The Gift and the Choice: to Suffer or to be Ashamed

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0:00] Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle but deep power upon each of us who are gathered here and upon each who are entering into the service through YouTube Live. Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with gentle power and that you would help us to know that we are in your presence, that you are the one who gives grace, and we ask that you help us to be in your presence, to receive grace from you and respond to you in a worthy manner.

And we ask, Father, that this be a day where your Word so works in our lives and Jesus is so real and present to us that we recommit to you and recommit to walk and to live under your loving authority and to your great praise and acclaim.
And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So a long time ago, when I was in graduate school at Carleton University, I started going to the fitness center. That's what it was called back in those days. It's where the weights were and the exercise bikes, etc. And I became a regular at the fitness center. And, you know, one of the things about becoming a regular at a place like a fitness center is you get to chat with people and, you know, you sort of become friends a bit.
And anyway, so after I'd been a regular there for a while, there's this fellow who showed up one day and he was instantly noticeable to everybody.
[1:29] The reason he was so noticeable was he, I mean, he was probably about six foot tall and 120, 125 pounds. But don't think Ethiopian or Kenyan winner of a marathon.

Think somebody who's just been through a terrible, wasting, debilitating disease. He looked very, very, very unhealthy. He looked emaciated. He looked sad.
And he came into the gym. He could only go on the exercise bike. And after five minutes of like virtually no pressure, no tension and not going very fast, he was tired.
He would take the tiniest little dumbbells that they had in the gym and he'd do a couple of little exercises like this. And then he'd leave. And he became a regular for a couple of weeks, coming in two or three times a week around the same time that I came in.
And people talked about him. And one of the most common theories was that maybe he'd been in Africa or Asia, got one of those rare diseases or got terrible malaria or something like that that just completely emaciated him, made him very, very unhealthy.
[2:34] And he was back in Canada. And we were trying to put a positive spin on somebody who looked manifestly unhealthy. But then one day he came up and put up two posters stamped by the authorities on the bulletin board.

And both of them, and we all, we got to know his, we knew his name. And both of them were advertising talks he was going to give on how to become more healthy.
I'm not making it up. Like, we were all gobsmacked like the regulars. Like, this guy looked like he needed to go to a workshop on how to become healthy, not give a workshop on how to become more healthy, more robust, etc.
All this, you know, blah, blah, woof, woof. So the reason I'm sharing this story is that we're going to look at a teaching today in the Bible that for many of our non-Christian friends, if you're here and you're just sort of curious about the Christian faith, or if you're watching online and you're curious about the Christian faith, it's going to be a teaching that basically most Canadians would say, George, if you actually followed that, you would become less healthy, less, like, why on earth would you give this advice to anybody?

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Because it just looks like it's going to make you unhealthy, and nobody in their right mind would want to come close to it. So, let's look, if you have Bibles with you, at 2 Timothy chapter 1.
[3:57] One of the things that we do in this church, most of the time we just finished a summer series where we did the attributes of God, but generally our meat and potatoes in this church is we preach through books of the Bible.

And so this is a six-week series. We're going to go through 2 Timothy. And if you don't have a Bible, by the way, I mean, we will have the Bible passages up front, but there's also a couple of free Bibles here which you're welcome to take during the service and keep our gift to you if you'd like to have a Bible.
So, it's 2 Timothy chapter 1, and here's how it begins. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.
To Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. And just sort of pause here for a second. Timothy isn't his child.
It's a term of endearment. Paul is quite a bit older than Timothy. Timothy's a young guy. And so Paul's writing this letter to Timothy, and we're going to talk a little bit more about the letter in a moment.
[5:05] But just a bit of an aside here, time out. Sorry, I didn't manage that transition very well. This is just an interesting little thing. The Jehovah Witnesses try to take all references to the Trinity out of the Bible, but they can't actually manage it.

