

The Presence and Development of Faith

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[0:00] 2 Timothy 1, verse number 5. 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.

And so on. I am sure every individual and personality in the Bible, they are important and special in themselves.

But one of the most significant writers in the Bible surely is Paul, who was Saul of Tarsus. It's an interesting study to look at Paul's life, to look at the road to Damascus and the life that he lived then as a very religious man, and the road that he took from Damascus, where he became the servant of Christ and where he served the Church of Christ.

And as we see from this chapter itself, where he suffered because of his service to the Lord Jesus Christ. And we know that in the Bible here, we see quite clearly that there are two letters that he wrote to Timothy.

[1:23] And he was concerned for Timothy personally, but he was especially concerned for the ongoing work of the gospel. In the first letter to Timothy, he is encouraging them to remain at Ephesus.

And he is encouraging them to continue to teach the things that Paul himself taught. He is wanting to ensure that the gospel works out to bring about change in people's everyday lives.

And so he is keen to encourage Timothy in order to watch out for the gospel. And here in the second letter, he is the Paul who is ready to leave this world.

We heard this morning about how it may be the case that this may be our last opportunity to hear the gospel. Paul was quite clear in his own thinking that he was coming to the end of his journey. We see later on in chapter 4 that he is sensing that he's finished his course. He's fought the good fight. He's kept the faith. He's somebody who's clear in his own thinking in the second imprisonment in Rome that he is about to leave this world.

[2:41] And before he does so, he wants to remind Timothy of God's claims upon him as the servant who is going to continue the work of Paul. And he wants to remind Timothy of the importance of remaining faithful to the teaching and to be led by the Spirit of God, knowing that he will suffer because of the gospel.

And here in these verses, we have a close reminder of the way in which Paul is interested in Timothy's welfare.

I want to look at these verses from verse 5 to verse 7 this evening and to think of the presence of faith and the development of faith. I want to think, first of all, of the presence, the presence of faith. And we want to see from this part of our message this evening that Paul wants to put his own ministry and the faith of the people of God in the context not of their own personal lives, but in the context of the wider church of Christ and indeed in the context of the wider covenant people of God, both Old Testament and New.

And when Paul introduces himself, we see that he wants to put his own ministry and his own service right in the context of his own ancestors, those who went before him in the Old Testament down through the generations.

[4:09] And he does introduce himself there in verse number 3. 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.

He is the servant of God. He is the servant of God as somebody who is in continuity with those who served God in the Old Testament.

And if we understand Paul's own thinking, he is not only the servant of God in line with the Old Testament prophets who are sent by God and chosen by God, he is also the servant of God in continuity with the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

The message of Isaiah in chapter 42, for example, focuses upon the coming of the Son of God into the world. Behold my servant whom I uphold.

And Paul understood what servant who had meant for the Son of God, for the Lord Jesus, and he seeks his own ministry, continuing, following on as the servant of God to continue the work that Jesus himself begun whilst he was here on earth.

[5 : 24] The importance of understanding of the importance of understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ. And our service in the name of God in the context of the whole of the Bible and the very way in which we come under the banner of God's covenant of grace, where the church develops and where God's plans for redemption are revealed more and more in the unfolding of the pages of the Bible.

And we see that the Paul who sees himself in that way, that he's imprisoned, but he's there with a clear conscience. He's done nothing wrong. He is there because he suffered for the sake of his Savior.

Our faith is the faith of the community of the people of God. It's the faith of the covenant people of God. And that continuity is important for us to recognize.

And it's important for us to appreciate because if we do understand that, we will see what the Word of God says about my faith and then learn what it means to have faith and to live by faith.

But as speaking to Timothy, he wants to move to the context of personal faith. And that's what he wants to focus on this evening, that faith is personal in the context of the bigger picture.

[6 : 53] And Paul speaks in verse 5 about the way in which he is reminded of Timothy's sincere faith. Every time he thinks of Timothy, he thinks of faith.

I wonder what you think about any person. What is the first thing that you think about anybody? Do you think immediately about their faith?

