

Living in God's Church Today

Do Not Be Ashamed of Christ

2 Timothy 1:8-12

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Introduction

John MacArthur tells the story that during the Boxer Rebellion in China (1899–1901), extreme nationalist Chinese fomented a campaign of terror against officials of foreign governments, Christian missionaries, and even Chinese Christians. After they surrounded a certain mission station, they sealed all exits except one. They placed a cross in the dirt in front of the open gate and told the missionaries and students that anyone who walked out and trampled the cross would be spared. According to reports, the first seven students who departed trampled the cross and were sent on their way. The eighth student, a young girl, approached the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, carefully walked around the cross, and was immediately shot to death. The remaining 92 students, strengthened by that girl's courageous example, also walked around the cross to their deaths.¹

Professing Christians throughout history have struggled to maintain a clear testimony to Christ. There has always been a temptation to be ashamed of Christ. And in some instances, people have paid with their lives when they have not been ashamed of Christ.

When Paul wrote his Second Letter to Timothy, Christianity was a tiny religion in a world of people who were antagonistic toward the gospel. As far as we know, all the apostles of Jesus Christ—except for the Apostle John—died a martyr's death.

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 10.

So there was a tremendous temptation to deny Christ when confronted and called upon to do so. There was a constant struggle of being ashamed to call oneself a Christian and be identified with Christ.

Timothy was by nature a timid young man. He was not an outgoing and extroverted young man. He was not bold and forceful. Yet, he was faithful. Paul saw Timothy as his righthand man. Paul was Timothy's faithful associate overseeing the work in Ephesus. Timothy was to oppose false doctrine by teaching the word of God faithfully and accurately.

So, in that context, Paul urged Timothy not to be ashamed of Christ. Paul's exhortation is as relevant today as it was on the day he wrote this letter to Timothy.

Scripture

Let's read 2 Timothy 1:8-12:

⁸Therefore 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, ⁹who 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, ¹⁰and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. (2 Timothy 1:8-12)

Lesson

2 Timothy 1:8-12 shows us several ways Christians guard against being ashamed of Christ.

Let's use the following outline:

1. By Sharing in Christ's Suffering (1:8a)
2. By Remembering the Gospel (1:8b-10)
3. By Fulfilling Our Calling (1:11-12a)
4. By Knowing Whom We Have Believed (1:12b)

I. By Sharing in Christ's Suffering (1:8a)

First, Christians guard against being ashamed of Christ by sharing in Christ's suffering.

Paul wrote in verse 8a, **“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel....”** Since, according to the previous verse (1:7), God had given believers a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control, Paul urged Timothy not to be ashamed of **the testimony about the Lord**, that is, the gospel message concerning Jesus Christ. Paul did not want Timothy to be **“ashamed”** to name the name of Jesus because he was afraid of potential persecution. At this time of writing, Paul was a **prisoner**, and he did not want Timothy to be ashamed of Paul either.

Interestingly, Paul did not say that he was “Rome's prisoner” or “Caesar's prisoner” but he said that he was **“his prisoner.”** Paul made it very clear that he was in prison because of his relationship with Jesus Christ. And he was glad to suffer for being a follower of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, one must remember that Paul was in a first-century prison in Rome. Some of you have visited someone in

prison. They are generally clean, well-lit, and may even have air conditioning. Not so in a Roman prison! It was dark and dank. There was probably the constant stench of human waste. Most likely, the air circulation was very poor. Prisoners were coughing and retching. There was no such thing as a six-foot space between one prisoner and the next. It was a most terrible place to be. And yet, Paul urged Timothy not to be ashamed of Christ by sharing in Christ's suffering.

By the way, let me add one more thing. In the New Testament, when suffering is spoken of it is usually not suffering due to one's failing health. A person who has cancer, for example, may suffer a great deal of pain. However, suffering in the New Testament is invariably not that but rather suffering for the sake of Christ. Being a disciple of Jesus may bring persecution and suffering for the sake of believing and proclaiming the good news of the gospel.

