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THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH

II Timothy 1:1-7

Step Number One-Integrity Getting It All Together

Well, as you know, our population is getting older and here are some of the games you play when you are older:

- * Sag, You're It**
- * Pin the Toupee on the Bald Guy**
- * 20 Questions Shouted Into Your Good Ear**
- * Kick the Bucket**
- * Red Rover, Red Rover, the Nurse Says Bend Over**
- * Simon Says Something Incoherent**
- * Spin the Bottle of Mylanta**
- * Musical Recliners (is my favorite)**

Now if you are going to church in the country in Texas this is probably what you are going to find out:

- * People grumble about Noah letting coyotes on the ark.**

- * The preacher says, “I’d like to ask Bubba to help take up the offering” and five guys stand up.
- * The restrooms are outside.
- * Opening day of deer season is recognized as an official church holiday.
- * A member of the church requests to be buried in his 4 wheel-drive truck because “They ain’t no hole that this thing’s been in that it never got out.”
- * The choir group is known as the “OK Choral” and the pastor wears boots.
- * There is no such thing in church as “secret” sin.
- * Baptism is referred to as “branding.”
- * There is a special fundraiser for the septic tank.
- * People wonder when Jesus fed the 5,000 whether the two fish were bass or catfish.
- * The final words of the benediction are “Ya’ll come back now, ya’ hear.”

That is the way it goes.

Here’s a few quotes from a little book *Don’t Dig for Water Under the Outhouse* by Tex Bender. He says:

- * Fall in love only when you can't help it.**
- * The only good reason to ride a bull is to meet a nurse.**
- * Work hard to leave a big hole when you die.**

And he was trying to describe how pretty this lady was and he said she was so pretty "She could cause a preacher to pitch his Bible in the creek."

She must have been a pretty, pretty lady.

The best Christmas greeting that I have found during the holidays was on a health club.

It says, "Merry Fitness and a Happy New Rear!"

Fits well, doesn't it?

I'd like to share a little cowboy poetry from Larry McWhorter's book. It is called *Drip Coffee*.

**On the day that I got married,
A present I was given
Which was supposed to update
My archaic way of livin'**

**Now don't think me ungrateful,
'Cause I'll tell you that I'm not,
But I've always been suspicious
Of the slow drip coffee pot.**

**For you see I've never trusted
Cuisine cooked with Franklin's find.
My friends tell me that's silly,
It's all just in my mind.**

**But one thing's always bugged me
And put my mind in doubt.
A feller could just starve to death
If a power pole goes out.**

**Now it never has been said of me
That I've treated things unfair
And so one day it got its chance,
My new coffee makin' ware.**

**So I filled its little basket
And poured in water, too.
Then set back and awaited**

This “Buck Rogers” style of brew.

**The aroma it emitted
Was a pleasant one I found.
I caught myself relaxing
To its steady dripping sound.**

**But something here just wasn’t right,
The familiar sounds I missed.
The way it boiled o’er the spout
And the friendly way it hissed.**

**Then suddenly, it hit me,
I jumped and turned it off!
I know it’s all just in my mind,
But hear me ‘fore you scoff.**

**As I listened to its dripping,
I changed my mind ‘bout switchin’
‘Cause its sound was of the bathroom
And not that of the kitchen.**

Well, studying II Timothy has been a great joy.
This book is written by the Apostle Paul.
And the Apostle Paul has been faithful, he has been fruitful,
and he is finishing his life. This is his last book.
He has been condemned in the court.
Nero set the city of Rome on fire and blamed the Christians
and Paul was one of the ones taken to court and he lost his
court case.
The execution date is unknown but we know that it is
within the next few months.
He is in kind of a hell hole, which just has a lid on the top,
and there are no windows and it is a stink hole in the
ground called the Mamertine Prison.
It has been very difficult for his friends to make contact
with him as you are going to notice as we continue to study
this letter.
But the Apostle is all alone because a lot of his friends,
since he is now a prisoner and on death row,
have turned away from him.
And so there is a lot of loneliness.
The only person that is in contact with him is Dr. Luke,
the physician and friend.

