

Overcoming Fear • 2 Timothy 1:6-7

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Bomb!*

1. A psychiatrist was flying to Chicago to attend a conference.
2. As was typical, when he struck up a conversation with his seat mate, the talk turned to his neighbor's fear of flying.
3. He said his phobia began several years before all the security measures were installed in airports and a man had taken a bomb on board his flight to Denver to kill his mother in law.
4. He said, "Ever since then, *until recently*, I couldn't get it out of my mind that someone on board my flight was carrying a bomb."
5. The psychiatrist was intrigued and asked, "Well, what did you do to relieve your fear?"
6. The man replied, "Well, I went to one of those special schools for people who're afraid of flying and they told me there was only one chance in ten thousand that someone would be on board my flight with a bomb.
 - a. "That didn't make me feel much better. The odds were still too close.
 - b. "But then I reasoned that if there was only one chance in ten thousand that *one* bomb would be on the plane, there was only one chance in *100 million* that *two* bombs would be on board. And I could live with those odds."
7. The psychiatrist was silent for a moment while he tried to figure out the man's reasoning, then said, "What good would that do you?"
8. The man replied, "Ever since then, I carry one bomb on board myself--just to improve the odds."

B. *Fear Epidemic*

1. Fear often moves us to do irrational things.
2. Rather than simply bringing caution in the face of danger, which is a healthy kind of fear,
3. Fear often becomes inflated and moves into the realm of terror that paralyzes us and keeps us from doing what we ought to do.
4. It seems there's an epidemic of fear today

- a. doctors are prescribing anti-anxiety medications at an alarming rate --
 - b. and counseling offices are filled with people who experience regular anxiety-attacks
5. The evidences of fear are all around us
- a. just a generation ago, few people locked their doors at night –
 - b. now we not only lock them, we bar them, and turn on the alarm
 - c. we have security lights with motion sensors
 - d. women carry pepper spray to ward off attackers
 - e. in 1975, cuddly poodles were the most popular dog in America, with 140,000 registered.
 - 1) there were only 1000 Rottweilers, a fierce breed used as a guard dog.
 - 2) by 1994, the poodle population had been cut in less than half while Rottweilers had increased 100 times to over 100,000!

C. Today

1. As Christians, we're called to live lives that are distinctly different from the world
2. And one of the ways we can demonstrate that distinction is by overcoming the fear that seems to characterize the lives of so many today.
3. The Apostle Paul speaks to this in our text today.

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 6-7

6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

1. This was Paul's last letter
 - a. he was confined to a dank, dark prison cell in Rome, awaiting his execution
 - b. he knew his days were numbered and sent this last letter to Timothy to give him encouragement not to lose heart
 - c. it had to be an incredibly difficult thing for Timothy to endure -

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- 1) realizing that his spiritual father and mentor would soon be put to death,
 - 2) and the reason for his death would be his faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- d. Paul knew Timothy would be facing all kinds of difficult questions about the love and power of God
 - e. if a courageous and faithful man of power like Paul could be arrested, tried, and sentenced to death, what chance did a young man like Timothy have against similar charges?
 - f. so Paul writes to encourage him and spur him on to not lose heart or faith.
2. Paul had spent much time with Timothy and knew he was the kind of man who unless he was regularly given a word of encouragement, tended to fall into a state of *discouragement*.
 - a. he wasn't like the out-going and energetic Paul who seemed to be *inspired* by challenges.
 - b. Timothy was more *timid* and *retiring* and tended to face challenges reluctantly.
 3. So Paul sends him these invigorating words.
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4. These verses have some wonderful truths for us – but the only way we can get to them is by doing a bit of word study.
 5. So bear with me while we do some mining to get at the meaning of these words.
 6. Then we'll put it all together to see what Paul is saying to Timothy and the Holy Spirit is saying to us.

B. Stir Up

1. In v. 6, Paul told him to “stir up” the gift of God which was in him.
2. “Stir up” is literally, “fan into flame.”
3. It pictures the act of sticking a poker into a fire to knock the ashes off the coals and re-awaken the flames
4. Time and circumstances had conspired to cool Timothy's zeal.
5. His devotion was less hot, less fervent than before.
6. In Revelation 3:2, to the Church at Sardis, Jesus said . . .

