

# Route 66

## 2 Timothy: The Good Fight

Part 55 – March 27, 2011



Paul addresses Galatians “to the *churches* [plural] in Galatia” (*Gal 1:2b*). That’s because Galatia was a Roman province (in modern day Turkey) that included several places Paul visited (and Luke wrote about in “Acts”).

Places like: Pisidian Antioch, Iconium [igh-KOH-nih-uhm], Derbe [DUHR-bih], and Lystra [LISS-truh] ... *Timothy’s* hometown.

[Paul] came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. – *Acts 16:1 NIV*



Unexcavated Tel Lystra in Turkey

This was Paul’s *second*, much happier, visit to the Lystrans. Like Colossae, the Lystra Tel is unexcavated; so the secrets of the Lystrans are waiting to be discovered ... *although*, I think we *know* what they’re gonna find!



Hermes and Zeus

An inscription *was* found (in 1885), dedicating a statue of Hermes (Greek messenger of the gods), to Zeus (Greek father of the gods). The Lystrans were really *big* into Zeus and Hermes!

On Paul’s *first* missionary journey, he and Barnabas had to flee (a stoning) from Iconium to Lystra. Paul meets a Lystran, lame from birth, commands him to stand, and the man jumps to his feet, healed!

When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” Barnabas they called **Zeus**, and Paul they called **Hermes** because he was the chief speaker. – *Acts 14:11-12 NIV*

The priest of Zeus is offering sacrifices to them, the Lystrans are worshipping them, and Paul and Barnabas, *mortified*, tear their clothes and shout down the crowd. Long story short ...

They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. – *Acts 14:19b-20 NIV*

As a Lystran, Timothy not only had fresh breath, he also had first hand knowledge of Paul’s suffering *and* courage for the Gospel.



Ephesus population: 450,000 +/-

And now, superintending the church in Ephesus (a megacity with a larger population than Miami), Timothy is experiencing some persecution of his own, and is in need of Paul's guidance.



2009 Miami population: 433,136

So, in Paul's second letter of encouragement and pastoral advice, he reminds him ...

You, however, know all about ... what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. - 2 Timothy 3:10-11 NIV

Timothy was likely just a boy when these things took place. But, thanks to mom and grandma, years later, when Paul made a second, much happier visit, he found Timothy well prepared for ministry.

... from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. - 2 Timothy 3:15 NIV

Paul credits this to Timothy's faithful mother and grandmother.

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** ... - 2 Timothy 1:5-6a NIV

Even though God uniquely equips us to touch the lives of others in His name; it's up to *us* to fan it into a steady flame.



You ever use one of those weed torches? Fire destroys weeds, but it *also* prepares the ground for a greater crop later (that's why farmers clear their fields with fire). So ... to keep the weeds from returning keep burning! Stir up the fire in your heart until it's a consistently burning desire to know, love, follow, submit to, and represent Christ.



Paul finds a number of ways to help his former apprentice, whom he now calls "my dear son" (1:2) understand that suffering is part of the process and we can't let it throw us off our course. This 1st Century A.D. statue of an athlete stood in Ephesus when Timothy was living there.

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. - 2 Timothy 2:3-5 NIV

I wonder how many times, after this letter, Timothy walked past *this* statue and remembered *these* words from his beloved mentor.

Being half Jewish, half Greek, and having a Bible education and a stellar reputation made Timothy the ideal apprentice for Paul.

The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of [Timothy]. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. – *Acts 16:2-3 NIV*

Because of his access to both cultures, Paul often used him to deliver or co-deliver his epistles/letters. And Paul became the spiritual father that Timothy never had.

... you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. – *Philippians 2:22 NIV*

And now, shackled in perhaps this dungeon (near the coliseum and already 700 years old), Paul writes his last known letter, his last surviving words, to encourage his “dear son”, Timothy, even as Paul awaits and expects his own soon-coming execution.



Mamertine Prison, Rome

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. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. – *2 Timothy 4:6-8 NIV*



It's rather difficult to read Second Timothy and come to the conclusion that Christianity offers any kind of quick and easy solution to suffering. At this point in history, Nero is on the throne, Christians are being tarred and lit up like torches, and Paul says, “Only Luke is with me” (4:11).

You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ... Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me ... – *2 Timothy 1:15; 4:10a NIV*

So Paul must be *really* discouraged ... right? Not to mention, *livid* about being deserted in his hour of need ... *right?!?*

At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. – *2 Timothy 4:16-17a NIV*

Do you know what Paul's “encouragement” to Timothy is?

... do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord ... But **join with me in suffering for the gospel**, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace ... given us in Christ Jesus ... – *2 Timothy 1:8-9 NIV*

From his cell, Paul is exhorting Timothy to tell the same story that has earned him desertion, suffering, and a death sentence.

And this is how Paul *starts* the letter! To believe for a moment that the promise of the Christian life is good health, a comfortable income, and a pleasant retirement requires psychotic-level denial of what's actually in the Bible. We've been called to a "holy life" not an *easy* life. To be "holy" means to be set apart and dedicated to the service of God.

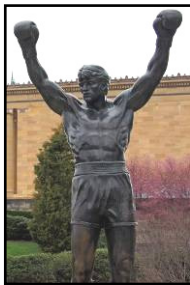


And, as Paul exhorts Timothy to stand strong (1:7), warn others (2:14), Flee evil desires (2:22), and prepare for tough times (3:1), he points him to the *only* tool that can thoroughly equip us.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped ... - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV

Our challenge is that *we're* not *really* persecuted. Someone might *gossip* about us - not *quite* the same as being fed to a lion. And we can let this *incredible blessing* warp our thinking. We can get so comfy in our semi-Christian, frog-kettle culture, that we confuse *trust* with *entitlement*, and *expect* God to give us the *good* things we want, like a successful surgery or a job. And all along, what God wants is for us to be learning to depend on Him for the strength and wisdom and maturity to stay faithful to *His* purpose no matter what happens or who abandons!

There'll be moments in your uniquely 21st century, American life when you'll *decide* whether to stay the course or desert. I've already made my decision and I'm preparing for it daily. So, even if my retirement fund takes a nosedive; even if a blood test comes back with the worst result; even if those I love betray my trust; I will continue to live in a way that will allow me to say ...



I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. - 2 Timothy 4:7 NIV

With all due respect to Charlie Sheen ... *that's* winning. The enemy loves to whisper in your ear, that the fight has been fought, and *you lost* ... but, that's a *lie*. If you've got breath, the fight ain't over! The Lord is much more focused on the *final* bell than the first. And no matter how poorly we begin - Paul's "hobby" was killing Christians! - we can finish well.

Paul ends the letter with some personal requests.

Do your best to come to me quickly ... When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus [KAHR-puhs] at Troas [TROH-az], and my scrolls, especially the parchments. ... Do your best to get here before winter. - 2 Timothy 4:9,13,21a NIV

I'm guessing that dungeon got awfully cold. We don't know if Timothy made the 1000 mile trek before Paul was martyred; but a tiny, mysterious verse, at the end of "Hebrews", lets us know that he *did* follow in his mentor's footsteps.

... our brother Timothy has been released. - Hebrews 13:23 NIV

As Paul passed the torch (1:13), he encouraged Timothy, and us, to fan the flame (1:6), burn brightly (1:7), and ignite others (1:8).