They don't actually have a translation of the Bible. They basically take an English Bible and try to change the words occasionally. In the original language, where it says, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father in Christ Jesus our Lord.
You can see it in English, but it's even stronger in the original language. Basically, it's saying grace, mercy, and peace are coming equally from God the Father in Jesus. In other words, it's one of those many texts in the Bible that show that the Bible believes that Jesus is God the Son.
God the Father exists, yet there's only one God. Anyway, there's the end of the little thing. Anyway, here's the thing about the text. Paul is not writing this like as a rich, powerful, white guy who's going to give this very, very odd type of advice to people hoping that they all follow it while he lives a very different type of life.
I tried to impress you by looking up really expensive designers, and I realized it's hopeful. I'm just going to pick one. Those of you who actually know expensive clothes, I don't know if this would resonate with you.
[6:24] But Paul isn't sort of outside of his expensive condo at one of those. He's all decked out, Tom Ford bespoke suits, and all decked out in Tom Ford clothes. He's eating, you know, having his $10 a glass, organic, freshly squeezed orange juice, eating a really luxurious meal, and writing down and scribbling a few little thoughts.

This letter is coming from a man who's doing hard time in jail. In fact, actually, and not only that, he's suffering in lots of different ways. If you just look at the very end of the text that we're looking at, verses 15 to 18, you'll get a bit of a picture of the context within which Paul is writing.
Look at verse 15. You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me. Like, just pause here for a second. You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are figilous and homogenous.
Now, he's being a bit maybe extreme, exaggerating a little bit, but the fundamental truth is here he is. We'll continue. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Anisiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not afraid of my chains.
But when he had arrived in Rome, he searched for me and earnestly found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you all know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. And Ephesus is part of what was then called Asia.
[7:53] We would now call it Turkey. It was a very important part of the Roman Empire. So what we see here is that Paul is writing this letter from jail. And he's doing hard time. He's not under house arrest.

He's actually in some type of a more dungeon-y, prison-y-like place in chains. A huge section of the Christian world that he had been directly responsible for bringing into existence have abandoned him.

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They're ashamed of him. They've turned away from him. He's in jail. And we'll look at this in a couple of weeks. But if you go back later on and you look at the end of the book, you'll see that Paul has a sense from the Holy Spirit that this time the only way he's leaving jail is not being let out a door to go free, but being let out a door to be executed.
That he's in the midst of appeals. He knows, he has this basic sense that his time of making successful appeals has run out. So this is a letter from a man in jail where a large number of his friends have abandoned him and turned away from him.
And he knows he's going to die. And he's at the end of his life. And as you can well imagine, if you had started businesses or you had a lot of friends and all of those things turned away from you, many of us, the normal type of thing would be to wonder whether or not our lives had been worth anything at all.
[9:16] Now, I'm not going to say that. In fact, one of the interesting things is that Paul doesn't talk about that. But it's a very important thing for you to hear this shocking thing in the text, which we're going to see in a couple of verses, that for the average Canadian, including the average Canadian Christian, is sort of a repulsive thing, a repellent thing that Paul says.

So let's look back at the text, verse 3. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.
As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, the faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.
Just pause here for a second. And it's not required in the original language, but the original language suggests that Lois and Eunice have died. In other words, that they came to a faith in Jesus, and they kept the faith in Jesus right up until their death.
It's very interesting. We also see here Paul's great heart is that he's human, just like you and me, and what he would really like before he dies is to see his young friend Timothy one more time.
[10:31] And he's reminding Timothy that when they parted, they parted with Timothy in tears. In fact, you have to wonder, did they part? Was it the case that Paul did the funeral for Lois and Eunice?

