

When Spiritual Passion Diminishes

- Ron Stullenbarger -

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles" (2 Timothy 1:1-11).

As Christians, it is possible for our spiritual passion to cool. Do you ever feel yourself growing cold toward the Lord? Our text reveals that even Timothy experienced a decrease in his excitement for God. That's why Paul wrote to him, encouraging the young evangelist at Ephesus to fan the flame of his faith.

Spiritual "cooling" can happen to any Christian. Oftentimes it starts when tragedy or disappointment divert our attention. Instead of crying out to the Lord and finding shelter in Him, we gradually cease reading the Bible. The Word of God is like wood in a fireplace: The flames can be kept alive only when there are logs to burn. As less time is spent in Scripture, other aspects of our relationship with God are affected. Church attendance diminishes, giving becomes sporadic, and prayer -- which seems increasingly stale -- is used only for emergencies.

At this point, we may find ourselves unwilling to stand up for what we once thought was important. The temptation to compromise can lead to guilt and defensiveness about how we're living. Finally, the joy, contentment, and peace of God are replaced by worry, doubt, and fear.

A believer who allows himself or herself to drift will miss out on the comfort and fulfillment of a close, vibrant relationship with the Lord. Think back. Is your excitement about the things of God stronger now than ever before? Or has it diminished over time? If your fire needs stoking, ask the Holy Spirit to help you.