

FBC POWELL, 11-5-17 AM NOTES  
"Missions in a Rapidly Changing Culture"  
2 Timothy 1:6-8  
Non-Series Message

"First Baptist Powell exists to invest in and equip the next generation to live Christ-transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture."  
—The Mission Statement of First Baptist Powell

**1 John 5:19b (NIV)** "Under the control of the evil one."

**Acts 26:18 (NKJV)** "Open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me [Jesus]."

**2 Timothy 2:1** "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

I. Fan the Flame of Your Calling (v. 6)

- A. Theological literacy is plummeting in the church.
- B. Churches are becoming more ingrown and less interested in reaching out to others.
- C. Members want "practical" formulas rather than profound spiritual truth.
- D. Christians are showing more interest in community action.
- E. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is gaining ground quickly among Christians.
- F. Christianity is having near-zero impact on the surrounding culture.

—George Barna

The world's population increases by about 70,000 a day. People hearing and believing the Gospel is about 7,000 per day.

A people group is the largest group through which the Gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding and acceptance.

There are 360 people groups with each having more than 100,000 people that have less than 2% evangelical Christians and have no mission groups, no churches working with them.

II. Stand by Faith in God's Provision (v. 7)

A. Power (v. 7a)

**2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)** "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

**Ephesians 1:18-19** "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

B. Love (v. 7b)

**Romans 5:5b (ESV)** "...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

**1 John 4:18a** "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

C. Disciplined Thoughts (v. 7c)

III. Share in Suffering for the Gospel (v. 8)

"Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold."

—Helen Keller

"To insist that missionaries avoid the dangerous and risky places is to belittle the lostness of a world without Christ, to demean the responsibility of obedience to God's call, and to succumb to a convoluted system of values that says one's own safety and comfort is a higher priority than sharing the gospel."

—Jerry Rankin

**1 Thessalonians 3:2-4** "And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know."

**Acts 14:22 (HCSB)** "Strengthening the hearts of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and by telling them, 'It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.'"

"What shall we do about these tortures? Will we be able to endure them? If I do not bear them, I put in prison another fifty or sixty men whom I know, because that is what the communists wish from me, to betray those around me. And here comes the great need for the role of preparation for suffering which must start now. *It is too difficult* to prepare yourself for it when the communists have put you in prison..."

—Richard Wurmbrand

*Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?*

*Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?*

*Sure I must fight if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Thy Word.*

—Isaac Watts (1724)

## **Sermon: Missions in a Rapidly Changing Culture**

**2 Timothy 1:6-8**

**Non-Series Message**

Our new mission statement says this: “First Baptist Powell exists to invest in and equip the next generation to live Christ transformed lives in a rapidly changing culture.” We could accurately have said “in a hostile culture.” While we have seen significant changes in our culture since the 1960’s, the changes in the past eight-ten years have come with warp speed. I don’t want to exaggerate, but if culture is pictured as a moving vehicle, from the 1960’s until the early 2,000’s the vehicle was moving at forty miles an hour, but for the last 8-10 years it is moving at a speed that breaks the sound barrier (767 mph). As we approach our Global Impact Conference, that starts this Friday night at 6:30 PM, we need to understand that missions – local, North America, and in foreign lands – is becoming increasingly more difficult. In many ways local missions has increased in difficulty even more than going to Unreached People Groups in Africa, Asia, or the mid-East.

Today, we are going to look at missions – reaching the lost locally, in North America, and around the world – and fear. For most of us, there has always been fear in sharing the Gospel. There is the fear that we will say something wrong, fear that we will be asked a question we don’t know the answer to, or fear that we will be rejected. However today when we proclaim the Gospel, we are speaking to a culture whose values are opposite the truths and admonitions of Scripture, and a culture that does not simply respond to the Gospel with apathy, but often with hostility. The result is that most professing Christians have become like an arctic river – frozen at the mouth. This fear must be dealt with! I know no better passage that deals with fear – fear in a rapidly changing, even hostile culture, than our text in 2 Timothy 1:6-8:

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ...

Timid, fearful people who give in to their timidity do not do well with missions. The world system which has Satan as its god (2 Corinthians 4:4) doesn’t recognize sharing the Gospel as appropriate behavior. John describes this world system in which we live in 1 John 5:19 (NIV): as “under the control of the evil one.” It should not surprise us that when we share the powerful Gospel which can, as Acts 26:18 (NKJV) says, “open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me [Jesus].” that there will be all sorts of supernatural opposition!

When we read all of 2 Timothy, it seems that Timothy struggled with fear and that fear may have made him somewhat timid about the ministry God had given him. It may have been that all the attacks from the world had taken a toll on his courage. His spiritual fire may have been somewhat cooled. Actually, Paul only gives Timothy one commendation in 2 Timothy (1:5) and the rest that Paul has to say to him is exhortation. One of the many examples of those exhortations is 2 Timothy 2:1: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” I don’t know about you, but I can use some of the same exhortation that Paul gave to Timothy.

