

Keeping the Charisma Flame Full

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Well, grab your Bibles and let's go back to 2 Timothy as we continue preaching through this New Testament letter. Again, the context, Paul is in his second imprisonment. He's writing this letter knowing that his death is imminent, he will be executed for being a Christian pastor or a Christian leader, and he has given this letter to Timothy so that Timothy might continue the process of ordering the church so that the church can shine forth the great wisdom and beauty and power of God. By the way, the church assembled and functioning biblically is the greatest portrait of God the world will know until Jesus returns and that's why it's so important that we dedicate ourselves to God's form and function for his bride, the local church. And so that's basically what Paul is doing. In one very real sense, Paul is shepherding or pastoring the church through Timothy. He's writing and saying, "Get this in order. Get these people straightened out. Rebuke this heresy. Structure it this way and that way." And, uh, often he'll give a word of strong encouragement or admonition to Timothy himself and that's what we see today.

Let's look at it together in 2 Timothy 1 and we'll look at verses 6 and 7.

6 For this reason I remind you [that's to Timothy] to kindle afresh 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 timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

"Keeping the Charisma Flame Full." That's what I've entitled this exposition, keeping the charisma flame full. Now the key phrase in these two verses is the phrase "to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you." That's what Paul's getting at here as he writes to Timothy the, the young man functioning as the pastor of this church.

Now the, the word here, uh, well, let me back up. Let me go to "kindle afresh" first. The phrase "kindle afresh" is in the present infinitive which means it's a continual action. "Timothy, I want you to continually to be about doing this very thing, kindling the flame that is in you." Language scholars, etymologists, who study these ancient languages tell us that this phrase in the ancient Greek would be the phrase that a blacksmith would use in his blacksmith, um, business as he's trying to, to heat the fire and, uh, get it hot enough so that he can meld it and form it to usefulness. He will look over at his apprentice and he'll say, "Push the bellows and keep the flame full. Push the bellows and keep the flame

full." If you've ever seen a video of an old blacksmith shop, they depend on that continuously because just the flame is not enough, it's got to be a full flame to have the kind of heat to make that metal bendable and pliable to produce something usefulness or to produce usefulness.

So Timothy is to kindle afresh, keep the flame full, if you will, the flame that God put in his heart. Now let's get to that part of it, it's called the gift. He says, "kindle afresh the gift of God." The word "gift" is the Greek word "charisma," that's why I used it. Charisma, it's also also can mean, um, uh, God's favor or a grace gift. It just means something that was given to you that God just chose to give you that you did not merit it and you did not earn it.

Now when we talk about the word "charisma," of course, it's the same word as the word "charis" that's translated Greek or grace, rather, in our New Testament. Let's remind ourselves that grace covers a lot of territory. Grace, again, God's favor, God's love for us. It was grace that put Jesus on the cross and died and was buried and rose again on our behalf. It is grace that produces the new birth whereby you're born-again and become a convert, a child of God. And it is grace that gives us spiritual gifts or these new divine spiritual enablements that we have as the children of God that we are to use in serving God. Well, that's the particular context here. He's talking about the grace that gave you this charisma, this gift you don't deserve, and it's a gift that is contained in special, if you will, abilities, traits, abilities to, um, minister for God in God's church and for God's glory. So, in essence, he's saying, "Okay, Timothy, I'm writing to you, my execution is right around the corner but, Timothy, as God's pastor despite what else happens, you've got to keep pumping the bellows and keeping the flame full so you can be, so that you can be effective as my pastor in the local church." Now don't think this is just a message for the pastor. You will see in a few moments the application is for all of us so there's a particular and directed application, of course, to pastors.

