

2 Timothy 1:3-10 (NIV)

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.

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.

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

GOD'S NOT-SO-OBVIOUS POWER

There are sections of the Bible where God's power is obvious, but that's not always how it is. We saw an obvious display of God's power in the gospel today from Luke chapter 8. There's a man who's been owned by demons for a long time; Jesus walks up to the man and they leave. Boom! God's power on obvious display and everyone's jaw is on the floor.

Is that how it goes in your life? Are you ever wrestling with temptation when Jesus walks into your living room and boom your temptation is gone? Do you ever toss and turn at night worried about something and then Jesus appears and preaches a sermon showing you that you don't have to worry? I've never heard of that happening. God's power in our lives is not always obvious and so

some people think it's not real. Sometimes it seems like Jesus did powerful things back then, but not anymore. If that were true then we would have to do life by our own power. Do you ever feel like that?

Well, our theme today is that God's power is at work in your life. I know because there are other parts of the Bible where God shows his power in not-so-obvious ways.

For example, 2 Timothy, chapter 1. It's not a story about Jesus. It's a letter written from the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Legend has it, that Paul wrote the letter from the worst prison cell in the city of Rome. The only air and light which come into this cell enter through a hole in the dome of the ceiling. Night and day he is chained to a Roman soldier. His friends had a hard time finding him. And based on what Paul wrote in his letter to Timothy, he was cold, he was lonely, and he thought he would die before he was released. It was a nightmare. And Jesus did not walk through the wall of the prison and set Paul free. But God's power was still at work in the life of Paul. Paul had a supernatural confidence, supernatural endurance, and he wanted to pass that power on to Timothy. That's what the whole letter is about. The letter has been preserved so that Paul can tell me and you about God's power.

God's Power Is At Work In Your Life

- 1. Remember God's power in your past.**
- 2. Ignite God's power in your current callings.**

GOD'S POWER IN TIMOTHY'S PAST

First Paul says to remember God's power in your past. The word "remember" or a synonym appears in every verse for the first few verses. See if you can find them. **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.**

In verse three, Paul says he remembers Timothy in his prayers. He also remembers how his ancestors served God before he did. In verse four, Paul recalls Timothy's tears. Maybe more than once they shared an emotional conversation, and you can bet they cried when they parted ways because they

loved each other. In verse five, Paul remembers Timothy's faith, how it started with his grandma and then his mother. Timothy's dad was a Greek, so he probably believed in like Zeus, but Lois and Eunice passed down the teachings of the true God to their little boy.

Why all this reminiscing? It's because Timothy hadn't seen Jesus. But he had seen Jesus' power at work in his past. In his relationship with Paul and with his mom and grandma, God was flexing and guiding and uplifting Timothy by means of ordinary people. Have you seen that in your past?

GOD'S POWER IN YOUR PAST

I have zero memories of Jesus walking into my bedroom and sitting on the end of my bed. I believe he was there, but I've never seen him. But I know a guy named Keith Wordell. I call him "Dad," and I can remember him sitting by the side of my bed when I was sick. I remember him making cocoa wheats in the morning so I didn't go to school hungry. I am good at remembering all the times when he wasn't perfect. But I recall our tears as he confronted me when I was struggling with a major sin. And I remember when he told me he loved me just the same. That wasn't just "life," and it wasn't just Keith. That was God's power in a not-so-obvious way taking care of me, guiding, and forgiving me, through my dad.

Who did God use for you? If you're like me, maybe it was your dad. All you kids, who are here today with your fathers, your dads aren't perfect. Don't expect them to be. But God is taking care of you, and today God brought you to church, through your dad. Of course, maybe you're like Timothy. Maybe, like Timothy, your dad didn't do all that. That's no problem for God. God can use grandmas, moms, pastors, friends, just like he did for Timothy.

In your past, God's power has provided for you, protected you, loved you, and taught you through the people he's put around you. So, if you want supernatural encouragement and confidence, remember God's power in your past.

GOD'S POWER IN TIMOTHY'S GIFT

Because of what God's done for you in the past, now you need to do something in the present. Paul says, Ignite God's Power In Your Current Callings. **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. ⁷ For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. ⁸ So 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.

Paul tells Timothy, "God gave you a gift." Bible scholars debate what is the gift. Some say it's his faith. Fair enough. Faith is a gift from God to us.

