

Staying on Fire

AN INTRODUCTION, from Acts 16	1) The work of the gospel is <u>powerful</u>
	2) The work of the gospel is <u>personal</u> and <u>particular</u>
	3) There is <u>a price to pay</u> to get in on it
	4) Paying that price <u>demonstrates the power of the gospel</u>
	5) The work of the gospel <u>calls for great discernment</u>
	6) The work of the gospel <u>calls for great diligence</u>

AND NOW ... PAUL'S 2ND LETTER TO TIMOTHY 2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that *it is* in you as well. For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

→ Paul dying letter of encouragement to Timothy.

Timothy is often thought of as a weak young man ?

- ✓ As seen in Paul's language: "**my beloved son**" / "**mercy**" / the references to their heritages: **vss. 3,5 / "longing to see you"**
- ✓ As seen in Paul's references to **Timothy's tears** (!) ---- and to "**a spirit of timidity**" ~ 'cowardice'
- ✓ And there are other references in Paul's writings

e.g. **1 Corinthians 16:10-11** Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace...

But maybe this is unfair! On the one hand, this is Paul the Apostle: **In the past**: tortured for his faith over and over again / **in the present**: in a Roman prison cell awaiting execution / **in the future**: executed.

And Timothy is established as a man of good reputation:

Philippians 2:19-23 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me...

And the stakes WERE high --- and would get higher in the days ahead. So maybe we should see this letter as a **call to a good strong Christian to stay strong**. And maybe that is exactly the message from God to you this morning!

And maybe not! Maybe you ARE afraid these days. If ever you ARE inclined to feel afraid, remember that a "spirit of timidity" – it is NOT God at work within you.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

But there is something God does within us to enable us to stand up and face our fears, and get on with the work that He has given you to do. **A spirit of power and love and discipline**: a spiritual ability to do the work that God has given you --- **POWER** ---- with the right motivation: **LOVE**: for God and for the people He brings into your experience --- and with the right perspective: **DISCIPLINE = SELF-CONTROL = SOUNDNESS OF MIND**.

So here at the end of his life on earth, Paul writes words of encouragement to Timothy to lay hold of the **POWER**, to act in **LOVE** and to think in a **DISCIPLINED** way so as to be ready and willing to **PAY THE PRICE** of the privilege of serving God in the work of communicating the gospel. And in the first place, Paul's instruction is a reminder...

2 Timothy 1:6 "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

And here we are, as Christians --- if we ARE Christians --- and as a church --- called upon by God to do His work: the work of the gospel. The work of getting it out and getting it in.

And in some ways, it is clear to us what that means we must do. And in some ways, it isn't yet clear.... But what we are being called to do is to get "on fire" for the Lord, and to stay "on fire" --- and to burn with a holy zeal --- and not to burn out or settle down... or cool off: and maybe that's the point: because being cool can mean the opposite.

So what does that mean, in September 2006? A good, back-to-school, back-to-real-life, end of summer kind of question!

There is a gift of God that requires us to tend to In the way that a fire needs to be tended: Two questions; two answers, two applications, and so two challenges for us all.

QUESTION#1 What is this gift? The Holy Spirit? Salvation? Faith? The Word? The gospel?

ANSWER#1 The gift is our "spiritual gift(s)" "laying on my hands" / 1 Timothy 4:14
Not complicated! Ask people who know you!

1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **Whoever speaks**, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; **whoever serves** is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

QUESTION#2 How do we kindle afresh or fan into flame our spiritual gifts?

ANSWER#2a) [Application #1] Add fuel The Word of God.

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD...

Jeremiah 20:9 But if I say, "I will not remember Him Or speak anymore in His name," Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

→ Add fuel! Add the Word of God to your life → read, listen to preaching, study, memorize: meditate

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

ANSWER#2b) [Application #2] Add oxygen! The breath of God.... The Spirit of God

Luke 11:13 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"

1 Corinthians 2:12,13 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (bringing together spiritual people and spiritual truth)

→ Add oxygen! Add prayer to your life! → Ask God to fill you with His Spirit: to empower you / embolden you / toughen you / enCOURAGE you!
And then as God calls you to **Pay the Price** (to suffer for the gospel) you'll find yourself wonderfully up to it!

Hebrews 13:23 Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.

2 Timothy 1:6-7 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

So the challenge this morning, at the beginning of this new study is ***to be diligent in studying the Word***, Sundays through to December and throughout the week, on your own and in small groups And ***to pray!***

Are you ready to commit yourself to this plan of action?