:11). At times we help by *exhorting one another* (Hebrews 3:13). But there’s another very special way and it must undergird every other way. We’re going to learn today from Paul’s example in 2 Timothy 1:3-7 *how to pray* for a discouraged friend.

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:3-7; 4:22

The year was AD 67. It was just three years after the Roman emperor Nero began his persecution of Christ’s followers. As you may recall, Nero was the self-absorbed ruler who likely burned Rome and covered his tracks by blaming his crime on the Christians. Due to this man’s wicked actions, many followers of Christ eventually lost their lives, and many more struggled with fear and discouragement. In that number was one

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the messages preached at WBC in 2008 and on 10/4/15.

particular follower of Christ, a thirty-something-year-old preacher of the gospel named Timothy.

How do you help a discouraged friend? The apostle Paul helped his friend deal with discouragement, one, by sending him a letter (the God-inspired letter we call 2 Timothy); and two, by remembering Timothy in prayer. Since we're not apostles, we can't write God-inspired letters (and in fact don't need to since we can point our friends to the preserved God-inspired words we have in the Scriptures). Yet like Paul, we can do the latter. We can *remember our friends in prayer*.

"I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day," said Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:3 (ESV).²

What's involved in *remembering someone* in prayer? To be honest, it's a phrase we often toss around loosely without realizing how biblical it is. We hear of a hurting brother and respond, "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. I'll remember you in prayer."

But what does that mean, to *remember* someone in prayer? It certainly wasn't a cliché for Paul. As his letters verify, it's something he spent much time doing.

Romans 1:9-10 "God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I *remember* you in my prayers at all times."

Ephesians 1:16 "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, *remembering* you in my prayers."

Philippians 1:3 "I thank my God every time I *remember* you."

Philemon 4 "I always thank my God as I *remember* you in my prayers."

1 Thessalonians 1:2 "We always thank God for all of you, *mentioning* [same Greek word translated "remember" elsewhere, *mneian*] you in our prayers."

The Greek word used in each of these texts is *mneian* (which appears seven times in the New Testament). The AV translates it as 'remembrance,' 'mention,' and 'memory.' The Greek-English Lexicon offers this definition: "to recall and to respond by making mention of." Interestingly, the word for 'tomb,' *mnama*, is closely related. Literally a tomb is 'a sign of remembrance' (used in Mark 16:2), not just a burial place, but also a place to remember a person that has died.

This summer we've been seeking to learn how to pray as Paul prayed, and if we're going to do that, we must learn to *remember people in prayer*. But again, what precisely does that mean?

I've shared before that when I was a young Christian in the seventh grade, I made it my practice to get down on my knees by my bed at the end of every day, and then brought my checklist to God. "God bless Dad. God bless Mom. God bless my brother Matt and my sister Jennifer. God bless Grandpa and Grandma. God bless my friend Brian, and my friend Buddy, and God bless our dog, Napoleon, our cat Puff." And on and on the list went. I mentioned them all, fearful that something bad might happen if I didn't *remember* them.

Is that what it means to remember people in prayer? No. What then does it mean? We learn from Paul's example in 2 Timothy 1:3-7 that remembering someone in prayer involves three responsibilities. Being intentional, being interested, and being an intercessor. This is the essence of how to pray for a discouraged friend.

I. Remembering someone in prayer involves being intentional (3).

² KJV "...without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." ASV "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day."

Verse 3 says, “I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day (ESV).”³

What we call Second Timothy was the last God-inspired letter that Paul penned. He wrote it around the year AD 67 while isolated in a filthy, dark dungeon in Rome. His days were numbered. He talks about this in 4:6-7, “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

As you may recall, a few years earlier Paul had spent some time under house arrest in Rome. Luke describes that experience at the end of the book of Acts. It was then that he wrote the prison epistles that we’ve explored in previous weeks (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, written in AD 60-61). But apparently, after those three years of his first incarceration in Rome, Paul was released. Concerning what happened next, we can’t be sure. But apparently, the following occurred.

Paul left Rome and traveled to Crete where he left Titus behind (Tit 1:5). Then he went to Ephesus where he left Timothy behind. Paul was always concerned about the well-being of the young churches the Lord had allowed him to establish.

Then he may well have gone to Colossae to see Philemon, as he had planned. He went next to Macedonia and while there wrote two letters. One was to Titus, and the other was to Timothy (what we call 1 Timothy). He told Titus that he planned on spending the winter in Nicopolis on the coast of Greece.