As he writes this letter, it is to his young understudy, Timothy, who is going to take the mantle for the ministry. Timothy has been charged with the responsibility of the church at Ephesus.

Ephesus happens to be the ministry where Paul spent three years which was his longest term of ministry.

During those three years, the ministry has prospered and the school of Tyranus, which was a Bible school, also was established there.

And it is believed that many of those churches that the Lord Jesus wrote to in Revelation 2 and 3 were also established by the Apostle Paul during this three-year tenure that he was there in Ephesus.

What I want to do today to kind of set the story, because it is a pretty emotional deal, is I want us to take a minute and listen to the Apostle Paul as he says goodbye to the Ephesian elders just a little bit earlier because I think it is going to help you understand where he is coming from.

This is Acts 20:

20:24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

20:25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.

20:26 "Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

.....

20:32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

.....

20:36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

20:37 And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,

20:38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

There are times when you have finished.

There are times when you lose things that you will never recover.

There are times when you just have to go on.

How do you think Paul is going to feel today knowing that he has just a short time, maybe a week, maybe a few days, maybe a few months to live, and that this is the last letter that he is ever going to write?

How do you think he is going to feel?

You know, it is going to be refreshing to you because at another time when he was in a Caesarian prison, he wrote the book of Philippians, when he told the Philippians you know I have a desire to depart and be with Christ because that is a whole lot better, but to remain with you is more needful because fruit still needs to be born. *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* He is absent from the body, and would be present with the Lord.

So he loves the Lord with a passion and that would be alright.

Then he also said in Romans 8 that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose. And he finished with that great doxology for I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,

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nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So get ready to go on an exciting journey.

Now, what I want you to do with me, is to study this book as we discuss the 12 Steps To Make A Fantastic Finish.

And I really believe that every one of you without exception today, if I came over and sat by you, and asked you, “What is your greatest desire?”

Every one of you would tell me “I really want when I die to go be with the Lord, number one, and I want to hear from Him, “*You did a good job, well done good and faithful servant.*”

Every one of you, including myself, would want that.

Now I want to tell you something, and I am going to be real nice with you.

I am going to tell you that that just does not happen.

You can not just wish something like that.

There are specifics of things that have to be done in order to make it happen.

And these 12 Steps To Make A Fantastic Finish start with the basic essential which is first and each one of them builds on the other in order for you to be able to be assured that you will hear what you want to hear.

So I am praying for you that during each one of these weeks as you build another step in the process that you are preparing yourself for that time which all of us are going to face when we are going to be out of here and we are going to be up there for eternity.

So with all of that in mind and knowing that this is a very emotional book, I wanted to take just a second for us to consider, how did Jesus handle that?

Here he is traveling on the earth and he knows he is going to die.

In John, chapter 4, when he is going north to Samaria because there has been such a conflict in Judea and that his ministry is being questioned and he literally flees for his life, in the land of Samaria he is visiting with an outcast woman about living water when the disciples come back from the Samaritan Safeway and say, *“Look, I have got some groceries.”* What did he say? He says, *“My food is to do the will of my Father and to finish his work.”*

There is nothing more important than that.

Then in John 9:4 he says, “*I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. The night is coming when no man can work.*”

In other words, the time is coming, and I am on a time schedule.

There is going to be a time when I am not going to get to do any more.

The final buzzer is going to sound and nobody is going to shoot anymore baskets.

There are not going to be any more goals scored.

The curtain has been pulled, the time is over.

And then I love in John 17, when he is in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the cross is tomorrow, he says, “*Father, I finished the work you gave me to do.*”

Now I think the greatest thing of all is when he is hanging on the cross, people just do not realize that, but he used one word and it describes the man who broke the Olympic tape and won the race when he said *tetelestai* – “*It is finished!*”
***The work that I came to do, I accomplished it.*”**

I am telling you, you are here not to perform for someone, you are here to fulfill an obligation.

And your duty and obligation and responsibility is to do for God while you are here what he wants you to do so that when you are finished, you truly are finished.

