

Gavin Orton. 27th July 2008. 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Living Dangerously.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes

Guinness Book of Record title of being “The World’s Greatest Living Explorer”

Was in the SAS but since 1960’s, he has become known as an adventure:

- 1996 attempted to walk across South Pole for Breast Cancer charity also failed
- 2000: attempted to solo walk across North Pole unaided but failed when sledge fell through weak ice and Fiennes was forced to pull them out by hand When he returned home from the latter – had severe frostbitten fingers and his surgeon insisted that the dead fingertips were retained for several months to allow re-growth of the remaining healthy tissue in the figures) but Ranulph was impatient at the pain in his figure tips and so cut them off himself in the garden shed with a fretsaw!
- 2003: Completed the Land Rover 7x7x7 Challenge – seven marathons in seven days on seven continents although four months previously he’d just had a double heart bypass operation. He ran them for The British Heart Foundation. (Heart surgeon approved the marathons so long as his heart rate did not go over 130 beats per minute... ..Ranulph forgot to pack his heart-rate monitor!)
- 2005: Attempted to climb Mount Everest – but failed
- 2007: Climbed the Eiger via the internationally feared north face – despite having a life long fear of heights – managed to raise £1.5M for Marie Curie Cancer Care

Most recently (May 2008) tried to re-climb Mount Everest and be the oldest Briton to do the task but failed due to exhaustion, suffering from heart problems and vertigo.

He is currently being treated for prostate cancer.

And yet in all of this, in his autobiography called “Living Dangerously” the first chapter in the book is called “A Timid Disposition”!

You might ask why I have spent the last five minutes talking about Sir Ranulph Fiennes...

2 Timothy 1:6-7

To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. **For this reason I remind you to fan into flames the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.**

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

Timid Timothy

When we hear of Timothy in the Bible, we often get the impression of a young, shy timid man who suffered from a number of ailments and illnesses, and was reserved and quiet.

Definition:

Timid:

1. Lacking self-confidence; shy
2. Lacking courage
3. Fearful and hesitate

Other words for timid:

Unadventurous, afraid, unassertive, backward, cowardly, fearful, unsure, cautious, weak

I find that I can relate to Timothy very well.

I can tend to see all of my uncertainties, failings, troubles and ailments? They can easily become the focus of my mind and drive my attitude? They can guide my actions and reactions into having a spirit of timidity and actually stop me from doing things.

I'd be a very rich man if I had a penny for every time a conversation has started at work, in the pub, with family and friends about religion or Christianity and I sat there thinking:

"Hmmm, I could just bury my head in the sand on this... ..I could pretend not to be listening... ..I could occupy myself with something else... ..anything rather than put myself out there.

Then I begin to reason with myself:

"I'd do a really bad job anyway, I wouldn't be clear, people wouldn't understand, they would get confused!"

This was certainly how I was when I first became a Christian. My friends and family back home knew nothing about me becoming a Christian when I came to University, and for me, that was the easy way – it was the timid spirit taking hold of me.

I felt that I could relate to timid Timothy very well – I saw similar characteristics mentioned and hinted at in many of Paul's letters.

Paul had spent many years with Timothy – travelling within him on many of the missionary journeys and Paul had sent him on a number of special missions (1 Thes 3:1; 1 Cor 4:17)

It was very much a father-son relationship that they had:

...Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord.

1 Cor 4:17

Paul referred to Timothy in his letters as being his 'brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ' (1 Thes 3:2) and Paul went so far as to say that 'I have no one like him' (Phil 2:20-22)

Paul recognised that Timothy was truly unique... ..and yet for thousands of years he has been described as being 'timid Timothy'

But the thing is – there was more to him than this because something happened, something changed which turned timid Timothy into a powerful, loving, self disciplined follower of Christ and leader not only of the Church in Ephesus but someone who continued the good news of the gospel despite the persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire (Paul was writing 2 Timothy as he was in a prison in Rome and likely to be killed within a matter of days).

Timothy was as New Testament time's version of Sir Ranulph Fiennes!

Timothy and the Gift of God

He was filled with the Spirit – and as Paul writes, not a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline!

We hear in these verses that Paul had prayed for Timothy when he was younger in the laying on of his hands. It may have been at his conversion. At this point Timothy received the Holy Spirit and therefore the gift of God.

In Paul's letter, he earnestly encouraged Timothy to fan into flames the gift of god, the gifts of the Holy Spirit!

It is important to note that when Timothy had received the Holy Spirit, it did not change him and his personality – he was still the shy, uncertain, timid Timothy we know, but with the Holy Spirit, when he fanned it into flames - the Holy Spirit moved in power, love and self-discipline through him.

