

Stay the Course Church – Fear Not! by Stu Fuhlendorf

2 Timothy 1:7, For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

The year 2020 saw God move out and declare His Lordship at Redemption Hills Church. God certainly did, "work all things together for good for those who are called according to His purpose." We saw God's people transformed by the gospel while many other churches, unfortunately, wallowed during the year. At RHC we saw people baptized, families reconciled, lives transformed, fellowship increase, and most importantly God glorified through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Whether 2020 was the greatest year of your life, or you are crazy happy to see 2020 finally end, thankfully there is one absolute truth through it all for each and every one of us: God is with us - ALWAYS.

The year 2020 was a wonderful year for Redemption Hills Church. God used joys and sufferings in decretive and perceptive Will to declare His providence and sovereignty.

Let's be laser-focused to do the work of ministry as 2021 begins.

God's Word is filled with prayers of men and women who reached out to God for a fresh start. Over and over again in the Bible God's people prayed for God to give them a new beginning and He was with each and every one of them. On the heels of the celebration of the birth of our King, the reminder that He is with us has the power to carry us into a fresh and beautiful new start in 2021.

Paul wrote his final letter to a young minister in Ephesus named Timothy. Its purpose was to encourage Timothy to continue faithfully in the work of God. I am writing you to inspire the same mindset as Timothy when he faced challenges.

Paul argued against false doctrines and faced persecution for preaching the gospel. Apparently - perhaps due to timidity and youth - Timothy held back some ministry work. Paul admonishes him to fan the flames of the spiritual gifts God gave him, not to be ashamed of the Lord, and to expect sufferings in the proclamation of the Good News: 2 Timothy 1:8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God."

Paul reminded Timothy that he has been given power to encounter all his enemies. The Holy Spirit is the Power, which Jesus promised would come and fill all believers: Luke 24:49, "And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." Genuine love and self-discipline inspire courage and bold authority (1 Corinthians 2:4).

Basically, fear comes down to a lack of trust in God. Trusting God is a refusal to give in to fear.

Worse days would come (2 Timothy 3:1–9). But through it all, Paul's solemn charge to Timothy was to remain faithful to the things he was taught. To stay the course without fear, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1). To study and "Preach the word! Paul told Timothy to be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

The Apostle Paul encourages the young Timothy that he has nothing to fear. Why? Because God has already come before him and set the table of successful ministry. 2 Timothy 1:9, "who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began." Devotionally, Paul exhorts Timothy, and us, to stand firm by God's power, exhibiting His love and exercising true Christian character because he has given us a purpose before the foundation of the world. Our Lord Christ Jesus has gone before us.

The truth is that He is Immanuel, God with us. And though circumstances and situations around us will shift and change constantly; and though people and relationships will wound and hurt us; and though things will happen in 2021 that stink and we wish wouldn't happen – the truth is that our God never changes – EVER - and He will never leave our side. The year 2020 was a great example of God not only being at our side, but leading forward as we followed with faithfulness.

When we focus on Paul's words to Timothy, that truth helps me to remember that God is in total control and therefore I can rest in the knowledge that no matter how out of control I feel, or how out of control a society can seem like in 2020, that Christ Jesus is still on His throne. What a crazy comfort that is in this unpredictable, insane world we are living in today!

Basically, fear comes down to a lack of trust in God. Trusting God is a refusal to give in to fear of the World. "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Psalm 56:11). Moses Ibn Ezra, a medieval Jewish philosopher said, "Your noblest quality before God is your fear of Him." Rather than the spirit of fear of the World, we are to have a reverential, fearful respect of the Person of God. For God, through Jesus Christ, saved us and called us to live for Him. "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11).

RHC Saints, my prayer is that as we read and write these verses about new beginnings and a new year, we are able to focus on the truth of His Word. I pray that as a result our hearts and minds are filled with these truths and that we spend each and every day of 2021 drawing closer to Him learning more about Him through time spent in His Word, and doing acts of love and service. To Him be the dominion and glory forever and ever! Amen!

Happy New Year RHC Saints!