

7/7/24 - 2 Timothy 1:1-7 - "Called to Fire, not Ash"

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[0 : 00] Hear the word of the Lord from 2 Timothy chapter 1. We'll be reading verses 1 to 7. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

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. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.

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.

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. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. We must understand that 2 Timothy is Paul's last letter to be written before his execution.

[1 : 25] This is, as John Calvin states it perfectly. Imagine that, Calvin stating something well. He says, Paul's writing is not in ink, but in Paul's lifeblood.

Now, if history were true, we need to imagine this scenario, this scene playing out in our minds throughout this series that's going to take us, imagine four chapters is going to take us to Advent. We're breaking this down pretty good. And I wanted this scene to play out for people in here as we go through this series, and even people on the live stream, is that Paul is waiting for his execution in an underground prison.

It's a chamber. There's a little hole in the ceiling for light to shine through it. Just enough to illuminate the page that he's writing to Timothy.

This is a Mamertine prison seen in Rome. Now, imagine being in that setting. Imagine being in that setting and not only being alone and lonely, being hungry, being chained, knowing that the only escape from that cell is death.

[2 : 46] Real history, real situations, real people playing out as we unfold his last letter to Timothy.

I want you to picture that and let that carry with you throughout this series. His pen flows with passion. His pen flows with urgency as he addresses Timothy this one final time, calling him to persevere, to persevere and continue Paul's work in defending the gospel.

In fact, contrasting the purpose statements between the first letter to Timothy and now the second letter to Timothy, we'll discover that this is quite different than the first letter. The first one was kind of like the building, the roadmap of how to well organize a church.

And the second letter is urging him to embrace the calling, to defend and guard the gospel and to preach the gospel.

And now we may even raise a question here that we addressed in our 1 Timothy series. Are these highly personal letters from Paul to Timothy, are these intended for just Timothy and his context then?

[4 : 07] Or does it hold authority for all time, transcendentally, even reaching the walls of Steel Valley Church? Is this relevant? Or are we kind of watching through a window between the interaction between one man and another man?

Well, for that, we really have to observe Paul's opening statement here. He says in verse 1, in your Bibles, open that up, take a look. He says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.

I think it begs the question if this letter was meant for Timothy, who Timothy knows quite well who Paul is. It's like, thanks Paul for that. What a lawfully introduction.

We see here that there was something intended of this letter in mind for Paul to be writing to Timothy for the letter to be read. And he mentions apostleship.

He makes this formal assertion of apostleship, which I believe is to reinforce, if he's reinforcing his apostleship, he's reinforcing his authority.

[5 : 19] And if reinforcing his authority, he's reinforcing imperatives to govern the local church then and through all time because of his apostolic office and apostolic authority.

This is the foundation of the church as Paul wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians 2.20. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets where Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

And I don't know about you, but you only have to lay a foundation once. Right? And so those called within this apostolic office in these early times of the church were not only hand-selected by Jesus Christ, but they were also a disciple of Jesus Christ, an eyewitness of his baptism, miracles, and his resurrection.

Now, Paul was an exception to the 12, and he even admitted to that. He was kind of the oddball of them all. But in nowhere in Scripture does this apostolic office continue to be passed on.

You only have to lay a foundation one time. And what we see here from the very front gate, opening the gate of this letter, is that this apostle was summoned by the will of God at this time according to the promise of the life found in Jesus Christ, the gospel.

[6 : 45] And what we're seeing unfold is not a passing of the apostolic office of apostles to continue throughout time, but from apostle to pastor.

Jesus intended the church to be established by apostle, Paul in the 12, and guarded by elders and pastors of which Timothy was in Ephesus. And the imperatives of this book then become transcendent today as we look back to the foundation, get back to the basics in this letter.

And so this authoritative apostle now turns in that intimate language of love for this pastor. And I believe that this warming thought probably illuminated and brought warmth to this cold chamber Paul was bound to.

