

1. I would like to ask you to turn with me in your bibles to the New Testament book of 2 Timothy.
2. We are going to begin a series of messages today that I have given two titles.
3. **Fan the Flame.** Or, **Feed the Fire.**
4. We will use those titles interchangeably.
5. The book of 2 Timothy is actually a letter that the Apostle Paul sent to a young man whom he considered to be a spiritual son.
6. Timothy had traveled with Paul extensively on his missionary journeys, but Paul and Timothy had become separated.
7. Paul was in prison for the umpteenth time, shackled in a cold dungeon, and he longed to see Timothy, but he also wanted to encourage young Timothy, because he knew Timothy was lonely as well.
8. And so, in the very early lines of this letter of encouragement to Timothy, Paul challenges Timothy to do something in particular, that will have a profound effect on Timothy's spiritual life.

TEXT: **2 Timothy 1:5-7** I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. **6** 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. **7** For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

TITLE: **Fire.**

INTRO:

1. We will focus most of our attention in this series on verse number 6.
2. But to help us understand exactly what Paul is encouraging Timothy to do, we are going to put verse 6 in the proper perspective with the help of the other verses.
3. Paul was talking to Timothy about his spiritual life. His walk with the Lord. His faith if you will. And so, in verse 5, Paul reminds Timothy that his faith. His walk with the Lord, has been a source of encouragement to him.
4. As he thinks about the faith of Timothy, he is lifted up and blessed. The spiritual life of Timothy makes his situation of being in a lonely,

cold, damp dungeon for months on end seem not quite so bad.

5. Then in verse 5, Paul reminds him where this faith, this hope, this passionate spiritual life was implanted into Timothy.
6. Paul says, this faith lived first in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice. And I am convinced that this same powerful faith. This same hope. This same strength also lives in you.
7. What Paul is saying is...It's there, Timothy. And don't you forget it. What Paul was doing was reminding Timothy that the circumstances surrounding him did not define his faith.
8. Loneliness, heartache, difficulties, trials, tribulations. None of those things define or decide who we are in Christ Jesus.
9. Because, even in the midst of all those things, Jesus is still lord, and you are still his child, and the power of the Spirit of God still lives in you.
10. And the result of that powerful Spirit living inside you is that you don't have to be afraid.
11. That fear didn't come from the Spirit of God, it comes from your circumstances.
12. But what God's spirit provides for us is power, love, and self-discipline.
13. I am reading out of the NIV bible. And it uses the word self-discipline.
14. The KJV, as well as a few others indicate that the phrase is, of a sound mind.
15. I don't believe either of those descriptions contradicts the other.
16. Self-discipline or self-control conveys the idea that things are not spiraling out of control. Things are not just randomly happening that have no rhyme or reason. Your life is powerful Timothy. Your life is filled with love. And your life is completely under the control of a loving heavenly father.
17. And where an out of control life breeds an out of control mind, what the Spirit of God provides is a sound mind. A strong mind. A peaceful mind.
18. If we have ever needed to hear the message that we are strong, that we are powerful, that we are ok, that everything is under God's

control, and that we don't have to worry our minds to death, that time is right now.

19. And I believe that is at least part of the message God has for you today. I said it a couple of weeks ago, but it bears repeating.

20. **God's got this. God's still on the throne.**

21. Your heavenly father has not experienced one sleepless night. He has not experienced one single worry filled; anxiety filled moment.

22. The God in whom we put our trust is still just as strong and as powerful as he ever has been, and because he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, you and I are secure yesterday, today, and forever.

23. What a great message of encouragement for young Timothy and for us.

24. However, we would be wise not to miss the verse that ties those two truths together.

25. The glue that cements those two realities in our lives is found in verse 6.

26. **2 Timothy 1:6 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.**

27. So, yes Timothy. You come from good stock.

28. And yes Timothy, you don't have to be afraid or weak or at wits end. But, you Timothy have a part to play in this wonderful, life giving condition.

