

Not Ashamed

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Date: 17 August 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's second letter to Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 1.

2 Timothy chapter 1, and if you read again at verse 8, 2 Timothy chapter 1 at verse 8, where Paul writes, he says, 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.

But particularly those words at the beginning of verse 8, where Paul says, do not be ashamed. Do not be ashamed.

I'm sure that many of you will remember the ILSFM program. It was called Not Ashamed. Not Ashamed, if you didn't know, it was a half an hour testimony program that aired on ILSFM on Friday afternoons at 12 noon, and it was also repeated on Tuesday afternoons.

And Christians would come onto the radio program, and they would be interviewed on air by Callum Campbell, and they'd share their story of salvation. They would talk about how they came to faith in Jesus Christ, and how the Lord has strengthened them and sustained them throughout their Christian journey.

[1 : 3 3] And it was a great program, a great half an hour program, which I often enjoyed listening to. But you know, I also love the name of the program, because the name of the program, the title that Callum gave to it, it explains and emphasizes what we should be as Christians.

We should be not ashamed. Not ashamed. And you know, is that not how Paul, what Paul said to the church in Rome?

Church in Rome was no different to the church in our day. A church that was seeking to serve the Lord in the midst of a godless generation. It was seeking to serve the Lord while surrounded by a secular society within the Roman Empire.

And yet Paul said to the Romans, he said to them, I am eager to preach the gospel, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

And that was Paul's statement. I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am not ashamed of the gospel. And that's what Paul reminds Timothy here in this final farewell letter.

[2 : 4 9] Paul knows that his ministry is drawing to a close. He knows that he doesn't have long left. He knows that he's on death row. And so with this letter, Paul is handing over, as it were, the gospel baton to Timothy.

And Paul is reminding Timothy in the verses that we're looking at this evening, he's reminding Timothy not to be ashamed of the ministry and not to be ashamed of the message.

He's reminding Timothy not to be ashamed of the ministry and not to be ashamed of the message of the gospel. So there are our headings this evening, not ashamed of the ministry and not ashamed of the message.

First of all, he says, do not be ashamed of the ministry, the ministry of the gospel. Do not be ashamed of the ministry. Look at verse six. Paul says, 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.

For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

[4 : 04] Now, as you know, and as we said last Wednesday evening, Paul's second letter to Timothy, it's a personal and pastoral letter, but it's also Paul's last letter prior to his execution.

Which makes this letter not only a personal and pastoral letter, it's also a precious letter. And last week, we saw how precious this letter is, because in the opening verses, Paul assures Timothy of two things.

He assured him that he's remembering him in prayer. He's remembering his ministry in Ephesus and all the pastoral problems that Timothy had to encounter and endure.

And as we read there in the opening verses, he's remembering Timothy's tears. And all the trials that Timothy has faced. He says, I thank God whom I serve, as I remember you in my prayers, night and day.

And so, Paul was remembering Timothy. He's remembering him in prayer, but he also says that he's reminding Timothy. He's reminding Timothy of the good and godly grounding that he had from his Christian mother and grandmother.

[5 : 12] That even in his family home, Timothy had a firm foundation in the gospel. He had a firm foundation. And Paul says to him, don't forget it.

Don't forget the firm foundation you were given by your mother and your grandmother. For this reason, says Paul in verse 6, for this reason, I remind you to fan and to flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, through your ordination.

For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. And Paul says, I am reminding you of this, Timothy, because my time is short.

I'm going soon. To live is Christ, but to die is gain. Therefore, your role and your responsibility, Timothy, is to pass on the baton of the gospel to the next generation.

And in order to do that, says Paul, fan into flame, fan into flame the gift of God that you have been given as a pastor and a preacher of the gospel.

[6 : 22] For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. He gave us a spirit, not of fear.

And you know, I think that most of us would relate better to Timothy than to Paul. Paul, as you know, he was a person who was very bold in his faith.

He was always out and out for the Lord. He would always speak about the Lord. He had this determination and this drive where he was committed to the cause of Christ 100% 24-7.

But you know, Paul was the kind of Christian, if you saw him nowadays, you'd immediately feel inferior to him. You'd feel such a rubbish Christian. And you'd also feel intimidated by him.

But Timothy, on the other hand, Timothy was someone I'm sure we could all relate to. Because Timothy, as we see from the testimony of Scripture, Timothy was someone who was timid, like us all.