And then shortly after he did the funeral, he had to depart for wherever he was going next, which ultimately led to him being caught by the Roman authorities and thrown in jail.
And you need to understand one thing as well. I'm not going to develop it much this week. We'll develop it in some of the weeks to come. And I'm very, very conscious that we write this. I'm doing this sermon the day after the 20th anniversary of September 11th, 2001, where I think it was 19 men sought death and sought death in the name of a religion that they believed in and sought death in a way that would kill thousands and thousands of innocent people.
But Paul isn't suffering because he is some type of a fanatic or terrorist like that. We're all familiar, unfortunately, over these last 20 years with people who give their lives, willingly give their lives, for some type of ideology or some type of religion.
What has led Paul to be in jail, which we're going to develop more in the weeks to come, is amongst other things, first and foremost, he's going to die for a fact.
[12:04] A fact. And the fact is that Jesus died beyond any question, that he died a horrible, shameful death beyond any question.

But on the third day, the body was gone, the grave was empty, and he appeared alive to many witnesses. And Paul is in jail and will die for that fact.
And all that that momentous fact means and implies. And that's why he's in jail. If he had just denied the fact, he could go.
So it's not an ideologically driven pursuit of martyrdom that leads him to jail. And we're going to see that developed in these next few things that he says.
Anyway, we see a very human tender part here, right? Because this, it looks all fancy. It's, you know, especially my version here. But you have to remember, if you're watching this, and you don't know much about the Christian faith, that all this is, it's now considered very precious.
[13:14] And for a variety of reasons, the Christians believe that this is actually, ultimately, what God wanted written, so that you and I could know about him and how to be free. But this was originally, you have to understand, this was originally some guy in a dungeon writing.

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And then passing it maybe through a guard to some friends who eventually took it to Timothy. And eventually it was considered to be so precious that we now, and for a variety of reasons, which a whole other topic, we now understand to be God's word.
But that's what this is. And so humanly speaking, he's in jail. He'd love to see, before he dies, his young friend one more time. And he remembers his tears.
Now, it's not seen in here, but Timothy has shown up in other places in the New Testament. We know a few things about him. And so these next words are actually very significant, and they pave the way for the shocking thing.
I know I keep saying there's a shocking thing. When you see it, you'll see it's shocking. But look at verse 6. He's talking about the faith, his tears and the faith of his mother and his grandmother and the faith he has.
[14:25] Verse 4. 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. Laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, should be capitalized, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

Now, the word fear there in the original language should really probably be better translated as timid or cowardly. If other places in the New Testament, you might hear of a virtue of being fearing God or the fear of the Lord.
That's not the same word which is here. This is the word implying cowardliness or being timid. And we know from other places in the New Testament that one of the things that Timothy struggled with was being timid.
So he's not writing, Paul isn't writing this letter to somebody who's won the Medal of Honor, highest level for bravery in the U.S. Armed Forces. He's writing this to a younger guy, but by younger, I mean he's probably in his 30s, early 30s, who has a problem.
He has a limp, so to speak. He follows Jesus with a limp. And his limp is that he easily is timid. He's easily frightened. He easily backs away.
[15:35] And so Paul reminds him that when the Holy Spirit, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, comes into your life, as the Holy Spirit comes closer to you, what the Holy Spirit always brings is power, love, and self-control.

Now just as a bit of an aside, you know, for those wondering about the Christian faith, we Christians can sometimes be very afraid of having the Holy Spirit have a deeper role in our lives, but we shouldn't really be afraid because as the Holy Spirit has a deeper role in our lives, as the Holy Spirit brings Jesus and what he's done for us deeper into our lives, what comes isn't being cowardly or fearful.
What comes is power, love, and self-control. And isn't that a wonderful three-legged stool? Like in fact, if there was a therapist who could write a book that says by the end of this book, power, love, and self-control would grow in your life, and if it actually happened, that book would be always sold out.
It would be a bestseller. And it's such a wonderful thing. In fact, imagine for a moment, if somebody just said, well, I'm going to give you power and control, self-control, but no love, you'd go, really? In fact, we wouldn't like a person who'd only want power and self-control without love.
And we're all familiar with people who have love and self-control, but they seem powerless. But this is a wonderful thing, this idea that is the Holy Spirit, as the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit's gifts become more real in our lives, what will happen is that even though some of us will always still follow Jesus with a limp till we die, the presence of the Holy Spirit starts to form us to having power, love, and self-control.
[17:16] But then the shocker, look at verse 8, the therefore. 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, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, blah, blah, blah, blah.

