Introduction

How many of you here this morning were raised in a Christian home? Praise the Lord! That is my testimony too.

I was baptized as a baby, brought up in the Church and don’t ever remember a time that I wasn’t following Jesus. I went to Sunday School, confirmation, youth group, and all kind of retreats and camps. However, when I was a teenager, I used to think that was a really lame testimony of faith. I would go to all these youth camps and hear these great conversion stories from people who had come to the Lord later in life and it always seemed so powerful.

But one day, when I was talking with one of those people who shared their story, they looked at me and said: “Your testimony isn’t lame or boring, it’s awesome! God has been faithful to you and has given you a great heritage of faith.”

And that idea of a “heritage of faith” is how we see Paul starting off his letter to Timothy.

Transition to the Text:

If you have your bulletin handy, look with me at the part marked 2 Timothy 1, and then go and find the small 5. 2 Timothy 1:5. Paul is writing to Timothy and he says to him: 5 I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you.

What is Paul talking about here? He is talking about a heritage of faith! He is writing to Timothy to encourage him and he’s saying: “Hey Timothy, remember your mom? Remember your grandma? Do you remember what kind of faith they had?” Paul’s saying: “That kind of faith lives in you too Timothy.”

But, the cool thing about Timothy’s heritage of faith, is that it was not just a hereditary faith, but Paul describes it as a “genuine faith.” What is the difference between a hereditary faith and a genuine faith? The difference is this: There are a
lot of people who go to church today just because their grandparents did or their parents did. Maybe their family members were even leaders within the congregation. And so, they go out of duty, out of obligation. This is the “family thing to do.” Sound familiar? I have talked to so many youth AND adults who live this way.

However, as Paul is addressing Timothy here, he is really intentional to point something out: “I remember your genuine faith.” You see, for Timothy, this wasn’t just lip service. This wasn’t just a faith that he had because of his grandma or mom, this was his faith. So, why is that important? Whoopdeedoo… Who even cares? Well, for one God does. Its God who cares about our faith. Hebrews 11:6 says “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

You see, the reason why Paul is making a big deal about Timothy’s faith is because it is this faith that sets him apart, this faith that makes him significant, this faith who defines who he is, this faith that is evidence of God working in his life.

And it is because of this foundation of faith that Paul has a specific reminder for Timothy :: He says there in vs. 6: This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you.

One of Paul’s points here is that the Christian life doesn’t stop with having a strong faith. That is not the “stopping point” for the Christian life. Instead, there is this thing called “growth” (fancy name = sanctification). And what Paul says this looks like for Timothy is the fanning into flames the spiritual gift of God given to him.

Now, I know this is St Louis, and we are in the city / suburb, so I might be going out on a limb here in using a camping illustration, but I’m going for it. Growing up, my family would always go to the Boundary Waters to camp every year. And this is rural camping. What that means is no running water, no toilet, no electricity. In other words, you are cooking over the fire. Now, for most people, that would be a drag, BUT, for my pyro brother and I, we liked it. In fact, we always looked forward to gathering the wood and getting the fire going. However, when you are out in the woods and trying to start a fire, there are a couple of tricks that you need to implement, one of which being the art of blowing on the fire. When I first heard of that, I thought my dad was crazy, but in all seriousness, if you want to get a fire going quickly, you need to get down close to the embers and blow on the coals to
help get the fire going. Sometimes its messy, you have to get down and get dirty, and it takes work and patience. BUT, the end result is a roaring fire.

That kind of imagery is what Paul is getting at here. He’s saying, “Hey, fan those gifts into flame Timothy.” Get the fire roaring! ☺ Don’t be stagnant, it’s time to grow!

Now, I know that some of us here may be tempted to think we are beyond “growing”…”You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”….I don’t know if I’ve heard a lie worse from the Devil. Somehow, we get this mindset that we get to a point where we can “plateau.” Maybe as a pastor, you’re tempted to think, I’ve learned all this before… Maybe as one who has been to church all your life, who has this heritage of faith, it’s tempting to think, “I’ve got this.” BUT, the reality is that there is so much more to learn. GROWTH still happens, until the day we die.

So for those of you here at Gloria Dei, what does this look like for you this morning? What does it look like to fan into flame the gift of the Lord? What would it look like to grow?

This morning, I want you to write down this morning 3 ways that you feel God may be calling you to grow, 3 ways He may be calling you to fan your spiritual gifts into a flame—to live out your faith. Doing these things don’t make you right with God, only Jesus does that, but this is what Christian maturity looks like: Growth. Take a moment to do that now.

Closing Prayer