

Not Being Ashamed of Christ, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7-10

Code: 55-3

We continue our study this morning in the first chapter of 2 Timothy, Paul's last will and testament, the final of his 13 epistles that he wrote, writing this one from a dungeon in Rome about to lose his life and his ministry is well nigh coming to an end. And as he writes, he writes to his son in the faith, Timothy, because he wants Timothy to carry on the work. Timothy doesn't have the strength of character and boldness and courage that Paul, his mentor, had. And it is necessary in this epistle to endeavor to infuse him with some strength that will hold him true to the task as he faces the opposition and the hostility of an unbelieving world.

So Paul writes this letter to Timothy. It is a very personal epistle. Although its truths, no doubt, would have filtered down to the Ephesian church in which Timothy was ministering, it was not written to them, it was written to him. It is personal. It is written from a man of God to another man of God. It is written from a generation to the next generation. It is a passing of the mantle, prophetically, a passing of the baton or the torch to one who will carry on the gospel. Paul, the Apostle, is a victim of persecution, persecution which he knows Timothy will also face and so wants to be sure that Timothy is strong in the face of that persecution.

The epistle, in a sense, can be seen in three different aspects. The first five verses of chapter 1 have to do primarily with motivation. And Paul articulates through implications the motivation that Timothy must have in his heart if he's going to be faithful to the ministry. Secondly, verses 6 to 18 in which we are now studying deals with attitude. There is an underlying and pervasive attitude that is necessary to one who does what God wants him to do. And then finally, beginning in chapter 2, he launches off into specific exhortations related to his ministry. So first the motivation, then laying down the proper and underlying attitude. And then finally the exhortations come as we approach chapter 2.

Now what then is the attitude which Paul has in mind in verses 6 to 18? What is the underlying driving force that keeps us moving ahead in the extension of the gospel? It is the attitude of not being ashamed of Christ. It is an attitude of courage, or an attitude of boldness. It is an attitude that does not equivocate. It is the attitude of no compromise. It is the attitude of confrontation in the face of hostility. It is the attitude of saying what ought to be said no matter who you're saying it to or what the repercussions might be. In a word, courage...the courage of one's convictions. And, of course, obviously, it's hard to have the courage of conviction if you don't have any convictions to start with. So we assume that Timothy had the proper theology and the convictions and Paul is calling on him for the courage of those convictions.

He mentions in verse 8 not being ashamed. He mentions it again in verse 12 and mentions it with reference to Onesiphorus in verse 16. Three times references made to not being ashamed. And I believe that that is the indicator as to what the major message of the text is to Timothy. Timothy is not to be ashamed, not to allow himself to be pressured into vacillating, not to lose heart, lose courage, not to be afraid to speak for Christ because it might cost him his life. He is to be courageous.

In fact, this is nothing new. Paul so lived and did the Apostles as well who followed Christ. And did Christ Himself. All of them who have proclaimed the truth of God have faced hostility. We can go all the way back to the Psalms, as I was reading in the Psalms I came across some interesting statements this week. One in Psalm 40 verses 9 and 10. It says, "I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great congregation, behold I will not restrain my lips, O Lord, You know."

In other words, the psalmist is saying, "Lord, You know I am bold. You know I will not hold back anything that ought to be said."

Further in Psalm 71 and verses 15 and 16, similarly the psalmist says, "My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness and of Thy salvation all day long, for I do not know the sum of them. I will come with the mighty deeds of the Lord God. I will make mention of Thy righteousness, Thine alone." In other words, nothing can withstand my commitment to speak of salvation and righteousness.

And then beautifully stated and concisely in Psalm 119 and verse 46, these words, "For I also will speak of Thy testimonies before kings and shall not be ashamed." So really Timothy is in a long line of the men of God who have not been ashamed to speak His truth. There were men before Timothy and women. During the time of Timothy's life and now even long after, those who are unashamed to speak of Christ.

And, of course, that is the underlying attitude that makes anyone effective. No matter how gifted you are, no matter how prepared you are, how well trained you are, how biblically literate you are, how astute you are, no matter how much opportunity you are granted and how open spiritual privilege is to you, if you do not have courage you will not speak. And so basic to all effective ministry is a certain spiritual courage that says I will live the way God wants me to live and I will speak the way He wants me to speak, no matter what the consequences might be.

