

A Good News Worth Suffering For

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[0 : 00] All right, well, as we go to the Word this morning, I want to begin with a question for you. Have you ever had anyone treat you poorly because of your faith in Jesus, specifically?

Have you ever had anyone treat you poorly because of your faith in Jesus? You know, I was thinking about that this week, and thankfully in my life, I can really only remember a few people who have treated me poorly because of my faith in Jesus.

The one that stands out the most to me was a co-worker named Harley. And when I used to work as a courier for FedEx, he and I would stand across from each other.

We had the conveyor belt going right down the middle, the parcels coming down the line. We had our trucks behind us. We were loading our trucks. And we'd often talk to each other about all sorts of things each day.

And I prayed for opportunities to share my faith with him. And on several occasions, I had the chance. And Harley mocked me. He laughed at me.

[1 : 08] He tried to get all the co-workers that were standing around to just laugh at me. And it was hard. Have you ever had anyone treat you poorly because of your faith in Jesus?

Well, this morning as we look into the Word of God, we're going to hear the words of a man who was treated far worse, terribly, because of his faith in Jesus. And we're going to hear what he would say to anyone who is perhaps fearful of bearing the scorn and ridicule and sometimes even suffering that sometimes comes with being a Christian.

We're looking at the words of the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the younger Timothy. And I'm going to read the passage for us and then we'll examine it together. We're in 2 Timothy, chapter 1. And we're going to start here in verse 6. Paul says this to Timothy. He says, Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

He has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace.

[2 : 54] This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame because I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

So our passage for this morning has three parts to it. That first part is in verses 6 to 8 and Paul is just encouraging. He's exhorting Timothy. Then in verses 9 to 11, Paul reminds Timothy of the gospel.

And then finally, he puts himself forward in verse 12 as an example to follow for Timothy. Let's look at these in order, starting with the first part.

Paul says, For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. Let's look at that word, fan into flame.

[4 : 22] What does it mean to fan into flame? In the original language, this phrase is just one word and it means to rekindle. And this idea of kindling a fire is almost foreign to us today in our electrified society.

But once upon a time, 2,000 years ago, when this was written, there was no electricity. Kindling a fire was an everyday thing for cooking and heating and I was reminded a couple Thursdays ago about how foreign this idea has become to us because we had half a dozen youth boys over at the fire pit just across the street there on Thursday night and they were all rather clueless as to why the fire that was lit just kept going out.

And they were even more surprised to see me blowing on it and fanning it with a piece of paper. Like, don't do that. You're going to blow it out. Those of you who have experience with camping and fire making know that to get a fire blazing it requires three things. It requires heat. It requires fuel, which in our case was wood, not diesel. I'm looking at the Schmitz. And it requires oxygen.

And so you've got to blow. You've got to fan on that flame. Not too hard, but hard enough so that those smoldering embers begin to burn if it's already gone out or so that that fire really takes.

[5 : 58] Especially if you're making the fire down in a pit that's got no air holes, which is what we were doing. So this is the metaphor that Paul is using here. He's saying, rekindle. Get the fire going again.

Again. And specifically, get the fire going again when it comes to the gift of God that is in you, Timothy. So what's this all about?

Well, Timothy has a gift from God. And I don't want to read into this too much, but perhaps Timothy has or at least he's tempted to let his gift go unused or sort of just kind of die down to a smoldering ember.

Now, what is this gift? Well, we actually don't know precisely what this gift is that Paul's referring to here. We know it's the gift of God, meaning probably from God.

And we know that Timothy received it from God through the laying on of hands by the Apostle Paul. Now, some people suggest here that the gift of God is really the Holy Spirit himself.

[7 : 12] and I think this is a little bit unlikely. It doesn't really make sense to tell Timothy to rekindle the Holy Spirit. Most likely, this gift refers to some special ability that God had given Timothy likely to do with all the things, the imperatives that he gives in these letters related to preaching or teaching or shepherding or leading the local flock there in Ephesus.

