

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time***

### **Not Being Ashamed of Christ, Part 1**

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:6

Code: 55-2

The passage before us in 2 Timothy this morning is a vital one. It runs from verse 6 through 18. In fact that whole last half of the chapter...we studied the first part of it last week...really surrounds one theme and that is the theme of "Not being ashamed of Christ." Not being ashamed of Christ is mentioned in verse 8. It is mentioned again in verse 12. It is mentioned again in verse 16. Three times from verses 6 through 18 the Apostle Paul speaks of the issue of not being ashamed of Christ. That then is the theme of this portion of Scripture. And we're going to be looking at this section for the next couple of weeks. We cannot hurry our way through it, it's just too important. It speaks directly to my own heart very pointedly and I need this perhaps far more than any of you do. And so I don't want to rush. I do want us to grasp the truth here in a way that we can understand the whole picture. But also I want to give time to the details which are so very very vital.

Now remember the scene because we went over it last week. At the time of the writing, Paul is in a dungeon in Rome. He has been incarcerated in prison for the last time in his life and he is here writing the last epistle of his life. This is his last will and testament, the final words of the Apostle Paul, just a little time before his head was chopped off his body and he entered the presence of the Lord he had served so faithfully. That dungeon is a dark stinking unhealthy place occupied by criminals. And in the midst of it is this one saint of God whose heart seems to be divorced from his circumstances and set on this young man, Timothy, to whom he writes.

Paul knows he's at the end of his own life and ministry. He knows they'll just be a matter of days perhaps before his life is snuffed out in this world. But the ministry must go on and he knows that in great measure it is in the hands of young Timothy. Young, I say young, 36, surely at least 30 years younger than Paul. Timothy must take the torch, the baton, the mantle, he must carry on and so Paul writes this epistle to strengthen him.

Timothy perhaps is not of the same constitution as Paul. He's not that indomitable character, that forceful dynamic personality who can stand against any one person or any group of people in any event and hold his ground unwaveringly for the cause of Christ. There aren't many like that and certainly Timothy didn't have all that same strength that Paul had. In fact, it's probably very likely that Timothy drew strength from Paul and now that Paul would be gone it was of some burden to him that Timothy find strength within himself from the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

We find some things about Timothy revealed in this epistle. But there is also a statement in 1 Corinthians 16:10 that tells us a little about him. Paul writing to the Corinthians says, "Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid for he's doing the Lord's work." Maybe that's an insight into the fact that Timothy could be intimidated, that he could be fearful and a little bit afraid when things were set against him. And so, Paul warns even the Corinthian believers to be easy on Timothy, perhaps indicating to us that he didn't handle the conflict as well as the Apostle Paul might have.

Timothy has to carry on. And he is perhaps by nature timid and he is under tremendous stress because as a young man he's trying to set the church at Ephesus right and that means he has to attack at the highest levels of leadership as well as at the level of the people. He has to be able to defend himself against all kinds of philosophical theological error that's floating around. And also the Romans have now unleashed a wholesale persecution against Christians whom they have blamed for the burning of Rome which Nero himself had incinerated. And it may well be that for the cause of Christ Timothy too could be imprisoned and his life taken away. But so much has been invested in Timothy, he has been the protege of Paul. Paul has been his mentor for several years. It's vital that that which is entrusted to Timothy be able to be used to its maximum in the generation to come and so Paul is deeply concerned that Timothy hold the line. Perhaps the sum of the epistle is in chapter 2 verse 1 where Paul writes, "You therefore my son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The whole epistle is a call for strength in spiritual service against opposition. Obviously Paul's heart is burdened. Paul's heart is deeply concerned. And as he languishes, as it were, in a prison, lonely with only Luke who cares to be near him, the rest have fled, in his loneliness reaching out to Timothy because Timothy is vital to the ongoing of the Kingdom. He never loses his sense of mission. He is never so languid in his circumstances that his focus is distorted, ever and always he concerns himself with the ongoing of the Kingdom of his Christ, and so the letter penned then to Timothy who must carry on the work.

