



Sermon notes

Preacher: Robert van Veenhuizen

Title: Fanning to Flame – The gift of God

Text: 1 Timothy 1: 1-10

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. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:6-7 NIV

Last weekend was a very exciting weekend for us as a church and we all experienced the Holy Spirit in a powerful way. The challenge for us then is to maintain that momentum and let it grow.

Do you agree with me on this?

Who does this depend on?

Do we need to maintain this momentum on our own?

Let us read from 2 Timothy 1:1-10

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. 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. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

2 Timothy 1:1-10 NIV

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, whom he disciplined and left in charge of the church in Ephesus. Although Timothy was a young man and we normally encourage young people with his example we can also be encouraged by the example he set and the mentorship that he received from Paul.

Last weekend when Hamilton extended the invitation to all of us to come up for prayer and empowerment by the Holy Spirit we did it out of a sincere faith. Paul in this passage refers to

this sincerity in faith as a basis to fan into flame the gift of God that Timothy received when they, being Paul and other of the church leaders, laid hands on him and prayed for him.

We receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit in a very similar way as many of us experienced last week. With the baptism in the Holy Spirit we do get certain gifting's as Hamilton pointed out the one of being able to pray in tongues, which many people view as a sign that you have been baptised in the Spirit. Others do believe that this can happen without the resulting "proof" of speaking in tongues. The 'tongues' referred to here is the private gift of 'tongues', or your own unique prayer language. This isn't the public gift of praying in 'tongues' referred to in 1 Corinthians 12 that need to be interpreted by someone in the body, or by the person who spoke in 'tongues'.

I am not here this morning to debate the proof, but as we step forward in faith, we can take God at His Word that we have indeed received what He has promised. 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4 speaks of these gifts - and that we receive them not for ourselves, but for the upliftment of the Body.

I am really focussing this morning on the gift of the Holy Spirit that we receive and His empowerment. Paul speaks about fanning into flame that gift. As a South African male growing up in a braai culture I know a bit about "fanning the flames" especially growing up without a dad and in a more primitive time (perhaps referring to the "70's" and "80's"). It does take some effort on our side, trial and error, and never giving up.

If we look at what is required first, the main part of it is for us to step out of the way, and to get rid of our preconceived ideas and/or fears. This takes a conscious effort. Trial and error because we are growing in our relationship and we will make mistakes.

There is definitely an element of risk involved in stepping out of our comfort zones, and mostly this is because it usually takes place openly in the church, and in front of witnesses. We could find it potentially embarrassing if the desired effect isn't reached. We live in a success driven society, therefore if your prayer for healing isn't answered immediately with the desired effect, it could be deemed as a failure. This is only of course if we make ourselves responsible for the healing. When pray for healing out of obedience then it is Christ who takes responsibility for the result.

This is similar to the analogy of when you are making fire at a braai and there are people depending on you, so that they can eat, you just can't give up!

Paul does however in verse 7, give us this encouragement, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."

Firstly, he says that the Spirit does not make us timid or fearful. Those feelings come from within ourselves and our own insecurities. The opposite of which would be bold. Being willing to step out and do it. Having the confidence to obey the prompting of the Spirit. We can do this in the knowledge that God is in control. He is the one that heals or doesn't heal. I am using the example of healing here because it featured very prominently last weekend. I am called to obey, and trust Him for the results. He is the One who ultimately takes responsibility and of course He can do so much more than we can ever even think of. So what if I pray and someone does not get healed? That's God's responsibility. If I do not step out in boldness, what happens? That person walks away without an opportunity of healing and possibly not getting to know Jesus, and thus potentially lost forever.

The gifting of the Spirit comes with power, just as Hamilton shared, that same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Our God is powerful and He can do powerful things through us

if we let Him. Hamilton clearly demonstrated for us, his faith in that power, in the boldness he displayed. We can certainly do with more of that.

Once again we are reminded that love is always at the centre of it all. As this takes place within the body of believers or out there in the mission field it must always be done in love. It is quite interesting that Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians puts his famous chapter on love right in the middle of his teaching on the gifts of the Spirit. So if we want to operate in these gifts best we take the teaching on love to mind.

Paul ends the verse with “self-discipline” or as other translations put it, “a sound mind”. God is a God of order and Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 expounds on this - that we are not suddenly called to go crazy, or to disrupt everything because we are “being led by the Spirit”. When prompted to act we are to test it against what we know of God and His character. That is, if it is in line with His Word. As we grow in our experience of who He is and what would uplift His kingdom, we will do more and more, seeking only that, that would bring Him Glory.

So the challenge for us this morning is to “fan into flame” the gift that He gave us in the Holy Spirit, knowing that He wants to use each one of us in the upliftment of His body and out there in the mission field.

Hamilton left us with that challenge - it is now up to us to put it into practice, as we move forward in our calling as an Acts 2 Church and not to view it as just a nice memorable ‘feel-good’ weekend.

I know for myself that I am excited to see what God has in store for us as a church and for you and me as an individual.