

How To Fulfill Your Calling In Life – 2 Timothy 1:3-7

2 Tim 1:3-7; Just started a new series from 2 Timothy titled **Keep On**

We found last week that these are the apostle Paul's last words

He was in a prison, in Rome, awaiting execution . . .

And wrote Timothy, his true child in the faith, and now the pastor of the church in

Ephesus, to say – Keep On

That's the main thrust of what he has to say

When the fog of life settles in – Keep on; When hardship falls – Keep On

When opposition threatens – Keep on; When false teaching spreads – Keep on

All those things Paul says, *are* happening and *will* happen more and more, in the last days

So prepare yourself and Keep On

Having laid the groundwork then, we now turn to Paul's first encouragement and exhortation for Timothy in v3-7 where he says . . .

• Verse 3

Ancestors – Jewish lineage

With a clear conscience – there was no remorse or regrets on Paul's part for how he disciplined Timothy

He poured himself into Tim; Taught him everything he knew

Gave him every advantage he possibly could

There was no shoulda, woulda, coulda in Paul's mind – his conscience was clear

Does that describe your discipleship efforts?

Verse 4

Tears – most likely refer to those Timothy shed when Paul was re-arrested this 2nd time

Especially given the increased persecution by Nero in those days – it didn't bode well

I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy – Paul's joy would come from seeing Timothy's sadness removed by their reunion

You know what all that says to me?

Invest in people (v3-4)

If you're going to fulfill your calling in life, you must invest in people

That's what Paul did with Timothy – he invested in him

There are lots of things you can do with your life

Lots of things you can become expert at – good things

Like becoming a great bond trader – which is what I was trying to do before ministry

Or being a great accountant; lawyer; doctor; builder/developer; real estate agent

But all of that is for naught, if it's all about you

We serve God as Paul says in v3, by investing in people

• I have this poem by James Dobson hanging on my wall in my office (**Priorities**)

When I reach the end of my days, a moment or two from now,

I must look back on something more meaningful than the pursuit of houses and land and machines and stocks and bonds.

Nor is fame of any lasting benefit.

I will consider my earthly existence to have been wasted, unless I can recall . . .

. . . a loving family

. . . a consistent investment in the lives of people

. . . and an earnest attempt to serve the God who made me.

And there's no better time than now to assess the values which are worthy of my time and effort.

Consistently investing in the lives of people, and serving God are one and the same

That's *how* you serve him

It's meaningless to say I'm moving to a deserted island to serve the Lord – why?

B/c it benefits no one – there's no investment in people, directly or indirectly

Even if you're writing refrigerator manuals – you're investing in people by helping them sell, service, and maintain them

Start at home, then at work, and then at church – and get involved in people's lives

Bless them, encourage them, exhort them, support them

So that as you remember them and pray, you can do so with a clear conscience – that you did all you could

Every calling in the Christian life involves an investment in people

• In v5 he starts to transition to his first exhortation or encouragement, saying . . .

I am reminded of your sincere faith

Your genuine, earnest, un-hypocritical belief and trust in God

A faith that dwelt first [he says] *in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice*

We know from Acts 16:1 that Timothy's father was an unbelieving Gentile, but his

mother was a believing Jew, who passed her faith in Christ, on to Timothy

So Timothy had the advantage of a godly heritage in both his mother and grandmother

I'm pretty sure that some of *you* have the same heritage don't you?

Parents and grandparents who loved the Lord and passed on a rich legacy of faith to you

B/c of that, you have a heightened responsibility to receive that legacy, and carry it on

Others of you *are* the parents and grandparents

You're the first in your family tree to give your life to Christ . . .

And you have the responsibility to be the *passers* . . .