Now keeping the charisma flame full, let's first of all talk about the reasons. It's interesting what Paul points out here as we begin in verse 6A, godly associations. He says, "Timothy, this is one reason why I know you can do this and I know you must do this, and that is your past godly associations." Matter of fact, let's look back up at verse 5. He says, "For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelled in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well." Then the connecting word, verse 6, "For this reason I remind you." So these connect together. Your, your godly mother and your godly grandmother. Paul effectively is saying, "Your grandmother was a woman of true and sincere faith, Timothy, and your mother was a woman of true and sincere faith and, Timothy, people have watched you long enough to know that you've got the same thing. You also have a true and sincere faith. Now because of this godly association and this godly heritage, don't quit now. Don't slack up now. Keep on going. Keep fanning the flame to the full of the gifts that are in you in faithfulness and in service to God." It brings up to me a practical idea, though, and that is, is it not true that we are greatly affected by those around us and those we've known perhaps in the past, as Paul is pointing out here. Remember Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another." Is that not the truth? A lot of you have had

a lot of iron sharpening as far as your spiritual life as you look over your life and look at your past, but it can also be true in the negative because Proverbs 13:20 reminds us, "the companion of fools will suffer harm." Well, we don't want that kind of association. Timothy didn't have that kind, though his father was probably not a Christian, his grandmother and his mother were very faithful committed Christians. What a good note for Mother's Day. Moms, you're having an impact and some of you that have chosen to pour all your energies into your homes and raise children in a day when the world says you're foolish and, and, and, and, and, uh, not credible and not important for doing that, who knows that baby of yours might be the next Timothy for the glory of God. You just don't know.

So here in Timothy's case, God's providence had given him the godly influence of a godly home and he was to draw fuel from that past, those past godly associations to fan the flame of faith going forward. But let me say to all of us this morning as we apply this to everyone, that if you are, if that's your experience, rather, you're without excuse. I want you this morning to just pause for a moment and look back. Maybe it was a godly dad, a godly mom. I remember, uh, a family that told me one time that they could not remember, she could not remember when her mom wasn't teaching Sunday school and she never missed singing in the choir. Couldn't remember a day and this lady was a senior adult at this time. Look back. Look back and draw from that the fan, if you will, to put on the flame of gifts in your heart to serve the Lord. Maybe it was a godly uncle or a godly aunt. Maybe it was a godly brother, a godly sister that just specially were committed to the Lord and you remember that. It could have been a neighbor in your neighborhood. I remember a lady in my own neighborhood who taught Bible studies for the children and I could just sit, she loved God and I still think about her to this day.

So look back on that and remember. Of course, we could expand out to godly Sunday school teachers and maybe a pastor who's impacted you. Use these memories to fuel your faith today. Keep on keeping on. You know, the world is just, the world doesn't lie to us anymore, the world screams lies at us today. All of this internet and all of this social media just pounds us and pounds us with we've got to chase this worldly thing, and we've got to have that worldly thing, and yet we look back at our moms and dads and grandmothers and granddads and great-grandmothers and great granddads, and they were faithful to God, faithful to serve him in his church and they didn't miss anything. They didn't miss out. Look back and pull that up to help yourselves.

Now some of you may be like me and didn't have a lot in the way of maybe godly companions in your past before your conversion. Well, in that case you must find some. That's what this would teach us. You need to be around some. Find you a glory of God focused, Christ honoring, Bible saturated, preaching of the word based, uh, uh, personalized strategic world missions impassioned local church and dive in there and find some people to put around you. That's the importance of small groups especially when you can build those relationships and those associations that can help you keep the fan blowing to keep your flame to the full in the context here, your charisma, the gifts God's given you you're supposed to be using to serve God in and through his local church.

Can I make a, maybe a, should I call it pronounce an edict this morning? Just a, just a statement because of where we've been? I want to say today from this pulpit that the pandemic pardon that we have been given to not be faithful to church and not serve in the church has now expired. There, we've been under a pandemic pardon, that you're pardoned, you're righteously pardoned from attending and participating in the work of God through his church because we're in this pandemic, but I need to announce this morning, Dr. Fauci, are you listening? The pandemic pardon for the people of God has expired. There are some exceptions. I'll certainly understand and respect and support senior adults that still need to be careful. I get that. But for the great majority of us, you look on your pandemic pardon card, it's got an expiration date and it was yesterday. And you've done well. I, I, I was told by a man who talked to the pastor of one of these giant, they call them churches, they're not, giant Sunday entertainment things they call churches today in south Florida. Thousands and thousands, I mean, boy, they, they put on a show every Sunday and the man said that he had lost 70% of his congregation because of the pandemic. I honestly don't know of one person we've lost. You know, you've got to keep on what you're building on and can I tell you something? This pandemic did not affect Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and forever, and if your church is founded on Christ, then all the pandemics the world may blow by cannot shake his church. All right, I'm going to set that aside.