The basic structure of the epistle is an exhortation to Timothy to be strong and to do his spiritual duty no matter what comes against him. But in order to set up the exhortation, the first chapter is, in a sense, preliminary. Remember last time the first five verses deal with motive. And in those verses Paul uses several things to motivate Timothy's response. He uses his own authority, his altruistic spirit. He uses appreciation of Timothy. He uses a prayer in appealing to God. He uses affection in verse 4 as he tells him how much he longs to be with him. And then he uses affirmation in verse 5 reminding Timothy that he knows his faith is genuine and it has great spiritual roots. He has a rich heritage and he is solidly in the Lord. And in that affirmation should move ahead in spiritual service.

So the first five verses acted as a motivation to Timothy. Now we come to verses 6 to 18 and they go a step beyond motivation. Any time you want to put someone in the Lord's work, you start with motivation. There has to be a reason for them to do that. And he piled up those motivational elements in the first five verses. But then it is necessary for effective service to Christ to have a

pervasive attitude. And what is that attitude? It is the attitude of not being ashamed of Christ...to put it in the negative. To put it in the positive, being courageously bold to speak for Christ. That's the underlying necessary attitude for anyone who is going to have an effective ministry for the cause of the Kingdom. There must be a willingness to be courageous and bold for Christ, no matter what that costs, no matter what that means, no matter what opposition that may bring up.

So, in these verses Paul speaks to the matter of not being ashamed three times because that's the heart of what he wants to say regarding Timothy's attitude. It is a call for Timothy to be courageous, to be bold, to have an uncompromising, unflinching commitment to proclaim Jesus Christ no matter what it costs. And anyone who is going to be effective has to take that position. Now let's face it, this is a very practical word for us. Every one of us have had occasions in our lives, including me, when we have been ashamed for one reason or another to speak of Christ or to be linked with Christ. Perhaps we were embarrassed. Perhaps we were afraid we'd be rejected. Perhaps we were afraid that we didn't have inadequate words to say. Perhaps we were afraid that we had lived in such a way that if we were to speak of Christ people would say, "Wait a minute, that's not consistent with what I know about you." So whether it's at work or at school or in our social contacts, all of us from time to time have been ashamed to speak of Christ. There have been times in my life when I have had occasion to speak for Christ and said nothing and should have said plenty. We've all gone through that, fearing rejection or embarrassment, or worrying about putting our position, our reputation in jeopardy because of a strong confrontive identification with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if we're going to be successful in serving the Lord, we've got to get the place where we have victory over that shame or embarrassment or fear, whatever it might be.

And it's not just persecution. Timothy was under the threat of persecution that could have cost him his life but the Bible says even the fear of man brings a trap. Just being afraid of what people say about us, or how they will react to us if we boldly proclaim Christ is enough to clam us all up on some occasions.

We're not alone. It might be helpful for us before we look at the first chapter again of 2 Timothy to go back for a moment to Matthew chapter 26 and a very familiar and almost classic portion of Scripture. In Matthew chapter 26 our Lord Jesus was on trial and during the trial, you'll remember Peter hung around the courtyard, the rest of the disciples had left him and fled, it says back in verse 56, they had all been ashamed to be identified with Him. They were all not only embarrassed but they were frankly afraid for their life. And when Jesus was taken captive, they ran as fast and as far as they could into hiding because they weren't about to put their life on the line which shows the weakness of their commitment. But Peter maybe a little stronger than they were hung around at a distance. But when the test came in this very classic account, you remember what happened beginning in verse 69, "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard and a certain servant girl came to him and said, You too were with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied it before them all saying, I do not know what you're talking about." Just flatly lied rather than be identified with Jesus Christ and be in any kind of

jeopardy. "And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, This man was with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied it with an oath, I do not know the man." Another lie and this time with an oath. "And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, Surely you too are one of them for the way you talk gives you away," had that Galilean accent. "And then he began to curse and swear, I do not know the man. And immediately a cock crowed and Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before a cock crows you will deny Me three times. And he went out and wept bitterly."