So that is that to which Paul calls Timothy...that attitude of courage and boldness that is not ashamed to be identified with Christ, even in a hostile persecuting and deadly environment. But how to do that? How to do that? In chapter 2 and verse 1 he says to him, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," but there's more to it than just saying "be strong," there has to be a way to comprehend the reason and the rationale for being bold. And that's what we have in verses 6 to 18. At first

reading admittedly, even in my own case, I couldn't quite see how it all was hanging together. But I have found in my own Bible study, I don't know if you find this true, that the more you read a passage and I mean read it and read it and read it and read it and reread it hour after hour, day after day, the more it begins to speak in terms of its content. And I don't mean the specifics, I mean you begin to feel what it's saying. You begin to sense the impact of the whole message. And that indeed in this particular section has to do with Timothy's courage. Therefore all the several parts from verses 6 to 18 relate to that.

Now last week we mentioned number one, Timothy, if you're going to have courage, you have to renew your gift. Verse 6, let's look at it again, "For this reason...that is the reason of your true salvation mentioned in verse 5...for this reason that I know you're genuinely saved and genuinely have a strong faith, I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you, of course confirmed through the laying on of the hands of the Apostle Paul as well as the elders of the church and the confirmation of the prophetic Word of God," those last two being told to us in the first epistle. So he says I want you to renew your gift, that's the idea. Timothy, remember the Word from God in prophecy, remember the elders laying hands, remember my own apostolic hands being placed on you, remember that all of that focused on the fact that God had unusually gifted you for ministry. Now that obviously has fallen into a bit of disuse and you need to renew your gift. That's the first place to start in terms of being courageous, kindle afresh your gift.

Courage, folks, rises out of a sense of giftedness. If I know what I'm equipped to do, then I'm going to be bold to do it. If I know God has said, "you are to do this and I gift you to do that," then I'm going to do that. In fact, I have nothing else to do. There is nothing for me to preserve because the only reason I'm here is to do that. So I'm not going to say to myself, if I preach Christ I'm liable to die. I'm going to say to myself, if I don't preach Christ I might as well die. You understand? In other words, I'm not going to say, I don't want to minister my gift, the cost is too high. I'm going to say, If I don't minister my gift my life has no value. Because the only reason I am here is to do what I'm gifted to do. And that's where the sense of courage and the sense of boldness begins, in understanding who I am. That is the proper kind of self-image, not a psychological one but a charismatic one in the true use of the term charisma which is the word here for "gift." I am who I am by virtue of my gift. Take my gift away and you have basically just me left in my humanness. So courage rises out of a sense of giftedness.

Secondly, he says consider your resources. Not only renew your gift but if you are to be bold in the cause of Christ consider the resources you have at your disposal. Somebody might say, "Well, if I launch out, how do I know I'm not going to get out there and get cut off from the cords of power? How do I know how long my extension cord is?" to put it simply. "How far can I go, how aggressive can I be in my ministry without sort of pulling the plug at the other end?"

Well, verse 7 says very directly, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but...implied...God has given us a spirit of power and love and discipline." And I want you to listen to this very carefully. Timothy, God did not give you gifts and then equip you with cowardice. You understand that? That's what the word "timidity" means, deilia, it's the only time it's ever used in the New Testament, it basically means cowardice, fearfulness, embarrassment, shame, weakness, frailty. He is saying God did not give you a gift to be used in the advance of His Kingdom and then give you an accommodating cowardice which would literally negate the gift. But rather He gave you power, love and discipline in order that it might operate that gift. This is a tremendous statement. Any weakness on your part, Timothy, is strictly just not cashing your check because the resources are in your spiritual bank, you're just not drawing on them. Vacillation and denial and a lack of boldness and being ashamed to speak for the Lord or live for the Lord or serve the Lord simply indicates that you're not using your spiritual resources. God didn't give you cowardice, God gave you courage.

And notice these three things, and we could spend a tremendous amount of time on each of them, but wanting to maintain the flow of Paul's thought we'll resist that urge. Verse 7 says God has given us, past tense, already in the bank, power, love and discipline. When you became a believer God gave you power. Why? Because when you became a believer you received the Holy Spirit and Jesus said in Acts 1:8 you shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you. When you became a believer you received divine capacity to love because it says in Romans 5:5 that due to the sufficient justifying work of Christ the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. And when you were saved you received a Holy Spirit who brings with Him His fruit and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and the last one is self- control...or discipline.

In other words, this is something you possess. And if you are timid in your ministry, if you are ineffective, weak and failing to be bold and courageous and aggressive in advancing the Kingdom, it is not God who has given you that, you can assume it is sin because God has given you the resources to do just the opposite.

Now look at the word "power" for a moment, dunamis. That word basically means just what it says, might, dynamic energy. It's among those words in the root word group from the root of which we get the word dynamite, or dynamic. It has to do with dynamic energy producing results. God has given you a dynamic to produce results. It doesn't matter what the opposition is, it doesn't matter how powerful the adversary is, the power of God is there to produce. And, first of all, you have to know you have that power. That's why in Ephesians 1 verse 18 Paul prays for the Ephesians this prayer, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us." He says I pray that you will understand His power that is working within you, "the strength of His might" he calls it in the same verse. And then in verse 20, the same power with which He brought Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. Resurrection power, ascension power, that is to say supernatural power, power over death,

power over natural forces, that's the power that is given to us. Power that is the power of God.

