

WHEN THE UNCERTAINTIES OF THE FUTURE ROB YOU OF PRESENT JOY - **2 Timothy 1:3-8** - "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. [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, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. [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 God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* [8] 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...."

Consider some of the things we know about Timothy:

- a) He was much younger than many in the ministry - "Don't let anyone look down on you just because of your youth."
- b) He was subject to frequent illnesses - **1 Timothy 5:23** - "No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your *frequent ailments.*"
- c) He wept when Paul left him alone in Ephesus - **2 Timothy 1:4** - "As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy."
- d) Timothy was emotionally prone to bouts of fear and worry - **1 Corinthians 16:10** - "When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am."

Paul had to tell people to *put* Timothy at ease. Questions would come to his mind. What if he never saw Paul again? What if Paul were killed? What if the persecution intensified? How could he cope with the work at Ephesus alone?

Sensing that these concerns might weigh heavily on Timothy's shoulders, Paul writes some words dealing specifically with *how he should face the future* - **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, [7] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." *First*, Paul says there is something *Timothy himself must do* - vs.6 - "fan into flame the gift of God...." And *second*, Paul says there are *resources God has given* - vs. 7. Paul says God has given Timothy "power and love and self-control." I want to look at the second part first and close with the first.

- 1) **THERE ARE RESOURCES GOD HAS GIVEN FOR THE FUTURE** - **2 Timothy 1:7** - "....for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Paul says God has given Timothy (and us) the resources of *power, love and self-control*. Let's look at each of these three gifts from our Heavenly Father:

- a) *In Christ we are given power.* Now think back for a minute. What I said in the first message in this series - that *misconceptions about the gospel will haunt and harm us farther down the road in our Christian walk* - is so applicable here.

Paul tells Timothy that he has to bring certain truths to mind - "Timothy, you seem to be thinking about yourself, and life and the challenges ahead of you as if you were still just an ordinary person. But Timothy, you have been born of the Spirit of God. God is in you. Timothy, what matters now is not what is true of *you*, with all your weaknesses and limitations. What matters now is what's true of *God!*"

There is an enormous and still growing tendency in Christian circles today to look at our lives only in terms of what we have been in the past or what has happened to us in the past. More and more Christians come to view their present and their future as solely *defined* by the accumulation of their past experiences and responses.

I recognize that you may very well be of a certain temperament type. About twenty years ago *Tim LeHay* started a big trend with his writings on spiritual temperament. People began to explain almost everything they did on the basis of their *temperament group*.

Listen, you may be of a certain temperament. And the *natural man* is filled and *dominated* and *controlled* by his temperament. Not so the *Christian*. The Christian *has* a temperament. But He is *dominated* - propelled - empowered - by the Spirit of God.

I think this concept helps explain some difficult words from the ministry of Jesus. Here are some words that are confusing to many - **Matthew 23:8-9** - "But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. [9] And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven."

Verse 8 reminds us that no earthly authority replaces or overrules our one teacher, Jesus Christ, our Lord. And in the same way **verse 9** reminds us that while we certainly *have* earthly fathers (and mothers) our *nature and destiny* isn't ultimately determined by earthly heritage and relationships. In Christ Jesus we have - actually *have* - a new Father. Our lives are certainly *influenced* on a certain level by the genes we inherit. But the power of God is so effective and pervasive that what God has called you to become is given by our Divine Father in fashion that is much more *powerful* (remember - we're still talking about Paul's Words to Timothy about being given *power* from God instead of fear) - that power is more effective in shaping your future than anything else about you.

It's significant that when Paul talks about the things that mark the person in Christ, the first thing he talks about is *power*. There's power for weaklings, power for the timid, power for the abused, power for the widowed, power for the abandoned, power for the stressed out and busy.