In verse 2, it says, To Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ our Lord.

What a beautiful triune-like address with an emblematic tone of their relationship that you can sense the intimacy between this apostle and this pastor.

[8 : 02] And so, as we continue, and what follows this authoritative and personal introduction between verse 1 and verse 2 is an encouragement in Timothy's calling as a pastor.

It's an encouragement. Now, we live in an individualized culture. I don't know if that's news to you, but welcome. Wake up to the world. Everything is about me and you, and the world revolves around you, and however that plays out from gender all the way to even skills in sports.

And what we do in this individualized culture is that we kind of privatize everything from what our identity is or what our faith in Jesus Christ looks like and how we kind of live that out in our lives. And we have to understand something here, that if Timothy were to individualize his calling, that it's just something that God gave him and he's just, he's going to hold that tight and he's going to go in that hole in the mountain, live as a monk and just be isolated from all the world.

He just needs that vertical relationship. If that were true of Timothy, he would have failed. Failed.

And what we're going to discover in this text, within these couple verses, is that our calling, whatever that looks like in your life, our calling is communal, not a private endeavor.

[9 : 40] And this will reinforce not only being devoted in our own calling as having received a calling from God the Father, who gives us gifts and spiritual gifts to glorify him, not only are we devoted to that calling as recipients, but we are also understanding and being devoted to our role playing out in the lives of others as well.

There's a recipientship and a donorship that will be discovered and unpacked in this message today. So I'd like to, for all any note takers, we have a sermon title called to fire, not ash.

And I believe that by the end of our time, you'll understand what that means in your life. So let's unpack this with three different sections as Paul takes Timothy through three sort of thematic sections within these verses that all communicate the same main point.

And let's reinforce that today. Before we do, let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Please join me in prayer. Father, we pray for illumination.

We pray for you to speak. We pray for your inerrant, perfect, authoritative, sufficient word to infiltrate our hearts, our minds, to govern our lives with you being Lord over all.

[11:18] Help this to be communicated clearly as it's no light task. And help us all to receive your word in encouragement or challenge, whatever you may have for us today. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. You guys still with me? Amen. All right. We'll see how you're doing by the third section. So let's look at this first section here, the communal initiative of our prayer lives. And we see this unfolding from verse 3 all the way to verse 4. He says, 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.

Verse 4, as I remember your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. As we remember our recent series in Acts, we may recall injustice that Paul faced as he's held captive without any basis of charge, any legitimate accusation, and here Paul waits for his execution.

Maybe that's why he says that he sits with a clear conscience. You see, the conscience is a unique aspect of human life. The conscience sets human beings apart from all living creatures upon this earth.

[12:53] It serves as a moral compass for all humanity. It's written on their hearts from God. And for a Christian, it influences conviction of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It guides us in sanctification from the moment we become a Christian to the moment of glorification when we're living in eternity with Jesus Christ, with our inheritance. And Paul stands, he says, as did his ancestors serving the Lord.

He likens himself as a messenger of God with Abraham, with Moses, with Isaiah, with Elijah, and other ancestors, all with a clear conscience.

And we might ask, why might this matter? You might say, maybe Paul's trying to convince Timothy to listen to him, that while he is facing death row, that he's an innocent guy.

Or maybe he's trying to help us even understand the relationship between a clear conscience and our prayer lives. Here, Paul makes a fascinating connection between a clear conscience and his prayer life.

[14:06] And this reassures Timothy that his prayers are certainly heard and not hindered. And what we learn from Scripture, even looking at David's own life in Psalm 66, verse 18, David even said, if I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would have not listened to David.

You see, a clear conscience paves the way for a confident and effective prayer life. While a convicted conscience hinders, restricts prayers, prayers.

And not only that, if Paul had not had a clear conscience, he's failing Timothy by praying for him. Now, Paul was not sinless, but he was blameless.

He was guiltless because Jesus Christ had taken Paul's guilt through the substitutionary death of Jesus upon the cross. In other words, the work of Jesus Christ cleanses an evil conscience.

