

# God's Gift and Your Fear (2 Timothy 1:1-7)

**Big Idea:** Overcome fear and rekindle your gift with the resources God gives you.

What are you afraid of right now?

The list could be a long one.

- fear of catching the virus
- fear for friends or family members who are frontline workers
- fear of the economic impact from the shutdown
- fear of a second wave

I don't want to give you all the ideas. I'd like to ask you to take a moment and think about what's keeping you awake at night, what has got you concerned about your future.

Okay, have you thought of something?

Here's the thing about fear. It's perfectly understandable. Fear is an emotion, and emotions are one of God's gifts to us. "The full spectrum of emotion is part of our design, and should be acknowledged and expressed in healthy ways" ([Jeremy Pierre](#)).

But here's the other thing about fear: how we respond to fear matters. If you handle fear properly, it can lead to greater wellbeing. It can alert you to things that really matter so that you resolve them in a healthy way. But, your fears can also harm you if you don't manage them well. Fear is a bit of a doorway into what we value most, and it can reveal things about us that are hard to admit.

Afraid? Join the club. The important thing is what we do with our fears. That makes all the difference.

That's why I'm so glad that the Bible gives us guidance on what to do with our fears.

## Fear

Last week we started looking at a letter that an early Christian leader wrote near the end of his life. His name was Paul, and he was sitting in Roman prison about to die for his faith. And yet he was doing well, not because he was an extraordinary person, but because God changed him. He knew that God had given something that nobody could take away from him.

That's Paul, who wrote the letter. But it's time now to talk about the recipient of the letter, Timothy. Timothy was Paul's close friend and coworker, his son in the faith. Paul calls him things like "our brother and God's coworker" (1 Thessalonians 3:2) and as "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:17).

When Paul wrote to the Philippian church, he said this about Timothy:

*For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.*

*For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know*

*Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. (Philippians 2:20-22)*

As Paul begins this letter, in verses 3 to 5, he spends some time thanking God for Timothy's faith and spiritual heritage.

Timothy is the kind of guy that you would want as a coworker, that we would enjoy having as part of your church.

Paul sent Timothy to help the church in Ephesus. And Paul sent this letter to encourage him. Both Paul and Timothy were in a difficult situation. Paul was in prison, had been deserted by most of his friends, and was about to die. That's his tricky situation.

But Timothy was in a tricky situation too. Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus to deal with false teaching. If you've been in a church with conflict, as I have, you know how tough it is.

And now Paul was preparing Timothy to carry on his ministry after he was gone. So Timothy faced pressures outside the church (hostility and persecution) and inside the church (false teaching and conflict). And he was about to lose his mentor and friend.

So Paul wrote to Timothy, a man who was facing some pretty real fears.

Do you feel weak, overwhelmed, and fearful? This passage is for you.

## Your Gift

Paul, Timothy's mentor and good friend, gives Timothy this encouragement as he faces this tough situation: "For this reason" – because of the faith that dwells within him – "I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands..." (2 Timothy 1:6).

You get the image. You've had a fire, but the flame is dying. But you're not ready to call it a night, so you get down on your knees and blow on it. You rearrange the dying embers and add more wood, and get the fire going again. It's amazing.

I don't think Paul is necessarily saying that Timothy had let his fire die down. I do think Paul is putting his finger on a problem that all of us have, even in normal times, but especially when we face tough times. Things naturally die down. Whatever you don't maintain and invest in gradually dies. Nothing stays in pristine shape by itself. If you want to grow something, you need to invest into it.

What does Paul say to rekindle? "The gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands." There's a unique application to Timothy, but this applies to all of us. Paul and other elders had set Timothy apart for a special role in ministry (1 Timothy 4:14). To formally recognize this moment, they laid hands on him to appoint him into service.

So there's a special application in this command to Timothy, but the same principle applies to all of us, because if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been given a ministry and gifts from the Holy Spirit. The Bible teaches that God gives every believer a special gift by God's grace: an ability that he uses to extend his grace and love through you to others. You don't earn it. You can't gain it. There's no way you can get it on your own. There's nothing you can do to deserve it. God gives every believer the gift that the Holy Spirit sovereignly wants to give. When you use that, God enables you through the Holy Spirit so that you do more than you would be able to do on your own.

