

Stir Up Your Gifts

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 1. 2 Timothy chapter 1 verses 6 through 7. Last week I preached verses 3 through 7 and I want to drill into the last two verses here. It would be verses 6 and 7. 2 Timothy 1, 6 through 7, let us listen attentively to the word of God. Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Let us pray. Lord God Almighty, we implore you, Lord, that you would help us, that we would indeed stir up the gifts that you have bestowed upon us.

It's not just Timothy himself who has this exhortation, but it's a general exhortation to be sure, applied to his particular circumstances, God. It's true for all of us, not just for pastors, that you have given us many sundry blessings upon our lives. We ought not to live in fear, but rather in encouragement that your spirit is with us, that we have the power, and love, and a sound mind, all of which are a gift from you.

We should therefore use them accordingly for your glorious namesake, and for the love of one another, especially for the church of Jesus Christ. Amen. So, yes, the text is directly about the young pastor, Timothy.

Paul, his mentor, calls him to what? Get to it, we say. Or his word, of course, is to stir up the gifts within him. Apparently, Timothy was slacking some, and in some way, and as the language of Paul implies here, for God has not given us a spirit of fear, he continues to explain, after exhorting him to stir up the gifts within him.

Being nice, Paul can be nice. I know we went through Corinthians, and he's really hammering them sometimes, but here he uses the first-person plural, we. You know, we can struggle with fear, the implication, of course, Timothy is struggling with fear of some sort as a minister.

But he ought not to fall for that, but to realize that God has given him not a spirit of fear, but rather a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Trepidation, in other words, and fear can undermine anyone, not just Timothy. Of course, it's doubly hard, doubly dangerous, as it were, for leaders, because what we do also affects the rest of us, whether at home, whether as moms, they are leaders in their own way, or dads, or in the church, or wherever.

So this is so common, of course, that it's important to us to, I think, drill down into this point, and to learn what this means, to stir up the gifts within us. And so we can see the application, therefore, in our life, that we would hold back from fear, instead of holding back from the full responsibility that we have given to us, wherever we are in our lives. And to that end, I want to encourage us, to ever step forward, to walk with the Lord, not in a spirit of fear, but in the spirit of power of God, of His love, and our love for one another, and of a sound mind.

Stir Up Your Gifts

Here's the first point. Stir up your gifts. Now, first of all, of course, he's urging Timothy here.

He says, therefore, I remind you. Here he is, calling him to bring to remembrance. It's a nice way, of course, for him to say, get to it, do what you're called to do.

And we help one another, of course, in various and sundry ways, to remember things. Now, the idea of remembering is not necessarily, they literally forgot, as much as, look, let's go back to the basics, we often say. Remember your A, B, Cs, and 1, 2, 3s.

Of course, they remember them. They can talk and read, of course. But they've forgotten, in the sense of, they're not doing it right then and there.

The pressures of whatever they're dealing with, of society, of their life, of sins they're struggling with, they've become so narrow-focused, they forgot to go back, and step back, and to realize more important things. And that's what Paul is urging Timothy here. Of course, we need this as well.

Because we have pressure. We have distractions. We temporarily forget, in that sense, that's not before our mind at that time.

And we have our duties and callings for one another. And we are called, thereby, of course, to stir one another up, in the sense of reminding. I remind you, brothers.

I remind you, sister. I remind you, fellow believer, husband and wife, that this is what we are called to do. Now, the word here, stir up, has the idea of rekindle, revive, or fan into a flame.

And thus, to be reactivated or excited into a fresh new activity. It's another unique word by Paul that he uses. He uses a lot of those.

But it's pretty straightforward. But what does it entail? And what does it look like? You stir up the gifts. Geneva Notes puts it this way.

That's a note they added to the Bible, the Geneva Bible, which is a different translation, before the KJV. So we're talking the 1500s here. Probably Calvin and Knox and others put the little notes there.

