

August 28, 2011 by Steve Brandon



Don't Be Ashamed

2 Timothy 1:8-10, 15-18

1. Don't be Ashamed (verse 8a)
2. Be Ready to Suffer (verse 8b)
3. Trust the Power of God (verses 9-10)

As you may recall, this letter is written by the apostle Paul to his loved disciple, Timothy. Timothy was the pastor of the church in Ephesus, and was going through a discouraging time in the ministry. He was facing opposition from inside the church (2:14, 16, 24-26). He was facing opposition from outside the church (4:15). He was facing doubts regarding his own giftedness, and perhaps, even his salvation (1:5-6). It all was wearing on him.

In this letter, Paul is seeking to encourage him to press on. "Don't give up. Kindle afresh the gift of God within you (1:6). Endure through the hardship of ministry. Trust in the Lord to give you the strength you need (1:7)." Or, as I have summarized the book, "Fan the Flame; Fight the Fight." Fan the Flame of God's gift in you to minister to others. Fight the Fight of ministry.

Beginning in chapter 1, verse 8, Paul encourages Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. One of the ways to fight the fight is to be bold in your faith. See if you can hear it, ...

2 Timothy 1:8-18

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me -- the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day -- and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

I have entitled my message this morning, "Don't Be Ashamed." That is, do not be ashamed of the gospel. Do not be ashamed of those who suffer for the gospel. My message title comes right from verse 8. You can see it there in verse 8, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner."

I do believe that this is the dominant thought throughout all of chapter 1. In verse 12, Paul writes, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed." In verse 16, Paul commends Onesiphorus, "for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains." And the point in verse 15 is that many were ashamed of Paul and the gospel: "You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes."

This is my first point, ...

1. Don't be Ashamed (verse 8a)

This is a big issue for us today in the American Church. John MacArthur wrote a book (about 20 years ago) entitled, "Ashamed of the Gospel." He talks in the book about how churches are getting away from the gospel and looking to other things to make an impact in this world. MacArthur quotes George Barna, who says, ...

I believe that developing a marketing orientation is precisely what the Church needs to do if we are to make a difference in the spiritual health of this nation for the remainder of this century." He adds, "My contention, based on careful study of data and the activities of American churches, is that the major problem plaguing the Church is its failure to embrace a marketing orientation in what has become a marketing-driven environment. [\[1\]](#)

Catch what Barna is saying here. He is saying that what the church needs is to go into marketing. It needs to market itself. Don't look to the gospel; look to marketing techniques! That is the key! But Paul, here in 2 Timothy, would say, "No, that's not the key." The key is to not be ashamed of the gospel.

MacArthur address this issue with a quote from Charles Spurgeon (written around the 1880s). Let's not think this temptation to focus on techniques rather than the gospel is a new temptation and fault of the church. Spurgeon writes of the Down-Grade Controversy, in which many people in churches were turning from the gospel. Spurgeon was calling them back. He writes, ...

I trust I am not give to finding fault where there is not; but I cannot open my eyes without seeing things done in our churches which, thirty years ago, were not so much as dreamed of. In the matter of amusements, professors have gone far in the way of laxity. What is worse, the churches have now conceived the idea that it is their duty to amuse people.

Dissenters who used to protest against going to the theatre, now cause the theatre to come to them. [\[2\]](#)

Spurgeon is basically saying that the church in England back in the 1880s was seeking to entertain people, to pull them in with theatrics. This is all driven by being ashamed of the gospel. Instead of focusing on the gospel of Christ, Christians say, "Let's find something that works." "Let's find something that will make the church really big." Spurgeon is instead saying what Paul is saying. Turn back to the gospel. Let the gospel be what is front and center. Do not be ashamed of the gospel!

There is a tendency within us all to be ashamed of the gospel. I was out in the neighborhood yesterday, talking with my neighbor. Things came up about the economy. And I found myself wrestling within me. I thought, "Oh, what a great transition to interject the reality of God into this conversation. And yet, my neighbor has never shown any interest in spiritual things. Should I bring it up or not?" But, then, I thought to myself, "I'm not to be ashamed." And so, after a moment's struggle, I said, "I sure am glad that I have set my hopes elsewhere. Our country isn't headed in a great direction. But, regardless of how bad it is here, I know that Jesus will bring me into His kingdom, which is better than anything upon the earth." He just smiled, and we carried on our conversation.

