

October 6, 2019

A Bold Faith

Lamentations. 1:1-6

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Timothy needed a pep talk. A young minister, he was confronting forces and problems which made him question his faith and call to ministry. Paul reminds him of those examples of steadfast faith- his mother, grandmother, and Paul himself. These helped shape Timothy's faith and remained models for him to follow. Think about the heroes of your faith. Were they family members, friends, a pastor, or a youth leader? From the examples of others, we can strengthen our own faith and become bold witness of the grace and love of God. If we truly believe, we will act boldly upon that faith regardless of the consequences.

These words are not only important for all ordained ministers, but for all Christians who are involved in any ministry. Paul's advice to Timothy translates into real ministry. Here are things to remember as we strive to serve God.

First is to remember the roots of your faith. What are the origins of your faith? Who were the ones that prayed for you and that you looked up to? In my life it was first my parents. At every evening meal we had devotions. We were taken to church every Sunday, whether we wanted to be there or not. Sometimes the urge to go fishing instead of Sunday school was strong.

My father was not pretentious in his faith. He lived his faith without pounding a Bible or pointing a finger at others. He was very responsible in serving the church. He was a Sunday School teacher, a trustee, an elder, the clerk of session, and a youth advisor. He often led worship as liturgist. My love of the church, I believe, comes from my father.

My mother was equally faithful in life and ministry. Serving the church in many ways as my father did, I remember accompanying my mother to migrant worker's camps to teach the Bible to children. When she was in college studying to be a teacher, she felt a call to serve in Alaska teaching in the school system. She was never able to fulfill that call, but I believe that my call to ministry is in part a fulfillment of her's.

There were other people in my life that influenced my faith and ministry. I can point to youth leaders, teachers, professors, and Sunday school teachers who had a profound impact in my life. Where did your faith come from and who are the hero's of your belief? Is there someone looking to you for inspiration in their faith?

Secondly, remember the gospel and make it the center of your ministry. To live and speak in God's love is the greatest witness that you can give. A police officer was sentenced to ten years in prison because of a shooting. The brother of the victim was allowed to testify at her sentencing trial. His words of forgiveness and love rang contrary to what you would expect.

No bitterness or righteous anger like you would express came from this family member. Rather he wished the officer the best and hoped that she would rely on Jesus Christ for strength. What a strong Christian witness. Now that's a bold faith. I don't know if I would be able to do the same thing in that situation.

Third, look to the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance.

Remember that Jesus said he would send the Holy Spirit to those who ministered in his name. Of the three, the Holy Spirit is the most misunderstood. We are told that the Spirit is with us always, but is hard to see. Remember that the word in Hebrew and in Greek, means wind, breath, or soul. Three things that you can't see, but you know by their effects. The wind moves the trees, your breath can fog a mirror, and the condition of your soul can be seen in how you live your life. The presence of the Holy Spirit is not evident. We know the Spirit is there in what is accomplished. The Bible describes this third person of the Trinity as the comforter and source of bold faith.

Many ask how we make the Holy Spirit a part of our lives. We cannot manipulate the Spirit, but we can create an atmosphere of welcome. By invitation and seeking the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives we can be comforted in loss, guided in ministry, and embolden in our faith. It is this person in God that is most active in our faith life. Remember, it is not our job to convert people, that is the Holy Spirit's work. We are to be faithful to the Gospel in word and deed, and the Spirit will do the rest.

This Holy Spirit entrusts in us a wonderful treasure. Some translations call it a “deposit.” And that is the good news of the Gospel. God loves us and wants all to be his children. Just as Paul reminds Timothy, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to accomplish this.

Each of us has things that we can use in ministry. It may not be preaching or teaching. It might be inviting neighbors and friends to church. It could be making a point to seek visitors and welcome them. It might be baking cookies for Kyros and supporting the prison ministry.

Discovering your call to ministry and the talents God has given you to work for the Gospel is what our Christian faith is all about. This is what having a bold faith means. Empowered by the Holy Spirit with gifts to use, confident of the rightness of our message, and reminded of the faithfulness of those who have influenced us, we are able to be ambassadors of Christ in this world. Where is God calling you in ministry?

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