
Sermon Notes

August 8, 2021

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

A Few Good Nobodies 2 Timothy 1:8-14

Nobodies

- ❖ Oswald Chambers: “All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.”
 - the life of NT Timothy is proof-positive of this observation
 - young, shy, reluctant, a tendency toward sickness... not at all what you might consider to be a natural leader
- ❖ Focus on the gift, not on the package the gift comes wrapped in
- ❖ Apart from God’s power and grace, Timothy is unsuited to accomplish much of anything that will matter for eternity
 - true for Timothy
 - true for Paul
 - true for us

Not Ashamed

- ❖ Of the gospel (the testimony about our Lord)
 - crucifixion was the supreme emblem of shame and dishonor
 - crucifixion was reserved for the worst of the worst
 - the cross of Christianity was a scandal
 - the temptation to keep one’s belief in a crucified Messiah on “the down-low” would have been every bit as strong then as it is for some today
 - flying below the radar
 - keeping quiet about the gospel
- ❖ Of Paul (the testimony of Christ’s prisoner)
 - for some, Paul’s suffering and imprisonment is dramatic proof that the Holy Spirit is not with him
 - those who want to undermine Paul’s ministry see his circumstances as the direct result of weak, defective faith, an unspiritual nature and the Holy Spirit’s disapproval
 - imprisonment for the sake of the gospel carried with it a social stigma
 - “I may be in Caesar’s jailhouse, but Nero is not my captor!”
- ❖ “Timothy, instead of being ashamed, grab hold of the power God makes available to join Paul in suffering for the gospel.”
 - not a call to masochism

- a realization that suffering is part of the gospel (*cf.* John 15:18-20, Acts 9:15-16, 2 Cor 4:8-11, Phil 1:29, 2 Timothy 3:12)
- as was true in the 1st century, those who are serious about following Christ in the 21st century will inevitably face persecution of some sort
- Jesus promises a blessing to those who suffer persecution for His sake (Matthew 5:10-12)
 - when we suffer for Christ, we do not do so alone
 - our suffering is shared among those who have, are and will experience suffering for the sake of the *gospel by the power of God*

Gospel Grace

- ❖ Paul links the power of God to endure suffering for the gospel with the grace that makes the gospel possible
 - from first to last, the gospel is the good news of God's grace
 - the consequence of salvation is consecration
 - God saves us *because of his own purpose and grace*
- ❖ When did God first pour out His grace on you?
 - God gave us His grace *in Christ Jesus before the ages began*
 - since God set His grace upon us before the world began that He will continue to keep us in His grace right up to the finish line of this life and beyond
 - this is the bedrock upon which our assurance of salvation is built

- ❖ This good news is a message worth suffering for
 - Paul says, "I suffer as I do because the gospel is so completely compelling. glorious and essential for all to hear."
 - Paul begins by telling Timothy not be ashamed and ends by declaring that HE is not ashamed
 - Paul knows WHO he has believed in
 - this is a world of difference from knowing WHAT he believes
- ❖ God is looking for "a few good nobodies" who know they cannot succeed in serving Him through their own strength
 - "nobodies" know that it is not in **SPITE** of their weakness but **BECAUSE** of their weakness that God uses them
 - through the persevering grace of the Holy Spirit, "nobodies" keep the pattern of sound teaching and guard the gospel that is entrusted to them

Personal Application

1. Reread the quote from Oswald Chambers with which this message began. What is God doing to put His glory and power on display in your life? How are you cooperating with and depending on the Lord as He does so?
2. What is your attitude toward suffering for the gospel? Are there any ways in which you are ashamed of the gospel or of those who boldly and faithfully proclaim its truth?
3. On what do you base your assurance of salvation? How would you explain assurance to someone who is unsure or skeptical about whether such assurance is possible?