**You have accomplished and you can hear,
*“Well done, good and faithful servant.”***

So what is that going to do to you? I hope it does to you what it has done to me while I have been studying it and that is, I have to cut a bunch of clutter out of my life. There is a bunch of stuff that I have to quit doing and messing around with that has been taking up so much of my time. I have to become a focused person.

Have you seen that t-shirt that say's, *“Failure to prepare is preparation for failure.”* That is really true.

**If we are going to be accountable,
if we have an obligation and a responsibility,
and if we really want to be successful
then you have to ask yourself these questions:**

- 1. How can I make a fantastic finish?**
- 2. Then you have to say, how can I leave a legacy?**
How can I do something that will outlive me, that will live in the lives of my kids and my grandkids and my associates?
- 3. And then, how will I be remembered when people are at my funeral? What will they appreciate and think about me?**

When you look at those three things, you could say to the Lord right now today “Lord, I want my final chapter to be the best one. Lord, I am wrapping it all up and I am getting close to the goal and I am really excited about it, I want to finish strong.”

Now with those things in mind, we are going to look at step number one today.

Now, when we look at the whole business of step number one, which is getting it all together, and our key word is “integrity” we have one thing we have to get over before we can get into the text.

When I mention the word “integrity” what does it do to you? You see what it does to you is what it did to me initially.

I meet people all the time and I have felt that in my own heart, “Look, in your early life you made enough mistakes, you lost your integrity so you will never be a person of integrity.”

And I will bet you dollars to donuts that there some folks sitting here right now thinking,

“I cannot take step one because I screwed up big time in my life. There are some unresolved things and I will never be known as a person of integrity.”

That is a lie from the pit of hell.

You can take this first step and it is a choice that you make.

Your integrity begins at the day you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior.

When you receive him as your Savior, the Bible says,

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

The slate is wiped completely clean and you get a chance to start building integrity.

Now I do not care how old you are and I do not care how long you think you have been in the game, you can start right today building the very first step to a fantastic finish and that is integrity—getting it all together.

Now some of you are saying,

“But I am a Christian. And I do not feel I am a very good person of integrity. I say one thing, and I do another. I am living kind of a hypocritical life.”

Alright, where is the ball in your court?

You have to get your act together and deal with the stuff that is making you a phony so that people can see what you can be.

And that the two go together.

That your heart and your hand and everything about you all sings the same tune. You are a genuine person.

Now with each of these studies there will be a key verse and I will always tell you at the first so that I can kind of land on it when I get there.

The key verse to this study is verse 5 and when we get down there we will look at that and study it just for a few minutes and see how it relates to integrity and the whole business of getting it all together.

Remember Job in chapter 2, verses 9 and 10.

Now Job has lost ten kids, he has lost basically all of his business, and he is physically afflicted on the ash heap.

And his dear wife, blessed with the wonderful gift – of the spiritual gift of discouragement – walks up to him and says, *“Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”* And what does he say?

“You are a foolish woman. Do we accept good from God and trouble? Yes, we accept both.”

And it says in all these things Job did not sin by speaking or accusing God.

So, a person of integrity. And Job became that and it is so fascinating to watch how his life unfolds.

Now just for us to understand the relevance of this study and the power of what we are going to be looking at in these verses.

I want to remind you of one judgment call so that you understand that it is really going to happen okay?

You remember Belshazzar in Daniel, chapter 5?

Belshazzar is drinking a little wine out of the temple goblets and really whooping it up and is an arrogant, godless king.

And during the party right on the wall, there is a hand that comes out and writes “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN” and they finally find Daniel and he comes in and Daniel says,

“Beltie baby your ground time is going to be brief because it says you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.”

In Daniel chapter 5, verse 30 it says that very night Belshazzar was slain.

You see there comes that time, and oh how sad to see an unseen hand write on the wall of our hearts, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

You did not address the issues that needed to be addressed to make a fantastic finish.

Now please understand you have to respond to what I have to say and you must do and cooperate with each one of these steps in order for that to happen.

It just isn't going to happen.

You cannot sit there and wish it and wait for it.

You have to take the bull by the horns and become a person who takes these steps deliberately to cooperate with what God is doing in your life.

