

By the Power of God, Feed the Flame

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[0:00] Let's pray.

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[2:14] Let's pray. Let's pray. their favorite parable in the Bible. So little Johnny had to say this, the one about the ones where they loaf and fish. So I've heard all of the sins of scripture can be summed up into two sins. Maybe you've heard this too, pride and laziness. Now that's a nice theory, but I know that many people in this world are proud to be lazy. I used to get Sports Illustrated, I don't know, 20 years ago. And there's a guy, the columnist Rick Riley used to enjoy reading him.

And I remember one time he had a, had an article about laziness and about children those days being lazy. And he used to say, we used to play kick the can every summer night. Now they play sit on your can. And so I liked that one too. I remember that ever since, but the lazy lifestyle is such an issue in America that it's affecting our schools, affecting our outlook in life. You know, people are not holding out down jobs. People are trusting the government to provide. Laziness contributing to obesity contributes to obesity too. It affects our healthcare. It affects the economy. It even affects our national defense. If you can imagine, fewer and fewer people are even qualified to be in the military these days due to obesity and the problems that affect that. So this is a big problem. I'm not, no pun intended there, but there is another kind of laziness that is much, much bigger problem. Spiritual laziness. Spiritual laziness can consist of not doing what God calls us as believers to do.

We have loafed on our responsibility as Christians in society while watching the world around us turn from God. The Bible is no longer, no longer has the place of authority it deserves in our nation. Sunday is no longer revered and we now see businesses open that don't need to be opened. Athletic events from little league to professional commencing and many recreational activities that keep us from worshipping corporately. However, there is another act of spiritual laziness that is every bit as destructive and it comes in the form of busyness. As believers, we know there is strength in prayer and meditation on God's word. Yet, how often do we get bogged down in many other things? Just give me a little personal testimony here. The clock is no friend to me.

[4:52] As I often get bogged down with performing certain tasks before time runs out, could be preparing for a worship service, writing a letter, directing a choir rehearsal, crunching numbers, practicing the piano, reading devotional books, studying for lessons, maybe even writing sermons like this one or whatever. Playing with my kids. I wrote the sermon seven years ago, so I had a small family then, only four kids. Nevertheless, it often takes me away from what God wants me to do the most.

He wants my attention. And too often these other things have my attention, even when I say I am doing these things because He has called me to do them. I remember James 5, 16, and this is an important verse for nights like this, what we call traditionally prayer meeting. The prayer of a righteous man. It's powerful and effective. This is true because praying summons the omnipotent God.

Prayer is available because of the grace of God. And in order to be righteous before God, we need to have a faith ignited by the grace and power of God. And so we come to the main idea. It says, by the power of God, feed the flame. It says right here in verse six, for this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God fan into flame. So by the power of God, we are to feed the flame.

What is this flame that Paul talks to Timothy about? It's the gift God has given him. And it's the gift God has given us. And he talks about what this gift is about. And bringing up several places in scripture from at verse seven, talks about the spirit of power and of love and of self-control. In verse nine, he talks about the gift of salvation who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works or anything we've done, but because of his own purpose and grace. And even adds that he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began. So the salvation is even preconceived by God. Eternal life in verse 10. He says, Jesus Christ to abolish death and brought life and immortality to life, to light through the gospel, eternal life with him. He gives an example of, of, of Paul, of, of him, the apostle Paul, given the responsibility of a preacher, apostle and teacher of the gospel, as you can read in verse 11. He also talks about the great assurance of salvation being this gift God has given to us.

[7:47] In verse 12, it says, it says, but I am not ashamed for, I know whom I have believed and I'm convinced that he is able to guard until that day, what he has been entrusted to me. And even the sound words of scripture in verse 13 and 14, we see that as a wonderful gift. And of course, the gift of the Holy spirit, as we see in verse 14, the Holy spirit who dwells within us, all of these wonderful gifts, which is this flame that we are to, that we are to feed by the power of God. And so having the ability to stir up this gift is also God's gift. It's a wonderful truth. The flame of God's gift is dependent on our feeding and our feeding relies on God's grace. We are to continue to be fed by God for this. So by the power of God, we feed the flame with courage. We have three points here. The first point we feed the flame with courage. We go back to verse, verses of five and six.