The idea here as Paul talks to Timothy is, "Timothy, what about these godly associations you've had in the past? Timothy, for that reason you ought to kindle afresh, fan the flame and keep the flame full." Hebrews 13:7 reminds us, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." Boy, we ought to do that as, as a pastor, as particularly a young pastor, I gained incredible strength from reading the histories and the biographies of godly men of ages ago and how they stayed faithful to the finish. Well, Paul is doing that. He's saying, "Timothy, they're gonna cut my head off here before long and I'm staying faithful to the end and, Timothy, you must also."

Well, number two, second thing as he gives the reasons why we should fan this, I'll, I'll sometimes call it faith, I'll sometimes call it the gifts, I'll sometimes call it the enablements, I'll sometimes use the original Greek, the charisma. I like that. Fan that up. Keep it going. Here's the second reason, because of the gravity of your ordination. The gravity of your ordination. "Timothy, here's a second reason," last part of verse 6, "the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." He says, "Timothy, you have this charisma, you have this gift in you, and it had to do with me laying my hands on you." Now I think this is, um, a reference to what Paul also spoke in 1 Timothy 4:14 where he tells Timothy in that earlier letter, "Do not get, neglect the spiritual gift, the charismatos, which is in you, which was sowed, rather, on you through the prophetic utterance and the laying on of hands by the Presbytery." So here, here we have the body of elders in the church and I believe along with Paul who, who had an ordination or commissioning type service for Paul, for Timothy rather, and Paul says particularly, "As I laid hands on you, God used that or worked in that to give you a special charisma for your work as a pastor and as a shepherd."

Now some thoughts on this. "Well, pastor, what does that mean? What are you suggesting, that we need to start laying hands on people? Are they going to receive special spiritual enablement? How are you going to unfold that?" Well, first of all, we see a lot of laying on of hands in the New Testament and we remind ourselves this is the apostolic era. This was a day of unprecedented signs and wonders and miracles, and these early apostles had powers and authorities we know not of today. I have in my 40+ years of ministry been hearing about certain pastors or church leaders who say we still have the apostolic signs, wonders and miracles today and we can do those. But as I watch what they're doing and hear about what they're doing, they do not look anything like the New Testament signs, wonders and miracles. They look like frauds. So I think it's wise for us to at least conclude that the signs, wonders and miracles of the first century church during the apostolic era as the word of God was being written, are not normative for the church today.

So when we talk about laying on of hands of men going into the ministry and the ordination, sometimes we could say the commissioning, I guess it would be, sometimes a person is, is ordained and then they're specially prayed over again and laid hands on for a particular task. All of those are biblical and acceptable but here's what I want to say: there's a lot that's unclear here. There is a lot that you just cannot pin down because God just didn't say that much about it. So because the Bible is not clear and you can't pin it down biblically, we must not form a dogmatic position or practice on this verse, Paul saying, "I bestow this to you through the laying on of my hands."

Secondly, another conclusion is not only must we not be dogmatic about a position or a practice on this, secondly, the gifts and calling of pastors is special and unique. We have nowhere else in Scripture where people are seen as being laid hands on in a formal commissioning outside of those men who were called to preach and then pastor God's churches. It is special and it is unique.

And thirdly, a third thing I would bring out is that local church elders representing the entire church body when they ordain or commission a man to the ministry, it is of special importance, and I think that's the general thing that Paul's getting across to Timothy is, "Timothy, you do understand I didn't do this to a lot of men. Timothy, I, I didn't do this just to everyone who came to faith in Christ. Timothy, this was something special. You have a special enablement, a special calling, a charisma. Timothy, you must know the gravity and the weightiness of that and keep fanning the flames of the charisma gift in you and be faithful for God."