Some time later he fulfilled his dream to take the gospel to Spain. Or did he? We don’t know for sure. The Scriptures are silent on this outcome.

At some point Paul revisited Ephesus where he saw Timothy. He eventually traveled to Troas, where he left his cloak and some books behind with Carpus (which he mentions in 2 Timothy 4:13). Apparently, he ventured to Corinth, and then back to Rome.

Somewhere along the way, Paul was arrested again. Where? We don’t know. Why? We do know that. Because of his preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, he was imprisoned a second time in Rome. And this time he did *not* have the freedom and comfort of his own hired house.

One commentator I read suggested Paul was incarcerated in some dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air. He was in chains (1:16). He wore fetters like a criminal (2:9). He was so isolated that Onesiphorus succeeded in finding him only after a painstaking search (1:17).

Tradition says that not long after Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he was condemned to death, taken to the Ostian Way about three miles outside of Rome, and beheaded.

How does that information affect you? Does it grip your heart to see this great servant of our Lord chained like a dangerous animal in some hole in the ground? After all he had done to help people, it’s not a fitting way to spend your final days on earth.

How did Paul deal with this injustice? Was he bitter? Did he take his pen in hand and vent his frustration with the legal system? Did he lash out against his cruel captors? Did he complain about how God had forgotten him?

Not at all. In fact, rather than being preoccupied with himself, what’s on his heart is something outside of himself. We know this because with his own execution facing him, he wrote a letter, this letter, to encourage a dear friend of his.

Why did Timothy need encouragement? For over fifteen years since Paul recruited him for gospel ministry, Timothy had been Paul’s assistant, sort of his “second man,” if you will. But Timothy had three strikes against him. First, he was relatively young (1

³ NIV84 “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.”

Tim 4:12; 2 Tim 2:22), probably in his mid 30s. Second, he apparently was prone to illness (1 Tim 5:23). And third, he was rather timid by temperament, sort of shy perhaps (we might call him an introvert).

In one commentator's assessment, Timothy was the kind of person who would "rather lean than lead." When he needed guidance, Paul was there. But that's the problem. Soon Paul would *not* be there, and that meant that Timothy would be facing new leadership responsibilities without his mentor.

That's why Paul wrote this letter. I appreciate John Stott's outline of this letter. Stott suggests that Paul gave Timothy (and us) four charges in this letter:

Chapter 1—The charge to *guard* the gospel (1:14).

Chapter 2—The charge to *suffer for* the gospel (2:3, 8, 9).

Chapter 3—The charge to *continue in* the gospel (3:13, 14).

Chapter 4—The charge to *proclaim* the gospel (4:1-2).

With this background in mind, let's ponder carefully Paul's prayer. I've suggested that remembering someone in prayer involves being *intentional*. Prayer doesn't just happen. Paul demonstrates his intentionality in three ways.

A. Paul did so by expressing thanks. He writes in verse 3, "I *thank God*." What a shocking way to begin a letter from death row! Paul could do so only because of God's grace (which he just mentioned in verse 2) and his own *clear conscience* (which he mentions in verse 3). People who don't know what God has done for them by His grace and who lack a clear conscience by His grace *will not* give thanks in hard times. But Paul did. He thanked God, and specifically he thanked God for Timothy.

Please note the connection. Paul's *thanking* God for Timothy and Paul's *remembering* Timothy in prayer went hand in hand. If we're truly thankful to God for someone, we remember them in prayer. And as we remember them in prayer, we express our thankfulness to God for them.

Paul appreciated the people God brought into his life. In this letter alone he mentions twenty-two names. Onesiphorus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, Carpus, Priscilla and Aquila, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, to name a few. Do you know what that list of names says to us? It's evidence that the most important things in life are not *things*, but *relationships*. First a relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ, and then relationships with people come next. Jesus Himself identifies the two greatest commandments in Matthew 22:37-40, "Love the Lord...love your neighbor...All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Know this. I can have a six-figure salary, a \$500,000 house, three cars and a few toys in the garage, and be miserable... *if* my relationships aren't what they should be, with God and with people. On the other hand, I can be chained in a dark dungeon and be thankful. How so? Just look at Paul. By knowing that I am right with God, and with my fellow man.