But, there was this struggle within me: "Do I bring up spiritual things? Or, do I simply let the conversation carry on?" The struggle has to do with my own timidity. The struggle has to do with my own shame of the gospel. Would we take a survey this morning, I believe that all of us deal with the same thing. We are often ashamed of the gospel. You say, "Why?" In some measure, it has to do with our own pride. We don't want to look foolish in the sight of others.

That's what the gospel is. The gospel is foolishness to the gentiles. The gospel is a stumbling block to the Jews (1 Cor. 1:23). They can't see it (2 Cor. 4:4). They can't understand it (1 Cor. 2:16). They think that what you (and I) believe is foolishness.

I remember on a few occasions talking with someone who had no exposure to Christianity at all. And I'm trying to describe my faith in Christ, all the while looking at it through the eyes of whom I'm talking with.

Our faith can appear very strange to those who haven't heard before. We believe that God became a man, born of a virgin. His name is Jesus. We believe that Jesus never sinned in any way shape or form. No swearing, no complaining, no lusting, no disobedience, no unbelief. This is not a Ghandi type person or a Mother Theresa. He was perfect in every way. But, in the end, He died. Actually, He was killed by the Romans, who were incited by the Jews. His death was a painful, suffering death upon the cross. Jesus died this way because God was punishing Him, not for His own sins, but for our sins. We simply need to believe in Him and we can be forgiven. After Jesus died, they laid Him in a tomb, and rolled a stone in front of the tomb. But, three days later, Jesus Christ arose from the dead. As we believe in Him, we are granted to share in His resurrection life -- eternal life forever.

There are some strange things there. A virgin birth. A sinless life. A dead man coming to life. God punishing a perfect life. Forgiveness by belief in Jesus. Resurrection from the dead. But, these are the things that we believe. There is a power in these things (which we shall see later in my message). We ought not to be ashamed of them, even if they sound strange to other people, because of what this truth has done for our soul. Instead, we ought to be bold in speaking up, which is the opposite of being ashamed. We ought to put our beliefs out there for others to hear.

That's how the early church operated. That's how the early church grew. The evangelistic methodology of the early church was boldness. They were simply bold to tell others what they had seen and heard.

Perhaps you remember the story (as recorded in Acts, chapter 4). Peter and John were boldly proclaiming Christ to the people (Acts 3:11-26). But, when the religious leaders heard about it, "they laid hands on them and put them in jail" (Acts 4:3). The next day they were brought before the high priest and the "rulers and elders and scribes" (Acts 4:5) to give an account of their behavior. They preached the gospel, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And although they were "uneducated and untrained" the religious leaders were amazed at these men as they observed their boldness (Acts 4:13). The counsel "commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). "When they had threatened them further, they let them go" (Acts 4:21).

Do you remember the prayer meeting that resulted? They praised God for all that happened. Then, they asked, "and now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bondservants may speak Your word with all boldness" (Acts 4:29). "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31).

As a result, "the word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem" (Acts 6:7). They didn't have great strategy. They didn't have great plans. They didn't have some great evangelistic methodology. They were simply bold in declaring the gospel.

It's easy to understand why Timothy was tempted to be ashamed of the gospel. Now, for them, boldness for the gospel meant more imprisonment (Acts 5). This meant more conflict and difficulty (Acts 13-19). And in the case of Stephen, it even meant death (Acts 7). For Timothy to be bold with the gospel, it might very well have meant imprisonment. It might very well have meant death.

That's what it meant for Paul. He was soon to die for the gospel. This is His last letter we have. In fact, that's what it meant for all of the apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, Matthew, Bartholomew, Thaddeus. They died for the gospel. They all died the death of a martyr for their faith. John, the only one who didn't die as a martyr, was exiled to Patmos, which was a prison island like Alcatraz.

For Timothy to be bold with the gospel, he would face all of these things. He had every reason to be ashamed of the gospel.

