

2 Timothy 1:1-18 “God’s Purpose in Christ”
Judges 13:1-7
Psalm 131
Matthew 1:18-25

November 27, 2011

Introduction: “He Will Save His People from Their Sins”

If you are looking for a type of Christ -
for someone who shows us a picture of Jesus -
Samson is a rather odd choice.
Samson was as flawed a judge as ever judged Israel!

And yet his birth narrative has strong parallels to the birth of Jesus.
Samson is the one who will begin to save his people from the Philistines,
just like Jesus is the one who will save his people from their sins.

If you think about it, the parallel works very well.
Samson – the flawed judge – *begins* to save his people,
and only begins to save them from their physical foes;
Jesus – the perfect king – saves his people *entirely*,
and he save us from *all* his and our enemies.

God seems to enjoy using partial pictures!
No one in the OT ever prefigured Christ fully.
There were lots of partial types and shadows.
For that matter, *since* the incarnation, no one ever pictures Christ fully either!
And yet, our God uses *us*!
The same God who used the deeply flawed Samson to point us to Jesus,
will use you and me to point the nations to his Son.

And so it is fitting that we sing Psalm 131 in response to God’s word.
Psalm 131 affirms that “my heart is not haughty.”
I do not think of myself too highly.
I am content with where God has put me.

Sing Psalm 131
2 Timothy 1

1. “According to the Promise of the Life that Is in Christ Jesus”: the Eschatological Focus of the Incarnation (v1-2)

¹*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,*

²*To Timothy, my beloved child:*

Paul uses his standard opening - but as usual,
he includes a hint of where he is going in the introduction:

"according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus."

We saw last time that 1 Timothy concluded with an emphasis on "life."

1 Timothy 6:12 - "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called."

1 Timothy 6:19 - urging the rich to be "rich in good works"

"thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future,
so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and have life abundantly" -

that abundant life - that eternal life -

is nothing less than the life that is in Christ Jesus;

it is the life of the Son of God who came in the flesh.

We often focus on the death of Christ as the central act of redemption -

and rightly so, because the cross is at the center of the gospel!

We focus on the resurrection, because in the resurrection of Jesus,

he triumphed over the power of death forever!

But neither the death nor the resurrection of Christ would have any real power

if it were not for the Incarnation.

We hear of the incarnation of the Son of God in our gospel reading, Matthew 1:18-25.

So hear now the Word of our God from Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

(which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The reason why the Second Adam became a life-giving Spirit

is because the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ,

is the Word of God who came in the flesh as "Immanuel" – God with us.

And in 2 Timothy, Paul says that he is an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

according to the promise of the *life* that is in Christ Jesus.

That life is nothing less than the life of God himself come in the flesh.

And Paul blesses Timothy in the name of God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord
with grace, mercy and peace.

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some of you have asked questions about the “Peace” that we share at the Lord’s Table.

The root of the idea comes from the early church,
which sought to put into practice the apostolic command
to “greet one another with a holy kiss”

The standard Greek greeting was "Chairein" (greetings!)
Paul replaces that with "charis" (grace).

The standard Hebrew greeting was (and still is!) "Shalom" (peace).

I think we have forgotten what "peace" is.

Peace is not merely the absence of conflict.

You have peace -- you have shalom -- when everything is right.

Peace -- shalom -- is a state of well-being.

When there is peace between us
there is joy and contentment and vitality.

We saw this when we went through the Psalms of Ascents.

Peace is one of the main themes that we heard repeatedly throughout:

Psalm 122 – “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!

May they be secure who love you!

Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!

For the sake of my brothers and companions I will say,

‘Peace be within you!’”

Psalm 125 asks the LORD to “do good” to his people,

and concludes, “Peace be upon Israel!”

Psalm 128 speaks of the prosperity of Zion

which comes when the people of God live in the Promised Land,
with lots of children,

and also concludes, “Peace be upon Israel!”

To wish “peace” (shalom) to someone else is to wish all of God’s blessings upon them.

Think of that famous hymn,

“When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,

when sorrows like sea billows roll;

whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,

"It is well, it is well with my soul."”

The peace that passes understanding is not the absence of conflict –

rather, it is my well-being *in spite of* whatever conflict may surround me!

Paul knows well that Timothy is not experiencing “absence of conflict.”