### **I. Fan the Flame of Your Calling (v. 6)**

The word translated “kindle afresh” means to stir into a flame or to stoke the fire. In a fireplace, the flames tend to die down and we have to take a poker and stir up the fire so that the flames and the resulting warmth return. Paul reminds Timothy that He has been gifted and called by God. God gave him

a gift, and now Timothy needs to be reminded to stoke the fire. Here is what happened. Timothy, it seems had lost his passion for the Lord and the work that he had been called to and gifted for. It is so easy in the grind and warfare of everyday life to lose the passion for the Lord and His command to take the Gospel to the whole world. I dare say that every person who has been a Christian for more than a short period of time knows by experience what I am talking about.

George Barna is a sociologist who takes polls and interprets them for the church in America. In one poll a few years ago (it has only gotten worse since this poll) involving 5,000 interviews, Barna gives us five themes they discovered:

1. Theological literacy is plummeting in the church.
2. Churches are becoming more ingrown and less interested in reaching out to others.
3. Members want “practical” formulas rather than profound spiritual truth.
4. Christians are showing more interest in community action.
5. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is gaining ground quickly among Christians.
6. Christianity is having near-zero impact on the surrounding culture.

[Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*, page 32]

If I could summarize what this research shows, I would say that it shows that the church in America is has lost its way and has become self-centered. Let’s take a little deeper look at these six themes. I believe that the root cause of the drift is in the first theme – the church has abandoned the teaching of theology and thus we have lost our foundation.

What about the second theme? When we try to reach out to those outside the walls of the church building, the warfare starts. There is rejection, ridicule, and at least in the USA subtle persecution (there is nothing subtle about it in many other countries). It is easier to get in a big circle, join our hands and sing Cum-by-yah as we turn inward than it is to confront those who are captives of the enemy and then experience the enemy’s attacks. I remember back in the 1990’s when our church got serious about taking the Gospel to the world, all kinds of weird things that disrupted our fellowship started happening. All at once this beautiful unity we had experienced began to weaken. I remember that some folks complained about some of the most ridiculous and irrelevant things. I was flabbergasted. One of the members who was zealous for the Gospel came to me and said something like – “well what do you expect when you start getting serious about getting the Gospel to the unreached.” She was right!

Going back to Barna’s list, I am all for doing nice things for our community. We do that in our celebrations (parades), we do grounds work in local schools, picked up trash along the roads in our community, and lots of other things. I am all for that, believe that we should do more, and believe it is valuable in showing our community that we care. However, that cannot be a substitute for clearly speaking the Gospel and making disciples in our community and around the world. There is so much lethargy in our church. It is not just us; I hear it from other pastors. Never in my thirty-one plus years here have I seen greater difficulty in getting people to commit to being laborers in the Lord’s field and soldiers in His army.

I am pleading with you to “kindle afresh the gift of God that is within you.” The need is so great. Our International Mission Board is great with giving us statistics. Here are some that I got this past week. Don’t just let these go through your brain and not reach your heart. The world’s population increases about 70,000 a day. People hearing and believing the Gospel is about 7,000 per day. In missions, we don’t speak so much about countries as we do people groups. Many times, the national boundaries (especially in areas where few have heard the Gospel) are not even recognized.

A people group is the largest group through which the Gospel can flow without encountering significant barriers of understanding and acceptance. In other words, it is an ethnic group with the same language, same cultural background, and the same customs. There are 360 people groups with each having more than 100,000 people that have less than 2% evangelical Christians and have no mission groups, no churches working with them. My heart breaks as I think about one of these unreached, unengaged people groups in West Africa with a population of over 300,000 and only about 100 believers. We have sent over twenty teams from this church to engage them with the Gospel and some have come to Christ. We now have some believers of their own people group that we have helped disciple who are discipling new

believers and sharing the Gospel with the lost. Our mission board will not allow us to go in because the deadliest terrorist group on the planet has a major presence where our unreached people group are located. At least we're doing a good job of reaching our own nation ... aren't we? No, we're not! Tom Clegg and Warren Bird wrote a book called *Lost in America*. In that book they tell us that if the unchurched population of America were extracted and set down somewhere as a nation of its own, it would be the fifth largest nation of the world. The United States of America is the third largest mission field of the world behind only China and India. We have churches on every corner, but a large percentage of them are as dead as King Tut! [Statistics from Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*, pages 63-65]

How do we kindle afresh the gift that is in us? How is the passion restored? First, we need to make sure that we know what we are to be passionate about! Our passion, our motivating desire is not for a larger church, certainly not to keep a bunch of programs running, and not even primarily to see the lost escape hell and gain heaven (though that is a great secondary passion). Our passion, our consuming desire that motivates us to give up comforts, money, and time is that God would be glorified by our obedience in sharing the Gospel and making disciples so that rebels become worshippers of the only true God! God is most glorified by man when He is worshipped and praised. Rebels who are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) cannot worship Him. As we are obedient to give, go, and pray, God brings people to Himself through the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and these dead to God rebels are made new creations in Christ who are now capable of fulfilling the purpose for which they were created – to glorify God, primarily through worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

Now that we know what the passion is that we have lost, how do we get it back? Let's look carefully at verses 7-8 to see the answer to that question.