“Integrity.” It means integration, it means soundness, it means living by principles, and it means being a person of good character.

Listen to Psalm 25:21. *“May integrity and uprightness protect me because my hope is in you.”* Isn’t that fabulous?

Let’s go to verse 1 in our text.

V.1 *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.”*

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus.”

He is an apostle of Jesus Christ and so he has a right to speak and he is an apostle how?

“Because of the will of God.”

He is in the will of God.

As an apostle, he is in the will of God, sitting in a prison.

He is in the will of God, knowing that his life is just about over.

He is in the will of God because God has been faithful through all these years.

“According to the promise of life, that is in Christ Jesus.”

I love that. A man getting ready to die and thinking about death and talks about the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

The Bible says we are born spiritually dead and we need spiritual life.

1 John 5 says, “*This is the record God has given to us eternal life, this life is in his son, he that has the son has life and he that has not the son of God has not life.*”

Each of us make that decision.

That is the beginning of getting it all together.

To receive this promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul has given his whole life to that very fact.

The will of God and in the will of God,

he has been proclaiming the promise of life through all of these years and I want us to understand that physical death does not affect eternal life.

And he is not affected by the fact that he is going to die physically because he has, “*the promise of life, which is in Christ Jesus*” who is the resurrection of life.

I am convinced, because the bible says that the promise of life is where?

It is in Christ Jesus, that is the only place it is.

John 14:6 Jesus says, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father but by me.*”

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Bringing it all together, becoming a person of integrity, the very first step has to be – to be sure of your eternal salvation.

Know that you have a relationship with Christ.

Verse 2 Look who Paul is writing to. *“To Timothy my beloved child: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

“Timothy, my beloved child.”

I think Timothy became to Paul the son he never had.

And so that is the reason they are so close. Paul met him at Lystra, disciplined him, and then Timothy became the pastor of the church at Ephesus and he is the guy who is going to be taking over the responsibility for the ministry.

Now Paul wrote two letters to Timothy didn't he?

The only difference between the greeting in 1 Timothy and the greeting here is the word *“beloved.”*

He calls him, *“my true child”* in 1 Timothy but here he calls him *“beloved,”* why?

When people go through the valley of the shadow of death and lose loved ones there is a common denominator and the people who negotiate it best are those who have faith in

Christ but have a myriad of friends who are around to support them.

Friendship counts more than any time in your life when you get ready to die.

Many older folks withdraw from social activity and interaction with others.

And they are destroying the very means, whereby God has designed support for us to be nourished and strengthened by the friends we build around us.

At least have somebody who can be there to support you and to encourage you and Paul has found that in Timothy and he lets his emotions hang out here for a minute.

He calls him “*my beloved child, I am wishing three things for you, I want you to have grace, I want you to have mercy, and I want you to have peace.*”

Grace is that which provides strength in order for us to negotiate these things.

Mercy is for those who have need and, of course, I am wishing for peace that everything will be alright in your relationship with the Lord.

**And all three of those precious gifts are in
*Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Now are you ready, here goes the letter.

Verse 3 *“I am feeling grateful to God, whom I am serving with a pure conscience, the way my forefathers did, as unceasingly I am having you on my mind and in my prayers night and day.”*

Now can you believe that?

He starts off as saying, *“I am feeling grateful.”*

Boy I tell you, what a witness to be able in this hour that is the wrap up, to say, *“I am feeling grateful.”*

Many of you may have received a letter from Vonette Bright with Campus Crusade for Christ that announced the sad news that Bill Bright probably does not have more than a year to live.

And it is one of the most great illustrations of people praising the Lord in the hour of physical death, being thankful.

They are thankful first of all that Bill’s replacement in the ministry for Campus Crusade for Christ, is already plugged

in and functioning and the ministry is going on and being blessed by God.

Number two they have had fifty years of marriage and fifty years of ministry and so they are living each day thankful for God giving them another day to remain here to continue on in ministry.

That is Paul. *“I am feeling grateful to God.”*

That tells you something.

If you are going to make a fantastic finish and your greatest opportunity for ministry is when you die, in the process of your dying you have the greatest ministry in the world to show people that the gospel is relevant, that Jesus Christ is faithful, and that you really do have the promise of life in Christ Jesus.