But he blesses Timothy with “peace” anyway!

And he adds a characteristic Christian emphasis on *mercy* -

since it is only by God's mercy that his grace and peace come to us.

Now, I say this to you every Sunday morning.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I could say "Good morning" - but that would be to greet you in the way of our culture.

Paul takes the cultural conventions of his day (Jewish and Gentile),

and transforms them into a distinctively Christian greeting.

And this is the heart of what we are asking you to do in "the Peace"

that we speak to one another at the Lord's Table.

It will feel awkward to say "the peace of Christ be with you"

but the point is that the same grace, mercy and peace

that has been proclaimed to you,

you are now proclaiming to others.

The passing of the peace is a demonstration of the priesthood of all believers,

as you declare to others the peace that has come to you in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What we are doing here is restoring to the people of God

a place in the service that rightfully belongs to you.

I, as a minister of the gospel, declare to you the peace of Christ – the *pax Christi*

which Jesus has established.

Then you, as the people of God declare that you are at peace with one another.

Now, if you are *not* at peace with one another,

then you would be a hypocrite to say that you are!

This is why Jesus says to leave your gift at the altar and *go* be reconciled to your brother!

If you need to do that today – you do have a few minutes as we come to the Lord's Table!

You have a chance to make peace with your brother.

But Paul says that this peace – this grace – this mercy

is rooted in the "promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus."

The eternal Son of God became all that we are, by nature

so that we might become all that he is, by grace.

2. “I Am Reminded of Your Sincere Faith”: Fanning the Flames of the Spirit (v3-7)

³ *I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you*

constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴ *As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.* ⁵ *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.*

In verses 3-5, Paul emphasizes the importance of memory.

“I remember you constantly in my prayers”

“I remember your tears”

“I am reminded of your sincere faith”

And what is more, he also remembers both his ancestors and Timothy’s!

Paul clearly indicates that faithful Israelites in past generations

were believers with a clear conscience.

Even though Paul is a first-generation Christian,

he states that his ancestors were faithful Christians as well

as they looked forward in faith to the Messiah – the Christ.

This same faith also dwelt in Lois and Eunice,

Timothy’s grandmother and mother.

But Paul also remembers Timothy’s tears –

doubtless a comment on Timothy’s anguish in his labors for the people of God.

In Luke 7, the penitent prostitute washes Jesus’s feet with her tears.

In Acts 20, Paul speaks of how he exhorted and admonished the church with tears.

In 2 Corinthians 2:4, Paul speaks of how he wrote 1 Corinthians “with tears”

Hebrews 5:7 says that Jesus offered up his prayers with loud cries and tears

in the days of his flesh.

In the scriptures, tears are not especially a sign of “sadness,”

but of anguish – of the depth of feeling that things are not the way they should be.

And Paul also remembers Timothy’s “sincere faith” –

the word “sincere” is literally “unhypocritical” –

it is a faith that is without hypocrisy.

A sincere faith will also be a weeping faith –

a faith that longs for things to be the way they should be!

That is why Revelation 7 and 21 emphasizes how Christ will wipe away every tear from our eyes

- because *then* everything will be as it should be!

And it is for this reason – because of Timothy’s sincere faith,

that Paul then calls *him* to remember something:

⁶*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,*

In 1 Timothy Paul spoke of how Timothy had received his gift through prophesy
by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (the eldership).
But here, in 2 Timothy, Paul emphasizes his own role –
through the laying on of my hands.

Several of you have had hands laid on you –
whether as elders or as deacons.
I would “remind you to fan into flame the gift of God,
which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”

The gift is not my gift – nor is it mine to give! –
It is God who gives gifts – it is Christ Jesus who ascended on high,
and gave gifts to men.

But through the laying on of my hands, God gives his gifts to the church.

Our egalitarian age doesn't like to hear that.
We prefer hearing the part about the election by the congregation
(which is also true – and essential to proper functioning church order).
But here, Paul emphasizes the importance of the laying on of the hands of the elders –
and especially his own apostolic hands.

Presbyterians believe in apostolic succession.
The apostles ordained the first bishops and deacons –
and therefore we believe that except in the most extraordinary circumstances,
only those who are ordained should ordain others.
The result is that all Presbyterian ministers, elders, and deacons
can rightly claim to be ordained by those who were ordained by those
who were ordained by the apostles.