Now that is the classic illustration of being ashamed of Christ. That's the classic. And we have all sort of climbed on the bandwagon to condemn Peter. In the past we've all thought how awful, how terrible, how weak, how unthankful, how unloving, how ungracious to treat Christ so. How sinful to lie in that way. And yet without exception everyone of us who loves the Lord Jesus Christ have had our moments, too, when we might have spoken for Christ and failed to do that. We may not have cursed and swore and denied association, but we've all been ashamed of Jesus at some point in some place at some time. And that's sad. That's sad.

But it's wonderful to look at the story of Peter because you learn that...that even Peter was recoverable. And in John chapter 21, do you remember that Jesus met Peter on the Sea of Galilee shore after His resurrection, and He said to Peter three times, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" And of course the three questions related to the three denials. You denied Me three times, will you affirm you love Me three times? In other words, Peter ashamed of Christ was useless. Absolutely no function in Christian ministry could be given to him, he was useless if he was going to be ashamed of Christ. How can you proclaim what you're ashamed of? But the Lord had to restore him. And He did and said, "Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me?" And when Peter responded, "I love You, I love You, I love You, Jesus three times said, Feed My sheep, Feed My lambs, Feed My sheep." Now you're fit for service. If you love Me, if you love Me enough to...what? Well then Jesus said to him, "Some day somebody's going to tie you up and take you where you don't want to go." And John said Jesus said that referring to the death by which Peter would glorify God.

In other words, "Peter, do you love Me? Will you serve Me even though it means your death?" And Peter said yes, obviously. Because in the text of John 21 he followed Jesus. And you see him on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 standing up with boldness and courage and conviction in an unflinching spirit and he denounces the whole populace of Jerusalem for crucifying the Lord of glory. And he preaches Christ and Him crucified and he preaches the resurrection and he preaches the judgment of God so that the people cry out and say, "What shall we do?" And he calls for repentance and three thousand of them are converted to Christ in that moment. And he went from being ashamed of Christ to being a bold proclaimer of the very Christ who was once an embarrassment to him and a cause of fear.

And it's only when you get past that shame, that fear, that embarrassment, whatever it is, that you become useful to God. Where there is boldness and courage and an unflinching conviction and commitment to proclaim Christ no matter what it costs, you have a useful servant of God. Could it be that Timothy was a little weak also like Peter? That Timothy tended to be a bit fearful? That Timothy was being hit from so many sides with so many threats and so much opposition that he was really falling a little bit? I don't think Timothy had grown totally cold in his spiritual life. I don't think he had abandoned anything. But I think he was kind of cooling off. I think the fire was waning a little bit. I think the battle had taken a toll on him because this epistle of 2 Timothy has very little commendation of Timothy, just one statement there that we read last week where he affirms his faith in verse 5, the rest of it is exhortation after exhortation after exhortation and I think that tells us that it was given to a man who needed that.

Peter was ashamed of Christ but when he got his life straightened out, he was very useful. And not only did he preach with power on the day of Pentecost, but he preached with power throughout Jerusalem and filled the city with his doctrine. He preached with boldness and power clear through the book of Acts until he disappears from the scene. And even when he was dragged into the Sanhedrin and they told him that he was to stop doing that, he said, "You judge whether we ought to obey God or men." He it was who boldly thanked God for the privilege of suffering in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. He was a different person. He yielded to the power of the Spirit of God and he was useful to God and bold and courageous. So there is recovery even for a waning believer.

To understand how serious it is to be ashamed of Christ though, let's go beyond Peter. And I want to take you to some words that Jesus spoke Himself. In Matthew chapter 10 would be a good place to start and we're just going to kind of introduce the concept this morning and maybe get into the first point. But in Matthew chapter 10 we have a very interesting section of Scripture. I want you to pick it up as Jesus teaches here regarding the cost of discipleship at verse 32, Matthew 10:32. "Jesus said, Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven."