Now you may say, "Well, that's interesting. That's about pastors." But can I say something to you? You know what your ordination was? That baptistry. When you committed yourself and submitted yourself to New Testament baptism, you were saying, "I may not be a shepherd of this church as far as being a pastor, but I am today being commissioned by God to faithfully serve in this church with my brothers and sisters." And you need to also fan the flame of the charisma, the special spiritually indwelling along with the gifts God's given you. Quit making excuses for coasting on your local church. You signed up for duty in that baptistry. Why are you not baptized out in a

swimming pool with just Joe and Jane and a couple of friends? No, that's unbiblical. You were baptized before a local church because that was the group you were now belonging to and signing up to serve with.

"So Timothy," Paul says, "look back on the godly associations and draw from that a new vigor and keep the flame full. And Timothy look back on the gravity of your ordination and your commissioning and I myself laid hands on you. You have gifts now unlike others to be faithful in serving God as pastor of his church."

Well, that's the reasons. Let's go, secondly, to the responsibilities. The responsibilities. Now he says there in verse 6 very clearly, "For this reason I remind you." Who is that personal pronoun speaking to? Well, this is very particularly, that's Timothy. "Timothy, you must take the initiative and you must do this. You kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." Now again, the word "kindle afresh" is a present tense. It means continual action. "Timothy, this isn't a one time thing." We hear people teaching about there was a one time when they got this special anointing or this special baptism of the Spirit, whatever it may be. Well, that's not what this text is talking about. He's talking about, "Timothy, the charisma is in you, now you must keep it stirred up and going. Keep the flame of it full and continually do that. Pump the bellows." This is the opposite of quenching a flame or extinguishing a flame. It's keeping it up strong and full.

2 Peter 1:13 gives a unique exhortation to pastors. While you do have a responsibility to keep yourself stirred up, I have a responsibility to help stir, keep stirring you up. I consider it right as long as I'm in this earthly dwelling to stir you up by way of reminder. I don't come to you every week to preach you something new and I learn new things every week I study the word. I was gonna say, you know, my, I just celebrated my 40th anniversary and you were so unbelievably kind and gracious to me and I'm so humbled and thankful for that. But I thought, you know, I've already told these people everything I know, and then I studied 2 Timothy 1:6 and 7 and I learned new stuff so I gotta come back and tell you that. Now it's not new in the sense that it's different from the other stuff, it's just in a continuation and an amplification of the other stuff. So when I come to preach to you each week, I'm trying to stir you up, get you out of the doldrums, and some of you that's a hard job. You go to bed late on Saturday night filling your heart and mind with everything in the world, you wake up Sunday morning, you give a wink and a nod, wink at small groups and a nod to my sermon, and then you go back out into the world. It's hard to keep the flame high just doing that so I'm trying to stir you up but you're responsible to help keep yourself stirred up.

Now this gift, this charisma again, is something that came in when you were born again, when you were saved. The Spirit comes to dwell in you and the totality of what came in is a charisma, it's a gift, it's a favor you don't deserve. You didn't work this up. So, so let's review for all of us for just a moment about the charisma gift you were given when you were saved.

First of all, you know, there's a strong word here for pastors and for Timothy in particular but there's a word for all of us. Number one, about the charisma, let's remind ourselves we received it at conversion and all of us received it. All of us received a charisma. I sometimes like to call it a spiritual gift cocktail. God just made a special snowflake of spiritual gifts for you. You have some leadership, some service, some administration, some teaching. I don't know, we've all got that unique gift that we were given by God. Ah, 1 Corinthians 12:7 reminds us, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit." To each one. All of you got something when you were converted.