[7 : 25] Timothy was someone who was shy when it came to presenting the gospel. He was maybe naturally more reserved. He was, maybe you could say he was even an introvert. Which is why Paul here is exhorting and encouraging Timothy.

He's reminding Timothy. He's saying, Timothy, fan into flame your gift. Don't let it die out. Don't let it just become embers on a fire.

No, fan it into flame. Fan into flame the gift of God that you have as a pastor and preacher of the gospel. Because God has not given to you a spirit of fear, but a spirit of faithfulness.

He has given to you a spirit of faithfulness. And the thing is, Timothy, Timothy was someone who was aware of his weaknesses. He knew that he was timid.

He knew that he was shy. He knew that he would rather stay in the background than speak at the front. And that's why Timothy, with Paul's encouragement, Timothy pushed himself.

[8 : 32] He pushed himself out of his comfort zone. He pushed himself out of his holy huddle in order to serve and to speak for the Lord. And, you know, my Christian friend, you know, should we not do the same?

Yes, it's difficult. It's challenging. We have these feelings in the pit of our stomach. And yet, the Bible exhorts us. The Bible encourages us. Paul says it.

Fan into flame the gifts which God has given to you. Because we've been given not a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

And yet, you know, far too often we come to a passage like this where it says, Fan into flame the gift of God. And we immediately have this pity patter. And we say, well, I don't have any gifts.

That's Timothy. That's Paul. That's the apostles. That's someone else. I can't possibly do anything for the Lord. What can I do?

[9 : 38] But, you know, we've all been given grace, have we not? And through grace we have been given gifts to use in the service of the Lord.

And whether it's out in the front or in the background, whether it's big or small, we should always be actively asking the Lord for opportunities to serve Him within our congregation and within our community.

There was how Paul reminded the church in Rome of that. He said to the church in Rome, he had given them this great theological thesis in chapters 1 to 11.

And then he says in chapter 12, he says, remember, we are one body. We're one body in Christ with many members. And we all have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

So let us use them. Let us use them. Fan into flame the gifts which God has given to us.

[10 : 46] Because we've been given not a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and self-control. Therefore, says Paul, verse 8, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, not of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

You know, as someone brought up in a Christian home, Timothy would have been aware. He would have been aware of what Jesus said. You remember Jesus' solemn statement where he says, Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory and in his Father's glory and of the holy angels.

Timothy knew that every Christian must not be ashamed. Of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. But Paul here, he not only says, do not be ashamed of Jesus as your Savior.

He also says, do not be ashamed of me as a prisoner. He says, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.

And the reason Paul says this is because at this time, there seems to have been a level of, I would say embarrassment, but a level of fear.

[12 : 07] That's why he says we have not been given a spirit of fear. There was this level of, a level of fear being associated with Paul being in prison. And as you know, throughout his ministry, Paul was in and out of prison.

He was in and out of prison week by week at the start. He was in prison for preaching the gospel. But in 58 AD, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem.

He was brought to the governor, Felix, for his trial to be heard. But Felix kept Paul in prison for two years. He kept him in prison for two years in the hope that someone would pay him, pay Felix, a good bit of money to get him out.

But nobody bothered. So then after two years, he was transferred to Rome. And he was kept under house arrest for a further two years. So he was in prison for four years.

And during that time, Paul wrote letters to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, and also to the Philippians. But around 62 AD, Paul was then acquitted.

[13 : 11] He was released from prison. He was released. He was allowed to go and encourage the church. But his release was short-lived. Because only two years later, 64 AD, Paul was once again arrested, put in prison, and then sentenced to death.

And you know, it was only weeks prior to his second and last imprisonment that Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy, where he was saying that he longed to see Timothy face to face.

But as we know, that wasn't to be. And the reason Paul ended up in prison the second time, or the last time before his death, was because at the time, the Roman emperor was Nero.

And if you know anything about the emperor Nero, you'll know that he hated Christians. He put Christians to death. He often used Christians as lampposts. He would impale them and then light them.

That's what he thought of Christians. He would persecute and punish Christians with every opportunity he could. In fact, when Nero set fire to the city of Rome in July of 64 AD, you remember the great fire of Rome, who did Nero blame?

[14 : 31] The Christians. They did it. And he blamed them for the destruction and the devastation of the city of Rome. And because he blamed the Christians, he used them as the scapegoat, and he saw it as an opportunity to persecute the Christians even more.