That is the greatest opportunity and you must prepare for it. *“I am feeling grateful.”*

Never lose your attitude of gratitude.

Now, if you are being thankful and you are having unexplainable circumstances – maybe you have a financial crisis, maybe something has happened in your family, maybe there is some other circumstance that you bring to the table today that you do not understand –

how can you feel grateful for that? There are only three ways that you can negotiate that and be consistent and be true about it.

Number one you have to hold on to God's sovereignty, that is the first test.

He is sovereign, He is not doing it the way you think He should do it, but He is doing it the right way.

So the first thing is "God, I know you are going to do what is right and so I am trusting you. I am feeling grateful to you."

Secondly, this is even harder.

You have to be submissive to that sovereignty.

Because if you feel things are out of control, if you feel things are not going the way you want and your thoughts are not his thoughts and your ways are not his ways, then there is this tension, maybe a crisis comes in, so you have to get to the second "S" in order to get to peace.

And then the third "S" is satisfaction.

When you finally accept his sovereignty,
you submit to what he has allowed,
you will have the peace and satisfaction that it is all
going to work out alright.

And that is the reason Paul is grateful because he is sitting
there in prison and these three things have to be true
so that he can make that kind of statement.

Now look at the next thing. *“I am serving with a pure
conscience, the way that my forefathers did.”*

Your saying “well that is out for me, I will never be able to
do that because I do not have a clean conscience.”

Oh you don't? Could you have one?

Oh, you sure could.

What is the key to having a *pure conscience*?

The key to having a *pure conscience* is working on it
everyday.

Acts 24:16 *“Herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience
void of offense toward God and toward men.”*

Now, just like you must exercise regularly to keep your body
healthy, you must exercise something everyday spiritually
in order to have a pure, clean conscience.

And what is that?

That is talking to God honestly every day and saying

“God, I need to address any issues that have offended you.”

And do not go to bed with unresolved issues.

Talk to him about it.

Remember Psalm 26:2 and 3, “*Test me O Lord and try me.*”

Psalm 139:23, “*Search me O God and know my heart.*”

“Lord show me any stuff where I am offending you, I cannot afford to live a day without a pure conscience before you.”

It is something you have to work at.

If you just went to talk to the Apostle Paul,

he would have a guilt trip over the fact that he was there,

when they stoned Stephen to death

and he wreaked havoc on the church

before he became a Christian.

He has a printout that would scare you.

It involved a lot of things but all that had been addressed

and so he had a “*pure conscience.*”

And when you address “those things” the result is going to be a “*pure conscience*” because you have addressed it with God.

The Hughes commentary says “The old warrior is chained in a dripping, winter-cold dungeon awaiting the executioner’s axe, and as he surveys his life—his conversion and then the kaleidoscope of sermons preached, ship-wrecks, confrontations, deliverances, stonings, beatings, and victories—his conscience is absolutely clear.”

The reason is, daily he has prayed and exercised before God to keep the pathway clear between him and the Lord.

Then the third one is “*I pray night and day.*”

It is like his life is a picture of communion with the Lord in an ongoing conversation.

It is not that he is just constantly praying all day and doing nothing else.

And if he were really writing a laymen’s letter to Timothy he would just be saying “*You know you are on my mind and every time you come to my mind I pray for you.*”

That is really what you have.

Now will you just take those three things and put them together and see that they are the ingredients, along with receiving Christ, that helps you maintain your integrity but it also helps you take the first step to a fantastic finish.

I have put them all with the letter “A” so it will be easy for you to remember.

- 1. Your attitude. Attitude of gratitude. *“I am feeling grateful.”***
- 2. Address the issues in your life on a daily basis.
*“I am serving with a pure conscience.”***
- 3. Appeal to God in prayer. You appeal to him about business decisions, about marriage and family, and all the other things that are coming across the table, discipline yourself to learn to just have a chat with him and talk with him about those things.**

Attitude, address, and appeal!

I will just ask you a question at the end of verse three.

Are you pushing toward integrity?

