

Unashamed of the Gospel

2 Timothy 1:6-12

Confidence in God who promises to preserve his own will empower you to proclaim Christ when fear tempts you to be silent.

LTS: Luke 9:18-26

This morning I need to begin our time together with a confession. Several days ago a man came to my house to examine our roof. When he knocked on the door, hunter (our four-legged security alarm) greeted him with a bark. I greeted him with a polite handshake that, truth be told, was offered in a way that strategically communicated that the ensuing conversation needed to be brief and businesslike. I had no time for smalltalk.

Somewhere during the course of our verbal exchange about shingles, skylights, and rain gutters I must have said something that made him realize that I am a pastor. He made the kind of polite quazi-religious comment that salesmen tend to make in the middle of attempting close a sale.

In an instant I realized he had just opened the proverbial door for me to engage with him about the gospel. I could have asked him that diagnostic question about what he would say to God if he had fallen off my roof and suddenly found himself lying on the ground before the pearly gates hearing the voice of God ask, “Why should let you into my heaven?”

I could have asked him if he attended church somewhere, or whether he had ever read the Bible? I could have asked him if he considered himself a good person and then given him the “good person test.” To be sure, there were probably ten different ways I could have responded to this young man that would have led us into gospel conversation. So what did I say? Nothing. I said NOTHING. And I confess that to my shame.

Looking back on that encounter with my young roofer friend, I have asked myself, “Why didn’t I speak for Christ?”

- Perhaps it was because I was in a hurry to get on with the “important” business my day.
- Maybe it was my fear that if I offended him he would rip me off, or fail put his best effort into the work on my roof.

- Or maybe I just didn't want to risk getting into a contrary religious discussion that could lead to any number of unfortunate outcomes... for me.

The fact is, all of those reasons have nothing to do with Christ and they had nothing to do with the man's eternal soul. Rather, my silence had everything to do with self-preservation. In short, I have to confess to you that in my encounter with that young man I was, in that moment, ashamed of the gospel.

I share this with you this morning not for personal catharsis, or to get it off my chest, as they say. No, I share this with you because I think if you were honest with yourself, you too, would have to admit that there have been times – perhaps many times – when you failed to speak of the glory of Christ in his saving work on man's behalf because you were ashamed of the gospel. And if you are willing to admit that, then this message is for your strengthening, conviction, and edification.

In Paul's second inspired letter to Timothy he is determined to graciously, albeit forthrightly, address this problem in Timothy's life. Now, to be sure, Timothy was a faithful minister – no doubt. Paul was proud of him for his exceptional devotion and loyalty. He had been given many difficult assignments and had been faithful to discharge them all. But there had apparently been times when Timothy had been ashamed of the gospel. He failed to speak when there was opportunity to direct a conversation to Christ. He failed to take a stand for Christ when it might cause embarrassment. He held back from full disclosure when Christians (and therefore Christ) was in the crosshairs.

In his defense, however, the adversarial pressures he frequently faced were a hundred times more intimidating than what we typically encounter. The kinds of temptations we face as we try to faithfully proclaim the excellencies of Christ hardly ever rise to the level of true suffering. But Paul suffered frequently – sometimes severely – and he expected Timothy to join him.

In fact, one could make the case that the message of this entire letter is an appeal NOT to flee personal suffering as a result of gospel ministry, but to resolve to suffer well when necessary for the sake of the gospel. For example:

- 1:8 “Share in my suffering.”
- 1:11-12 “I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher which is why I suffer.”
- 2:3 “Share in suffering as a good soldier.”
- 2:9 “I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal.”

- 2:10 “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect.”
- 3:11 “My persecution and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch... persecutions which I endured.”
- 3:12 “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”
- 4:5 “Endure suffering
- 4:6 “I am already being poured out like a drink offering.”
- 4:10 “Demas has forsaken me.”
- 4:14 “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm.
- 4:16 “At my first defense No One stood with me.”

This is the kind of ministry Timothy was called to and gifted for. Was it a ministry that brought him joy? Yes! Was it a ministry that bore fruit in the souls of many a lost person? Of course! But in doing it Timothy needed to understand that from time to time it would require him to suffer. And he should not shrink back from it. Lets begin our time together by reading the text.

Rad 2 Tim. 1:3-12

I see three hooks to hang our thoughts on this morning. They are...

- I. A Call to Courageous Gospel Suffering: (6-8)
- II. A Gospel Worthy of Our Suffering: (9-12a)
- III. A Promise Sufficient to Our Suffering: (12b)

I. A Call to Courageous Gospel Suffering:

Read 1:6-8

1. I have often said from this pulpit that the Fruit of the Spirit listed for us in Gal. 5:22 is not a comprehensive list. The fact is, the H.S. evidences his presence in any number of spiritual fruit. Humility, for example, is not in the list, nor is courage (just to name

two) but they are certainly a qualities produced by the Spirit of God in the Child of God. What Paul is saying here is that while there may be many unnamed fruits of the spirit, Fear is not one of them – at least not that faithless kind of fear mentioned here in verse nine.

