



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

Fredrick Howard Taylor was born to the famous missionary couple, Hudson and Maria Taylor. Howard, along with his wife Mary Geraldine, served alongside his dad in the China Inland Mission (his mom died suddenly at the age of 33 after the birth of Samuel). To honor his father, Howard and Mary wrote, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*. This fascinating read reveals two things about Hudson and Maria Taylor. First, life was hard for his parents. Maybe most difficult for Hudson was the loss of 5 of his 9 children, and then the sudden death of his wife after the birth of their last child. Second, Howard writes that his father's favorite hymn included this chorus which could be heard quietly sung from Hudson's bedroom in the early hours of the morning: "Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art..." His secret was simply this: "I have just to roll the burden on the Lord." What a thought, what an example!



Mark & Lori Ring (MBS, 2004)
Faith Baptist Church | Rhinelander, WI

Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

Mark and Lori Ring moved to Virginia Beach in the summer of 1998 to begin seminary after graduating from Bible College and serving several years as an Associate Pastor. Upon graduating from VBTS in the Spring of 2004, Mark and Lori moved to Rhinelander, Wisconsin where he planted Faith Baptist Church. Since their charter service on June 26, 2005, God has seen fit to grow the fellowship from a small group meeting in a storefront, to a thriving fellowship with beautiful facilities. Mark says, "My passion for this local church is to see it fit the model of Ephesians 4, and we work to magnify Jesus in North Central Wisconsin." VBTS rejoices in God's favor upon this dynamic couple, and their faithful ministry at FBC!



Faculty & Student
breakfast
fellowship after
chapel each
Thursday morning



Truth for the Agora: “Fan into flame the gift of God” 2 Timothy 1:6

The verb translated “fan into flame” in 2 Timothy 1:6 is unique in the Greek New Testament. The full phrase is somewhat startling as Paul calls Timothy “to fan into flame the gift of God.” One commentator suggests that “Timothy might be in a state of *athumia* [discouragement].” If so, is Paul anxious about the possibility of Timothy wilting in his ministry duties at Ephesus? Or, does Paul have something else in mind with these words? Let’s take a closer look at this phrase and see if we can discover what Paul is saying to his “beloved son” (1:2).

The Context. There are three things in Paul’s letter that immediately suggest Timothy is doing well in ministry and that Paul is pleased with his son. *First*, Paul begins his letter by sharing his longing to see Timothy, “that I may be filled with joy” (1:4). Paul considers Timothy a genuine source of spiritual delight. *Second*, Paul writes that he knows that Timothy’s present faith is “sincere” and models that faith which “dwelt first in [his] grandmother Lois and in [his] mother Eunice” (1:5). *Finally*, at the end of the letter, Paul implores Timothy to “do your best to come to me soon” (4:9). Such a personal entreaty is not consistent with the view that Paul considered Timothy to be vacillating in his ministry and in need of verbal correction. Therefore, the context of the letter does not seem to be a Pauline frustration with a discouraged or retreating son; rather, it seems just the opposite.

The Term. Mounce properly suggests that to understand this phrase one must begin with “a precise meaning” of the verb translated, “fan into flame” (475). He notes the verb is actually a present infinitive of continuous action, meaning, “to keep in full flame” (476). Rather than being a *criticism* of what Timothy is not doing, the verb is actually an *encouragement* to Timothy to continue what he is doing. Knight concurs that this verb is not used by Paul to mean that Timothy’s heart for ministry is dying, “but that he should fan into flame that special gift of God that he had received, i.e., make full use of it” (370).

Chrysostom’s Implication. The phrase in full is, “fan into flame the gift of God.” Paul knew both the challenge of leading the ministry at Ephesus and the delicate constitution of his son Timothy. To encourage him in his pastoral role as he faced a number of trials (cf., 2:24-26), Paul encourages Timothy to make full use of the gift (*charisma*) that God gave him for this very purpose. Though this spiritual gift is not defined in this text, both Timothy and Paul knew what that gift was (cf., 1 Tim 4:14), how he received it (1:6b), and why it must now be exercised (1:7-14). The purpose then for Paul’s metaphorical expression was to encourage his son in the faith to a greater fervency in ministry. Centuries ago from this text Chrysostom observed, “A fire requires fuel, so grace requires our alacrity, that it may be ever fervent.” In sum, Paul’s words are meant to encourage Timothy to *eagerly* use his spiritual gift and keep his ministry fire burning brightly.

A Personal Thought. As I contemplate this text, I am aware of a significant ministry tension: A belief that God has fully equipped me for ministry, and the reality that ministry can be difficult. May I (we) be eager to fan into flame the gift of God within us as we navigate through the challenges of ministry with a goal to exalt Jesus Christ!