You can find it online. It has some helpful stuff, very brief notes. The gift of God, it writes, is, as it were, a certain living flame kindled in our hearts, which the flesh and the devil go about to put out.

And thus, we must always be on our guard to stir it up to keep the flames and embers glowing in our lives. We had a fireplace in almost every house I grew up in. I liked it.

We had the Franklin stove, which is nice, thanks to all that iron heated up in the middle of the night. So I learned early on how to take care of a fire, get it going, and keep the flames to stoke it, to stir it up so that it would not fade away. And that's what we are called to do.

And I'm going to go into what that looks like. But first, we have to learn what gifts are being talked about. What gifts does Paul have in mind, not only for Timothy and pastors, but for ourselves today? There are, of course, the natural gifts.

I talked a little bit about this in Sunday school class and sanctification. You may recall making the distinction between the supernatural and the natural. Supernatural just basically being with respect to God and the things that he has given us in his word.

The natural, in the sense of these are the gifts that Timothy has as a church leader. Leadership skills, we say in business talk. That are there for him are the same that he would have if he had another job.

If he wasn't a minister, he would have the same skills that God has bestowed upon him through providence. Even if he wasn't a believer, we know there are natural leaders. We've met them.

They're men that we respect. They're like, this is a good man, other than the fact he's not a believer. But he clearly knows how to lead.

He clearly knows how to stand firm and make good decisions. Those are the kind of qualifications I think Timothy had. I think it's of necessity that he had to have them.

Because the supernatural, that is what God has bestowed upon us, his church and salvation is always built upon the natural. And the natural here would mean that he is a otherwise qualified for the position. But he needs, of course, one more step in the church.

He needs to be a believer. And he needs to have the church recognize and lay hands upon him. And so that's what happens, as we know, in 1 Timothy, it mentions there where he was reminded that 1 Timothy 4, the presbytery has laid hands upon you.

Don't forget that. Here he specifies Paul himself was involved in this. He laid hands on Timothy.

Stir up the gifts of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. And that may imply supernatural gift given to him on top of the natural gifts he would otherwise have by the spirit of God. Something extraordinary, Matthew Henry thinks is probably something extraordinary, maybe to boost his natural abilities, to be more alert, to be more understanding, to be more whatever he needs to be as a leader.

And it could perhaps also overlap with the idea of ordination itself. His qualifications here as a believer that he is called to be is through the ordination. Ordination is public setting aside of a man for an office.

Nothing more fancy than that. It's not magical. You just, look, this guy, we do a similar thing.

We have a swearing in ceremony. We don't usually see the other offices, judges do that. We usually see the president because the media is gonna pick up on that and see that.

That's the same kind of idea. He's voted, he's elected, and now he's installed in the office through an oath or a vow. We have the same thing in the church of God.

And that's the time in which he is therefore endowed with by the spirit of God through the church with the authority to be whatever his office requires him to be. And that office, of course, is a public authority and a trust, authority to be used in the church of Jesus Christ and a trust handed to him by God through the church. It should be therefore taken that way more seriously, to be sure.

Now, men can have leadership skills and teaching skills even. There could be teachers and professors in the pews, good businessmen and the like, but they're not necessarily qualified to be a pastor, a ruling elder, or a deacon. Those are, in some sense, bare minimal.

You need at least some of those skills, but you need more. You need a recognition of the church of God, of course, and you need the spirit of God upon him in such a way that he desires to be. That's one thing you'd certainly need.

I mean, you could be a business leader. You could be one of the best guys. Like, that's the guy who would follow to the ends of the earth, but he has absolutely no desire to be a pastor, then he shouldn't be a pastor.

You shouldn't force that upon him. Some people feel this compulsion. People pressure them into the ministry.

You ought to be a pastor and whatnot. If he doesn't desire it, that's part of it. The spirit of God hasn't given him a desire.

1 Timothy 3, as you recall, it's good to desire to be a bishop. You got to have that inclination because if you don't, as you all know, if you try to work a job you're not interested in, it doesn't get done very well often. It just drags.