It's a great Old Testament principle, not by might nor by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord. That is not by human might and human power but the power of the Spirit of God. We possess the indwelling Holy Spirit and in Him there is power. That's a tremendous thing to realize. And that does not operate, mark this, in any area of your life other than the spiritual dimension and service to God. You will be as impotent as anyone else, stuck with nothing but your own natural abilities when you're operating outside the spiritual dimension. But when you begin to operate in the spiritual dimension, you begin to operate on supernatural power to effect results that could never be effected apart from that power, tremendous promise. In fact, that power is even beyond our ability to understand. Paul in Ephesians 1 prays that we would understand it. And in Ephesians 3 says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all you can ask or think, according to the power that works in us." It's a marvelous thing to live your life in service to Christ and see that power, to see the power of God operate to change lives and move the Kingdom and exalt the Lord. And you have that power. There is no Christian on the face of the earth walking around who doesn't have that power. You may not be appropriating it because it comes to the one who is controlled by the Spirit of God, the one who has set sin aside and is submitting to the leading of God's Holy Spirit, that's where the power operates.

Secondly, talks about love. And love also is concomitant with the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Love which is shed abroad in our hearts is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes in, deposits the love of God which permeates us and we know that love of which Paul also spoke to the Ephesians, that love which is so surpassing, that love he says which can hardly be comprehended as to its breadth and length and height and depth and it is the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. Now we have not only power but love and shouldn't power operate with love so that it doesn't run amuck, so that it isn't abrasive or abusive or injurious? So that it is compassionate and sensitive, we have that love. That means love toward God and love toward others. That means love that is directed toward whomever we direct our ministry. Tremendous thought. And it is the kind of love, agape, it is the kind of love that is volitional love. It's not emotional love like phileos or a sensual love like eros, it is that love of choice, that highest supreme love where in character volitionally says I will to love you, that's the highest love. It's not a love that is based only on emotion because emotion changes. It's not a love based only on passion because passion ebbs and flows. It is a love based on volition, will, the mind, the highest love...that love which says I choose to love you. And how is it defined? It is a self-denying grace that says I give myself away on your behalf. Directed toward God it means I'll give my life away to serve you. Directed toward others, I give my life away to serve you. It's the same thing. It's that love, Jesus said, that is the greatest love which is willing to lay down its life for the one it loves, John 15:13. It is the love that covers a multitude of evils, Peter says. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, tremendous thought.

And may I add? It is the love that John said was perfect love that casts out fear, 1 John 4:18. Perfect love casts out fear. Let me give you an illustration of that. When I love something supremely I..I lose

all fear of self-preservation. In what sense? One of my children were to fall into the sea and begin to drown, my love for my child would cause me to dive in to rescue my child with no thought of myself because I love my child to the degree that I would have no thought, that is the perfect love that casts out fear. If I loved God supremely I'll put my life on the line in serving God and have no thought of self-preservation because I love Him more than I love myself. The bottom line is very simple--what I love controls my action. And if I love God perfectly then I have no fear in serving Him because if I lose my life in serving Him I have lost my life for the one I love. And if I lose my life in serving men and bringing them the gospel, then I have lost my life in serving the one I love and if they and God are more precious to me than I am to me then that's no loss at all. Do you understand that? So that kind of love casts out fear.

If on the other hand I love myself and I will do everything to preserve myself and my own life and my own comfort and my own success and my own reputation and I live to satisfy me, then I will not sacrifice for God and I will not sacrifice for you or anyone else. I will sacrifice you for me. And I will sacrifice what God wants for what I want. My life can be measured by whom I love. But if I love the Lord God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and my neighbor as myself then I fearlessly serve the God I love and the neighbor I love.

You say, "How can you do that?" The love is there, it's a matter of you walking in the Spirit so the love manifests itself. You must walk in the Spirit and these things are the fruit of that walk.

