

**I'm a little teapot, short and stout
Here is my handle, here is my spout
When I get all steamed up, hear me shout,
Just tip me over and pour me out!**

**It's much easier pouring water out of a teapot than pouring your life
out for God.**

My mother-in-law, God rest her soul, did not get along with teapots. She had a habit of putting her teapot on the stove, turning on the heat and then forgetting she had done so. She burned up a few teapots in the process. The first time, we gave her some latitude and said she needed a teapot with a whistle in it, to notify her when the water was boiling. She didn't like our suggestion.

A few months went by. She got a new teapot and within a few weeks burned it up. Although she didn't tell us she had done so. It just disappeared. We asked her where the teapot was and she said, "I don't know."

"Did you burn this new one too?"

"I don't remember. Maybe."

We bought her a new teapot with a whistle in it. It was red enamel and beautiful. She didn't like it! And we couldn't understand why.

A few weeks went by and we found it on the stove one day, with the whistle gone. She had removed the whistle. Then one day the little red enamel teapot was gone. “Mom, where’s the new teapot.”

“I don’t know.”

“Mom, what happened to the teapot?”

“I don’t know. “

I went out to the trash and there was this blackened, burnt-out little red teapot.

Why do we avoid warning signs? Why do we take the whistle out of the teapot? What is it in our human psychic that tells us it’s okay to abandon caution and proceed ahead when the signs say, “Whoa Cowboy, slow down; Caution there pardner, you’ll need to back up; Hey buckaroo, go this way not that way; or watch out cowgirl, there’s a sharp curve ahead”

Some of us will run to the stove and turn off the heat. Some of us don’t hear or see the warning signs. The Apostle is giving the church at Philippi a warning – remain obedient like when I was with you and “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to his friends at Philippi. He was in prison thanking them for the gifts they had sent him. He could have been

killed any day while in prison but he warns them to stay obedient, “for it is God who works in you.”

I struggle with “fear and trembling.” The angels in the Bible continually tell us to not be afraid. What’s this fear and trembling about? I don’t want to be fearful -- I don’t want to tremble. But dog-gone-it, doesn’t that whistle in the teapot give us a warning to pay attention?

I believe this is what the Apostle means in “fear and trembling.” He wants the followers of Christ to pay attention!!! Be obedient, submit ourselves to God in humility. Don’t be overconfident – depend on God for our strength.

We don’t need to tremble because we’re unsure of things – let us tremble because we believe God is actually working in us. The fear and trembling should help us move into action for Christ, not giving in or giving up.

We humans, have the ability to let things slide and not be on guard for what God might be doing in us. We lose focus – we let the teapots of life get burnt! We fear aging; medical diagnoses; dying; and losing our memory, our hearing. We fear losing the ability to live on our own. Perhaps we fear we’ll lose the joy of play if we give ourselves to God, yet, “... it is God who

works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.” Do we believe that?

God’s good purpose for us is for us to empty ourselves, pour out our lives in service to the gospel message. But, somewhere, somehow we get stopped. We can’t pour ourselves out because we don’t fill ourselves up with Christ. We ignore the whistles!

I know it’s hard to sense God working in our life when we fill it up with other pursuits. Then God gets moved out of the center of our lives to the edges where, slowly over time, we struggle to find room again for God. We have too many choices of things to do, places to go, people to meet.

We can’t seem to feel God at work in us when, much like the problems faced by Philippians, we begin complaining, grumbling, arguing, murmuring.

So, how do we live in a warped and depraved generation without grumbling? How can I pour myself out when I repeatedly hear negative news, violence all about us? Why should I pour myself out into the awful circumstances of our depraved world?

Christ poured out his life for us. The Apostle Paul poured out his life for others. Yesterday we celebrated the life of Pat Landenberger, who poured out her life to comfort others, as a Christian, as a Stephen Minister.

Today we recognize our newest Stephen Minister and a new Stephen Leader and the work of all within the Program who pour out their lives for others.

God is at work in you when you share the sorrow of someone – when you visit the homebound.

God is at work in you when you give time, money, energy to others in need – when you give with great joy.

God is at work in you when you serve your church family in some humble way – sending a card or calling someone to remind them you're thinking of them.

I do believe you know the feeling of being poured out. You have cared for your parents – you were a parent giving it all you had for your children – you were a teacher, a nurse, an executive who cared deeply for your co-workers, your students, your employees and those you served. You gave it your all for work, for family, for fun and play. We must abandon ourselves to faith, to that which we have no control and trust God to lead us. God is in charge of the future.

Is there anything left to give? I believe the more we give the more we are given. The more we pour ourselves out the more we get filled up with love. Christ gave us everything. Christ poured out himself on the Cross so we can obtain salvation and be unafraid to pour out our lives.

The Apostle gave everything to keep the message of salvation and hope alive. That's what the Apostle wants us to consider doing for Jesus Christ. Give it our all. 100%! Pour out our life in serving Christ.

When you pour out your life you shine as luminaries, as stars in the world, brightly leading others to Christ. In your person you carry the Word of life to others and this is a beautiful and marvelous thing. Amen.