

Title: Rekindling the Gift of God that Is in You (How to Stay on Fire for God)

Text: 2 Timothy 1:3-18

Date: November 11, 2018 at FBCW

I'm 37 years old and have told you this before: approximately half my pastor friends from college/seminary are no longer in ministry.

Two questions → how have some managed to stay on fire for God for so many years? Why are others, who once were on fire, in their devotion to Christ, no longer on fire?

Some of the saddest words you can hear at church:

- You know, I used to be faithful. Years ago, I was active.
- My parents or grandparents sure are faithful – but not me.

INTRO. One thing has really perplexed me as I have read through the Bible this year.

- As a Christian, what I've found makes me a bit sad.
- But as a Preacher, what I've observed has been a helpful reminder.

What I'm talking about is this fact: *not everyone who met Jesus followed him. Not everyone who heard him preach the gospel surrendered their life to him and became born again.*

Personally, this is staggering – if I took Jesus out of my heart and put him in yours for 5 minutes, you'd never want to let him go.

Pastorally, I can feel “the wall of rejection” at times when preaching – I know there are lost people in the crowd who hear...but they refuse to respond to Christ.

It's a bit ironic and tragic – the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who was slain to take away our sin – the one who gave the most costly gift of all time (his blood) – to forgive the most grotesque thing imaginable (my sin) – and yet for some reason... there are people in the crowds who hear this message, they remain unmoved, and they simply walk away.

John 6:60, *Therefore, when many of his disciples were complaining about this, they said, “This teaching is hard. Who can accept it?”*

John 6:66, *From that moment many of his disciples turned back and no longer accompanied him.*

1 Tim 4:1, *Now the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will depart from the faith...*

Acts 20:29, *After my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

Jude 3, *For some people...have come in by stealth; they are ungodly...denying Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.*

I am a Gospel preacher. You are a Gospel believing church. FACTs about the Gospel:

- Gospel = good news about Jesus.

- None of us deserve it.
- Any of us can have it.
- Some of us will reject it.
- But those of who do trust in Christ (believe in the gospel) are called to persevere.

Phil 2:12, *work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*

Phil 2:16, *Hold firm to the word of life...we are not laboring/running for nothing.*

I believe these two things with all of my heart:

Once saved, always saved.

- But maybe we've overused this term – and have a bunch of lost church members.
- Better way to say it – *if truly saved, always saved.*

If you claim you are born again, but you bear no fruit, I'm not sure you're truly saved.

- (2 Cor 5:17, *if a man be in Christ...he is a new creation, the old things are gone.*)
- (Matt 7:16, *you will know them by their fruit.*)

Background. 2 Timothy is warm, pastoral, and personal.

Author. Old, experienced Paul – a veteran minister – with many years under his belt...

- Traveled many miles. Started many churches.
- He is now at the end of his life.
- His focus is strengthening/encouraging the young men (pastors) who come behind him.

Recipient. Paul is writing to young Timothy. Timothy is still wet behind the ears.

Timothy is trying to get his legs under himself as the new pastor at Ephesus Church.

- Timothy was timid. Lacked confidence (2 Tim 1:7).
- Seemed to fear the *natural stress* that being a pastor brings.
- Raised by a single mom and grandmother (Eunice and Lois).

Yet God's hand was on Timothy's life...Paul loved Timothy like a son (2 Tim 1:2).

Paul clearly sensed great spiritual potential in Timothy's life.

****When you're still amazed God has blessed you...you'll be far less surprised that God wants to bless other people, too.****

Heart of the whole letter is 2 Tim 1:6-7.

V6. Stir up the gift of God in you...rekindle the gift of God inside you.

God has put something inside of each of us.

- We are saved by the blood of Christ.
- The Holy Spirit is given to us at the moment of our salvation to:

- Help us look more like Christ.
- Strengthen/encourage others to look more like Christ.
- Eph 1:14, *the Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance.*
- 1 Cor 12:7, *A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.*

The Holy Spirit also produces a gift inside of me/us that helps me/us fulfill our destiny in the Lord's church!