Now, what about you? You aren't facing threats of imprisonment if you are bold with the gospel. About the worst thing that you will face will be a smirk from your neighbor. So, let's be bold with the gospel. Let's think about every conversation that we have with a non-believer, and think about how we might turn things to speak spiritually. How can we do this? Pray about these things. Saturate your mind with the Word. Find joy in God and it will come as an overflow!

But, Paul's counsel here is "do not be ashamed." Notice the two things that Paul identifies here: "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." That is what we have been focused upon at this point. "Do not be ashamed of the gospel." "Do not be ashamed that we follow crucified Savior." But, there is another thing. "Do not be ashamed ... of me His prisoner." That might sound like a strange thing. Why would Timothy be ashamed of Paul? He was his well-loved father in the faith. He owed everything earthly speaking to Paul. Why would Timothy be ashamed of Paul?

To stand with Paul would mean to join in with Paul's lot. It meant to join Paul in prison. It meant to join Paul in His sufferings. Which is Paul's next point in verse 8, ...

2. Be Ready to Suffer (verse 8b)

You can see it right there in verse 8, ...

2 Timothy 1:8

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

Now, for us in America, these things sound strange. They sound strange because there is very little suffering today for the gospel. Oh, occasionally, you will hear in the news that someone was fired from a job for saying something against homosexuality because of their faith. Or, you may be restricted in the things that you can display on your desk at work. Or, perhaps you might not be able to say certain things to your customers, like "Merry Christmas." But, such "suffering" is hardly the suffering like Paul was calling Timothy to do.

Paul was calling Timothy to "Join with me in suffering." In other words, "Join with me in the same suffering that I'm experiencing." Paul was in prison, soon to be martyred for the gospel. Paul was calling Timothy to join him in prison, if need be. Paul was calling Timothy to be bold enough with the gospel that others may well bring him harm.

In America, such warnings sound crazy. But, in other places in this world, such a call is very real.

I remember speaking with a missionary who ministers all around the world. He told me that one time he was in China. And a Chinese pastor was telling him of the circumstances surrounding his ministry. He said, "When I tell others the gospel and they believe, on the one hand, their life improves. They gain a happiness in their soul. They have a hope to live for. But, in many ways, their life on earth gets worse. They face persecution all around them. Sometimes don't get promoted in their jobs. Sometimes their children are denied entrance into the schools. In a way, I feel sorry for my converts." And I'm sure that there are many other countries across the world where a similar story could be told.

And the temptation not to stand strong is very real. Even in the days of Paul, there were many who chose not to suffer. In fact, all of the believers in Asia were ashamed of Paul. Look down at verse 15, ...

2 Timothy 1:15

You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

They turned away from Paul because they didn't want his sufferings. But, Paul was suffering as any Christian might suffer. This may well have been the case with Demas as well. He "loved this present world," and so deserted Paul (4:10). Contrast the cases of Phygelus and Hermogenes (and maybe Demas) with that of Onesiphorus in the next verse, verse 16, ...

2 Timothy 1:16-17

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me--

Picture Paul in a dungeon someplace in Rome. It wasn't well advertized where he was. It's not like there were big signs identifying where the prison is. So, Onesiphorus, had to ask around, "Do you know where the dungeon is? I have a friend who is there. I'm looking for the apostle Paul. They may have said to him, "Oh, you mean the follower of Jesus? You mean the man on trial for heresy? Do you believe what he believes? I don't know where he is." The same thing with the next guy. "Paul, the lunatic? Are you one of his followers as well?"

Rather than pulling a Peter and denying Paul (Matt. 27:69-75), Onesiphorus continued on until he found Paul and ministered to him while he was in prison. Who knows the sort of suffering he endured by identifying with Paul. He wasn't ashamed of Paul. He joined Paul in his sufferings. Paul desperately wanted Onesiphorus to be remembered. We see that in verse 18.

Though we may not suffer prison in our day and age for the gospel, I do believe that we need to be ready and willing to suffer anything for the gospel. We may suffer financial hardship, because we give of our resources to help those in need. We may suffer fatigue, because we give of our time to help further the cause of Christ.