In other words, Jesus says everyone who openly, unashamedly, unabashedly with conviction speaks My name before men, I'll speak their name before My Father. In other words, if you'll claim Me, I'll claim you. If you don't claim Me, I won't claim you. Verse 33, "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." Now we're dealing with a very serious issue here, friends. This is a matter of salvation. If you are continuously and constantly ashamed to confess Christ, then He will be ashamed to confess you before His Father. You don't belong to Him if He doesn't belong to you. If you won't acknowledge Him, He won't acknowledge you. And the implication here is that there's a price to pay for that. Notice verse 34, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth, I didn't come to bring peace but a sword." Jesus is saying I know there's a cost here. "For I came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-

law against her mother-in-law and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."

In other words, I know that if you confess Me in that Jewish environment, you're going to pay a price for it right in your own family. But if you're not willing to do that, then I'm not willing to confess you. And verse 37 He follows it up, here's the real issue, it's who you love most. "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who doesn't take his cross...that means be willing to die...and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. And he who has found his life shall lose it. And he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." In other words, if you're willing to confess Me, if you're willing to take what rejection comes, if you're willing to give your life over to Me even to death, then I'll confess you before My Father. But if you're ashamed of Me, and if you're constantly ashamed of Me and continually ashamed of Me, then I don't have any relationship to you at all and I will not claim you before God.

In Mark chapter 8 verse 38, you remember this text, don't you? "What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Listen to what comes after that. "For whosoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation," you get that? You're ashamed to speak up for Christ because you know society is hostile to Him. "The Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Boy, what a statement. That's repeated, by the way, in Luke 9 verse 26.

Now those passages tell us a very disturbing thing that there is a damning sin among unredeemed people and that is the sin of being ashamed of Christ. Those people who as a life pattern want nothing to do with Christ and are not willing to confess Him before men and take whatever opposition and take whatever hostility and take whatever rejection may come will find some day when Jesus comes that He will not consider them to belong to Him at all. At His return He will reject them and be ashamed of them. He would be embarrassed to have any association with those who were embarrassed to have any association with Him. He would be ashamed to allow into His heaven anyone who was ashamed of Him. And they will be consigned to eternal hell for He will not allow in His presence one who does not desire to confess His name.

Now what am I saying? I am saying it is characteristic of unredeemed people to be ashamed of Christ. And if a believer is ashamed of Christ, then he is behaving as if he were unredeemed because it is our very nature as believers, it is the very definition of who we are that we live to name the name of Christ. We are even called Christians...Christians. The kind of shame that marks an unbelieving soul should never mark a Christian, and yet sometimes it does. I suppose that shouldn't shock us since every other sin that unbelievers commit from time to time and place to place, believers may indulge in...except the ones of rejecting God and Christ. We can commit the sins of the unredeemed and one of them would be in some place and some time or some places and some times to be ashamed to be identified with Jesus Christ. But that's not the mark of a true Christian.

And if a true Christian were to do that, he or she would be acting as if they were unredeemed.

How can one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ, how can one who receives the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord be ashamed of Him? And yet in such subtle ways we are. Oh, we would never say that we're ashamed of Him. Maybe we wouldn't even go as far as Peter in a hostile environment and deny the Lord if our life was on the line. Maybe we wouldn't go that far but there are times and places when the shame comes out. And so the seriousness of this is pointed out not only by Peter's shame and the need to restore him to make him useful, but by the fact that this is characteristic of the unredeemed, not the redeemed. And we're acting like them if we show shame for the one who loved us.

But there's even another thought and this one has been a part of my own thinking for many years. Look at Hebrews, that wonderful epistle. In chapter 2 and verse 11, one of the most, I think, motivating striking statements of our Lord.

