

July 5, 2020

Fan into flame the gift of God

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

II Timothy 3:1-5

As Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, struggles to endure "***terrible times***", the Apostle sends him this second letter. He encourages his young protégé to "***fan into flame***" the bold and powerful spirit which he has received from God, to remain "***stong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus***", and to present himself "***a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of God***".

In our context for today in II Timothy 3, Paul continues to encourage this young evangelist to "***continue in what you have learned and become convinced of...***" In our troubled world, as in the world of Timothy's day, it is hard for believers to stay focused on what they already believe. Like Timothy, we struggle to remember the faith we have chosen to live by when there are so many other things being said and taught.

It really is confusing for all of us. God's word tells us just how we ought to live even in these "***terrible times***", but others are telling us so many other things. Jesus, in the Word, teaches us to "***Love one another.***" "***As I have loved you,***" he commands, "***so you must love one another.***"

Our Lord teaches us that the summation of our faith is demonstrated in this simple rule: "***So in everything, do to others what your would have them do to you.***" And, the Apostle Paul defines love in action for us writing: "***Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.***"

Scripture makes it very clear what an approved workman believes and how he lives. But our troubled world keeps telling us something else doesn't it? The world demands that we take sides, that we become angry, that we demand our own way and insist on our rights no matter the cost to others. And frankly, the world's voice is often so much louder and so much more demanding of a response than is God speaking through his Word.

In these "***terrible times***" it would be so, so easy to go along with the messages that are so prevalent; to join in. So, when the Apostle tells his young friend to "***continue in what you have learned and become convinced of...***" his command is not so easy is it? When everyone around us, almost without exception, is demanding that we join in these "***terrible times***", continuing to live the basics of our faith is not easy. It was not for Timothy and it is not for us now.

Paul, in this letter, points Timothy back to what he already knows. He sends him to the Scriptures, "***which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.***" And that's the secret to continuing in what we have "***learned and become convinced of...***" The secret is to constantly return to Scriptures and to test every message, every action, every demanded response against the Word of God.

If the world demands that we take sides accepting some while despising others we who believe must measure that message against **"So in everything, do to others what your would have them do to you."** If our world demands that we seek to satisfy only our own selfish desires we must measure that against; love **"is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."**

Are you struggling with these **"terrible times"** and what they would demand of you? **"...continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of..."** As believers, we have chosen to believe in the God of heaven, his one and only Son, and the guiding Spirit of truth who shows us the way through the Word and we have chosen to live that faith before the world every day.