Why is this important?
⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

In the challenges and trials and anguish that Timothy faces,
he needs to remember what Spirit he has.
“Spirit” here should be capitalized.
It is the Holy Spirit of whom Paul speaks.
In the same way that the Spirit of God came upon the prophets in the OT,
so also the Spirit of God,
the Spirit of power and love and self-control,
has come upon Timothy –
and upon *you* who have been ordained by the laying on of my hands.

But it is possible for this gift to lie dormant.
It is possible for the fire of this gift to burn low,
so that it is mere embers that remain.

Therefore, Paul says to Timothy,
“fan into flame the gift of God.”

The reality of the presence of God’s Spirit does not disappear from the believer –
but it may need to be fanned into flame once more!

Why is this so important?

This is where Paul goes in his central focus on the gospel in verses 8-14.

3. The Purpose and Grace of God “Now Manifested” in the Incarnation (v8-14)

a. The Point: Share in Suffering for the Gospel by the Power of God (v8)

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,

Why does Timothy need to fan into flame the gift of God?

Because Timothy needs to share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Paul remembers Timothy’s tears – his anguish – and Timothy’s sincere faith.

But as Paul himself is preparing to die for the sake of the gospel,
he warns Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.

The word “testimony” is the Greek word “marturion” – which means “witness.”

Because of those who were *not* ashamed of the witness – the marturion –
eventually this word comes to mean “martyr” –
one who suffers (and dies) for the sake of this witness, of this testimony.

You hear echoes here of Romans 1:16 –

“I am not ashamed of the gospel” –

as Paul now calls Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,
nor of me his prisoner,

but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

b. God Saved Us and Called Us, Not Because of Our Works, But Because of His Purpose and Grace (v9)

⁹ who saved us and called us to [or with] a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace,

Verse 9 speaks of God’s “call”.

When Paul talks about God’s “call” –

he is not talking about some general “call” that goes out to everyone.

Jesus uses that general sense of “call” when he says,

“many are *called* but few are chosen.”

Paul, however, uses the term call, to refer to God’s internal work
of *calling* you into a state of salvation.

Think of Romans 8:29ff where Paul says “those whom he predestined, he also called”
or Romans 9:11-12 where he says,
“in order that God’s purpose of election might continue,
not because of works but because of him who calls...”
Or 1 Corinthians 1:9, “God is faithful, by whom you were called
into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Paul’s idea of “calling” is an “effectual calling” –
when God calls you back from death into life,
you are made alive with Christ;
his call brings you into fellowship with his Son.

There are a dozen other passages in Paul that emphasize this same idea of God’s effectual call.
God did not save us or call us because of our works,
but because of his own purpose and grace.
There are echoes here of Ephesians 2 – “it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith, and this is not your own doing;
it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Only God can save.

And this is demonstrated most clearly in how God’s purpose and grace
have been given us

c. God’s Eternal Purpose in Christ Now Manifested in the Incarnation and Resurrection (v9-10)

which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, [“before times eternal”] 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,

Here in verses 9-10 you see how the incarnation of Christ is at the center of Paul’s gospel.
At the end of verse 9 Paul emphasizes the *purpose* of God –
how he gave us his grace in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

Listen!

think about what Paul is saying here!

Before the ages began – before the creation of the world –
he gave us his grace in Christ Jesus!

Before all history, God determined to save us.

And he gave us this grace “in Christ Jesus” before the ages began.

I know!

The Messiah didn’t exist yet!

But God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit –

had already purposed our salvation in Messiah Jesus.

The whole of redemptive history, from the promise of the seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 to the Virgin birth in Matthew 1, was part of this divine plan and purpose.

What we remember in the season of Advent is how the whole plan and purpose of God came together in the incarnation of his Son.

You hear this in verse 10, where Paul says that God's purpose and grace "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."

The "appearing" of Christ frequently refers to his future appearing - when he will come to judge the living and the dead - but here Paul uses it to refer to his first "appearing" - the incarnation.

And in the incarnation of the Son of God he has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

I want you to see something here:

Paul has made no reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus yet. Jesus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (and certainly the death and resurrection of Jesus are essential to the gospel! That is the good news!)

