

2 Timothy 1:5-8

A Spirit of Power

Main idea: God shows His power to us, and gives His power to us, that we might rely on His power through us.

Have you ever thought about how powerful a train's engine is?

[Silent video showing trains moving]



Some trains are more than two miles long when you add up all the freight cars that they pull, yet the engine can pull these cars across the entire country loaded with thousands of tons of cargo! Up and down hills, around mountains, over mountains, it seems as though nothing could stop them!

But do you know one simple thing that can keep a train from getting to its destination? Simply remove the tracks. And you don't even need to remove much of the tracks. Just a small section will do.

[Picture of Hither Green rail crash]



In 1967, a train in England on its way to London derailed from its tracks. Known as the Hither Green rail crash,¹ it led to 49 deaths and 78 more injuries. After an investigation, they determined it was all due to a small crack in one of the rails, which eventually caused a small chunk of the rail to break off. The piece missing was only 8 inches long.

Despite the engine's great power, if the train isn't on the tracks, it's practically useless, and can even cause great damage to itself and others.

And it's very similar for those of us who follow Christ. God gives us His Holy Spirit, so there's a power in us beyond anything we can imagine,² but we need to be on the right tracks. We need to be in His word, following the Spirit, and allowing God's power to move us so that we would see God's power working in and around us for His glory.³

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hither_Green_rail_crash

² Acts 1:8

³ Galatians 5:25

2 Timothy 1:5-8.

I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also. Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. (2 Timothy 1:5-8)

Father, help us to follow You, relying on You, so that we would see Your power and grace accomplish the impossible in our lives and around the world. In Jesus's name, Amen.

For the next three weeks, we're going to take a break from our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesian church, and take a look at another letter that Paul wrote. But it's actually not too disconnected from our study of Ephesians, because Paul originally wrote this passage to Timothy, who at this point was the pastor of the church in Ephesus.⁴ So as we study what Paul wrote to Timothy for the next three weeks, we'll actually also get a small glimpse of what it was like in the church of Ephesus.

For example, from our passage today, we learned that there was something about Timothy's placement in Ephesus that caused Paul to remind him, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment." And we'll talk about what that might be in just a minute.

But primarily in 1 and 2 Timothy, Paul continued to disciple Timothy in the faith, and equip him to be the pastor that God called him to be.⁵ And, by extension, these letters also teach all Christians about how God calls and equips us to serve Him wherever He places us. So here's what I want you to remember from the sermon today. I've boiled it down to one sentence:

God shows His power to us, and gives His power to us, that we might rely on His power through us.

This is something we actually see many times throughout Scripture. In so many of the stories of the Bible, we see this example of God revealing Himself to someone, and then God calls them and equips them to serve Him in some way, but not so that they would then need to serve in their own strength, but rather that they would rely on God so that God gets all the glory.⁶

One of the most obvious examples of this is Moses. In the book of Exodus, Moses encountered a burning bush, right?

[Video of the burning bush]



⁴ 1 Timothy 1:1-3

⁵ 1 Timothy 1:18

⁶ Think of Gideon, Samson, David, etc.

The bush was on fire but was not consumed, capturing Moses' attention. As Moses approached it, God spoke to him from the burning bush and revealed His divine presence. In this encounter, God commissioned Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.⁷

Moses initially felt inadequate for such a significant task, probably as we all should, but God assured him that He would be with him and provide the necessary power for the task, in the form of miracles that he could perform.

[Picture of Moses performing a miracle]



And even after the people of Israel were able to leave slavery in Egypt, Moses still needed to rely on God when they were being pursued by the Egyptians, and they were trapped between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea.⁸

[Video of the Red Sea parting]



So once again, God showed His power, parting the Red Sea, but doing it through Moses' willingness, demonstrating that God chooses to work in and through us, even though we're broken, even though we're often fearful, in order to accomplish His purposes.⁹

In other words:

God shows His power to us, and gives His power to us, that we might rely on His power through us.