Others say Timothy's gift is his calling or you could say his job. You can picture God in heaven. He has a list of things he wants to get done, and he could do them all himself, but instead he chooses to call on people to do it. So, 1900 years ago, God said, "I need someone to teach the believers in the city of Ephesus, I call on Timothy!" The same thing happens today. Sometimes I say being a pastor is my job, but it's more accurate to say that God called on me to be the pastor of some believers in Appleton. I could say the same about you. God said, "I need someone to take care of sick people, I call on nurses. I need someone to keep the peace, I call on police officers. I need someone to raise these kids, I'll call on father's name." God could do all that without you, but his gift to you is that he chose to include you in his plan to love the world.

Finally, some scholars think that God's gift to Timothy was all the special skills he needed to fulfill his calling as a pastor.

It seems to me that faith, calling, and skills go together as a package gift. If God didn't give you faith you wouldn't see your jobs as callings from God. If God didn't give you abilities, you could do what he called you to do. It's a package deal gift for Timothy and for you. God gave you faith, multiple callings and abilities, and he gave you some instructions: **"Fan into flame the gift of God."**

FAN YOUR GIFT INTO FLAME

I thought of this passage a few weeks ago when my family went camping. We parked in our campsite and when I walked to the fire pit, there was a gift inside: embers. The last campers had not fully doused their campfire from the morning. I could see it was still hot. I could feel it. So you can guess what I did. I said, "Rachel! This is perfect! We can sit back and remember what a great fire that must have been this morning. If we're lucky we can roast half a marshmallow before this goes out." Of course that's not what we did. There was work to do. Get some newspaper on there. A little kindling. *Blow on it.* It starts crackling. Add a log. *Blow on it.* Now we got a fire.

That's exactly what God has ordered you to do with the gift he's given you. Fan into flame the faith God gave you. The Bible says "**Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the message about Christ.**" (Romans 10:17) So you hear about Jesus often. *Blows on heart.* By the power of God's Word your ember faith becomes a fire faith. Fan into flame the skills that God has given you so you can be even better at serving people in your callings. You grow better at being a mom or dad. You gain more skills in your job so you can be more useful to the people around you. You work at being a good friend so you can show the love of Jesus to people in your life. When you fan into flame your faith, and your skills, that's not just life. It's not just professional development. It's God. It's God's power in this world working in a not-so-obvious way through you.

OUR GENEROUS GOD

We need reminders to fan into flame our gifts. Our default setting is to let our embers extinguish. There have been days when I have sat back and admired the gift God gave me, instead of working to develop it. There have been days when you weren't so concerned with growing your faith or serving God in the ways he's called you. Those days when we misuse the gifts God's given us, they show us just how undeserving we are of God's gift. There's a reason we don't give expensive jewelry to toddlers. They don't know how to take care of it. I would think that God would be hesitant to give me faith, because sometimes I neglect it. I would think God would be hesitant to give you important jobs in his kingdom. If it were up to us by our power, we'd make a mess of all that God give us.

But we serve a generous God. He gives to people who don't deserve it. And he gives us also his Holy Spirit to help us. Paul put it this way. **9 He 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, ¹⁰ but 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.** God saved you from yourself, not because of who you are but because of who he is. God called you to serve him, not because of your resume, but because that's what he's been plotting to do good through you since before there was light. God revealed all of this to us through his gospel. That's God's power in your current life even if it's not-so-obvious.

GOD'S POWER IN WENDY

Today we are celebrating how God's power has flexed in Wendy Bixby. 25 years she's been serving God as a teacher—not to mention as a daughter, as a friend, as a wife, as a mom, as a director, as a coach. You got a lot of callings sister. It makes me think of the lots of people who God has encouraged, God has inspired, God has comforted through you. It only makes sense if this seems weird to you. It's appropriate for you say, "It's not about me," or "I'm just doing my job." That makes sense because you know better than we do how undeserving you are to receive God's gifts. But it also makes sense for us to think it's awesome! What God's power has done in your past to give you faith, to give you your language skills, your people skills, that's awesome. And it's also awesome how you have fanned those gifts of God into flame. God's power is at work in your life, and praise God, his power is helping hundreds of other people through you too.

The work of teachers, and dads, and all of you, it's not quite as obvious as when Jesus cast out demons. But I do wonder how many times God used you hold crush evil in the life of someone you know. God's power is at work in your life, just like it was for Paul and Timothy. Remember God's power in your past. Ignite it in your current callings, by God's grace. Amen.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.