

2 Timothy 1:1-18

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- Steve Jobs

Steve Jobs was the man who started Apple Computers. He died of Pancreatic Cancer in October 2011. In 2005 he made a speech to Stanford University graduates, and spoke about his impending death:

*"When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right..."*

*Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important."*

As Paul is writing this second letter to Timothy, his last ever letter, he's about to face death. He's locked in a prison cell, somewhere in Rome about 66AD, during the persecution of the Christians by Emperor Nero. Eventually, he will be beheaded by the Romans.

Paul is focussing on what's really important. Timothy is a young minister, at a time when the church is really in trouble. Christians are being persecuted and many are turning away from their faith.

- The apostle Paul writes "To Timothy, my dear son". This is a personal letter. From the apostle to a church pastor.

He thanks God for Timothy. He constantly remembers Timothy in his prayers. He really LONGS to see Timothy. He misses him like a son. He remembers Timothy's mother Eunice and Grandmother Louis, who brought Timothy up in the faith. He knows the family.

And for this reason, because Paul personally knows Timothy's faith, and loves him so much, he says to Timothy:

- *"...I remind you to **fan into flame the gift of God,**" (verse 6)*

At a time when God's church is under so much pressure, Timothy is encouraged to be bold with his faith - to fan it into flame. If you think about the way you build a fire: You light the match and you start with some paper, then a few little sticks, and as they burn, you slowly add heavier sticks and then logs, the whole time fanning air onto the fire, feeding it with oxygen to help it burn. That's how a fire grows – you feed it and you give it air.

God has started the fire. He lit the match. Timothy's mother and grandmother have nurtured that fire, and now Timothy needs to fan that fire into a roaring flame! Because, verse 7:

- **"God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline."**

If our faith is in Jesus, his **Holy Spirit** is in us. And that Holy Spirit is not timid, or fearful, or apprehensive. God's Spirit is bold and powerful. And WE are to be bold with what God has given us.

Maybe you have the gift of preaching, or leading, or music, or hospitality, administration, healing, praying, welcoming, evangelism,... **whatever** gifts God has given you, BE BOLD with them. Fan them into flame. **Feed** the fire and give it oxygen – help it grow. It’s easy to hide our gifts, it’s easy to keep them small and “manageable”. But as Paul faces death at the end of his ministry, you can see his perspective here:

- **“This is it!”**

There is no more time apart from this life. God gives us gifts to serve him in this world, and you only get THIS TIME, this ONE life, to use those gifts.

But this also reminds us that this is about God’s divine sovereignty **AND** human responsibility. God has GIVEN us spiritual gifts. All of us. Those gifts come FROM HIM. The fire was started **by Him**. But our responsibility is to use those gifts. And develop them. And grow them. With God’s help of course. By the strength of his Holy Spirit. But we have a responsibility to grow those gifts. Not to keep them small. Not to build a fire and keep the small embers going. Not to build a fire to cook some toast. But to fan that fire into flames!

And as it was in Pauls’ time, it is for us now. This is not the time for Christians to be silent. Now is not the time to sit back. Now is the time to ask – “Where is my confidence?” Where is my strength? My assurance? My certainty?

Paul wants Timothy’s confidence to come from the great truth of the gospel, even to the point where he’s willing to suffer for it – verse 8(b):

- **Verses 8-10:**

*Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

Join with me in suffering.

By the power of God.

Because he has saved us.

Because he has called us.

Not because of anything we’ve done.

But because of his purposes. And his grace.

Before the beginning of time he called us. Gave us purpose.

And now – he’s shown us his grace through Jesus – who has destroyed death and brought us immortality.

THIS is where our confidence comes from! This is why we don’t need to be ashamed! Timothy knows this. Paul wants to remind him of this. Because it is SO important to remember.

The gift of God is the gospel of Jesus that offers eternal life. And sometimes the world tempts us to back away from it. To be ashamed of it.

But Paul goes on in verse 12:

- *Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.*

Paul is not ashamed. He is convinced. He is confident. And he is convicted of the power of the gospel of Jesus. And he knows God is able to guard him even through his suffering. And so he says to Timothy, with this great confidence in the gospel, with this great confidence in God's power to look after him... verse 13:

- *13What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

### **GUARD the deposit.**

God will guard **you**. Now **you** guard what God has given you. Guard the truth. Guard the gospel you received. Guard it. What does that mean? Look after it. Don't take it for granted. Don't water it down. Again, like a fire – you walk up to a fire and it's cosy and comfortable and it's built well and it's doing all it should do. Guard it. Feed it. Fan the flame. Don't just sit down and enjoy it for a few moments and walk off.

Because that's what so many have done. Back in Paul's day. And now. Many have walked off.

As Paul writes these words, there were many walking away from the gospel. Just look at his sadness in verse 15:

*15You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.*

Paul has been deserted. This is devastating. He's planted these churches in Asia, but when persecution came along, they walked away from the gospel, from Jesus, and from Paul. They all left him. Imagine how that felt? The gospel of Jesus gave them life... and they walked away.

But then, verse 16, there was Onesiphorus.

*16May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. 18May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.*

Onesiphorus was great. He's the guy you want beside you when you need encouragement. He looked for Paul when he was imprisoned. He sought him out and looked after him.

Never underestimate the power of being WITH someone. Never underestimate what it means for others when you are AT church, or AT growth group or AT youth group or AT their home. Never underestimate the power of calling someone to say hello. Just BEING there. Standing guard with them. It might be praying with them. It might be eating with them. Or sitting down and talking.

Fan your faith into flame. Use your gifts. No matter how large or small.

- **PLATES**

And I want to encourage you to think of it a bit like this: We all have different sized **plates** in life. Different amounts we can handle. Some of us have big plates – and can do a LOT of work. Achieve a lot. Some of us have a small plate. It only takes a little work to be completely worn out and tired. Sometimes because of illness, sometimes because it's just the way we are.

Those who have a big plate can fit a lot on it. They can work long hours, handle lots of stress, manage a lot of different affairs in life. But some have a small plate in life. What Paul says is that we should be **BOLD** with our gifts in life. **BOLD** with a small plate. **BOLD** with a large plate.

Paul is saying: put a good amount on your plate. Don't overfill your plate and overwork and burn yourself out. But don't leave your plate half empty and be lazy. No matter what size it is. And on top of that, let me add, don't judge others by how much they do. Maybe they just have a smaller plate than you in life.

Take God's gift, whatever size it may be, and fan it into flame. Work with what he has gifted you.

Paul is facing death. But he's not saying: Forget it! It's too hard! Give up now. It's not worth it. No. He says: Go for it. It IS worth it. It won't be easy. It won't always be joyful. But it IS worth it. Don't give up. Fill up your plate. The gospel is worth it. Every day.

- **This is it.**

1Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

2To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Thanksgiving**

3I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. 5I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

### **Appeal for Loyalty to Paul and the Gospel**

6For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 8So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. 9He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

13What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

### **Examples of Disloyalty and Loyalty**

15You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. 18May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.