So let's break that down. First:

1. God shows His power to us.

In verse 5, we read:

⁷ Read the whole story starting in Exodus 3

⁸ Exodus 14

⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:27-29, 2 Corinthians 12:9

I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also. (2 Timothy 1:5)

Our spiritual journey begins with faith.¹⁰ Paul recalled that he saw this faith in Timothy's mother and grandmother, and now sees it also in Timothy himself.

You know, people have described faith in many ways. People who are skeptical of religion often say faith is the opposite of knowledge, because if you had knowledge, you wouldn't need faith. But the Bible seems to describe faith not as the opposite of knowledge, but as the logical result of a knowledge of God.

In John 17:3, Jesus prayed to the Father:

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.
(John 17:3)

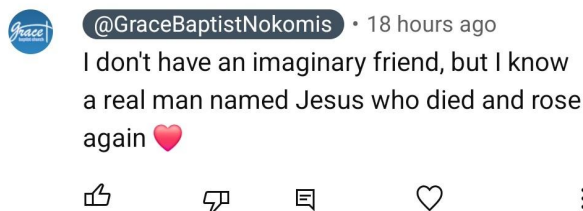
So eternal life isn't a result of a blind faith, but faith in the God that we know.¹¹

[Picture of YouTube comment]



Someone commented on one of our church's Youtube videos recently, "Complete nonsense. Prove your imaginary friend exist." What he was implying was that Christianity is based completely on blind faith, and that there's no evidence for believing what we do. He was outright saying that Jesus is just a figment of our imagination.

[Picture of YouTube response]



¹⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9

¹¹ Romans 1:18-20

So I responded to him, “I don’t have an imaginary friend, but I know a real man named Jesus who died and rose again.” You see, Christianity requires faith, yes, of course, but not blind faith. We have faith in Jesus who really lived, really died, and really rose again in history to prove that He really is the Son of God.¹²

In other words, because we’ve seen God move undeniably in history and in our lives, it only makes sense to place our faith in Jesus.¹³

We see this time and time again throughout history. In the Bible, we read that hundreds of people saw Jesus alive again after His resurrection, so that even many who were skeptics before Jesus rose from the grave, afterward were willing to die for their faith in Jesus, like Jesus’s half brother James, and Paul himself who was a strict Pharisee, and approved of the deaths of Christians, but then had an encounter with the Lord even after Jesus ascended to heaven, and became the most evangelistic missionary in the history of Christianity.¹⁴

And then in more modern history, former atheists like C.S. Lewis and Lee Strobel who really started to look into Jesus and the claims of the Bible in order to try to disprove them ended up coming to believe in Jesus because of them, and they became extremely outspoken regarding their faith in Jesus.¹⁵

You see, Jesus changes us by His grace and power through the gospel.¹⁶

Paul wrote in Romans 1:16:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

This is such an amazing statement! God made all things by His power.¹⁷ God is omnipotent, and can do anything He desires.¹⁸ God has raised up and torn down kingdoms.¹⁹ He has all power. And yet, Paul tells us that the gospel itself is the power of God for salvation.

Through Jesus, God showed us His power, because at the cross, Jesus destroyed sin, destroyed His enemies, and He did it by loving His enemies, giving us His very life, to which we respond with faith and repentance unto salvation.²⁰

But God not only showed His power to us, that’s number 1, I want us also to see how:

2. God gives His power to us.

Look at verses 6 and 7.

Therefore, I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment. (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

¹² 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

¹³ Romans 12:1-2 – it is our “logical” worship

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:6-8

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_convertsto_Christianity_from_nontheism

¹⁶ Galatians 2:20

¹⁷ Colossians 1:16

¹⁸ Psalm 115:3

¹⁹ Isaiah 40:17-18, Jeremiah 10:10

²⁰ John 3:16

Verse 7 is actually going to be our focus for the next 2 weeks as well. Next week, I'll be preaching on how God has given us a spirit of love, and the week after that, Micah Slifer will preach on how God has given us a spirit of sound judgment. But this week, we're looking at how God has given us a spirit of power.