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

- a. the church at Sardis had gotten off to a good start,
 - b. but somewhere along the way they'd gotten sidetracked
 - c. so Jesus cautions them about the need to take care and fan the flame on their quickly cooling embers of faith
7. Here Paul tells Timothy to fan the flame on the gift of God in his life.
- a. what that gift was is made clear in the next verse . . .

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

- b. the gift Paul's referring to was not the special calling to be a pastor or apostle
 - c. he means the gift of Timothy's *conversion*, when he first came to faith in Christ
 - d. Paul had laid hands on him, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit.
8. If you have a NKJ bible, the small 's' on the word 'spirit' is an unfortunate translation because Paul is *clearly* referring to the Holy Spirit.
- a. the Holy Spirit is the gift of God
 - b. and this Spirit does not bring fear!
 - c. on the contrary – the Spirit of God brings power, love, and a sound mind.

C. Fear

1. This word for "fear" in v. 7 is used *only here* in the Bible
 - a. it means *cowardice*
 - b. it's the kind of fear that hinders a person from doing what's right for fear of personal harm
 - c. it's a weak kind of *shamefulness* that shirks one's duty
2. It's the perfect word for Paul to use here because of the context -
 - a. look at what he goes on to say in v. 8

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God

- b. Paul's concern was that Timothy would lose heart and abandon his post as pastor of the Church in Ephesus when he heard of

- Paul's imprisonment and sentence.
3. Stop and think for just a moment what kind of pressure was on Timothy and why he might be tempted to grow fearful and desert his post as pastor in Ephesus.
 - a. today, in our modern world, the gospel of Jesus Christ has attained a certain dignity and respect
 - b. people might not believe it, but they recognize Christ's death as *noble* because it was motivated by the purest love
 - c. this was not at all the case in the ancient world – the gospel was a scandal!
 - 1) a Roman cross was the place of ultimate shame
 - 2) and crucifixion was the epitome of humiliation
 - d. Christians taught that their God had become man and then been crucified on a Roman cross!
 - e. this was nothing less than scandalous and earned the early Christians a huge amount of loathing.
 - f. here's Timothy, living in the openly hostile city of Ephesus, and his main occupation is as preacher of this scandalous message!?!?
 - g. furthermore, the man everyone knows has been his mentor is now considered to be a traitor to the Empire and a criminal sentenced to death!
 4. No wonder Timothy might be tempted to fear!
 - a. his world seemed to be caving in around him
 - b. and the enemy was at his elbow, suggesting he ought to get out while the getting was good
 5. So Paul is saying – “Timothy, remember what Spirit you've been made a partaker of.”
 - a. “The Spirit you've been given is not the Spirit of fear.”
 - b. “No – the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of power, a Spirit of love, and a Spirit who comforts and controls the mind.”
 6. Again – Paul sends Tim this poignant exhortation because he knows it's his *natural* inclination to become fearful in the face of difficulties.
 7. But he wants to remind him that being a Christian means moving *out of* the natural into the *supernatural*.
 - a. sure it's *natural* for Tim to be afraid
 - b. but now he's a *new creature in Christ* and he needs to

- appropriate who and what he really is!
- c. the moment he was born again, he received a gift from God – the Holy Spirit who came to set up permanent residence within him
 - d. Timothy is now to reckon the old timid, cowardly Tim as dead –
 - e. and that the Holy Spirit has created a new Timothy who's lifestyle is marked by power, love, and a sound mind.
8. THAT is what Timothy is to stir up – the new person he really was IN CHRIST!

