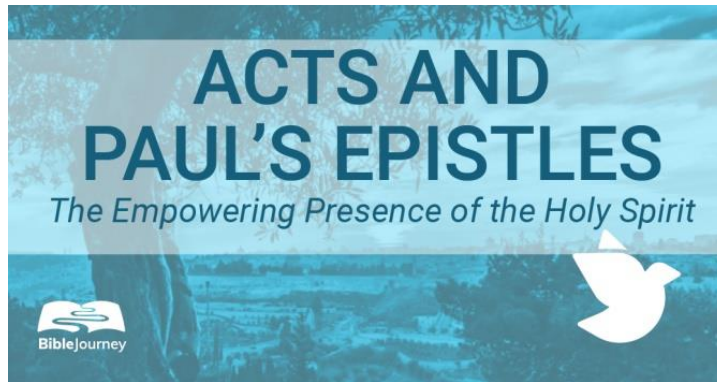


***Fan into Flame the Gift of the Holy Spirit within You***  
**May-June Sermon Series**  
Kenwood Baptist Church  
Pastor David Palmer  
June 27, 2021

**TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:1-14**



Good morning beloved. Paul, in our text this morning, toward the end of his earthly life, speaks with clarity and conviction with a view toward those coming up behind. We are in the midst of a series that is ending this morning, and we have been looking together at the Holy Spirit as God's empowering, personal presence in our lives. As we come to the last of Paul's letters, 2 Timothy, we look again at this theme and we see this image for fanning into flame. This image of fanning into flame is an image I want to write on your heart this morning from God's Word—to fan into flame the gift of the Holy Spirit. It means that you have to tend the work of the Spirit in you. It's not passive, just received, as if the Holy Spirit drops on you and you do nothing. You have to tend it. You have to keep an eye on the fire. You have to look and see if some of these logs are wet. Should they be set by the side of the fire to dry out as the rest of the fire burns? Is the fire getting low? Is the fire threatened by external forces? Fan into flame! It's a unique image here in 2 Timothy. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:6:

*“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.”*

It seems that he has had to say this before. Timothy is much younger and less experienced. He's been given charge of a significant congregation and ministry, a ministry that would probably be overwhelming to a young man. He was left in charge of the church in Ephesus, the fourth-largest city in the Roman world, and the ministry, from a human point of view, was exhausting. It was overwhelming. It was beyond his resources, and so he needed the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and he needed to actively tend that fire. If he needed to do that, you need to do that, and I need to do that, because the fire of God's presence in our souls can

die down, and so it has to be cultivated, tended, never neglected.

Let's look this morning at what this means in Timothy's life. Keep your Bible open to 2 Timothy. I'm going to invite you a couple times to turn one page back to some references in 1 Timothy. He says: "I'm reminding you to fan the flames, the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." This gift of the Spirit that is present within us, he describes as a gift. Think first of all of the gifts of the Spirit as gracious gifts. The word for gifts of the Spirit is *charisma*. It's where we get the word *charismatic*. A charismatic is someone who emphasizes, or a portion of the body of Christ which emphasizes, the gifts of the Spirit. The *charismas*, if you will, or the Greek plural, *charismata*, are the gifts of the Spirit. But it's interesting to note that this word is the same word, *charis*, for *grace*. Grace is the feminine form. The gift is a neuter form, but it is the same word in both of these cases, *charis* and *charisma*. So, the gifts of the Spirit are nothing that you earn. They are gracious gifts. What are the gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit?

What does the Holy Spirit give to us? There other places in the New Testament, but there are two very significant passages in Paul's letters that describe for us what these gifts are, and I want you to open your mind and heart to think of the full range of the gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives these gifts to every single person who believes. If you have trusted in Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit has given you gifts. The first chapter is 1 Corinthians 12. In this chapter, we read there are varieties of gifts, and there is that word again—*charismata*, the gifts of the Spirit. There are all kinds of varieties, but the same Spirit: one Holy Spirit, and a variety of gifts given by the Spirit: varieties of ministries, the same Lord; varieties of activities, the same God who empowers them. In 1 Corinthians 12:7, we read:

*"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

Some of us are given a gift of wisdom. I remember a patron saint of Kenwood, Paul Mathews, and he had the gift of wisdom. It was amazing that people figured out that he had the gift of wisdom, and they would go to him for advice. He would speak, and it was such a blessing. He exercised and used his gift. Others have a gift of uttering knowledge or insight. Have you been around someone who can really see what's going on? It's like a skilled coach who can analyze someone swimming and can notice all the things that are wrong with the swimmer's stroke. They can see it with insight. If that's helpful in the swimming pool, how much more helpful is it in our walk with Christ to have someone who can see what's going on and speak with insight? If you have that gift, then you have got to use it. Some of us have the gift of faith. When the faith of another member of the body is lagging and they're not sure or able to trust God, feeling overwhelmed by what they're facing, a brother or sister who has the gift of faith can come up alongside and say: "I'm going to believe God with you and for you until we get across this valley." Some of us have gifts of healing. I don't make a distinction between gifts of healing for

those who are gifted in medicine and those who have the gift of healing and pray for the sick and they have recovered. God gives all of these gifts. Some have the gifts of miraculous things; others have the gift of prophecy, which is not primarily predicting the future. Prophecy in the Bible is leveraging God's perspective on the present moment that you're in. When someone speaks prophetically into your life, they help bring heaven and earth together in that moment and help you discern. Some have the ability to distinguish between spirits. There are evil spirits in the world that seek to take us away from Christ, and some have a sense for that. Others can speak in prophetic tongues, and others are given the interpretation. But in 1 Corinthians 12, the bottom line is that all of these gifts are empowered by the same Holy Spirit who distributes them or apportions them to each one. So, if you have faith in Christ, Beloved, then you have a gift, and you have a gift that must be fanned into flame. It must be tended. A smoldering fire never gathers a crowd, but a raging fire gathers people together. You can cook on it; it radiates heat and warmth; it facilitates conversation and sharing. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts to each one.

The second large paragraph in Paul's letters about the gifts of the Spirit is Romans 12. In Romans 12, we read again that having gifts that are diverse—same word used, *charismata*—gracious gifts of the Spirit, we have these different ones, and we are to put them into use: if prophecy, according to our faith; if serving, then serve; if you're gifted with teaching, then you have got to teach. You may teach children; you may teach adults; you may teach men; you may teach women; you may teach in the community. But if you have that gift, then you have got to use it. If you have the gift of exhortation, of stirring people on and motivating them forward, then you have to use it. Some of us have gifts of giving, and if you have the gift of giving, then Paul says to give with generosity. Those who lead and have gifts of leadership are to lead with dedication and zeal. Those who have gifts of acts of mercy, are to do it with cheerfulness and kindness.

What are the Holy Spirit's gifts? They are the gracious gifts of God's empowering presence in your life for the sake of building up the body, and there's a great range of these gifts. They are all given by one and the same Spirit. God, in His infinite wisdom and kindness and love for the whole body, spreads this out. No one has all the gifts and there is no one who has none. Every gift must be utilized. If it's not utilized, it atrophies, or the fire, if you will, dies down. So I want to ask you next: "What is your gift?" What is the gracious gift the Holy Spirit has given to you? How do you know this? Sometimes you can take a spiritual gift survey or inventory and the set of questions can prompt a reflection on what God has given you. Sometimes you can recognize the gifts of the Spirit by a desire that comes from the Holy Spirit to do something. I find that one of the most reliable guides. Other times, people will call out a gift: "I see this in you." One of my favorite gifts in the body of Christ is the gift of encouragement. I really love being around

people with this gift. It's an amazing thing. You get around people like that and sometimes they don't even have to say anything. They just look at you and they bring the Holy Spirit's presence of encouragement. It is like breathing wind in your sails, and you wonder what just happened. Then you walk away thinking, "I need to spend more time with that person." What is your gift? You can take a spiritual gifts inventory; you can be attentive to a desire. If God is giving you a desire to do something in the body, then do it. Listen to the counsel of saints around you.

We can learn from Timothy's example. His specific gifts are named for us, and this is where you can turn back just one page in your Bible, back to 1 Timothy 4. In 1 Timothy 4:13, Paul writes to him and mentions Timothy's specific gifts:

*"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."*

Now, these may be your gifts. They may not be. But regardless, we can learn from Paul's example and instruction to Timothy about what he should do with his gifts, and we can extrapolate that and apply it to what we should do with ours. Timothy received from the Holy Spirit a gracious gift of being able to teach and exhort and interpret the Scriptures publicly. That was the gift that God had given him. It's an important gift in the body of Christ. It's an important gift in the life of the local church. It's an important gift in Sunday school classes. It's an important gift to be used in discipleship classes, whether that's one-on-one, whether that's in a group setting, whether that's in front of the gathered church. This is the gift that God has given to him. It's a gift of challenging people, not only to understand God's Word, the teaching side, but the exhortation side means you have to call people out and forward. Exhortation is a double-edged sword. Exhortation in Scripture is being able to wisely rebuke and correct but also to encourage. Timothy is given these gifts, and what do we learn from his example? What do you do with the gifts that you have? It is so obvious, but sometimes stating the obvious is helpful. Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:14:

*"Don't neglect the gift that the Holy Spirit has given you."*

Don't neglect it, but in 1 Timothy 4:15, he says:

*"Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress."*

Practice your gifts. Whatever you have from the Holy Spirit, whether it's the gift of giving, of leadership, worship, teaching, exhortation, wisdom, discernment, speaking prophetically, praying for others, practice doing it. Why do you need to practice something? Notice that he says practice these things: immerse yourself in them so that others can see your progress. Let me encourage you this morning with the reality that the first time we exercise the gifts God has given us, we usually don't use them well. The first sermon is rarely the best. The first time you teach a small group or lead it, most people who have done that end up thinking: "I'm never

going to do that again!” They make the classic mistake of not dividing responsibilities of hospitality and of teaching, and they try to do everything. At the end, they’re exhausted, and they forget what the small group lesson was about. They forgot to pray for people; they forgot to ask someone else to help to organize and do the administrative work; and they feel overwhelmed. The first time you use the gifts, it's not the Holy Spirit's fault, but it's our growth in godliness in using it. One of the great barriers that as a pastor I hear from people who say they are not going to use their gift is that they're afraid of not using it well. The Holy Spirit's big enough for that. You are supposed to practice it, use it, and make progress. You make progress so that you know how to use your gifts well. In Timothy's case, the gifts of exhortation and teaching have to be practiced so that they're not harmful, but helpful. In 1 Timothy 5:1, Paul writes to him about how to use the gift of exhortation in a way that builds up and doesn't tear down. He has a profound combination of gospel gentleness and gospel conviction. He says:

*“Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers,”*

Timothy is a younger man, and Paul says to relate to the older men he’s leading as he would talk to his own father; relate to younger men as he would to brothers. He goes on to say in 1 Timothy 5:2:

*“ . . .older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.”*

There's a gentleness in how he is to use the gift of exhortation, and notice there's a sensitivity that you don't exhort everyone in the same way. You speak to your peers in a slightly different manner, and you always show respect to people who are older, even if the Holy Spirit in you has placed you in a position where you're leading, serving, or exhorting. There's a temptation that positions of the exhorter can be used with a heavy hand, and he wisely tells Timothy to use his gift with gospel gentleness. There is the opposite temptation, though, which is to feel: “Who am I? I’m younger. Can I really call something out among my peers?” Here's where we need gospel conviction. He tells them in 2 Timothy 1:7:

*“ . . .for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”*

God has not given us a spirit of fear or of timidity or of cowardice, but of power, love, and self-control. The Holy Spirit in you wants to utilize and manifest Himself in and through the gift. The Holy Spirit in us doesn't lead us to hold back. He doesn't lead us to a place of cowardice and restraint but to utilize the gift. So, when you see someone in spiritual danger, whether they are older, or younger, or a peer, you need gospel conviction there as well.

About Timothy’s gift of teaching, in 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul says:

*“Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.”*

Isn't this order important? Sometimes we are very concerned that we have the doctrine right, but we neglect godliness in our own life. If you're going to be teaching the Scriptures, then you have to make sure you're applying the Scriptures to yourself first. Preach to yourself and then to others. Model godliness in your own life. Make sure there is a correspondence between your own life and your learning and persevere in that. Keep an eye on yourself, he says, and what you teach. The Holy Spirit graciously gives gifts to every single one of us. What is your gift this morning? Are you fanning it into flame or neglecting it? When you recognize it, are you deploying it? Are you practicing it? Are you making progress in how you use it so that it can be used well?

Finally, the last reference to the Holy Spirit in Paul's letters is in 2 Timothy 1:14:

*“By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”*

The last theme of utilizing the gifts is to guard this deposit, this portion of gospel ministry. It's this treasure of God's presence. It's the treasure of the knowledge of the gospel. It's that which God has given you and placed in you, and his last word is “by the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, guard that.” I've had some really special visits in my office downstairs: times where people share their hearts and lives, need prayer; great interactions with our staff team, thinking and praying about the future; and occasional visits from guests or sometimes guest speakers. I'll never forget the time that John Piper was here and sat in my office. Let me just say that John Piper is an intense person. He has no ‘neutral’ gear. He sat down, and there were no pleasantries like how's your family or anything like that. He was there for about 15 seconds, and he just stared right at me and said: “What's the deposit that the Holy Spirit has given you and are you guarding it?” That's just who he is, always on. I told him what I felt God had given me and what He had invested me in, and he said: “God gets a good return on His investment.” I've never forgotten that, and it made me think seriously about what the deposit is. That's really Paul's last word to Timothy: “Guard that deposit; guard the treasure of the gospel that God has given you, the knowledge of Christ, a gift from the Spirit.” This image of deposit is that God has saved you, forgiven you of your sins. He has filled you with the Holy Spirit, and He has invested Himself in you.