2. Your charisma, your spiritual gift, was given for the good of your local church. Listen to me, church, your spiritual gifts were not given to bless you. Your spiritual gifts were given to bless those around you. 1 Corinthians 12:7, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." It's so that you might serve others in your local church in the same way a pastor is gifted to serve you by preaching and leading the church. So you've given, been given a charisma, spiritual gifts, so that you might bless those around you. Don't go to the judgment bar of God and say, "Lord, I didn't do a whole lot with mine. I didn't do much."

3. Concerning this charisma we all got at conversion, he gave it to us for the common good of my local church. 3. Serve in submission to your church leadership developing character and humility and you will not miss your place of service. Here's what I mean. You don't come into a church and pull out your union card and say, "Here's my gifts and here's what I want to do in this church." That doesn't work. I mean, what chaos you would have if we've got 750 pretty much active members because if you don't come to church, you don't belong here basically. Now if you can't come, we understand that, of course, but that would be chaos if everybody came in proclaiming, "I have these gifts, I have these, this is what I'm gonna do in the church." No, you come in and say, "What needs to be done? I'll be glad to do it."

Brother David Young is just, he tells me all the time but he's told me a lot lately, he says, "Brother Jeff, over and over and over, our people will call me or email me or text me and say, Brother David, whatever you need done, I'll do it." And that makes his job a lot easier. We have 170 or so small group leaders. Could you imagine if every one of you were ornery? If every one of you were difficult? "Well, I'll do this but I won't do that." God taught me this early on. I had some godly teachers who just pounded into me to be humble and just serve, and I did so many things in those early years that are not really my gifts but I needed them. They built character. They were not my gifts but I did them and that was back in the day when you went to every children's event and every youth event and every college event and every senior. I mean, the pastor was at all of it. That's the way we viewed it in those days.

You remember the story because when you've been somewhere 40 years, you've told all your stories. When Bob Pittman was the senior pastor and I was his associate pastor, we, um, bought this building next door. It was the skating rink and he wanted a bathroom in the senior pastor's office. That's a good idea, the problem was the plumbing and the water was way way across that big old building. They got some guys to come in and cut the

concrete out and it needed to be dug out and the lines laid, and so that's what I did. I dug that ditch and I laid those lines and Dr. Pittman had him a bathroom in his pastor's office. It's now my bathroom but, honest to God, I had no concept that I'd ever be the senior pastor here and that wasn't my goal. I tried to go other places and nobody would have me. That's just the truth. But here's what I'm going, are you listening this morning? You've got to dig your ditch before you find your niche. Be willing to dig your ditch and then you'll, some of you have been in here for years and you still ain't found your place because you're just not willing to do what needs to be done. Now we, we'd never ask you to do something you're uncomfortable with or would be difficult for you or, or stressful. That's not what we're saying but if you'll just be willing to serve, then eventually you'll find your place because God wants to grow you in character and humility and then put you in your place of service. You've got to dig your ditch before you find your niche and, trust me, there was more than one ditch. I didn't think some of those ditches would ever end, to be honest.

"Timothy, you're responsible, you're responsible to fan the flame and keep it full and keep the charisma on fire to stay faithful in serving your brothers and sisters, the sheep you shepherd in your local church." 3. The resources. He said the reasons, look back at your mom and your grandmom and looking back at the gravity of the ordination, "The responsibility, Timothy, you're supposed to do it yourself." And I want to say to you, church, you, you've got to stir yourself up at times. I like what my dear brother Jono Simms said one time, he said, "I grab myself by the nape of the neck and make myself do it because I've got a duty." Christianity has some of that in it. You're responsible.