I found out last week that one of my first cousins died. I hadn't talked to her in years and don't know where she stood with the Lord. Sadly, I learned that she was estranged from others in our family which grieves me. Her passing did prompt the rest of us to have some meaningful interaction with each other. But for her it's too late.

Brothers and sisters, life boils down to relationships. If our relationships with the Lord and others are not right, we're not ready to leave this world. But if they are, what assurance, what confidence, what hope it gives us.

The following observation by John MacArthur is helpful, "While Paul was incarcerated in the dark, damp, dangerous, filthy, and stinking Roman prison, he nevertheless rejoiced that the Lord had given him the privilege of knowing and discipling Timothy. He was not bitter or resentful. He had no anger or hatred for those who placed

him in prison or for the hardened and brutal criminals who were beside him. He did not lament the unjust and cruel execution he knew soon awaited him. His thoughts were on his sovereign God and on the memories of his beloved son in the spirit...”⁴

Remembering someone in prayer involves being *intentional*. Paul demonstrated his intentionality, first of all, by expressing thanks.

B. Paul did so as part of his service to God. “I thank God, *whom I serve, as my forefathers did* (NIV; ESV says “as did my ancestors”).” Paul saw himself as a servant, one who “served” the Living God. He served God by preaching, yes, and by traveling, and by writing letters, but also by remembering people in prayer. *Whom I serve...as I remember you in my prayers*, he told Timothy.

Do we see prayer as an act of service? Paul did. When I get down on my knees and talk to God about the people He has placed in my life, I am engaging in one of the most important acts of service possible. And as with any act of service, it requires self-denying intentionality.

C. Paul did so night and day. “Constantly in my prayers night and day,” says the ESV. Do you like the nighttime? Do you like to be awake in the nighttime? Some of us don’t sleep well at night. Apparently, Paul didn’t either. But he doesn’t complain. He invested his nighttime hours the same way he invested his daytime hours.

It’s worth noting that from inside his dark dungeon, Paul probably never saw the external light necessary to distinguish night from day. Yet his point is clear. Regardless of what time it was, He was praying for Timothy (and others).

If we’re going to remember people in prayer, we must be *intentional*. While most of us would probably agree with that assessment, we may need help with implementation. Perhaps a story can help us. Some of us are like the man in an illustration shared by D. A. Carson:

Lillian Guild tells an amusing story of an occasion when she and her husband were driving along and happened to notice a late-model Cadillac with its hood up, parked at the side of the road. Its driver appeared somewhat perplexed and agitated. Mrs. Guild and her husband pulled over to see if they could offer assistance. The stranded driver hastily and somewhat sheepishly explained that he had known when he left home that he was rather low on fuel, but he had been in a great hurry to get to an important business meeting so he had not taken time to fill up his tank. The Cadillac needed nothing more than refueling. The Guilds happened to have a spare gallon of fuel with them, so they emptied it into the thirsty Cadillac, and told the other driver of a service station a few miles down the road. Thanking them profusely, he sped off.

Twelve miles or so later, they saw the same car, hood up, stranded at the side of the road. The same driver, no less bemused than the first time, and even more agitated, was pathetically grateful when they pulled over again. You guessed it: he was in such a hurry for his business meeting that he had decided to skip the service station and press on in the dim hope that the gallon he had received would take him to his destination.

Interesting little story. And what’s the point of it? Listen to D. A. Carson as he offers this reflection:

It is hard to believe anyone would be so stupid, until we remember that that is exactly how many of us go about the business of Christian living. We are so busy pressing on to the next item on the agenda that we choose not to pause for fuel.

Sadly, Christian leaders may be among the worst offenders. Faced with constant and

⁴ John MacArthur, *Second Timothy*, p. 4.

urgent demands, they find it easy to neglect their calling to the ministry of the Word and prayer because they are so busy. Indeed, they are tempted to invest all of their activity with transcendental significance, so that although their relative prayerlessness quietly gnaws away at the back of their awareness, the noise and pain can be swamped by the sheer importance of all the things they are busily doing.

Of course, they tell themselves, in their heart of hearts praying is of utmost importance. It's just that the overburdened calendar ensures that this month prayer cannot be given the attention it deserves.⁵

If we're going to remember people in prayer, we must be intentional. We can't be passive, but must buy up opportunities to "remember people in prayer". Let me offer some practical suggestions.