As soon as Paul remembered Timothy, he prayed for him and he remembered his faith. And as we consider faith, we want us to understand something of what faith means.

In Hebrews chapter 11, we read that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that are not yet seen.

And there are two things within that definition of faith that help us to appreciate what faith is. It is, first of all, the substance, what is set under the Word of God and the promises of God in my thinking.

[8 : 05] It is what gives the Word of God a platform in my mind. Tonight, if I have no faith tonight, the Word of God will land on my mind and will just disappear and vanish because it does not have the platform on which it is going to rest and where I am going to view the Word of God by my faith.

But you will know tonight that if you have faith, that's what it does for you. It gives you that sense of observing, of admiring in the Word of God and the promises of God.

You hear, you read, the Word of God is preached and there it is on display before you. It doesn't vanish. It doesn't vanish even as you leave the church service.

It remains part of your thinking because faith is working. And faith ensures that the Word of God stays in your mind and you're able to look upon it.

And along that, faith is the assurance, the conviction about things not seen. And because the Word of God comes and rests in my faith in that way, I see what God has promised to do along with what God has already done.

[9 : 25] And because I see all of these things, I know that what God has promised to do, He will fulfill it eventually. And at the end of time, He will bring this world to an end.

His Son will return and all of His promises will at last be fulfilled. That's what faith looks like. That's how the Bible describes faith.

It's that sense of having a place for the Word of God to rest in our minds, for our hearts to feed upon it and to learn from it, and for our daily lives to be lived, looking at the promises of God and knowing that He will be with us always.

And when Paul thinks of Timothy, he is reminded of his sincere faith. It's a faith that is without pretension.

It's not a performance for the public stage. It's something that arises from the very heart of Timothy. Timothy. And it's important for us to understand faith in that way.

[10 : 38] As much as our faith is displayed by its works, our faith arises from our hearts. It's not for sure in the sense of being a performance.

It is something that arises from the depths of our being, from our choosing, from our willing, and from our loving of God. Timothy's sincere faith.

I wonder what your own faith is like this evening. I guess we all come to hear the Gospel and the Word of God because in some way we have faith and we accept and acknowledge what the Bible says.

But the faith that Timothy has in sincerity, the faith that Paul is looking for, the faith that God is looking for from you and for me, is that heartfelt sense of devotion to God, being persuaded of the Word of God, and leaning upon God and resting upon God every day of my life.

A personal faith. A sincere faith. A faith that brings about great change. And the personal faith that Paul highlights, he wants to place it in the context of family faith.

[12 : 15] And that's really important because we read the Bible and we read the way in which God works in families. God's covenant people are blessed in their families.

And generation after generation, there is continuity down through the revelation of the Bible where God is working through families. He works outside of families also, of course.

But generally, ordinarily, God works through his covenant people. And Paul here is looking at the way in verse 5 in which it's a faith that dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice.

It's a family faith that dwelt, first of all, in a grandmother. And the dwelling of faith is something that's vitally important.

It's something that speaks to us of life and of something being dynamic in life and working powerfully.

[13 : 25] If we think of a home where we live, we can have items of furniture that are really attractive, that are beautiful to look at, that set a particular purpose, but there's no life in them.

They don't contribute anything to the life of the home. But place somebody in the home full of energy, full of life, the home becomes alive.

There is movement. There is a dynamism about the family life because of the introduction of life. That's the kind of dwelling that Paul is referring to here.

This faith was a faith that was in your grandmother. It was something that was powerfully dynamic that brought about a great change in her life.

And then that was also found in your mother Eunice. There was the development of faith through Timothy's family reinforcing the sense of the fact that God does work in continuity with his people, in continuity with his covenant, and through the teaching and the lessons and the example given by parents to their children.

[14 : 48] And I'm sure this evening that there are many people here in this time of worship and in this service who learnt the Bible from their parents, who learnt the Bible from their grandparents, who were taught the things of God.

God commanded the people of God in the Old Testament to teach to their children in their homes and while walking in the way to reinforce the teaching of the Bible always so the children grow up to understand the Bible.