Which is why Paul ended up in prison. And that's where he is right now in 2 Timothy. He's there in prison. And he was there from 64 AD to his death in 67 AD.

He was there for three years. And so only weeks before his death, maybe he was dead by the time Timothy received this letter. We don't know.

But from his prison, just prior to his death, Paul is writing this farewell letter to Timothy. And you know, sadly, prior to his death, Paul, as he mentions there, he's alert and he's aware to the fact that there were lots of Christians.

There were lots of Christians who were ashamed of Paul. They were ashamed that he was in prison. They were ashamed that he was someone who was being sentenced to death for the gospel.

[15 : 42] They were ashamed. They were distancing themselves from Paul, disassociating themselves from his mission, and even deserting Paul and leaving him in prison. Because we read in verse 15, we'll look at it slightly more next week.

He says, verse 15, that many of the church in Asia, they turned away from Paul, among whom were these two people, Vigelis and Hermogenes, people who were influential during Paul's ministry.

They were Christians who became ashamed. They were ashamed to be known and named in their community as a Christian for fear.

They had a spirit of fear that they too would be sent to prison and maybe even sentenced to death. And that's why Paul is saying here in verse 8, he's saying, he's exhorting and encouraging Timothy, do not be ashamed of the ministry of the gospel.

Do not 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.

[16 : 54] Do not be ashamed of the gospel. And you know, this is so applicable to us, isn't it? Although we don't have the same fear of persecution, in many ways, some would say it's on its way.

It's not far away. But you know, we don't have the same fear of persecution as those in the first century. And yet, we still have this same fear. The fear of being ridiculed.

The fear of being rejected. The fear of being refused. When we stand up, or when we speak out, for Christ and for his cause.

And sadly, it makes us afraid, doesn't it? Sometimes we're apprehensive to speak about Jesus, or to say something, when we should say something. Sometimes we're even ashamed to be known and named as a Christian in our community.

And that's why Paul is saying to Timothy, he's saying, this is his last thing that he wants to say to Timothy. This is his final letter. He says, do not be ashamed. Do not be ashamed of this gospel.

[18 : 07] Because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to those who believe. And so Paul says to him, do not be ashamed of the ministry. But do not be ashamed of the message either.

That's what we see secondly. Do not be ashamed of the message. He says, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 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.

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, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher.

So having expressed to Timothy that he's not ashamed to be suffering as a minister of the gospel, Paul now emphasizes that he's not ashamed of the message of the gospel.

And Timothy shouldn't be either. And he's not ashamed of the message of the gospel because, well, it's a great and it's a glorious message. It's the best news in all the world.

[19 : 24] It's the good news of the gospel. And of course, Paul isn't ashamed of the gospel because it's that gospel which changed and transformed his life.

And you know, we must never forget that the author of this letter, he was once known as Saul of Tarsus. He was once known as the Pharisee of Pharisees who hated Christ.

And he hated those who followed Christ. And he hated the gospel of Christ. And by his own confession, Paul said that he zealously persecuted and punished the church for proclaiming Jesus as the Christ.

We read the book of Acts and all we see is Paul there. He's beating Christians. He's throwing them in prison. He's putting many of them to death. And at one time, Paul was, or Saul as he was then, he was so vehemently opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ that he wanted to eradicate Christianity altogether until he was completely changed, radically changed by an encounter with the risen Christ.

You remember in Acts chapter 9, Paul is on this killing spree. Or Saul was on the killing spree. He's determined to do more damage in Damascus.

[20 : 49] So he's heading north. And while he's on the road to Damascus, his life has changed. And it's changed not as a result of reason. It's not that somebody reasoned with Paul and said, no, no, you need to think about this.

No. His life was changed as a result of revelation. Paul had an encounter. An encounter with Christ. And that encounter changed and transformed his life.

And you know, my friend, an encounter with Christ in the gospel is always what changes and transforms the hearts and lives of sinners. Nothing else will do it. You know, a man or a woman may be intrigued by Christ and interested in church, but it's only an encounter with Christ.

It's only an encounter with Christ in the gospel that will bring about genuine, conversion. And for Paul, Paul went from being a persecutor of the gospel.