What do you do with it? He says: “Guard it.” So I want to end with a way that helps me remember – using the letter P.

Number one: ***Protect the deposit entrusted to you.*** You have to protect what God has put in you. In Timothy's case, that means protecting his teaching from being diluted or compromised. When you read through the letters to 1 and 2 Timothy, you hear that there is a lot of false teaching going on around him. In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul says:

*“As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine.”*

There was false teaching around in Ephesus, and there is false teaching around in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Protect the Word; protect the deposit of the gospel in you. Not only is there false teaching, but in 1 Timothy 4:1, he says:

*“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons.”*

Not only is there false, misguided teaching, there is demonic teaching around you, around me, and we can get pulled into that, so it's critical for Timothy to protect his deposit from false teaching, from demonic doctrine. In 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

*“For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”*

This is a reality, 1<sup>st</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sometimes we just select what we want to hear. Sometimes we have an appetite or a desire or an affection or an attraction, and we think we can rewrite this so I have teaching that corresponds to me. One of the great dangers of social media is that the algorithm figures out what we like to hear and then feeds it back to us, and we get into a smaller and smaller echo chamber of just our own desires. That's why we have to read the Word of God. Protect the teaching.

Number two: **Present it.** Guarding the deposit doesn't mean just keeping it under lock and key. Guarding the deposit means protecting it from compromise, but then presenting it publicly so that the treasure of Jesus Christ can be seen and known and loved. That is why he exhorts Timothy to devote himself to the public reading of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 4:2, he says:

*“Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”*

We are to be ready all the time. Then, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, he says:

*“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

All of God's Word helps us. It helps us learn who God is and how we are to live. It's helpful for reproofing us. Sometimes we need to be pruned. It's helpful for correcting us. Sometimes things need to be straightened out, and it's helpful to train us in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God might be complete and fully outfitted for every good work.

Finally, to guard the deposit means, number three: **Plant it**. We are to protect it, present it, and then plant it: put it into someone else. This is really his last word. His last word is to remind Timothy of the generational transmission of faith. In 2 Timothy 1:5, he says:

*"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."*

So there are three generations right there of faith transmitted and passed down. That's why he says to fan flame that's in you. He says in 2 Timothy 1:5:

*"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."*

He tells him to guard the deposit that's been entrusted to him, and in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, he says:

*"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."*

The word that's translated here as entrust is the verb form of the noun deposit. He says to guard the deposit and then deposit it. Protect what's in you, and then deposit it into someone else. Deposit it to faithful people who then will be able to teach others. Christian life, the gifts of the Spirit fanned into flame, are then passed down one generation to the next, one life to the next.

Beloved brothers and sisters, fan into flame the gracious gift God has given you. Don't neglect it. Kenwood Baptist Church needs the warm glow of your fire. It needs the warm glow of your fire in the hallways, greeting people on Sunday morning. It needs the warm glow of your fire serving and reaching children in our community. It needs the warm glow of your fire reaching out to volunteer for Vacation Bible School and Soccer Camp. I learned this last week that we have an exciting and overwhelming feature to our VBS registration so far. Many of those registered are from Japan. That's exciting! It is exciting for a society that's less than one percent Christian. It is exciting for moms learning English as a Second Language here and being invited. It is exciting to think of international kids coming. We need the fire of the Holy Spirit in you fanned into flame for generosity. Fan into flame the gifts that God is giving you. Look where He's calling you to serve, where He is giving you desire. Practice your gift, fan into flame the gifts He's given, even if you totally blow it. Use your gifts and learn to use them well. Protect the gift, the deposit of the gospel, present Jesus Christ publicly in and through whatever He is empowering you to do, and implant it into someone else. This is the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in us, and let's ask Him to do all this and more together. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, we love You. Holy Spirit, we have been humbled and delighted to fix our attention

on You these past eight weeks. I pray this morning that You would come, Holy Spirit, that You would breathe life into willing and available servants. (This morning, I want to ask you to put your hands out in front of you in a gesture in God's sight of availability, of willingness.) Holy Spirit, I pray that You would see these hands, every single one. I pray that You would take delight in indwelling every life committed to You. Fill us up. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that You do not give a stingy amount of the Holy Spirit, but overflowing. Come, Holy Spirit, renew us, fill us with Your empowering presence, manifest Your presence among us with gracious gifts, and help us to use them for Your glory. Be exalted in this place, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, that the gospel might be seen, that the treasure might be perceived and passed on. We ask for Your help, for Your power now.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.