

Happy New Year, everyone!

I pray you are all well. As many of you may have heard, I have been going through some medical challenges over the last month. I am on the road to recovery and am simply walking through the process required to get back to 100%. Thank you for your continued support and prayers, I count it an incredible honor to have all of you in my life.

I would like to pick up where I left off in the November newsletter with Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "stir up the gift that is within you" (**2 Timothy 1:6**). Paul is calling Timothy to reconnect with the Holy Spirit in his prayer life, because this would be the solution to what he was facing.

**Notice that Paul did not promise that all of Timothy's problems would go away.** Instead, in **Vs. 7** he encouraged him to tap into the solution for what was weighing him down within his soul. We know this is true because of what Paul addresses next in **Vs. 8**, where he draws a parallel to himself so Timothy can clearly understand their shared sufferings with the Lord for the sake of the gospel. Timothy was going through things, Paul was going through things, you are going through things—we are all going through things. Notice what the remainder of **Vs. 8** and the beginning of **Vs. 9** say: "but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus."

Why would Paul draw attention to the "power of God" as the solution in the midst of suffering for the gospel? God saves us, and He calls us, not according to our works—our own capacity to solve problems apart from Him—but according to His purposes rooted in Christ Jesus. **Jude Vs. 20**, paraphrased, says: "But you, beloved" (not referring to one person, but the entire body), "building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit."

If we are called according to His purpose, and if we serve—even through suffering—according to His purpose, then wouldn't that place a tremendous responsibility on us to begin operating according to His ways? This world and its ways leave far too much to chance. But like Timothy, if we can fellowship with God and tap directly into His power, we can be built up in our most holy faith.

I know I spend a great deal of time in my newsletters and teaching emphasizing fellowship with the Holy Spirit, but I have personally found no other way to be certain that, regardless of what I am going through, I am walking in God's purposes for my life. I am susceptible—just like Timothy—to the pressures of this life.

Have you ever considered how Paul could be so confident that he was in God's purpose while sitting in prison? Or how Jesus could possibly fulfill God's purposes on the cross? According to **Isaiah 55:8**, His ways are not our ways, and this is exactly why fellowship with Him is so important. **It is only through direct fellowship with Him that we gain the clarity needed for our current circumstances.** As you know, I am personally going through things right now, and even I can feel shaken within my soul, just like Timothy. Paul was not exempt from pressure, and Jesus Himself suffered greatly in the garden as He prepared for what lay ahead.

I know this message may seem repetitive, but I want to share something the Lord shared with me that has helped me during this time **1 Peter 4:19 (NKJV)**:

**19** Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

I was recently reading Rick Renner's newest book on **1 & 2 Peter**, and his interpretation of this verse from the Greek deeply blessed me. **1 Peter 4:19 (RIV)**:

**19** Wherefore—in light of all that has been said to this moment—to those who are going through great difficulties and hardships that have caused them to experience emotional and physical suffering, but they are sticking it out because **they are determined to do what is right and live according to the will of God**: I urge them to come right alongside God to completely commit, deposit, and entrust their mind, will, and emotions to an entirely dependable, faithful, never-failing, reliable, and trustworthy Creator, especially as they **continue** to do those things that are brave, noble, and right."

Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. God does not purpose for us to go through medical issues like the ones I am facing, any more than He caused the people in Timothy's church to create the pressure and stress he endured. We live in a fallen world; there is an enemy who operates within this system, and there are also people who cause all kinds of problems—just as Paul points out in **2 Timothy 1:15** with Phygellus and Hermogenes. **Regardless of the source of the pressure, this verse in 1 Peter gives us great hope: we serve a dependable, faithful, reliable, and trustworthy Creator in whom we can completely commit, deposit, and entrust our mind, will, and emotions.**

Keep praying, my friends, He is so faithful to His church.

Love,

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