You just, why am I doing? I don't really want to do this. The same with the ministry. Nothing's changed.

So don't force people into that position. Well, you have gifts as well because the gifts that Timothy has, almost all of them, save the supernatural, if he was given something supernatural, an enlargement of his gifts. We're going to have, to one degree or another, there's common gifts that all Christians have.

One is the natural, again, given to us in history that is in God's providence, from birth or through our training, physical and mental combination. We have something along those lines so that we can at least read and get a job done and take care of ourselves and the like. We all have to have this.

We all should have this. But the supernatural gifts I want to especially focus on, of course, that's common to all believers is that we are born again. And as being born again, we have the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God within us means we have the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that is the fruits of the Holy Spirit in particular.

I know you don't always feel that way. Pastor, I don't feel especially long suffering today. I don't feel a lot of joy necessarily today.

Now, I didn't say you had the fullness of it. You can have a tree and have pretty sad fruit on it, but you know it's a fruit tree. And that's the struggle we have as believers, isn't it? We rise in our faith and we fall in our faith and our fruits thereof get large and small through life.

That's true. But I believe we all have it because we all have the Spirit. These are bare minimal things.

We will have patience and love, the gift of repentance, the gift of faith, long suffering. We are called therefore to exercise it. Indeed, all good things are given to us by the Spirit of God as believers.

And it may not feel especially special to you because you're not a church officer. It doesn't matter. God has indeed blessed you.

And you need to use what you have in the world that you find yourself in, the levels of responsibilities and the people that you can influence and be satisfied therein. So let's look at some of these things here. There's no particular order or organization in this matter.

I want to talk about knowledge, faith, and repentance. These are what all believers have. Just like Timothy, we had to have these same things too.

What kind of knowledge? Well, supernatural knowledge, knowledge of God and of Christ and of redemption, of the Bible. You're granted truths, brothers and sisters, other people do not have. You're used to it, especially if you grew up in a Christian home.

This is the way it is. And you realize, wait a minute, I guess it's not. You meet your neighbors again, you move and you get new coworkers and you're, okay, I guess I have to start over again.

These people that really don't understand Christianity, they don't understand where I'm coming from. It's going to take patience for you, but it's a gift that God has given you and you are called thereby as he has called to what? Stir up. So I pointed out, I'm going to talk about what is stirring and what are the gifts that we have to stir up.

I talked about the gifts. Now I'm talking about stirring those gifts at the same time. It goes together.

God has granted you many things. And one of the basic things is the knowledge of the word of God. And how would you stir up that knowledge of the word of God? But by reading some more.

Meditating, memorizing. There are Bible programs online that you can use that will give you a Bible verse a day or a week that you can go over and over and memorize it. I know growing up as a kid, I hated memorization.

It's actually where I don't want to work. I want to go outside and play. One of the easiest ways I think, maybe for me, is just repetition.

Don't make it like it's a school assignment. Just keep reading the same two by four or whatever you use. I guess it's three by five, right? Flash card, Bible verse, digital flash card.

Whatever works for you. Just look at it every day. The more you read it, something's going to sink in eventually.

That's why repetition is one of the foundations of a good education. You're going over it and over it and over it. Don't beat yourself up too much, although you may need to if you're being especially lazy.

But try to memorize some things. Another method I think that's helpful is just know the book and chapter. And then from there, you can work your way to the verse itself.

You can find the book and the chapter. That's a good start. You can always look it up.

So that's how you stir it up. You're going to see a pattern here when it comes to stirring or rekindling the gifts that God has given us. Faith, as you know, comes and goes.

That is, it gets strong, it gets weak, sometimes obscured by emotions or confused by lies. Yet this too must be stirred up. And how do you stir up your faith? But meditation upon the word of God and the work of Christ is what he has done and continues to do for you.

The blessings he has given you in your life, count them, write them down. Very practical, simple. Things you would do in nature for other things in your life anyways.

The same methods. Just for what? Godly, spiritual, and supernatural ends. Repentance.