We quickly skip over, but just pause here for verse 8. Verse 8 sets before us a choice that no Canadian likes. Verse 8 sets before us a choice that no Canadian likes.
Now, if you're here and you're not a Christian, if you're watching this, you're not a Christian, I'm going to take a moment to really speak directly to Christians, and you can just take the role of an anthropologist studying a really weird tribe or a psychologist trying to figure out a really weird mental disease, and you can listen to this.
But what this text is saying is this, that in our lives, we constantly face everything from micro decisions to very, very, very, very big decisions, micro decisions about like what to say in a

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conversation over coffee to macro decisions like who you're going to marry.
Really big decisions, right? What job you're going to take. Big decisions. And it's saying that in life, everything from micro decisions to macro decisions, there will be times when the conversation will turn in such a way that you can reveal either by, or that it's open to you, maybe you feel a pressure that you should bear some witness to the fact that you follow Jesus and you belong to Him, that He is your Savior and your Lord, and you trust Him, and you believe what He says.
[19:02] And whether it's a micro decision or a macro decision, it could be that later on next week, people, I can't remember when Owen's group meets.

Is it Thursdays at Owen's group? Is that your name? Yeah. So it could be that next Friday, you get together with some co-workers, you decide to stop meeting with Zoom, you decide to get together and have a beer or something like that at lunch, and they all get talking, you know, there's four of you, and the four of you, the three people start to talk about what you did last night, and one of the people said, oh gosh, I went to this place in Wakefield, it was an organic farm, and it was this top award-winning chef, the meal was fantastic, it was all locally sourced, organic, it was so delicious, the atmosphere, there was a folk musician in the background, and you're all going, wow, that sounds really neat, and then another person said, what did you do?
Well, you know, I went rock climbing, I left work a little bit early, and I went to this place, and I did rock climbing, it was a spectacular day, I managed to do all of this, and then afterwards, we had a few beers, and chatted, everybody's going, wow, that's really, really fantastic, and then another one, he said, well actually, you know, I'm part of this theater group, and we're finally getting back together, we're going to be doing this performance, and we've decided to do some of this avant-garde, early French, you know, 20th century stuff, a bit of surrealism, and we go on a little bit about surreal art in the back, and people are going, oh wow, and then they ask you what you did, now you went to Owen's Bible study, so what do you say?
that's a micro decision, do you do something, so that nobody ever asked you, what you did last night, or do you just say, I got together, and hung out with a few friends, but you leave Jesus out of it, Paul's saying, you were ashamed of Jesus, you didn't want to suffer, and let's be serious, the worst that would, well maybe lots could happen in that, because maybe there were co-workers, it might mean, that they don't want to give you a job, or give you a promotion down the road, because they think you're going to be unsound, on certain, woke political issues, which are all the vogue, and so it might be, that it's going to make it harder, for you to get a promotion, but it just might be, that they don't think of you as highly, or they look down their nose at you, or they're going to start making fun of you, or razzing you, but what you did, is you said,
I don't want to suffer, and when you say, you don't want to suffer for Jesus, you don't want to take that risk, what you've just said is, I'm ashamed of Jesus, and here's this big verse, and it's very obvious, even in English, but especially in the original language, is fundamental parting the way, and this actually is a key discipleship issue, and by the way, this is one of the reasons, this is one of the reasons, this book is so important, Being the Bad Guys, How to Live for Jesus in a World, That Says You Shouldn't, it's just talking about the fact, that in our day and age, Christianity is often seen as toxic, by large segments of our community, and that if you say, if you reveal, that you actually trust Jesus, and you trust what he says, you're revealing yourself, not as a lover, but a hater, not as part of the solution, but part of the problem, not as anything good, something toxic, and so it's, what he talks about is that pressure, and in a sense, how to live as an out Christian, to appropriate language from our gay friends, how to live as an out Christian, now you see, these micro decisions, and macro decisions, what happens is, what Paul is saying is, this is a key discipleship issue for you, and as we all know, micro decisions matter, and so will you be ashamed of Jesus, or are you willing to suffer for him?
[23:05] I think one of the reasons why, if you've ever read any of the deconversion blogs, and maybe some of you are here today, after having gone through, you would have said that you've left the Christian faith, and maybe you're coming back, I think one of the reasons that many people talk about, the great sense of relief, and release, when they finally just stop being a Christian, is the fact that, there's been accumulated shame in their lives, and now they can just walk away from it, except, as we all know, shame doesn't work that easily in our lives, but the fact is, if you continue to be ashamed, if I continue to be ashamed for Jesus, that shame will only grow, and grow, and grow, and the only solution to it, isn't speaking in tongues, sorry, it isn't having a private, religious, mystical experience, Paul is saying, the solution is to suffer, oh, dang, I want the choice to be, shall

