

need training in righteousness. Those who outlaw the Bible from our schools or teach it only in a critical manner will, one day, have to answer for their actions. Jesus' most severe condemnation was for those who put stumbling blocks in the way of children.

The Bible equips us to be **proficient, equipped for every good work.**

Andrew Jackson said, "That book, sir, [the Bible] is the rock on which our republic rests."

George Washington put it this way: "It is impossible to govern the world righteously without God and the Bible...."

Horace Greeley asserted, "It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a Bible-reading people."

President Woodrow Wilson urged, "I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on we realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this Book [the Bible]."

Paul needs Timothy to minister to him. He tells Timothy not to be ashamed of him, Jesus' servant, who is in prison and facing almost certain death. He wants Timothy to visit him in prison and be prepared to bear harsh treatment along with him.

Do our friends thank God for our service? Have we shared with them the good news that Jesus died and rose again; that he has paid the penalty of our sin; that we can know him as Savior and Lord and have eternal life? Are we there when they need us?

CONCLUSION

Illustrated letters: Paul's letter illustrates how God lives in the lives of his people. God assures us:

2 Cor 12:9 ⁹...My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.

Paul thanked God for Timothy's faith, for Timothy's gifts and for Timothy's service.

A missionary to India was traveling through a city and stopped to speak to a man beside the road. He talked with the man for a time about Jesus. Then, having to travel on, he gave him a few pages of the Bible in the man's language. The Indian read them and was thrilled to learn of Jesus. To show his gratitude, the man measured the footprints left by the missionary, and made a pair of moccasins. He then traveled 200 miles to give them to the missionary as an expression of thanks. The missionary's life was enriched by the gift, but the Indian man was much more enriched because he had expressed his thanks. Have you ever tried to give 200 miles of thanks?

ILLUSTRATED LETTERS

3. LETTERS TO A FRIEND

2 Timothy 1:3–10; 3:14–17

INTRODUCTION

Illustrated letters: Paul's letter illustrates how God lives in the lives of his people. God assures us:

2 Cor 12:9 ⁹...My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.

We learn more about Christian living as we read what was probably the last letter Paul ever wrote. He writes to his young friend and colleague, Timothy, for whom Paul is so thankful.

THANK GOD FOR YOUR FAITH

Remember, remember the 5th of November, gunpowder treason and plot.

There is no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot.

In 1606 a group of Catholic conspirators attempted to blow up the British Houses of Parliament to rid the country of its Protestant government. The attempt failed. The event is remembered every November. How can we remember something that happened when we were not there? We are asked to do the same at the Lord's Supper: **do this in remembrance of me.** Some things we can remember, we do remember and want to remember. We remember friends, even if we do not see them. Paul, in prison, towards the end of his life, is glad to be able to remember Timothy's faith. Paul had met Timothy when he first went to Lystra. He got to know the whole family, Timothy's mother, Eunice and his grandmother, Lois. Although Timothy's father was Greek, Timothy's mom and grandma had passed on to him the faith of Israel, so Timothy submitted to circumcision but also became a Christian. Paul remembers that:

(a) **TIMOTHY'S FAITH WAS SINCERE** *Sincere* means 'without wax'. Ancient potters sometime filled small holes in pots with wax. The pot looked perfect, but when hot liquid was put in it the wax melted and the pot was useless. Timothy's faith was sincere; all that it should be. It was genuine, unaffected, honest, authentic, heartfelt and true. It was 'unhypocritical'. What a testimony. What a challenge to us. This is what faith is all about. We do not put it on at the church door and leave behind when we leave.

(b) **TIMOTHY'S FAITH WAS PERMANENT** It was *an abiding grace*. Paul could say that it lived in Timothy, because he had accepted

Christ as Savior and Christ lived in him. Can this be said about you?
You have accepted Christ, he lives in your life, permanently.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word;
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, condescending, patient, free.
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,

On to the close, O Lord, abide with me. (*Henry F. Lyte*)

Timothy had a sincere and permanent faith because he had been instructed from childhood in the scriptures, and made that faith his own.

THANK GOD FOR YOUR GIFTS

As well as a sincere faith and a godly heritage, Timothy must also be aware of the gift God has given him. This, he must fan into flame or rekindle. God gives the gift, but we have the responsibility for using it and keeping it alive. It is a gift of special grace – *charisma* – from which we get the word *charismatic*. It comes from *charis*, meaning grace. Paul says Timothy received this gift through the laying on of hands by Paul and the elders, probably at Ephesus. This would have been Timothy's ordination to ministry.

The charisma is not an ordinary gift of God's grace, such as every Christian may seek and obtain according to his need; but it is the special grace received by Timothy to fit him for his ministerial functions. (Bernard)

General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, once sent this message to those under him: "The tendency of fire is to go out; watch the fire on the altar of your heart." Anyone who has tended a fireplace fire knows that it needs to be stirred up occasionally.

Timothy seems to have had a naturally timid nature and was probably not very strong physically. He had been brought up by his mother and grandmother, perhaps sheltered, perhaps sometimes over-protected (a mommy's boy!?).

A timid soldier in our Civil War who, figuring to play it safe, dressed himself in a blue coat and gray pants and tiptoed out onto the field of battle. He got shot from both directions!

God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible. God uses sensitive people, like Timothy, and enables them to be bold for Christ. This is possible when we use the gifts God has given us. It can be a struggle to be diligent in our work for God. Paul also used the picture of the athlete. The race must be run to the end. Like Timothy, we are not to give in to cowardice, however timid we may be. Power, love, self-discipline are the words Paul uses.

Power, to endure, love to care and discipline to keep on looking to Jesus and living like him.

A plainly dressed woman was noticed picking up something on a poor slum street where ragged barefooted little children were accustomed to play. The policeman on the beat noticed the woman's action, and watched her very suspiciously. Several times he saw her stoop, pick up something and hide it in her apron. Finally he went up to her, and with a gruff voice demanded, "What are you carrying off in your apron?" The timid woman did not answer at first. The policeman, thinking she must have found something valuable, threatened her with arrest if she did not show him what she had in her apron. The woman opened her apron and revealed a handful of broken glass. "What do you want with that stuff?" asked the policeman. The woman replied, "I just thought I would pick it up so the glass would not hurt the children's feet."

Be bold, be strong
For the Lord your God is with you
Be bold, be strong
For the Lord your God is with you
I am not afraid (no,no,no!)
I am not dismayed
Because I'm walking in faith and victory
Come on and walk in faith and victory
For the Lord your God is with you. (Morris Chapman)

THANK GOD FOR YOUR SERVICE

As Paul gives thanks for Timothy, he thinks of Timothy's ministry. He urges Timothy not to be ashamed to testify about Jesus. Paul does not mean that Timothy has been ashamed of witnessing and he needs to put things right. He is encouraging Timothy so that his courage will be strengthened. Do not be ashamed of the Gospel. Preach the truth and do not let the critics turn you from your faithfulness to and proclamation of the Word of God. Paul will remind Timothy of the divine origin and nature of the Scriptures.

2 Tim 3:16 - 17 ¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Inspired means God-breathed. We are not told how this inspiration took place. It is simply stated as a fact. When Scripture speaks, God speaks. Scripture is for **teaching** – doctrine: what to believe and the how and why of believing. When necessary, Jesus told people they were wrong. We have the Bible not only to tell us what to do but what not to do. Scripture corrects where there is error, literally *restores to an upright position*. The Bible is our training manual. Beginning in childhood, we