And Timothy himself, later on, Paul refers to him as the person who, from childhood, you have been acquainted with the writings of Scripture which make you wise to salvation.

And tonight, as a young person, please remember that God is speaking to you through your mothers and fathers, through your grandmothers and grandfathers, if you have them still with you.

God is speaking to you through them and God wants you to learn from them and to listen to everything that they speak to you about the way that you should live, the way that you should worship, the way that you should serve God and the way that you need to come to faith.

[16 : 26] Young people, you need to listen to your parents to learn. And there is the importance also of the home and family environment.

where you as parents have the responsibility and the privilege to lay before your children the importance of faith, the importance of the things of God, not just for the Lord's Day and for Sunday, but for every day living and for every day of the week.

God blesses that ministry that takes place around the family table in the family home. And God regularly blesses that ministry.

And from it so often, we see our children, our young people, growing up and developing in their faith because of the things that they have learned and the things that they remember.

and time after time on my own journey through faith come across so many people who will, in telling the story of them coming to faith on the Lord Jesus, will speak about the things they learned when they were younger, what they learned at home and in Sunday school, and what they learned even in day school about the things of God.

[17 : 50] these things leave a mark. And that kind of ministry takes place in the environment of our home with prayer and recognizing that only God is going to bless.

so that there is that sense of the community of faith into which we come by faith. There is that sense of the need of personal faith and there is that sense of the importance of family faith.

And of course, there is no way that Paul is saying or there is no way that I'm saying that that alone will save anyone. Of course, it will not, but it can be the means so often and it has been the means through which God works to bring about change in the lives of our children and of our young people.

And may we be encouraged recognizing the presence of faith in Timothy to seek to recognize the presence of faith in ourselves and to seek to ensure that because we have the faith that belongs to the whole of the community of faith, the church of Christ, that we have the responsibility to use that faith in teaching and in instruction.

There is the presence of faith. Secondly, there is a problem regularly in the Bible when the standard is set, when what God requires is set before us, there is usually a problem that the Bible addresses.

[19 : 35] And there is a problem here which comes to our attention in verse number 6. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God.

Paul is reminded about Timothy and Paul wants to remind Timothy about something else. and he wants to remind him about what is taking place in his heart to fan the flame which is the gift of God. And the very words suggest to us and paint the picture for us that here is a fire that is because of neglect that it is in danger of burning out.

There is not much left but the signs of ashes or embers or the sense of the fire just on its last legs ready to burn itself out completely.

The sense that this fire needs attention. This morning we heard about light and the illustration of streetlights.

[20 : 55] a different way of looking at streetlights that help us to understand the passage here. The streetlights that are there for a purpose for our safety to show us where we are going and regularly on our streets in a dark winter's night we can see some of the lamps either simply flickering or not working at all.

And because they are not working at all it introduces danger into the path and there is that space of darkness where this light should be shiny and where it is not.

And that lamp needs attention because there is a fault on it. There is maintenance work required in order to fix the light so that it fulfills its purpose.

and from what Paul is saying it suggests to us tonight that there may be times in your life and mine when our faith is withering away when its very activity is coming to an end when because of our neglect of our faith it has stopped working.

Faith will never vanish completely because it is the gift of God but its development depends on the way in which I'm going to look after my faith and as surely as a fire will stop working will stop burning when we remove heat and fuel and oxygen from it as soon as you and I neglect our faith then our faith begins to wither away and tonight it's worth asking the question is it possible that you are neglecting your faith and starving your faith of the very things that your faith needs in order to grow and that because of that your faith is beginning to fail later on in this chapter the book itself in chapter number 4

[23 : 15] Paul refers to the man called Demas who in love with this present world has forsaken him there is that sense of the way in which living our lives in this world exposes us to the danger of neglecting our faith and introducing into our lives the very things that will smother the fire that will eventually snuff it out and cause it not to burn at all what is your faith like have you neglected your faith are you starving your faith and you're wondering why your faith isn't growing the possibility of these things happening in life in the world in our working life in our things that we are exposed to in

our school life in family life in life with our friends so many things that are working in the environment around us seeking to starve our faith of what it needs and the danger that we are exposed to in all of these areas of life of embracing the very things that are so harmful to our faith the problem of neglect the problem of starving our faith and Paul exhorts