When confronted with your sin, don't make excuses or ignore it. But stir yourself up by looking directly at the sin and saying, that was me. I can't make excuses.

And I acknowledge before my Lord and Savior, forgive me. So that's stirring. That's it.

There's nothing magical. But it is supernatural so far as the power of God in you may exercise and direct it to use the gifts, to reanimate them, to pick them up again, and to grow thereby. Stirring up your gifts is therefore doable by all believers.

It's not just Timothy. It's not just, well, only pastors have this special ability to get a little stronger and try harder in their walk. All of us are called this way.

The goal is to use the gifts that God has given us. And to use them, of course, often comes about through practical steps. We don't need to seek out signs and wonders from God, or wait on the Lord, or God told me this and I heard that.

Now I'm actually going to exercise and do what I'm called to do. We're not to be spiritual couch potatoes. I know people accuse Calvinists of being spiritual couch potatoes.

They don't use that language. They basically say, why do you bother doing anything if you're a Calvinist? Why did Christ? Did he know the end from the beginning? Of course he did. He knew exactly what was going to happen, but he did it anyway.

We don't know the future, so you better do even more. Or last, as the case may be, flee sin and temptation and the like. No, of all people, if you look at history, of course, we know from the Reformation and early America even, Calvinists were very much stirred up and excited to do God's will because they know he is for us.

He is for us who can be against us. Never forget that. You have your responsibilities.

You have your gifts. You have your callings. Whatever they may be.

And Paul here does not offer details of what stirring up looks like because, again, it's just simple practical things that may work for you and may not work as much for other people. Although there's commonality between all of it, right? Breathe, pray, use the means of grace. You may have to have other methods to help you use the means of grace better.

Sleeping is one of them. That's kind of important. And the like.

So in general, knowledge. Knowledge of the law of God, in particular, or the gospel of your duties. Learn these things.

Meditate upon them. Learn how to apply the law of God. That's one way to stir up the gifts because this particular gift is knowledge.

The knowledge of his word, the gospel, and of the law. The law, of course, is important in the lawless age that we find ourselves in. We always need Christ.

So knowledge as a believer can be stirred up through more knowledge, more reading, more meditation. Ask questions. Write the questions down if you forget.

Your will as well. Determine to follow the Lord and execute your responsibility as a father, as a mother, as a co-worker, as a citizen of this nation. Knowing, of course, you are limited.

You can't do everything, but that doesn't stop you. Do what you can. That's what you're called to do.

Timothy couldn't change a lot of people's hearts, of course. And people probably fought against him. As we saw in 1 Timothy, there were those that Paul cast out of the church.

Troublemakers. Your emotions. How do you stir up your emotions? Well, pastor, sometimes I don't have to do a whole lot.

There it is. That's true. I know that could be a temptation and a problem.

But for those of us who need to get godly emotions in a godly direction to stir them up, prayer and praise. What I mean by praise is, of course, singing. Not just on Sunday.

Sunday morning or Sunday evening. Oh, we got together, got to pray. Sing throughout the week.

Find good Christian songs that can help you. Especially if you can find the Psalms sung to song. That would be a double way to memorize.

We found some songs, scripture songs sung as well, like out of Isaiah. Some things in the New Testament. Put the song.

Verses, put the song. Of course, not always sure exactly what translation is being used, but you get the idea. Again, nothing miraculous.

Nothing spectacular. Just simple, practical steps to stir up the gifts. And one way is just simply do it.

If you're on the cusp and on the edge and you know and you have been doing things, but you can go a little further. Sometimes you just need a push. Maybe that's what Paul's doing here to Timothy.

Just enough to push him over the edge. Just do it. Stir it up.

You can go. Go a little further. You've got it.

Just walk off and do what you are called to do and trust in the Lord. Families, of course, are called as we are spouses and as we are parents. Various and sundry ways in which we are able to stir up what God has given us as parents, as spouses even, so that we can not lose what God has granted us.

