

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-6-11 AM NOTES  
"DOING GOD'S WORK IN A HOSTILE WORLD"  
2 TIMOTHY 1:6-8  
Non-Series Message

**John 15:18-19 (NKJV)** <sup>18</sup> If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

**John 16:33 (NKJV)** "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

**John 17:14-16 (NKJV)** <sup>14</sup> I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."

**Romans 12:2a (NKJV)** "And do not be conformed to this world..."

**2 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV)** "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."

**2 Timothy 2:1 (NKJV)** "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

**2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)** "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

**2 Timothy 4:5 (NKJV)** "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

I. Stir up the Passion (v. 6)

1. Theological literacy is plummeting in the church.
2. Churches are becoming more ingrown and less interested in reaching out to others.
3. Members want "practical" formulas rather than profound spiritual truth.
4. Christians are showing more interest in community action.
5. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is gaining ground quickly among Christians.
6. Christianity is having near-zero impact on the surrounding culture.

—George Barna Interviews

Just over 50% of the world's population (about 3.5 billion people) has had no realistic opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel. There are 11,646 people groups in the world today. Of those 11,646 people groups, 6,734 groups contain less than 2% professing evangelical Christians and many of those have no mission organization working with them, no churches being planted in them, and few if any who are even praying for them.

II. Recognize Our Resources (v. 7)

A. Dynamic Power (v. 7a)

**2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)** "for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

**Ephesians 1:18-19 (NKJV)** <sup>18</sup> the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power."

B. Divine Love (v. 7b)

**Romans 5:5b (ESV)** "...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

**1 John 4:18 (NKJV)** "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..."

C. Disciplined Thoughts (v. 7c)

III. Submit to Suffering (v. 8)

"Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold."

—Helen Keller

"To insist that missionaries avoid the dangerous and risky places is to belittle the lostness of a world without Christ, to demean the responsibility of obedience to God's call, and to succumb to a convoluted system of values that says one's own safety and comfort is a higher priority than sharing the gospel."

—Jerry Rankin

**1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 (ESV)** "2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, 3 that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this."

**Acts 14:22 (HCSB)** "strengthening the hearts of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and by telling them, 'It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.'"

"What shall we do about these tortures? Will we be able to endure them? If I do not bear them I put in prison another fifty or sixty men whom I know, because that is what the communists wish from me, to betray those around me. And here comes the great need for the role of preparation for suffering which must start now. *It is too difficult* to prepare yourself for it when the communists have put you in prison..."

—Richard Wurmbrand

*Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?*

*Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?*

*Sure I must fight if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,  
Supported by Thy Word.*

—Isaac Watts (1724)

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This morning I want us to look at a passage that will turn our focus to the work God has called us to in making disciples – making disciples around us but also missions which is making disciples across cultural, language, and / or distance barriers.

One of our enemy’s most used, most effective tools to divert us, discourage us, and stop us in God’s work is fear. The Bible speaks in Romans 8:15 of the bondage to fear; 1 John 4:18 speaks of the torment involved with fear. We live in a world system that is hostile to our God because the world has Satan as its god (2 Corinthians 4:4). We are called to live and do God’s work in this wicked world system that 1 John 5:19 tells us is “under the control of the evil one” (NIV). Since the world system we live in here on earth has a different god, opposite values from those of Scriptures, and ideas and beliefs that are contrary to the Bible, why should we be surprised that this world is hostile to those who have a biblical worldview and are yielded to the God of the Bible and are committed to do His work? Jesus Himself had much to say regarding the world system we live in and how there will always be conflict. **John 15:18-19 (NKJV)** <sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” **John 16:33 (NKJV)** “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” **John 17:14-16 (NKJV)** <sup>14</sup> “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” We should never be surprised when those who are of the world ridicule us, belittle us, persecute us and reject us. When it comes to the world, the only thing we should fear is being conformed to the world (Romans 12 commands us: **Romans 12:2a (NKJV)** “And do not be conformed to this world...”).

In this hostile world system, it is easy for believers to become fearful of openly confessing and standing for Christ and those who speak for Him. It seems that Paul’s disciple Timothy struggled with such fear and that fear may have made him somewhat apathetic about the ministry God had given him. It may have been that all of the attacks from the world had taken a toll on his courage. His spiritual fire may have been somewhat cooled. Actually, Paul only gives Timothy one commendation in 2 Timothy (1:5) and the rest that Paul has to say to him is exhortation. Some examples would be in **2 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV)** “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” **2 Timothy 2:1 (NKJV)** “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” **2 Timothy 2:15 (NKJV)** “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” **2 Timothy 4:5 (NKJV)** “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” We, like Timothy, often get worn down by the world around us and need some encouragement and exhortation to get back in the battle – a battle that never ends until we are taken out of this world system. I need this exhortation, and I believe the whole church needs it. Let’s listen to some plain spoken exhortation as we do God’s work in a hostile world.