Hebrews chapter 2 verse 10, "It was fitting for Him...that is Christ...for whom are all things and through whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies...that's Christ...and those who are sanctified...that's us...are all from one Father...that's God...and if Christ is from God and we're from God, for which reason Christ is not ashamed to call them...what?...brothers." And then he quotes out of Psalm 22, "I will proclaim thy name to My brethren." Listen to this. Jesus Christ in that Messianic Psalm 22 was not ashamed to call us His brothers. May I suggest to you, does it even need to be suggested, that He has every reason to be ashamed of us? Do you think there is anything positive that comes to Christ by His association with us? Does He profit by that? Or does that tend to drag His name down? Well the answer is yes on both counts. There are times when we live and speak and act to bring honor to His name. There are times when we live and speak and act to bring shame to His name, right? But the thing that overwhelms me is in spite of our sin and failure, He is not ashamed to call us brothers. How in the world could we ever be ashamed to call Him brother who is without sin?

Look at chapter 11. And here that same idea goes a step further. In chapter 11, that great chapter on those who live the life of faith to the glory of God, in the discussion of verse 16, still talking about Abraham and Sarah, it says, "But as it is they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." All those saints who lived by faith, who willingly put their life on the line because they wanted a better place, who lived in the light of heaven not in the light of earth, those for whom He says He has prepared a special city, all those who put their life on the line because they live by faith in what was to come, he says God is not ashamed, not ashamed to be called their God. That amazing?

Did you know God doesn't mind being called John MacArthur's God? Did you know that? God doesn't mind that. God is not ashamed to be called my God. He's not ashamed to be called your

God. He's not ashamed to be called the God of anyone who is willing to live their life for His glory, who belongs to Him. And, beloved, let me tell you, He suffers a lot by being identified with us, doesn't He? Scandal after scandal after scandal through the history of the church, dragging the name of God incessantly into the mud and yet God in His sweet mercy and grace is not ashamed to be called the God of those that bear His name. And if God is not ashamed to be called our God and if Christ is not ashamed to call us brother, then how can we possibly be ashamed to name the name of God and name the name of Jesus Christ?

And so, it is a serious thing to be ashamed. It renders you useless in service, as it did in Peter's case. It makes you behave like an unregenerate person. And furthermore, it perverts to the extent that the one who is not ashamed of you though you are shameful, you're ashamed of though He is without flaw. No place for being ashamed. And that's why it's so important for Timothy because underlying all effective service is this courage, this boldness. If there's shame there, you're not going to be effective. And that's why verses 6 to 18 deal with the subject. Now let's go back and look at them.

I was reading this week of John Huss. John Huss the great pastor at Prague, called the morning star of the Reformation because it sort of started with him. Was arrested, condemned and sentenced to be burned at the stake by the church, that's how corrupt the church was in 1415. And when he was tied to the stake, set to be burned to ashes, he prayed from Psalm 25 and verse 2, "In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, never let me be ashamed." And he went to death unashamed of his identification with Jesus Christ.

But how do you do that? How do you live a life that's not ashamed? Well he gives us here, I think, eight aspects...eight features that are implied down through verse 18. All we're going to do today is look at the first one because I wanted to spend the time introducing the idea. But let's look at the first one. How do you get the focus of your life right so that you can live a bold courageous confrontive unashamed life?

The first thing he says to Timothy is to refresh or renew your gift...refresh or renew your gift. What does he mean by that? Now listen carefully to what I say right now. It means, get a grip on what you're supposed to do. That will help. That will help. In other words, if I know that I am here for the purpose of proclaiming the name of Christ, then being ashamed of that violates my very reason for existence. That's how basic it is. That's how it strikes at the very root of my being because, you see, as a spiritual entity I have been given a gift from God for ministry. If I don't use that in the exaltation and proclamation in the name of Christ, then I have literally ceased to function at the very basis of my spiritual purpose. Notice that in verse 6, "And for this reason," he says, "I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

In other words, he says, "Timothy, renew your commitment. Refresh your commitment to use the gift of God that's in you." You have been designed by God for a certain function, for a proclamation and an instruction and a leadership within the body of Christ. You must do that or you cease to function at the very point of your being spiritually. You're in this world given a gift from God to do a ministry. If you don't do that then you're here for no reason. You have ceased to mean anything. You might as well leave. That's the idea. Renew your commitment.