Hebrews 10, 22, speaks about that cleansing aspect. And not only is Timothy's calling communal through the prayers of others, like, Timothy needs the prayers of others.

[15:24] Right? Not only that, but it is also dependent upon Paul to remember the work of Jesus Christ, confess his sin, and engage in this, his communal responsibility to Timothy.

There's a recipientship and a donorship here regarding a prayer exchange. And what a motivating example Timothy gets from Paul to emulate in the local church in Ephesus.

Maybe this is hitting too hard too early in the sermon, but I'm just going to hit it. We cannot tell someone that we're praying for them if we are unwilling to do the hard work of killing our sin.

Crucifying your sin. You're doing nothing for the other person to continue in sin and say, I'm going to pray for you in that.

Jesus is the recipient of our guilt, our shame. He cleanses us, not to be sinless, but to be blameless.

[16:32] And by our faith in Jesus Christ, He is faithful and He's just to forgive. How do you lead an effective prayer life?

You kill your sin before you lift anybody else up. You deal with the heart problem on your knees and cleanse your hearts before God.

Your calling is a communal engagement as a Christian. How? Well, we depend upon the cleansed consciences of others to support us as recipients.

Everyone in this room, we depend upon our cleansing conscience to support us in prayer. But we others are also depending on you to cleanse your own conscience.

and it goes round and round. This is the communal initiative of a prayer life that we see early in this passage.

[17 : 38] Now, this will change and transform anybody who clocks in a nine-to-five throughout the week. this will change the whole aspect of your home life and your parenting structure at home and even how we serve within the church body.

And sometimes people just need to open the door to other people to do life with them rather than privatize their life. Privatize their workspace. When a struggle comes up at a workspace, when you're taken to court for some crazy ridiculous aspect or something like that with the government, like you, that's an inside joke, I'm sorry, I try not to tell inside jokes from the pulpit, but there you go, I'm a sinner.

Thank you, thank you. Cleanse your conscience first. But we see that if we're having a struggle at a workplace, we don't endure that alone.

We lean upon others' prayers to support us in that time period. If you're at home, it's not just you in dirty diapers, it's you, dirty diapers, and entire church body.

Recipients. See, take your prayers, take the prayers of others with you wherever God is calling you, whether workplace or home, or even the local church.

[19 : 06] And don't stop there. Also, don't neglect anyone else who depend upon your prayers to take with them. It's communal. It's a communal initiative of a prayer life.

But not only that, we see as the verse continues in verse five, there's a communal initiative of passing on faith. In verse five, he says, 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.

Not only is Timothy's calling vitally connected to Paul's prayer life, but here we realize the vital role of the family in encouraging the faith of future leaders.

Parents, sharing the gospel with your children is a vital responsibility. It is a calling to be a parent. Here, we see the generational baton flowing through Timothy's life. From Timothy's grandmother, Lois, who encouraged Timothy's mother, Eunice, who encouraged Timothy's faith.

[20 : 35] faith. Paul was sure of it as it dwells through the fruit of Timothy's life. And this is the hard reality for us, any parents, is that a family that is not passing on faith is losing faith.

Faith doesn't have a maintenance mode. It's either growing or declining. There's only one or the other. And a family that is not passing on faith is losing faith.

This also has significant dual emphasis of the calling of parents, but also the calling of children as well. Faith is not only personal, it is communal.

parents have the vital role that we often fail to engage in. Sometimes because of the crazy behavior of our kids who decide to use the bathroom as you're walking out the door to go to church on time for the first time in your life.

And guess what? It's a number two. And guess what? You have four kids that all of a sudden have to do it.

[22 : 02] And there they line up as the clock ticks away. And sometimes that behavior can distract us.

We get isolated in our little moments where we fail to realize our calling as parents to be faithful, images of faith for our children to observe.