Thirdly, the resources. In verse 7, here's these powerful resources, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline." So here we see these three words in the New American Standard, "power and love and discipline." These three things are elements or components of the charisma that is in you, and they must be harnessed and increased so you could be faithful and effective in serving in your church for the glory of God. But and before we get to that, he says there's something that's got to be taken off. Those things were given to you and you need to put them on and live them out, but he says, you've got to get something out of the way first, he says, first of all, "Timothy, God has not given us a spirit of timidity or fear," and you can translate that word that way, fear or cowardice, even. Because you understand being afraid to give your life to God, being afraid to spend your life serving God in a local church, you might miss something in the world, "Oh, I might be lose out on this and this." You know what the Bible calls that? Cowardice, fearfulness. Why are you so afraid? Timidity. That's what Paul's getting to here. He's saying, "Timothy, God didn't give you that. That didn't come from God when you were born again. That wasn't part of that gift mix. That's coming from your flesh. That's coming from the world. That timidity, that's coming from the devil. You didn't get timidity when the Holy Spirit came to reside into you. The timidity, the fearfulness, the cowardice, that's of the old man, that's of the old nature that you received in your natural birth when you were born in sin and polluted by sin. So Timothy, first of all," Paul says, "work at quenching the cowardice, work at snuffing out the fear and flame that, or rather fan that flame to the fall of the charisma that is put within you."

Now a couple of things about Timothy real quick. You remember we have several texts that tell us Timothy was probably more insecure than the average guy. He was young and that made him intimidated sometimes by others. He, um, probably had a nervous system that was prone to make him sick. Paul would tell him to drink wine for his stomach because, you know, you get, you get, you get out of sorts with your stomach sometimes over your nervousness. So that's probably one reason why he says, "Timothy, don't give in to that timidity." But there's another reason, the man writing this to Timothy is the greatest Christian that ever lived and he's locked in a Roman prison about to be executed so Timothy is probably thinking as he passes the church in Ephesus, "They know I'm his right-hand man. They know I believe the same doctrines. They know I've given my life for the Christ. I could be next." Fear. Cowardice. Timidity. Paul says, "Timothy, don't give in to it. Don't do it. Don't let it happen."

One thing I'd like to say about this timidity or cowardice or fear, this is closely akin to that phrase that we've all heard a lot, the fear of man. The fear of man. Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare." In other words, if you function afraid of living for God because the men of this world, this world wants you to live for it, and you, you, you kind of respect the world so you live in the fear of man, it's going to be a snare. It's a trap. By the way, when you get an animal in a snare, it just means they're gonna die soon. That's the picture. You see, to fear man is to have an attraction to and an affection for the things of this fallen world system. It's having, having attraction and an affection for the purposes of this world, the priorities of this world, and the pleasures of this world, and these purposes, priorities and pleasures are in distinct contradiction to the purposes, the priorities and the pleasures of God. The fear of man is to be more concerned with the disapproval of the world than with the disapproval of God.

Think about pastors today, pastors who embrace the latest trends and the latest fads in order to avoid the world's disapproval and the worldly people in their own congregations. What are they doing? They're, they're not wise and clever and creative, they're cowardice, they're fearful, they're too timid. Parents today, you parents are so woefully overcommitted, just overcommitted. You know why we're overcommitted as parents sometimes? Because we're fearful. "My Johnny's gotta do what the other Johnny's down the street are doing. My Sally can't miss out on what the other lady girls in the junior high are getting in on." So there's basketball and volleyball and football and soccer and gymnastics, and here we, then there's travel ball, and then there's this, and then there's band, then there's gymnastics, and none of that is wrong but you've got to not fear, "What if my child doesn't get in on everything?" Get them in on God and God's work and God's kingdom and do those things as you can and don't be a slave to the fear. And I'll be quite honest, my heart goes out to you ladies. You guys, I don't worry about you guys, you take care of yourselves but too many of these ladies have too much to do, too many of these ladies have too many responsibilities, too many of these ladies have too many burdens. You know why? The world told us to do this, this and this, and walk in the church and the church says, do this, this, and this, and it about kills us to do it all, and if we're not careful, we'll get fearful and we'll do what the world says and slack off on what the church says. That's what Paul was telling Timothy, "Don't let that happen."

Pam and I don't get a get a grade of 100 on raising our children, but we had many a meeting with coaches and extracurricular school leadership and said, "We're Christians, we can do some things but we can't do everything." I told my daughter who played ball in college, "We're gonna have to narrow it down to one sport. We can't do all of this and be faithful to the Lord's church like we need to." Now look, don't you go out of here and think that my conviction has to be exactly yours, okay? I don't know where your balance is but don't be a slave to fear and cowardice and timidity because there is good in those things but isn't it just like Satan to take good stuff and use it to hurt the children of God if we get out of balance?

