

## Gospel-Centered Courage

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Last week we looked at Paul's heart and discovered that he had an all-consuming passion for Christ. We saw that his main desire was to honor Christ whether it be through life or death. I decided to make this a two-week series which I am calling "Following Christ Through Persecution." This week I want to take a look at Paul's heart for the Gospel and how it affected his whole mindset. As we do, it is my prayer that we would follow in his footsteps and cultivate that same heart to see people come to Christ.

2 Timothy 1:8-14

*<sup>8</sup> Therefore 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, <sup>9</sup> who 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, <sup>10</sup> 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, <sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, <sup>12</sup> which 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. <sup>13</sup> Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

Let's pray.

Once again we begin with the word "therefore," and like I have said, when we encounter words like that, we need to go back and see what was said before this passage so that we can rightly understand what the passage is saying in context.

First, a little back story. 2 Timothy was written by Paul the apostle to Timothy, his "son in the faith" and the pastor of the church in Ephesus. Like we saw last week with Philippians, 2 Timothy was also written from a prison in Rome. The difference is, the persecution that Paul and Christians throughout the Roman Empire had been facing had been kicked into overdrive. Paul had actually been released from his first imprisonment for a short time and that is when he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Since then, Paul had been arrested again for being a "ring-leader" for the Christian faith as part of Nero's persecution of Christians. Unlike Paul's confident hope of being released during his first imprisonment, he had no such hope this time. The prison Paul was in when he wrote 2 Timothy was a dark, cold dungeon. He was in chains and was abandoned by virtually all who were close to him for fear of persecution. This time he faced imminent execution. He asked young Timothy to come to him one last time before he is martyred.

When someone knows his life is coming to an end, only the most important things matter to them. In this letter of 2 Timothy, which ended up being his final letter before his death, Paul urged Timothy to remain faithful in the ministry of the Word – to hold on to sound doctrine, avoid error, accept persecution for the gospel, put his full confidence in God's Word, and preach it relentlessly. You can almost hear Paul's urgent cry to Timothy, seeing him as the one who

would carry on the gospel ministry Paul had begun. The spread of the Gospel was at stake. And Paul's heart yearned to know that the light would not go out.

Think about that for a minute. Paul had guarded the integrity and purity of the Gospel like a mother guards her newborn child. Paul knew the power of the Gospel to change lives and he knew that the faithful preaching of the Gospel needed to continue at all cost. Now as his last days were at hand, he turns to young Timothy to now be the one who faithfully guards the truth by God's power.

- I. Paul begins by reminding Timothy of his sincere faith that was also evident in his mother and grandmother. He knows Timothy was feeling the pressure of sure persecution himself and lets him know that he was praying urgently for him.

Apparently, Paul sensed that Timothy was fearful and maybe even on the verge of wanting to hide his faith. Who wouldn't understand, given the extreme circumstances? If Timothy were caught preaching the Gospel, especially as a leader of a church, he could very easily end up just like Paul – in a cold dungeon on his way to sure death. How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

Paul, however, encourages Timothy in verse 5, affirming Timothy that his faith is sincere, and then in verse 6 Paul admonishes him to not let his preaching gift die down, but to “fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” Paul also reminds him in verse 7 that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” This would have undoubtedly served to bring Timothy much comfort and to focus his attention on God's power and ability instead of his earthly circumstances.

This is where the “therefore” comes in in verse 8. Paul says:

*<sup>8</sup>Therefore 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*

Paul gives Timothy two parallel imperatives, or commands.

First, “do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner...”

Why would someone be ashamed of the Gospel?

1. Being men-pleasers. This involves being afraid to fall out of favor with people's opinion. Being socially outcast comes with very powerful emotional trauma. And the more people care about their social status, the more traumatic it is. We don't like being rejected or looked down upon. This, especially in today's time, is a powerful hindrance to sharing the gospel.

**Galatians 1:10** <sup>10</sup>*For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

2. The threat of persecution – This, of course, is a much greater cause for fear, especially in Paul and Timothy’s day, but more and more in our day as well. Persecution usually includes taking away one’s rights, necessities, or freedom. It often is associated with the threat of prison, torture, or being charged fines or being labeled a public enemy or outcast so that living in society becomes more and more uncomfortable and unbearable.
3. The threat of death – This is persecution taken to its fullest degree.

The second thing Paul commands Timothy to do in verse 8, “but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.” Paul tells Timothy to go ahead and just settle the matter in his mind now before it happens. To come to a conclusion what he is going to do when the time comes that he faces persecution, because it is bound to happen sooner or later. The reason why you settle it in your mind before it happens is that when it happens you won’t be thrown off. You won’t stumble and not know what the right thing to do is. After all, Jesus warned his followers that they will certainly face persecution:

**John 15:18-20** <sup>18</sup> *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.*

Paul himself, later in this letter to Timothy, warns him,

**2 Timothy 3:12** *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

In their commentary on 2 Timothy, Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell write, “This first century theology needs to be central in our twenty-first century theology. Persecution is inevitable for serious Christians.”<sup>1</sup>

But Paul was not only calling Timothy to settle the matter, he was calling him to weigh the gospel in his mind and heart as more weighty, more important, more urgent, than preserving himself from persecution.