But Paul's focus here is on the *appearing* of our Savior Christ Jesus. His appearing in the flesh is what abolished death and brought life and immortality to light *through* the gospel.

The incarnation brought life to our humanity and the way the incarnation brought life to our humanity was through the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

But without the incarnation, without God coming in the flesh, there would have been no gospel.

Only God can save. But only a man could bring life to his fellow men.

d. Which Is Why I Suffer – Confident that He Will Be Faithful (v11-12)
¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do.

And Paul says that is why he suffers.

He was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher for the gospel, "which is why I suffer as I do."

If God came in the flesh to abolish death and bring life and immortality to light

through the gospel,
then those who preach the gospel should expect to suffer with him.

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.

Do you know whom you have believed?

Do you have that sincere faith? – that faith that is without hypocrisy?

Or are you ashamed of him?

Are you ashamed to say that you know him and love him?

If so, repent!

It is true that Paul is speaking primarily to pastors (elders, deacons),
but as we have seen all through the pastoral epistles,
the officers of the church are merely supposed to be exemplary Christians!
All believers are called to suffer with Christ.
No Christian may be ashamed of the gospel!

Maybe you hear this and say,

“Of course I believe the gospel – and no I’m not ashamed of the gospel.
Why don’t you get to something practical?”

There is nothing more practical than the gospel!

Every moment of your life,
the devil is trying to lure you into thinking that the gospel is irrelevant!
If he can convince you that the gospel is irrelevant to everyday life,
then he has won!

Through the incarnation,

through the Virgin birth,
through the Son of God taking our human flesh to himself,
Jesus has abolished death and brought immortality and life to light
through the gospel!

So if you are being selfish in your marriage,

then, in that area of life, you are not believing the gospel.

If you are pursuing your career in a way that steps on others,

then, in that area of life, you are not believing the gospel.

If you being mean and cruel towards others,

then, in that area of life, you are not believing the gospel.

This is why Paul says in verses 13-14,

e. And Therefore, by the Holy Spirit, You Should Too (v13-14)

¹³ *Follow the pattern of the sound [literally, the “healthy”] words that you have heard from me,*

in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

For Timothy, this has to do with how he preaches.

Follow the pattern of the sound words – preach the same message that I have preached.

For you fathers and mothers, it has to do with what you teach your children.

For all of you, it has to do with how you speak to one another – and to all those around you.

The pattern of sound words – the healthy doctrine that you have heard
from Paul, from Timothy, from others pastors, from me,
follow this pattern “in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

We saw that in 1 Timothy Paul didn’t speak much of the Holy Spirit.

He makes up for it in 2 Timothy!

You guard this good deposit “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.”

This is why Paul has no fear for the deposit that has been entrusted to him – and to Timothy.

Because “I am convinced that he is able to guard [it] until that day” –
until the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: the Eschatological Focus of Those Who Belong to Christ (v15-18)

¹⁵You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— ¹⁸may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Yes, there will be those who fail –

Phygelus and Hermogenes are named as two who “turned away” from Paul in Asia.
Perhaps they were afraid that to be closely identified with Paul
would harm their standing.

After all, Paul was a prisoner of the emperor – and if they were identified with Paul,
they too might suffer.

But Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul’s chains.

When he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me,
and “he often refreshed me.”

In Roman prisons – as in many places in the world today –
prisoners had to provide their own food.

So if no one cared for you, then the guards might (or might not) take pity on you.

This is the reason why Jesus said to visit those in prison –

because they might only be able to eat if someone visited them!

But Onesiphorus did all this because his focus was not on his reputation –

he didn't care what people thought of him;
he cared for this servant of Christ who had been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel.

And so Paul says, "May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!"
What matters to the Christian is "that Day."

Too many of you are obsessing over other days.
It may be a child who is about to be born.
It may be a job that you don't have that you want;
 or a job that you do have that you don't want!
It may be the day when you will finally get that thing that you want!

(I think that is what I most despise about the commercialism of Christmas:
it is designed to focus our desires on the *things* that we want,
rather than the true meaning of Christmas – which is the *One* we desire!

The coming of Advent reminds you once again
to fix your hearts on "That Day" – the glorious Day when our Lord Jesus Christ
will judge the living and the dead.