Love for one another even is a gift of God. Don't forget that. Gift here is just what God has given us by his spirit for spiritual ends, whatever that may be.

The spirit of fear, of course, is what he wants to snuff out. Stir up, inflame, and enliven the gift of God so that you can snuff out, is the implication, the spirit of fear and wipe it away, wash it away, burn it away. Timidness.

In this context, it looks like it's timidness, holding back in the fulfillment of his duty and responsibility as a pastor. And you know, you've run across that as well as a husband, as a wife, as perhaps a co-worker or a boss. And whatever that you need to do and not hold back, often or many times or sometimes, I know not, failure is sometimes just the consequence of not doing what you're supposed to do out of fear.

It's not always fear, but fear is one of those things we have to consider. Now, stirring ourselves up here, God has not given us a spirit of fear, the implication is, but a spirit, a power of love and of a sound mind. And I believe because those are gifts of God as well, they ought to be stirred up as well.

Stir Up Your Gifts of Power

So the gifts of power, the second point here, I like the translation power. The idea, of course, is ability, that you can do it. It's not just a potential reality.

God, the Holy Spirit within you, has granted you various and sundry gifts and abilities. And I want to think of it in terms of authority and responsibility, because that's certainly what Timothy has to deal with, his office. Paul is writing to him as a pastor, not just merely a Christian only, although that's always part of it, but as a pastor, a man given public authority and responsibility.

And we all have some kind of authority and responsibility in our life that we should not fear. Having power is not inherently wrong. You've probably heard the saying in politics class, political theory, power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

You've probably all heard that. And I think I grew up hearing that as well. And as I learned a little more theology, I realized, well, wait a minute, doesn't God have absolute power? Does that mean he's corrupt? Of course not.

So the best reading of it, of course, is it's a rule of thumb when it comes to politics. Just be careful about giving authority. And I grant that.

And I think that's a good thing. But unfortunately, it seems in my experience, too many Christians look at power as a bad thing, whether it be political power, social power, or whatever. And they just maybe want to hold back or they're scared of something.

I'm not sure what it is, but power, if used for godliness, is good. And it should be used for good to stop wickedness, to stop murdering of babies, for example. I want to use political power to stop butchering kids.

We should not be afraid of using that power. That's what Paul tells Timothy. Don't be afraid to exercise your office and your ability, it may be in his case, to bring judgment upon the listeners.

Unless you're an odd pastor, most pastors are not inclined to run around trying to bash people in the head, but they know they're called to do that sometimes. I use that as a colloquium, of course. The time to be very blunt and clear and say, stop that, repent and go back to our Lord and Savior.

But that's the power he's been given. He should not hold back. We should not hold back.

Whatever our responsibility is, perhaps as a grandparent, as a parent themselves. And all these things we are called to exercise, to stir ourselves up with respect to power is to use that power, perhaps for yourself, self-control, one of the gifts of the spirit. That takes power on high.

And God has granted it to you. And you are called to stir that up as well, to control yourself, to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. And of course, those with public power should not be holding back that power to protect the family and the church.

Stir Up Your Gift of Love

Gift of love, the third point. Not the spirit of fear. We should not imbibe upon that.

But a power and of love. Love clearly is a gift of God, a gift of the Holy Spirit. And I think the context here is especially to be considerate of others, to treat others and to think of them first.

Because that's part of the office of the pastor. And historically, even in the pagan cultures, the king was recognized as a shepherd or a father with the idea being he should be caring and loving towards his own citizens. Because you'd rather have that than a dictator, wouldn't you? One who's aloof and cares nothing for you.

And the same is doubly true in the house of God. We are called, you are called to stir up your ability of power and to do that out of love, out of a desire for the betterment of others around us, especially the church of Jesus Christ. Love should drive our dedication to use our abilities for one another.

Pastors, therefore, should love the flock of Christ. Christian employers should love their workers and treat them as family. Now, not fully like family, of course.

