Rekindle the Gift of God

8/26/2018
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*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, **2** To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. **3** I am grateful to God-whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. **4** Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. **5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. **6** For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; **7** for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. **8** Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, **9** who saved us and called us with **a holy calling**, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. **11** For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, **12** and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. (2 Timothy 1:1-12)*

1. The Unforgettable Gift

We often receive gifts throughout life. Do you have any gifts that you've received that are particularly memorable? For me, the most unforgettable gift I received was from my daughter when she was about 3-4 years old. She brought me a birthday card and I found out that it was a handmade birthday card and she even included a one-dollar bill.

I'm not sure where she got the money, but I was touched by my daughter's thoughtfulness. Her gift, even to this day, reminds me of her love for me.

2. The Gift of God

In today's scripture, Paul talks about the gift of God. In 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul says to Timothy, "***I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands**."* The writer does not say what the gift of God is. Before we discuss what the gift of God is, I would like

to talk about the relationship between Paul the writer and Timothy the recipient and the context of the Letter.

Timothy was from the city of Lystra in Asia Minor. He was born of a Jewish mother Eunice and a Greek father. His grandmother was Lois. We do not know much about his father, but his mother and grandmother were well known for their piety and faith.

Paul meets Timothy for the first-time during Paul's second missionary journey in Lystra. Timothy had been Paul's traveling companion on the second and third missionary journeys. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to help the church there. When Paul was in prison and awaiting martyrdom, he wrote this letter. In his letter, Paul calls Timothy "my beloved child." Paul says that he has been praying for Timothy day and night. We don't know how long Paul and Timothy had not seen each other, but we know that Paul misses Timothy.

Around the same time, the Roman emperor Nero burned the city of Rome and blamed it on the Christians. Across the empire, Christians were persecuted. Being a Christian became very dangerous. Many Christians wanted to turn from their faith. In addition, false teachers had positions of influence in many local churches. Many believers were influenced by their false teaching. Timothy, as a leader in the early church, would be overwhelmed by the responsibilities. Paul was Timothy's mentor and Timothy was concerned about Paul's approaching death. In his prison cell, Paul heard what was happening in Ephesus and wants to encourage Timothy. This is why Paul writes the Second Letter. The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy is known as Paul's final letter.

What is the gift of God that Paul talks about in verse 6? In verse 8 & 9, Paul says, "***Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, [9]who saved us and called us with a holy calling.***" Paul says that Timothy should neither be ashamed of the gospel nor Paul's imprisonment. Paul rather urges Timothy to join with him in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. Paul reminds Timothy that God not only saves him but also calls him with a holy calling.

Here we notice that the gift of God is (1) God's salvation and (2) God's calling to share the gospel of Jesus with others. There are so many Christians who believe that the gift of God is our salvation through Jesus Christ. But Paul here emphasizes that God's calling is also part of the gift of God. The gift of God is like a coin which has two sides. Coins today aren't built with only one side. The gift that God gives us is our salvation and a mission to save others. To accomplish God's mission, we need the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Fetter Lane Society

After coming back from England, I began reading about the Methodist Movement in the 18th century in England. I learned that in John Wesley's life, in addition to the Aldersgate experience, there was another important event. On New Year's Day, 1739, at the Fetter Lane Society, John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, and about sixty others, who were members of the Society were gathered together for a New Year's Eve watch night service. In his journal, John Wesley describes what happened.

"About three o'clock in the morning, as we were continuing in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

As you may know, on May 28, 1738, John Wesley experienced the assurance of salvation at the Aldersgate Street when he attended a society meeting. But about six months later he experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Fetter Lane Society meeting. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit caused him to become others-directed as never before. Up until then, Wesley's biggest concern was his personal salvation. However, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Fetter Lane, Wesley focuses the salvation of others. His heart was burning with passion to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Some called the Fetter Lane experience "the original Methodist Pentecost."

Following the New Year's Day outpouring, George Whitefield began preaching outdoors. Whitefield urged John Wesley to follow suit. This was the beginning of the preaching in the field in the Methodist Movement. Although field preaching was considered a violation of law in the church of England, the response of the people was overwhelming. John Wesley was very reluctant to preach in the field, but when he preached in Bristol, three thousand people listened to him on April 2, 1739. The scripture that John Wesley preached on was Luke 4:18, "***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor***." George Whitefield and John Wesley became a Spirit-empowered witness. For the next 50 years, John Wesley travelled 225,000 miles on horseback, preached 40,000 sermons, and won as many as 144,000 converts to Christ.

4. Sara's Testimony & Her Life

Sara Connolly may not be an evangelist like John Wesley or George Whitefield, but she is eager to be a witness for Christ. I believe that the Holy Spirit urges her to be so especially in the context of her family. As you know, Sara has travelled with her children to Iceland, Alaska and will travel to Israel

next year. She wants to make a big impact on the lives of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She knows what the gift of God is and tries to use God's gift as often as she can.

5. 4X100 Meter Relay

One of the tracks and field races in the Olympics is the 4X100 meter relay. Each runner runs 100 meters and passes the baton to the next runner. Coaches often say that the most critical moment in the relay race is not the beginning or the end; it's the split second when one runner takes the baton and places it in the hand of the next runner.

Each Christian generation has a holy calling to pass the truth along to the next generation. Parents are called to make every effort to see that their children follow Jesus. I believe that Sara is doing her best to pass on her faith to the next generation. Church leaders must look to the future or the church will disappear. This is why we put every effort to teach the children in the community at Vacation Bible School. I wish we could have VBS more than once a year. If we really believe that children, youth, and young adults are important in our church, we should give our priority to them. It's not enough for each of us to say, "I believe in Jesus." We must witness to the next generation so that they believe in Jesus as well. We must pass the truth along because we will not be here forever. Passing the gospel of Jesus Christ on is our holy calling.

6. Conclusion

In verse 6, Paul urges Timothy to "***rekindle the gift of God***." Paul reminds Timothy that God gives him salvation and a holy calling. To fulfill God's calling we need the power of God. God is ready to pour out the Holy Spirit to us as the Lord did to Jesus' disciples and John Wesley and George Whitefield.

7. Application

When Paul writes this letter, Paul's death is imminent. But Paul does not worry about himself at all. His priority is to mentor Timothy, rekindling Timothy's assurance of salvation in the gift of God. Paul's heart is full with passion to share his hope and the good news of Jesus Christ with Timothy. Paul passes the love of God and grace of Jesus Christ on to Timothy.

Who is our "beloved child"? For whom have we been praying day and night? Who is our next runner who will run the race after our departure? What are we doing to support and train him or her? I pray that our hearts are filled with passion that we have had when we were saved and called. May God continually empower us with the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.