

Rekindle Your Spiritual Gifts. 2 Timothy 1

Introduction

"Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

(2Ti 1:6-7 NKJV)

Last week we talked about Timothy's awesome spiritual heritage. Paul reminds Timothy of how God has abundantly blessed him. He encourages Timothy to come out of the shadows and let his light shine. He tells Timothy, "Don't live in fear; let the Holy Spirit produce in you power, love, and a sound mind. Fan into flame the gifts God has given you." That is God's call to all of us. There is a time when we must be able to say no to fear and yes to faith.

The "gifts of God" are given to every believer the moment of salvation when we choose to follow Jesus. These gifts are the divine equipment the Holy Spirit gives us, so we have everything we need to live for Christ in this evil world. We don't start the fire; God does that! But Paul tells us to stir up the fire that we've allowed to weaken. Fan into flame the fire that once burned brightly, and use your gifts and talents to serve the Lord!

God lights the fire inside you, but you must fan the flame! It's your choice to let the passion of Christ burn in your soul! Whatever your gift, only you can stir it up and use it to glorify God.

If you can teach, then teach.
If you can preach, then preach.
If you can help, help.
If you can sing, sing.
If you can cook, then cook.
If you can give, give.
If you can build, build.
If you can serve, then serve.
If you can lead, lead.

Each one of us can do something for God, and most of us can do more than one thing for the Lord. Paul tells the Colossian believers, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col 3:17 NKJV)

In these prophetic days, we see our world plunging from one crisis into the next. The church needs "all hands on deck" if we want to be God's voice of hope that will help people survive these times. God calls every believer to an active faith, not isolation and fear. We need to find ways to stay engaged and make a difference.

Verse 7 tells us we already have everything we need to do God's will. If you're a Christian, it's inside you, put there by God. You don't need more faith. You need to unleash the faith you already have! Fear comes from the Devil. 1 John 4:8 says, "God is love!" and verse 18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (1Jn 4:18 NKJV)

The Devil will tell you, "You aren't qualified enough, or you aren't outgoing enough. You don't have what it takes, or intelligent people are too smart to believe in God." Thoughts like that don't come from God. Never listen to the Devil because even if he speaks the truth, you can be sure it's for the wrong reasons. The Bible says that Satan is a liar from the very beginning. He is a master at twisting the truth to keep you from stirring up your gift and serving the Lord.

I. Refuse to be intimidated.

Paul says to stir up the gift of God within you and refuse to be intimidated. In verse 8 Paul writes, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason, I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2Ti 1:8-12 NKJV)

Paul knew that he was "the Lord's prisoner," and that he was in prison by God's design. There are times when all of us face the temptation to be ashamed of our faith. Maybe you keep quiet at work because you fear the reaction of your coworkers. Maybe you don't speak up at school for fear of what your classmates will say about you. Maybe you play down your faith because you don't want to offend anyone or you want to be politically correct. Taking that approach is like saying, "I've found a cure for the Coronavirus, but I'm afraid to tell anyone because they might not believe me." If a person had a cure for COVID-19, wouldn't it be criminal not to share it with others?

Jesus has a cure for the sins of the whole world. And as a Christian, as a follower of Christ, how can we possibly keep silent about a cure that guarantees Eternal Life? How can you keep something like that to yourself? Paul says, "That is why I am suffering as I am." The Apostle Paul is proof that a bold witness and suffering usually go hand in hand. You cannot separate them. If you choose to go public with your faith, someone won't like it, and you'll pay the price for your faith eventually.

In verses 9-12, Paul explains the reason for his boldness. He says we can be bold because of what God has done for us. God saves us by grace, and that grace has

come to us through Christ. Jesus IS the Good News that conquered Death and provided immortality that will one day replace this fleshly mortal life. The gospel message victoriously proclaims the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave.

Paul says, "We have not believed fables; we believe the truth of God." Christ has abolished death. Our house of clay may die, but our spirit is eternal! Christians, don't stay dead! The Bible says when Jesus comes again, He will change our physical bodies into a glorified body that will never die. Knowing this transforms our entire view of suffering and death. We are not afraid of physical death because we have eternal life. Paul says, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether die, we die unto the Lord, therefore, whether we live or whether we die we are the Lords. We win either way.

When it comes to sharing your faith, don't be intimidated by others. If people ask you questions, you can't answer, open the textbook and get the answer out of the book of life! Reject the fear and stand firm in your faith. And if you face suffering for the sake of the gospel, embrace it. Paul preached the gospel without fear. He was devoted to telling the world about Jesus. How could he do it? He had a personal encounter with Christ. His dedication landed him in prison, facing a death sentence. And yet he isn't afraid. And he's not trying to manipulate the situation so he can be released. Paul has a peace that keeps his heart and mind secure and bold even in the face of imminent death. In the darkness of a Roman jail, living under the sentence of death, Paul is triumphant in faith and confident of his eternal future.

