

II TIMOTHY 1:1-7
PASSING THE TORCH!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 1 as we begin our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to his son in the faith, Timothy.

Keep in mind that First and Second Timothy and Titus make up what are known as the *"Pastoral Epistles."*

And these three epistles were written to two young pastor/preachers who worked with Paul. In fact, Paul had led both of them to Christ and they eventually joined his missionary team.

Remember that the focus of I Timothy was Paul dealing with what the church is all about or as he put it in I Timothy 3:15, **"but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."**

What is the church to proclaim?

THE WORD OF GOD – THE GOSPEL MESSAGE!

What is the foundation of the church or what is the church built upon?

THE WORD OF GOD!

How important that is for every pastor in America and around the world, that the Word of God must be taught, and it must be taught verse by verse through the whole Bible. We are not to pick and choose what we want to teach and what we don't. It is the whole counsel of God, from Genesis through Revelation!

And make no mistake about it, this is what the church needs to understand.

Why is this so important?

Look at how people conduct themselves in church, look at what they believe, worldly wisdom instead of Godly wisdom. Their behavior is based on what they are taught and if they are not taught the Word of God, then their actions will reflect that!

Keep in mind that prior to Paul's writing of I Timothy, he was in prison. We saw that in our study of the book of Acts.

As the book of Acts closes, we are told, "**Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.**" Acts 28:30-31.

Paul was under house arrest, and he was chained to a soldier twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. But that is not the end of the story for Paul.

Paul was released from prison for a time since there were no real charges against him. Nero let him go after, I am sure, Paul gave him the Gospel message!

After Paul was released, Paul revisited some of the churches he ministered to, including Ephesus and maybe traveling as far as Spain.

While in Ephesus though he saw some of the problems. He saw false teachers with their false doctrine. He saw leadership that was in trouble, some even leading the people away from the truths of God found in the Word of God.

So we see that Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to handle some of these problems and he continued on to Macedonia where he wrote this first letter to Timothy and Titus, these young pastors, in around 63-64 A. D. Titus being written shortly after this first letter to Timothy.

Now, in July of 64 A. D. Nero ordered the torching of his own city, Rome. In fact, according to historians, it was on July 19, 64 A. D. that a fire started in the woodsheds near the Circus Maximus.

Later it was reported that Nero's servants were seen running from the sheds just before the blaze started. The fire engulfed the city.

This fire continued on for some 10 days and torched 2/3 of downtown Rome.

And make no mistake about it, everyone suspected Caesar Nero to be the arsonist. He burned his own city just so he could rebuild it in honor of himself.

This fire affected the rich and the poor, from the political people to the religious people and they were not happy.

Of this the Roman historian Tacitus wrote, "***But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor and the propitiations of the gods did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration [fire] was the result of an order by Nero. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most tortures on a class hated for the abominations, called Christians by the populace.***"

So the people knew that Nero burned Rome, but he placed the blame on Christians, they were the ones who started this fire that burned their homes, and thus, the start of the Roman persecution against Christians began. And this persecution grew and grew!

Nero had Christians burned at the stake to light his parties!

Nero clothed Christians in animal skins - threw them to wild dogs - and watched them get mauled!

Christians under Nero were crucified - executed by gladiators - and torn apart by ferocious lions!

He tied them to poles and poured pitch on them, lit them on fire and rode through the streets on his chariot naked, watching them burn to death!

Nero's persecution was relentless and merciless.

So even though Nero released Paul from this first Roman imprisonment, now this was going on and by the time of this epistle Paul had been rearrested, put in chains, and was now languishing in a Roman prison. He was treated as a common criminal with little light to read or write by, no sanitation, and no prospect of relief except by death.

Keep in mind that Paul was a Roman citizen and thus, he could not be thrown to the lions or crucified, so he was awarded the easiest form of execution the Roman government afforded its capital offenders, death with a sword by decapitation.

This increasing persecution occurred around 66 A. D. and this time Paul was not placed under house arrest, but he was placed in a dungeon called the Mamertine prison that was nothing more than a dungeon with a hole on the top to let light in and food in.

It was dark, it was cold, it was damp, it was filthy, it stunk as you can imagine and that is where Paul was.

You can go to Rome today and visit the Mamertine prison, which was nothing more than a holding cell until the prisoners could be executed, as was going to happen to Paul.

And it was in this setting that he wrote for the last time to his beloved son in the faith a final word of exhortation.