As followers of Christ, we need to be willing to be misunderstood. We need to be willing to be seen as foolish. We need to be willing to be called names, like "Old Fashioned" or "Puritanical" or "Out of Touch." These can hurt. But, Psalm 27 says, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?" (Ps 27:1).

You may be ridiculed in the classroom, because you don't believe everything that scientists put before you as "facts." On our vacation to California, we stopped in Colorado and went to the Dinosaur Museum. There was a bone that the guide claimed was something like 16 million years old. She claimed that carbon dating had proven how old it was. I didn't feel that it was the right time to argue carbon dating, but I have since looked up carbon dating. It is only theoretically possible, with carbon dating, to go back about 60 thousand years due to the short half-life of carbon 14. So, several millions of years is just not possible. My point here is that as you kids get older and become more educated, you may be able to point this out and argue your point in the classroom. Your professors may ridicule you.

You may be ridiculed by your peers because you don't engage in their sinful behavior. You may be scorned by your boss, because you won't go out with the boys after work, preferring to be with your family instead. Such are the things that we may endure as followers of Christ.

Well, the good news this morning is this -- we don't have to work up the strength in ourselves to be able to do these things. We don't find boldness in our own strength. We don't find the courage to suffer in our own strength. No, it's in the strength that God provides, just like in so much of the Bible! Look again at verse 8, ...

2 Timothy 1:8

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God

Do you see it there? When Paul called Timothy to suffer, it wasn't in his own strength. Rather, it was "according to the power of God." That is, according to the power that God gives.

Paul has already said this in verse 7, ...

2 Timothy 1:7

God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

God has given us a "spirit ... of power." In other words, God strengthens us for the ministry to which He calls us. This is my third point, ...
3. Trust the Power of God (verses 9-10)

Let's catch the flow again from verse 8, ...

2 Timothy 1:8-10

... but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

When Paul describes the power of God, he reminds Timothy of the gospel. This is the power of God. These are some of the richest words in all of the Bible, which speak of our salvation! And yet, I don't think that they are very well known. So, let's just pick it apart, phrase by phrase.

He Saved Us.

This is the core of the gospel. This is the work that God does in our souls. He ... saves ... us. We don't save ourselves. God is the One who does the saving.

This implies that we were in trouble and needed rescuing. Here's an illustration appropriate for today. The hurricane had come our way, and we were unprepared. The winds blew and rain and hail pelted our house. Windows were broken, the power was out, a flood of water approached our house, and we were in distress. We had no other resources at our disposal. We cried out for help, and Jesus rescued us. He brought us to safety.

That's what Jesus did for us. He rescued us from our sins, which had brought upon us the condemnation of death. But Jesus, dying upon the cross paid our ransom. Through faith in Him, we are free. Where once our minds were darkened, He has given us light (Eph. 4:18). Where once we were blind, now we see (2 Cor. 4:4). Where once we were dead in our sins, now we live (Eph. 2:1-3). Where once we were far off, God has brought us near (Eph. 2:17). He Saved Us.

He Called Us.

"He called us," as verse 9 says, "with a holy calling." See, when God saves a soul, He transforms a soul. God doesn't save us from our sins,

only to let us return to our sins. God doesn't rescue us from our sins, only to let us continue in our sins.

No, He saves us from our sins that we might be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4). He saves us to be a holy people (1 Peter 2:9). He saves us to serve Him. God makes us new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). He calls us to put off the old self and to put on the new self (Eph. 4). The call for Timothy to suffer, was a part of his "holy calling."

Not By our Works.

Look again at verse 9, "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works." This is the great reality of the gospel: it comes to us free of charge. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

We don't work for our salvation. We don't repay our salvation with works. Rather, we respond to our salvation with joyful service to the one who saved us and called us.

And I tell you here, church family, that this is oh, so important. We can easily forget that we are saved "not according to our works." There is within the soul of every one of us a works mentality. We think that we are rewarded for what we do. We think that we deserve a reward for what we do. And yet, salvation is a gift to us. It is totally unmerited. It is totally undeserved. It is "by grace." It is "through faith."

