

[tiny tim]

:: 2 timothy 1.3-7 ::

We're taking a few moments to look at Paul's second letter to Timothy. Last time we spoke briefly on the first two verses and tonight we're continuing in chapter one with verses 3 through 7.

We saw in the opening of this book that we are men and women like Timothy, simple servants of God, children in His eternal family, and we have received an incredible store of grace and mercy and peace from our Father. We saw that God has saved us that we might go throughout the world proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ and demonstrating the love of God to a lost and dying planet.

It was a reminder of who we are, who we've signed up to be as followers of Jesus Christ.

And now we come to verse 3, where we read this:

2 Timothy 1.3-7 - I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Paul is conveying so much to his young friend and to us here tonight as well. In these 5 verses we find incredible insights into our faith and our activity on the earth.

He began by saying:

2 Timothy 1.3 - I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

Very first thing we see this evening is Paul's thankfulness before God. Despite his struggles or circumstances, Paul was a man of thankfulness and joy. And thankfulness is an attitude we choose. Because, despite our struggles or sufferings, there is always much to be thankful for. And if we're not feeling thankful, it's because we've focused our hearts on earthly things, on difficult things, on hurtful things, instead of focusing on heavenly things and the One who is seated at the right hand of the Father, who is making intercession for us and has provided us all that we need for life and Godliness and purpose and peace on the earth.

If you don't find yourself thankful, get your head out of the dirt and into the clouds.

Second, Paul points out that he had a clear conscience before God. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first was because Paul understood the value of self-examination. We see in his letter to the Romans that introspection, looking within at our thoughts, at our desires, at our activities and attitudes is an absolutely necessary habit for the Christian. We are so benefited by measuring our lifestyles and

our habits and our choices by the Holy Spirit of God who dwells within us as believers. Because when we fail to examine our lives, when we fail to filter what we do, how we do it and why we do it, then we become less acquainted with God and more acquainted with sin. Paul had a clear conscience before God because he was a man that made a habit of inspecting his life and his choices to see what the Lord might say about them.

But secondly, he had a clear conscience because he remembered Timothy in his prayers.

Do we pray? It's a question that each of us must ask ourselves this evening. Prayerlessness is a deadly disease to the Christian and the Church. Truly, we are invited and commanded to pray, that we might know more of God's character and more of God's plan for our lives.

Colossians 4.2 - Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Luke 6.28 - Bless those who curse you and pray for those who abuse you.

1 Thessalonians 5.16-18 - Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

It's not that we pray out of a shameful obligation, but because we understand that it is the personal connection that God has given to us that we might speak with Him, that we might enter into a personal communion with the One who has saved us and that we might understand His power more fully and urgently.

Paul remembered Timothy, we should remember others, both in our prayers and in our daily life. He went on to say:

2 Timothy 1.4 - As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

What do we see here?

First, it is so important that we cultivate compassion and understanding in our lives. Within this room are people who are blessed and others who are struggling. There are hurts and trials being lived out in the lives of our congregation right now and we must be sensitive to the tears of the people around us.

Romans 12.15-16a - Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another.

Our mission is to represent Jesus Christ to the world around us. That is why you are here. Not to build wealth. Not to make a name for yourself. You are here to represent Jesus both to His people and to those who are still outside of His salvation. As representatives of Jesus, we are to act *like* Jesus.

That means living with compassion. That means showing mercy. That means speaking truth. That means looking around and noticing the needs of the people around you. Paul knew Timothy's tears because he was a man who understood love and compassion and he could speak to him the truth of God's word and plan for Timothy's life to guide and encourage him.

There's some really interesting phrasing here. Paul says, "I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy."

Now, what about someone crying would fill Paul with joy?

Well, I think that question is answered for us in verse 5:

2 Timothy 1.5 - I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in you grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

Paul wasn't happy about Timothy's sorrow. But, in those tears, Paul saw the sincere, personal, powerful faith that Timothy had in Jesus Christ. Paul was reminded of how deep Timothy's relationship with God was and he remembered how passionate Timothy was about serving the Lord and ministering to the people around him.