And what we see here in II Timothy is that Paul deals with the coming apostasy, the apostasy I believe we are seeing in our day, and how Timothy was to combat this apostasy that began in his day and has increased to where we are at today.

J. Vernon McGee, in regard to the apostasy that Paul speaks of in this letter, wrote, *“In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as ‘total desertion of the principles of faith.’ So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truth of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but he has repudiated [or renounced] them.”*

And as we will see, Paul told Timothy what to do and he warned him and us as well, to **“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:2-5.

We will see in II Timothy chapter 3 that Paul warned Timothy of this coming apostasy and to combat that you ***PREACH THE WORD!*** And it doesn’t matter what people want, you don’t give them what they want, you give them what they need, ***THE WORD OF GOD!***

Prior to writing I Timothy, Paul was released from Prison, as I have said. But now things have changed and here in II Timothy, Paul is not that optimistic, he knows that Nero is going to put him to death for his faith!

Now what happened to Nero who only a few years earlier released Paul from prison and now is planning to execute him?

We don't know for sure, but Paul did witness or bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to Nero during his first imprisonment, before he was released.

He presented Jesus Christ to Nero, he heard the truth, and it must have been very convicting and yet, he hardened his heart to it, he rejected Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior and shortly after this, he set Rome ablaze, he went insane!

As I have said, he would gather Christians, tie them to poles naked, pour pitch upon them and then start them on fire and ride past them in his chariot naked!

That is not normal, and it is possible that in rejecting the truth that was before him, the heavy conviction, he went completely in the other direction, maybe even being demon possessed!

That is a possibility, we don't know for sure, but obviously something drastic happened to this man in his life to cause him to act like this.

A short time after Paul wrote this letter he was martyred for his faith. And, according to tradition, he was beheaded for his faith on the Ostian Way, west of Rome by orders from Nero.

So Paul knew his earthly life was coming to an end and he was passing the mantle of his ministry to his son in the faith, Timothy.

In a sense, this is Paul's last will and testament and so what he has to say, his final words are very important, he is not going to waste them.

The last words we say can be and should be important. What are we leaving behind for others to see? That is important.

In the will of Pringles creator, you know, those potato chips in a can, Fredric Baur, when he died in 2008, requested that his ashes be placed in a Pringles can, and they were! We are not sure of the flavor of the can he was put into, but I am sure it was a little spicy!

And then there was Frisbee creator Ed Headrick, who, per his request, had his ashes molded into frisbees and given to his family and friends. I don't know how many family and friends he had, but if he had a lot, he must have been a big guy! Just saying.

Now those are funny but truly, what are we leaving behind for family and friends so that they may grow in the Lord or come to the Lord?

During a battle in the Civil War, a Union General stood watching over the wall. His officers urged him to duck, but he refused. He said, "***They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist_____.***" Famous last words!

"Pistol Pete" Maravich died as he lived, playing basketball. He collapsed during a friendly game in a church gym.

Shortly before his death he wrote: "***I have finally realized after 40 years that Jesus Christ is in me.***"

Now those are famous last words! It was not a focus on himself, Pete Maravich, but on Jesus Christ and what the Lord had done in his life.

Jim Elliot, a missionary who was martyred in 1956, at the age of 29, wrote: "***He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.***" Famous last words! We still quote those words, not words about Jim Elliot, but words about the Lord and what we do for Him!

And missionary C.T. Studd wrote, "***Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.***"

For Paul, sitting in this filthy hole in the ground waiting for his execution, you wouldn't expect a letter of encouragement and yet, that is what Paul leaves with Timothy.

You see, he lived what he believed and thus, no matter what came down the pike, even death, it was not going to change him, it was not going to move him from the joy he had in the Lord.

If you were to give a theme to this letter, I think it would be “*Faithfulness in the face of hardship.*” Paul did not want Timothy to give up the fight even if more hardship was to come his way and he used his life as an example for Timothy to follow.

I have called this study – ***PASSING THE TORCH!***

The reason being is that Paul knows his earthly life is coming to an end and he wants to warn and encourage Timothy in the work that was before him as Paul passed the torch to Timothy to continue on in the work!

I have broken the verses that we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

LIFE NOT DEATH – II TIMOTHY 1:1

LOVE FOR TIMOTHY – II TIMOTHY 1:2-5

KEEP THE FIRE BURNING – II TIMOTHY 1:6-7

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in II Timothy chapter 1, starting in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as Paul writes from the Mamertine Prison in Rome to Timothy who is in Ephesus, the final words to his son in the faith.