29. And that part Timothy is this. Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.

30. This phrase, fan into flame, will be our focus for the next few weeks.

31. **Our victory in the Lord is made possible by our cooperation with who the Lord is and what the Lord does.**

32. A life of victory is only possible as we handle properly the spiritual life, faith, and hope we have been given.

33. So, let's talk for a moment about that word flame.

34. All throughout the bible, a flame, or fire has been used to represent a number of different things. But one of the things this idea of flame or fire represents is our spiritual walk with the Lord.

35. We might say that the word fire of flame could be used to identify

the intensity with which we are living out our walk with the Lord.

36. In the book of Revelation chapter 3, Jesus makes a distinction, and uses as an illustration the temperatures that can exist in our relationship with the Lord.

37. Hot. Cold. And lukewarm are all different temperatures Jesus used to describe the spiritual condition of the church in Laodicea.

38. So, when Paul encourages Timothy to fan into flame this gift, he is talking about the temperature of his spiritual walk. He's referring to the intensity of the fire of his spiritual life.

39. So, this morning I want to point out two aspects of the fire that describes our spiritual walk.

Fire has different intensities.

1. 2 Timothy 1:6 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.
2. The reminder to fan into flame indicates, that at the time Paul writes this letter, that the fire or intensity of Timothy's walk with God was not all that intense.
3. You don't need to fan something into flame if a flame already exists. You only need to fan something into flame if the flame has gone out.
4. Now. I don't believe that Paul is indicating that all of the spiritual intensity or fire has gone out of Timothy's life.
5. He doesn't say light a fire, he says fan into flame. When you fan a fire into flame, it is a result of feeding the burning embers or coals that are present.
6. And if you have ever put your hand close to burning coals, you know that even though there is no flame present, there is still plenty of heat.
7. As a result of all these hardships in Timothy's life. Separation from Paul. Difficult work. Being young and inexperienced and not entirely knowing what to do. All of these things have served to change the intensity of the fire or heat in his life.
8. But notice with me what Paul does not say. As a spiritual father who would have had every right to do so, Paul does not scold Timothy, or get on to him, or shame him because at this moment in his life all that remains are some warm coals.

9. Paul was not saying that it was bad or wrong that there was no visible flame, and only not so visible coals.
10. The encouragement to fan into flame the fire was not an attempt to straighten out some problem or failure on the part of Timothy. This was simply an encouragement to not stay down and out. To seek that fire again.
11. Allow me to apply that to our spiritual walk with the lord. Allow me to apply that to the intensity of our faith, or our passion, or our strength.
12. God does not expect you and I to be burning at 1,000 degrees, every minute of every day.
13. God does not expect our spiritual life to be so on fire 24 hours a day that we just jump from one fiery filled moment to the next. Strong all the time. Never discouraged. Never questioning. Never doubting.
14. Feeling weak, feeling discouraged, having unanswered questions that cause you to doubt what is happening in your life are simply parts of the ebb and flow of how fires burn.
15. In bible times there were not gas appliances or gas logs that had a continuous flow or flame that could be controlled and regulated with a thermostat, right down to the degree.
16. Fires were these things that were created using different materials that burned at different temperatures and at different intensities.
17. If I have learned anything it is that fire has a mind of its own. And that same fire can be scalding hot one minute, and the next it is only half as intense as it was before.
18. A while back I had trimmed several trees and bushes and I was going to burn the waste.
19. I knew it was all green, so I decided to wait a couple of weeks to let it dry out.
20. Two weeks later I went out to burn it, and I couldn't even get it to stay lit.
21. So, decided to wait two more weeks. Same thing. Wouldn't burn for anything.
22. Then, I waited another month. And this time I tried just a small amount of kerosene, and when I lit that pile, in a couple of minutes I had flames shooting 30 and 40 feet up in the air. I thought I was going

to catch a tree on fire.