Look at the third one in verse 7. He calls it discipline. It's the word sophronismos, it's a word used only here in the whole New Testament. It's not a word that we have a lot of illustrations of to determine its meaning. But nonetheless its meaning becomes relatively clear in this usage and in what we know about related words to this word. And the basic idea is, it means the control of one's self in face of praise or pain. In other words, it is ultimate self-control. It is the ability to control every element of your life, whether they're positive or negative ones, whether you're being praised or inflicted with pain. It is that wisdom, that sound judgment, that self-control that takes every feature of life and makes it positive for the advance of the Kingdom of God. It's a rich term. It's more than wisdom, James says, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and holds back none," it's more than wisdom, it's the application even of that wisdom to every circumstance. In Proverbs 2:7 it says, "He stores up wisdom for the upright." But it's again more than just that. It is that totally ordered life in which wisdom is applied to every situation. It is the ability to prioritize. I can put it, I think, in those terms to give it a best understanding. It means I know my priorities. It means whether my circumstances are positive or negative, I master those circumstances to advance the work of Christ. It is the kind of discipline that says I have no wasted motion in my life. I don't spend my life with trivia. I don't spend my life beating the air, to borrow Paul's expression in 1 Corinthians 9. I don't spend my life shadow boxing. I don't waste my motion. I take all that comes into my life and I use that in a prioritization for the advance of the Kingdom.

Now everyone of us is probably sitting here saying, "I'd like to be that kind of person." And that kind of person you are if you cash in on your resources because the Spirit of God is the divine organizer in your life. And I have thought to myself in thinking this thought that if all of the people who are walking around with an organizer in their hand were totally yielded to the organizer in their heart they might get a lot more done for the advancement of the Kingdom. The issue is not how you keep your schedule written down, the issue is how you walk in the Spirit. And I don't want to belie or make irresponsible...those people who are responsible for schedules, I just want you to understand that you do not learn self-discipline in this regard. You do not learn it. It can't be taught to you by any human source. You don't go to college to learn it. You don't go to seminary to learn it. Nobody disciplines you into it. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a divine resource, the ordered life, that belongs to those who walk in the Spirit, who are filled with the Spirit, who are led by the Spirit, in whom the Word of Christ dwells richly. But it is that incredible ability to order your life so that everything fits into the priorities and enables you to do God's work, no wasted motion.

And what a triumvirate these three things are. And every one of us who love Christ would say, "Oh if I had power...oh if I had that supreme sacrificial love...oh if I only had that order to disciplined and self-controlled life that knew only priorities and followed them through." And the word of testimony of Scripture to you is you have it if you want to cash in on it. If you want to yield to the Spirit. These resources belong to us already. Power to do the task, love to fix our eyes on the persons for whom that task is done, both God and man. Discipline to bring every factor in our life into line to accomplish that task, to order every diverse feature of life and put it somewhere in the mix to accomplish the goal. A tremendous approach to life. And again I say they're not natural endowments.

They're not even talking about that in this text, both Paul and the Holy Spirit. They're not talking about the kind of power that some people have in their personality. There are people who have powerful personality, right? That's not what we're talking about, aggressive people, dynamic people. That's not it. It's not love that belongs to some person who just is basically humanly compassionate, tender, generous, kind, thoughtful, sensitive, whatever. And it's not the discipline of someone who would make a good sergeant in the Marines or the discipline of a soldier or whatever. We're talking here about something that's not human at all. We're talking about a divine endowment...not the result of heritage, not the result of environment or instruction but a gift of God. And Paul says, "Look, Timothy, if you'll just consider your resources you can get on with this. You have the power. God has given you the love of God and man that will make you sacrifice your life. God has by His Spirit given you self-control and a discipline to order your life, to stay on the track of priorities no matter what happens. Now if you'll just renew your gift and consider your resources, you can get on with it."

Then there's a third point in verse 8 and that's accept your sufferings. You have to be programmed for rejection. Are you ready for that? You have to be programmed for rejection. People ask me from time to time, "Does it bother you that people disagree with you?" Well I guess in a sense it bothers

me if they disagree with the truth because I like to think people will accept the truth. But my computer is programmed for rejection, you have to know that. We did a radio talk show on Friday and it was interesting. I gave my opinion on the current PTL scandal, some of you may have heard that. I don't know, did any of you hear that on Friday on KKLA, a few of you do...it was a two-hour thing and they asked me my opinion and then people called in to give their opinion of my opinion. And many people agreed but there were a few who violently disagreed. But I'm programmed for that. I'm programmed for rejection. I'm programmed for animosity. I'm even programmed for hostility. I'm programmed for that. I'm programmed for threats from people who have said that if we don't change our message or stop saying something they're going to sue us, or whatever it is. I mean, we're all...we all in service to the Lord need to be programmed for that because if you're programmed for that it doesn't come as a surprise. You understand?

But if you've decided that you're going to live a life that is completely comfortable and you're going to do everything you can to evade that hostility, you're not going to be able to do it and when it comes it's going to cause you to be collapsed. That's the problem.

