



19 April 2024

Fan into Flame

The apostle Paul opened his second letter to Timothy expressing his care for him, and appreciation for his sincere faith. Based on that, he reminds Timothy to “fan into flame the spiritual gift God” had given him.

Paul does not say what gift he was referring to. As well, the phrase “fan into flame” more literally means to bring to life again, or to rekindle. So the New American Standard Bible renders it “kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you.”



One thing you and every believer has in common with Timothy is that God has given you spiritual gifts or abilities with which you can serve God and others.

- Paul writes, “But to each one [believer] is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”, and “one and the same Spirit works all these things [spiritual gifts], distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:7,11).
- Peter instructs, “as each one [believer] has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

Spiritual abilities are distinct from natural abilities. They are neither totally different or identical. God gives the gifts He chooses to each and every believer, including you. We don’t earn them, nor do we have to pray for them. You have not been left out!

What are these spiritual abilities? You can read Romans 12:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:7-16 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 to see some of the spiritual abilities God gives. Which spiritual abilities do you have? You can take some surveys which may identify them. The best way is to serve God. As you do that, note what you are interested in, what God is using and listen to the confirmation from other believers.

Now let’s come back to Timothy, and in turn, ourselves. Paul wrote, “kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you.” Timothy was Paul’s protege. He was in a responsible position of leadership in the church. Paul is not necessarily saying that Timothy had neglected using his spiritual abilities, that the flame had died down, much as in a fire in your fireplace does. What he is asking Timothy to do is to keep on *fanning the flame*, to keep on using it and developing it. You see, while God gives

us the spiritual abilities we have, we are to keep using them, developing them so the flame of service for God burns brightly.

How do we do that? Here are a few things we should be doing.

- Keep reading, thinking about, living God's word. Jeremiah said that God's word was "like a burning fire" within him, so he could not hold it in even if he tried (20:7-9; see also 23:29). It is the truth in Scripture that is a light to our path—and that includes our service.
- Keep praying. In Romans chapter 12, right after Paul writes about spiritual abilities and service, he says we are to be "devoted to prayer" (verse 12). Prayer is essential to understanding and wisdom, and also to serving God as He wants us to do.
- Focus on, maintain an attitude of thankfulness and praise, even in the darkest nights, even when you wonder if your service for God is amounting to anything. When Paul and Silas came to Philippi and preached the gospel, they were arrested, beaten, thrown into prison with their feet locked in stocks. How is that for serving God? How did they respond? Luke tells us, "about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God" (see Acts 16:22-40).
- Whatever results you see and don't see, keep serving God. Keep on employing the spiritual abilities God has given you "in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God,"

Keep fanning the flame!

Pastor Lyle