

Week of October 14-20

THE COWARDLY LION

Scripture Reading: Read 2 Timothy 1

Next month, our county's all volunteer theater organization will be producing Frank L. Baum's classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, for our community. There is probably no reader of this devotional who is not familiar with the tale of Dorothy and her dog, Toto, the Tin Man, The Cowardly Lion, and the Scarecrow, or the songs *Over the Rainbow* and *Follow the Yellow Brick Road*, or the line, "There's no place like home!"

If this production were being held back in the 1st century, Timothy would have been a likely candidate to play the role of the Cowardly Lion based on what we know of him from the New Testament. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, Paul has to challenge the Corinthians to treat Timothy properly so he wouldn't be frightened: *"If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers."* In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul gave Timothy instructions on what to do with his tender stomach and his weak constitution: *"Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses."* Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul exhorted Timothy on the need to fight the good fight (1:18; 6:12). In 2 Timothy, Paul reminds Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God which is him (1:6). Paul commands Timothy not to be ashamed to testify of the Lord or of Paul (1:8). Instead, he wanted Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2:1) and to endure hardship (2:3; 4:5). These things taken together imply that Timothy had a tendency towards timidity.

Do you have timidity tendencies too? Could you audition for the role of the Cowardly Lion? If so, then listen in to what Paul has to say to Timothy in today's chapter reading: *"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."* Paul repeats this thought in Romans 8:15 when he writes, *"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship!"* It's clear, isn't it? That timidity tendency you have is not of the Lord. It may be a spirit of fear from the enemy. It may be due to unconfessed and unaddressed sin. It may come from the result of trauma in your life. It may come from unbelief or flow out of faulty theology or thinking, but you can be sure of this: no matter where it came from, it does not flow from the throne of God. God has not given you a spirit of timidity. He has given you a spirit of power from his Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), a spirit of love that drives out all fear (1 John 4:18) and a spirit of self-discipline to endure whatever challenges come your way. If you still want to be a lion, then be the lion of Proverbs 28:1 – *"The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion."*

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Commit 2 Timothy 1:7 and 1 John 4:18 to memory. Ask the Lord to reveal to you the source of any ungodly fear and timidity and then give it to Jesus. Pray for the Lord to empower you to live in light of 2 Tim 1:7 and 1 John 4:18.

Take-a-way: *In Christ, believers can be bold as a lion.*