And do it well like *Timothy's* mom and grandma did

• There's particular encouragement here for single moms and dads

Or for wives whose husbands won't have anything to do with God, or vice versa

Take heart – you might just be the mother or grandmother of a Timothy; my mom was

Dad didn't come to Christ until I was an adult and long out of the house

And tho he was never antagonistic toward our involvement in church, neither did he go

So mom covered all the spiritual bases as best she could, and God honored it

If you're a single parent, literally or spiritually, you *can* raise godly kids, who grow up to love and serve the Lord

Is it easier with a spouse who's on board? Yes; But it's not impossible without them

- 5b – *And now, I am sure dwells in you as well*

What a huge shot in the arm this must have been for Tim – his mentor *believed* in him
 Never underestimate the effect of *affirmation* on those around you
 A little encouragement goes a long way when you're investing in people
 And a *lot* of encouragement? The impact is immeasurable

The question is, would anyone around you have cause for being even the least bit encouraged by your faith, like Paul was Timothy's?
 Would anyone have cause to even comment on the sincerity of your faith?

If not, you need to . . .

Get serious about your faith (v5)

That's the example of Timothy here – to get serious about . . .

Your walk with Christ; Serving the Lord; Growing in your knowledge of the Word
 Your passion for worship; Your love for God

- And I'm not talking about some nebulous concept of faith here
 “The important thing is that you have *faith*,” Or, “I'm on a *faith* journey”

Listen, faith in the religious sense, faith for faith's sake – counts for nothing
 By definition biblical faith always has an object, and that object is always Jesus Christ
 Nothing else saves; And everything else is a moot point

If you're going to fulfill God's calling and purpose for your life, you must . . .

Get serious about your faith in *Jesus*

To live for him and him alone

To so surrender your life that it's marked by . . . **(5 Marks Of A Sincere Faith)**

1. An increasing love for God and others

2. An increasing obedience to what God says

3. An increasing openness about yourself

Where there's nothing to hide

4. An increasing closeness in your relationship with Christ

5. An increasing trust in God and his Word

That's a sincere faith

Not one that has reached some pinnacle, but one that's always growing

Get serious about that, and then . . .

Cultivate your gifts (v6)

If you're going to fulfill your calling, and do your job, and accomplish your purpose like Timothy did – you must cultivate your gifts

6 – *For this reason* [i.e. b/c you're on a sure foundation of sincere faith] *I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God*

Paul's like – you have the faith to accomplish your ministry . . .

Now all you have to do is cultivate your *gift*

As in – grow it, develop it, get it going, stir it up, use it
 That's what he means by *fan it into flame*

And not just once, but *constantly* – that's the idea of the word here for *fan into flame*
 It means to do it and *keep* doing it

It's the same idea as a camp fire where you blow on it and nurse it along and add fuel to it
 In order to fan it into flame and keep it that way

The same is true of the gifts God has given *us*

We must cultivate them *continually*, otherwise they will die down, and for all intents and purposes, become useless embers at the bottom of our soul

- Now, the gift Paul is referring to is probably a preaching or teaching gift, given the role that Timothy is in . . .
 And the fact that Paul tells him in ch4 to preach the Word and do the work of an evangelist . . .

And regarding that gift, he makes an interesting statement at the end of v6 that I want to spend some time on, saying . . .

This gift *is in you through the laying on of my hands*.

Or, as **1 Tim 4:14** says – *Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.*

Most likely referring to the same event where Paul is present at both

- Contrary to the majority of us who receive or are empowered in our gifts at conversion Timothy it seems, received his gift or gift-set when Paul conferred it upon him with a prophetic word and the laying on of his hands

A prophetic word or a prophecy simply being – a thought from God, spoken with power and precision, often times spontaneously

That's prophecy in the NT; It's not predicting the future

While laying on of hands is a tangible way to *symbolize* what is being said or prayed, and give emphasis to it (**end verse slide**)

- Which begs the question, does any of that happen today?
 The answer is yes, on both accounts, but *not* with the authority of an apostle
 The gift of prophecy does not automatically equal truth
 Just b/c you say it or think it, doesn't mean it's right