In verse 12 he says, "For this reason, I also suffer these things; nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2Ti 1:12 NKJV)

Our hope is not in what we believe or what we can do. Our hope is in what Christ has already done! Paul says, "I know the One to whom I have committed my eternal destiny. I know who He is, and without question or any hesitation, I leave myself in his hands." Spurgeon wrote, "If you are trying to keep your own soul, you are in serious trouble and will be rudely surprised one day. You cannot keep yourself safe. Your only hope is to entrust all that you are and have to Jesus. Lay it all at his feet, and you will be safe."

Proverbs 16:2 says, "All the ways of a man *are* pure in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the spirits. Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established." (Pro 16:2-3 NKJV)

Don't be afraid, and don't be intimidated to live your faith. You may be mocked or ridiculed for what you believe, but you can be sure that God will vindicate you in the end. Again, Paul says, "...I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day." (2Ti 1:12 NKJV)

One day, the truth will be known to the entire universe. And all those who trusted their lives to the promises of God will be vindicated.

II. Commit to the Gospel Message.

Commit yourself to the gospel message. Look at what Paul writes in verse 13, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (2Ti 1:13-14 NKJV)

Christians who want to make a mark for God in this generation must commit themselves to the purity and truth of the gospel message. That’s not a popular position right now. Fear has pretty much dominated the world these past few months. I wish I could tell you this is the last time we’ll have to face something like this. But the New Testament truth is that as we head toward the end of the age, these kinds of things will become more prevalent. Christians will need to make some tough decisions about how they will live their lives during the last days before Jesus comes.

Paul tells Timothy to keep the blueprint of truth he has received and guard it against those who would corrupt it or change it or amend it or dilute it in any way. If we stop keeping and guarding the truth, others will come and change it to meet the whims of the new generation. We do not have God’s permission to change the gospel! We are to preserve the truth as the Holy Spirit inspired it to be: the Word of God. We are to hold it, guard it, and then preach it everywhere we go. The Word of God is not the first draft of a term paper that we “blue pencil” out parts we don’t like. The Bible is a final, finished version. If you start to water down the truth of God’s Word, you will find yourself questioning every doctrine of scripture.

Many churches today have done precisely that, and it’s why they aren’t sure if Jesus is the only way to heaven, or why they support taking the life of an unborn child and are so confused about gender and so many other issues. Somewhere along the way, personal preference embraces a new relative truth. Those who don’t guard the truth allow it to be corrupted. It happens so slowly that we don’t see it at first. Error creeps into the church little by little, unnoticed at first, until one day, false doctrine dominates the church. That cycle has been repeated time and again throughout church history.

Every generation needs a spiritual revival. The next generation must experience for themselves the undeniable truth that Jesus died for our sins and offers us salvation and Eternal Life. Paul says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1Co 1:18 NKJV)

It is the genuine encounter with Christ that causes you to keep and guard the sacred truth of God in your generation. It is that kind of faith that causes you to commit to proclaiming the gospel message.

III. Respond to God's call.

Living the Christian life is not for the weak! Paul writes in verse 15, "This you know that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered *to me* at Ephesus." (2Ti 1:15-18 NKJV)

No matter how sincere your work and prayer for Christ, there are always some who will turn against you. In this case, Paul mentions two names—Phygellus and Hermogenes. They represented a larger group of Christians from Asia (modern-day Turkey) who turned away from Paul after he was thrown into prison. What a crushing blow that must have been. People Paul loved turned against him. People he thought he could trust disappeared. People into whom he had poured his life abandoned him when he needed them most.

But that is not the whole story. Even though some fell away, others heard the good news and responded in faith even in the moment of crisis. Paul mentions one such man—a hero named Onesiphorus who, when he heard Paul was in prison, came to Rome and searched until he found him. Unlike those who were embarrassed by Paul's chains, Onesiphorus proved that he was a true friend. He came as a breath of fresh air to that dark and damp Roman prison. Onesiphorus stands for all those Christians who take the words of Jesus to heart when He said, "I was in prison, and you came to visit me" (Matthew 25:36). Onesiphorus began one of the first "prison ministries" in Christian history, but he would certainly not be the last. God bless all the modern-day sons and daughters of Onesiphorus who remember those who are forgotten by society because they are behind bars.

Conclusion

As we stand back and look at II Timothy 1, several things stand out clearly. It is crucial that we are not ashamed of Jesus or of being a Christian. It is always important to stand up and stand fast for the gospel. It is equally important to stand with those who suffer for the Lord.

Martin Luther said that a soldier's test of loyalty is if he shows up where the battle is hottest. Anyone can be a soldier when there's no war to fight, but it takes a special kind of courage to go where the battle is raging. Paul's message to his timid yet loyal protegee is clear: "Timothy, stand fast for the gospel. Never be ashamed of the gospel. And don't be ashamed of me because I am in chains."

We live in amazing times when the world itself seems to be undergoing a seismic change. It is no time for neutrality! Everyone we meet is either going to heaven or hell. There is no third option. We cannot give in to despair, and we must never lose hope. There are too many people in this world who still need a genuine encounter with Jesus Christ.

These are great days to be alive, perhaps some of the most important days in all of history. Don't let the current events discourage you. God himself stands behind the gospel message. Our part is to be faithful. So, stand fast, be a bold witness, and entrust your future into the hands of the Lord. Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Rom 1:16 NKJV)

No matter what the cost, make your choice to live for Jesus.