

“Maintaining Zeal”
2 Timothy 1:1-6
(Preached at Trinity, December 12, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I pointed out last time, much has changed since Paul's first letter to Timothy. When Paul wrote his first letter he was on the road hoping to soon join Timothy in Ephesus. This letter was written from prison at Rome. It would be Paul's last letter. Paul knew the days of his life were drawing to a close.
And the situation for Timothy at Ephesus had grown worse.
2. Paul is writing to encourage Timothy to keep the faith, to stand firm upon the truth, and to resist the false doctrine being promoted at Ephesus. The threats and challenges to Timothy were great. Although Timothy was sound in doctrine and personal godliness and a faithful servant of Christ, he was prone to fear.
3. In **verse 5** Paul sets up the next section. He calls attention to the reality of Timothy's faith. Paul refers to it as genuine faith, sincere faith. From the beginning Timothy's faith was manifest to all. He had a good reputation, well-spoken of by all who knew him.
Acts 16:1-2 NAU - "Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, ² and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium."
Genuine faith is demonstrated by certain observable characteristics – all motivated by our Love for Christ. Among them are:
Steadfast Obedience – Humble Service – Sound Doctrine – Courageous Conviction
These things were important for Timothy to remember, especially in light of the situation with the Ephesian church.
 1. Timothy was probably discouraged, beaten down.
 2. Paul is encouraging him to remember the genuine faith that God had wrought within him. It was the same faith that was demonstrated in Timothy's grandmother Lois, and his mother, Eunice.
 3. Timothy was one of God's elect. God had saved him and called him with a holy calling.
4. In **verse 6** Paul says, “for this reason” or “therefore” or “because of this” I remind you – Paul says, “kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you.” The verb for “kindle afresh” is from the Greek verb, ἀναζωπυρέω – It is actually a compound word from three Greek words: ἀνα - in the midst, among; ζάω – live, be alive; πῦρ – fire
Lit. – Paul is telling Timothy to “kindle the living fire within you.”
I have a special rake we carry in our camping trailer that I use to stir the fire. Campfires need to be tended. Logs need to be turned so that fresh flames can be brought to life. Timothy's gifts needed to be stirred. Paul sensed that the fires of Timothy's zeal needed to be stoked.

5. There is a close tie between the “Spirit” in **Verse 7** and the “gift” in **Verse 6**. I agree with William Hendriksen that the “s” in **Verse 7** should have a capital “S” referring to the Holy Spirit.¹ Paul is talking about the spiritual fruits of power, love, and discipline.
6. Paul is speaking particularly of Timothy’s call to the ministry. This was his gift that was affirmed at his ordination. Despite all of his hardships, Timothy was to maintain the fires of his zeal towards the work God had given him. It’s possible that with all of his trials and difficulties, Timothy’s zeal was beginning to cool.
7. I’ve often said that a pastor’s calling is sometimes the anchor that keeps him pressing on—the weightiness of God’s call upon his life.
 - a. The lack of this internal call may account for the huge rate of attrition in the pastorate.
 - 50% entering the ministry will not last 5 years
 - Only 1 in ten will actually last until the end.
 - b. The pastor will often look to God’s call upon his life:
 - “God I’m not sure what you are doing in this situation, but you have called me, and I pray you will keep me faithful to the calling.”
8. These are the Pastoral Epistles—1&2 Timothy and Titus, but it doesn’t mean they are for preachers only. Paul is writing this epistle to Timothy. It is very personal. And yet, there are truths we must glean from the text. Each and every one of you who profess the name of Christ have been put to work in our Lord’s kingdom. All of you have been given gifts to equip you to carry on your work. **1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NAU** - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." **Romans 12:4-6 NAU** - "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*. . ."
9. It is God’s purpose that we spend our life laboring for Him – that we use what He has given us for His glory. You may not be called to some great public ministry, but you have been called and gifted to a faithful life of service to Christ.
10. This morning I want us to look at Paul’s statement, "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you"
I want us to examine the matter of our own zeal for service –

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 4, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 229.

