

like you're better than everybody else, think, "It's not about me. God saved me! My life doesn't depend on me or my works. It depends on God's grace!" It's all God. It's all grace.

Paul writes, "*This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time...*" When did God start loving you? Before the beginning of time! This blows our minds! For those of us with children, think of it like this. You planned for children long before they were actually born. Once you and your spouse decided to have a baby, it maybe took months or years to become pregnant. You waited nine months during pregnancy. You raised that child for years before they really understood what's going on. And then they become teenagers and ask, "Why don't you love me?" And you're like, "What?" You tell that child: "I have loved you since before the beginning of time. Long before you ever existed, I planned for you and longed for you and waited for you and loved you... You have no idea how much I love you!" That's God's love for you. Before the beginning of time, God had you on his mind. That's grace!

But God's love for you didn't just stay in his mind. "*This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*" Jesus came! He died for our sins and he rose to destroy death and bring life. This is what makes a Christian different from everybody else. You don't have to be afraid of death. You don't have to live like there's no tomorrow. There is! While I was in Wisconsin helping Pastor Heise move, I heard about a WELS man who died suddenly last Saturday at the age of 60. His family was shocked, but at his home, they found great comfort. His Meditations devotion book was opened to that day's devotion. Do you know what the title of the devotion was the day he died? "Who's next?" It was about "Who's next to enter heaven?" Do you think God was in control? Jesus destroyed death, so you don't ever have to fear it.

So Paul wrote, "*I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*" This is what it all comes down to. Whom have you believed? Every person is trusting in someone or something. Every person is putting their life into someone else's hands—you have to! Whom are you trusting in? God is faithful. Like the best bank with your money, you can put your faith and your life in God's hands and know that he will keep it until the day comes when you're next—when he takes you to heaven.

What should I tell my brother as he begins serving a new congregation? This is what I'm going to tell him to remember: "*I know whom I have believed.*" Base your life on that phrase. When the timidity wells up inside, "*I know whom I have believed.*" When the devil accuses you of your sins, "*I know whom I have believed.*" When all the world seems against you: "*I know whom I have believed.*" When it would seem to be a whole lot easier to stop following God, "*I know whom I have believed.*" When you face death, "*I know whom I have believed.*" Jesus Christ keeps his Word! "*God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline,*" because we know whom we have believed!

2 Timothy 1:3-12
Pastor Nathan Nass

Pentecost 7
July 23, 2017

³ 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. ⁴ Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. ⁵ 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. ⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. ⁸ 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, ⁹ 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. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹ And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

I Know Whom I Have Believed!

My older brother is a pastor, and he just accepted a call to a church in Lake Mills, WI. He's being installed there in two weeks, and he asked me to preach for his installation service. My first thought was, "Finally, he gets it! It's taken him way too long, but he finally realized he should listen to his younger brother!" Of course, it won't be a day to share my opinions, but God's Word. What should I preach about? There will be excitement and nervousness—a time of big changes. My brother's name is Timothy, so I've chosen verses from the book of 2 Timothy for my sermon that day. As I studied them, I realized this is just what I need to hear! I think it's what you need to hear too. So I want to share with you what I want to share with him.

As the apostle Paul writes to Timothy, a young pastor, he starts by giving thanks to God for him. "*I thank God, whom I serve,...as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.... I have been reminded of your sincere faith.*" This caught my attention right away. What did Paul thank God for? Not what you'd expect! Not Timothy's accomplishments or success. What did he thank God for? Timothy's faith in Jesus. As I think about my brother, the greatest reason to give thanks is not that he's a pastor. Not that he's going to a new church. He believes in Jesus. Isn't that great! Thank God! I don't do this enough. I've been giving thanks to God this week for you—for your faith in Jesus. That is a special thing. What a blessing that you believe!

So Paul reminded Timothy who put that faith in his heart. Did you catch who it was? This is great! It wasn't Paul. "*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.” Who planted faith in his heart? Mom and grandma! To you moms and grandmas, keep it up! Never stop encouraging your families in our faith in Jesus. I know you can feel powerless. I know it can seem like it’s not working. But never stop encouraging with God’s Word! To us with kids, isn’t faith in Jesus what we really want our kids to have more than anything else? So do we treat faith as more important than everything else? Faith doesn’t happen on its own. It doesn’t come naturally to anybody. We need to teach them about Jesus—over and over again!