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I be a hip Christian, or a rich Christian, will I be a healthy Christian, or, you know, those are, you know, fill in the blank, that's what we'd like Paul to say, here's the choice before you, will you be hip, or will you be rich, or will you be popular, will you be cutting edge, will you be avant-garde, will you be successful, those are the choices we want, we don't want them to say, the choice is between shame, or suffering, but that's the choice, this is the Bible, and our non-Christian friends, now say,

George, okay, whoa, time out, who on earth would want that, if Chris, you've just, George, you've just given me another reason, to not be a Christian, if I followed that, I'd be like that guy in the gym, emaciated, and unhealthy, pretending to tell people, how to be healthy, like him, that's what our non-Christian friends, would say, let's just pause, and think about that, for a second, because the fact of the matter is, as human beings, nobody desires to suffer, and nobody desires, to be ashamed, and the fact of the matter is, is that's a very, very common human thing, human, I mean, the whole religion of Buddhism, is all around, dealing with suffering, and most, a lot of counseling, in fact, is just trying to deal with shame, and the consequences of suffering, and the reason you go take, self-help courses, the reason you go, you try to read a John Maxwell book, or a Robbins book, or you spend money for these courses, is how to be victorious, how to be a winner, how to move forward, how to get the promotion, how to get the brass ring, how to be healthier, how to live longer, how to be better looking, how to have more friends, that's what the self-help section, is all filled with, it's a big human desire, and people peddle this idea, that there is a way of living, if you just learn it, that you won't suffer, and you won't have any shame, but the reason, that there's so many books, in those stores, is because they don't work, because if there was ever, a book that worked, you just buy that book, the whole self-help section, would be one book, or one course, but here, you have to think about it, for a second, this desire to think, that there's a way of living, without suffering, and without shame, one of the ways,

I could really insult, a non-Christian, or you, is to say, that you're a heard thinker, you're just a heard thinker, you know, whatever's popular, on TikTok, and on YouTube, and in the media, and social influencers, you just go along, with whatever's popular, dagger, they would be terribly, terribly insulted, if I just said, you're just a quirk, you're just a quirk, floating along, on the currents of the culture, doing whatever they say, they say, no, I'm striving to be authentic, I'm striving to be autonomous, I'm striving to be myself, I'm striving to be, all of this, but the fact of the matter is, is, that you cannot actually be, an independent thinker, and not, and to be, some bit more like, a fish in the water, swimming against the current, rather than a quirk, if you don't make, intellectual, and moral commitments, freely, and you hold to them, even if the culture, and all of your friends, disagree, and if you actually, hold a position like that, that's different from your friends, guess what will happen, you will suffer for it, if you pursue a path, of no suffering, and no shame, you're pursuing a path, of being a herd thinker, of a cork on the water, it is not the characteristic, of a free person, oh, so maybe the Bible, has something, insightful, let's think as well, about suffering, first of all, we have to acknowledge, that some things, can't be accomplished, that are very, very good, that you desperately want, without suffering, if after, as a result of this sermon, for some odd reason, the takeaway was, that I'm going to run, a sub three hour marathon,