The Gift of God

Before Jesus ascended into Heaven he said to his disciples:

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit...

...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”

Acts 1:4-8

Timid Timothy... what about Petrified Peter or Mild Moses

A few days later, the Day of Pentecost came and the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The effect of this was that the Spirit empowered the disciples.

Peter, who only a few weeks earlier, denied any connection with Jesus as he was being tried and punished, now went out to the crowds and preached with the almighty power of the Holy Spirit – 3000 people were saved that day (Acts 2:41) and each and every day after that, God added to their numbers!

That’s a pretty powerful spirit!

What about Timid Moses...

Moses suffered a similar spirit of timidity! When God commanded that Moses go and set His people free, Moses at first is shocked:

“Who am I? What if they say they don’t believe me or listen to me or say that you didn’t appear to me?”

Even when God gave him signs to perform to prove that he had been sent from God, Moses response was:

“O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and of tongue!”

The Lord gets pretty frustrated

“Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.”

Ex 4:11-12

And yet Moses still protested!

“Can’t you send someone else?”

To Moses, the thought of marching into Pharaoh’s Courts and demanding back the Israelites completely intimidated him – he saw himself as a timid fellow, used to raising and looking after cattle – how could he set the people of God free?

Yet God assured him that He would go with him and as we know, Moses did go to the Pharaoh, along with Aaron his brother – for support - and with the Spirit of power, set the people of God free from slavery!

The Brick and the Bible

I was the typical closet Christian – went back home to get old bible out of Nan’s garage – found it but pretended that I was after a brick – had to bring brick back to Birmingham.

Then one day, I was reading the passages where Peter denied Christ three times and felt God say:

How long will you deny me?

I felt the Holy Spirit really convict me of this difference in my life. I asked him to help me share the fact that I had become a Christian with my friends and family back home – I asked him for the Spirit of boldness and truth.

When I met with friends and family after that, I asked God to allow opportunities to come up where I could talk about my faith in Him...
...and every time, he made sure there was one!

With Him and his spirit, I began to open out to friends and family. Now every time I meet up with them, God makes sure that at some point there will be a conversation or some questions about my faith in Him or a question about the Bible. I love these times – not because of me, or what I say but because I know that God and His Holy Spirit are with me – helping me, making me bolder and more confident in Christ and that it is sharing the Gospel with those I love and care for.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

God has given us the Holy Spirit as a free gift and there are many specific gifts that we can take a hold of and claim in His power and Christ's name:

- Prophecy
- Serving
- Teaching
- Encouraging
- Contributing
- Leadership
- Administration
- Mercy
- Faith
- Healing
- Speaking in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Distinguishing between spirits

Timidity is not on the list! Spirit of timidity is not God given. Timidity is a human reaction.

Open for All

As Paul says:

God has not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for all of us – not just a few special chosen people – all of us – not just the holiest of the holy – all of us – not just Martin and Dan – all of us!

All are available – not born with them, not inherited from parents, not achieved through a course. Each Christian who means business with God, God gives a spirit of power, love and self-discipline

All of the gifts available to us come through and out of the Holy Spirit of Power, Love and Self-discipline.

Fanning the Flames

Going back to our verse from 2 Timothy:

...I remind you to fan into flames the gift of God...

D.L. Moody, a famous American Evangelist in the 19th Century:

“Are you filled with the Spirit?” – “Yes... ...but I leak!” – The need for refilling, rekindling, fanning back into flames.

We have been given the gifts of the spirit but in this we must keep on pressing in, developing those gifts – we need to fan them into flames.

Now in New Testament times, the picture that Paul was describing would have been something everyone would have been familiar with – they would have had of lit fires everyday. For us, it’s a little distant so here’s to living dangerously...

FANNING INTO FLAME DEMONSTRATION

All we need to do is blow onto the embers and the flames begin to rise – I’ve taken the easy route of using cotton wool for the purposes of demonstration, sometimes we have to keep on blowing, sometimes we have to work a little harder, sometimes the flames don’t burst out the first or second or even third time – but we need to persevere in fanning into flames the gift’s that God has given us.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes failed to climb Mount Everest the first time – did that mean he gave up – no he tried again a few years later and failed again. He had a heart attack and a double by-pass operation – did that mean he pulled his foot off the accelerator – no it meant that he ran 7 marathons in 7 days on 7 continents. He has suffering from a fear of heights all his life – did that stop him from climbing one of the worst vertical cliff edges in the world – of course not!

Timothy was a youngster in the eyes of his peers – did that stop him from leading a church in Ephesus – no. He suffered a number ailments and had poor health – did that stop him from going on missionaries with Paul – of course not. He had a shy and reserved way of handling things –

did that mean he gave in to the Roman Empire and stopped preaching the Gospel – absolutely not!