My job is to orient my life – surrender, yield, intimacy – with that which God has put in me!

Stir up or rekindle → literally to keep blazing...to keep aflame.

- *Put a log on the fire...feed the fire...fan the flames.*

Paul's point → Timothy...God has put something special inside of you. A special calling, etc.

- Make it your ambition to achieve all of it.
- Don't run away from God's call...run to it! Embrace it!

V7. Why is this so important? *Because God's not given me a spirit of fear...but of power, love, and sound judgment.*

- Don't be afraid, Timothy! God's not given us a spirit of fear!
 - Problem: we fear man too much, and don't fear God enough.
 - Solution: we should be fearing God more, and man less.
- Power: nothing is stronger than God's power.
 - The word means God's strength, not mine.
- Love: nothing is more beautiful than this – holy God loves sinners.
 - God helps me love people with his power.
 - God helps me love unlovely people (just like God loves me).
- Sound judgment: God will give you wisdom to live in this broken, fallen world.
 - A specific wisdom to match the needs of this present generation.
 - 1 Chron 12:32, *Sons of Issachar, men who understood the times...*

Power, love, sound judgment – God will show you how to live/minister in this big old world!

- God's power in me will do things I can't do.
- God will empower me to show supernatural kindness.
- God will give me wisdom that shines in the darkness of the age.

You'd think the following ways/words would be the best ways to encourage Timothy.

Paul could have said to Timothy:

- *Timothy you'll do great things!*
- *Timothy you're gonna pastor a BIG church.*
- *Timothy you'll have lots of friends...favor...financial security.*
- *The people will always love your preaching.*

- *Ministry will always be fun, easy, and fulfilling...everyday will be vacation.*

But Paul did NOT say these things to Timothy. Not even close.

- Paul wrote Timothy this letter from prison; Timothy knows it.
- Paul has a premonition he'll die soon.

These are the words, instead, that Paul used to describe his ministry: shame...prison...suffering...friends have deserted me.

How do we rekindle, or stir up, the fire of God in our life?

First, don't be ashamed of the Gospel (v 8). *Don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner (v 8).*

Paul to Timothy → Don't be ashamed of the real truth about Jesus...Don't be ashamed that the message has landed me in prison.

- Ashamed = disgraced, singled out.
- Literally it means = don't feel as if you've believed a big lie (John 8:44).

What is the Lord's testimony? (Luke 19:10, Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.)

What is my testimony? (John 9, I don't know everything, but I know once I was blind but now I see.)

What is Paul's testimony? (Rom 1:16, *For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ...*)

Why would you be ashamed of Jesus who loves/saves like this? Who is worthy like this?

Here's how you can know that you are not ashamed:

- Willing to suffer for Christ (v 8).
- We know his power is perfected in our weakness (v 8).
- We know our calling is based on his purpose for our life, not our abilities (v 9).

1:8. Paul to Timothy → When you get going in true ministry...you will suffer.

- But don't get discouraged.
- It's in the suffering that you'll see the real power of God (2 Cor 12:9).
- "Share" in suffering with me = identity with me, be a co-laborer, take your part.

1:9-11. Paul to Timothy → We've got a great message! Never forget it!

- We are sinners! We can't do anything in our own strength...
- Yet Jesus became sin for us and died in our place...but he defeated death when he rose victoriously!
- So we have life in this gospel ministry – not because of our good works, but because of Christ's life!

Gospel: my curse was laid on Christ...Christ's victory (righteousness) is laid upon me.
(ILLUS: Dad's song, What a Wondrous Exchange)

1:11. Paul: I am a herald, apostle, teacher.

- *"This message has been my job!" "I live to declare this message!"*

1:12. Paul: But this message has caused deep suffering.

- Yes I suffer.
- But no, I am not ashamed.

LESSON. Paul seems to have no regrets!

- V8 – Don't be ashamed.
- V12 – I am not ashamed.

LESSON: Is it hard? (Yes) Is there suffering? (Yes) Is it worth it? (Yes)

Q: How does Paul have this strength/hope/confidence?