Look at verse 8. "Therefore because of your gift and resources, Timothy, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me as prisoner." No reason to be of either of us. "But join with me in suffering for the gospel." Stop at that point. That's the idea. Timothy, don't be ashamed, suffer. Join with me, get in the group, Timothy, we're all in it together. "Therefore because of your gift and resources do not be ashamed." In other words, don't be reluctant to preach Christ. Don't be reluctant to name the name of Christ. Don't be reluctantly...or reluctant to do the work of an evangelist, that is to go out on the streets and proclaim Jesus Christ all over the city and take what comes. Don't be reluctant to do that. Don't be ashamed...notice the phrase...of the testimony of our Lord, marturion, the Christian message as a whole, the witness of Christ, the gospel. Don't be ashamed to take a public stand for the gospel, is what he's saying. Don't be ashamed to name the name of Jesus Christ and to proclaim in a herald's voice publicly His death and resurrection. Don't be ashamed to call men sinners, damned and on their way to a godless hell. Don't be ashamed to call them to glorious heaven.

Now Paul is not saying stop being ashamed in the sense that Timothy was showing a lot of shame. It hadn't come to that point but surely he had drifted some. And the tendency was to be a bit ashamed in all circumstances to name the name of Christ. There was, after all, a serious and potentially deadly stigma in being identified with Christ, specially for Timothy in his society where Christians were being thrown in jail and killed. And the society saw Jesus as nothing more than a crucified criminal and Christians were nothing more than rebellious insurrectionists who had burned Rome. It could not only be humiliating to be identified with Christ, it could be frankly fatal. After all, the cross to the Jew was a stumbling block and an offense and to the Gentile was stupidity. At best they would think you an absolute fool. At worse they would take your life.

And so, in verse 8 he says, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony...I love this...of our Lord." Personal possession, yours and mine, Timothy, and he links himself in with Timothy. Our Lord. And then he adds, "Or of me as prisoner." The only thing that could be even close to begin associated with Christ in terms of a dangerous thing would be to be associated with Paul. Since Paul was the leading spokesman for Christ, anyone who identified with Paul was in the same danger Paul was in. And to be linked up with Paul could be fatal, too. For after all he was in a dungeon because he preached Christ. And anyone who preached Christ the way he did could wind up in the same place.

So he says, "Look, Timothy, don't be ashamed to be identified with Christ, don't be ashamed to be identified with others who preach Christ like myself, learn to accept your suffering," literally, join with me in suffering. That's one word in the Greek...one large compound verb, almost too long to translate. Join with me in suffering. Literally to suffer evil together, or to take one's share of evil treatment along with others. It just...it's a big word with a lot of English words to say what it says. But it means...expect it, get in the group. Anybody who names the name of Christ is going to experience it. Chapter 3 verse 12, he says it again, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

So you expect it, you program for it. You program if you're a student and you're at campus and you name the name of Jesus Christ, somebody's going to alienate you. You program your mind for the fact that if you're trying out for a team in school and you have a bold and forthright testimony for Jesus Christ, the coach might put you on the bench because he doesn't like what you stand for. Program yourself for the fact that if you're on the job and you speak of Jesus Christ and live for Christ and call into question a lack of integrity in your business that you're going to get a hostile reaction. That is to be expected, join the group, suffer along with everybody else who ever named the name of Christ in an ungodly environment. Figure that in your family when you alone exalt Jesus Christ and you are a constant rebuke to the consciences of the people there that they're going to react negatively. Program that if you're on a professional athletic team traveling on the road and you live for Christ while everybody else lives to the hilt for the devil, that they're going to resent everything about you. And it's going to be hard for you to be considered a part of the team and they might even cut you. It's happening all the time.

I mean, it's just that way in a hostile world. Now you say, "Well I know a lot of Christians and they never have any persecution." Right, and they never confront the society they're in. If you speak to people the true gospel, not the sort of Pabulum approach that we have today, if you tell people they are Christ-rejecting godless sinners on their way to an eternal hell, that's not a popular message. If you confront their sin and demand of them that they repent and bow the knee to Jesus Christ or be damned, that's not a popular message. But if you talk about, "Wouldn't it be nice to have all your problems solved and have a happy life and go to heaven," and don't talk about sin, that will be popular, you might even get a television program to say that. But that's not the gospel.

If you are willing to be bold then you're going to be willing to suffer. So you program yourself for that, Timothy, Paul says, you expect it, that goes with the territory and you're not alone, it's so wonderful. Join with everybody else in suffering for the gospel because we're all in it together. It's a common partnership.

It's curious to me, by the way, that in that verse he calls himself "His prisoner." His--referring to Christ. He was never the prisoner of Rome and he was never the prisoner of the Jews when he was in jail in Jerusalem, he was only the prisoner of Christ who sovereignly controlled his life. And if Christ wanted him in prison, that's where he'd be because there was a ministry to be had in that place. So he says program yourself for suffering. Like that early church, you remember Acts 5:41, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. Program yourself for that. Expect it, don't be shocked by it. It just goes with the territory.