I. Stir up the Passion (V6)

The word translated “stir up” means to stir into a flame or to stoke the fire. Using the picture of a fire in the fireplace, the flames tend to die down and we have to take a poker and stir up the fire so that the flames and the resulting warmth return. Paul reminds Timothy that He has been gifted and called by God. God gave him a gift, and now Timothy needs to be reminded to stoke the fire. Here is what happened. Timothy had lost his passion for the Lord and the work that he had been called to and gifted for. It is so easy in the grind and warfare of everyday life to lose the passion for the Lord and what He has called us to do. I dare

say that every person who has been a Christian for more than a short period of time knows by experience what I am talking about.

George Barna is a sociologist that takes polls and interprets them for the church in America. In one recent poll involving 5,000 interviews, Barna gives us five themes they discovered:

1. Theological literacy is plummeting in the church.
2. Churches are becoming more ingrown and less interested in reaching out to others.
3. Members want “practical” formulas rather than profound spiritual truth.
4. Christians are showing more interest in community action.
5. The postmodern insistence on tolerance is gaining ground quickly among Christians.
6. Christianity is having near-zero impact on the surrounding culture.

[Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*, Page 32]

If I could summarize what this research shows, I would say that it shows that the church in America has lost its passion and has become self-centered and has been conformed to the world. Let's take a little deeper look at these six themes. I believe that the root cause of the drift is in the first theme – the church has abandoned the teaching of theology and thus we have lost our foundation. What about the second theme? When we try to reach out to those outside the walls of the church building, the warfare starts. There is rejection, ridicule, and at least in the USA subtle persecution (there is nothing subtle about it in many other countries). It is easier to get in a big circle, join our hands and sing Cum-by-yah as we turn inward than it is to confront those who are captives of the enemy and then experience the enemy's attacks. Churches often turn to doing nice things in the community to get the world to accept them and say nice things about them instead of doing acts of love with the intent to soften hearts so that they might be more receptive to the gospel. Rather than speak clearly what God says about Jesus Christ being the only way to heaven, about what God says about moral issues, justice and individual responsibility, Christians are all too often quiet lest we offend those in the world and they therefore won't like us. The end result is that we have near-zero impact on the culture because there is little difference between us and the culture. We have lost our passion to make disciples and be salt and light in our culture.

Let me turn away from the evangelical Bible believing churches in general and turn the spotlight on this church. We have lost our passion! There is lethargy and apathy in our worship and in our ministry. Never in my twenty five plus years have I seen greater difficulty in getting people to commit to the work of the Lord. Some of those who are doing the work seem to have lost their passion for God's work. I am especially grieved with the apathy relating to prayer and to ministry with children. It is not so much that people are leaving the church in droves and no one is joining. The difference is that people who used to be here 48-50 weeks out of the year and involved in ministry are now here 20 weeks of the year and are involved in no ministry. People who used to give a minimum of a tithe of their income and then give over and above to special ministries and special needs now give if they have anything left over after house payment, new car payment, premium cable payment, credit card payments, and paying for multiple weekend getaways.

I am pleading with you to stir up the gift that is within you!! The need is so great. God has led us into the inner city, the mobile home parks around us, and into the neighborhoods right around the church. I remember days when it seems that members were standing in line at the end of the service to introduce me to their neighbor they had invited, their co-workers they invited, or unchurched family members they had brought with them. Those lines are much shorter today. We are a church that has lost its passion. This is not just a sad thing; this is an evil thing!

Just over 50% of the world's population (about 3.5 billion people) has had no realistic opportunity to hear a clear presentation of the gospel. There are 11,646 people groups in the world today. Of those 11,646 people groups, 6,734 groups contain less than 2% professing evangelical Christians and many of those have no mission organization working with them, no churches being planted in them, and few if any who are even praying for them.

At least we're doing a good job of reaching our own nation aren't we? No, we're not! Tom Clegg and Warren Bird wrote a book called *Lost in America*. In that book they tell us that if the unchurched

population of America were extracted and set down somewhere as a nation of its own, it would be the fifth largest nation of the world. That would make the United States of America the third largest mission field of the world behind only China and India. We have churches on every corner, but a large percentage of them are dead as old King Tut! [Statistics from Ronnie Floyd, *Our Last Great Hope*, pages 63-65]

How do we stir up the gift that is in us? How is the passion restored? First we need to make sure that we know what we are to be passionate about! Our passion, our motivating desire is not for a larger church, certainly not to keep a bunch of programs running, and not even primarily to see the lost escape hell and gain heaven (though that is a great secondary passion). Our passion, our consuming desire that motivates us to give up comforts, money, and time is that God would be glorified by our obedience in sharing the gospel and making disciples so that rebels become worshippers of the only true God! God is most glorified by man when He is worshipped and praised. Rebels who are dead in their trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1) cannot worship Him. As we are obedient to give, go, and pray in ministries here on this campus, go into the neighborhoods around us, the inner-city, the unchurched cities of America where 83% of the population is, and to the unreached around the world, God brings people to Himself through the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16) and these dead to God rebels are made new creations in Christ who are now capable of fulfilling the purpose for which they were created – to glorify God, primarily through worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

Now that we know what the passion is that we have lost, how do we get it back? Certainly it will involve humbling ourselves, confessing our sin of cold hearts and disobedience, and repenting with brokenness before Him. Certainly it will involve a total surrender and the filling of the Holy Spirit, giving Him control and walking in dependence on Him, but let's see the context of this command to stir up the gift in us. In the very next verse, we see that dealing with a loss of passion involves dealing with fear, which is a major factor in giving in to and being conformed to the world.