Our culture is becoming increasingly secular and opposed to the gospel. A growing number of people know little or nothing about Christianity. They vehemently oppose any Biblical morality. Christians are being shouted down in the public square and unbiblical practices such as sexual orientation and gender identity are now celebrated in our culture. Christians must winsomely and graciously proclaim the good news of the gospel. This is no time to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. And we must be willing to share in suffering for the gospel. That is our calling in the present day.

So, let me urge you if you are a Christian to take a stand for Biblical truth in your circle. When people want you to affirm someone who wants to identify in the gender opposite to how God created them, Biblical love and truth should compel you to call a person in accordance with creational reality. When your company wants to finance women to go out of state to

get an abortion, speak against the practice of abortion. When you receive an invitation to a same-sex wedding, decline the invitation to celebrate an event that is contrary to Biblical truth.

I think it was John Stonestreet of Breakpoint who said that Christians need to develop a theology of being fired. We are not yet at the point where we will be thrown into prison for our Biblical convictions. But, we are at the point where Christians face being fired if they do not conform to the company's unbiblical policies. That is a very real and growing possibility for Christians. And the choice is either to be ashamed of Christ or to suffer with Christ.

II. By Remembering the Gospel (1:8b-10)

Second, Christians guard against being ashamed of Christ by remembering the gospel.

Paul wrote in verse 8b, “... **but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.**” I want to suggest three truths about the gospel that we are to remember.

A. *The Gospel Is God's (1:8b)*

First, the gospel is God's.

Paul wrote in verse 8b that “**the gospel [is] by the power of God.**” The first thing we are to notice is that the gospel did not originate with Paul. It did not originate with any human being. It originated with God. It is God's gospel.

Every human attempt to frame a way of salvation, whether it is Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddhism, has humans doing something to earn eternal life. All religions call for some form of works righteousness to enable a human being to earn his or her way into eternal life.

But, only in the gospel do we find that God comes to us. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect and sinless life. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. And then God accepted his substitutionary sacrifice by raising him back to life again on the third day. And God even gives us the gift of saving faith to believe that Jesus did that for us.

B. The Gospel Saves Us (1:9a, 9c-10)

Second, the gospel saves us.

Paul wrote in verse 9 about God **“who saved us..., not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”** Paul made it clear that salvation is God’s work. He called us effectually to himself by **“his own purpose and grace.”** It was because of **Christ Jesus** that God was able to do this. Jesus lived a perfect life and paid the penalty for our sin so that we might be reconciled to God. And the destiny of God’s elect was determined **before the ages began** in eternity past.

One of my professors at seminary was Dr. D. A. Carson. I remember in one class he stressed that no Christian would ever get to heaven and then boast that he was there because he had made the right choice whereas his unbelieving friends did not make the same right choice. Believers get to heaven because God chose us because of **“his own purpose and grace.”** God did not look down the corridor of time and see who would chose him. Rather, he chose believers in eternity past, and in time we experienced his grace and were enabled to believe in Jesus and be saved. I was somewhat surprised that in that class some students struggled with the concept that salvation is all of God. We contribute our sin but even the faith

we exercise is a gift from God's grace.

Paul then went on in verse 10, **"...and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."** Salvation has been shown and made clear through the first coming of Jesus. The word **"appearing"** is from the Greek word for "epiphany" (*epiphaneia*) and usually refers to the second coming of Jesus. But here in this verse, it refers to his first coming. The Greek word for **"abolished"** (*katargeo*) means "to cause something to become idle, inactive, inoperative, or useless." Death still exists but it is no longer a threat to Christians. Jesus' first appearance took away the power of death and showed us (by the resurrection of Jesus) the future that awaits all those who are believers in Jesus Christ.

A little over two years ago, the entire world went into a lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were told that if we all isolated ourselves from each other for several weeks, then we should be able to get rid of COVID-19 and get back to normal. As we all know, that did not happen. Recently, I have reflected upon how so many Christians were just as fearful of COVID-19 as were non-Christians. I understand that no one wants to die before his time. But it seems that fear paralyzed so many Christians. And yet, when we think of the gospel, and verses such as 2 Timothy 1:10, we should not be afraid of death. Jesus has **"abolished death"** and so it should not hold the same terror for Christians as it does for non-Christians. Jesus has **"brought life and immortality to light through the gospel"** and so it should make Christians full of hope and joy and unafraid in a way that non-Christians simply cannot understand.