Jesus said, "Come to me all who are weary and heaven laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). We are saved, merely by coming to Jesus, placing our burdens at His feet. We are saved by crying out for help! We are saved when we turn from our sins and trust in our Savior.

The next phrase brings this out a bit further.

By His Purpose.

2 Timothy 1:9

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace

In other words, it was God's purpose to save us. He's the one who entered the storm on a rescue mission. He's the one who came to earth with a saving plan in mind. He's the one who initiated it. He's the one who carried it out. He's the one who will bring it to completion.

It is "His own purpose and grace." People often think that they are saved of their own will. But, it's God's purpose to save. It's God's will that saves us. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13). Lest you doubt this, look at how verse 9 ends : "according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (verse 9). Literally, it was "before time began."

In other words, before God created the world, He purposed in His heart to save us by His grace. Before Adam and Eve ever existed; before the human race fell into sin; before we ever needed a Savior, God knew that He would save His people from their sins. God knew that He would send His Son to be the sacrifice for our sins.

And the clear sense that you get here is that we were given Jesus Christ, long before any of us had ever sinned. His grace "was granted to us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." In other words, before time began, we were given grace in Christ Jesus.

All that goes to highlight the grace of God. If God decreed our salvation before time began, according to His purpose, then how much did we do to accomplish our salvation? Nothing. And that's the point of grace. It's totally apart from anything that we do.

By the appearing of Jesus.

Look at verse 10: "but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus." This plan from eternity past stepped into time, when Jesus Christ put on flesh and blood. This is describing Christmas. This is describing the incarnation. Jesus Christ coming to earth. Jesus came out of the shadows and into the light. Jesus stepped onto the stage, to accomplish everything that God had given Him to do.

He was born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life. He was offered up as the Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Though our salvation was granted to us in Christ Jesus "from all eternity", it just hadn't been paid yet. In some regards, Jesus gave us grace on credit. He granted us grace, before He paid for the debt. But, in taking of flesh and blood, Jesus was able to pay for the debt. He paid for it upon the cross -- dying for our sins, dying as a substitute in our place, taking God's wrath for us.

Look at what Paul highlights for us in the work of Jesus. He abolished death. I trust that you can see it right there in verse 10, "but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death." Jesus Christ abolished death by dying Himself.

Now, it's not that He did away with death. Rather, it's that Jesus Christ made death to have no power anymore. He took away the sting. Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we can rejoice: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? ... thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

Though he is surrounded by the smells of death and his own approaching death, Paul knew that Jesus Christ had conquered death. This is why Paul can look death in its face with no fear.

Finally, let's look one more time at verse 10. Jesus Christ:

He brought life.

He Saved Us, He Called Us, -- Not By our Works, but By His purpose, By the appearing of Jesus, who abolished death and brought life. Look once more at verse 10, ...

2 Timothy 1:10

but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Jesus Christ "brought life" Jesus Christ "brought immortality to light." Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is Easter! It is as though we see Christmas and Easter both in the same verse!

The gospel is so great. We have no reason to be ashamed of it! Find the gospel powerful in your life. I will end with the story of Polycarp. Polycarp was a contemporary of John; he was disciplined by John. Polycarp lived a long time, and when he was very old, he was brought before the Romans. The Romans said basically, "Out with the athiests!" Christians were accused of being athiests because they didn't worship the Roman emperor, who was the "true god". So, the Romans said, "Death to the athiests!" And Polycarp answered back, "Yes! Death to the athiests!" He knew that they were the true athiests! He was bold even in his death.

The emperor threatened Polycarp with the raging fire that could burn him to death. Polycarp said he was not afraid. The emperor asked Polycarp if he would not just offer up incense to worship the emperor, the "true god", and Polycarp refused to deny God Himself. It is recorded that he said, "Eighty and six years I have served Him. How then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?" Polycarp was burned at the stake. He was not ashamed of the gospel!

That is the very thing that will give us the power to not be ashamed -- trusting the power of God in the gospel.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 28, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John MacArthur, "Ashamed of the Gospel". pp 23-24.

[2] Ibid, p 86.