We are reminded about, or Paul says he's reminded of Timothy's sincere faith that started at an early age. That sincere faith, sincere or genuine and other translations, literally in the, in the Greek, it means unhypocritical, anti-hypocritical. It is, it is against hypocrisy. So this is a faith that is, that, that, that's, that the courage stems from just genuine faith. And it was formed at an early age. And this is a very beautiful truth about Timothy too. It's formed at an early age as Paul is reminded of his grandmother, Lois and Timothy's mother, Eunice, solidifying this faith in him.

And teaching him the wonderful truths at home of, of, of what, of what faith is about and what scripture is about and how to truly follow after Christ. And, and as an adult committing to trust in the Lord and, and be called into the pastorate as he's preaching in the book of Ephesus. That's really when Paul wrote this letter to the book to Timothy, he was in Ephesus. He was pastoring that church, spent the rest of his life doing that, that great work. And, and so at that point, even, even earlier than that, he was able to have this faith formed in him. And, and so many great people were used for that purpose, not just the apostle Paul, but even his family at a young age. And so, and also, of course, Paul was talking about the laying on of hands as, as, as, as Timothy was laid on, as, as Paul prayed for him by the laying on of hands. Of course, Timothy was also prayed for by elders in the church as first Timothy chapter four talks about as well. And we think of, we look at these, these, these things, and we think of Timothy having faith from an early age, trusting, and trusting in the Lord from an early age. And we are intrigued by powerful testimonies of God. We really are. And, and, you know, we are always drawn to the ones that are people that are saved from horrible sins, horrible atrocities. We're all horrible sinners without Christ, of course, but some can just spread a little extra sin jam on their testimonies. Can they not? Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual immorality, grand theft auto, mafia connections, et cetera. I do know someone with mafia connections. At least I've met someone. I don't really know him well. You may be that person who grew up in a Christian home, went to Sunday school as early as you could remember, got saved at a young age. You don't think you have a powerful testimony. You do though, you do though, praise the Lord. He can save anyone, regardless of who they are or what they have done. But if you're the one who was raised in a home of faith, praise the Lord that you have an early opportunity to build that genuine faith, that sincere faith in order to stand for what is of God. So that was a little bit of inside, but Timothy had this sincere faith, even from a young age, and he continued in, in, in persevered in that faith. So Timothy is to exercise three gifts from God to combat fear. As it says in verse seven, a well-known verse, God gave us a spirit, not a fear, but of power and of love, the self-control. I memorize a sound mind. And so he has, he has to have the Holy Spirit's power in all the various circumstances in Timothy's ministry. The spirit imparts his power. We need his power in all the tasks God has called, calls for us to do. And that's something that's understanding. When, when I preached the sermon back at little Cypress, Texas, uh, they were in the process of looking for a youth pastor. And this is interesting. We're beginning that

process as well. And, and so I gave this little application, talent, training, and experience cannot take the place of the power of the spirit. We need to understand that and remember that as well. So not only Holy Spirit's power, but of love as well. It's a fruit from the spirit. Galatians 5.22 talks about that. This is a love that conquers contempt and opposition by forgiveness and refusal to seek revenge. Selfishness will also negate love. So we are to have love and self-control, the sound mind, self-discipline. God never intended that defeat should be the norm of Christian living. We are all moved by our emotions, but we should not let them enslave us. We need to be disciplined in that. And that is self-control, of course, is also a fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5.23, next verse, from love as well. So fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. So there's a religious movement today, a life today, that teaches Christians need a second filling of the Holy Spirit, apart from salvation. This filling is accompanied by speaking in tongues, other gifts of this kind. This is not a biblical teaching. John 14.16 says, The Holy Spirit forever abides with those whom he has saved. It is possible to grieve the spirit and quench the spirit, but he will not leave us when we fail. But if we neglect our spiritual lives, he cannot use us and empower us as the faithful and obedient servants he desires and deserves. So Timothy didn't need anything new in his spiritual life. He only needed to stir up what he already had. That's important for us to know. We don't need anything new. We need to stir up what we already have from our salvation. When God saves us, we don't need anything new. By the power of God, we feed the flame, this gift of God, not with fear and cowardice, but with courage, with sincere faith. So by the power of God, we feed the flame with courage, and we feed the flame with character as well, with character, with integrity, with honor. See, Paul instructs Timothy to never be ashamed of the Lord's testimony and the Lord's prisoners. On the contrary, he is encouraged to share in the suffering for the sake of the gospel. You see that in verse 8. Do not be ashamed, but share in the suffering for the power or for the gospel by the power of God. I want to share a statistic. It's a fairly old one from 2011. Remember, this is an older sermon. But it says, estimation of, on average, there's 270 new Christian martyrs every 24 hours over the past decade. And talking about the first decade of the 2000s, so this is a decade ago. It's probably grown from there, because I'll tell you this. Every decade from the first century on, there have been more and more martyrs over that time. Fox's Book of