- I. Paul says, “Kindle the fire.” It is important that we guard our hearts from lukewarmness. To the Laodiceans:

Revelation 3:15-16 NAU - "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

- A. Life is often full of challenges and can be overrun with the mundane.
1. We must guard against just coasting through life. There is no cruise control.
 2. Students can be overwhelmed by the pressures of their schedule, of books to read, papers to write, and exams to take.
But in the midst of this Christ must reign supreme. He must remain the chief focus of every day. His presence must be treasured.
 3. Moms can become consumed with the daily task of caring for the children and managing the home. Endless laundry and diapers. Sometimes they feel overwhelmed with the mundane.
Again, Jesus must remain the focus. There is no mundane with Christ. As we recognize every detail has been ordained and that Christ is in the midst of it all every moment can become a joy.
 4. Your present life, right now, is to be lived to God’s glory.
Timothy was worn down, tired, perhaps overwhelmed. Paul reminds him, “You have been richly gifted by God. Press on Timothy. Use you gifts well. Don’t fear the face of man. Keep your eyes upon the marvelous work of the Gospel.”

- B. See the Parable of the Talents – **Matt. 25:14-30**

The passage is often used and abused, but it does demonstrate the importance of faithfully staying engaged as we wait for the return of our Master. It follows the parable of the ten virgins.

Matthew 25:14-15 NAU - "For *it is* just like a man *about* to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. ¹⁵ "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey."

1. The faithful servants were excited to show the master what they had done—how they had increased what he had entrusted to their care.
V.20, 22 - The master says to them –
Matthew 25:23 NAU - "Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."
2. To the servant that did not make good use of that which had been entrusted the master said (**V.26-30**) –
"You wicked, lazy slave"
"Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
3. Notice both faithful servants received equal praise although one brought less than half as much. God has not endowed each of us with the same gifts, but he demands the same zeal.
 - a. Both excitedly gave unto their Master
 - b. What do you have to show for the blessings He has given?

- C. Much of the coldness and deadness of the modern church is due to an improper understanding of soteriology or the doctrine of salvation.
1. The expression, “nothing but the blood of Jesus” is absolutely true. We hold tenaciously to the solas of the Reformation.
 - a. We are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. His atoning sacrifice is sufficient in satisfying God’s divine justice. By faith, God’s justifying grace is imputed to us. We can add nothing to the grace of our salvation.
 - b. Timothy had been blessed with the grace of saving faith. It was genuine faith, faith that rested upon Christ.
 2. But we must never forget that our salvation is the work of the triune God.
 - a. We owe our salvation to the Father, who ordained and planned it. By His infinite love and mercy He elected a people to give to His Son.
2 Timothy 1:9 NAU - "according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity"
 - b. We owe our salvation to the obedience of the Son who satisfied all that God’s justice required. Jesus came to save His people from their sin.
2 Timothy 1:10 NAU - "who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,"
 - c. We owe our salvation to the regenerating Holy Spirit who applies saving grace through the gifts of faith and repentance; who sanctifies and preserves us. He is the indwelling Spirit of God. He grants faith and repentance and transforms our cold dead hearts.
 3. Genuine conversion is demonstrated by the reality of the Holy Spirit living in us. He creates in us a love and zeal for God. He changes our appetites. Jesus said, **Matthew 5:6 NAU** - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

II. Each of us has the responsibility of kindling the fires of zeal

"I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you"

- A. This is the consistent teaching of the New Testament
Romans 12:10-11 NAU - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;"
“Fervent” - to boil with heat, be hot
1. William Hendriksen – “Religion without enthusiasm can hardly deserve the name religion.”²
 2. Matthew Henry – “If religion is worth anything it is worth everything.”
 3. William Plumer – “He who has no zeal has no love for God”
1 Corinthians 15:58 NAU - "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."

² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 415.

Galatians 6:9 NAU - "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary."