They're not your biological family. But it's certainly something that would, what, hold back greed and oppression on the job and the company. Or certainly in the church of Jesus Christ, we want ruling elders and deacons, they have this kind of love, kind of consideration and care for their own.

And how do you stir up the gift of love, but to use it and to meditate upon the helplessness and the need of those you have power to help as a pastor, as a citizen, as a neighbor, as a family and friend? Because love looks out away from ourselves and to others. And that's what we are called to do. Lastly, gift of a sound mind.

Gift of a Sound Mind

This too, of course, is from the Spirit of God. The idea here of sound mind, stable and sure, because on the flip side, fear and uncertainty kind of go together often. I'm afraid, I'm not sure exactly what's going to happen.

Or on the other hand, sometimes fear is, I have too much certainty of the wrong thing. I think what's going to happen is going to be bad and I don't want to deal with the badness. But sometimes it's certainly just uncertainty.

I don't know what's going to happen. So I'm going to hold back. I'm not going to do what I'm called to do.

Maybe that's what's going on here. And that's why Paul highlights, because he could have mentioned other fruits of the Spirit, but he mentions these particular ones because clearly he thinks Timothy needs to hear these things. And perhaps you need to hear this as well.

Of a sound mind, this too is a gift of God. We ought to and should have it. A sound mind can replace a fearful heart.

What does that look like? When we're back to knowledge again. It means tell me about the mind, what you know or don't know. Faith without knowledge is blind.

Some of us grew up that way. I know I did, lots of ignorance about the Word of God. But I had a lot of zeal and a lot of faith and God protected me nevertheless.

We are called therefore to learn the Word of God, to rely upon Him and His Word. That's how you gather and stir up a sound mind, to strengthen it, to shore it up, to make it more useful in your life. We're back to learning the Word of God, the law and the gospel and the means of grace, which are there to strengthen our weak faith as well.

And that's the second point here. The last one I want to focus on, the power of God with respect to a sound mind, to stir it up as well, and faith. Faith is part of a sound mind.

Trust and reliance upon Christ to bring us to heaven. If you do not have that, the confidence that God Almighty is with you through the person of Jesus Christ, you will have fear. You will certainly have uncertainty and you will waver to and fro.

And a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, James tells us. And that's true for Christians as well. It's the opposite of a sound mind, opposite of being established in the Word and the truth.

Belief that He died for you and He continues to provide for you. These are parts and parcel of a sound mind that we are called to have and that we have been given to one degree, I believe, or another by the Spirit of God. And you stir up your faith to stabilize your mind.

You want a sound mind, strengthen your faith as well, which goes back to, again, the Word of God, meditating upon what Christ has done 2,000 years ago, what He's doing now in your lives, that He has indeed changed you by the Holy Spirit. You have grown in sanctification. You have done good works.

You have prayed for the saints. You have fed the saints and you have loved them. The paraphrase, various parts of Timothy and Hebrews, which encourages and thanks God for the saints.

You have, in other words, done good works. Not good enough to get you to heaven, to be sure. They don't justify you, but they are real nevertheless.

And they are evidence of God working in you and that should strengthen you and therefore stabilize your mind. We are called, all of us, pastors, ruling elders, deacons, and those who aren't church officers who have, in some ways, more reach than the rest of us, to stir up the gifts that are in you. Whether natural or supernatural, they are called to work together to a godly end, that we may use the power God has granted us and the love in our hearts and the gift of a sound mind for God's glory and for the good of one another.

Amen, let us pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirits, these are glorious gifts indeed that you've granted us. May we not hold back out of a spirit of fear, but rather, Lord, stir up and rekindle the various and sundry gifts that you've given us, the common gifts to be sure that we are born again, we have faith and repentance, we have the knowledge of the word of God, but even those particular gifts that are ours, some of us are parents and some of us are not, and those too have their own gifts given to us by your spirit.

May they be used and redirected out of a heart of love and compassion, based upon a sound mind. For your glorious namesake, we pray, amen. Let us stand.