Now look at the specifics of verse 6, "For this reason I remind you," what reason? The reason of verse 5, "That I know your sincere faith and I know you have great spiritual roots from Lois and Eunice and I know that in you dwells that which is genuine spiritual life." That's what verse 5 is really intending to say. In other words, because I know you're a true believer, because I know your spiritual roots and heritage, because I know you're genuine, I therefore know you have a gift of God and you need to use it. And that can be said of every believer. Every believer in Jesus Christ has received a spiritual gift. He divides to every man severally as He will, 1 Corinthians 12:11 says. Every believer possesses a gift. Romans 12:3 says, "Each man has received a gift in line with the measure of faith and the amount of grace that God wants to dispense." And whatever your gift is, get on with using it. Be about using it. That's what you're for.

Notice that verb "kindle afresh." I remind you to kindle afresh. Why is he reminding Timothy? Well I think Timothy was on the cooling side. I think he was waning a little bit. I think he was sort of on the back side, down hill slope, if you will. And Paul uses here a present infinitive indicating continuous action but nonetheless it is a call to continually kindle afresh. It's like Paul's own words in 1 Corinthians 15, I think it's verse 31, "I die daily. Every day of my life I get up and bury Paul and let Christ live. I don't worry about Paul, I just let Christ live and then everything's okay. I don't try to protect myself. I don't try to comfort myself. I bury myself and I let Christ live." And that's what he's asking Timothy to do. He's saying, "Timothy, I'm reminding you to get that fire going again and keep it alive, keep it blazing." It's the positive side of the negative statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 which says, "Quench not the Spirit." Don't put the fire out, fan it...fan it. And as I say, I believe that Timothy needed to do this. Something wasn't just right in his life.

Now notice the little phrase "the gift of God," charisma, grace gift, charisis grace, charisma is the grace gift. You don't earn it. You can't gain it. You can't seek it. There's no way you can get it on your own. There's nothing you can do to deserve the gift. God gives every believer the gift that the Holy Spirit sovereignly wants to give. That's what it says, 1 Corinthians 12, I just quoted it, He divides to every man severally as He wills. You cannot seek a gift of any kind. Now there were given gifts, according to Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12, gifts for the functioning of believers in the body of Christ for the building of that body. Romans 12 lists some of the categories of giftedness. Romans...1 Corinthians 12 lists some categories of giftedness, they're not quite the same which leads me to believe that there's a little latitude there, they're sort of general ideas of areas in which the Spirit gifts people...in preaching and teaching and helping and administrating and believing or faith, and

which I think is tantamount to giving in many cases. Gifts that can...categories of gifts that can come in all kinds of shapes and sizes and forms. And what you have is general categories of gifts in which the Spirit enables believers to function. You have a category of teaching. You could have thousand teachers, they would all teach distinct from each other. You have preaching and there are myriad of preachers and each of them approaches their preaching a little bit different than others. You have people in leadership and styles vary and ministries vary as much as the people vary.

So, you have there some categories of gifts. It's very much, I believe, like a pallet and God has basic colors and those are those categories of gifts. And I'm not talking about the sign gifts which I believe passed away at the apostolic era, tongues, interpretation, healing and miracles or casting out of demons. But the remaining gifts that are for the edification of the ongoing church, they're like colors on a pallet and God takes His brush and takes a little of this and a little of that and a little of this and paints you just the color He wants you to be. You're a combination of the categories of giftedness to make you unique. That's why Peter can say, "As each man has received the gift." Everybody receives the gift for them. It isn't gifts, it's the gift. But that gift for you is a combination of categories blended together to make you unique.