2. What kind of fear is Paul thinking of? Not the fear of the Lord. That certainly is a fruit of the Spirit. No, here Paul is speaking of the kind of fear that is translated in the NASB as “Timidity.” The GK word is sometimes translated cowardice. Ouch! He’s talking about a state of fear due to a lack of courage. It is a shrinking back in the face of a perceived (real or imagined) threat to self.

- The command “do not fear” is the most often repeated command in the Bible.
 - Gen. 15:1 Abraham - promise of a son
 - Exodus: God repeatedly said “Fear not.”
 - Deut: Boarder of the promise land, “Fear not.”
 - Joshua at the Jordan: “Be not afraid...”
 - Whenever an angel appeared with a message form the Lord - “Fear not.
 - The angels at Jesus’ empty tomb - “Do not be afraid.”
 - When Jesus apeared to disciples after resurrection, “do not be afraid.”

3. That kind of fear is NOT of the Spirit. You may ask, Well, what does the Spirit give us when faced with an encounter we perceive may be threatening? Paul tells us (2 Tim. 1:7):

- He gives us Power: Jesus told the disciples, “You shall receive power when the H.S. comes upon you.” This isn’t the power of personality, or the power of persuasiveness. It is the power of the Spirit of God to turn enemies of God into sons of God.
- He give us Love: Now this one IS in the Galatians list of fruit. This love is agape. This is not erotic love (eros). It’s not brotherly love (Philadelphia), it is volitional love. It is a love that acts and moves intentionally for another person’s good. When you choose to take advantage of an opportunity to share the gospel of Christ, the H.S. fills your heart with a love for that person – regardless of race, religion, culture, or gender.
- He gives us Self Control. Some versions render this “discipline” or “a sound mind.” It’s the opposite of the “depraved mind” of unbelievers

in Rom. 1. Here the idea is that the Spirit of God gives us the ability to think clearly when your emotions may otherwise be tempted to run amuck. He gives you the capacity to say what God wants you to say when you are sharing the gospel of Christ.

3. “Therefore” (8) because the Spirit of God who indwells you grants you the necessary Power, Love, and Self-control, “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me his prisoner.”

4. The phrase “Do not be ashamed” corresponds to the “spirit of fear” mentioned earlier. The word ashamed means to feel shame, to be embarrassed, or to lack courage.

- Beloved, if we are going to be faithful to “Proclaim the excellencies of Christ in all things, to the glory of God in the joy of all peoples,”” its going to require personal courage. IN fact, I dare say that for most of us we have MORE than enough theological education to effectively engage people with the Gospel. We are educated FAR beyond our obedience! The problem is NOT a knowledge problem. What we have is a COURAGE problem!

5. So Paul says, “Don’t be ashamed about the testimony of our Lord.” What is that? It’s the Gospel. The testimony. The witness of Christ.

- 1 Tim 2:5-6 “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.
- What Paul is saying is, Timothy! Don’t be ashamed of the gospel! Don’t be a coward, don’t shrink back, don’t wimp out when God gives you opportunity to share the “glad tidings,” the “good news,” the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Rather, share in my suffering for the gospel. That is, dive into the frey even if you perceive a threat (whether real or imagined) or imbarassment self. Speak boldly “by the power of God’s Spirit. The “power of God” will give you the capacity to suffer well (when necessary) as you share the gospel.

6. This is Paul’s Call to Gospel Suffering. And that brings us to the second point...

II. A Gospel Worthy of Our Suffering: (9-12a)

Read 9-12a

1. Paul is telling Timothy (and us) that we should be unembarrassed and unreserved about the gospel because it is so robust and so significant and so powerful and so God exalting that it is Worthy of any amount of suffering we may ever have to experience.

2. Why is this gospel worthy of our suffering? Because the gospel is all about what God has done for sinners. NOT what man can do to earn his salvation, but what God has done to secure our salvation. What did God do? What we read next comes as kind of a doxology to God.

A. It is the gospel of the God who saves:

- 1) “Who saved us.”
- 2) God was not obligated to save sinners. It would have been just for him to allow us to receive the punishment we deserve.
- 3) We are all recipients of the most wonderful thing God could have done for us. He saved us from eternal judgment! Why wouldn’t we be willing to suffer momentarily since God has secured our eternity?

B. It is the gospel of the God who calls:

- 1) “And called us with a holy calling.”
- 2) Paul is NOT talking about the call that goes out through the preaching of the gospel. That is the general call.
- 3) Paul is speaking of the effectual call. In his mercy God didn’t leave it to us to choose him, he called us to himself. Paul famously writes to the Romans about this (Rom. 8); “Those whom he called he also justified.”
- 4) If you are a believer in Jesus Christ it is not because you were smart enough to understand, and wise enough to make the decision. No, if you are a child of God it is because you were adopted by God. He called you. (1 Cor. 1:26 Consider your calling, brethren...)