We become harsh, some abusive, some isolated, some distracted that your only way out of your crazy number two line is to go on Instagram and look at some reels to escape.

All the while our children's faith hangs in the balance because of our selfishness. I'm preaching to myself today.

Parents, are you showing your kids the scriptures? But not only that, are you showing them biblical theology? Not just verses, but how those verses intertwine in God's redemptive plan for humanity.

[23 : 14] Do they see you as sincere in your faith? Do they see that? kids. I'm telling you what, kids are professional detectives.

They can spot out a fraud. And if your kids are anything like mine, they will tell you when you're out of line. And praise God that my kids are definitely fiery and they hold me in line when I fall.

Lots of times. They are watchers. And children, if you're a child under the age of 18 with us today, follow the faith of your parents.

Encourage the faith of your parents. Now that may be biologically or you may not even have kids and you may be spiritual parents or spiritual children of spiritual parents.

Because not every child has a Lois or a Eunice. We live in a messed up world. And a messed up culture and society. Follow the faith of your parents.

[24 : 25] What a responsibility parents have in the future faith of the calling of others. Think about Timothy being held as a little baby in Eunice's arms.

And to think that his future would unfold with traveling city to city. was an apostle. Called for a very laborious task in Ephesus.

We'll just call it a hot mess of a task in Ephesus. And his future faith weighed in the balance of those who held him in his arms.

If anyone would benefit from Timothy's calling, we see in Ephesus, if anybody would benefit from his pastoral ministry in Ephesus, we see it's not only attributed to the nature, the communal nature of prayer in his life supporting him, but also in this communal passing the baton of generational faith.

We don't know. Timothy got a lassie wife in his life. We don't know how that panned out for him, but we know he knew how to do it.

[25 : 45] He knows how to pass the baton of faith. So parents, it's time to get missional with parenting. You are called to be a parent.

Children, you're called to be a child. Even if your kids are adults, maybe your kids are serving in the military, or maybe your kids are out in the workforce all over the world or all over the country, might be like, well, I lost my chance.

Not so fast. Because even if your kids are adults, all over the world, they depend upon those phone calls.

They depend upon your prayers. They depend upon your encouragements. For parents, that's a calling that you don't retire from.

It's lifelong until your final breath. So be encouraged. Your calling is a communal engagement as a parent. How? We must depend upon the faithful role models to emulate as recipients, and others depend on our faith as well to be their faithful role models, recipientship and donorship.

[27 : 09] people. And then in the last section here, we see the communal initiative of the local church. With Paul having established the two supportive roles of prayers and parents, he gives this one final boost of encouragement which helps Paul and Timothy to reflect upon the corporate aspect of his call, playing out in the church, the assembly of believers.

It says in verse 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.

For God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and of love and self-control. Timothy is reminded of his own responsibility to steward God's calling in his life.

And this means that upon the reception of this call with the laying on of hands which is a reference to his ordination ceremony back in 1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 14 that we saw in our 1 Timothy series.

We see that there's a responsibility that he was given at that time. In other words, that was the starting line. Not the finished line.

[28 : 39] This is a fanning work. The Greek word here indicates there's an ongoing fanning of an ember process going on.

So as he's telling Timothy to fan the flame fan into flame the gift of God which is his he's telling him to keep that fire going.

To keep that fire going. To set it ablaze. This is a beautiful image of God's sovereign calling in our lives but also human responsibility to respond in obedience to that call.

And what a wonderful illustration that Paul makes of the gift of God being related to embers that need fans. This brings to mind the work and the toil to grow as a Christian to remain humble and to never fall for the lie as the phrase goes that we have arrived in our Christian walk.

And we know all the Alana verses and we know all the twos. Right? But for Timothy it's a little bit different.

[29 : 55] Timothy didn't have that problem. He had the opposite problem. Whatever the opposite of pride is that's what Timothy had. Timothy was not confident.

Timothy felt weak. Timothy needed help which makes sense in light of verse 7 that he reminds Timothy for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control.