Timothy as he reminds him of that to fan up fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands he has a responsibility he has a responsibility to revive this fire to stir it up again to reactivate this fire so that it begins to burn that is active again the way that it was before is to take the kindling that will rekindle the fire and to ensure that what I choose as my kindle to rekindle the fire are the things that are effective in order to ensure that the fire begins to burn and for our fire we go for the kindle the dry pieces of wood that are so ready to burn with the least bit of heat and we need to ensure as we seek to rekindle our faith that we use the things that God has designed will do exactly that and the danger again that we are exposed to is that we choose the things that we think are going to rekindle the flame of our faith when in actual fact there are things that will smother it more and more it's learning to take the things that belong to God that will revive my faith and refresh it and cause it to be built up and strengthened and to cause it to be developed and Paul speaks in 1st Timothy chapter 4 of the very things that Timothy himself must do in order to ensure that the fire keeps burning devote yourself in public and in private to the reading of scripture to exhortation to teaching do not neglect the gift of God that is in you practice these things immerse yourself in them keep a close watch on yourself persist in this so that you may save both yourself and others it's a picture of the Bible and perseverance in studying the Bible and learning the Bible and knowing the Bible and in putting the Bible into practice immersing yourselves in the word of God and from there emerging as those who are ready to live out the word of God to walk in the light with God and to stand firm as those who have faith the problem the answer is simple and the answer is exactly what we're doing here this evening or that's at least part of the answer that in the public worship of God my faith is instructed

I learn about my faith I learn about what God is saying in his word and that feeds my faith it's like fuel to the fire of my faith and so my faith begins to grow and my very neglect of the public worship of God which God has appointed for that purpose exposes me immediately to my faith losing its edge losing its fire and to my faith simply beginning to wither out and because of the way in which we are all exposed to this problem the importance of ensuring that we use the public worship of God that we use the our own family worship that we use our own private personal worship as the means through which we are feeding our faith and as a means through which we are ensuring that we are not starving our faith but that it is growing and developing there is the presence of faith there is the problem and thirdly there is the proclamation and the proclamation we have in version number 7 why is that the case what he has said before it is for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control

God did not give us a spirit of fear in other words the gift is the spirit of God the gift is the spirit of God in our hearts and perhaps it would be fair to translate that word or to write that word with a capital S to show that at least what Paul has in mind is the spirit of God which makes us the children of God which dwells in our hearts and the same Paul in Romans chapter 8 speaks of you haven't received the spirit of bondage again to fear and there is the same idea here that you have not received the spirit of fear there is the sense that Timothy was timid there is the sense that he perhaps was a bit of a coward when he came to faith and there is a sense that Paul recognized that there was the danger because of what faith was going to cost

Timothy that he was so reserved and that he was the person who would take a back seat and take a step back instead of taking over from Paul a sense of fear and it seems that if we want to see a line of the journey that Timothy was on that there is the sense of the fear of God where we come to trust in God and the other place is the sense of living the life of faith in the Lord Jesus and this sense of fearing it's not the sense of terror it's the sense of the coward who stops halfway between the two the person who is persuaded by the spirit of God with their trust in the Lord and has that faith in their hearts a faith that should express itself and show itself in our public lives it stops its development does not take place because of the fear of the coward of the heart of

[32 : 11] Timothy and we can be like that when faith takes place when salvation takes place and faith begins to work in our lives we can have the sense of the private relationship with the Lord Jesus a sense that I've come from where I am I'm not what I was before I am a new creation now in Christ and my faith is in the Lord Jesus and I have that in the privacy of my own heart and I know

that Jesus wants me to follow him and to serve him and to show my faith but there is something in here that leaves me afraid I might be afraid of those in my family I might want to hide my faith from them because I don't want to show it to them I might be afraid of those who are in school with me who are my friends as I grow up in life

