

July 12, 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

Surviving these "**terrible times**" is a challenge for all of us as believers. Paul's second letter to his young friend Timothy should, I think, serve as a guide for us as we try to navigate these difficult days. In the first chapter of this letter the Apostle tells us, "**...fan into flame the gift of God...**" Paul reminds us that we have a "**...spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline...**" We must always **REMEMBER WHAT WE HAVE**.

In the second chapter the Apostle encourages us to **REMEMBER WHOSE WE ARE**. "**...be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...**", he writes. We are those who are saved by grace and these "**terrible times**" cannot change that unless we let them.

Later in this same chapter Paul reminds Timothy to become "**... a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth...**" As believers, the Apostle will tell us, we need to be focused on our preparation. We need to prepare to face whatever comes. And as believers who are preparing to meet whatever comes, we have access to the truth of God's Word. We do not and never will need to depend on our own understanding nor do we need to trust in what others might tell us. We always have access to the specific and complete truth found in God's Word. As believers we need to **REMEMBER THE WORD**.

Last week we focused on Paul's sommand to Timothy; "**...continue in what you have learned and become convinced of...**" In the face of "**terrible times**" the very foundations of our faith can be shaken. As believers we have chosen to believe in the God of heaven, in his risen Son and in the Holy Spirit who lives in us. Nothing should cause us to doubt those convictions. We must **REMEMBER OUR FAITH**.

In today's context in chapter 4, Paul writes, "**In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kindgom; I give you this charge: Preach the Word. Be prepared in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.**" In this serious and specific charge to Timothy he reminds his young friend and all of us to be purpose driven.

In the face of these "**terrible times**" it is so easy for us to forget what we are all about. We are not like everyone else. As believers we have a specific and all encompassing purpose. We have been commanded by our Lord and Master to "**...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**" (Matthew 28:19-20)

Our task, our focus, our single purpose is to share the good news of Jesus with a world that does not really know him. Our very existence should be a living testimony to the grace we have received in Jesus. In these "**terrible times**" it is so easy to be drawn into other causes and to pursue other purposes. Ultimately our single purpose as those who follow Jesus is to simply to bring others to him. We must **REMEMBER OUR PURPOSE**.

So much of what we are drawn to throw ourselves into has nothing to do with this single purpose. We can easily be distracted into fighting for other causes and working for other ends. As believers, sharing the gospel is the single task set for us.

Surviving these "**terrible times**" always has and always will demand that we focus with all of our being on that purpose for which we have been called. We are called to share the gospel, to make and teach disciples and we cannot be distracted into losing ourselves in other causes and concerns. Our purpose-driven focus is essential to our very survival.

