

June 28, 2020

Fan into flame the gift of God

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

II Timothy 3:1-5

We live in terrible times as, very likely, all believers have from the beginning. For us the challenge is, as it has always been, to faithfully survive and thrive as believers despite the terrible times. In this second and final letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul, will focus on those things that will help us to do just that.

Last week we looked at the nature of the spirit that God has implanted in each of us who believes; ***"...a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."*** Today we want to think about the importance of the grace of Jesus Christ in our survival as believers. Paul writes, ***"You then my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel..."***



For believers the grace that is ours in Jesus Christ has to constantly be our foundation. As we have often discussed we are saved by grace and grace alone. The death of Jesus on the cross brought grace into the world because through the death our God and Father satisfied once and for all the requirement of the law of sin and death. We are saved because God has purchased us with the blood that his Son shed on the horrible cross of Calvary in his death. That blood cleanses us from all sin. Our only reasonable response to the grace that is ours in Christ Jesus is our own personal death to our sin-filled selfishness, our own burial with Jesus in the grave of

baptism, and our own resurrection with Him to a new life. In this new life we confess Jesus before the world through lives focused on the good works which we were created to do through that grace.

The Apostle will tell his 'son' Timothy to ***"...entrust to reliable men..."*** his gospel so that they are ***"...qualified to teach others..."*** and he tells the young evangelist to ***"Keep reminding them of these things..."*** For all of us who believe, the importance of standing on the foundation of the gospel is essential to our survival even in terrible times. It is so easy for us to get caught up in the battles that go with terrible times and to lose sight of the one thing that really matters; our salvation in God's grace.

Thus, the Apostle will warn his young friend, ***"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace...Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel."*** One of the characteristics of terrible times is the constant quarreling and fighting which sometimes even entraps believers.

But Paul will make it clear that those who live through grace cannot, indeed must not, participate in quarreling. As believers we are those who have received grace and as believers we are those who must be focused on sharing that grace with others.

Paul encourages his friend, ***"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."***

Even in terrible times each of us has been called and empowered to continue to share the grace of Jesus Christ which we have received from our loving Father and God.

I am convinced that the key to making this a reality in our lives is to see all others, without exception, as those in need of the same grace that we have already received. Everyone, every single one, that we meet is always and only a soul in need of Jesus. Our task, our single purpose as believers, even in the worst of terrible times, is to share that same gospel that we have received with those souls.

