

Today we're starting on Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy.

So, let's have a little re-cap: We've just finished 1st Timothy. And Timothy was a missionary mate of the Apostle Paul, and he's (what we would now call) "a Pastor" in the church at Ephesus.

Paul: — he's in jail. And **this** is one of the last letters that Paul wrote. I think Titus might be final letter, but Paul's coming to the end of his life; He knows his execution is just around the corner, and we see this coming through in the letter...

And as Paul approaches the end of his life, what he wants us to know, is what his faith is grounded in (or more to the point, **who** his faith is grounded in). And he's wanting to encourage us, to hold on to this same faith. (Which is the Gospel that Paul preached wherever he went.)

Now, Paul's position and his calling, is that of an Apostle, and Paul didn't decide for himself that he should be an apostle – it was by the will of God.

But he also says that it's according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus

Alright, so here Paul is – he knows that his execution is imminent – at any moment, he could get the chop.

^{4:6} For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I

have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.

Alright, so he knows that his execution is imminent, and it's **because** of his calling to the ministry of Christ, that he's **going** to be executed... But Paul knows that part of his calling is **the promise of the life** that is in Christ Jesus

So he's going to cark-it for following Jesus and preaching Jesus, but this is also the promise of life... When we get to Chapter 2, we're going to hear Paul say

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him

Powerful words there – powerful words for those who suffer; powerful words for those who endure in their faith (no matter what the cost)... But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

The promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, is so much bigger than our physical, earthly life...

We know that **this** life is short; challenging; and sometimes troublesome... But our life in Christ, is glorious and eternal...

Righto, so, Paul is writing to Timothy. Timothy is like a son to Paul. He calls him, "my beloved child... (1Tim "My true child in the faith)

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul reminds us of that, every time he writes a letter. And we should be talking about this all the time too. As we share & fellowship & speak with one another, we should remind each other of this all the time. Tell me about the grace/mercy/peace that you have from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Righto, let's pick up at v3.

Paul gives thanks to God, for Timothy. But who is the god that Paul serves?

*I visited a bloke last week, and he was very glad that I popped in and visited him (he doesn't get many visitors). But he was very keen to tell me what he believed... And I'd say his belief is a reasonably common one... He's **not** an atheist – he believes there is some form of a god, but it doesn't matter what we name him, or who we picture him to be – just as long as we're nice to people... As long as we do good, and don't do too much wrong,*

“Why should it matter if I name a particular god, or worship a particular god? Is it right for God to judge me, if I do the right thing, but just don't recognise God???”

And I said to him, when Jesus was asked, “What's the greatest commandment”, he said,

Matthew 22: (ESV) 37 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

And I said, "You've recognised the second bit, but the first and most important bit is missing..."

We have to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.... And the Lord our God, isn't a god of our own making, and he isn't a god we can select from a smorgasbord of gods where we decide "Oh, this one sounds like it's going to suit me – I might give this one a go for a while"...

The God we worship, is:

- The one true God
- the God of Israel
- He is the God of Paul's ancestors
- The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...
- **He**, and He alone, is the God of Love;
- This is the God of mercy;
- This is the God who loves us so much, He sent His only Son, to die on the cross, so that we might live.

This is the God Whom Paul serves, and he serves **with a clear conscience**. That means he has no ulterior motives...

In his first letter, he warned Timothy about people who are in it for the money, or “godliness as a means gain”.... That’s not Paul. He serves God with a clear conscience – no ulterior motive...

And he prays for Timothy (& presumably the church in Ephesus) unceasingly...

Now, a key word here, is “remember”... It’s important for us to remember...

³, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith,

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you

Is all this remembering, for Paul, just a bit of “nostalgia”? “Ah, back in the old days”.... No...

To remember, is to return our focus, to where it should be again...

Paul remembers Timothy, and it reminds him to pray for him...

He says, I remember your tears

I suspect, last time they saw each other, it was a tearful farewell. They'd gone through a lot together – they were good mates – they were brothers in Christ... And Paul would love to see Timothy again – that would be joy... But Paul can't visit Timothy, because Paul's in jail. And at the end of the letter, he says to Timothy, “**Do your best** to visit me soon”

Even as Christians, sometimes the situations in life, will seem a very dark place... At times like these, it's good to remember.