Let's begin with a very basic commitment. If we say we'll do it, then let's do it! If someone asks us to pray for them, and we say we will, then let's do it right then. Let's not wait, but begin right away. Do it in this room in a few moments, or in the foyer, or with your neighbor in the yard, or with your co-worker at the office, or friend at school.

Another suggestion is to identify a special place for prayer. Jesus began his day by going to a solitary place and praying (Mark 1:35). Concerning Daniel, we're told in Daniel 6:10, "Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before." Do you have a prayer closet, a place where you intentionally go to talk with God?

Then, I recommend developing a prayer schedule/system. It's helpful to have a methodology for remembering people in prayer. You might use our church directory and take a page or two each day and pray over the church family on a regular basis. As you read their names, thank God for them, and as needs come to mind, ask God to work in their behalf for His honor.

Another system, one I've used over the years, is to take several 3x5 cards, one for each day of the week, and pray for people by topic. For instance, on Mondays I pray for various ministries and leaders (like ABWE, ACBC, Scioto Hills Camp, TSBC, etc), on Tuesdays for our country, state, and local leaders, on Wednesdays for missionaries, on Thursdays for personal friends and partners in the ministry, and on Fridays for my extended family.

D. A. Carson says it well, "It matters little whether you are the mother of active children who drain away your energy, an important executive in a major multinational corporation, a graduate student cramming for impending comprehensives, a plumber working overtime to put your children through college, or a pastor of a large church putting in ninety-hour weeks: at the end of the day, if you are too busy to pray, you are too busy. Cut something out."⁶

And I would add, *get intentional* about it. If we are going to remember people in prayer, we must be *intentional*. Here's a second responsibility that Paul models.

II. Remembering someone in prayer involves being interested (4-7).

As we listen to the following words, there can be no doubt that Paul was *interested in Timothy*. Listen to what he says about him in verses 4-7 (ESV), "As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of

⁵ As told by D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*, pp. 111-2.

⁶ D. A. Carson, p. 114.

God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”⁷

The language is quite personal, isn't it? Paul shows his interest in Timothy by expressing four features he observed in his spiritual son.

A. Paul remembered Timothy's tears (4). “Recalling your tears,” says Paul. Think about that. Those words imply something, don't they? They imply that Paul knew that Timothy shed tears. He knew that because he got close enough to Timothy to see his tears spilling out of his eyes and running down his cheeks.

When did he see that? Perhaps many times. Perhaps the last time they parted company, Timothy broke down and cried. Perhaps Timothy was there when the Roman soldiers hauled off Paul in chains.

Those scenes stayed with Paul. He *remembered* them, and it says much to us about this spiritual mentor. Mentoring people involves more than giving truth. Mentoring involves giving attention. Paul took time to think about people, especially people whom he loved. And he did love Timothy.

“I long to see you,” he continues in verse 4, “so that I may be filled with joy.” That may sound at first like Paul's interest in seeing Timothy is self-motivated, but it's not. Yes, Paul wanted to see Timothy, and in fact later in the letter will give him these instructions, saying in 4:9, “Do your best to come to me quickly,” and in 4:21, “Do your best to get here before winter.” There's no doubt that seeing Timothy would benefit Paul, but Paul knew it would benefit Timothy as well. If Timothy came to Rome, that would mean that Timothy faced his fear, which would be good for Timothy. And that would produce in Paul great joy, for it would indicate that Timothy was back in the game, ready to stand for the gospel even if it cost him his life.

Remembering someone in prayer involves *being interested*. Are you interested in other people? When you're with others, do you want to know about *them*? Do you ask them questions, and then listen, and then take what you learn to your prayer closet? Paul remembered, first of all, Timothy's tears.

B. Paul remembered Timothy's faith (5). Notice verse 5, “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.”

Timothy's father was not a believer in the God of the Bible (Acts 16:1). He was a Greek. But his mother was, and so was his grandmother. Paul says faith *lived* in them.

That's interesting. Paul describes faith as something that *lives* in a person. When it is living in a person, as in the case of Timothy and his mother and grandmother, it produces visible effects that others can see and later remember.

Faith is more than agreeing with some facts about Jesus. It's true that Jesus Christ lived a perfect life, died in the place of sinners on a cross to provide a basis for their forgiveness, and rose again on the third day. Those are historical facts. But merely acknowledging those facts isn't faith, nor does merely agreeing with those facts save a sinner from the wrath of God.