23. Same pile. Same method of lighting. But the circumstances changed. What once was green was now dry. And the result was a completely different intensity of flame.
24. The circumstances of our life change daily, hourly, minute by minute. And God is not up there on his throne looking down on us with disapproval just because the stuff of life makes us feel like we barely have a few coals glowing.
25. God get's it.
26. This message to fan the flame is not an attempt to get us to strive for some type of perfection, where we are always on fire. Never experiencing ups and downs.
27. The point of this series of messages is not to condemn the fact that we can feel super intense one day and the next day feel like we are burning out. Because the reality is that all of us experience those ebbs and flows of life. Striving for that type of spiritual life is what I call fairy tale Christianity.
28. I don't know about you, but my spiritual life is no fairy tale.
29. But, what this message to fan the flame IS about is helping us understand that...

We can't afford to be passive about our fire.

1. Yes, life is all over the place. Yes, the stuff of life affects us greatly.
2. Yes, we all go through times of intense spirituality, and weak spirituality.
3. But that doesn't mean we are powerless and that we just have to sit idly by and be tossed back and forth like a rag doll.
4. We have a choice. And that choice is to either relate to and deal with our spiritual intensity passively, or actively.
5. 2 Timothy 1:6 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.
6. Verse 5. Timothy, you have this great heritage and history.
7. Verse 7. You are strong, powerful, and thinking healthy thoughts.
8. But what you have, and what you can have are affected by what you do with what you have.

9. What do I want you to do with what you have? I want to remind you to fan it into flame.
10. Now. In later weeks we will about what that means. But for today I ask us to simply focus on this.
11. Paul says to Timothy. Don't just sit there. Do something. Fan that gift into flame.
12. Don't be passive. Be active.
13. I do not believe it is God's desire to produce in us or encourage in us passive Christianity. No command or promise of God in the bible or otherwise has as it's purpose for us to do nothing.
14. Even if what God promises us is completely and entirely outside of our ability to make happen. Meaning, in order for it to take place it will require the work of a supernatural God doing miracles on our behalf. God still doesn't expect us to do nothing with it.
15. At the very least he expects us to believe what he has promised. Believing is not passive it is active.
16. One of the passages of scripture that I believe so clearly defines God's expectation of us as it relates to our part in our spiritual walk is found in the gospel of John.
17. John 6:27-29 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." 28 Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."
18. The crowd of people approaches Jesus and he recognizes that they are only there because they want something from him. They want more food.
19. And in response he gives direction as to what they should and should not do. But notice that doing nothing is not an option.
20. When they ask what they must do, he clearly tells them. What you must do is believe.
21. Believing is active and not passive.
22. But this active participation does not result in all the weight being on us. Jesus says, don't work for this and that and the other thing. Just believe.
23. In other words, cooperate with the work God is already doing.

24. I am going to get into that more next week.

Conclusion:

1. One of the great struggles we can have in life, is like the people who were seeking Jesus, we can seek him for the wrong reasons, and fail to seek him for the right reasons.
2. We can be busy, working ourselves to the bone, and in fact be working toward the wrong goal, or even in the wrong direction.
3. So, we most certainly need the help of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Into the path the Lord would have for us.
4. But that process of needing the Holy Spirit to give and do what we cannot is not passive. We must believe. We must seek.
5. For today what I want to leave you with is this.
6. The intensity of our spiritual life. The flame or fire that represents our life in Jesus Christ is not about perfection.
7. Neither is the intensity of our spiritual life. The flame or fire that represents our life in Jesus Christ something that we don't have a say in.
8. Our heavenly father always gives us the choice to either accept or reject what he is trying to accomplish.
9. Our heavenly father always gives us the choice to either cooperate or reject what he is trying to accomplish in our lives.
10. So, this morning I want us to make a couple of choices.
11. Pray.
12. Salvation. We can only be made perfect by accepting Jesus as our savior.
13. Accept and receive that on all the time. Burning hot all the time. Being completely and utterly full all the time is not God's demand.
14. Give yourself grace and room for the ups and downs of life.
15. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom to know what to do and when to do it.