Notice also he says "suffering for the gospel." That's the issue. Not suffering for sin. If you suffer for sin that's your problem. It's suffering for the gospel. Peter talks about that very thing in 1 Peter 4, I think it's in verse 14, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you're blessed because the Spirit of glory in God rests on you. By no means let any one of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evil doer or a troublesome meddler, but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed but in that name let him glorify God." Don't be ashamed of Christ because you suffer, be honored because you suffer. You're counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Paul says, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ," Galatians 6, what a happy privilege...what a happy privilege...to take whiplashes and to be beaten with rods and have manacles on my hands and feet that leave their scars for the sake of Christ. Paul accepted suffering as an inherent element in his ministry. In Ephesians 3:1 he calls himself a prisoner of Christ Jesus. And wherever Christ took him, that was okay with him.

So if we're in his service we expect it. And we anticipate that. We program ourselves for suffering and we aren't at all surprised when it comes. In fact it's almost a welcome friend because it assures us we're saying something right.

I remember the first time open hostility broke out against me in the ministry here at Grace Church some years ago. My first reaction was, "I must have done something wrong," that passed in about five minutes and I began to realize that we were doing something right...countering an ungodly society.

And then a fourth, and with this one we'll close our lesson today. A fourth element in being courageous and not being ashamed of Christ is to remember your God, verses 8 to 10. Picking it up at the end of verse 8 and going through verse 10, "According to the power of God who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity but now has been revealed by the

appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Now let me say this, beloved, those statements that I just read to you at the end of verse 8 down through verse 10 give to us what amounts to one of the single greatest statements in all the pages of Scripture of the doctrine of salvation. In fact, we have here a mini-soteriology for you theological students. We have here a mini-doctrine of salvation that is utterly comprehensive. And naturally the urge in me is to take this thing and turn it into a study of the doctrine of salvation and develop a whole theology out of this which would be about a three-month project. But wanting to do due service to Paul who had not intended to do that in this letter, I will resist that urge very reluctantly. And we will touch it but somewhat lightly this morning, nonetheless grasping the tremendous truth it carries.

He says then, "Remember your God, the God who saved you." And the idea here is that when you're out there using your gift, energized and empowered by the very force of the Spirit of God in an environment of love and discipline you will suffer but don't forget the God who holds you up. Remember your God. Boy, what a tremendous thought. And what God is our God? "The God who saved us, the God who called us with a holy calling, the God who did so according to His own purpose and His own grace, the God who granted us that salvation in Christ Jesus from before eternal times, the God who revealed it in the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," that's the God...the God of salvation in summary. The God who can save you is the God who can hold you. Do you understand that? If God can save me, He can preserve me.

Now let's take those specifically. Verse 8, "According to the power of God." That's...that's what keys the section. In other words, you suffer according to the power of God. What does that mean? With a full understanding of the God who supports you, knowing the power that is available, that God is powerful, God is almighty, God can save us, God can cause us to endure, God can overwhelm our enemies, God can preserve us in the midst of anything. We can face persecution in God's power, millions of people have done it. And even in their deaths the Kingdom has been advanced. Any suffering we ever suffer at the hands of evil men we suffer under the power of God who allows it, who can overpower it at any time. God has amassed His power in our behalf. Jesus said, "All power is given unto Me," and then He said, "I commit it to you in the Holy Spirit." We have power to do all things through Christ who strengthens us, Paul said to the Philippians. He has the power, Jude says in that just incredible little verse, to keep us from stumbling and make us stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy. He has the power to hold us...the power to preserve us...the power to give us victory. Marvelous.

And the substance of our confidence is based on the fact that He had the power to save us. And if He had the power to save us, then He has the power to keep us. See, Romans 5 says that. In Romans 5 the Apostle writes in verse 10 that if we were saved by His death we are being kept alive

by His life. In other words, if the death of Christ could save us then the life of Christ can keep us, Romans 5:10, a great verse. If He is so powerful in death that He can save us, how much more powerful is He in life to keep us? That's why all that are saved will enter into glory. That's why Jesus said, "I have lost none of them but shall raise them all up at the last day." That's why in John 10 it says that they'll never ever ever become not My sheep, no man is able to pluck them out of My hand...He says. Because the one who can save us is the one who preserves us. And there's nothing else to live for than to put ourselves in His power.