[16:00] Martyrs talks about that. Other places, Voice of the Martyrs has talked about that. It just continues to grow and grow. More and more martyrs all over the place. We forget that here in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, even with Voice of the Martyrs over there, but it does happen. So 270 new Christian martyrs every 24 hours, over a 10-year period. If you do the math, it's more than a million people that are being martyred for the sake of Christ. Yet, read Fox's Book of Martyrs. Read Tortured for Christ, the Heavenly Man, all these books, and you find something constant in those who are persecuted for the faith. There is joy in suffering for the sake of Christ. And there's a reason, because of God's power. So Brother Yu and Richard Wurmbbrand and other living martyrs credit God for giving them power to experience suffering for him. So, I just give it a little aside. November 3rd, we're going to be talking about this in our worship service, the International

Day of Prayer for Voice of the Martyrs. Jeremy Burton, who is the Director of Marketing, a member of our Church, will be sharing with us preaching the sermon that Sunday. So, November 3rd.

So, anyway, a minister from the 17th century named Samuel Rutherford said this, If you were not strangers here, the hounds of the world would not bark at you. That's a great quote.

Jesus said, If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. See, there's something wrong with seeking popularity as a Christian. We could probably give all kinds of examples here.

But one thing I could think of just lately, of several pastors or ministers who are well-known, who have approved of a book written by Paula White. Paula White is a, yeah, I know some of y'all looked at me. Paula White is a word of faith, new apostolic reformation, kind of pastorics, you know, female pastor.

[18:18] And, and anyway, Robert Jeffress, Jack Graham, a couple other people. I guess they approved her book. I don't know what else to say about that. Endorsed it? I may be too strong of a word, but, but nevertheless, that's what they did. They just said, hey, you should read this book.

And it's a terrible thing. What did, what did they, why did they do that? And, and of course, it's political reasons beyond that. And that's unfortunate. We don't want to talk about that right now, but because that would be a real tangent.

So, lots of problems with that. But in, for the sake of this sermon, it's a compromise and an appeal to popularity. I mean, let's be honest. They're trying to engage in a larger Christian group of people that are not necessarily Christians.

They're following a false gospel. So, this may bring happiness for a while, but it falls short of having true joy in Christ. It really does. When you trust in something other than Christ.

And follow something other than His Word. So, character is shaped by God's gift of salvation, by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus. And it has nothing to do with individual effort.

[19 : 39] He established the plan of salvation before there was time. Jesus' appearing changed everything. To those saved by grace, death has no eternal effect.

Christians receive the gift of eternal life, giving them the boldness to fully trust in Christ no matter what. As verse 10 says, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

So, remember that Paul was writing this letter to Timothy while in prison, awaiting execution. There is physical death. All will pass through. There is an eternal death, a full separation from God.

Christians will not experience. Those whom Christ hasn't saved will be eternally separated from Him in a literal hell. We've got to recognize the reality of that literal hell.

Of the fact of why we go out and reach out to this community. Why we do the things in order to reach out, like Fall Festival, the Carnival, Sunfest, go out there.

[20 : 47] All the things that we're involved in. And we do that because we want people to hear the gospel because that is a timely message that they need to hear. They need to hear.

And we've responded to the gospel. Christ has saved us. We want them to be saved too. So we share. And we cannot lose that. We cannot quit reaching out.

The gospel gives us the freedom to share in Christ's sufferings. The International Mission Board does that. Over, well, about 4,000 missionaries.

Maybe a few less than that now. There's many appointments every year. And they're doing suffering all over the world.

We may think maybe they're not necessarily. But you know what? There's all kinds of suffering. Missionaries do die for their faith. Nevertheless, they're going in there learning a different language, different customs, different religions they have to deal with.

[21 : 53] We have to deal with that too here. And yet, you know, they're going in there and they're serving the Lord in a way that the Lord has called them to serve. And the Lord has called us to serve.

