



Jan 28: Reset on God's Power | 2 Timothy 1:7

Mrs. Munroe lives in Darlington, Maryland and is a mother of eight children. And one afternoon she came home from the grocery store to a fairly quiet house.

A little odd, everything looked normal. Until she got to the living room.

Looking into the living room from the kitchen, she saw five of her darlings sitting on the living room floor, in a circle. Now they seemed exceedingly quiet.

And were doing something in the middle of the circle she couldn't see.

Super curious, she put her grocery bags on the kitchen counter, and stepped quietly into the living room. And peering over their shoulders, she saw all five of her children playing with five of the cutest skunks you ever did see.

Instantly terrified, she yelled, "Run, children, run!"

In terror, each child grabbed a skunk and ran in five different directions. Seeing her kids respond that way, Mrs. Munroe screamed even louder.

Which in turn scared the children even more so that each one squeezed their skunk.

And as we all know, skunks don't like to be squeezed.

Oh my word, I love that story! Screaming causing screaming and then fateful squeezing! A little story from John Haggie in his book Winning Over Worry.

I don't know about you, but I grew up with a healthy fear of skunks. I grew up in the country with dogs. They'd occasionally get into it with a skunk, right? Smell was horrible!

I remember going for a walk one evening in the country. The clouds were covering the moon so thick I could barely see my hand in front of my face.

When I came to my driveway, I heard some scrambling and scratching in the leaf clutter.

I couldn't see anything... But before I could form the thought, I froze completely. More scratching, clouds parted, and by moonlight I could just make out a skunk, rise up on its front legs, about ready to unleash.

To this day I don't know how I knew to freeze. And I don't know how I didn't get sprayed.

There are some things in this world that are worth having a healthy fear of. Skunks are one of them. Fear, anxiety, stress and worry can spring up out of nowhere, just like that skunk.

Normal everyday kinds of fear of things that should be feared.

But maybe we know of someone who has leveled up, taken worry and anxiety to an art-form. Do you have a friend who worries when they don't have something to worry about?

Their worrying is almost comforting to them?

Like my friend Bonita. About fifteen years ago, I was a personal care attendant for Bonita. She had had a severe stroke, was slightly paralyzed on her right side.

Her kids told me it changed her personality, she became a chronic worrier.

One day she was complaining about something she was worrying about. It was bizarre.

And I jokingly said, "Bonita, the likelihood of that happening is about the same odds as a meteor hitting this house!"

Her immediate response, "Great, now I have another thing to worry about!"

"Bonita!" I scolded.

And then I heard a faint chuckle. Bonita may have been a world class worrier, but she also had a wicked sense of humor.

Fainting goats, squeezing skunks, our friends who always worry...are just a few examples of fear, anxiety, stress and worry. Fear and anxiety is a truly legitimate and daily struggle for many.

There may be times we need to seek professional support in our struggles. I believe in therapy and the appropriateness in taking medications as needed.

I believe 100% those are God's form of guidance and support too.

Managing our anxiety and fear is a billion-dollar industry. How many illnesses and diseases can be linked directly to our attempts to overcome fear and anxiety and worry and overwhelm?

When we try to take on responsibilities and carry things that we are not designed to carry?

If we can't handle it, why are we trying to handle it? If you can't change it, why are you worrying about it?

But we do, don't we. I do. We do.

It's why I am especially grateful for the Dynamite Prayer 28 Day devotional. It was on day 18, that I came across a very timely and fitting scripture passage. God's encouragement for us.

From our text, 2 Timothy 1:7, I like the New King James version because of the strong and clear emphasis, **“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”**

The author of this powerful truth is Paul and he is speaking to his young protégé named Timothy. Very much like a father – son relationship.

Paul had every reason to speak to Timothy from a place of fear. He penned these words from a cramped, dark, Roman prison cell without much hope of release.

Emperor Nero was blaming the Christians for everything, crucifying them, and then setting them on fire like tiki torches.

As Tacitus, an eye-witness historian wrote, **“...to serve as a nightly illumination when daylight had expired.”**

It was a very difficult time for the early church. And we know Paul was soon beheaded for his love for Christ.