D. Already Given

1. This is made clear by realizing what verb tense Paul uses when he says . . .

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

- a. this is an aorist indicative
 - b. I know this is a bit technical, but it's critical we get it if we're to appropriate the powerful truths Paul speaks of here
 - c. this verb tense means simple completed action in the past that produces present results!
 - d. in other words, Paul tells Timothy that when he was born again, God did not give to him a Spirit that brings fear –
 - e. but that he DID receive a Spirit that brings power, love, and a sound, settled mind!
2. Let me use an illustration:
 - a. last Tuesday, Bill Gates deposited half a billion dollars in *your* savings account
 - b. tomorrow you get the electric bill in the mail – it's for \$120
 - c. you look at it and start to worry about whether or not you'll be able to pay it
 - d. no – that's silly \ you have half a billion dollars in your account
 - e. and every day, at 6% interest, if you pulled *just the interest earnings* out and used that as spending money – you'd have over \$82,000 every single day!
 - f. would that be enough for you to live on?
 - g. it'll sure pay the utilities!

3. Paul is telling Timothy to get the right perspective –
 - a. no matter what the world throws at him he has resources so far above and beyond the challenges of this world that they pale in comparison
 - b. they're \$120 electric bills, and Tim's got over a half billion in savings!

E. Power, Love, & A Sound Mind

1. Rather than imparting a cowardly fear, the Holy Spirit who indwells Timothy provides *power*
 - a. this word was one of Paul's favorites.
 - b. it's the Greek word *dunamis* from which we get our word *dynamic* and *dynamite*
 - c. it speaks of the kind of power that's able to do things in such a way that it's not exhausted or used up.
2. Fear paralyzes – power liberates!
3. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them and they were endued with power.
 - a. then He told them they were to go and be a witness of Him to the ends of the Earth.
 - b. Timothy faced a fear that would *hinder* his witness for fear of bearing shame for the sake of Christ.
 - c. Paul says such cowardice is not of God – rather, boldness to testify of Jesus is the Spirit's work.

4. The Holy Spirit is also the *Spirit of Love*
 - a. 'love' is *agape* –
 - b. the kind of love that comes from God alone.
 - c. it's a concern for others that moves us to seek their best with no thought of personal reward.
 - d. it's the kind of love God has for us and is demonstrated in the Cross!
5. Listen to these words from Paul in Romans 8 . . .

31 **What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**

- a. in other words, if God would go to the length of the Cross to

- reveal His love and save us from danger -
b. certainly He will come to our aid in all the lesser things

33Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is God who justifies.* **34**Who *is* he who condemns? *It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* **35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* **36**As it is written:

*"For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."*

37Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. **38**For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, **39**nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- c. Paul is utterly triumphant!
d. he says that even if evil men conspire to take our lives –
e. all they have done is send us to glory!
f. death itself cannot separate us from the love of God
g. and if death, the last, greatest foe has already been defeated, then so have all the lesser enemies and obstacles along the way!
6. Why do we live so timidly - what are we afraid of?
a. death? Christians never die – they only go home.
b. are we afraid of rejection? – We are accepted in the beloved!
c. are we afraid of being misunderstood and made fun of? – God knows us and will vindicate us in the Last Day when He puts a royal robe on our shoulders and a crown of victory on our heads.
7. It was this that allowed Paul to brave the enemies and challenges of his life and stand as a victor, even when he was chained to a Roman soldier in the darkness of that Roman prison.
8. If we really grasped the greatness of God's love, we would *never*

be fearful again

a. in 1 John 4:18, John writes . . .

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

b. being fearful is a sign that we are not resting in faith in the love and power of God.

9. Little eight year old Bobby was playing out in front of his house with a friend

a. he had a shiny new scooter and was riding it back and forth on the sidewalk

b. the neighborhood bully, 11 year old Freddy Stallone came along and started hassling Bobby and his friend

c. Freddy wanted to ride the scooter and started threatening to take it

d. Bobby was smaller than Freddy by 4 inches a good 50 pounds

e. but Bobby stood toe to toe with him without a bit of fear

f. the reason why was because Bobby knew something Freddy didn't:

g. Bobby's older brother Max, a college sophomore and a star linebacker on the football team was home and at that moment looking out the front window, keeping an eye on his little brother who he adored