In fact, let me go a step further. I think your gift frankly is inseparable from your function or your ministry. The only way your gift can be known is in the context of the ministry to which God calls you. If we read 1 Corinthians 12 properly when we receive the Holy Spirit at salvation, when we are baptized with the Spirit, placed into the body of Christ, it is at that time that the Spirit gives us the gifts. So all of us from salvation on possess divine enablement to serve the Lord. In Timothy's case, preaching, teaching, leading, doing the work of an evangelist, all combined to be his gift. Now if Timothy received his gift as normal, according to 1 Corinthians 12, he would have received it at his conversion. The Spirit of God would have planted in him the enabling to do that. But it never came to full fruition, it was always latent until he stepped into his ministry, until he stepped into his calling. And so notice verse 6, "Kindle afresh the gift of God, it came from God which is...where?...where is it?...it's in you." It's an internal grace operation. It's something that is energized by the power of God like nothing else you do, okay? Marvelous thought.

When I use my gift I am more enabled by the power of God to do that than anything else I do. In fact the other things I do may not be enabled by the Spirit of God in a particular way at all. And so he says you have the gift from God in you.

Then he adds this phrase, "Through the laying on of my hands." Does that mean that God gave him the gift through those laying on of the Apostle's hands? It may well be. It may well have been that in a sense Timothy was extraordinary. He was still in the apostolic transition area and maybe he hadn't received his gift at salvation. On the other hand, maybe he had received that gift and it was latent until officially the hands of the Apostle were laid on him, until the hands of the Presbytery in his own church were laid on him, as 1 Timothy 4:14 says, until word came from God directly through a

prophet as 1 Timothy 1:18 says and in that extraordinary event his gift may have been given or it may have been latent there and it just burst into full flower at that moment. We really don't know which is the case. But the point here is to kindle it afresh.

The reason he mentions the laying on of hands is to affirm that Paul knows he has the gift. Just as in mentioning in chapter 4 verse 14 of the first letter to Timothy, the Presbytery to affirm that he was part of a larger group and accountable to that group for fulfilling the commission that the laying on of hands implied. Just as in chapter 1:18 of 1 Timothy saying the word came from God was an accountability which Timothy had to live up to knowing that this gift came from God Himself.

So here he was, receiving a gift from God verbalized through a prophecy, having the church lay hands on him confirming his commission, and becoming an apostolic delegate linked to the Apostle Paul himself by the laying on of his hands and that's a tremendous responsibility to fulfill. You're obligated to God, you're obligated to your church, you're obligated to me to use that gift, that's what he's saying. And in that sense perhaps Timothy's giftedness was extraordinary. But anyone's spiritual gift puts upon them the demand to use it. Boy, this is so basic...so basic. And if you don't do what you've been gifted to do, then you don't do what you're here to do, you might as well not be around. You're denying the very essence of your spiritual function. And yet the churches are full of people who just don't see that. They think Christianity is a spectator sport and they've done their duty if they show up and listen, sing a few songs. Paul is saying to Timothy, "Look, I put my hands on you as the affirmation of your giftedness and call to the ministry. I put my hands on you and launched you as an apostolic legate, as it were, an emissary, an ambassador of Christ and you've got to do it."

Now that's where your boldness starts. It starts with a recognition that you're here to do a ministry. That's where it starts. If you're going to be encouraged and enthusiastic and courageous and bold, it starts when you know that you're here to name the name of Christ, to exalt Christ, to use your gift to serve His name. And so you never are ashamed of Christ, your very reason to be is to serve Christ, whatever your gift. You may say, "I only have the gift of helps, I don't have the gift of preaching." Fine, then the world ought to know you're here to help the cause of Christ. You say, "Well, I just have the gift of giving." Well the world ought to know you're here to give to the cause of Christ. In other words, whatever it is that you are doing, whatever enablement the Spirit of God has placed within you, you are doing it for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ and the glory of His name and the building of His church. And if you're not, then you're denying your very reason to be.

I know some of you are going to say, "Well I don't even know what my gift is." And let me tell you this, I'm not sure I can define mine very well. I know what I do, that's all. So if you ask me what I do, I'll tell you what I do. And I know that my gift is a combination of things that come out in what I do in my ministry but it can't be divorced from my ministry. That's why Timothy's gift even though it was by God given to him through the Spirit, placed within him, never really could be seen and never began to function until he was commissioned and sent to minister. So what you want to do, my dear friend, is

minister, go at it. And it doesn't matter that you've got some airtight box in which you can define your gift. All that matters is that you're ministering in the energy of the Spirit of God, seeing what He does with you when you offer your life on the line in service to Him.