Doing the work of God in a hostile world system involves stirring up the passion.

## II. Recognize Our Resources (V7)

The word used here for fear is not the common word “phobos” that we get “phobia” from. It is a similar word that means timidity, angst, and shameful fear. It is the shrinking back from a challenge. It is really a selfish fear that withdraws rather than doing the hard thing that is required. It primarily refers in this context to a fear of the hostile world system that we live in but because we are not of the world, we have constant conflict with it. God has given us three resources to deal with this fear, this timidity, this shrinking back into a more comfortable self-centered life.

### A. Dynamic Power (V7a)

The Greek word for power is the word we get “dynamic” and “dynamite” from. It is the idea of effective, productive power. It is power that makes us effective in fulfilling our purpose and ministry in a hostile world system. It is an effective power in enabling us to live victorious over a self-centered comfortable life. Notice that the grammar here indicated that we already have this power. We see it more clearly in the ESV: **2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)** “for **God gave us** a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” In the person of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have been given the power to overcome fear. In Ephesians Paul prays that our eyes would be opened to see the power that we have already been given. **Ephesians 1:18-19 (NKJV)** “<sup>18</sup> the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power”.

### B. Divine Love (V7b)

Since the kind of fear we are dealing with here is based in self-centeredness, the resource we need to overcome it is God's love. That is what we have been given. God has already given us His love. **Romans 5:5b (ESV)** “...God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” God's love is perfect love and we read in **1 John 4:18a (NKJV)** “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear...” When there is first of all a love for God and His glory and second and love for those

whose eyes have been blinded by the god of this world, we will have the passion restored and continue doing God's work in a hostile world.

### C. Disciplined Thoughts (V7c)

In other translations that phrase "sound mind" is translated "self control" (ESV), "sound judgment" (HCSB), "discipline" (NASB), and "self-discipline" (NIV). Fear leads to irrationality and a mind with out of control thoughts. A sound mind leads to a divinely ordered life where godly discipline is applied to every circumstance and challenge. A sound mind analyzes every situation and circumstance in light of the Scriptures and the sovereignty of our God who does all things well.

To effectively do God's work in a hostile world, we must stir up the passion and recognize our resources – power, love, and a sound mind.

### III. Submit to Suffering (V8)

Because we do the work of God in a *hostile* world, we should not be surprised when suffering accompanies the proclamation of the gospel. We have, in America, developed an obsession with "safety". Safety is in reality a myth. Helen Keller once said, "Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. The fearful are caught as often as the bold". I am amazed at how many Christians have bought into this myth of safety. We send teams out during TELL (our evangelism and discipleship training) into dangerous places. Some refuse to go or let family members go. Some of the places we take mission trips are dangerous, but we must go. Dr. Jerry Rankin, former President of the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention said this of missionaries, but I would broaden it to just Christians: "To insist that missionaries avoid the dangerous and risky places is to belittle the lostness of a world without Christ, to demean the responsibility of obedience to God's call, and to succumb to a convoluted system of values that says one's own safety and comfort is a higher priority than sharing the gospel" [Jerry Rankin, *Lives Given, Not Taken*, Page 11].

Let me talk about the time to submit to suffering. It is not when the suffering starts. It is right now! The Apostle Paul tried to prepare new converts for suffering.. He said in **1 Thessalonians 3:2-3 (ESV)** "<sup>2</sup> and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, <sup>3</sup> that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this." We see Paul preparing new converts in **Acts 14:22 (HCSB)** "strengthening the hearts of the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith, and by telling them, 'It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.'"

One of my heroes is Richard Wurmbrand who endured 14 years of imprisonment in Romania during the years his country was under the rule of communism. When the communists tried to control the church for their purposes, Wurmbrand led a secret underground ministry. Listen to what he says about the importance of submitting to suffering before the suffering comes. "What shall we do about these tortures? Will we be able to endure them? If I do not bear them I put in prison another fifty or sixty men whom I know, because that is what the communists wish from me, to betray those around me. And here comes the great need for the role of preparation for suffering which must start now. *It is too difficult* to prepare yourself for it when the communists have put you in prison..." [John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*, Page 79].

I am calling you to submit now to whatever suffering that God allows you to go through as you do His work in a hostile world. Your suffering may be the rejection of those closest to who do not understand the call of Christ on your life. It may mean the loss of a job you really enjoy. It may be suffering and death in a foreign land for proclaiming the gospel. It may be being misunderstood and slandered and ridiculed by others. We don't get to select our suffering, but we must submit to it whatever it is and we must submit now.

Somehow, we have come to believe in America that we deserve a suffering free life. That view did not come from the Bible. Suffering is our lot. Isaac Watts penned what I want to say better than I could say it.

*Am I a soldier of the cross,  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name?*

*Must I be carried to the skies,  
On flowery beds of ease,  
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Increase my courage, Lord!  
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