This is the amazing thing. He went from being a persecutor of the gospel to proclaiming that same gospel and being persecuted on account of the gospel. And now, as we read in 2 Timothy, he's been punished for his commitment to the gospel.

[22 : 00] And Paul says, I'm not ashamed of that. I'm not ashamed of the message of the gospel because this message is a great and glorious message which transformed my life and is able to transform the hearts and lives of many others.

It's a message, says Paul in verse 9. It's a message which saved us. It's a message which saved us. It's a message which rescued us from death in sin.

It's a message which redeemed us from slavery to sin, from our blindness and our deadness and brought us to see and to live. It's a message, he says, which called us.

And it called us to a holy calling because the gospel saves, the gospel sanctifies, and the gospel sets apart. The gospel saves, sanctifies, and sets apart.

But none of it, says Paul, none of it. None of it is because of our works of righteousness. As David was saying on the way in, it's 100% grace and 0% me.

[23 : 10] It's all of grace. None of it is our works of righteousness. It's not because we're good or gracious or a great person. No, it's all according, as Paul says, all according to his purpose and grace in our lives.

And this message, he says, has been made known to us. It has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ, the same Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And Paul says, I'm not ashamed of this message. It's a wonderful message. It's the best message in all the world. It's the power of God unto salvation. This is what's going to save hell-deserving sinners.

It's a great and glorious message which transforms hearts and lives. But here's the point. Here's the application for all of us.

If this gospel is such a great and glorious message, then why are we so often ashamed of it? Why are we so afraid to speak about it?

[24 : 27] Why are we so afraid to highlight it to our unconverted friend? If the gospel is such a great and glorious message, why do we stay silent in our homes and among our family?

And I'm speaking to myself. I'm preaching to myself, my friend, before I'm preaching to you. Why do we stay silent in our homes and among our family when we know we should speak up?

Why do we let things go in the workplace without making a stand? Why do we not live lives that distinctly, and they distinctly display and demonstrate to our community that we are those of whom Paul speaks.

We are those who are saved and sanctified and set apart. If this gospel is such a great and glorious message, which it is, then why are we so often ashamed of it outside of these four walls?

Why do we want to keep it to ourselves? Do you know, in his commentary, John Stott, famous preacher in London, he wrote, we are all more sensitive to public opinion than we like to admit, and we tend to bow down too readily before its pressure, like reeds shaken by the wind.

[25 : 54] And you know, it's so true, isn't it? Because in the day and age we live in, Christianity is marginalized. It's minimized. We see the church in Scotland that was once convinced of its position and clear in its purpose and committed to preaching the truth.

But now we see the church conforming to the pressures of the world. We see the church conforming the gospel to the world rather than transforming the world by the gospel.

And the church is becoming, we see it all around us, we see it becoming like the world rather than demonstrating and displaying to the world that we are those who are saved, sanctified, and set apart.

And we may wonder, well, what's happened to the church in Scotland? What's happened? Are we asleep? Most likely.

Are we apathetic? Most certainly. Are we ashamed? Most definitely.

[27 : 10] My friend, the reality is for long enough the church in Scotland has been reluctant or even refused to take heed to Paul's exhortation. Do not be ashamed of the gospel.

Do not be ashamed. Don't be ashamed. Don't be afraid to be known and named as a Christian and part of the church of Jesus Christ.

Don't be afraid to stand up and speak out. Do not be ashamed of the gospel. But of course, this isn't unique to our day. Nothing new under the sun.

And you know, we'd be wrong to think that it is unique to our day. At the end of the 19th century, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, he was asked the question, as you look forward into the 20th century, what are your concerns for the church?

And this is what he said. It's a prophetic reply. He wasn't a prophet, but it was very prophetic what he said. He said, I consider that the chief dangers that confront the coming century, they will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.

[28 : 38] And he wasn't wrong. He wasn't wrong. Because in 21st century Scotland, we have religion without the Holy Ghost.

Christianity sometimes without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and preaching of heaven without hell.

You know, we have prominent clergy more concerned about peripheral things than the primary things of the gospel. We have ministers, too many of them, in the pulpits of our land who are graceless and godless, and have given up.

They've given up on clear biblical instruction. Just like the false teachers Timothy was facing who were soft on sin, loose on the law, and glossing over the gospel, these same men today, and women, in the pulpits of our land, they undermine the inspiration, the infallibility, and the inerrancy of the Word of God.