So, it would seem that at some point, God gave this special gift to Timothy, a spiritual gift, perhaps an ability to teach or preach or lead, and it came through the Apostle Paul laying his hands on Timothy, but now perhaps Timothy is at least tempted not to use his gift from God, to let it go unused, to let it like a flame just kind of die down.

And Paul's saying, rekindle that gift, fan it into flame, use it, don't stop preaching and teaching the good news about Jesus or teaching others how to follow Jesus.

And with this exhortation comes a word of encouragement, a sort of a motivating reminder in the next verse here. fan into flame the gift of God that is in you, for the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.

So Paul reminds Timothy that any fear that he has right now doesn't come from God. Why would Timothy be afraid right now?

[9 : 01] why would he be tempted to let his gift go unused and sort of just die down to a smoldering ember? Any guesses?

Fear. Fear? Fear of what? The crowd. The crowd? The crowd? You're in a foreign country, you just don't want to fit in mind.

Stand out. Okay. If you were here two weeks ago, what's Paul's situation right now? He's in jail.

I heard somebody whisper it. He's in jail. In fact, he's chained. If we look just down one verse from this, he refers to himself as a prisoner and suffering.

And if we look ahead a little bit further in the letter, we see that Paul is near the end of his life and he knows that he will soon be executed. So this is why Timothy might be afraid right now and tempted to let his gift fall into disuse.

[10 : 14] This is why he might be tempted to just kind of keep his head down and keep his mouth shut. Right now, there is widespread persecution of the followers of Jesus and people like Paul are suffering.

They are being imprisoned and some even being killed because of their faith in Jesus. Right now, Paul is on death row. But he's exhorting Timothy.

He's encouraging him. He's saying, don't let what's happened to me cause you to shrink back or to keep quiet about Jesus. If you've stopped preaching or teaching or speaking about Jesus, start it up again.

Rekindle that flame. And if you're afraid that what's happened to me might happen to you, Timothy, know this, that fear that you feel doesn't come from God.

God has given us his Holy Spirit, Timothy, and the Spirit of God in us doesn't make us afraid. No. He gives us power.

[11 : 23] He gives us love. He gives us self discipline. It's interesting that Paul highlights these three particular things.

I mean, power, I think we can appreciate Timothy's need for that right now. Like, power equals strength. It equals the ability to persevere and go on using his gift to do these hard things. But we need more than that in the face of fear and in the face of persecution. Paul says the Spirit also gives us love. What lies beneath our efforts to proclaim the truth of Jesus in our world? Love. Love. fear might tempt us to keep quiet if the world around us becomes intolerant of the message about Jesus.

But love for the people in our world will keep us speaking because we know the desperate need of the people around us to have that salvation, that same salvation that we have found, that same forgiveness that we have found.

[12 : 40] So Paul reminds Timothy that the Spirit inside us gives us love for our fellow man. And that love will lead us to speak about Jesus, even when it's hard, even when it might cost us dearly.

And then the third thing, he says, the Spirit gives us self-discipline. Well, what's self-discipline for? When's it needed most?

It's needed when we know the right thing to do, the best thing to do, and yet our feelings are running strongly in the opposite direction. And feelings are very powerful.

Self-discipline implies that there's something that we must do despite what we kind of want to do or how we really feel. And here's the good news.

God's Spirit living in us gives us self-discipline. He gives us the ability to do the right thing, the hard thing, even when we don't feel like it, even when it's hard, and the things we feel inside of us are pushing.

[13 : 56] No, don't go that way. Go the opposite direction. In the context here, Timothy is feeling fear. At least that's what Paul refers to when he says spirit of fear or timidity.

What is good and what is right is for him to keep using the gift that God has given him. Probably to keep preaching and teaching the message about Jesus, the truth about Jesus.

And so I find this really encouraging. Sometimes talking to people about Jesus is hard. Sometimes it's just uncomfortable.

if I think back to those conversations with Harley and the way that he was responding to me, I was just tempted to say, well, forget it then. I'm not going to talk about this at all.

I'll just keep quiet. But God's spirit, says Paul, who lives in us, who lives in all of his people, gives us power, gives us love, and gives us that ability to make ourselves do what we don't want to do or don't feel comfortable doing.