Now look what it says about Him. The power of God then is seen in the fact, verse 9, first of all, that He has saved us. He has saved us. It is all of God. If anybody questions the source of salvation, that ought to end that question. He saved us. He designed salvation. He initiated salvation. And He effected salvation in our behalf. He delivered us from sin. He delivered us from our fallenness. He delivered us from death. He delivered us from Satan. He delivered us from hell. That is a powerful work. He overturned the curse. He overturned sin, death, Satan and hell. Incredible reality. The power of God unleashed in salvation that He came in Christ to save sinners was the fulfillment of the plan before the world began that God would save those He chose. A tremendous thing.

God then is Savior. God is Savior. It's used, by the way, the term "Savior" six times of God in the pastoral epistles. His powerful work is that of delivering men from sin and death and Satan and hell. And certainly the one who has the sovereign grace and the sovereign power to do that can keep us, sustain us, preserve us.

Furthermore look at this. He not only saved us, that's negative. To save someone is to rescue them from danger or from evil. But He also called us with or to a holy calling. I like to read it, called us to a holy calling. He not only saved us from sin but called us to a holy calling. The word "called" here has to do with the effectual call, the saving call, not an invitation. It doesn't mean He called like calling sinners to repentance. It is an effectual call, an actual saving call. So when He saved us from sin, He saved us to holiness. That's the idea. He called us to a holy calling. That's how powerful He is. He made the unregenerate regenerate. He made the dead to live. He made the unholy holy. He made the sinner a saint. He called us from sin to God, from dark to light. And so there's a total transformation...the power of God, the invincible power of God. The epistles, by the way, never use the term "calling" to refer to anything but the effectual call to salvation. It is never so used in any of the epistles of the New Testament. It always means an effectual call, a saving call.

Now notice, He saved us, that is rescuing us, from the consequence of our sin and the very plight of our sinfulness and then He called us into a holiness which we never ever experienced which literally demanded the creation of a new nature. So He recreated us as holy in Christ. And then it says, "Not according to our works." That's so important. There's no work at all that you do in salvation. There's no work that you do to deserve salvation. It is a work of God, not according to our works, by the deeds of the flesh shall...by the deeds of the law, rather, Romans 3:20, shall no flesh be justified for

you are saved by grace through faith that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God not of works lest any should boast, Ephesians 2:8 and 9 says. And Titus sums it up beautifully in chapter 3 and verse 5, "He saved us not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness but according to His mercy." What a great statement.

So, not according to our works. Now listen carefully, this is the key to the whole point here. If He saved us from our deadness, our sinfulness, and if He by His power not only saved us but made us holy and He did all of that without our help, then, beloved, we do not have to scheme and connive and contrive to preserve ourselves in the process of ministering in His behalf for the one who saved us without our help is also able to keep us without our help. So there's a sense in which I can abandon myself to my cause and leave my flanks unguarded, if you will. I don't have to go through life trying to avoid saying anything that might cause a problem. I refuse to do that. I want to go through life saying the truth and let God take care of the problems. If He can deliver me from sin to holiness, He can deliver me out of anything else because the greatest deliverance has already occurred. The total miracle has already happened.

And then not being able to leave the grandiose truth alone at that point, Paul adds, "And He did it according to His own purpose," stop at that point. What a thought. Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, elect before the world was ever made, names written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world. Tremendous statements that the purpose of God was set in concrete, as it were, before the world was ever begun. You were written down in His book because He chose you to believe in Him. And then He effected your salvation, but first He purposed it.

Notice it is according to His own purpose and grace. And He had to put grace in that verse somewhere because there's no other way to be saved. Undeserved forgiveness was required. It is absolutely essential.

So, back to verse 9 and let me sum it up. He saved us by His power. He translated us into a holiness by His power. He didn't use us in any way to do any of that. But it was all according to His own eternal plan and eternal grace which was granted to us in Christ Jesus..get this..from all eternity. Literally from before eternal times. When is that? I don't know. When is before eternal times? That expresses the idea of a remote period that's so remote it's beyond my conception. I don't know when before eternal times was. But that's the time God planned me into His redemptive work. John MacArthur by name was to be redeemed in Christ Jesus and God set that in motion before eternal times. Incredible thought. And see, God had such a plan for my life, such a plan for my life, my destiny was all sealed from before the world began. By the way, this presupposes Christ's eternal preexistence as God as well because it was granted us in Christ Jesus from before eternal times. So Christ Jesus must have been there before eternal times.

