

How to Access the Miraculous Power of God Timothy Walked In

Have you noticed an increase in anger and frustration in our nation? The COVID-19 pandemic has unnerved many.

Excessive state-mandated lockdowns are being protested. Business closures and layoffs have inflamed others. To be sure, there is reason for concern; 36 million people are now unemployed in the U.S.

Inadequate coronavirus testing and contact tracing early in the pandemic frustrated many. Others are offended over the issue of whether to wear face masks—to mask or not to mask!

As followers of Christ, we are empowered to abide in His peace and joy, above the circumstances and frustrations of world conditions. After all, Jesus said “in the world [we would] have trouble” (John 16:33b, NIV). Individually, we choose whether we respond to negativity in life with faith, hope, and love, or respond with worry, fear, and anger. As James stated, “the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

What is wellness of soul? I define it as the absence of unhealthy anxiety and fear, and the absence of negative thinking and emotions that displace us from God’s peace.

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he has some specific instructions for his spiritual son to help him maintain a strong faith and persevere through hardships he and the church at Ephesus were facing.

“Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I

constantly remember you in my prayers. I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again. I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline" (2 Tim. 1:3-7, NLT).

After commending Timothy for having genuine faith, a faith observed first in his mother and grandmother, Paul instructs Timothy to "fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave" (2 Tim. 1:6b) him when he laid hands on him. To understand Paul's charge, the context is important.

Paul, imprisoned for his second time, writes this letter to his protégé Timothy around A.D. 66 or 67. Timothy had become a son in the faith and one of Paul's closest friends. Timothy converted to Christianity after Paul's first missionary journey to Lystra (Acts 14:6-18).

By Paul's second visit, Timothy had grown into a respected disciple of Jesus (Acts 16:1-5). Timothy would later join Paul for his other two missionary journeys. Paul eventually left Timothy in Ephesus to oversee the church there (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

Paul wrote 1 and 2 Timothy just before his death by Roman Emperor Nero. The persecution against Christianity was severe. Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome (historians attribute the cause of the fire to Nero), and was driven like a madman to arrest, torture and martyr many believers. These letters (1 and 2 Timothy) provided Timothy guidance, instruction and comfort during extremely challenging times.

Paul, after commending the faith of Timothy's mother and grandmother, changes direction and tone. He specifically tells

Timothy to act upon his genuine faith and instructs him to “fan into flames the spiritual gift” (2 Tim. 1:6b) imparted, and finally tells him, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Timothy is charged with fanning into flames (or stirring up) the spiritual gift received. The text implies that as Timothy edifies himself spiritually, he will prevent fear and timidity from ruling him.

Some scholars believe Timothy was prone to timidity and Paul was trying to encourage him. The Greek word *deilia* translates as “timidity” in this verse and can also mean “cowardice.” Timothy needed courage to face the challenges of life in his time.

Keep in mind that Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father and mentor. He had a deep relationship with him and earned the right to speak into Timothy’s life. It is a mistake to speak this verse to others you have little or no relationship with, who might be struggling with worry or fear, and just tell them to renounce fear (or what you presuppose is fear—you could be judging them), to have more faith and so forth.

Everyone responds to life events differently—there is no one size fits all. Therefore, be careful of Christian cliché statements about fear and faith—it could be damaging to someone else. Paul discusses in Romans 14 and 15 that we should consider others and their faith; we do not want them to stumble or be offended because of our behavior.

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up” (Rom. 15:1-2, NIV).

From examining 2 Tim. 1:7, it seems clear that as we actively engage ourselves in the Spirit, stirring ourselves up through

spiritual gifts, prayer and more, we begin to operate from His power, His love and His discipline or soundness of mind. These spiritual characteristics ward off thoughts of fear and overcome timidity with God's courage.

Remember, Paul is giving Timothy instruction on how to lead the church in Ephesus. The times are tough; extreme persecution has erupted against Christianity in the Roman Empire. Paul is giving Timothy principles to overcome in trying times and how to maintain wellness of soul.

To say that we are living in a trying time is an understatement. Anxiety and frustration levels are high, and fear has gripped many.

Before I go further, do not make the mistake of labeling everything as "fear-based." In other words, there is a healthy balance with faith and science—COVID-19 demonstrates this. We need to trust God, live in faith and believe for His supernatural protection, while at the same time adhere to proven scientific and medical guidance. To maintain a balance between faith and science does not mean we are given to "a spirit of fear." Let me give you a personal example.

One year ago this week, I suffered a heart attack. I was living in faith, believing God for health, protection, prosperity and more. The heart disease was growing within, but I was unaware. I was not lacking faith; a health event occurred suddenly.

Science and modern medical practice saved my life that night as the hospital did emergency heart catheterization and placed two stents in my heart. Faith was at work through the medical procedure and during my recovery. There was an intersection of faith and science, a healthy balance between the two.

So, here we are in this coronavirus pandemic. Currently, there is no vaccine; therefore, all we can do, besides living in Christ, standing in faith and praying are the practical things

science has proven to stop viruses and germs. You know them by now:

Do not leave home if you are sick. Wash your hands frequently. Do not touch your face with your hands. Stay at least six feet apart. Wear a face mask when social distancing is not possible. Avoid crowds if you are at risk and so on. Again, practicing these guidelines does not mean we are given to fear. Rather, we are proactively taking care of ourselves while trusting God for divine health and protection from the virus.

Again, using my heart attack as an illustration. In one year, I lost 40 pounds, began to eat healthy, exercise daily, get eight hours of sleep at night, take prescribed medications and more. But I had to change my thinking about how to live my life.

As my thinking changed, so did my behavior patterns, for example: what I ate, making sure I exercised daily and so on. Now I feel great, my blood pressure and blood work are right on target, and I do not fear having another heart attack. Why?

I trust God *and* I continue the proven medical practices to stay heart healthy. If I discontinue doing the practical, proven things to take care of myself, I will have reason to be concerned about another heart event.

Active faith (fanning into flame) begets God's power, love and a disciplined mind. Wellness of soul can be achieved. Again, what is wellness of soul? I define it as the absence of unhealthy anxiety and fear, and the absence of negative thinking and emotions which displace us from God's peace.

I have taught previously how to fan into the flame our faith and gifts. Here is a partial list:

- **Maintain genuine intimacy with Jesus.** "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8, NKJV).

- **Pray without ceasing** (1 Thess. 5:17, MEV).
- **Pray in the Spirit.** “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18, NKJV).
- **Worship routinely.** ” Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16, MEV).
- **Read God’s Word daily.** “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, NASB).
- **Serve others.** “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Pet. 4:10, NKJV).

As you fan into flames your faith, three things occur: a reliance on God’s power, a release of God’s love and a disciplined life.

Power (“ but of power”). Power from the Greek: *δύναμις* (*dunamis*): miraculous power, might or strength. It is the same word used in Acts 1:8a (MEV): “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”

Paul is telling Timothy, “You have received something: God’s miraculous power.” Be confident in God’s power at work through you!

Bob Sawvelle is the founding and senior leader of *Passion Church in Tucson, Arizona*. *Passion Church* is a vibrant, kingdom-minded church in the heart of Tucson that values God’s love and presence. He is a doctor of ministry doctoral mentor for the Randy Clark Scholars cohort at *United Theological Seminary (UTS)*, an adjunct professor teaching master’s-level classes in evangelism, discipleship and church planting with the *Global Awakening Theological Seminary (GATS)* and an online course facilitator for *Global Awakening’s Christian Healing Certification Program (CHCP)* and *Christian Prophetic*

Certification Program (CPCP).