Are you a person who is getting it together and what others see is what you be?

You are dealing with things in your personal life that will ensure the fact that you will make a fantastic finish, you will leave a legacy, and you will be remembered as a person who was close to becoming Christ-like before you left this earth.

Verse 4 *“Greatly longing to see you when I recall to mind your tears in order that I may be filled with joy.”*

When you are away from somebody special, do you ever feel kind of lonesome?

Paul has had some great experiences with Timothy in ministry.

He has found this young man faithful and he is just like a son to him.

And he is missing him.

And the only comfort he is kind of getting, while he is in prison, is the fact that the last time they were together he has a picture of Timothy crying, and how sad he was for the fact that they were going to have to part.

And Paul said, just knowing that, has given me some joy in my heart.

Isn't it amazing that he can even be filled with joy in prison?

You know on the last night before Jesus died on the cross in John 15 he said,

“These things I have spoken unto you that my joy may remain in you and that your joy might be full.”

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**You know it is amazing what God can do
to fill our hearts with those things,
when we are at peace and rest seeking his face
and being available to him.**

Now your key verse is verse 5.

***“Having been reminded of the genuine faith which is in you,
which lived first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother
Eunice, and I have been convinced that (it is) in you as well.”***

Isn't that a great tribute?

**When you read the tribute about Timothy in Philippians,
chapter 2, Paul says,**

***“I do not have anybody like him who is as genuinely
interested and concerned in you Philippians as you Timothy.
Everybody else is concerned with their own things but not
Timothy.***

***He is a guy who will go anywhere, to do anything, at any cost,
as long as it is going to glorify God”*** and Paul has seen
enough of that.

He says, *“I am reminded of your genuine faith.*

You are the real deal.

I can see Christ being formed in you and I can see things going on in your life that can only be explained in terms of God's sovereign work."

This is integrity.

Getting it all together.

"Having been reminded of the genuine faith which is in you."

You are the real deal.

Your heart and your head and your hand are all singing the same tune.

You are a man and truly you are a man that is walking with God and I am convinced that it is in you as well."

But now who else does he mention?

Well he mentions that it was in your grandmother Lois, I saw it in her, and I saw it in your mother Eunice.

Are you becoming a link in a chain that can affect the next hundred years by the fact that you are passing on to the next generation your faith in the lives of your children and your grandchildren?

We should be praying for children and grandchildren

“Lord put a hedge of protection around them and Lord as soon as possible bring each of them to faith in you. I want them to know Jesus Christ.”

What kind of a religious legacy are you leaving?

What are you doing to be faithful in praying for your kids and your grandkids

that God will intervene in your family

and leave a legacy that will long outlive you

or are you a person who has religion without relationship?

You are one thing on Sunday but you are something else at home.

You are one thing at work and you are something else with the rest of the guys.

Do you really have it together?

Does your life speak one sound message that Jesus Christ is everything to you?

You know in Matthew 7 when Jesus is finishing the Sermon on the Mount what does he say?

“Wise guy builds his house upon the rock and the foolish guy builds his house upon the sand.”

You know when the rains and the floods and the storms of life which involve physical death and reverses and losses come upon the guy who has built his house upon the sand, that house falls and great is the fall of it.

The person who has built their house upon the rock is the person who has genuinely got the strong foundation of a relationship to Jesus Christ and step number one, he is characterized as a person of integrity.

I went to the dictionary to look up integrity.

The dictionary says; possession of firm principles, completeness, wholeness, uprightness, honesty, high principle, moral fiber – these wonderful things.

Do you remember what I said at the beginning?

That you can recover your integrity.

I want to prove it, okay?

Here is a passage of scripture that will knock your socks off.

2 Peter 1:5-10.

1:5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, to your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge;

1:6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness;

1:7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, [Christian] love.

1:8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

1:10 Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;

Wow!

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow said it and you probably memorized it in school.

“The heights by great men reached and kept

Were not attained by sudden flight,

But they, while their companions slept,

Were toiling upward in the night.

Be a person who is being faithful and walk with God.”