- B. Since our zeal is the outward manifestation of the inward presence of the Holy Spirit our zeal must be a Biblical zeal.
1. True zeal is never blind excitement.
Romans 10:2 NAU - "For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge."
 2. True zeal is fueled by our love for Christ. Our heart are enflamed with Him.
 3. False religions often carry great zeal
Mormons and JWs have great zeal, Muslims have great zeal.
Many religious people have great zeal.
The prophets of Baal had zeal. Israel had zeal as they marched around their golden calf.
 4. Paul admitted that his early zeal before conversion was misdirected
Philippians 3:6 NAU - "as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless."
1 Timothy 1:13 NAU - "even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;"
 5. Paul is charging Timothy to stir up genuine zeal.

III. How do we maintain or stir up true zeal? – How are we to stir up the gift that is in us?

- A. By maintaining a high level of discipline
1. Too often any admonition to discipline, to self-control, to diligence is labeled legalism. We are charged with being too moralistic.
 - a. We aren't talking about how our disciplined lives can manipulate God's blessings or escaping God's anger.
And we are not narrowing the Christian life to a set of morals.
 - b. We are saying that the Christian life should be enflamed by a passion for Christ. We love Him and want to be like Him.
We're willing to exclude anything that would bring Him dishonor.
 2. This has been Paul's message to Timothy – to maintain discipline unto godliness.
1 Timothy 4:8 NAU - "for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come."
1 Timothy 4:14-16 NAU - "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵ Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. ¹⁶ Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

3. The Christian should strive to gain mastery over our flesh. Will you serve the flesh or will you maintain dominion over the flesh?
1 Corinthians 9:25-27 NAU - "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶ Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; ²⁷ but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
- B. By taking a serious attitude with regard to sin.
1. Nothing quenches zeal like sin.
 2. We must flee from evil
1 Thessalonians 5:22 NAU - "abstain from every form of evil."
Romans 12:9 NAU - "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*"
Romans 6:11-12 NAU - "Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,"
 3. This is applying what the KJV describes as the mortification of sin. John Owen has an entire volume on the subject. It means putting to death the love affair of our flesh with sin.
Romans 8:13 KJV - "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."
Colossians 3:5 KJV - "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"
- C. By being filled with the Holy Spirit
- Ephesians 5:18 NAU** - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,"
1. This is not referring to some extraordinary second work of grace in a believer's life. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is ordinary Christianity. "be filled" is in the imperative – it is not an experience but a command.
 2. It is a simple yielding to the indwelling Spirit.
1 Thessalonians 5:19 NAU - "Do not quench the Spirit;"
Ephesians 4:30 NAU - "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the indwelling presence of God in us.
 He illuminates and enflames
 He is absolutely holy and sin has the effect of quenching His activity in our soul.
 William Hendriksen: "Not only should the saints take care that they do not quench the Spirit, that they do not resist the Spirit, and even that they do not grieve the Spirit, they should earnestly ask the Holy Spirit to fill them with zeal, the enthusiasm needed for properly carrying out their Christian duties and attaining their goal."³

³ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 415.

- b. The Holy Spirit is our equipper – Each of us have been equipped for service to God.
We must use all that He has given us for the glory of God.
1 Peter 4:10 NAU - "As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."
 - c. Those who demonstrate poor stewardship are in danger of losing even what they have.
Matthew 25:29 NAU - "For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away."
- D. By being thankful
1 Thessalonians 5:18 NAU - "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
- 1. Gratitude increases worship, obedience, and zeal.
 - 2. The thankful heart is overwhelmed by God's goodness is full of praise and joy. Thanksgiving kindles the fire of our worship.

Conclusion:

- 1. Divine giftedness must be continually rekindled. We must keep the fires burning. The Christian life demands constant attention
- 2. With great zeal we must continue to keep on the course set before us.
We must always remember that we are a part of the body of Christ. Our zeal will have a profound effect upon those around us. Zeal is contagious. So is apathy.