They deny sin. They deny the incarnation. They reject the virgin birth. They reword the redemption. They ridicule the resurrection. What's more is that they don't preach against sin.

[29 : 53] No, instead, they praise it. They promote sinful behavior, all in the name of Jesus. I ask you again, my friend, what has happened to the church in Scotland?

Are we asleep? Most likely. Are we apathetic? Most certainly. Are we ashamed?

Most definitely. You know, we're not only distancing and disassociating and deserting the ministry of the gospel, we're doing the same to the message. The message of the gospel.

Because, you know, and this is what it's all about. In our day and generation of casual and consumerist Christianity, and I speak to myself saying this, we would far rather concede and compromise in order to remain comfortable than stand firm and stay faithful.

We would rather concede and compromise in order to be comfortable than stand firm and stay faithful. Which is the very reason Paul is saying these words.

[31 : 09] He is exhorting and encouraging Timothy and the church in the coming generations. He says, do not. Do not be ashamed of the ministry and the message of the gospel.

Do not be ashamed of the ministry and the message of the gospel because it is the power of God. It is the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

Do not be ashamed. And God willing, next week, we'll consider Paul's exhortation and encouragement to guard the gospel.

Don't be ashamed of the gospel. But then he says, guard the gospel. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we live in a difficult and a dark day, but we thank thee, Lord, that the gospel has not changed.

The power of the gospel hasn't changed. The message of the gospel remains the same. And Lord, help us then as thy people to stand firm, to stay focused, to stay faithful, to keep preaching and proclaiming Jesus, to keep working and witnessing for Christ.

[32 : 35] Help us, Lord, we pray, in our day and generation to be willing to speak a word in season that all would be done to thy glory and the furtherance of thy kingdom. O forgive us, Lord, we pray, for the times we are ashamed of the gospel where we hide our light under a bushel.

But Lord, help us to let our light so shine before men as Jesus said that they may see our good work and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

O Lord, speak to us, we pray, in our day and generation. Revive thy work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make known, O Lord, in thy wrath remember mercy.

Do us good, we pray, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. We're going to sing again this time in Psalm 25 or again in Psalm 25.

We're just singing from verse 19 down to the end of the psalm. It's in the Scottish Psalter, page 232, Psalm 25, page 232.

[33 : 53] And we're singing from verse 19 down to the end of the psalm. Before we sing, I'm going to just highlight a couple of prayer points from the prayer points that are sent out each week.

This week we've been encouraged, just the free church congregations, I mean there's so much to highlight, to pray for Nairn, Nairn Free Church, that's where Mud or Murdo McLeod is, I'm sure you're familiar with him.

So please pray for that congregation, remember them as they serve the Lord there. They used to be linked to Smithton, there was Smithton, Culloden and Nairn and they've grown so that they're now at an established charge on their own now.

So please continue to remember them. Also to pray for Glasgow City, Glasgow City Free Church, they were worshipping in the centre of Glasgow but their church had damage to it and they're no longer worshipping there, they're now in Partick Free Church on Crow Road.

And so pray for them, pray also for their minister Colin Dow, I think he's been unwell, I'm not sure if he's back to work yet, so please remember him and remember the church plant that's connected to Glasgow City, a church plant in Helensboro, that's where Duncan Murchison is, so if you remember Murdo Murchison he used to sell cars in Stirling, it's his son Duncan, he's serving the Lord there.

[35 : 14] So please remember these congregations, there are many others, remember the congregation in North Uist, a vacant congregation in our presbytery and also the congregation in North Tolstah, pray that the Lord will provide for them.

So just a few prayer points to highlight to you. We're going to sing Psalm 25, sing verse 19 down to the end of the psalm. Consider thou my foes, because they many are, and it a cruel hatred is which they against me bear.

Or do thou keep my soul, do thou deliver me, and let me never be ashamed, because I trust in thee. Let uprightness and truth keep me who they attend.

Redemption Lord to Israel from all his troubles send. We'll sing these verses out of Psalm 25 to God's praise. Consider thou my foes, because they many are, and let me do and let me do and let me do and let me do and let me do and let me bear.

Or do thou keep my soul to love to ever be, and let me ever be ashamed, because I trust in thee.

[37 : 00] Let love and truth keep me to thee attend.

Redemption Lord to me and let me never be ashamed, the Lord to Israel from all his struggles fill us?" Amen.

Thank you.