C. *The Gospel Sanctifies Us (1:9b)*

And third, the gospel sanctifies us.

Paul wrote in verse 9b that God **“called us to a holy calling.”** The gospel transforms people. The gospel makes us new creations in Christ. The gospel makes us love God and hate sin. The gospel gives us a love for people. The gospel makes us want to serve others. The gospel makes us want to shout the good news so that others might receive it too.

III. **By Fulfilling Our Calling (1:11-12a)**

Third, Christians guard against being ashamed of Christ by fulfilling our calling.

Paul wrote in verse 11, **“...for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.”** For the sake of the gospel, Paul **“was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.”** Paul saw himself as fulfilling three different functions. A **“preacher”** was a “herald.” In ancient times, when important news was to be announced, a herald would go to the public places and shout out loudly the good news to the people. That is what a preacher does: he proclaims the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to the people. **“Apostle”** relates to Paul’s unique calling as a messenger sent by Christ to authenticate and write down what people are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man. And finally, as a **“teacher,”** Paul was to instruct people in the doctrine of the Scriptures in light of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Paul concluded his thought by saying in verse 12a, **“which is why I suffer as I do.”** Paul wrote this letter to Timothy while he was in prison. He had endured enormous suffering for the sake of the gospel, the good news that had now transformed

his life.

Paul's calling as an "apostle" was unique. Jesus no longer calls men to serve as apostles, since the canon of Scripture is closed. He does, however, call men to serve him as preachers and teachers of the gospel. Each year, our Presbytery ordains men to the gospel ministry of the word and sacrament. However, to keep up with population growth, we need to ordain a vastly greater number of men. Moreover, we need to send out a vastly greater number of missionaries all around the world to preach and teach the good news of the gospel.

IV. By Knowing Whom We Have Believed (1:12b)

And fourth, Christians guard against being ashamed of Christ by knowing whom we have believed.

Paul wrote in verse 12b, **"But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."** Even though Paul was in prison and likely enduring great hardship and difficulty, he was not ashamed to suffer for Jesus and the good news of the gospel. Paul had a deep experiential knowledge of Jesus. He was not committed to some philosophical idea or vague general principle. He had an historical encounter with the resurrected Jesus Christ, and he was a transformed man. Moreover, Paul was convinced that his life in time and eternity was completely secure in Jesus. No hardship, no difficulty, no suffering would ever shake Paul's confidence in the saving and keeping power of Jesus.

Recently, I read a quotation from R. C. Sproul. It read something like this, "Our assurance of salvation is not because we hold on to Jesus but because Jesus holds on to us." My eternal destiny is not based on how strong or weak my faith is.

Sometimes faith wavers and one wonders whether one has enough faith. But it is not faith that is important. It is the *object* of our faith that is the key. Jesus will never lose a single soul that has been given to him by the Father. Oh, how comforting this is to any believer who is struggling with assurance of salvation.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed 2 Timothy 1:8-12, we should surrender our lives daily to Christ.

I heard a story on Harry Reeder's podcast (Today in Perspective) about a woman who told her pastor that she wanted to have an open casket at her funeral. She also wanted to have her Bible in one hand and a fork in the other hand. She wanted her Bible because it was in the word of God that she encountered the God of the word. The gospel changed her and she was not ashamed of Christ. She was sure that she was going to be with Jesus for all eternity.

When the pastor asked her why she wanted to be buried with a fork in her hand, she said that when one had dinner at someone's house, after the meal was over, the hostess would say, "Keep your fork." And we all know that the best part of the meal was yet to come. And this lady wanted to testify to everyone at her funeral that the best is yet to come.

Friend, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you know that the best is yet to come. But until that time, let me encourage you not to be ashamed of Christ. And the way to guard against being ashamed of Christ is by sharing in Christ's suffering, remembering the gospel, fulfilling our calling, and knowing whom we have believed. Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. <https://tampabaypresbyterian.org/SermonAudio>.
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