“Repentance is what a man does on Sunday for what he did on Saturday and intends to do on Monday.” So says Chuck Swindoll as he points out the all too prevalent notion

⁷ NIV84 “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.”

concerning repentance. But that's not biblical repentance, and mere intellectual assent to Jesus is not biblical faith.

What is faith? By definition, to have faith means to believe, to trust, to have confidence in, to be persuaded of something. Of what? Actually, it's not *what* but *whom*. Paul reveals the content of his own faith in verse 12, "I know **whom** I have believed, and am convinced that **he** is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."

That's what faith is. *Faith is trusting in the person and accomplishments of Jesus*. Yes, faith is a person (in this case a sinner named Timothy) trusting in another person, (namely in Jesus Christ). And specifically trusting that what Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross and in His empty tomb is for the benefit of the believing sinner. And when faith is present, it is living, meaning it shows up in the life of the person who possesses it.

Take note, moms and dads. We can't give our children faith. We can't inject it into their soul. We can't force them to have faith in Jesus Christ. But we can do this. We can model faith. We can give our children a pattern of faith to follow, as Timothy's mother and grandmother had done for him. Only God can produce faith, and God does that by His grace (Ephesians 2:8), through the instrument of His preached Word (Romans 10:17), and by His sovereign will (John 1:13).

Several years ago I read, *A Spoke in the Wheel*, a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was a German pastor during the second world war and one of the few that saw through the godless intent of the Nazi machine. He was ultimately arrested and imprisoned for his actions, and on April 9, 1945, transported to Flossenbug Concentration Camp and executed.

While in prison, Bonhoeffer wrote the following perspective of faith: "One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world—watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith."⁸

Does that describe you? Have you thrown yourself completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not your own sufferings, but those accomplished by God in the world in the person of His Son Jesus Christ? That is faith which is how we enter God's family, and live in it too.

I'll say it again. Remembering someone in prayer involves being interested in them. In their *tears*. Even more so, in their *faith*. Are we praying for the faith of people in our sphere of influence?

C. Paul remembered Timothy's giftedness for ministry (6). We see this in verse 6, "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."

Timothy had a gift, says Paul. What gift is he talking about? He uses the Greek word *charisma*, literally 'grace-gift.' It's a broad word in the New Testament. Sometimes it refers to general gifts God gives us, but here it has a special sense.

How did Timothy receive this gift? "Through the laying on of my hands," says Paul. Paul used the same imagery back in 1 Timothy 4:14, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you."

Paul seems to have in mind Timothy's commissioning or ordination service. It happened years earlier back in his home church. "The elders laid their hands on you, Timothy, mine included. Remember? Words were spoken about you Timothy (see Acts 16:2), prophecies about the significant role the Holy Spirit had for you in gospel ministry.

⁸ *A Spoke in Wheel*, p. 170

God gave you a gift, my son. He called you into His service. He gave you a special endowment so you could fulfill that service. Now fan that gift into flames!”

Friends, giftedness isn’t enough. Gifted people need people praying for them. Paul knows Timothy is gifted. But Paul also knows that Timothy needs prayer support because ministry takes more than giftedness.

This brings us to the fourth feature Paul observed in his spiritual son. Tears. Faith. Giftedness. Timidity.

D. Paul remembered Timothy’s timidity (7). He says in verse 7 (NIV), “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” Why is Paul telling Timothy this? Timothy knew these truths, didn’t he? He knew that God didn’t give us a spirit of timidity but of power, love, and self-control. Why then say it? Oh, he knew this truth, and perhaps taught others this truth, but he was struggling with this truth, and Paul knew it.

That’s the point. Paul took a genuine interest in Timothy. He knew all about his tears, his faith, his giftedness for ministry, even his timidity. He knew about these things because he loved this man.

Beloved, if we’re going to engage in the ministry of remembering people in prayer, we must *be interested in them*. Back in 2008 or so, Sherry and I went to visit our missionaries in Brazil, including then ninety-year-old Willard Stull. When we were with Willard, he took me by the arm and said, “I can still picture being in your house some twenty years ago, with you, and Sherry, and little Julie. You’d just moved there, and the living room was empty. You had hardly any furniture...” And he continued to describe the scene and the details of our lives then and since. I left his presence that day with no question that this dear brother was remembering my family in prayer, and I knew it because he had taken a genuine *interest* in us.

