

flagging, or running well

In Paul's 'swansong' to Timothy, he opens up in **2 Timothy 1:5** how he remembers Timothy's good beginnings. Paul earmarks the younger man's genuine faith, and the Christian heritage he had enjoyed.

Timothy certainly had good beginnings, but was faltering in running the Christian race.

What were some of the problems he was facing?

It would appear from v7 that Timothy was struggling with a spirit of fear. As a young pastor, Timothy no doubt felt a sense of being overwhelmed by the task that God had called him to. What is important to distinguish here is that being overwhelmed by a task is not wrong, as long as it drives us to depend totally upon the Lord.



PRAISE the Lord for:

- ★ Each person who has committed their life to Christ through the testimonies/articles in the paper
- ★ Our Challenge directors around the world. They are our vital link in terms of promoting and distributing the Challenge throughout their countries and beyond
- ★ The ongoing translation of discipleship material into various language for prisoners throughout the world
- ★ The opportunities Carl had to promote the paper in New South Wales

Timothy began to be ashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus. This problem reveals itself in the church when the Lord's people stop witnessing. It is sad to say that Christians have no difficulty talking about their favourite sport team or the weather, but, as Stephen Olford says when it comes to witnessing, "they are like arctic rivers – frozen at the mouth".

I have found that Christians can dream up a myriad of reasons why they should not witness. One that is so familiar is: I have no burden for witnessing. I sense this comes from confusing the gifting of the Holy Spirit and our responsibility to convey the gospel. 2 Kings 7:9 tells the response of four lepers who discovered that the besieging Syrian army had fled and they were revelling in the food and wealth. Suddenly they get a pang of conscience: *"Then they said to one another, 'We are not doing what is right. This is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household.' "*

This is a day of good news that needs to be proclaimed. Some time ago a survey of 380,000 evangelical Christians was carried out in the USA.

Continued over

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One of the questions in the survey was this: "Have you shared your faith on at least one occasion in the last 12 months?" Four percent responded with a 'yes', which translates to 15,200 people. I wonder what the figures would have dropped to if the survey question asked a figure of two, three or four occasions per year.

What these figures highlight, which I believe would be no different in Australia, is that the majority of Christians are ashamed of the gospel, or at least not sufficiently convicted of their responsibility to share the gospel. All sorts of rationalisation goes on to justify our shameful silence, like I am not gifted in that area, or I don't feel burdened to witness, or my life is my witness or I have to have some special call.

With all due respect these excuses are patent nonsense conjured up as some sort of panacea for our consciences. We can spend endless hours watching TV but ask people to help evangelise the neighbourhood, you might get 2-3 percent of the congregation.

The thing that most Christians miss is that God has provided everything necessary for us to get the task done. Paul says to Timothy in v7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." The root word for power in that verse is 'duna', which means ability or willingness. Paul was saying to Timothy that there is no need to be fearful, because if we are willing to trust God to use us in ministry, God will give us his willingness and ability to do the task. Exactly the same word is used in Acts 1:8, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me..."

Therefore, we do not have to feel guilty or driven about witnessing. Rather we need to trust God to impart His willingness and ability to evangelise. Each day we can start by saying, "Lord I am available to be used of you whenever and wherever you want. I trust you for your willingness and ability to serve you effectively." May God make this a reality in your life.



PRAYER needed for:

- ★ A replacement Editor to free up Carl to concentrate on promotion and development of the paper both in Australia and overseas
- ★ The latest edition of Challenge and its distribution. Pray each paper will clearly show people their need of Jesus as their Saviour
- ★ Pray we can successfully get the digital printer across to Cuba in the near future
- ★ Ongoing funding for all the project areas we support around the world

{ CARL CARMODY }
EDITOR CHALLENGE }



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