II TIMOTHY 1

VERSE 1

Now here is a question I have for you. Obviously, Paul knew Timothy, so why did he list his credentials, expound on his calling to Timothy?

Keep in mind that various leaders probably read this letter in the various churches as well as these letters being shared with the congregation, and thus, Paul wants them to know that his calling was from God and not the will of man.

Why was that important?

Because it was showing that Paul had the authority to speak for God and these words were not born out of the heart of Paul, but out of the mouth of God to Paul.

And for all of us, in all we do for the Lord, it should be from a calling that God has placed upon on lives. If it isn't. If it is just something we want to do, then when things don't go the way you want, you will drop out, you will stop the work.

And I have seen that over the years, and it is never good, it hurts people, people who were counting on them to serve and because some need was not met, they stopped! If your calling is from God, none of these things should move you from the course that God has for you!

Paul also speaks of "**the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,**" why?

Think about this for a minute. Paul is in prison, the Mamertine prison there in Rome. And I can't imagine what it looked like or what it smelled like. It was horrible!

And what is Paul doing there?

Well, he is awaiting his death for his faith in Christ!

Well, let me clarify that. This is what was going to happen to Paul. But Paul isn't awaiting death, his mind and heart are full of the promise of eternal life in Christ!

Hanging over his head isn't a gloomy cloud but a glorious sunrise! Jesus has guaranteed him eternal life!

Yes, Paul was facing death and that was going to come very soon for Him. But Paul realizes that there is eternal life with Jesus even though these bodies of flesh will go back to the dust of the earth.

Why is that important?

Because having a proper perspective keeps the door closed to the enemy who wants to bring doubt and discouragement into your life.

Paul, during his first imprisonment in Rome, said in Philippians 1:21-26, **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”**

Paul was ready to go home, to be with the Lord, but he felt at that time God would spare him so that he could minister to, build up the people in the faith.

That time has now passed, and Paul will be taken home to glory very soon!

In Valladolid, Spain, where Christopher Columbus died in 1506, stands a monument commemorating the great discoverer.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the memorial is a statue of a lion destroying one of the Latin words that had been part of Spain’s motto for centuries.

Before Columbus made his voyages, the Spaniards thought they had reached the outer limits of earth.

Thus, their motto was ***“Ne Plus Ultra,”*** which means ***“No More Beyond.”***

The word being torn away by the lion is “*Ne*” or “*no*,” making it read “*Plus Ultra*.”

Columbus had proven that there was indeed “*more beyond*.”

Yes, there is more beyond the death of these physical bodies. And Jesus has given us assurance of eternal life with Him. You see, by His death and resurrection we are assured of being raised in glory one day.

That yes, these earthly bodies will go back to the dust of the earth, but our soul and spirit will go to be with the Lord, where He has prepared a new body, an eternal body for us.

Paul spoke of this in I Corinthians 15:20-23, where he wrote, “**But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.**”

Because He rose, we too will rise one day and that is a promise of God and God does not, God will not go back on His Word! Those that are His, those who have repented of their sins and asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives will be raised in glory. Those that have rejected Him will also have an eternal body that will ultimately be in the Lake of Fire!

Now some may be confused about being raised from the dead, what that is all about.

And Paul will answer that as he goes on to say in I Corinthians 15:35-38, “**But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain - perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.**”

Paul illustrates this for us by saying the resurrection of our body is like a seed that a farmer plants in the ground and when it dies it brings forth life that looks different than the seed and yet it is related to that seed.

Think about it. You plant a corn seed in the ground and a corn stalk and eventually a corn cob grows from that seed. It does not look like a seed, but it is related to the seed.

And the point that Paul is making is that our bodies are no different, they go back to the dust of the earth and one day, at the Rapture, God will raise them up, like our physical bodies and yet different!

Keep in mind that when we die our spirit and soul go to be with the Lord or as Paul said, **“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”** II Corinthians 5:6-8.

What is God preparing us for?

Heaven!

God is preparing us down here to fit in up there, in heaven!

We see this in Jesus as He died and was buried and His earthly life came to an end, the body was dead and after the death there was life in the new body, the resurrection body. And that is also true for us, this life will give way to a new life in our resurrection bodies!

