

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 17th November 2024 am

TITLE: "Suffering and shame for the gospel" TEXT: 2 Timothy 1 v 1 - 14

SERIES: "Guarding the deposit" Pt 11 Scripture references from the ESV

2 Timothy 1:1-14 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,²To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

³I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. ⁴As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. ⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. ⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

⁸Therefore 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, ⁹who saved us and called us to^[a] 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,^[b] ¹⁰and 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, ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which 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.^[c] ¹³Follow the pattern of the sound^[d] words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Grasping the nettle is defined as forcing yourself to be brave and do something difficult or unpleasant. Living out our Christian faith and speaking up for Jesus can often feel like grasping the nettle. We are afraid of being stung even though we know that it is what God has called us to do.

The church in Ephesus had men in it who were teaching things that were contrary to the Gospel. They were trying to draw people away from the church and gain their own following. Paul had set Timothy, as the pastor, the task of silencing them. However, in reading Paul's letters to him, it seems that Timothy was timid about the work that God had called him to do. He was unwilling to grasp the nettle of gospel ministry.

In the section above, Paul writes, not to tell him off, but to encourage him to fulfil his calling. He gives Timothy a command (v8) that demonstrates why we shy away from Gospel work and gospel living. It points Timothy, and us, to the resources we have in Christ to enable us to faithfully live out our calling.

We shy away from gospel living and gospel work because they can lead to the experience of shame and of suffering.

1. The experience of shame

The word **ashamed (v8)** refers to the stigma of being associated with something that our culture considers shameful. In Timothy's day, the cross was a thing of shame. Both Jews and Gentiles despised anyone who had been crucified so to identify with a crucified Messiah or those who followed him brought shame on a person. Paul had to tell Timothy:

Do not seek to avoid the humiliation of all that comes with being a follower of Jesus.

There are issues today that might well cause us to avoid the humiliation of identifying with Jesus. Christians may be shamed by those who take a different view of Biblical truths:

- The sacrificial death of Jesus to atone for the sins of those who trust in him, as God punished his Son in the place of sinners, has been labelled as cosmic child abuse
- Miracles in the Bible, such as the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection, are considered by many to be merely the teaching of simple people. Now that we are more enlightened, we do not need to believe these things!

Other people may well shame us for holding to Biblical truth in those situations, trying to tell us that we believe in a cruel god or that we are gullible and unenlightened. New atheists, such as Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens, pushed the view that there is no god and those who believe there is a god are stupid and have no place in academia, thus humiliating Christians who taught in universities.

Today, gender issues are probably the biggest challenge to us as we seek to live and speak out for Jesus. Our culture is

desperate to accommodate those who want to change their gender. Affirming Christ's teaching on gender is leading to people being humiliated and shamed. We are accused of being bigoted, cruel and even evil. It is ultimately a way of silencing truth.

Every day, issues arise that go against the testimony of Jesus. Speaking against those issues could result

in us being humiliated and treated as stupid, cruel or evil. Scripture tells us:

Do not seek to avoid the humiliation that comes from being a follower of Jesus, as we speak his words, live out his commands and identify with his people.

2. The experience of suffering (v8). The suffering that comes with the gospel is not just the result of following it. **Suffering is necessary for the success of gospel ministry**

The gospel is the message of how Christ suffered death on the cross in order to redeem all who would trust in him from sin, Satan and death. People in every nation need to hear the message that through Jesus' death, they can have life – real life, eternal life and fellowship with the living God.

This message is most effectively proclaimed by followers of Jesus through us dying to ourselves and embracing the suffering the gospel brings. Reflecting on the life of Adoniram Judson, and drawing from **John 12:24-5,**

John Piper wrote:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. *In other words, a fruitful life and an eternal life come from this: dying like a seed and hating your life in this world....how strategic it was that Adoniram Judson died so many times and in so many ways.*

More and more, I am persuaded from scripture and from the history of missions that God's design for the evangelisation of the world and the consummation of his purposes includes the suffering of his ministers and missionaries. To put it more plainly and specifically, God designs that the suffering of his ministers and missionaries is one essential means in the joyful triumphant spread of the gospel among all the peoples of the world.