There's a book called *Rachel's Tears* and it is the story of 17 year old Rachel Scott who died at Columbine in the massacre that took place there on April 20,1999.

Rachel kept a diary.

She was shot twice in her backpack in the hallway and she was still alive when the guys walked down the hallway and they asked her if she still believed in God and she just said "You know I do" and they said "Go be with him" and shot her again.

She lost her life right there but she left a legacy in her journaling.

Listen to this from her journal. You talk about a legacy. She was having a hard time at school because of all the drugs and pot and stuff going on and she said, "I'm not a beer chuggin, pot trippin, cigar puffin, drug dealing Christian.

I am a God lovin, satan slamin, Jesus freakin, world changing Christian. I am a warrior for Christ."

She wrote that about a year before she became a true warrior and laid down her life for the Lord Jesus.

Robert Baker says "As I grow older, I care less and less what people think about me and more and more

what God thinks of me. I expect to be with him much longer than with you.” Don’t you love it?

Do you remember back on October 25, 1999 Payne Stewart’s plane was floating around the skies and we all prayed that he would live but he lost his life.

On television in the last U.S. Open, that he played in and won, many people saw the “What would Jesus do?” bracelet on his arm.

He was asked after the U.S. Open about his faith, he said with tears in his eyes,

“J.B., I just want everyone to know, its *Jesus* that has done this for me.”

Then almost as if to make sure J.B. understood, Payne repeated himself,

“It’s Jesus that has changed my life.”

What a legacy, what a witness.

Now look at verse 6.

Verse 6 *"For this reason I am reminding you because you are a man of genuine faith and I know you are, this is what you need to be doing. I am reminding you to be stirring up the*

flame of the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

“Stirring up the gift of God.”

That is the stirring up of the fire. It is stoking it.

Now Timothy’s fire has not gone dead okay?

But Paul is telling him as a man with genuine faith to constantly be stirring it.

That is in the present tense.

If I translated this literally it would be, keep on stirring up and stoke it regular, do not let it die down.

Now what is the normal process to faithful experiences or faith experiences?

It is to sit here in the study, get all excited and get real hot and go out of here and gradually get cold so that you got to come back next week with a bunch of ashes and a few embers so we can stir it up again.

That is the way we live and the Lord knows that.

In Matthew 24 He says *“In the final days the love of many will go cold.”* To the church of Laodecia,

“You are neither cold nor hot, you are lukewarm and I am about to vomit you out of my mouth.”

It is because we just let things happen and we get slothful, we get lazy, we get indifferent.

As we get older we have tried so many times to do things we just get worn out and we just yield to the pressures of culture and just go out in a fizzle rather than constantly stoking up the fire, staying after it, and being faithful.

Stir up the gift of God, does that make sense?

As soon as you become a Christian, you receive two gifts.

Number one, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you to guide you into all truth

and number two, you are given an ability by the Holy Spirit to minister to other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

It would do well for you to study the gifts of the Spirit in the New Testament, ascertain what yours is, and constantly be stirring it up.

That is the key, continuing to build a life of genuine integrity, getting it all together.

**I am reminding you of the gift
that you have been given, now stir it up, light it up,
lay it on, and leave a legacy.
Get on fire for him and be faithful.**

**Now if the fire dies down, what happened to it?
I came up with four “S’s”:**

- * Sin**
- * Satan**
- * Stress**
- * Sorrow**

**First of all, sin. The fire of the Spirit goes out when there is
unjudged and unconfessed sin in our lives.**

**Satan. He loves to get our priorities botched up
so we do not take time.**

And he would love to have us burnt out.

**Stress. Stress comes because we get ourselves so focused
on material things that we forget about spiritual things
and we are spending all of our energy and time**

**on the bottom line rather than on our relationship
and building a premise and a foundation
for making a fantastic finish.**

**And we are stressed out so we do not have time
to keep the fire burning.**

**And then sorrow. When some tragedy or some loss comes
into life, it causes many people to get bitter and resentful
and at a distance, with the Lord and the fire goes out.**

Now, let me turn it around.

That is negative and here is the positive.