I can tell you, as one who, many, many, many, many, many decades, ran a sub three hour marathon, you can't do it, without suffering, even those, 120 pound Ethiopian, and Kenyans, who seem like, their feet, barely touch the ground, couldn't do it, without suffering, you want to have good kids, you got to suffer, the woman has to go through, the suffering of pregnancy, and then the parents, have to go through, the suffering of waking up, in the middle of the night, dealing with vomit, and dealing, you go, I don't want to go, any farther with that, just a bit of an aside, the farewell for me, when I was in Eganville, when I was leaving, the parish of Eganville, we had a daughter, who was I think, around eight months, or something at the time, and so they had this big thing, at the legion, for everybody, who wanted to come, from all of the different points, this big big meal, and they're doing all these things, and they roast me, and all that, you know, good fun, right, pointing, making fun of, you know, the shorts I wore, and all that type of stuff, anyway, I'm looking after my daughter,

Catherine, listening to it, bouncing her like this, and just before it's time, for me to go up on stage, she throws that up down my back, and all over my shoulder, like a really good one, like just all over, anyway, I went up, and did my final remarks, with young child, spit up vomit, all over my shoulder, and down my back, and then, anyway, that wasn't much suffering, because everybody just thought it was funny, and they were used to me, having very little shame, about stuff like that, but the fact of

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the matter, is you can't accomplish, a lot of good things, without suffering, the other thing about it, is that suffering is inevitable, it's called aging, like if you're here, and you're 20 something, well, no, ask me after the service, to do the splits, my kids bug me, because I, I mean, I can't even touch my ankles, I can only touch my toes, if I do this, actually, even that gave me, a bit of a cramp, in my calf, you know, suffering is inevitable, and then on top of that, at the end of suffering, in our life, you die, which means, your suffering, and your life, was meaningless, and in fact, if all that you've done, in your life, is things which are, relatively meaningless, your life is really meaningless, but you die at the end, and one of the things, which is most hardest, about suffering, is when it's meaningless, you see, it's one of the reasons, why, even though you have to suffer, to do a sub three hour marathon, it's worth it, because that's purpose, purpose, the purpose, the purpose is very shallow, because I'm going to die, you're going to die, but what if there is, in fact, a suffering that comes out of a profound purpose, profound meaning, from a profound gift, that makes all of your life, on this side of the grave, have, begin to have purpose, and meaning, which will only, in fact, be deepened at death, not removed at death, let's consider shame, very briefly, shame is a constant problem, in our culture, often, one of the ways, that people talk about, shame, and getting rid of shame, is they try to get rid of guilt, you know, one of the really funny things, is that you have, lots of different courses, and ways of talking, about getting rid of guilt, because if you get rid of guilt, you'll get rid of shame, but here's the thing, what is the definition, of a sociopath, a person doesn't feel guilt, these courses, are courses, on how to be a sociopath, obviously, they don't put that, on the title, but in fact, the matter is, is if you try to live a life, with no guilt, so you feel no shame, what you're actually trying to do, is to emulate sociopaths, and feel no guilt, what you need, is how do you deal with guilt, in a way that's real, and doesn't lead you, into being a sociopath, in many cultures, how you deal with shame, is you kill the person, who's brought shame to you, or you punish them, or ostracize them, in some particular way, and then of course, finally, that the thing, which is most often, talked about in our culture, and that some people, actually mistakenly, think is Christian, and I want to tell you right now, this is not a Christian idea, it isn't a Christian idea, to learn how to forgive yourself, and the fact of the matter is, is that forgiving yourself, doesn't work, you see the very structure, of how human beings, are human beings, is that there's something, inside of us, which unless it's, unless you've become, a true sociopath, so you have no conscience, and one of the things, about conscience, is that conscience, is both something, which is deeply personal, and within you, you know that the sometime, as well feels a bit external, to you, and independent to you, [33:39] and you can try, to forgive yourself, and forgive yourself, and even Christians, talk about it, but it's not a Christian idea, it's the opposite, of a Christian idea, is that you need, to forgive yourself, but you can't actually, forgive yourself, you've done these things, and even if you can, even if you could, forgive yourself, what do your victims think, what would they think, if you say, well I'm feeling a lot better, I've forgiven myself, and what would you say, how dare you forgive yourself, for what you did to me, how dare you forgive yourself, I carry these scars, and these wounds, and you forgive yourself, you narcissistic, blah, blah, blah, let's listen to verses, 8 to 12 again, now in the original language, verses 8 to 12, are all one sentence in Greek, and we'll just look at it, very briefly, but it's very, very powerful, and very, very wise, listen to what it says, 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, remember this is all flowing, from the fact that, the Holy Spirit, has come into Timothy's life, and the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit, has a deeper role, and power in your life, what will happen, is power, love, and self-control, verse 9, who saved us, and called us, to a holy calling, not because of our works, in other words, what we've done, 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, an apostle, and a teacher, 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, in other words, his whole mission, his whole life, the purposes of his life, the suffering, everything that's been, entrusted to him,