And so I ask again. Do people know that you are interested in them? When you’re with people, and especially with your church family members, do you ask questions to find out about their interests and needs? Do you know them well enough to know if they’re shedding tears, or struggling in their faith, or wavering in the use of their giftedness, or yielding to their timidity? Paul made it a point to know.

“I need help learning how to do this,” you confess. “I’m such a private person, self-focused is more accurate. I don’t really know what’s going on in the lives of my church family members. What can I do about it?”

Here’s a practical suggestion. Take advantage of the opportunities that come every week. Come to a Sunday School class, and to our Sunday evening and Wednesday evening services, and community groups. These are the services when we share about the needs in our lives and ministries. So just come. Whenever possible, be here. And be intentional when you are here. Be interested in other people. And then take what you learn to the throne of grace by remembering your brothers and sisters in prayer. We can’t pray about what we don’t know, but as we make church services a priority on our schedule, we will grow in our ability to *remember one another in prayer*.

Remembering someone in prayer involves a third responsibility. Be intentional. Be interested. Be an *intercessor*.

III. Remembering someone in prayer involves being an intercessor.

I’m making an assumption in this message and I acknowledge it. Paul doesn’t say in our text that he asked God to do anything in Timothy’s behalf. He just says, “I remember you in my prayers.” Yet based on Paul’s other prayers which we’ve examined in detail this summer, we know that when Paul prayed for people, he brought specific requests to God. Surely, he did the same with Timothy. That’s my assumption.

A. What Timothy needed, Paul asked God to provide. And what did Timothy need? I think he needed the very things Paul just mentioned to him. Behind the apostle's words are these four unspoken requests to Timothy.

One, let your faith show. Yes, Timothy, I remember your faith in the past. Now let it show again in the present.

Two, use your God-given gift. You have a gift, Timothy, a calling and the spiritual equipment necessary to fulfill that gospel calling. Now use it.

Three, don't give in to your fears. I know you're timid by nature, Timothy, but don't be ashamed of the gospel or of me (verse 8). Face your fears and join me in suffering, if necessary, by the power of God who saved and called us (verses 8b-9).

Four, exhibit the power, love, and self-control God has given you. You have what it takes, my son. Now use it.

I know it's an assumption, but I think it has merit. If Paul talked to Timothy about these provisions and needs, surely he was talking to God about them too. And that's called intercession. What Timothy needed, Paul asked God to provide.

And we should do the same with our discouraged friend. Encourage them. And intercede for them. But there's one more way we can help them, as did Paul.

B. What Timothy needed, Paul affirmed God had provided (4:22). I want us to see the final inspired words the apostle Paul ever wrote, the very words with which he closed this letter. Notice 4:22, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

What did Timothy need? That verse sums it up. *First, Timothy needed the presence of the Lord.* Remember, Timothy had a timid spirit, and yet what he needed Paul affirmed he had, declaring, "The Lord be with your spirit." That's both a statement of fact and a request. The Lord be with your spirit, Timothy, and know that He is.

Second, Timothy needed grace, and so do we. The final "you" is actually plural. When Paul says, "Grace be with you," he uses a word that indicates this letter was intended, not just for Timothy, but for public reading. The believers where Timothy served needed grace, too. And so do all of God's people, including us. And what we need, God has lavishly provided for us in Christ. *Grace be with you.*

This is what it takes to remember people in prayer, particularly our discouraged friend. Be intentional. Be interested. And be an intercessor.

Take Inventory: We can't remember what we don't know.

Hence, three responses are in order.

1. *Let's make sure we know the Lord.* Prayer is talking to the Lord, but we can't talk to Him unless we know Him, and we can't know Him unless we know His Son. Do you?

2. *Let's make sure we know the Lord's servants.* Paul remembered Timothy in prayer and did the same for dozens and dozens of others, as his letters indicate. He could *remember them in prayer* because he *knew* them. Do you know the things that are on the heart of your Sunday School teacher and classmates? How about your deacon and deacon care group members? Your missionaries? Your pastors?

3. *Let's make sure we are talking with the Lord about what we know.* What a joy to belong to a church family where people are remembering one another in prayer!

Song of Response: #191 "*There Is Power in the Blood*" (all four verses)

Communion

This evening: Preachers in Training – 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

2:1-2 Austin Hall

2:3-4 Ed Ruggles

2:5-6 Daniel Meadows