This surely makes sense.

The salvation we enjoy comes through a Saviour who was willing to die an agonising death on the cross in order that we might have life.

- Hence, the spreading of that message also requires a dying in order that others might live

As Christ suffered to save us, so we surely must suffer for the sake of spreading that gospel, though it will be different for each of us.

- For some, the suffering will involve intense persecution. In places like North Korea, Afghanistan, Indonesia and many more, God's people are denied work, arrested, imprisoned, tortured and killed because they follow Jesus.

We do not experience that level of persecution at the moment, but there is still suffering. The current cultural issues can lead to us being shamed, some have lost their jobs, and others have found themselves cancelled on social media.

We might also suffer because we do not follow the world's way of getting ahead.

Perhaps we turn the other cheek in a dispute, rather than getting even, or we are honest in the workplace rather than manipulating to get promotion. We might be the friend to a person no one else likes, because Christ has given us a heart of compassion and we want to win that person for Jesus.

This is not suffering on the same scale as persecution, but it is still suffering for the sake of the gospel. We are suffering because we want to live out and share the gospel. That suffering is necessary in order to see the nations reached with the momentous news of salvation.

We might shy away from gospel living and gospel work because of the experience of shame and of suffering.

We need to take to heart Paul's command to Timothy in **v8: 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,**

It is easy to say but much harder to do, so how do we do it, when, with every fibre of our being, we want to avoid grasping the nettle? Paul tells us how in the passage above. He is writing from a place of experiential authority, not as an armchair theologian!

We do this by the power of God.

Already (v7), Paul has told us about the Spirit that God has placed in us.

Therefore (v8) do not be ashamed

of Christ and be ready to suffer for the gospel. The strength to obey this command does not come from us

but from the Spirit of God within us.

How do we experience the Spirit of God empowering us?

We do this by trusting in God (v11)

We are to trust in Christ and in his promises, and specifically in three aspects of Christ's work.

- a) **We are to trust in Christ's past salvation (vv9-10).** Christ's work has abolished death and secured eternal life. The message for which we are called to suffer contains the assurance that

Death cannot have any hold over us but can only bring us to our eternal rest.

The worst thing anyone can do to us is to kill us, but death only shortens our journey and hastens us home. That truth enabled Paul to not be ashamed of Christ and to be willing to suffer for the gospel. It enabled him to write encouraging letters even when he was in prison and awaiting execution.

- b) **We are to trust in Christ's present power (v7).** The gospel work we are engaged in is precious to Christ and he does not leave to just get on with it. He comes and is involved in it with us. When we are engaged in Christ's work, we experience his presence to strengthen us. Conversely, the way to experience the Spirit is to get involved in the work of Christ.

- c) **We are to trust in Christ's future justification (v12).** The word translated as **ashamed** here means undeserved humiliation from which one desires vindication. When we suffer shame for the gospel, we want someone to stand up for us. Paul is convinced that Christ would do that for him and for us. The ESV footnote offers **what I have entrusted to him** as the last part of v12. Paul has entrusted his life and ministry to Christ to be guarded for a future day, and he is confident that when that day comes,

Christ will vindicate him before those who humiliated him and made him suffer.

In this life, the world may scoff at us because we believe in Christ and his word, seeking to follow him and obey his commands. However, one day those people will witness Christ say to us: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into my kingdom and the rest I have prepared for you'.

The justification we desire now, but do not receive, will one day be ours

The only judge who matters declares us righteous

- When we trust in Christ's past salvation, his present power and his future justification, then we will experience the Spirit of God empowering us.

**The one who indwells us is the Lord Jesus Christ,
who himself was humiliated through death on the cross.**

He powerfully abolished death for us.

He will return in power and glory.

On that great day, he will own all those who are not ashamed of him now.

**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 (v12)**