Jesus is able, to guard, it's a very, very, very powerful message, first of all, let's just look at this thing, in the, and if you can find it, verse nine, 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 this idea of the call, and what this actually is, is literally, it's

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saying from eternity, from the eternal, and this is one of the things, which is so amazing, about the gospel, is it isn't if God, looks down at someone, like you and me, and it's like he's going, through a dating app, and he can't decide, whether he's going to flick left, or flick right, but even if he flips, otherwise it's just a whim, doesn't mean anything, and here today, gone tomorrow, it's, but what it is saying here, is that from outside of time, God who is from outside of time, in a sense, before there was time, God was calling George, God was calling Jason, or Jill, and that even now, God who is outside of time, is calling George, is calling Jason, or Jill, and that in a sense, for what is our future, beyond our death,
God is calling, calling us, he's calling us, from before you were born, he's calling you, right in the midst of your life, he's calling you, from after death, and after judgment, it means that when he calls you, he knows everything about you, because he's outside of time, and he's God, he knows everything, that you've done wrong, from the time, you could do anything wrong, he knows the things, you've forgotten about, he knows the things, that you will still do, in the future, he knows all of these things, and still he calls you, to be his child, and he's calling you, to be his child, through the person of Jesus, and there's this profound gift, that's won by Jesus, is that Jesus, lives this life, that you could not live, and dies this death, and when you see Paul, when you see Jesus dying, you see in a sense, death swallowing Jesus, but what Paul, is proclaiming, is that it looked as if, in fact it's true, death swallowed Jesus, but when Jesus, was inside death, he swallowed death, and he emerges alive, on the other side of death, having swallowed death, on the third day, and Paul knows, that the only way, that God could swallow death, is by swallowing that, which caused death, which is your rebellion, and mine against God, and Jesus, knows all of that, from the moment of your birth, to the moment of your death, and everything in between, and he dealt with all of it, when he died upon the cross, that when you come to Jesus, it is not as if God says,
George is so good at theology, he's so good at ethics, he's so good at living, he's so successful at money, he's so successful in life, I think I'll let him, into my kingdom, no, he doesn't look at any of that, at all, he said, I'm calling you George, because I am love, I am mercy, I am grace, and I have provided the gift, I have provided my son, who does what you cannot do, and he swallows death, and that means, he's swallowed, and taken into himself, all of the punishment you deserve, all of the shame you deserve, and not only that, that I, he has swallowed that for you, but now you stand, before me, clothed with his, perfect life, and then when it talks about that day, if you look again, verse, verse 12, 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, that day means the end, and the fact of the matter is, it doesn't matter, if your rich brother-in-law, says you should be ashamed, because you're so poor, it doesn't matter, if the health guru, says you should be ashamed, because you have 20 pounds, too much on you, it doesn't matter, if the, if your dad says,
I always knew, you'd never be any good, and that's why you went into drugs, it doesn't matter, what your teachers say, it doesn't matter, what you're saying to yourself, it doesn't matter, any of these things, what really matters, is the voice of the one person, who knows everything, and that is the triune God, and what he says, is that when you have given yourself to Jesus, and allow that, Jesus to do that work, of accepting you as his child, that on the last day, he will say welcome, he will say, I have seen you face to face, and I am so glad, that now you can see me face to face, the true antidote to shame, is knowing that Jesus has paid it all, and that the final word about you, is not shame, and death, and unsuccess, and meaninglessness, but I have had a purpose for you, I have had things, that you could do in the world, and you have done them, and you have paid the price, and I'm not letting you know my kingdom, because you are so successful, for any of these things, but I have my grace, and mercy, and love, and peace, and when we suffer, for the testimony of Jesus, we are doing something, which makes our father smile, and we are doing something, which bears witness, and testimony, to a broken, and hurting world, that there is an answering, to their suffering, and their shame, and their guilt, that there is a better thing, than being forgiven, forgiving yourself, but by being forgiven, by almighty God, and that is what you're invited, and ushered into, so just in closing friends, what Paul is saying, is that we need to recommit, to Christ, and learn to live, as an out Christian, and one of the things, that you can pray for us, as a church, is it will be, an out community, we need small groups,
[41:46] Owen's going to talk about it, in a moment, we need small groups, where we can live, as out Christians, in an out group, and share each other's lives, as we share our triumphs, and our suffering, and our struggles, and our successes, and we need out mentors, and disciples, who we