Spurgeon put it this way, *“Truly it is never a pleasant sound, that rattle of the clay upon the coffin-lid, ‘earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes.’ Nor to the farmer, for its own sake, would it be a very pleasant thing to put his grain into the dull cold earth; and yet I know no farmer ever weeps when he sows his seed.”*

Now, why is that? Why do we need a new body to go to heaven?

Paul tells us in I Corinthians 15:50-56, **“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

These bodies are weak, they are frail, and the biggest issue is this. These bodies are imperfect, we still drag around that stinking, rotting flesh nature but one day it will be raised in glory, we will have a new body!

One day we will have new bodies, spiritual bodies that will be able to live in heaven, to move about freely without limitations, it will be glorious!

Now please understand we are not going to be ghosts like Casper! That is not what Paul is saying, and that is not what I am saying.

Remember in Jesus’ resurrected body you could touch Him! Yes, His new body was different from His fleshly body, but this spiritual body will have flesh and bones as Jesus said in Luke 24:39 regarding His resurrected body!

Jesus said, **“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.”** Luke 24:39.

And the difference between a natural body and a spiritual body is that the former is suited to life here on earth whereas the latter will be suited to life in heaven.

And thus, we all must be changed because these bodies, with that sin nature, cannot enter the Kingdom of God!

Now let me say this. Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die. It sounds funny and it is, but that is the reality many times. But Paul had a different perspective. He looked at life not death and I mean life beyond the grave!

And that should cause us to be, as Paul tells us, **“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:58.

In other words, keep serving the Lord until that day He calls you home because the work you are doing for the Lord is not empty, it is not in vain, even though it may seem that way right now. It is not in vain!

So even though Paul knew his life was coming to an end. That he was going to be put to death by Nero, he saw it more like a moving day. Moving from this earthly tent to a heavenly mansion, a new body for his spirit and soul to dwell in and we should do the same. Death is not the end for Christians, not even close!

Thus – ***LIFE NOT DEATH!***

As we continue on here, we will see Paul’s – ***LOVE FOR TIMTOHY!***

VERSES 2-5

It sounds like a father exhorting his beloved son one last time before he dies. He wants to give Timothy the tools, the warnings, the exhortations to continue on in the work as the torch would be passed down to him from Paul!

Also, as we have seen in I Timothy and we see in Titus, in these Pastoral Epistles we see “**mercy**” added to “**grace**” and “**peace.**”

Why is that?

Possibly the reason is that a pastor, a leader in the church needs more mercy and as we receive the mercy of God into our lives, not getting what we deserve, we can minister the mercy of God to others.

Spurgeon used this verse, along with I Timothy 1:2 and Titus 1:4 to show that ministers need more mercy than others.

Listen to what he wrote,

Did you ever notice this one thing about Christian ministers, that they need even more mercy than other people? Although everybody needs mercy, ministers need it more than anybody else; and so we do, for if we are not faithful, we shall be greater sinners even than our hearers, and it needs much grace for us always to be faithful, and much mercy will be required to cover our shortcomings. So I shall take those three things to myself: ‘Grace, mercy, and peace.’ You may have the two, “Grace and peace,” but I need mercy more than any of you; so I take it from my Lord’s loving hand, and I will trust, and not be afraid, despite all my shortcomings, and feebleness, and blunders, and mistakes, in the course of my whole ministry.

- Spurgeon

Let me sum this up like this. Remember that the peace of God is found in the Grace of God, it is found in Jesus, and it is because of God's rich Grace, getting what we don't deserve; His mercy, not getting what we do deserve; that we can experience the peace of God in our lives because we have made peace with God through Jesus Christ.

And Paul says that he serves the Lord with a "pure conscience", or he served the Lord faithfully.

Let me give you this example and you will see what I mean about not serving with a pure conscience.

The Columbus Iselin was a ship used by the University of Miami to collect chemical, physical, and biological data on the currents of the Florida straits.

The information was accumulated to help manage ocean oil spills.

But ironically while working in the Florida Keys the ship ran aground and spilled 200 gallons of diesel fuel into the ocean.

Rather than being part of the solution the scientific team from the University of Miami became part of the problem.

That can also be said for many Christian ministers. We can poison what we seek to protect, if we don't conduct ourselves in a godly and gracious manner. And not only for Christian ministers, but for all of us, because we are all ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing our faith, exhorting our brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Also, Paul speaks of serving as his forefathers did. What does he mean by that?