Paul often encouraging Timothy to push on, to fan into flames the gifts that he has been given.

Moses was nervous, timid, felt he was unable to communicate clearly and lacked any form of confidence – did that mean he stayed in the fields tending to cattle and flock – definitely not, he went and claimed freedom for the people of God.

In the latter two, this was all possible through the gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling within the individuals and them picking up a fan and fanning into flames the embers of God’s Spirit within them.

Rather than stepping back and allowing the spirit of timidity to take control, they stepped forward and said:

“It’s not possible for me to do this as I am. I need you Lord and your Holy Spirit to come and dwelling within me, guide me, prompt me, push me on!”

We must remember that this doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy!

One of the words used in the Bible for the Holy Spirit is “Comforter”. Nowadays, comfort, has more of a meaning of supporting and soothing but it also means strengthening, assisting and encouraging.

Bayeux Tapestry – “William comforts his troops” – picture of him behind his troops with a spear pushing them out into the battlefield!

Are these timid thoughts stopping us remembering the truth – the truth the we have not been a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline... ..a gift that has not come through our own hard work or our own wisdom, but a gift that has been given freely by God – the sovereign, the creator, the all knowing, all powerful, all loving!

It’s not about us; it’s all about him!

When we are living with the Spirit and fanning it into flames – we are living dangerously!

Let's Live Dangerously!

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

What does the Spirit of Power, love and self-discipline look like today?

1. Power: Power gives guts, keeps the faith, push forward through and see new ways

2. Love: agape - love that Christian's give to the world – selfless giving love.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

1 Cor 13:1-3

3. Self-Discipline: Balanced judgement. Through self-discipline we will not become puffed up by success nor embittered by failure.

Jim Packer

“Supernatural living through supernatural empowering”

Shanka's relative – healing of leg after being prayed for – returned home to India – told Husband – husband mad because she didn't get her arms prayed for as well – that's a Spirit!

Coffee break at church other week – John S said he had a bad back – thought immediately entered my mind “Pray for it to be healed” – while he was still talking – battling with the decision – do I pray or not – went with praying – prayed a very uninspiring prayer – got to end – “How's the back?” – “Much better thanks” – bent over and touched knees!

Following a recent preach people were called to respond and receive ministry – I didn't think I had anything so stayed sat in my seat – Jon High saw me sat down still – beckoned me up (spirit of encouragement) – uncertain to come up because I still didn't think I had anything – wrestled in my mind – easier to stay sat down – I don't want that kind of action/reaction – forced myself up - on way up asked God to open my mind and spirit to Him and the Holy Spirit – started praying for couple of people and had pictures for them – prayed into them.

I receive a lot of pictures when I'm praying – God knows how my mind works and uses that to equip me when I know that I am stepping out of the comfort zone.

We are currently seeing a ever increasing presence of the out pouring of the Holy Spirit in our meetings – there have been many healings, some permanent and other temporary.

How are we approaching this?

All heard and been watching Todd Bentley and the Florida healings, many of us have been to Dudley. Many who have been Christians for a while have heard of and experienced similar outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

This can mean that we approach this outpouring with a dampened fire, passion deadened, heart's flattened and spirits tired of hearing the same stories. Reaction can be: "Been there, done that", "nothing changed long-term"

Our reaction should be to see the glory of God in this place! We should be boldly saying:

"God, please can we have more of you and your Holy Spirit!!"

Martin

'I want new stories to tell from now, not from 10 years ago!'

Feels as though we're at a point when we can either say:

“Ok, we’ve had enough of this now, there’s been some good healings and few people saved – now let’s back to how things were before the whole Todd Bentley thing”

Or we can fan into flames the embers that God is showing us?

“God, please can we have more of you and your Holy Spirit!!”

The gift that god is currently outpouring on us.

Ploughed field – was tough and hard – but God’s Spirit has helped us to plough it – God has planted the seeds within the field. They’re ready for us... what do you do?

Sit back – let the birds eat them, let the weeds take over, let the freshly ploughed field go into rack and ruin again?

Or are we going to take up the role – more hard work – but the fruits are in sight!

God’s comforting Holy Spirit is with us but that doesn’t mean it’s not going to be hard work.

Are we going to get fired up and ready? Are we stoking the fire? Are we going to be hungry and searching for opportunities to share the gospel and demonstrate the Kingdom of God through the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Are we opening our hearts? Minds, souls to God and saying God, where do you want me to be, what do you want me to do? What words can I give? Lord, what gifts have you given me to fan into flames?