

Ready! Set! Go!
A Foundation for Perseverance
2 Timothy 1:1-15

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Text Introduction: First and foremost, Paul’s second letter to Timothy is a call to perseverance. Interestingly, Paul’s letter comes from prison. His encouragement to persevere is not theory, it’s testimonial. (4:6-8) It is widely held that 2 Timothy is Paul’s last letter before his death.

It is my intention for us to walk through this whole book, basically verse by verse, certainly section by section for the next weeks. We have given this theme to this book: Ready, Set, Go. The idea behind this theme is two-fold. First, it is an adequate description of what is happening in this letter. This book originally is a letter from Paul to Timothy. Paul is preparing Timothy in this letter to take the baton, to assume a greater role of leadership in the life of the Church—to take his place. The second idea behind this series is for God to use this teaching to prepare our hearts for a challenge that I want to issue to you individually and to us as a church this Fall.

This Fall, I will issue the challenge to “Do Something” for God that you have never done. We will talk more about that along the way. But today, let’s just dig in to this first chapter.

Text: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, for the promise of life in Christ Jesus:

²To Timothy, my dearly loved son.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day. ⁴Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy, ⁵clearly recalling your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois, then in your mother Eunice, and that I am convinced is in you also.

⁶Therefore, I remind you to keep ablaze^[a] the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷For God has not given us a spirit^[b] of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

⁸So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

⁹He has saved us and called us
with a holy calling,
not according to our works,
but according to His own purpose and grace,
which was given to us in Christ Jesus
before time began.

¹⁰This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

¹¹For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher,^[c] ¹²and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know the One I have believed in and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me^[d] until that day.

¹³Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.¹⁴ Guard, through the Holy Spirit who lives in us, that good thing entrusted to you. ¹⁵This you know: All those in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Introduction: As we see a new generation of students graduating, we see a whole new group asking a question that all of us have asked ourselves many times: “What now?” It’s not just graduates who must deal with this question. In lots of ways, we are all in constant transition.

One of the things that God so longs to see in us is perseverance. In many respects this letter of 2 Timothy is a call to perseverance. It does not matter if you are 6 or 96, God call us to persevere.

There are three things in this text that are important to anyone asking “What now” or “How do I persevere?”

Know what you believe!

To some degree, it is necessary to have changing beliefs on some matters. After all, you might be, today, believing the wrong thing. In this letter, Paul has indicated that Timothy has believed the right things, and is issuing the call to Timothy to persevere in believing the right things. In essence, Paul is urging Timothy and so us to...**Settle what We believe about the Gospel!**

If we keep reading in this text we will see the explanation of the faith that Paul referred to in verse 5.

- Provided by Jesus (9)
- Purpose for life (11)
- Persuaded that God will keep us (12)

Paul mentioned the faith of Timothy’s grandmother and mother, but Paul also acknowledged Timothy’s faith. Everyone must settle what he or she believes about the Gospel.

Billy Graham said “Early in my ministry some intellectual theologians challenged me because they felt I was naive when it came to understanding the Scriptures. As I listened to them, I began to question what I believed. One moonlit night I walked into the woods and spread my Bible over the stump of a tree. ‘Lord,’ I said, ‘I don’t understand everything in this book. But I accept it by faith as your divine Word.’ From that moment on, I’ve not had a doubt that the Bible is God’s inspired Word. The Scriptures have remained my constant guide.”

We must come ourselves to that point when we will say, “This is the Word of God. I do not understand yet all that it says to do, but as God gives me understanding, I will obey, because this is God’s Word.”

Build on what you believe!

That is—“Stir up the Gifts within you!”

Verse 6 challenges us to “keep ablaze” or “stir up” the gift of God within us. This does not mean necessarily that Timothy had allowed the fire to subside, but rather the challenge to always stir up the gift within us. Even in settling what you believe about the Gospel, the challenge is always before us to keep that stirred up within us. Verse 7 is related to verse 6 in giving us 3 results of keeping the fire of God alive within us.

- Power
- Love
- Discernment

Paul wrote to Timothy in a context of a hostile world around him. Paul, himself, is in prison for preaching the message of Jesus. Chapter 3 gives evidence of an escalating time of difficulty as history moves forward. For these reasons, we must “stir up” the gifts within us.

Guard what you believe!

We see this in verse 14. We see before and after that how we are going to do that. In verse 13, we see that we are to “hold on” to sound teaching. In verse 14, we see that we are going to “hold on” by the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 15, we are cautioned that others have already deserted their beliefs.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 is the exclamation point of this letter. I want that sentiment to characterize my life.