[15 : 11] We're not called to be comfortable. We're called to follow Jesus, to take up our cross and follow him, and to proclaim him, and to share the good news about him with the nations.

And God is in us, and he is with us, and he gives us exactly what we need to do what he's commanded with whatever unique gifts that he has given to us.

Paul goes on here, verse 8, he says, so do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me, his prisoner.

Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. As we'll see in the weeks ahead, there is a tone of sadness in Paul's heart, because some who have claimed the name of Christ have deserted him.

They've abandoned him. Some are ashamed of him because of his chains, because he's in prison. And as this suggests, some are even ashamed of the gospel, the message of Jesus, the name of Jesus.

[16 : 30] that's the name that's at the center of all this. The persecution and the suffering is coming and it's all around this name of Jesus. And so what does Paul urge Timothy to do?

He says, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me, his prisoner. Timothy, don't be ashamed of the true testimony, the true account of Jesus Christ that we've been proclaiming. Don't be embarrassed by it, even if people think poorly of you, or mock you, or scorn you because of it. What's Timothy thinking here?

You know, what if continuing on this way is going to lead me into suffering? Like not just scorn and derision, but real suffering for me. We don't know if Timothy had a family at this point, but maybe for

his family too.

What does Paul say to Timothy here? He says, join with me in suffering for the gospel. Yes, I am suffering.

[17 : 44] Suffer with me for the sake of this truth about Jesus our Lord. And you won't be alone in this. God's spirit is in you.

He's going to give you power. He's going to give you love. He's going to help you to endure. This is so explicit, isn't it? I mean, Paul doesn't just say, Timothy, you might suffer.

I hope you don't, but you might. No, he says, join with me in suffering for the gospel. Imagine for a moment that you're Timothy.

what's your response to this? Do you say, yes, I'm willing to suffer with you, Paul, for the sake of Christ and the gospel?

Or do you say, thanks for the invitation, but no thanks. The cost is too great. at this point, Paul takes a minute to remind Timothy of what the gospel is, what the good news about Jesus is, and he reminds Timothy that we have a gospel that's worth suffering for.

[19 : 07] Let's see this in the next couple verses, starting in verse 9. He has saved us, says Paul, and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace, this grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

So not only does Paul remind Timothy of the gospel here, but his underlying point really is that we have a good news about Jesus that's worth suffering for. It's a good news about how God has saved us, how he has delivered us from the punishment that we deserve because of our sins. It's a good news about how God has called us to a holy life or a holy calling as some translations say. God is a holy God. God is like no other and he has chosen us specially.

He has called us specially for a special purpose to belong to him, to be his people, to be his children, his treasured possession and to live lives that are holy now, set apart from the world in its ways.

we have a gospel that is worth suffering for and it's about a God who has saved us and specially called us and chosen us to be his holy people and to live holy lives and he just keeps going on.

[20 : 52] It's a good news about how God has done this for us, not because of anything that we have done. This salvation, this holy calling are not dependent on how we have lived.

It's not because we're so good that we're saved. It's not because we haven't sinned so much that we're saved. If we read other places in the Bible, it's actually despite how much we've sinned and blown it.

Yet God has saved us. He has called us. Why? Because of his own purpose and grace.

God is a good, gracious, generous God, truly benevolent, and it's out of that goodness and generosity and giving nature that he has, that he has purposed to save us and to call us to himself. Another way to say it, God has decided to save us and to call us, not because of who we are, but because of who he is. We are unworthy of God.

[22 : 09] We're unworthy to be in a favorable relationship with him because of our sins, because of our corruption. But he is the kind of good and gracious God who has real compassion and mercy even on sinners like you and me.

And so salvation is his gift. And it's a free gift. And that is the good news. Paul goes on.

Amazingly, Paul says that God had this gracious plan to save us through sending Jesus even before our world began. he saved us and called us.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus. Before the beginning of time is maybe not the best translation in my opinion, without getting all philosophical on us this morning.

Some of the other translations capture this well, I think. The idea is before time as we know it began, or as some say, before the world began.