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can pour out our heart to, and get some wisdom, about moving forward, and if you are listening to this, you are here, and you haven't given your life, to Jesus, and you feel any type of pressure, now maybe within you, to give your life to Jesus, that's Jesus knocking, you are now starting to feel, and sense that call, on your life, that began before you were born, and is also coming, from the future, that you'd open the door, of your heart, and let Jesus in, as your Savior and Lord, and there's no better time, than right now, to do that, please stand, Father, you know, you know the things about us, that are really strong,

Father, you know those amongst us, who just, I don't know, maybe because of our parents, and our DNA, we just are naturally brave, and Father, you know the ones amongst us, who are not naturally brave, but naturally timid, and we give you thanks, and praise that you call both, and we ask, Father, for those of us, who are naturally brave, Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit, would help them to be brave, in a godly way, to grow in that power, and love, and self-discipline, that comes from you, and have a confidence, not in their own bravery, but in you, and in your gospel, and Father, for those of us, who, we walk with a limp, in following Jesus, and we walk with a limp, of being easily frightened, Father, we give you thanks, and praise, that your word, has reminded us, of the fact, that we can follow you, with a limp, that Jesus takes our hand, and won't let us go, and we ask, Lord, that the Holy Spirit, would become more real, in our lives, your word, more real, in our lives, that in our micro decisions, that we would be willing, to suffer for you, and bear testimony, to Jesus, and we thank, and praise you,
Father, that you are still calling, people in this city, and in every people group, and to the edge, of the end of the world, that you are calling people, to follow Jesus, we thank you, that you use, very, very, weak vessels, like us, to bear testimony, to Jesus, and Father, if there are any here, who are hearing the door, their heart being knocked on, by Jesus, we ask that you help them now, by your Holy Spirit, to open that door, and welcome Jesus in, knowing, that he is their hope, of glory, their comfort, and suffering, the antidote to shame, Father, we ask all these things, in the precious name of Jesus, and all God's people said, Amen.

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