**The Race (2 Timothy)**

**Avoid Godlessness (2 Timothy 1:1-7)**

**Introduction:**

* **As you may recall Paul endured two periods of imprisonment…**
* **The Book of Acts closes with Paul under house arrest in Rome. Although he was always linked to a guard, he lived in his own quarters and was able to have visitors. After his release form house arrest Paul embarked on yet another missionary journey, probably into Spain. Upon his return to Rome, he was arrested for a second time. This time, however, Paul was put in a dark, damp dungeon. Why? The reason most probably lies with the then-emperor of Rome Ceasar Nero.**
* **According to historical evidence, such a megalomaniac was Ceasar Nero that he desired to burn Rome to rebuild it and become known as the supreme architect of a rebuilt Rome. Thus, most historians believe that Cesar Nero was the one who set the fire that did, indeed, burn the city in A.D. 64. Needing a scapegoat for the fire, Nero chose to blame Christians. “These Christians are always talking about being the light of the world,” he said, “but really they’re nothing but a bunch of arsonists and cannibals”-referring to Communion. Eventually, Caesar Nero would ride through his palace grounds, shrieking with glee, as he watched Christians lit as human torches.**
* **Why did Nero descend to such depths of insanity? Historical evidence points to the fact that Nero went insane after he had a discussion with Paul the apostle. Church history indicates that Paul was indeed brough into a discussion with Nero before he was beheaded. Thus, it was at the point that Nero rejected the gospel that he seemingly lost his mind. Awaiting trial before Ceasar, Paul picks up his pen for the last time… Paul was encouraging his associate to keep the fire burning brightly so that it might generate spiritual power in his life.**
* **2 Timothy 2:1-7**
* **Today, we will look at 4 challenges Paul gave to Timothy to avoid Godlessness.**

1. **Grow by having loving relationships (vv. 1-2)**
   1. **Three Love-Deepening Skills to Develop**
      1. **Grace: To give grace is to pass on goodwill to another person. I look out for the best of someone else.**
      2. **Mercy or Compassion: To show mercy and compassion is to be lenient and helpful to someone else. The opposite is to be punitive or hurtful.**
      3. **Peace: When I deepen my love through peace, it means that I try to build more harmony. I fight less and cooperate more.**
   2. **When I develop these three qualities in my relationships with other people I am growing more loving relationships. “Grace” is God’s enabling power, “mercy” is his compassion, and “peace” is stability and tranquility.**
   3. **God as our spiritual Father, Christ Jesus as our Lord and The Holy Spirit are the source of these necessary provisions for our daily Christian Life.**
2. **Having a consistent Prayer Life (vv. 3-4)**
   1. **Paul had developed a deeper prayer life. The second challenge to avoid Godlessness is prayer. While in Prison, Paul was able to increase his prayer life. He had little else to do than pray. Paul starts to pray by thanking God. He does so with a clear conscience. Paul heard about the true God from his forefathers; and now he was serving that God with a pure conscience. The fact that he had a pure conscience helped give power to his prayers.**
   2. **You can sense the emotions in his prayers. It may be since he is about to die. It may also be the fact that he has deepened his relationships with other people, including Timothy. Paul wants his relationship with Timothy even more. We know this because the answer to Paul’s prayer-seeing Timothy again-will give Paul joy. When you look forward to that kind of joy, you are going to pray more. When you deepen your relationships, you are going to pray for them with more intensity, passion, persistence, regularity, and focus.**
   3. **Paul had longed for Timoth’s companionship which was such a joy to him. Even the great apostle at times became lonely, discouraged and in need of support from fellow Christians.**
   4. **It is essential that leaders pray for their people. At times, one will pray in general for groups of people. At other times, we pray for specific people.**
3. **Looking at examples of faith in the church community (v. 5)**
   1. **The third challenge in avoiding Godlessness is confidence in others. Paul recalled his confidence in Timothy in these verses. Paul was confident in Timothy’s ability because of his faith. Timothy had a history of faith which Paul watched. He saw Timothy’s mother and grandmother become Christians. Timothy’s father was a Greek.**
   2. **Acts 16:1: Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.**
   3. **2 Timothy 2:2: and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.**
   4. **So, Paul is watching Timothy and his spiritual growth. He has taken time to see how Timothy will turn out. Based on his experience, Paul is convinced by Timothy’s sincere faith.**
4. **Continuing spiritual Enthusiasm. (vv. 6-7)**
   1. **The central theme of 2 Timothy is Paul’s charge to Timothy to continue with his ministry. This charge is the central theme of 2 Timothy because Timothy was somehow failing to fulfill his ministry calling. The nature of his failure of weakness may be evident in verse seven, where Paul says, “for God gave us a spirit not of fear.” The inference is that Timothy was held back in the ministry because of a timid mind. He had not opposed the false teachers as boldly as Paul had expected after his first letter. This rhetorical thesis statement leads directly into the first argument or proof in the letter, in which Paul continues to exhort Timothy toward more effective ministry.**
   2. **There is a reference to Timothy’s ordination in 1 Timothy 4:14, where Paul also speaks of it as having imparted a ‘special gift’ (the same word as here: Charisma) to him. Here the gift is compared to a fire, the suggestion of rekindle being not so much that it has gone out as that the embers need constant stirring. Gifts are not given fully developed; they need to be strengthened and matured through use.**
   3. **When you go camping, you usually build a fire. After a time of putting wood on the fire, the flames will turn to embers. Unless those flames are completely drowned out by water, you can always rekindle the flames and use the fire again. It is this picture that Paul uses when he states to “rekindle the gift.” The embers of the Holy Spirit need to be constantly stirred up in our lives. For the fire of the Spirit to brighten our ministry, we need to keep the coals stirred up.**
   4. **After the events of the last letter, Timothy might have felt fearful to lead in his present ministry setting. Timothy might have said: “I am not going to stir anything up. Dealing with those false prophets last time really hurt me and wore me out.” Paul was encouraging Timothy to get back up and stir up the Holy Spirit’s gifts within him. It is like riding a horse. You may have fallen off the horse on the trail ride. Once you learn, you can always get back on another horse for the next one.**
   5. **The word fear is better translated “cowardice.” Fear is a natural thing, and it is a good thing. For example, I am afraid of a lion. If there were one loose in the street, I would find a good place to hide. It is normal and good to have a sense of fear.**
   6. **However, Paul is speaking not of a good kind of fear, but of cowardice.**
   7. **How to rekindle the embers of Spiritual Enthusiasm**
      1. **Overcome Cowardice- “fear”**
      2. **Rely on God’s Power- “power”**
      3. **Deepen yourself in God’s love- “love.”**

**Conclusion:**

* **What is the Application of avoiding Godlessness?**
  1. **Growing in Loving Relationships**
  2. **Consistent Prayer Life**
  3. **Looking at examples of living out faith.**
  4. **Spiritual Enthusiasm**