Notice that this is in contrast to having a spirit of fear. We might be fearful of any number of things. We might be afraid for our future, and the direction of our country. We might be fearful for our kids, whether they will follow Jesus or rebel against God as they go out on their own. Timothy may have been fearful about his ministry in the city of Ephesus. The people in Ephesus were steeped in Greek mythology.

[Temple of Artemis]



In fact, the temple of the Greek goddess Artemis, which was a massive amphitheater that could accommodate 50,000 spectators, was built in Ephesus. This is only a digital reconstruction of what it may have looked like, because the original was destroyed by fire in the 4th century.²¹

But this was the place where a mob of Greeks shouted at and threatened Paul as he preached the gospel because of their devotion to false gods.²² So Ephesus was not a safe place for Christians!

So Paul reminded Timothy, "God hasn't given us a spirit of fear, but one of power." When we come to faith in Jesus, we not only receive Jesus, but also His Holy Spirit, so that we have power to do whatever He's called us to. And we're going to need that power to face all the obstacles of life.²³

For example, where do you go when you find that you have a severe health condition? Well, in addition to going to your doctor for treatment, studies find that if you also go to God with it, trusting that He will care for you, you'll find more happiness and contentment, even if you don't end up getting better.²⁴ Having faith leads to having more joy, more peace, and more hope, and this is all because the God of all hope is working powerfully in our lives.²⁵

So God not only shows us His power, and gives us His power, but also promises that:

3. We can rely on His power through us.

Look at verse 8.

So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. (2 Timothy 1:8)

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Artemis

²² Acts 19:24-41

²³ Romans 15:13

²⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolefisher/2019/03/29/science-says-religion-is-good-for-your-health/>

²⁵ Jeremiah 29:11

Suffering for the gospel can come in different forms.²⁶ Maybe your suffering doesn't look like an angry mob shouting at you as you share the gospel. Maybe your suffering looks more like holding your tongue when you're called names today for your faith.²⁷ Maybe your suffering looks more like responding with love when reviled.²⁸ Whatever it looks like for you, the answer is the same. We need to rely on the power of God.

So what does that look like?

Practically, it looks like taking a step of faith when you want to shrink back in fear. That could mean speaking a kind word to a bully, or telling someone you're a Christian, or even just trusting God in the morning to get up and start your day.

Because Jesus died and rose again by His power, He also lives in us, and therefore, we're empowered to live for Him.²⁹

So we need to make sure we stay on the right tracks, or else we can cause great damage to ourselves and those around us. It's so easy, in our flesh, to respond to hate with hate. It's so easy to lash out when we feel threatened.³⁰ I think most of us have had the desire to tell somebody off when they offend us. And all of this is a result of how our sin has damaged us. That's the wrong track.

But in Jesus, we're healed.³¹ That's the right track to be on. And God calls us to rest in the gospel, receiving His grace and love poured out on us through Jesus, and then rejoice in the gospel, sharing His love with others.³² Not shrinking back in fear, but knowing that we have God's power to overcome any obstacles we may face in life, whether suffering or persecution or intimidation, we can respond to all of these things and more with the same love that God has shown us in Christ.³³

We're going to talk more about that love next week as we talk about how God has given us a spirit of love. But for now, just know that God loves you, and showed you His love by powerfully defeating sin on the cross, that you might begin to rest and rejoice in Him.³⁴

²⁶ 1 Peter 5:10

²⁷ Psalm 34:13

²⁸ Luke 6:27

²⁹ John 14:23

³⁰ Romans 12:19

³¹ Psalm 103:3

³² Mark 12:30-31

³³ Philippians 4:13

³⁴ Romans 5:8