The Holy Spirit fans power into the weak who feel ill-equipped to the calling that they've received.

You know those little books that are sometimes in bathrooms Oswald Chambers the utmost for his highest those are good little tidbits. Oswald Chambers says on this God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources or the abandonment of reliance on them.

All through history God has chosen and used nobodies because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace.

[31 : 16] He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their own natural abilities and resources.

You want to talk about a calling to be a parent it gets real when you have the little basket of your kid at the hospital you're taking him home you're like this child is my responsibility to keep alive.

Talk about inadequacy I can barely brush my own teeth on the right regimen not to mention brush these kids teeth. If this is true your calling in life is much more dependent upon your humility than your competence only to rely solely upon God's power.

What an image what a beautiful image Paul refers to here which takes us back to the moment when Timothy felt those hands upon his shoulder that were laid upon him at the ordination ceremony back in 1st Timothy chapter 4 and the body of believers surrounding him saying yes you are called to this work we are with you see God reassures the weak through the corporate support of the local church I mean Timothy had quite a task he had to silence false teaching he had to drive it out actually he was young these guys were old how do you respect your elders when you're young and you got old guys and you're supposed to shut them up how does that work

Timothy's got quite a task but Paul takes them back to the ordination ceremony to boost that confidence laying on of hands that communal initiative from the local church in other words those who are called into such a role whether it's pastoral ministry parenting or maybe your workplace if that's your mission field those who are called into such a role must fight fear with God's promises the promise that is steadfast that is foundational that rest sure and steady regardless of any storm or turmoil that goes on in your life God says to those who are ill equipped that I am with you I am in you and I am for you in your calling the gift giver of our calling and the

[34 : 18] Holy Spirit produces the power needed to persevere to fan in the flame and a rallying church around all of us individually reinforces that maybe the most blessed place to be in our calling is a place of inadequacy then maybe here is God's power most welcome to be received with open arms your calling is a communal engagement how we depend upon God's power in our calling as recipients and we also have others depending upon us as we allow God's power to work through us into other people's lives as we become the donors living out that calling thinking about the transcendent nature of this letter we're reminded that every

Christian has been given gifts for ministry doesn't matter introvert extrovert you've been given a gift for ministry there is a calling in your life and you've received the Holy Spirit to empower you to glorify God within that calling and so the question for each and every one of us here today is will we live in a privatized kind of just you and God calling or will you live a communal calling will we live out our calling as just recipients just standing under the sun just God thank you for giving me this gift I don't need anyone that's theologically true to a certain extent but fails in our sanctification according to God's work in our lives with other Christians around as his church will we live out our calling as recipients and donors how often an untended fire can quickly turn to ashes this is a sad reality when our workplace merely becomes a source of provision you clock in you do your work you go home and we neglect the mission that God has called us to it's a sad reality when our homes become the capital of distraction capital of abuse and we neglect the mission this is the sad reality when the gathered church becomes just a spiritual care provider you get your tinglys and then you go about your week and you neglect the mission how often an untended fire can quickly turn to ashes this is my encouragement to you don't allow yourself to turn to ashes church

God has called each and every one of you however that pans out in your life you are called to the work and the mission of God it's unique in each one of our lives do not turn to ashes because we neglect to fan the flame for recipients don't allow inadequacy to hinder the flame that God desires for you to fan in your life and donors as donors be prayer warriors that people can depend on be role models that your children can depend upon and rally around others as people depend upon you what might God be calling you to step into what change or direction might God be calling you to lead a different path but for most it's simply just stepping into the gifts right here right now in your life of where

God has you here and now you see a calling is a communal engagement this this takes many shapes and forms we depend upon others and others depend upon us you are not your own church you are not your own you have the responsibility to serve within your calling so may we powerfully consider how this looks prayerfully consider how this looks and rest in God's power alone and bring glory to his name as it were in Timothy's calling may it be so for us let's pray such