h. Bobby knew Max was probably ready to fly out the door and come to his aid

i. this knowledge gave him the confidence to face Freddy the bully nose to nose

j. Freddy wasn't used to this kind of courage, got spooked, and turned away

10. As we go through this life, we're going to face a lot of Freddies – a lot of things that are going to come to us and try to rip us off of what we have in Christ

a. We need to remember that our God who loves us is hovering over us

b. though we cannot see Him, He is nevertheless there

c. and He wants us to live in the comfort that knowledge brings

11. The Spirit is also One who brings us a *sound mind*

- a. the commentators really struggle with this one
 - b. the word literally means to be *sober*
 - c. but as Paul uses it here it speaks of the kind of mind that isn't tossed about and filled with the confusion fear produces.
 - d. the sober mind is a *clear* mind – undiluted by foreign elements.
 - e. fear attacks the mind and conjures up all kinds of confusing thoughts
 - f. the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of *Truth*, dispels the shadows fear plays on the walls of our minds
 - g. He produces a mind that sees things as they really are and then empowers us to live within that reality
12. Let me use yet another illustration
- a. many of us were afraid of the dark as children
 - b. mom and dad would be watching TV or reading in the living room, and at 8 or 9 o'clock they'd say – "It's time to go to bed. Go brush your teeth."
 - c. but brushing your teeth meant leaving the well lit living room and walking down that long dark hallway to the bathroom
 - d. so you'd suddenly remember some important thing you had to talk to your parents about, or something you forgot to do for homework, or that you forgot to feed the dog
 - e. after several of these delaying tactics, finally you had to take those timid steps toward the dark and sinister hallway
 - f. you slowed down and inched your way forward
 - g. what were you afraid of? The Bogeyman, what else!
 - h. you just knew there was a hunched, knuckle-dragging, goo-drooling, green fanged, red-eyed hairy monster waiting in the back bedroom to grab you and suck your brains out!
 - i. every night your trip down that hall was an agony – and every night, proved your fears totally groundless!
 - j. why? BECAUSE THE **REALITY** WAS - THERE WAS NO MONSTER!
13. The Holy Spirit is the *Spirit of Truth* who shows us what it real and enables us to live *within* that reality.

III. CONCLUSION

A. What IS Real

1. Friends – here is what is real . . .
2. Jesus Christ is Lord over all!
3. In His death He defeated sin and in His resurrection He conquered death!
4. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God – nothing.
5. There is no foe Jesus hasn't already beaten and no battle he hasn't already won.
6. There is no challenge, obstacle, trouble, trial, or pain than can exhaust His power.
7. That's reality – our reality!
8. And it's the way we ought to live!

B. Already Have It!

1. You and I don't need to read any more books or attend any more conferences in order to be better Christians and live more victorious lives.
2. All we need to do is be what in fact we already are!
3. Remember what Paul said to Timothy – God has already given us the Spirit of power, love and a sound mind!
4. All of this is already ours – we simply need to turn away from our own natural inclinations to the new person we are in Christ
5. We need to fan into flame the work of the Spirit in our lives.
6. The way we do this is by asking the Lord to open our eyes to who and what we really are in Christ.
7. Here's how Paul puts it in Ephesians 1

17 [I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

C. What's Your Challenge - Romans 8:12-16

1. Paul wrote these words to Timothy, who's unique challenge was *cowardice*
2. Maybe you don't have a problem with this kind of fear – it may be that your personality leans more toward boldness
3. What Paul writes here still applies to you!
4. You see, whatever your unique challenge is – you can substitute it in the place of the word “fear.”
5. Just as God has not given us the Spirit of fear, He also hasn't given us the Spirit of *any other* sin!
 - a. He's not given us the Spirit of lust
 - b. or the Spirit of greed
 - c. or the Spirit of anger & violence
 - d. or anything else that is contrary to the will of God
6. No friend – God has given you the Spirit of power, love and a sound mind
7. That's who you really are now as a child of God
8. Let's read together Romans 8:12-16 . . .

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD,

9. Next time you are tempted to be timid, lustful, angry, whatever your challenge is, remember who you really are – and that that temptation, that bondage, is mark of what you *used to be*, not who you now are.