When Paul speaks of his "forefathers" he is speaking of those who loved the Lord, were awaiting His coming, not the hypocrites who put on a show of righteousness but inwardly they were wicked.

And I believe Paul was thinking of the faith of Abraham onward, when he spoke of his **“forefathers.”**

Make no mistake about it, Paul loved to see genuine faith, not people who came to church to put on a show and Timothy, his son in the faith, brought him great joy and he prayed for Timothy all day long, whenever he came into Paul’s mind.

Now the tears from Timothy could be when Paul left him there in Ephesus or they could be related to Paul’s arrest and being taken to Rome.

It is a possibility, and Paul, knowing he is going to be put to death soon, wants to see Timothy one last time.

You can just imagine the heart of Paul at this point.

Keep in mind that God did make us emotional people, he was not some stoic person just ignoring what was going on, and yet, he knew the ultimate outcome of it all, he would be with the Lord, and yet he missed Timothy and wanted to see him one last time!

Paul also expounds a little bit about Timothy’s family.

The Scriptures tell us that Timothy and his family came from the city of Lystra, where Paul visited on his first missionary journey, (Acts 14).

And Timothy had an unbelieving Greek father, a believing Jewish grandmother named Lois and a believing Jewish mother names Eunice.

First his grandmother was saved, then his mother and then Timothy also was saved, maybe on Paul’s first journey there, we are not sure.

It would seem from the Scriptures that Paul lead Timothy to Christ.

What I want you to see is that their faith, it was **“genuine faith.”**

It comes from a Greek word that means ***“unhypocritical.”***

And this unhypocritical faith “**dwelt**” in his grandmother, in his mother and also in Timothy. And the idea with this word, “**dwelt**” is that it is not a faith that was just a visitor, but it is a faith that has made its home in their heart! I like that.

As we continue on with the story of Timothy, we see that on Paul’s second missionary journey he came to Lystra again and Timothy is a believer with a good reputation and as Paul leaves Lystra he takes Timothy with him, and he mentored this young man who now was overseeing the church in Ephesus.

Please understand that Timothy’s home life was not ideal since his father was an unbeliever, and the husband, the father had authority over the family.

But that did not stop his mother and grandmother from teaching Timothy the things of God and look how God used this young man.

You may be in a house situation that is not ideal, but don’t let that distract you from God who takes the impossible and makes it very possible. Don’t make excuses for your behavior or what you are not doing for the Lord, learn the lessons of faith and continue to grow in the Lord and see what God will do in you and through you for His glory!

And Paul took Timothy as a son in the faith and now, before he is put to death, he sends one last letter to Timothy because he loved Timothy so much and wanted him to flourish in the ministry, to see the work continue on!

I think it is important to have those around you that you are mentoring, training up for the work of the ministry, to continue on after you go to be with the Lord.

Let’s face it, it will happen to all of us, and my prayer is that I would not only leave an example of God’s love to my wife, my children, my grandchildren, all of you, but that God would bring someone into the ministry that I could mentor to carry on the work of the ministry.

Now don't freak out, I am not dying. Well, I guess we all are, but I am feeling pretty good right now. But life goes by fast, and I want to see God's work continue on long after I am gone!

Paul had this tremendous love for his son in the faith, Timothy!

And lastly, we will be looking at – ***KEEP THE FIRE BURNING!***

VERSES 6-7

Back in I Timothy 4:14 Paul told Timothy, **“Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.”**

Why would Timothy neglect this gift?

Why would he have to be reminded to stir up the gift, to fan the flame, not to let the fire go out?

It is possible that fear caused him to step back, to lay low. Timothy was not the Terminator or the Rock. He was timid, shy, he was not bold like Paul.

And now that the Roman persecution against Christians was growing, over 6 million martyred for their faith in around 300 years, he was not burning brightly with the gift that God had given him. Because of the problems in the church of Ephesus, maybe he just didn't want to rock the boat, cause problems, so he was laying low, not confronting the problems that were there like he should have been doing. Because of that Paul wants Timothy to stir things up! Use it or lose it, was what he was saying.

And that is what the word **“stir up”** speaks of. Stir up a fire to keep it burning bright and strong.

What happens to a fire when you don't tend it?

The fire will burn out.

That means we are to take care the gifts that God has given us, stir them up, keep that fire burning brightly for Him.