Senior adults. Senior adults sometimes find themselves pouring so much into their grandchildren just to keep, make sure their grandchildren keep up with the Joneses grandchildren down the street. That's not to be your concern. You need to pour the things of God into your grandchildren. I don't think we have any and if we do, I, I, I'm not, well, I'm just going to say it. Senior adults buy a motorhome, an RV. "Pastor, we're gonna be gone six months every year. We've got to go watch the leaves turn up in Gatlinburg. We've got to go, we've got to go collect some sea shells down in Florida." You know what they're saying? "We're fearful. We're gonna, we're not gonna live much longer. We're fearful we're gonna miss something in this world." Now look, if you've worked hard all your life, you've been faithful in the church and you retire and you get a motorhome, let me borrow it once a week, once a year for a week. And you say, "Pastor, we're gonna be gone for a couple of months but we'll be back and we're not gonna do no three and four, five months every year." I say, "Have a ball, man. Just have a ball. Have at it." You know, look, balance. Can I get an amen on balance? Don't be controlled by fearing you're going to miss out on something. Our, our motto in my household has been we're gonna dedicate ourselves to the Lord's work and the Lord's church and whatever that allows, that's what we'll do out there. I know that's radical but 98% of churches today basically are saying, "Come in here, we'll let you bring the world with you." I'm not saying that because the world has Satan as its ruler and he comes to kill and steal and destroy, and that's a snare.

Now let's talk real quick and I'm done about these specific resources of power, love and discipline. First of all, he talks about power. "Timothy, this timidity you struggle with is not from God so let's deal with that, Timothy, but let's talk, first of all, about what you did get as a part of the charisma." And first of all, it's power. This is that spiritual power that's opposite of earthly or worldly power. It's the power of God that came in you through the new birth and you have this now as an undeserved gift in your life and listen to this, don't tune me out, listen, you now as a child of God have the power to not give in to fear. You now have the power to not give in to cowardice. You now, Timothy, have the power to not give in to timidity. You have the power to not give yourself over to the purposes, the priorities and the pleasures of this world but instead you have the power to give yourself to the higher things, the purposes, priorities and pleasures of God centered in your devotion and service to your local church, which that's the context Paul's writing to Timothy about. If you miss the local church here, you miss everything.

Power. He said, "Timothy, here's another thing you have that you need to keep flaming and keep the flame full on and that is love," agape is the word here. It's that special love that came into you, you have to grow it but it came into you when you were converted and you begin to love God and love God's people more and more and more and more. "Timothy, now you have this new capacity to not love the world as your chief aim, but to love the purposes and priorities and pleasures of God and not the purposes, priorities and pleasures of the world. Your love object has changed, Timothy, now your love is continually and increasingly focused on God and God's work in the world."

So power and love and then he uses the word discipline. The scholars tell us this has the idea of disciplined thinking. Some translations say a sound mind. You can even say sanity. "Timothy, you now have the power to think sanely instead of thinking like the insanity that rules the world." I mean, the person that claims to belong to God through the new birth and they say, "You know what? I'm gonna drink as deeply as I can of this fallen world. I'm gonna basically give myself to this world's priorities, purposes and pleasures, but I'll also tag a church membership onto my life. As long as that church doesn't expect much out me because they start expecting too much, I'm gonna leave that church and I'm gonna tell everybody they're a cult, that they demand too much." A person that thinks that way, Paul is telling Timothy and Paul says, "You know what they are? That's unsound thinking. That's undisciplined thinking. Why, why, that's insanity. You've been saved and washed by the blood of Christ, placed in the kingdom of God, in the family of God, given special charisma gifts at your new birth to be able to serve your or give your life to help building up God's work in God's church that lasts for eternity, and you'd walk away from that and think like the world thinks? And by the way, you're giving yourself for a world that Jesus has promised to destroy when he returns." Paul says, "That's insanity. That's insanity."