I might want to hide my faith from them because I am afraid of how they will respond if I show my faith at every stage of life there are things taking place around us that want to make us to hide our faith instead of doing what Paul did and what Jesus commanded the disciples to do that is to suffer for his name's sake and if you are here tonight and you have that faith in your heart between yourself and the Lord Jesus and you know it is there it is the faith that by its very nature needs to shine out in public and don't let the fear of anything around you trap you in the place where you begin to hide the faith and stop it from it being developed why should you not fear well Paul gives the answer and the answer is the spirit that God has given is one of power and of love and of self control that's what

God has given the spirit of power the spirit of the ability to achieve something the spirit of courage and the spirit of strength the quality that you and I need in order to live out the life of faith and perhaps your response is as it could be anyone else's perhaps your response is that your faith is too weak and you are too weak yourself and you cannot give expression to your faith because of your weakness and the same Paul in 2 Corinthians 13 he speaks about the way in which God says to him my grace is sufficient for you my power is made perfect in your weakness what does that mean in simple terms it means that his weakness was the platform for God's power in other words the weakness it's not the excuse not to show my faith but the weakness is the place where God's power will enable me to give expression to the faith that I think

I cannot do myself so that it is the case this evening that the more we are persuaded of our own weakness the more we should see the power of Christ the power of the grace of Christ to enable us to serve him you have received the spirit of power and the power certainly is on the platform of weakness it arises out of there and I sense the power as soon as I move from the platform of weakness then the power of God the power of Christ overtakes me the spirit of power the spirit of love what's at the very center of the gospel the continuity and the connectivity of the love of God the God who is love himself the God who shows his love by sending his son to be the propitiation for our sins the God who by his Holy

Spirit pours his love into our hearts it's a spirit of that love that sort of my faith is continuous with the faith of the people of God the love that I have in my heart is continuous with the love that there is in God's own heart and because that's the love that dwells in my heart it's the love that persuades me to walk in the ways of God to do the will of God to serve God because we love him because he first loved us and Paul in writing to the Galatians makes that so clear that he is crucified with Christ nevertheless he lives but the life that he now lives it's a life of faith in Jesus Christ who loved me and gave himself for me it's a spirit of love and love for the Lord love for the Lord

[38:02] Jesus trumps everything else it over comes everything else it over comes my fears it over comes my weaknesses when I have the love of God poured out to my heart then I will follow him and I will serve him that's the spirit that Paul says Timothy has received and the one of self control learning about the kind of person that I am from the word of God learning the kind of person that God wants his people to be learning the path that God wants his children to follow and being able to control and to discipline myself in the light of the word of God in my love for the Lord Jesus so that there is no hesitation so that there is service even though it means suffering there is following even though it means denying myself nothing can stop me or hinder me from following the Lord

Jesus because this is the spirit that God has given to us and as we close this evening let's be encouraged with the reminder of the spirit that God has given to us and let's go forward in faith to experience more of his power let's go forward in faith to learn more about how his love is expressed to us and how love expressed to him and let's go forward in faith living as the people of God in the zone of life that God has set out for his people to live in and so be Christian families and Christian congregation and congregation that belong to the wider church of Christ who walk always in the ways of God and who do the things that are pleasing to him may God bless these thoughts to us let us pray most gracious God we bow before you we give thanks to you for your word for every way in which it speaks into life and we pray that you will help us to take your word to heart to still ourselves before you and to reflect upon the things that you speak to us each time we come in contact with your word and this evening may you take us from here where we take our journey into the week that

unfolds before us and do so with a sense of belonging to you a sense of the need to guard and keep our faith and to protect it from the things that seek to weaken and destroy and help us oh Lord God to live as those who love you in sincerity and with all of our hearts so help us and hear us we pray for Jesus sake Amen finally I now pray to Psalm verse 31 in the Scottish Psalter page 243 Psalm 31 at verse 21 all praise and thanks be to the Lord for he hath magnified his wonders love to me within a city fortified we stand to sing from verse 21 to the end of the psalm to God's praise! to love to come to me and come to me! to to! to! to die! to!

to! to! to me!

[42 : 24] to may CHOIR SINGING

I'll go to the main door after the benediction.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.