Of this Guthrie remarks, *“The Greek anazopureo (stir up) means either ‘to kindle afresh’ or ‘to keep in full flame.’ There is no necessary suggestion, therefore, that Timothy had lost his early fire, although undoubtedly, like every Christian, he needed an incentive to keep the fire burning at full flame.”*

Let me put this into perspective for you. As you read through I and II Timothy you will find no less than 25 different places where Paul is encouraging Timothy to be bold, to not shy away from confrontation, to stand strong where he needs to stand strong. This is what Timothy needed to hear, to stand up and use the gifts that God had given to him!

And let’s face it, we forget things easily and that is why I think Paul said those words often to Timothy in his letters. Even here in II Timothy 1:6 we see Paul say, **“Therefore I remind you . . .”**

In other words, *“Don’t forget what I have told you. Don’t forget to keep those fires of faith burning brightly. Use the gifts that God has given to you and shine brightly for Jesus!”*

And what Paul is saying to Timothy, trying to encourage him by warning him of the difficulties that were before him, and then not to give up, to steady the course and fan those flames, he is saying to us!

And it is out of this that Paul says, **“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”** II Timothy 1:7.

Let me say this. The gifts of God must be used or else they will begin to go dormant. Thus, you have to *“stir”* it up, you have to start to use those gifts, and it will come back to a flame.

Think about a fire pit. You start the fire, and you just can't walk away from it and expect it to continue to burn. You have to fan those flames, you have to stoke that fire, you have to care for it, or it will go out. And the same is true with the gifts that God has given to us. They must be used, or they will go dormant, that flame will go out!

What stops us from using those gifts that God has given to us?

Many times it is - ***FEAR!***

We all face situations where we feel timid and afraid. For some, speaking in front of others makes them fearful; others are afraid of confrontation, others of being made to look foolish, others are afraid of rejection. We all deal with fear.

Let me show you what I mean that fear will affect the things we do or in reality, it will keep us from doing things that we should do.

We are told,

A man who hid for 32 years fearing punishment of pro-Nazi wartime activity says he used to cry when he heard happy voices outside, but dared not show himself even at his mother's funeral.

Janez Rus was a young shoemaker when he went into hiding at his sister's farmhouse in June, 1945.

He was found years later after she bought a large supply of bread in the nearby village of Zalna.

"If I had not been discovered, I would have remained in hiding. So I am happy that this happened," Rus told a reporter. Throughout those years he did nothing. He never left the house, and could only look down at the village in the valley.

- Today in the Word, October 17, 1993

Notice that all those years he did nothing but watch and observe what others were doing. And that is like some Christians. They have isolated themselves from what God has called them to do because of this fear or that fear.

They are just inside watching the work that others are doing. They are spectators instead of being involved in the work that God has called them to do.

And believe me, I am not saying your fear is not real to you, but if God has called you, don't you think He is more than able to enable you to do what He wants you to do? Of course He is!

Paul tells us in Ephesians 3:20-21, **“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

Don't let fear stop what God wants to do in you and through you.

But fear is a real obstacle. Let me show you what fear can do in a person's life.

Louis Pasteur is reported to have had such an irrational fear of dirt and infection he refused to shake hands.

President and Mrs. Benjamin Harrison were so intimidated by the newfangled electricity installed in the White House they didn't dare touch the switches. If there were no servants around to turn off the lights when the Harrisons went to bed, they slept with them on.

- Jane Goodsell, Not a Good Word About Anybody

Again, notice how fear affected their actions, what they did or again, what they didn't do or were not able to do because of fear!

It is said that the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin so feared for his safety that his residence in Moscow contained eight bedrooms.

Each night Stalin chose a bedroom at random to ensure that no one knew exactly where he was sleeping.

What can we do about it?

I like what little Johnny did about his fear. Let me share his story with you because it does give us a proper perspective of things.

5-year-old Johnny was in the kitchen as his mother made supper. She asked him to go into the pantry and get her a can of tomato soup, but he didn't want to go in alone.

“It’s dark in there and I’m scared.”

She asked again, and he persisted.

Finally, she said, ***“It’s OK - Jesus will be in there with you.”***

Johnny walked hesitantly to the door and slowly opened it. He peeked inside, saw it was dark, and started to leave when all at once an idea came, and he said: ***“Jesus, if you’re in there, would you hand me that can of tomato soup?”***

- Charles Allen, *Victory in the Valleys*

I like that!