If you're, if your view of Christianity is, "I'll just tag a little Christianity onto my life," this isn't the church for you. Now we'll love you and you're welcome to come but that, that's not what we are. We're trying to keep the flame full, and can I say something to you, and I'm a pastor: keeping the flame full is a full-time job. That's why he uses the continual, continuous, uh, uh, mode or spirit in this verse, continually try to keep that going. I've told you a million times, you know why? Because you leak. You get filled up pretty good on Sunday morning, then you leak out by Wednesday. Now that we don't have Sunday night service, some of you are leaking out by Monday afternoon.

Discipline is the third thing. It's sound thinking. You're enabled by the charisma gift within you to not think like the world any longer. Y'all remember Leon Kilbrith? Some of you do. Mr. Sunday School they called him. He'd go around and he'd have Sunday school revivals, we'd call it small groups today, and he'd just fire everybody up to get back to the work of Sunday school, the work of small groups. Leon Kilbrith, he was funny. He had, he had a great sense of humor. He said, "You know what? I've never seen an over-worked Baptist. I've seen a lot of under-powered ones but I've never seen an over-worked one." I think there's some truth to that.

Now let's be balanced here. There are some people that need to take a break here and now, maybe not teach a class this next term or whatever, but that's the exception, not the rule. You know, why is it that pastors today, now let's get back to, you know, we're talking about Timothy, he's a pastor. Let, why do pastors today seem to fall apart when they start getting criticism from the world? Pastors fall apart when there's the threat of diminishing numbers or attendance in their services, why do they do that? Here's what Paul's telling Timothy, it's because they lack power. They have the power to not let that crap control them if they'll draw from it. Because they lack love. If they love God and love the church, it wouldn't affect them so much. They lack sound thinking. They're thinking unsoundly and like the world. That's why they give in to that stuff.

So can I ask you this morning, and I'm not gonna ask for a show of hands because I'll get a bunch of them. Are you tired? Are you tried? Do you need to back out on your attendance and faithfulness to God's work and God's church because you're doing too much in the church? Or is the real truth you've let the flame grow dim? The flame is flickering. It's almost diminished. You have little power to stand up to the bullying of this world, this bully that unceasingly demands you to embrace its purposes, its priorities and its pleasures in your life, this bully that demands allegiance and you're bullied by the bully because you're too timid and you're too fearful and you're too cowardly, and your love for the brethren and for God has waned and, and your thinking has become warped and insane like the world.

I can go out to the great majority of the people in this world and I, I could say, "Listen, sir, listen, ma'am, I love you, I don't mean this hard-spirited but Jesus is coming to destroy everyone and everything that does not belong to him. You must repent and embrace Christ and you'll know an abundant life, you'll have a person, purpose for now that lasts for all eternity and when you get to eternity, there'll be endless multiplied pleasures you can comprehend, the pleasures of God." And you know what they'll say? "Why, I, naw, have nothing to do with that." Do you know why? They're insane. It's insanity. But when you get the new birth, you get a charisma that allows you to change your way of thinking and you start thinking rightly, soundly.

Is your lack of devotion because you've lost your first love, you've lost the full flame of love for God and the full flame of love for the brethren and you've grown cold and the lust of the world has begun to take the place of the love of God that was put in you at conversion? Is your thinking undisciplined? Now let's remind ourselves he's telling Timothy, "Timothy, get these things built up." Is your thinking undisciplined? Is your thinking unsound? Are you thinking like the world? Have you gone insane?

Fan the charisma flame full. Full. I don't know about you but I think God is just perfect in his providence. I think this is the perfect message for the end of the pandemic. So many of you do a good job of striving to live this out but too many of you are coasting. So you dads need to draw a line in the sand and say, "I won't be perfect. I'll blow it some more. But this family's gonna have a new commitment to God and God's church." I'm gonna stir this stuff up again and we're gonna go on for the glory of God.