In fact, based on the teaching and example in Scripture, there are at least 4 Guidelines to prevent abuse of this gift, and keep it in proper perspective

1. Just like any other gift, it's *not* infallible – we can and do get it wrong
 So we need to be humble in saying what we think

2. It's subject, as always, to the Scriptures
 God's Word always has the final say
 And a prophetic word can never be contrary to *the* Word

3. What is said is subject to the discernment of others
 1 Cor 14 says that it s/b be weighed/measured by others
 Implying that what is said could be inconsequential or spurious (false)

4. It carries less authority/weight than that of biblical *teaching* (the interpretation and application of Scripture)

But having said all that, it's an important gift, and not uncommon in the church today
In fact I'm pretty sure it's exercised every single week in our SG's – when one person addresses an issue or situation in another person's life, with conviction and clarity
Is it prefaced with "I'm a prophet and I have a prophecy"? No
That would be arrogant and unnecessary
It's just spoken in the course of discussion
If it's right, it hits home and the HS uses it; If it's wrong, it's dismissed and forgotten

But like any other spiritual gift, it needs to be used with discernment and discretion
B/c the potential to wound someone, or lead them on, is very high

So yes, prophecy is a NT gift, but not with apostolic authority as with Paul

- In addition to that, laying on of hands is also something we still do
Not as a means of supernaturally imparting a gift to someone, like Paul evidently did
But to confirm and indicate an already existing gift in an outward, symbolic way
Like when we install elders – which we'll do Lord willing with Bob Brueggem

It's a means to express our prayers in a tangible, physical way . . .
Asking the HS do *inwardly* what we are praying and showing *outwardly* – whether it's praying for healing, or commissioning a team, or installing an elder
So that too continues to be a legitimate practice this side of the cross

- Unfortunately, some churches and individuals fail to distinguish between themselves and the apostles when it comes to these practices . . .
And end up claiming more power and more authority than they really have
Causing confusion, disillusionment, and generating false hope in those who don't know any better

So Paul is reminding Timothy of the supernatural means by which he received his gift or giftedness, in order to encourage him to fulfill his ministry
And by example, urging *all* of us to cultivate our gifts and fan them into flame on a constant basis

Unfortunately, we often times don't, do we?

When facing opposition, or the pressure to conform . . .
Instead of fanning the flame and using our gifts for the work of the Lord . . .
We far too often shrink back

Don't shrink back (v7)

That's the last thing Paul is saying here
Despite the road blocks, the intimidation, the pressure, loneliness . . .
Despite the godlessness of these last days (ch3)
Don't shrink back

Fan your gift into flame and use it b/c (v7) – *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Jesus didn't give his life so you could cower in a corner until he comes
He didn't pay your price so you could go w/ the flow and fly under the radar
He didn't spare you from hell so you could play it cool

- When you put your faith and trust in Jesus to save you – God gave you a spirit, a disposition, an attitude . . . *not of fear, but of power*
An ability to overcome, and triumph, and do *anything* that God wants you to do
Not without difficulty/hardship, but neither without joy/satisfaction

He gave you a spirit of power, and a spirit of *love*
Even for those who oppose you; Even for your enemies; Even for the unlovable
An other-oriented disposition that has been poured into your heart through the HS

And then, on top of all that, he gave you the self-control to use it, constructively
To be a winsome, attractive witness in expressing that love/power . . .
When all you really want to do is lash out – b/c the hatred toward you is palpable
When all you really want to do is run away – b/c the pressure is unbearable
When all you really want to do is shrink back – b/c the task is impossible

Don't do it – don't shrink back
God has given u everything u need, including self-control – to fulfill your calling in life
(**Summary slide**)

- I feel this – the subtle pressure to “just relax”
To play it cool; To stop pressing for godliness
To start allowing for worldliness; To lighten up a bit

I *feel* the opposition growing; I *feel* the pressure building; I *feel* the storm brewing
And you will too, if you don't yet
And when you do, *do not shrink back*