You say, "Well how do you know you're even going to get in the right ministry?" I think He'll lead you by your desires. I think commensurate with your gift is your desire...your desire.

I remember when somebody said to me early in my ministry, I counseled them on...I had two appointments in counseling and at the end of the second appointment this man said to me, "I want to tell you something that may help you in your future ministry." I said, "What's that?" He says, "You don't have the gift of counseling." I said, "You just helped me a lot." And you want to know something I said to him? I said, "I'll tell you something else I don't have and that's the desire to counsel." I have absolutely no desire to do that so I'm sure glad I'm not stuck with a gift that I don't want to use. But you want to know something? I want to preach. You wind me up in the morning and I preach. That's the way I function. That's me, that's the truest thing there is about me in terms of spiritual dimension. That's my gift. And so when I want...rather than sitting around in a corner trying to figure out what my gift is, I just say, "O God, fulfill my heart's desire," and that's the thing that moves me in the right direction. Now if you're walking with the Spirit and your life is the way it ought to be, what do you want to do? Now some of you are saying, "I want to be where you are, I want to preach." You have to find your own place. I'm not going to deny your gift, just don't crowd me.

But you need to check your desires and check your heart and find out what your impulses are and what direction the Spirit of God is prompting you and then get busy using that gift. You see, that's where your boldness comes from. Your boldness comes from the fact that this is what God made you to do, this is what God designed you to do. You've got to be doing this. This is your reason for existence. Boy, what a tremendous thing that is to know and to know that God has me here to do this so I can't be ashamed to do it because I don't have any other reason to be. I'm not trying to protect myself in another area because there is no other area. If I don't do this, then I don't do anything that could be even close to this in importance.

So, Paul says, "Look, Timothy, I know it's not easy and I know you're cooling off a little and I know you've got a lot of problems and I know it isn't easy to anticipate persecution that could result in the end of your life, but know this, the first safeguard against being ashamed of Christ is to renew your gift. It's the discipline of ministry." That's what it is, it is the discipline of ministry, doing what the Spirit of God called and gifted you to do. Don't let the fire go low, never ever ever lose the focus that you are here to do what God designed you to do. Nothing more and nothing less. So courage rises out of a sense of giftedness.

I don't have any fear because I'm equipped to do this. I'm not ashamed because this is what I'm designed to do, this is what the Spirit has enabled me to do.

And just to introduce his second point, we won't go into it, he first of all says renew your gift and secondly, look in verse 7, he says, "Consider your resources...consider the resources you have to do it." God didn't give a spirit of timidity. If you're timid, God didn't give you that. What God gives, here are His resources, power, love and discipline. If you need discipline, He'll give it. If you need love in which every ministry must operate, He'll give it. If you need power, He'll give it. You have the resources. So, first of all, if you want to avoid being ashamed of Christ then take a good look at your gift and renew it and secondly, take a good look at your resources and use them.

And there's so much to say about that but we'll save it for next time. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for your love to us, a love which redeemed us, a love which drew us into the family, a love which gifted us for service here. Father, I pray that there will be no one in this place who is not using the gift You've given them. How thankless we would be to receive a gift and never use it. We wouldn't even do that to a friend. Our love for the friend who gave us the gift would cause us to use whatever they gave. And now we know that You have given us a gift for ministry, just like You did Timothy. And that part of not being ashamed, part of being bold and courageous is to know we're functioning with the gift that You gave us by grace, enabled by the Holy Spirit. What is there to fear in that? For we cannot but be successful as that gift operates in the Spirit. But, Lord, help us to realize, too, that the gift is not automatic. It has to be used. We have to be alert to its use. It has to be revitalized. Save us, Lord, from wasting our life and help us to use what You've given us for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

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