- b) *In Christ we are given love* - **2 Timothy 1:7** - "....for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

Before Paul tells Timothy what God *has* given, he takes one specific sentence to tell Timothy one thing God *hasn't* given. Paul says, "God didn't give us the spirit of fear." Now that's just stated as a bare fact. But it begs a good question. *If God didn't give it, then where did it come from?* If God didn't give this fear, why does Timothy have it? Is it from Satan? That's *partly* true. But the spirit of fear comes from *self-concern, self-love, self-protection, and the craving for self-fulfillment*. Fear has its roots in the life of self. I'm afraid I'll lose reputation, or my material success, or my health, or my pleasure, or my happiness.

So how does this *love* work in Paul's thinking specifically to free the life of fear? What *kind* of love does Paul have in mind?

- i) *Love for God* - Romans chapter 8 Paul unfolds all of the rotten things that can come into any life down the road - **Romans 8:35-39** - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or

famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' [37] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This is a highly realistic view of the world. And it's a highly realistic view of life. But then he reminds himself - "**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?**" And what you're witnessing is the fear of the future disappearing as the power of God's unfailing love fills Paul's heart.

ii) **Love for others** - Love for others is one of the key ways to keep the life of God alive in your soul. Try to hold your life to yourself and you lose it for sure. Lose it for the sake of the gospel and you find it in fullest measure. Jesus said so. If you want to overcome fear of the future and all that it holds you need to discover the spiritual power of giving your life and time and resources away as God by His Spirit pours His love in and through you.

c) **In Christ we are given self-control** - Paul has one more resource from God for Timothy and for us. God can give a kind of Spirit inspired sound judgement that lines our minds up with the mind of the Father - **2 Timothy 1:7** - "**....for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**" This is an essential part of our resources. Fear of the future and our own adequacy for it not only drains our bodies of **energy**, but drains our minds of **soundness and understanding**.

Remember, I said there were **two parts** to Paul's message. **First**, we looked at the **resources given (7)**. Now I want to close looking at the **second** part. **What Timothy was to do about all of this (6)**.

2) **WHAT TIMOTHY HIMSELF WAS TO DO - 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....**"

This is very important to me. Paul knows all about Timothy's Godly training and upbringing. He knows all about his gifting and ministry. But neither of those truths frees Timothy from what Paul is about to say.

Let me tell you one of the reasons (not the **only** reason) Christians feel the heat of the hour more than past generations of believers. It's not that we're persecuted more. It's not that we work harder. It's not that we have less material goods than we used to. It's not that our lives are tougher. Remember, Paul wrote these words from prison, facing execution. Our lives are softer than Paul's by quite a stretch. We have more time-saving conveniences than any other generation in human history.

In fact, later on in this very letter, Paul is going to tell Timothy that the pastoral ministry in the last days is going to be a very difficult one - primarily because people will be "**lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God**"

That doesn't mean they will have little idols with the word pleasure on them. Or that the pleasures will be immoral pleasures. People will grow, more and more, to center their lives on only those things that seem to be immediately pleasing to them. And in doing so they will miss the things that will make them safe and satisfied **eternally**. They will look at self-satisfaction as the goal of everything they do.

And as they **do** they will come to be dominated by **fear** that they can't possibly keep these things long term. Life fills up with threats to the worshiper of the temporal. God's plan and remedy for a sound mind can't grow in self-satisfaction.

Now, I know we aren't the unredeemed. I know we want to love and serve God alone. So did Timothy. But I'm almost haunted by the way Paul feels the need to remind this pastor - "**....I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you....**"(2 Timothy 1:6).

"Timothy, don't forget there is something precious - something latent - something still deep in your heart. It can burn and warm your life. It can set your soul aflame. Have you forgotten it? Are you losing your way? Here's the way home. **Fan it to flame, Timothy. Fan it to flame all over again!**"

While you remember the little things of life - groceries, your work appointments, your conference calls, your kid's soccer game - are you missing the biggest thing of all? There's power and love and a sound mind waiting. Let the Holy Spirit remind you where they're to be found.