## **II. Stand by Faith in God's Provision (v. 7)**

The word translated "timidity" in verse 7 is translated "fear" in most translations (KJV, NKJV, ESV). The NIV says "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid..." The word used in the Greek is not the most common word translated "fear." *Phobos* (the Greek word most often used) can be used in a positive way – especially when talking about the fear of God. The word used here in verse 7 is *only* used in a negative sense. It is the shrinking back from a challenge. It is really a selfish fear that withdraws rather than doing the hard thing that is required. It primarily refers in this context to a fear of the hostile world system that we live in and have constant conflict with. God has given us three resources to deal with this fear, this timidity, this shrinking back into a more comfortable self-centered life.

### **A. Power (v. 7a)**

The Greek word for power is the word we get "dynamic" and "dynamite" from. It is the idea of effective, productive power. It is power that makes us effective in fulfilling our purpose and ministry in a hostile world system. It is an effective power in enabling us to live victorious over a self-centered comfortable life. The grammar here indicates that we already have this power. We see it more clearly in the ESV version of 2 Timothy 1:7: "for *God gave us* a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." In the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have been given the power to overcome fear. In Ephesians Paul prays that our eyes would be opened to see the power that we have already been given. Ephesians 1:18-19: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

### **B. Love (v. 7b)**

Since the kind of fear that we are dealing with here is based in self-centeredness, the resource we need to overcome it is God's love. That is what we have been given. God has already given us His love. Romans 5:5b (ESV): "...God's love has been poured into our hearts through *the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*." God's love is perfect love and we read in 1 John 4:18a: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..." When there is first of all a love for God and His glory and second, love for those whose

eyes have been blinded by the god of this world, we will have kindled afresh the passion to continue doing God's work in a hostile culture.

### **C. Disciplined Thoughts (v. 7c)**

In other translations that word "discipline" is translated "self-control" (ESV), "sound judgment" (HCSB), and "self-discipline" (NIV). Fear leads to irrationality and a mind with out of control thoughts. A sound mind leads to a divinely ordered life where godly discipline is applied to every circumstance and challenge. A sound, disciplined mind analyzes every situation and circumstance in light of the Scriptures and the sovereignty of our God who does all things well.

To effectively do God's work in a hostile world, we must fan the flame of our calling and recognize our resources – power, love, and a disciplined mind.

### **III. Share in Suffering for the Gospel (v. 8)**

Because we do the work of God in a world that is for the most part hostile to the Gospel, we should not be surprised when suffering accompanies the proclamation of the gospel. We have, in America, developed an obsession with "safety." Safety is in reality a myth. Helen Keller once said, "Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold." I am amazed at how many Christians have bought into this myth of safety.

Some of the places we go to share the Gospel are dangerous, but we must go. Dr. Jerry Rankin, former President of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention said this of missionaries, but I would broaden it to just Christians: "To insist that missionaries avoid the dangerous and risky places is to belittle the lostness of a world without Christ, to demean the responsibility of obedience to God's call, and to succumb to a convoluted system of values that says one's own safety and comfort is a higher priority than sharing the gospel." [Jerry Rankin, *Lives Given, Not Taken*, page 11]

Let me talk about the time to submit to suffering. It is not when the suffering starts. The time is right now! The Apostle Paul tried to prepare new converts for suffering. He said in 1 Thessalonians 3:2-4: "and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know." We see Paul preparing new converts in Acts 14:22 (HCSB): "strengthening the hearts of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and by telling them, 'It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.'"

One of my heroes is Richard Wurmbrand who endured fourteen years of imprisonment in Romania during the years his country was under the rule of communism. When the communists tried to control the church for their purposes, Wurmbrand led a secret underground ministry. Listen to what he says about the importance of submitting to suffering before the suffering comes.

What shall we do about these tortures? Will we be able to endure them? If I do not bear them I put in prison another fifty or sixty men whom I know, because that is what the communists wish from me, to betray those around me. And here comes the great need for the role of preparation for suffering which must start now. *It is too difficult* to prepare yourself for it when the communists have put you in prison...

[John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*, page 79]

I am calling you to submit now to whatever suffering that God allows you to go through as you do His work in a hostile world. Your suffering may be the rejection of those closest to you who do not understand the call of Christ on your life. It may mean the loss of a job you really enjoy. It may be suffering and death in a foreign land for proclaiming the gospel. It may be being misunderstood and slandered and ridiculed by others. We don't get to select our suffering, but we must submit to it whatever it is, and we must submit now.

Somehow, we have come to believe in America that we deserve a suffering free life. That view did not come from the Bible. Suffering is our lot. Isaac Watts penned what I want to say better than I could say it.

*Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
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*Sure I must fight if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Thy Word.  
— Isaac Watts (1724)*