A: Notice 2 Tim 1:12, *"For I know whom I have believed...and am persuaded...that he is able...to keep that which I've committed...unto Him, against that day!"*

We used to sing this song by Daniel W. Whittle:

*I know not why God's wondrous grace
To me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love
Redeemed me for His own.*

*But I know whom I have believed
And am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I've committed
Unto Him against that day!*

Phil 1:6, *I am certain of this, that He who began a good work in you will be faithful...*

1 Cor 15:58, *Therefore, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...*

Second, hold on to sound teaching about Christ (v 13).

"Hold on" → language of marriage: to have, to hold (ILLUS of the wedding ceremony).

- To get a strong grip.
- To refuse to let go...to become one with the rope.

Don't chase silly theories...silly myths...false religions...they will leave you empty.

Cling to, hold on to, the Gospel/Scripture! Cling to that which causes you to:

- Put faith in Christ.
- Love others.

LESSON: Won't always be popular (2 Tim 4:1-2)...but you cling to the Word!

LESSON: You hear many words everyday – are you listening to Christ's words about the noise?

Third, guard the honor/name of the Holy Spirit living within you (v 14).

Guard = keep an eye on...as in 1) shepherds over flocks or 2) military/guard night watchman.

- 3rd commandment – don't dishonor the Lord's name with vanity.
- Jesus taught us to pray, "*Hallowed be your name...*" (Matt 6).
- 1 Thess 5:19, *Don't stifle the spirit...*

Language here means we are called to remain in close intimacy/fellowship with the Holy Spirit that God sent to live with us when we were born again.

- ILLUS: Don't offend your neighbor – makes it hard to live there!

Personal interlude/musing of Paul – Timothy 1) hold on to reaching 2) guard the deposit...because not everyone will!

V15. Many deserted Paul. They abandoned their faith; they abandoned Paul.

- Phygelus and Hermogenes walked away.
- Again...not all will be loyal! (Demas; 2 Tim 4:10).

V16. But may the Lord bless Onesiphorus.

- He was a great encourager.
- He was not embarrassed by my chains.
- He always tried to stay in touch with me.

So the question is this – Why do some walk away? Why do some quit?

1. Their match was never truly lit (they were never truly saved).
2. They've lost the fire of their devotion (they need their faith to be rekindled).

Application:

This church has a great gift/mission!

- Stir up the gift...rekindle the gift...
- Throw a log on the fire of your faith!

Don't be ashamed of the Gospel.

- Don't let the devil keep you quiet!
- God is keeping the score...keep working hard (1 Cor 15:58).

Keep teaching the Word of God...keep the Bible central to all you do.

- Listen to Pastor Johnny or whoever is preaching.
- Participate in worship...
- Be faithful...attend Sunday school...take advantage of all your opportunities...

Observing never lights my fire...but you know what lights my fire? Participating!

Pray and ask God that the Holy Spirit will have great liberty here!**Always remember – anyone who walks through those doors...though they are a sinner, Jesus can change them!**

- This will light your fire...
- Addictions get broken...marriages are restored...children for direction...the lonely find friends...etc.

What's the future of FBCW?

- We have a great heritage.
- But until Christ returns, we must pour out what we know/have for others, for the future.

One of the most beautiful testimonies you can have: a good theology of suffering.

LESSON: Paul is an old man glad to be finishing well.

LESSON: Paul's passion is to reach out to the young man Timothy and help him!

- But Paul is honest with Timothy.
- The Christian faith, in this life, often means suffering... (2 Tim 3:12)

Major testimony → people in suffering, yet still believing.

- Antithesis to the Prosperity Gospel.
- Yes, sometimes God heals...but even if not in this life, I trust him (Job 13:15).

Major testimony → loving, caring for suffering people.

- Remembering them. Serving them.
- Taking time with them.

We rekindle the gift...we stay on fire for God...by unashamedly surrendering everything to Jesus Christ and completely trusting our future to Him!

What is in my future? 2 Tim 4:8, "*A crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me...*"