We remember:

- the good times we have;
- the good relationships we have;
- journey God has led us on; and
- that God has been there every step of the way – we've always been able to depend on Him...

And what this does, is:

- it increases our faith – if God has carried us before, He'll carry us now;
- it gives us a joyful hope. If we have joyful memories, we'll have a joyful expectation;
- it reminds us we're not alone... As a prisoner for Jesus, Paul wasn't alone... At times it seemed like everyone had deserted him, but not so... And for you, sometimes you might feel all alone...

Not so...

Remember those who have been instrumental in your journey with God. Reach out to them, and experience that joy again...

And the thing that Paul most liked to remember about Timothy, is his sincere faith.

Some families have been blessed with (what I call) a Godly heritage. Do you know what I mean by that?

- The Grandfather was a strong Godly man;
- And he passed it on to the father;
- Who passed it on to his son;
- And his son is now a Godly man...

Alright, so we all know families where faith continues down the family line... And it looks like Timothy was a 3rd Generation Christian... One day you'll get to meet his mother Eunice, and his Grandmother Lois, because these were women of faith...

And so, a Godly heritage – what a wonderful thing it is... But it is of no benefit, unless our faith is sincere. ⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith (Greek, “without hypocrisy”)

Sometimes, as faith gets passed down from generation to generation, it evolves into more of a “family tradition”, rather than a “sincere faith”...

- That's just what our family does;
- That's just how our family behaves;
- That's our beliefs;
- That's our ethics

But faith, isn't faith, unless it **is** sincere (without hypocrisy).

And I want to challenge you today:

- Is your faith sincere; or
- Is it 'a family tradition'; or
- Are you just going through the motions???

A sincere faith is evident, when Godliness is **the** priority in one's life. Do you have a sincere faith? Do you truly believe it? Because let me tell you, "If you truly believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you will trust in Him with your whole heart, and He will be your everything.

And when a person's faith is sincere, they will express their faith in service...

V⁶ For this reason (what reason?) because he's been reminded of Timothy's sincere faith

I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands

Now, what is this "gift of God" that Paul's talking about here? Is it:

- The gift of salvation that Timothy received when he first believed in Jesus?
- A particular spiritual gift that he received?
 - Teaching;
 - Preaching;
 - Healing;
 - Prophecy;
 - Languages;
- Being filled with the Holy Spirit???

Well, it could be any of those things, or all of those things... The thing is, it's not a **new** gift that Timothy needs – it's a rekindling of the old.

You know when you're camping, you go to sleep at night, and you stoke the fire before you go to bed, and put a couple of heavy logs on it, so it'll burn all night. But when the sun comes up and it's all frosty you know that when you get out of your warm swag, you're going to need heat... So you find a few hot coals and you put a few twigs and bit bigger sticks on the coals, and they just start to smoke...

And then you grab your trusty old hat and fan it...

Times have changed. I've noticed Jake just grabs his Makita cordless blower.... It's like a portable forge....

Now, that's the image we're given here... The gift of the Spirit – whether it be:

- The joy of salvation;
- A particular spiritual gift;
- The activity of the Spirit of any kind

It was once stoked – it was once burning bright, and you look back to what you once were, and you realise, “Things are not what they once used to be. I've gone backwards”...

I once used to:

- be on fire for God,
but now I'm just smouldering;
- be excited for things of the Spirit,
but now I'm a stodgy Christian;

- love reading God's word and praying and seeking Him, but now I'm content to watch tv;
- find a lot of joy in serving God and being active in the church, sharing Christ with others, but it's not like it used to be...

The fire's burnt down; I still believe; but the Spirit's fire isn't what it once was...

Do you know what I'm talking about? Does anyone identify with that? Is anyone here honest enough to say, "That's me"... "The Spirit's fire, isn't what it once was, in me"...

How do you get the spirit's fire going again???

I'll tell you what some people do:

- They look for something new – "The old way of the fire has passed – we need a new way of the fire"....

There has to be some new:

- Teaching;
- Special anointing;
- Speaker;
- Maybe I need a whole new church – it must be those people who are holding me back

But the truth of the matter is, Timothy already has the gift. It just needs to be rekindled...

And when God has given you the Spirit Gift, you don't need anything new – what you already have, needs to be rekindled.