[23 : 27] God is amazing. He knows the future with perfect clarity. He knew that we would disobey him and become rebels.

And even before we'd made the choice, even before he'd made the heavens and the earth, he had this gracious plan and intention to rescue us and to forgive us and to save us by sending Jesus Christ into the world.

And this saving grace, this call of God has now been revealed, says Paul, through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus. We have a glorious good news about what God has done to save us and to call us because of his goodness and grace and at the center of this salvation plan of God's is the man, Christ Jesus who has now appeared, says Paul.

And he keeps going. What has Jesus done? Our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death, says Paul, and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

I love these words. Jesus has destroyed death. Quite literally, he has abolished it. He's rendered it powerless.

[24 : 54] That great inevitable fate of every single person who has ever walked this earth, death, that unbeatable demise that overtakes all of us, Jesus has abolished it.

He's broken its power. And, says Paul, Jesus has brought two things to light. light. This is metaphorical language here.

He has brought life and immortality to light. The sense of this is that there were these two things that were lost to us in darkness. We couldn't find them.

Really, when it boils down to it, both of these things are the same thing, life and immortality. They were lost to us. We would live, but only for a little while. And then death.

We couldn't find that life that endures. We couldn't find immortality. But now Jesus has come, and he has shone the light on life, on immortality.

[26 : 04] He has helped us find what was lost to us. He's helped us see that there is a way to have life and immortality. Or is Jesus called eternal life.

And if we listen to the testimony about Jesus, the good news of Jesus, we discover that Jesus is the way to that life, even more, that Jesus himself is that life.

And he gives that life to those who repent and believe in his name. We have a gospel, we have a good news, that is absolutely worth suffering for, about a gracious and loving God who has saved us and called us to be his own special people and live with him forever.

Why is it that Paul places so much emphasis on this little bit about life and immortality, on this part of the good news? He could talk about all kinds of things, atonement for sins, reconciliation with God.

Why life and immortality? Because death is the worst thing that can happen to us when we suffer for the sake of Jesus.

[27 : 24] What's the thing that Paul's facing right now? Death. And that's why he's clinging so tenaciously to Jesus' promise of life as we saw in the first verse of this letter.

He's soon to be executed. He's soon to die. And what does he want Timothy to remember?

Timothy, Jesus has destroyed death. He's shone the light on immortality, on life.

And if Jesus has nullified the ultimate devastation of death for us, then we need not fear. You don't need to fear for me, Timothy.

You don't need to fear for yourself. If you keep using your gift and you come to suffer yourself. love. And if we have a salvation so great as this, if we have a remedy to death, a promise of life like this, how can we be ashamed of it?

How can we let fear keep us silent about it? Shouldn't we be willing to suffer for this, to make this news, this remedy known, known?

[28 : 44] This Savior, Jesus, known. In these last couple verses here, verse 11 and 12, Paul puts himself forward as an example of the kind of courage and faith that he's really urging Timothy to have here.

He says, and of this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet, this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

It's this wonderful, glorious, good news of God's gracious salvation, his promise of life, that I'm suffering for, Timothy.

I've been heralding this gospel, I've been declaring it loudly, proclaiming it publicly, teaching it, speaking it on behalf of God as an apostle, and that's what's landed me here in prison, says Paul. That's why I am suffering as I am. But make no mistake, this is no cause for shame. And I love these words.

[30 : 08] Paul's words just drip with confidence. They drip with trust in Jesus. This is a man on death row. And he says, this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed.

And I know the one that I've put my trust in. I am convinced that he is able to keep what I've entrusted to him until that day.

What has Paul entrusted to Jesus? to keep for that day? Himself, his life, everything.

Everything's at stake here. And Paul says, I'm absolutely convinced. My life is safe. My life is secure in his capable hands.

He is able to keep what I've entrusted to him until that day. What day? Not the day of his execution.

[31 : 22] The day beyond that. The day that is coming. The day when Jesus Christ himself busts through the clouds and returns as a king to reign and raises Paul to life an immortality.

Never to die again. Never to suffer again. So these are the reasons. I'm not ashamed, says Paul.