The apostles, in Acts 5, knew the importance of the Gospel and that they must obey God over men, even if they were to suffer for it.

**Acts 5:27-32** <sup>27</sup> *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. <sup>30</sup> The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell. *Preaching the Word: 1-2 Timothy and Titus*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 192.

Look what happens in verse 40-42:

*<sup>40</sup> and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. <sup>41</sup> Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. <sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.*

Suffering is not fun. It is never something we choose to happen to us. And it's not something we endure in our own power. That's why Paul calls Timothy to do it "by the power of God" as it says in verse 7.

But it's vitally important for us to understand WHY the Gospel is of such importance. Why would men die preaching it? Why would God ask US to be willing to preach it unashamedly even in the face of persecution?

Romans 1:16-17 gives us the answer:

*Paul says, <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

The power of God to save and transform lives comes through the Gospel! The saving righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. **The Gospel message is God's chosen method or means through which He sends His power to save people.** This is absolutely imperative that we understand this. It takes God to change people's hearts. We have no power to change one single life. Nobody can be persuaded intellectually to become a Christian. There MUST be a change of heart. They MUST be born again! And that is something only God can do. And the means through which He sends His power to earth to change people's hearts, to bring about the new birth in a person, is through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

**Point #1: Do not be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for all who believe.**

- II. So Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed of the Gospel, but be ready and willing to suffer persecution because of it. Next, as if to leave no doubt just what that Gospel is, Paul spells it out all right here in verses 9-10.

*<sup>9</sup> who 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, <sup>10</sup> 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,*

Five things we need to see in these two verses that make up the Gospel:

1. God is the one who alone saves us – As it says in Psalm 3:8 – “Salvation belongs to the Lord.”
2. God calls us to a holy calling – in other words, God requires that we turn from our sinful life and He separates us from the world and makes us His people. 1 Peter 2:9-10 - *<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*
3. It was not due to any works we could do or any works he would foresee us doing, but because of God’s purposes and grace alone which He ordained before the creation of the world that He would save us, as he says in the last half of verse 9 - *not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,*
4. God’s one means of conferring this salvation upon His elect is through Jesus Christ. That’s why the Gospel has the power that it does. Look at verse 10 - *and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus – Ephesians 2:4-10 <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*
5. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God reversed the curse that was placed onto humanity through Adam’s sin which was “you shall surely die,” and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as it says in verse 10, Christ *abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 Paul says, *<sup>3</sup> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.*

As Paul was reiterating the Gospel to Timothy here in these verses, it’s almost as if these verses would have given Timothy strength, which is exactly what happens. The same power that the Gospel has to save is the same power that the Gospel has to strengthen. But we must know that Gospel and be continually reminded of it.

**Point #2: If the Gospel is the power of God for salvation, we must know the Gospel well.**

III. Paul didn’t just tell Timothy what to do. Paul lived what he preached.

Look what he says in verses 11-12:

*<sup>11</sup> for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, <sup>12</sup> which 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.*

Now I want us to keep in mind that phrase “to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.” That’s going to be very important in a minute.

For now, though, what I think God wants us to see here is that those of us who are further along on the journey of faith need to live our lives as an example to the next generation. Notice in verse 12 we see Paul himself is suffering for the Gospel. Also in verse 12 we see that Paul’s faith wasn’t just based on a system of facts, but a living relationship, a living trust, with the Person of Jesus Christ.

*But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able*

Why was Paul so convinced that Christ was able? Because Paul had experienced Christ’s faithfulness in his life and he walked with him every minute of every day. He had experienced firsthand the faithfulness of Christ over and over again. Which teaches us a valuable lesson, that as we obey God and walk with Him, we will find that our relationship with Him will grow more intimate and close.

But it is important that we should always be mindful to pass on the faith that we have to the next generation or else we will end up like Israel in the book of Judges.

**Judges 2:6-12** <sup>6</sup> When Joshua dismissed the people, the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land. <sup>7</sup> And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the LORD had done for Israel. **Skip to verse 10** <sup>10</sup> And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. <sup>11</sup> And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals. <sup>12</sup> And they abandoned the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the LORD to anger.

**Point #3: Be faithful to live the Gospel-centered life as an example for the next generation.**

IV. Finally, we see in verses 13 and 14 that Paul gives Timothy two more very urgent imperatives or commands:

First, he says:

*<sup>13</sup> Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

If there is any message that the Church, especially the church in America, needs to hear today it’s this!

Basically what Paul is saying is, “In the midst of persecution, it will be easy for you to back off of the message and water it down, or tame it to make it not so objectionable to people of the world. Be sure that you are very careful to follow closely what I have taught you – what the Word of God says – and don’t deviate from it one bit!”