What grandiose magnificent thoughts of God's eternal sovereign gracious plan. But it wasn't just a plan that was frustrated. No, look at verse 10, "But now has been revealed," the plan came to pass and now we're in history. We went from eternity to history. It was revealed. It's revealed in history. Notice verse 10, "By the appearing of our Savior," and by the way, Savior most often in this set of epistles refers to God, but the Savior is God and here He appears as Christ Jesus, of course. "It has been revealed by the appearing, the epiphaneia of our Savior, God, Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Now how did He abolish death? Through His what? How did Christ abolish death? Through His resurrection. So that's what the appearing here means. The word epiphaneia is used several times in the New Testament. In fact it's used I think four times in the pastoral epistles, 1 Timothy 6:14, 2 Timothy 4:1 and 8 and Titus 2:13. And all four of those refer to His Second Coming. So sometimes epiphaneia refers to the Second Coming, the appearing of Christ in glory. Here it refers to His appearing in resurrection. Very clearly that is the intent of the context. The appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. The gospel is Jesus died and rose again. And in that resurrection was the appearing of Christ as the one who had abolished death. Tremendous.

Now listen to this. All of this is to recite for us the power of God. How powerful is God? God is so powerful He saved us. God is so powerful He made us holy. God is so powerful He did it without our help. God is so powerful that He purposed to do it and be gracious to us and set it in place before eternal times in Christ Jesus. God is so powerful that He took the plan He had made and brought it to reality by bringing Jesus through the grave and out the other side. That's how powerful God is. And in so doing, God is so powerful that He abolished death and He brought to light...the Greek verb photizo, He revealed the picture of life and immortality through the gospel. That's how powerful God is. And you've just been swept through the whole history of redemption.

What does it mean to abolish death, katargeo? It means to render inoperative. It doesn't mean there is no more death, it means death has no more sting. It doesn't mean death is non-existent, it means death is impotent. It means for the believer we don't fear death, death becomes a welcome friend and Paul can say, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is...what?...is gain." Far better to depart and be with Christ. We long for the day when this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruptible shall put on incorruption and life becomes life as God intended it, death is swallowed up in life. We long for the time when we shall be clothed, he says in 2 Corinthians 5, with our house which is from above. Death, where is your sting? Death, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto Christ whose given us the victory.

So, death is impotent. It exists but it is abolished as to its power. And so in the resurrection of Christ God abolished death. Hebrews 2:14 puts it so magnificently when it says that Jesus Christ suffered

death in order that He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is the devil. And He brought life and immortality to light. What does that mean? Eternal life, immortal life, life forever in the presence of God and it all came through the gospel, it says at the end of verse 10. The gospel, what is that? The good news that Jesus died and rose again. The person, the work of Christ, that Jesus died, was buried, came out of the grave, that's the gospel. And we who believe in that are saved.

Do you understand the God that we are talking about, folks? Whenever the Bible wants to celebrate the power of God in the New Testament it always goes back to the resurrection of Christ. And as we go out to use our gift and take our resources and accept our suffering, we do so in great confidence because of our God. And how powerful is our God? Our God is so powerful that He saved us from sin and death and hell. So powerful that He transformed us into holy beings in Christ. So powerful that He did it all without our help. So powerful that He laid down before eternal times a plan and a purpose in grace in Christ to redeem us and in history He worked it out, brought Christ through the grave, out the other side, abolished the power of death and brought to us eternal life. That's the power of our God. And if we understand the power of our God, then we understand the power of the resources at our disposal, right? So when we go out boldly to proclaim Christ, what do we fear? What do we fear? Are men stronger than God? Is the system bigger than God? Are the persecutors potent and God impotent?

So he says to Timothy, remember your God, Timothy. Remember your God. And the power of God and the very God who can bring about the plan of redemption can certainly sustain the people He has redeemed. What cause to be cowardly? What cause to be fearful? What cause to be timid or ashamed? None, only cause to be bold and courageous because of the God of power who is working out His eternal purpose in our behalf. What a glorious confidence should be ours in Him. Let's pray together.

We rejoice, our Lord, in having the joy of learning another portion of Your holy Word. What a rich passage. We never understood it like we understand it now. We regret the years that have gone by without our understanding. But thankful are we that we know have a grip on this. Help us to live it out. Help us to be bold and courageous in using our gift, considering our resources, accepting the suffering that may come because we know the power of our God. Help us to keep our eyes on You, not on men. Give us that perfect love that casts out fear. Grant to us in the Spirit that discipline and self-control that orders every element of life to the priorities of the expansion of the Kingdom. Rekindle in us afresh the gift You've given us that it might be used in the energy with which You have empowered it that we might live life here that has eternal meaning and not waste our time. And we pray, Lord, that none of us would ever be ashamed of the one who was not ashamed to call us brother, never ashamed of the God who is not ashamed to call Himself our God. May we never be ashamed of Christ, or ever to be associated with those who proclaim His name but may it be our highest joy and greatest privilege to name the name of Christ and be named among those who

preach His name. We bless You for such a privilege in Christ's name. Amen.

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