C. It is the gospel of Grace alone.

- 1) “Not because of works but because of his... own grace.”
- 2) Nearly every person I talk to about salvation says they believe God will accept them because they are good. But that is not the message of this gospel.
- 3) By grace you have been saved, through faith...”

D. It is the Gospel of God's Sovereign Grace:

- 1) Notice Paul says, Not because of our works, but because of his own purpose. It was God's initiative to save sinners.
- 2) God has a cosmic and eternal purpose for saving sinners. It is so that for all eternity Jesus, His Son, will be honored and glorified by the redeemed.
- 3) This is a statement of God's sovereign grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus.
- 4) But it is not merely sovereign grace. It is also transcendent grace.

E. It is the gospel of grace that is in Christ

- 1) "in Christ"
- 2) Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No One comes to the Father but by Me.
- 3) Acts 4:12 Peter declares that There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

F. It is the gospel of Transcendent grace.

- 1) "Before the ages began"
- 2) Saving grace is transcendent grace because God determined to save a host without number before the world began.
- 3) The author of Hebrews referred to this as the Eternal Covenant in which God the Father promised to give to the Son a people who would be to the praise of His glory forever and forever.
- 4) Jesus said (Jn. 17:24) Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."
- 5) Ponder this, beloved. The reason the gospel is worthy of your suffering is because it has been the very mission of God to save sinners through his Son even before He created the world.

G. It is the gospel of Incarnate grace

- 1) “Now manifest in the appearing of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”
- 2) The word “appearing” is epiphaneia, From which we get the word Epiphany which means coming (i.e. Christmas).
- 3) This gospel is the announcement of the grace of God. And this grace appeared in the world first as a baby, and then as a man who fulfilled all the O.T. promises of the coming Christ.
- 4) This Jesus is the promised King of Israel, King of kings and Lord of lords, the Christ of God. He is the one who accomplished this salvation and makes the gospel possible.

H. It is the gospel of Death Destroying Grace:

- 1) “Who abolished death.”
- 2) By His resurrection he rendered death useless.
- 3) Jesus declared, “I am the resurrection and the life... whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

I. It is the gospel of Life Preserving Grace

- 1) Brought life and immortality to light.”
- 2) “Immortality” is simply a word that gathers up everything involved in the promise of “eternal life.”
- 3) “For God so loved the world that He gave his own begotten Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.
- 4) And how does God apply all of this to the practical need of the sinner?
- 5) He tells us (10-11) “through the gospel.”

3. My friends, this is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the crown jewel of the universe. Nothing is more beautiful. Nothing is more powerful. Nothing is more worthy of our life, our love, our all than the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

4. And for this Gospel (v.11) Paul was appointed a preacher and apostle, and teacher. And he says, “This is why I suffer as I do.”

- A. Beloved, does not thankfulness compell us to share this gospel?
- B. Does not love for the lost require us us to proclaim it?
- C. Does not the glory of God demand that we declare it?

5. Now someone will ask, how can I gain such a fearless, courageous, devotion to proclaiming and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, you gain it the way Paul did. We’ve seen...

A Call to Courageous Gospel Suffering:

A Gospel Worthy of Our Suffering:

Now finally we come to,

III. A Promise Sufficient to Our Suffering:

1. You want to know why Paul was not ashamed of the gospel? He tells us in v. 12.

Read v. 12

2. If you are reading from the ESV the end of the verse says, “He is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” The NAS reads, “He is able to keep what I have committed to him until that day.” So which is it?

3. Well, if you read the commentaries they are split on the subject. But I have my opinion.

4. I think the whole letter of 2 Timothy is nothing less than Paul strtegetically crafting his last words to encourage Timothy to be faithful in proclaiming and ministering the gospel of Jesus Christ without shame or cowardice even in the face of personal suffering, even if it costs him his life.

5. The temptation to be ashamed of the gospel stems from the thought that if I stand firm and call people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ alone it may cost me a lot.

- It might cost me my reputation.
- It might cost me promotion or my job
- It might cost me my health

- It might cost me some very dear friendships
- In the end, it might cost me everything.

6. So I think Paul is saying, Timothy, I have counted the cost. I have weighed everything I stand to lose against the eternal value of being faithful to Christ. And I have concluded that the wisest and most fruitful course of action is to count everything as loss for the sake of Christ.

7. Where does he get that kind of courage? It flows from his confidence in God. So he writes, “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.

Dan’s Repentance: The man at the picnic table

- Different ethnicity
- Different culture
- Different paradigm for life.
- May the Lord grant him saving grace because of the gospel message he heard.

My prayer this morning is that God would use this text and this message to shake many of us free from our irrational fear, embarrassment, and cowardice so that we can say with Paul, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Confidence in God who promises to preserve his own will empower you to proclaim Christ when fear tempts you to be silent.