Paul knew his ministry was coming to a close and that his life would be ending soon. Timothy, on the other hand, was young and just beginning his ministry life.

With great poignancy, Paul, not knowing how much time they had left, shares the best of his ministry insights, the very best spiritual wisdom he had to pass on to Timothy.

As I was reading, I got a little caught up in their story. What would Paul say to Timothy? What would Paul emphasize? Paul’s wisdom the best for Christian living.

Over the years, I have had a couple conversations like this. I’ve recommended a few things to the next generation. Like, go to an accredited seminary, stay close to Jesus, have hobbies.

But I’ve never suggested what Paul did.

Instead, Paul taught how Timothy could live his life sustained and enabled with unfailing power. Paul reminded Timothy of God’s gift already given.

A Spirit of power, love and self-control. God, the Holy Spirit.

God, has not given us a spirit of fear. We are not destined or designed to simply be anxious and fearful, and resigned to it. We are NOT fainting goats. No, we were made for more.

We were given a spirit of power. And this is not just a pep talk or positive thinking. No, God has given us the Holy Spirit through Pentecost and our baptisms.

We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at our disposal as a constant resource in living an overcoming Christian life. But sometimes I think we simply don’t access this resource.

The fruit of the Spirit in Paul's life? From his jail cell, Paul continued to be bold, teaching these kinds of truths, while facing death, in a healthy reliance on the Holy Spirit.

And what Paul shared with Timothy, is also for us.

Paul reminded Timothy that any spirit Timothy might be experiencing that made him fearful or timid was not something God sent.

And Timothy was to steer clear of it and shake it off.

When we feel fearful or timid, do we lean on God's help? I love how our Dynamite devotional is helping us turn toward God the Holy Spirit. Bite sized Biblical teachings each day.

So empowering...as we learn how to let the Spirit empower us!

Paul encouraged Timothy to be looking for the empowering Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit that God does send. A Spirit that makes us bold for God and God's priorities, loving others more and more, and focused on the things of God.

And a bit of a nod to Methodists. I like how you are not uptight about the Holy Spirit. I came from a denomination that was little uneasy with the Holy Spirit. But you all are chill and more open.

Another nod to Methodists and future members; for us to be investing in God's church with our presence, prayers, giving, serving and witnessing to our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is impossible to do these things without God the Holy Spirit helping us. But God will help us.

How about you, let's bring this back home a little. How about you? How easily do you succumb to fear, anxiety, stress or worry?

And when you do, and it happens to all of us, how much does it impact your ability to love others, to think clearly and serve?

History shows that what Paul recommended, Timothy embraced and lived out. Paul set and reset himself on God's power. And so did Timothy.

The Spirit of God enabled both of them to proclaim God's story of love to the world. Just like the Spirit of God will enable us to share God's story of love to our community.

I couldn't say it better than the Dynamite devotional, **"They each chose not to allow fear or discouragement to triumph, to consume their focus, or otherwise to unintentionally limit what was possible."**

One night a grandfather was taking care of a couple of his young grandkids. It was late in the evening, but grandpa was spoiling them and they were still awake.

They were having fun, when all of a sudden, there was a loud knock on the door!

Startled, one of the grandkids grabbed grandpa's hand. Grandpa said, "It's okay." But the knock came again...loud. And grandpa headed for the door.

The grandson that had had grandpa's hand, followed him, but now was hugging and hiding behind his grandpa's leg.

Turns out it was just a neighbor looking for their dog. After the neighbor left and the door was closed, that clinging grandson pipped up loudly, "**Bubba, we don't have anything to worry about, do we?**"

And Bubba replied, "No, we don't have anything to worry about. Everything's fine."

Do you know why everything was fine?

Do you know why the grandson overcame his fear, became bolder?

Because he knew Who he was clinging to. Because that grandson knew who he was holding on to.

Who are you holding on to?

**"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."**

**Let's take a moment to reflect.** Let's take a moment to take these truths in and reset ourselves on God's strength. Rest in God's strength, let go of fear and cling to God, trust in God the Spirit to help you love boldly.