

In our last letter, Paul—the aged and experienced apostle now imprisoned in Rome—writes to the young pastor Timothy, who is carrying a heavy burden of responsibility in the church at Ephesus. One of the primary challenges he faced was the rise of false doctrines introduced by those seeking personal gain. Paul speaks candidly about the conduct of such ministers in **1 Timothy 6:3–11**, warning Timothy to be on guard against those who do not pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, and love. His instruction is clear: they must be removed, and mature leadership must be developed.

In our last newsletter, we discussed the need for spiritual fathers in our midst. May I emphasize again the word “spiritual.” In his first letter to Timothy, Paul reminded him not to let anyone despise his youth and to give attention to the gift that was imparted through prophecy and the laying on of hands by the elders (**1 Timothy 4:12–14**). This was a direct reference to the calling Timothy received for the office he now occupied—to pastor the church.

Now, fast forward to **2 Timothy**, written several years later—perhaps even just months before Paul’s death. Notice in **2 Timothy 1:6–7** that Paul again refers to the laying on of hands, but this time the reference is different. Here Paul is not speaking about Timothy’s ministerial calling but rather about the baptism of the Spirit he received when Paul laid hands on him as a young man. In **verse 5**, Paul recalls,

5 when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first
in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in
you also.”

Timothy was not neglecting his calling, but the pressures of ministry were mounting and beginning to overwhelm him. Paul addressed the issue directly, reminding Timothy of what he had been neglecting—not in his duties, but in his spiritual life as a son and a spiritual father. Yes, Timothy was called into ministry within the foundation Paul had established, but now Paul was stirring him to use the gift, to pray in his spiritual language.

When Paul writes in **verse 6**, “stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands,” he goes straight to the heart of the solution. The phrase “stir up” (**Greek: ἀναζωπυρέω – anazópureó**) literally means to **rekindle a flame—as one would stir the embers of a campfire to revive its fire**. In **verse 7**, Paul continues,

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear [a mind out of control], but of power
and of love and of a sound mind [a mind under control].

The message to Timothy was unmistakable: If you are going to lead others into spiritual living, you yourself must first live spiritually. Why is this so vital? It should be obvious to anyone called by God to lead, as Timothy was—you cannot give what you do not have, and you cannot lead where you are unwilling to go. This is precisely why the Holy Spirit comes to us personally, bringing with Him His supernatural language for our benefit.

No matter how spiritual—or unspiritual—you may feel, just like Timothy, when you begin to pray in the Holy Spirit, you are fanning the flame, and with it, the process of edification begins.

All of us have crossed many deserts in life, but eventually, we must find an oasis of living water. This water flows not from the flesh, but from our innermost being—our spirit. ***You can pound your head against the wall, slam your desk, grow frustrated at the obstacles before you, or complain as the Israelites did in the desert—or you can simply drink from the well of water He has provided.***

Jesus demonstrated this perfectly with the woman at the well in ***John 4:13-14***:

14 Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Life—**ζωή (zōé)**—everlasting **αἰώνιος (aiónios)**, meaning eternal and unending. Imagine a fountain that never runs dry, producing a satisfaction that truly quenches thirst and brings forth life itself.

You can see why Paul gave this exhortation to Timothy: Get your eyes off the problems around you and fix them on the solution. The challenges of Paul’s day were great, and as we noted last month, he warned that the last days would be even more perilous. Whether you believe the end is near or still far off, one thing is clear—we are living in perilous times.

My exhortation to you is the same: stir up the gift that is within you.

Love,

JANN T. BUTLER