I've said this several times. I've said it one time on Sunday morning. Whether you're going overseas to China or just going across the Walgreens parking lot to the restaurant over there, the Chinese restaurant over there, we are to share the gospel.

We are to bring the gospel to people. Whether it's across the world or across the town, we've got to do it. We really do. You know, I'll tell you a real truth about suffering.

Back in the 19th century, foreign missionaries, instead of packing their belongings and supplies and suitcases or wooden trunks, they packed them in coffins. I don't know if everyone did that, but some people did.

They packed them in coffins. Why? Well, you all know what a coffin is. They didn't plan to come back and many of them didn't come back. Bloody Moon was one of them. So how's your commitment to spreading the gospel when all we have to do is just go over next door to us across the street?

[22 : 59] I'll tell you, it's not very good for me. So how's the commitment? So by the power of God, we are to feed the flame with courage, feed the flame with character, and we are to feed the flame with conviction.

And this is a big one. This is a big one. Paul was facing execution, but he had no shame for being in prison for doing exactly what he was called by God to do.

Paul's confidence is not in himself, but in Christ. All we are and all we have in Christ is in his hands. So verse 12 talks about this. It says, but I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

We sing a song about that. I know him I have believed and persuaded that he is able. That would be King James. So what have I committed to him? So it's this deposit he's talking about.

We'll have to deposit with Jesus and he with us. He's entrusted this truth in God. Romans 13.7 says this, Oh no one anything except to love one another for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. [24:20] So Jesus paid it all to him. I owe. We are debtors until every person on this earth has heard the gospel. Whether it's across the world or across the street, we are to share.

So conviction in Jesus is grounded in the word of God. Verse 13 says that follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

What more can he say than to you he has said. We are to follow the sound words of the words of God. Many who say they speak for Christ proclaim false doctrine.

No matter how good certain teachers may sound or how large their following might be. We need to pursue sound teaching and to avoid all teaching that does not conform to scripture.

And the only satisfactory viewpoint we are to have is the word of God. The verbal plenary inspiration of the word of God. And so the Christian life can only be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[25:26] And so we need to understand that. And this is important this conviction because if you go to the following verses after verse 14 you see the truth of the conviction of Paul.

Again being in prison he's about to be executed. He's just I mean this is the last book of the Bible that he'd written or the last letter he'd written. So verse 15 it says you are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me among whom are Phagellus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. Name three men there. One was faithful to him two are not and others that were not named also were not.

You know fact is even when he's unpopular even when he's not being followed people are avoiding him at whatever cost he still has to have the conviction.

He shares that again with Timothy in this book 2 Timothy in chapter 4 it says preach the word be instant in season and out of season what does that mean?

[26:45] No matter what the cultural worldview says no matter you know whether you have two people in your worship service or 200 people in your worship service or 2,000 you are to bring the word of God.

You are to bring the truth of God's word and you are to bring it in an undefiled way. And so that's even if it's popular or if it's not popular and you know what it's often times not going to be popular the world hates us the world has always hated us the world has always hated Christians true believers in God's word and we have to understand that.

We put our confidence not in others we put our confidence not in ourselves our confidence completely in Christ. We have to do that.

That's our conviction. So by the power of God we feed the flame with courage. God has given you everything you need to effectively and successfully walk with him. He gave that to you in salvation. With character your life of integrity will develop through a willingness to share in the sufferings of Christ.

With this willingness witnessing for your faith becomes second nature. And we feed the flame with conviction. We place our total confidence in Christ alone. And so we need to stop being busy over trivial things.

[28:06] We need to be placing our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ. When I preached this sermon back seven years ago, it was two days before the presidential election of 2012.

And so I shared this. This year I've heard a lot of Democrats and Republicans actively seeking to share their beliefs with me. That's never changed, by the way. It's every year. It doesn't matter what's going on.

But you know what? I don't hear anywhere near as often people sharing the gospel with me. Maybe in church. Perhaps. In the pulpit, this is an easy place to share the gospel, you know, relatively.

But, you know, not so easy out there. And we need to be convicted about that. The gospel is infinitely more important than politics could ever be. When we are in eternity and America is long forgotten, the gospel will still be remembered.

If you are a believer, maybe you should be investing your time in something that will matter when you have been in eternity for a million years. church. So what are we investing in?

[29:09] What are you doing in your spiritual walk that you can say, that's the power of the Holy Spirit? What are we doing as a church that we can say, you know, that's the power of the Holy

Spirit?
Thank you.