God has given you something that the rest of us need, and you need to rekindle it regularly. How do you do this? Use it. Pray about it. Invest in it. Be intentional with it.

Think about this for a minute. We often talk about turning to Jesus and repentance and faith, and God forgiving your past, remaking you in the present, and guaranteeing your future. That's what it means to follow Jesus: we turn to him with empty hands of faith and we're transformed by him, and we follow him for the rest of our lives. If you have never done that before, you can do that right now. Turn to him with your mess,

receive the gift of forgiveness and transformation because of what Jesus has done for you.

But there's more than even what I just described. When we turn to God in repentance and faith, he gifts us a spiritual gift: an ability empowered by the Holy Spirit to be used to extend his love and grace to others. If you have followed Jesus, it's not possible that you don't have a spiritual gift. He's given you something that the rest of us need. Use it!

God intends to use you. You may think, "I have nothing to offer." That may be exactly the feeling that Timothy faced: feeling inadequate, feeling unequal to the challenges before him. Paul reminded him: God has given you a gift, and it will go out unless you rekindle it. Use your gifts or you will lose them. An untended fire will die. It's easy to be scared and to feel inadequate, but God intends to use you. For some of that it will involve stepping out and doing something you've never done before. For others it will involve staying faithful. Keep going! Keep rekindling the flame! Keep using that gift, prayerfully asking for God's help as you do so. Don't let it go out.

I wish I could look every one of you in the eyes and give you this encouragement. God has given you a gift. He desires to use you to extend his love and his grace to others. It's something you drift towards because it's how God has shaped you. You just do it when you're functioning well.

Some of you may be thinking that you don't know what gift you have. I have two pieces of advice for you. First, ask around. Other people probably see your gift more clearly than you do. Second, the Bible never tells us to worry very much about figuring out what gift you have. It just tells us to get serving. Where you feel drawn to serve is probably a reflection of where God has gifted you.

Some of you love encouraging and showing mercy to others. That's your gift! Some of you love organizing and providing leadership. That's what God has given

you! Some of you love to serve. Some of you love to teach. Whatever it is, stir that into flame. You can usually tell what it is because you have a desire to do it, and usually you get feedback from others that God uses you in a unique way when you do it.

Don't let fear or apathy shut that down. Rekindle it. It's one of the reasons God has put you here. We need it!

We need it always, but we especially need it now. God has given you a ministry, a purpose, and we need it!

That's the encouragement that Paul gave to Timothy, and it's the encouragement that I want to give to you today.

But as we close, let me give you one more thing that Paul says.

## **God's Resources**

Verse 7 says, "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." If you are fearful, God didn't give you that. Fear isn't one of the resources that God hands out with spiritual gifts. You didn't get that from him.

Here's what God did give you. Three things:

- power
- love
- self-control

If you need power to serve God, he will give it. If you need love, which is important for all ministry, that's his specialty. He'll give you all the love you need. If you need discipline and self-control, God will give you that too. He will give you everything you need to use your spiritual gifts to bless others.

Not only does God give you the gift; he also gives you everything you need to use that gift.

Listen, my friends. I began by asking you what you're afraid of. We all struggle with fear. Timothy did. We do too.

But then Paul tells Timothy, and indirectly he tells us too: don't let fear get in the way of God using the gift he's given you to show his love to others. Not only has God given you a gift, but he's given you everything you need to use that gift. We must apply ourselves to use that gift with the resources God has given us. It may actually be one of the best ways to move past fear like Timothy did: remember your calling, and use the gifts that God has given you to bless others.

**Overcome fear and rekindle your gift with the resources God gives you.** Stir up that gift and don't be fearful.

God can use you. And we need you. Rekindle what God has given you, because God has given you everything you need to be a blessing to others.

Lord, fear and apathy is natural to all of us. It has a way of shutting us down.

Thank you for the reminder today that even in tough times, you've given us all an assignment. You've given us something to do. You don't just call us to you; you give us a ministry so that you can use us to bless others. And then you give us everything we need to carry that ministry out.

Help us to rekindle that flame. And help us to tap into your power, love, and self-control so that we can carry out that assignment. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.