That's what gave Paul joy. That's what gave Paul, what the original Greek translates as: 'delight and cheerfulness.'

The insight for us is simple: surround yourself with people who are passionate for Jesus Christ. Sports fans are a dime a dozen. Political pundits will come and go. We need to seek out people who have made serving Jesus their life's goal. People who are not simply something plus Christian. "Yeah, I'm a Christian, but I'm *really* into graphic design. I'm *really* into designing websites. I'm *really* into music." [Those are all things I enjoy in my life]

There's nothing wrong with those things, but you are not a career plus Christianity. You are not a goal or desire or dream plus Christianity. You are a Christian. A new creation in Christ Jesus. And you are not going to be helped in your walk with God if you surround yourself with people who aren't passionately living for Him.

Seek after people who are fired up for Jesus Christ. They are people who will bring you joy. Who will bring you cheer and help in your life.

How do we find those people? Well, Paul saw Timothy's faith in the way that Timothy lived his life. In the words that he used, the things that he did, the life that he lived.

If my coworkers don't know I'm a Christian, there's a problem. If my neighbors don't know I'm a Christian, there's a problem. If my fellow students or extended family or other people that I am regularly around don't know that I've been saved by grace, brought from darkness to light, there's a problem. Because, even though we're not all called to go out and stand on a soap box and shout out our testimony to the public, we are all light. And if people can't see Jesus when they look at us, then it's probably because we've got a basket over our light. A basket of anger. A basket of ambition. A basket of hatred. A basket of addiction. A basket of greed or materialism or covetousness. Something that has covered over the light that the Lord lit within us.

This is where the self-examination comes in. We must examine our light and see how brightly it's shining. Is there a difference between me and my unbelieving neighbor? Is there a difference in how I talk? In how I act? In the choices I make? Is there a difference in the things I read and the things I watch and the things I do? Because we are new creations, made alive by the power of God to live

our lives with strength and grace and peace so that we can draw others to God through His Gospel and by our example.

Paul reminded Timothy and us of that in verse 6:

2 Timothy 1.6-7 - For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Interestingly, many times when we're feeling disconnected from God, when we feel like we're not moving forward in our ministry or in our walk with Him, we tend to go before Him and say, "what's the deal God? Let's get something going here. Light my fire again!" We sing songs about it and pray prayers about it.

And while God never ignores any of our prayers, we should have a sense that those feelings are really missing the point.

Because God's love is eternal. The Holy Spirit is eternal. Our salvation is secure. His dwelling within us cannot be changed. So, the 'light' that we talk about, the power within, the eternal life granted to us by God, the calling He has placed on our lives, that light cannot be extinguished.

God's fuel for us never runs out. His Holy Spirit is never out of power or out of strength or out of guidance for us. His supplies of grace and mercy and peace are everlasting. His plan for our lives has been waiting for us since before the foundation of time.

So we know that God's provision for us cannot run dry. Yet, so often we feel that dryness, we feel that stagnation, we feel that disconnection from God and we wonder why. That is part of the human condition. But it cannot be because God has forgotten to refill our oil supply. It cannot be because the fire is extinguished, because we know that those supplies are eternal.

And this is why Paul said, 'Timothy, *stir up the gift God has given you!* Fan into flame your relationship with Jesus.'

Why? Because God has prepared an amazing life for you and for me. God has given us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. God has invested in us eternal resources so that we might live life without fear. That we might live lives of love to those around us. That we might have the self-control necessary to overcome sin and to listen for the Lord's leading and to forgive those who wrong us and to pray for those who abuse us. That is the Christian life! That is who we've signed on to be! That is the flame that God started in our hearts, and now we must cultivate that flame, that gift that God has given us. The gift of salvation and sanctification. The gift of His Spirit to indwell us. The individual gifts that we're given to edify others and build up the church. The gift of purpose and opportunities. The gifts that God has bestowed upon His servants, His children, His people, that we might live lives that are unlike anything the world could imagine.

That's who we are. That who we get to be. And there is nothing more wonderful, more delightful, more satisfying, than living a life that is clean before God, where we are available to passionately live out all that He's planned for us.