**Here are six suggestions to help you keep the fire burning
brightly.**

1. Deal with sin and compromise.

**Whatever it is, the Spirit of God is speaking to you,
deal with it now – address it.**

**2. Return to Calvary. Kneel at the cross and be reminded of
what it cost for your salvation. Renew that warm, flaming
passion of the cross of Calvary that will come by being
there.**

3. Pursue a pure conscience. Take care of these things that are keeping you from having that conscience.
4. Focus on his holiness.
He is a holy God and he expects that from us.
5. Surrender to his sovereignty.
6. Be filled with the Spirit. And I can tell you that if you will do the other five things, you will have that.

Stay after it. Be faithful.

Be a person who is stirring up the flame.

The reason that you want to stir up the flame of the gift of God is because you have everything that you need.

There it is, verse 7.

“For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness or cowardness but of power, love, and self-discipline or good judgment.”

You have power to get the job done,
his love will fill you so you will be motivated
to want to accomplish it and then that third word
is hard to translate.

Good judgment, self-discipline, there are all kinds of translations to it.

Another writer put it – it is control in panic and in passion.

Control in an hour of panic, control in an hour of passion because the Spirit of God is there to protect and provide us

A great little book *Lord Faulgrin's Letters*, it is the takeoff of C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, *Letters from the Devil in Order to Accomplish His Purpose*.

“The safest road to hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

Listen to Psalm 41:12. “*In my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever.*”

There are 13 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: The apostle Paul is in the center of the will of God, proclaiming “the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus” (verse 1).

LESSON #2: Even though the apostle is facing eminent death, it has not affected God’s “promise of life” (see John 11:25, 26).

LESSON #3: Friendship really matters late in the game.

LESSON #4: Is Jesus Christ really your Lord?

LESSON #5: In the process of preparing to meet the Lord, stay focused on the three A’s: (1) your attitude of gratitude; (2) address all the issues in your life; and (3) appeal to the Lord in prayer.

LESSON #6: Lord, help me to maintain a continual contentedness under Your sovereign hand.

LESSON #7: Lord, I want to be honest and transparent in every area of my life so I can bear witness to the fact that I have a “pure conscience” before You (verse 3).

LESSON #8: Lord, the goal of my life in these remaining years is to be a man of integrity and getting it all together in a “genuine faith” (verse 5).

LESSON #9: Lord, help me to light it up, lay it on, and leave a legacy.

LESSON #10: “Lord, take my lips and speak through them; take my mind and think through it; take my heart and set it on fire.”—W. W. W. Aitken.

LESSON #11: Lord, may the remaining years of my life be marked by the presence of Your Spirit with a holy boldness, with “power,” with self-sacrificial “love,” and “self-discipline” (verse 7).

LESSON #12: Do you know what your spiritual gift is?

LESSON #13: Is the Spirit’s “power,” “love,” and “self-discipline” evident in your life? (verse 7).

STUDIES IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

“THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH”

Key verse 2:15 — “*Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.*”

STEP NUMBER ONE –Integrity: Getting It All Together – 2 Timothy 1:1-7

Key verse 1:5

Notes

v. 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

v. 2 To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, (and) peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

v. 3 I am feeling grateful to God, whom I am serving with a pure conscience, the way my forefathers did, as unceasingly I am having you on my mind in my prayers night and day.

v. 4 Greatly longing to see you, when I recall to mind your tears, in order that I may be filled with joy.

v. 5 Having been reminded of the genuine faith which is in you, which lived first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I have been convinced that (it is) in you as well.

v. 6 And for this reason I am reminding you to be stirring up the flame of the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

v. 7 For God did not give to us a spirit of fearfulness (cowardice) but of power and of love and of self-discipline (good judgment).

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read 2 Timothy 1:1-7 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What three things come from "God the Father" in verse 2? What do these words mean?**
- 3. How does Paul serve the Lord, according to verse 3?**
- 4. Why does Paul remember Timothy's tears when they parted?**
- 5. What kind of faith did Timothy have?**
- 6. Who else in his family had faith like his?**
- 7. What is Timothy asked to do in verse 6?**
- 8. Describe the Spirit that has been given to us in verse 7.**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**