Okay, maybe he did not conquer that fear completely, but he looked to Jesus to help him out!

You see, the first step in dealing with such fears is to understand that they are not from God.

It is a significant step to say, ***“This isn’t God making me feel like this; God hasn’t given me this.”***

In I John 4:18-19 John tells us, **“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. We love Him because He first loved us.”**

Thus, this fear that you may be experiencing, perhaps it is from personality, perhaps a weakness of the flesh, perhaps a demonic attack, but it isn’t from God.

So what can we do about this fear that stops us from using the gifts that God has given to us?

How can we fight against this fear that the enemy throws at us?

Paul gives us three things we can do.

First of all, God has given to us **“power”** or ***DUNAMIS*** in the Greek. And from this word we get our English words ***“dynamic”*** and ***“dynamite”*** from.

God, by His Spirit has given to us the power we need to accomplish the work He wants us to do!

I want to share this story with you that will drive home the point of the power that is waiting for us from the Lord. We are told,

A town somewhere in the U. S. was battered one night by hurricane-force winds.

In the morning, after the storm had abated, the citizens emerged from their homes and shelters to assess the damage. The power of the storm quickly became clear to one investigator who was dumbfounded by an incredible discovery.

Mouths dropped open as people came to check out his report: a common plastic drinking straw driven deep into a telephone pole by the night’s vicious winds.

Obviously, under normal circumstances, a flimsy straw could never penetrate a telephone pole. But the tremendous power of the wind had driven the straw into the wood like a spike.

As believers living in an ungodly world, sometimes we wonder if we can ever make a difference. We wonder if we can effectively penetrate our cynical culture with the good news God has given us to proclaim.

The answer lies in the source of our power. If we rely on our own strength and methods, then no, we cannot make much of a difference.

But if we choose to be driven by God's limitless power, we become like that straw in the hurricane where nothing can stop us. We can indeed make a dramatic difference.

- Greg Laurie, *On Fire*, pp. 21-22

When we understand that God is working through us, that fear should melt away and we should be able to walk by faith! Remember, He can and will do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think!

Secondly, God has given to us unconditional "love", *AGAPE* love and thus, the power God has given to us is manifested in the Love we have towards others.

When we think of power, we think of people crushing others, monsters destroying villages. We think of Godzilla or the like and the power that they have.

But here we see that this power is coupled with the love of God and thus, as we use this power we do so with the love of God flowing from our lives and touching the lives of others!

Lastly, God has given us a "sound mind" or one that is calm, self-controlled. That is the idea with this Greek word for "sound mind."

It is a love that does not fly off the handle, it is out of control!

There is no confusion or panic in us.

This is so important. That we are resting in the Lord and His peace is seen in our lives.

Think about children. When they fall and hurt themselves, many times their response is based on their parent's response.

If the parent is upset, worried, "*Are you okay?*" and fear is upon their faces, then the child will respond appropriately. Usually, they begin to cry.

Several weeks ago my granddaughter Delta was playing, she just turned one, and she fell forward and hit her face on the floor. And she started to cry, and I picked her up as she was crying so hard, and I gave her to her mom, Ashley, and all the crying immediately stopped.

It wasn't that she did not hurt herself. She did. She had a bruise on her cheek from this fall.

Now here's the thing. If you come and hold them and tell them they are okay, no panic in your voice, no fear on your face, then they are relaxed. And that was the response of Delta, in fact, she was smiling and laughing!

Okay, maybe she had a concussion! No, she didn't, but felt the comfort of her mom and was relaxed, no need to fear!

Also, and let's face it, when we are involved in a ministry and we have to deal with a problem, it is not easy. And we can allow fear to cause us not to use the gifts that God has given to us, while faith believes and uses those gifts that God has given to us, the power to exercise them in love and with a calm spirit in the midst of turmoil!

As one writer put it, *“What this verse is teaching is that God has given us a spirit of self-control or self-mastery. We are to use discretion and not to act rashly, hastily, or foolishly. No matter how adverse our circumstances, we should maintain balanced judgment and act soberly.”*

I like that. **POWER, LOVE** and a **SOUND MIND!**

Now use the gifts that God has given you!

Paul was – **PASSING THE TORCH** to his son in the faith, Timothy!

And like I have said, this letter is filled with warnings and encouragement for Timothy to continue on in the work, after Paul is gone as well as right now!

May we be warning and encouraging others in the faith!