And isn’t that our temptation? To be a little afraid of offending people by such a strong, exclusive message? After all, this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A message that says we are sinners and Jesus is the ONLY way to salvation? That’s going to be looked upon as hateful and bigoted.

But Paul is warning us here, don’t waiver one iota from the message. Let the Gospel stand as it is and allow God to change people’s hearts through it.

But he also says, and this is very important, when you stand for the truth of the Gospel, do it “in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” In other words, our attitude in standing for the Gospel is just as important as us standing for it.

Finally Paul says,

*<sup>14</sup> By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*

Now this is where I want us to look back at verse 12 where Paul says, “*and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.*”

Here he is telling Timothy that just like he had the charge from God to guard the good deposit that was entrusted to him by God’s grace and power, so he urges Timothy to do the same. And what is “the good deposit?” It’s the Gospel message itself and the call and commission to preach it.

Paul is reiterating what he charged Timothy at the end of his first letter to him.

**1 Timothy 6:20-21** <sup>20</sup> *O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called “knowledge,”* <sup>21</sup> *for by professing it some have swerved from the faith.*

Obviously this is extremely important if Paul is repeating it. Obviously there were, in Paul and Timothy’s day, people who distorted, watered down, and changed the Gospel message and amassed for themselves followers who will follow such false teachers because they have itching ears and only want to hear what they want to hear. Does that sound familiar today?

Some people wonder why I’m so adamant and militant to defend the Gospel, especially in light of the many false teachers that are out there today. They wonder, well what’s the fuss all about, Pastor Rob? Why are you being so negative about these people? What did they ever do to you?

Here’s my answer to them:

People are going to hell! Every day someone dies without Christ and they will spend an eternity...AN ETERNITY...in the fires of hell, and they will have no hope and no second chance.

We tend not to think about this very often because it's uncomfortable. But you know what? We need to. We need to allow ourselves to be uncomfortable more often and meditate on the truth that when people die without Christ, they spend an eternity in the fires of hell.

Now keep that in your mind for a moment, and now think about the urgency of telling them about the saving power of Jesus Christ – the only salvation that is offered to us by God.

And now think about those people you hear on TV and read about in books, and the message that they bring the world which says that we need to be positive and optimistic. To pull ourselves up by our boot straps and rise to the occasion. That we can claim a life of victory if we just believe it and confess it. That we God's people should be wealthy and healthy and have no troubles and if you just believe and say the right things and send in your money as a seed faith offering, all this can be yours. And people fill their churches by the tens of thousands. America is flooded with this stuff. And Africa is overrun with it as well.

So excuse me if I get more than a little adamant about hearing this when people are dying and going to hell without hearing the true Gospel, the true good news of Jesus Christ because these false teachers are tickling their ears with feel-good words of affirmation! Never is anything said about sin and the fact that it separates people from God. Never is anything said about God's holy justice and our unholy, depraved state that is under God's wrath. And nothing is ever said about the name of Jesus being the only name under heaven whereby we...must...be...saved!

The great 19<sup>th</sup> century preacher Charles Spurgeon once said, "If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped around their knees. If hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let no one go unwarned or unprayed for."

It's time that God's people stand up, take courage, and unashamedly preach the pure message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ once again!

**Point #4: We must guard the purity of the message of the Gospel that has been given to us in God's Word.**

### **Application**

I had another conclusion to this message until yesterday. I had a list of creative ideas on how you can share your faith with people. If you hear this message and are moved by God and would like to hear these ideas, then email me this week. I actually would love to have my email inbox flooded with emails asking for these ideas because that would tell me that God has moved you to want to be bold for Christ in sharing the message of the Gospel with others.

But I got to thinking...this message is called "Gospel-Centered Courage." What truths would give us Gospel-centered courage? And I believe the Lord showed me yesterday. Three things I want to close with, all of them I have mentioned in this message.

1. I honestly believe that if we would truly get a vision in our mind and in our heart of the truth that people who die without knowing Christ spend an eternity in hell...if somehow we can get this and see it...I believe we will be much more bold and courageous in our faith. I quoted a passage of Scripture last week from 2 Corinthians 5:14 – “The love of Christ *compels* us.” When I think of someone...and I want you to put an actual face and name to this in your mind...but when I think of the countless people out there who are living a Christless, Godless life, will one day be spending an eternity in hell...I am burdened. I am burdened for their souls. I want to ask you to do something this week...will you go to God in prayer and ask Him to burden you for the lost. To give you a greater realization of the fate of those who die without knowing Christ.
2. I also honestly believe that the truth we saw today, that God has chosen those whom He will save before the foundation of the world, that this gives us boldness and confidence knowing that those whom He has called WILL indeed come to Him. That our evangelism is going to bear fruit. It is a definite and sure thing.
3. And thirdly, I believe that if we get a hold of the truth that the Gospel is the means through which God brings His power and grace to earth to save sinners, then we will also be more bold and courageous to use this tool given to us by God. That we will be unashamed to proclaim Christ to the world.