

## 2 Timothy 1:1-14

### Rekindle the Gift

Campfires are one of my favorite things. Not being an outdoorsy type I am not very good at making a campfire, but I really enjoy them. Ken on the other hand is a bit of a firebug. I also know several people that I would call firebugs. Me, I can just sit around the campfire and enjoy it. Others need to poke and prod it. Good thing too as they tend to the fire and keep it burning.

I have often noticed or watched as Ken has taken a fire that looked like it was pretty much out, and he rakes the coals together fanning them back into a flame, adding some more kindling and logs as he goes. It is rather fascinating to think that it takes so little to begin a fire.

And who of us has not heard of the danger of just a spark that is lifted into the air and lands in a forest with a dry forest bed that, with just the right conditions, becomes the ignitor of a raging fire.

This is the type of imagery that the writer of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is alluding to when he reminds Timothy to, "rekindle the gift of God that is within you." The gift is that of grace, faith, love, and hope. And these Timothy received from God, but it was through the faith and actions, the teaching and presence of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and in that present moment the writer of the letter, that Timothy learned and experienced faith, grace, love, and hope.

On one of her trips to the Netherlands, my mother was given a prayer that her grandmother on her dad's side had written and held to for what I understand to be years. My great grandmother had at that time prayed for her children, her children's children, and the generations after that, of which I am one. She prayed that we would know God and live lives of faith. I am the benefactor of generations that have been faithful Christians. Not perfect people but people whose faith was of importance to them.

It is my great sadness that, though bringing my children up in the knowledge and love of God, they themselves have moved away from the love, faith, grace, and hope that has sustained generations of my family. They live good lives, they are good people, but they do not know intimately what I know to be true of God, Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit. My hope is that one day they will rekindle the faith that was passed down to them and that has been the experience of their ancestors.

And it is truly difficult being a Christian in today's cultural context. It often feels like no one seems to want to hear a message of hope, grace, faith, and love, well at least not a Christian message of hope, grace, faith, and love. We are almost embarrassed to share

that part of ourselves for fear of judgement and condemnation from those we work with, live with, are related to, or we call our friends. We may hear them say, or think they might say, we can be friends, just don't bring up your religion.

At first, I felt I had to walk a fine line when our granddaughter was born, I even felt I needed to walk that line when speaking with my adult children and in-law children. Over time I have come to the place where I respect their boundaries, but if they truly want to know who their mother is, and for my grandchild who her grandmother is, if friends truly value my friendship, then they must understand that my faith is the basis for how I live my life. My faith shapes my understanding of the world, it is the lens through which I make decisions. It is not just a part of me, my faith shapes me.

Maybe it is age, maybe it is maturing in faith, maybe it is that I just don't care so much anymore what people think of me. It may be that I am just secure in who I am that I find I speak more freely about my faith. I don't force anyone to believe as I do, but I value the Christian faith enough to no longer hide my stories of faith and how it shapes my life. It is hard to start a fire of faith in anyone if there has been no kindling placed in their lives to begin with, if they have not heard stories of faith from anyone.

We do not have to be ashamed that we are Christians. When our lives are lived in the example of Christ, when we love and give the gift of grace and hope to others, then we have nothing to be ashamed of. Yes, many harmful things have been done in the name of religion. The National Day of Truth and Reconciliation has a lot to do with the harm done by the government with the help of churches to Indigenous children in residential schools. The harm done to families whose children were taken from their homes. Centuries of conflict around the globe has often been in the name of one faith or another. Even what has happened with the convoluted manner of politics and faith south of our borders is concerning, but none of this is the example that Christ gave us.

If we are truly living out our faith as followers of Christ and Christ's example of healing and teaching that leads to giving others, especially those we consider vulnerable, a lease on life, care for their concerns and needs, advocates for justice for those who have little money, power, or prestige, then we have nothing to be ashamed of. If nothing else, if more of us were living into this type of faith it might change the negative and challenging stereotypes that Christians have been given.

What many people who know little about our faith fail to realize is that those of us who go to church know that we need to be here because we are in need of forgiveness, grace, hope, and love. We are in the church and part of this faith, not because we think we have it right, but because we know that our faith brings strength, wisdom, grace, love, and hope to our own lives, which we can then in turn give to others, freely and without judgement that which has been given to us.

Some of us have been given this gift, taught about this gift through generations of families, others are learning it from us because they never received such teaching, grace, love, and hope from those who came before them. Those who learn of it may

receive this gift through attending church, but many more only experience the gift through our loving and attentive presence in their lives.

You and I have been entrusted with this treasure with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. It is our privilege, our honour, and the expectation that we will not squander this gift but share it as freely as God in Christ has shared it with us. So, if your faith has failed you, maybe it is shaky or afraid, maybe it has been shown to you as judgement, know today that this gift of faith, hope, love, and grace, is one that is to be life-giving for you and those whose lives encounter yours. It is a fire that starts with an ember and is kindled into a powerful blaze of love.

God has not given “us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.” (v7) This power is only to be used as love and grace poured out in our lives and the lives of others. Do not be ashamed, share that which has been entrusted to you, and rekindle the gift of God that is within you.

And this we live in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.