And I think his intention is that Timothy would hear this and that he would take these reasons for himself now as he goes out and uses the gift.

Don't be ashamed, Timothy. Don't give in to fear. Remember, the spirit of God lives in you.

Join with me in suffering for Jesus and this saving truth about Jesus. What's the worst thing that can happen to you, Timothy? Death? Jesus has destroyed death.

[32 : 24] He has brought life and immortality. Don't let a fear of that keep you silent in these difficult days, Timothy. How does all this apply to us 2,000 years later?

Well, if you're here and you're a Christian, if you're a true believer in Jesus, I think what Paul's urging of Timothy, he would basically just say the same thing right to us. Pretty close anyways.

We may not have the same gift of God, the same spiritual gift as Timothy had, but we all have the same spirit who gifts us each in different ways for the unique work that God has called us to do.

Now, we may not be experiencing or seeing the same kind of suffering or persecution that Timothy and Paul were in those days, at least not the same intensity here in Davidson, here in Canada.

And yet, even without that, even with a relative lack of suffering and persecution in our time and place, we're still tempted to be silent at times, aren't we?

[33 : 34] We're still tempted at times to keep quiet about Jesus, as Jesus said, to hide our light under a bowl. But that temptation, that fear that we feel, is not from God.

God's spirit is with you, Christian. he lives in you. He gives you power and love and self-discipline so that you can be a witness, so that you can use your unique gift in the cause of the gospel.

What happens when you hide a candle that's lit under a bowl? It goes out. The flame dies out for lack of oxygen.

Don't let it die out. Fan it into flame. Use whatever gifts and skills and abilities God has given you for the cause of this gospel because we have a gospel that's worth suffering for.

We have the promise of life that Jesus has given us. Don't be ashamed of Jesus or his gospel. Be willing to suffer scorn, ridicule, contempt, insult for Jesus' sake.

[34 : 53] We have a gospel that's worth suffering for. We have a good news which leads us and others to immortality, to victory over death itself.

And so I want to urge you this morning from these words to follow the example that Paul left and the words that he gave to Timothy. just as Paul said, our glorious God and his son Jesus are absolutely worthy of our trust and our confidence in this, our full confidence.

And so may we serve Christ unashamedly, fervently, without fear, by the power of God's spirit in us, no matter the cost.

maybe you're here this morning and you're not a Christian. If that's you, let me urge you to consider this good news of Jesus, which Paul was willing to suffer and die for.

And this is the good news. Just sum it up again. God has rescued, God has offered rescue to us.

He's offered us a way to be forgiven of our sins and completely pardoned and it's a free gift of his generosity and grace, not because of anything that we have done.

[36 : 22] Even the bad things we have done can't disqualify us from this. It's sheer grace, it's God's own purpose, and it's offered freely as a gift. The gift comes through Christ Jesus, the one who appeared 2,000 years ago, and Jesus offered life and immortality.

to all of us who die. And then he gave his life and he died on the cross for us. And he was raised to life again by God on the third day, destroying the power of death and opening the way to eternal life.

Listen once again to these famous words of Jesus, which probably all of us know. John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

And so if you're here this morning and you do not believe or you have not received this gift of salvation yet, I want to urge you today, do it. believe in Jesus.

Accept the grace of God. Receive this awesome gift. And if you need help to do this or you'd like someone to pray with you, feel free to just talk to anyone here in the room who you know is a believer in Jesus and ask them for help or you could talk to me.

[37 : 57] We'd be more than happy to sit down with you and just hear your thoughts and pray with you. But make that decision. while God gives us the time.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we're so grateful for what you have done for us through Jesus.

It's amazing. It's so wonderful. We see the fear in people's eyes around us, especially as they think about death and when tragedy strikes.

But for us who believe in your name, we need not fear death at all. We look forward to the day that you return, Jesus. Whether we live till then or whether we die before then, we know we will be raised to life by your words, by your power on that day.

that we will live in your kingdom and enjoy you forever. That's where our hope is set. We thank you that you have given us this gift.

[39 : 11] We give you praise and thanks in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.