Now, if there's something I've learned about re-kindling a fire, is it doesn't happen without effort. I cannot remain wrapped up in my nice warm swag, and rekindle the fire at the same time... I have to move.

I have to move closer to God, and I have to get involved in the Holy Spirit work that God is doing...

And this is a work of the Holy Spirit.

V⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of

- Power; and
- Love; and
- self-control.

The Spiritual gifts are given, for the good of the church. The Spiritual gifts are **not** given to elevate one's-self. They are for the building up of the church – for the building of the body of Christ.

God hasn't given us a spirit of fear.

In V⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

I reckon the biggest hindrance to the gospel, is fear. We say we're not afraid, but we are.

I'm afraid:

- to tell people about Jesus, because they might not like me anymore;
- I might offend someone;
- someone will judge me;
- they'll think that I'm judging them;
- I might break the law;
- Be charged with a hate-crime...

If God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, we will not be afraid. We won't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. We won't be ashamed of Christian leaders like Paul, who because of **their** witness for Jesus, have been ridiculed and ostracised, and maybe even imprisoned or executed...

During the week, our previous prime minister (Scott Morrison) has been lambasted by the media, because he preached a sermon and he said, "We trust in Him [God] – we do not trust in Governments." And oh, did they come down hard on him there...

You see, suffering for our faith, is a normal part of being a disciple of Jesus.... Most Christians have the idea that the power of God is what's going to **stop** us from suffering, but it's actually the opposite. When the Holy Spirit power of God is active, and we are witnesses for Jesus, the world won't like it. Paul tells Timothy, but you share with me, in suffering for the gospel **by** the power of God

Alright, so he hasn't given us a spirit of fear... It's a spirit of **Power**. And this power, isn't so we can look like a bunch of

super-heroes – it's the sort of power that allows us to suffer for the Gospel for Jesus.

The Spirit He's given us, is a spirit of **Love**...

We learned a lot about this when we studied the letter to the Corinthians.

The Spiritual gifts are given for the building up of the church. Rekindling the fire, isn't about me building myself up – it's about building up the church. I mean, in Corinth, there was a bunch of individuals who were so concerned about themselves, some would hook-in and down the communion supplies before others had even arrived; they'd talk over the top of one another and babble away in languages that nobody understood... To them, it all appeared super-spiritual, but there was no love. And Paul said to that church, I could have the most amazing gifts, but if I don't have love, I'm nothing...

And the Spirit He's given us, is a spirit of **self-control**

The Holy Spirit fire, produces Godly living; obedience to God; Discipline... And that shouldn't be any surprise. We know that the fruit of the Spirit is: Love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; self-control...

Do you know what's coming through to me here? – If my spiritual fire has burned low and now it's just a couple of smouldering coals, what a disaster for me, **and** what a disaster for my brothers and sisters in Christ... (not just Michael the pastor — but think of me as any person)

If any person's spiritual fire has burned low and is now a few smouldering coals in a bed of ash, what a disaster it is for them, and what a disaster it is for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

If the spiritual fire that once blazed, is now smouldering ashes, not only are you lacking – the church is lacking, and the Gospel is suffering...

Where the Spirit of God is kindled, there is

- power;
- Love;
- Self-control...

When it's not kindled, there's:

- Fear;
- Little Power, which equates to little willingness to be bold for Jesus and share the Gospel in the face of persecution;
- Little love;
- Little self-control...

So, what do we do with that?

1. Remember...

- sincere faith;

- the joy of our salvation;
 - the activity of God; and our experiences of God;
 - how the fire of the Spirit has been in the past.
2. Understand that if the Spirit's flame has grown dull, in a person, it's not only a problem for themselves – there's a deficit in the church.
3. Nothing new is required. God has already given the gift – it just needs to be re-kindled.
4. Rekindle that fire...
- Love God as you once loved Him;
 - Serve Him like you did at first;
 - Don't be ashamed of Jesus;
 - Share the Gospel;
 - Don't be afraid to suffer for Christ. If you suffer, it's probably because the Spirit is at work.

Basically, this is about putting God back where He belongs – as No.1 in your life... If other things in my life, have become a priority, so that God is no longer my priority, that needs to change.

I don't do many altar-calls, but I believe today is a day where the Spirit's fire is to be re-kindled. And if God is going to re-kindle a fire in someone's life today, don't we as a church want to share that?