But once you’re blessed with faith, you’re not done. Listen to what Paul says to Timothy: *“I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”* If you come Pastor Heise’s ordination service, you will see the laying on of hands. Pastors will give blessings from God’s Word to our new pastor. That had happened to Timothy too. But was that it? Was he done? He had faith. He had God’s blessing. So he was set. No!

“Fan into flame the gift of God...” I’m not a great outdoorsman, but I have started fires. You know how to do it. Start with newspaper. Put little sticks on top. Light them. Add more sticks. Add bigger logs. Keep feeding the fire. Why? If you stop feeding the fire, what happens? It goes out. What a great picture for faith! It is a blessing when faith in Jesus is kindled in your heart, but now fan that gift into flame! Keep feeding your faith with God’s Word. You need it!

Because there’s a challenge that I think we all face. Paul wrote to Timothy, *“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity...”* Wait a minute. How could Timothy still be timid? That’s a silly question. Who here doesn’t get timid? We all do! When I said these verses hit home for me, this is what I was talking about. A “spirit of timidity.” I can relate to that. Last Saturday we handed out flyers about our church around town. We didn’t have many people help. Timidity? Even as I walked around with my boys, I found myself hoping people wouldn’t be outside, so I wouldn’t have to talk to them. What a bad attitude! A “spirit of timidity.” Can you relate?

Why are we timid? It’s not because we can’t talk. I know there are a lot of you who like to talk! Why timid? Maybe timid because of shame. “Who am I to be doing this? I know what I’ve done!” Maybe timid because of fear. “What if they don’t like me?” Whatever the reason, you know what timidity feels like. Your heart beats faster. You feel the worry rise in your chest. It’s like your tongue stops working. I know that feeling! But think about this: Who does timidity come from? From God or from the devil? The devil loves timid Christians. But *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity.”*

So Paul encouraged Timothy again and again, *“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.”* It makes me think of a hymn that says, “Ashamed of Jesus, just as soon, let midnight be ashamed of noon!” Does it make sense for us sinners to be ashamed of our awesome God? No way! That’s why I love this verse: *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”* As you grow in your faith in Jesus, God wants to take away that one feeling—timidity—and replace it with three others—power, love, and self-discipline.

There a contemporary Christian song by Jeremy Camp called “Same Power.” The re-

frain starts like this, “The same power that rose Jesus from the grave, the same power that commands the dead to wake, lives in us.” Have you heard that one? Think about that! The same power that created the world. The same power that calmed storms and walked on water. The same power that rose Jesus from the grave lives in you. Is that really true? Yes! The moment you believed in Jesus, the Holy Spirit with the power of God entered into your heart. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but of power!

Except, what does power do in the hands of sinful people? Have you heard the old saying? “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” So God gives us something else too—love. He places in a Christian’s heart compassion and love for others—like Jesus loves us. You know people with lots of power and no love. That’s no good. You know people with lots of love but too timid show it. That’s no good either. God places in you the power of Christ and his resurrection together with the love of Christ and his death for us. Power and love!

And he adds one more: “self-discipline.” How many good intentions have you had that you never carried out? How many times said you were going to go to church more often? Said you were going to read your Bible? God gives you the self-discipline to put your faith in action in your life. To know what is good and right and do it! When you’re too timid to open your mouth, remember, *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”* When you’re tempted not to care about that person and his problems, remember *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”* When you’re too lazy to do what you know is best, remember *“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”* That’s what I need to hear!

But here’s what can happen when we start to see God’s blessings in our lives: We can get a big head! Have you ever noticed how often we can go back and forth between timidity and pride? I have to admit that it’s been a source of personal pride that I’ve been a pastor at a bigger church than my brother. Not anymore. His new church has 1500 members. So we have to grow a lot, right now! It’s silly, right? It’s sinful! But I bet you do that too. You find something you can do that someone else can’t, and the pride swells! From timidity to pride just like that!

Why is that? What do timidity and pride have in common? Me! When I’m timid, whom am I thinking about? Me! When I’m proud, whom am I thinking about? Me! Here’s one thing I’m going to remind my brother about on his installation day. The worst thing a pastor can do in his ministry—and it’s a big temptation—is to make it all about him. I don’t think it’s any different for you. The worst thing a person can do with her life is make it all about her. You know what are signs your life has become focused on you? Timidity and pride—our constant companions.

So here’s what conquers that: *“God saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.”* On days when you feel timid, like you’re worthless or a failure, think, “It’s not about me. God saved me! My life doesn’t depend on me or my works. It depends on God’s grace!” On days when you feel proud,