

Be Not Ashamed

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Date: 04 September 2011

Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 0 0] Let's pray while you remain standing. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do again thank you for your word. We thank you that we've heard it already, and we ask that as we reflect on it now, that you might give us minds to understand and hearts to live it out.

We ask it for your glory. Amen. Please take a seat. Hopefully you will have received in your bulletin an outline and also the insert that Jenny just read to us.

Well, Michelle was 10 years old. My wife Michelle was 10 years old when she was given a little male guinea pig whom she decided to give the very masculine name Blossom.

Now, Blossom was very precious to Michelle, and so she guarded him. She guarded him from the family dog who had already shredded the tennis ball and was looking for a replacement.

And she guarded him from her younger brother who had offered to teach Blossom how to skydive without a parachute. Now, in order to guard Blossom, Michelle would keep him in the cage and lock the cage to protect him from the dog and her brother.

[1 : 0 6] Unfortunately, Blossom got sick, and despite Michelle's best efforts to care for him, she, in fact, got a little hot water bottle and put him on top of the hot water bottle under the covers of her bed, he still died.

But the point of the story is that we often guard things that are precious to us, don't we? Well, today we're starting a new series in the letter of 2 Timothy, and Paul wants Timothy to guard what is precious to him.

In fact, I think the key verse for the whole letter is there in chapter 1, verse 14. Have a look there on your sheets. Chapter 1, verse 14, Paul writes this to Timothy. He says, Guard the good deposit entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Paul wants Timothy to guard the good deposit entrusted to him. What is this good deposit? Well, it's the gospel because that's what Paul had entrusted to Timothy.

And we know it's the gospel because in verse 8, that's what Timothy is to suffer for. And in verse 11, that's what Paul proclaimed. Timothy is to guard the gospel. Just a bit of background for the letter.

[2 : 0 9] We know from 1 Timothy, chapter 1, that Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus to be the pastor of the Ephesian church, and in particular to stop certain people from teaching a false gospel with wrong living and instead promote the true gospel with right living.

In other words, Paul knows that the gospel is under fire at Ephesus. And so he writes to encourage Timothy to guard it. But more than that, Paul also knows that he's about to die.

If you look at chapter 4, verse 6, on the back page of your inserts there, Paul writes this. He says, For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close.

See, Paul is in prison, and he knows he will soon die. And so he wants to make sure that this precious gospel does not die with him, but rather that it is protected from those false teachers and preserved long after he's gone.

So he writes this letter, the last letter we have of Paul's, and it's a kind of last will and testament, as it were, to encourage Timothy to guard the gospel. Now, usually when we want to guard or protect something, we lock it up, don't we?

[3 : 22] Like a precious piece of jewelry or a guinea pig. But it's the opposite with the gospel. And to guard the gospel means making sure that it's proclaimed and passed on faithfully, just as Chris and Jenny are doing in Eurasia.

You see, if every Christian locked the gospel away, then no one would hear it, would they? And if no one heard it, then it would fade from memory and then from history and then be lost.

And so in order to guard the gospel, Paul will say things to Timothy like, Preach the word, Timothy. Pass it on, as we'll see in the coming weeks. And today, Paul will say two things to Timothy in order to guard the gospel.

First, he will say, Don't fear, but fan into flame. And secondly, Don't be ashamed of the gospel, but suffer for it. This is how Timothy is to guard the gospel and ensure that it's preserved and remembered.

But before Paul reminds Timothy of these two things, he firstly remembers Timothy himself, which brings us to point one, verse one. Paul writes, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, for the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly loved son.

[4 : 29] Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.

Remembering your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy, he says. Do you notice how Paul remembers Timothy? In verse two, Paul calls him his dearly loved son.

Of course, Timothy was not Paul's physical son. He was Paul's spiritual son in the faith. Nevertheless, there is an intimacy here such that Paul, while he's concerned to see the gospel guarded, he's also concerned for Timothy himself.

And so, verse three, he remembers Timothy in his prayers night and day. He constantly thanks God for him and his faith. And in verse four, he remembers Timothy's tears, perhaps the tears that Timothy shed when Paul parted for Macedonia and left Timothy behind at Ephesus.

Either way, Paul longs to see Timothy so that he and presumably Timothy may be both filled with joy. You see, the gospel forms deep bonds between people, doesn't it?

[5 : 41] We had the privilege of going to England to visit Michelle's grandparents one year and we went to a church there, faithful saints who follow Jesus.

We did not know them from a bar of soap, but instantly there was a warmth there that you don't always get when you meet strangers from different places. Why was that warmth there? Because of the fellowship we have in Jesus.

And this fellowship we see, Paul has with Timothy. Although for them, it's a deeper fellowship, isn't it? Because Timothy has fought in the trenches together. And so theirs is a particularly deep relationship.

Paul even knows his family and how the faith has been passed on from generation to generation. See verse five. He says, Now, we all have a different Christian heritage, as some people here will have come from a non-Christian family and become a Christian later in life.

For others of us here, we may have grown up in the Christian family and always have known God. For Timothy, it seems like he grew up in a mixed household because there's no mention of a Christian father or grandfather.

[6 : 53] In fact, in Acts chapter 16, we're told this. Luke writes, Paul met Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. And the implication is that the father was not a believer.

Yet it seems one believing parent was enough to pass on the faith, you know, from grandmother to mother to son. And Paul thanks God for this, for this sincere faith that was passed down from generation to generation.

And I think this highlights for us the importance that parents and grandparents, and in fact, uncles and aunts, can play in the life of children. You see, I want to show you three occupations on the screen.

So if we can have the next slide. Sorry, Graeme, I didn't prep you for this. On the next slide, here's three occupations. Teacher who teaches children, a doctor who saves children, a parent or an uncle and aunt or grandparent who teaches their children.

Now, which occupation do you think would be most important in the world's eyes? Which one do you think? Doctor, maybe teacher, certainly not the parent. But which one do you think is most important in God's eyes?

[8 : 00] You see the difference? We must not be fooled about what the world says is important in life. What does God, sorry, what does Paul thank God for? He thanks God for Timothy's faith that was passed down.

And so if you're like Lois and Eunice who take the time to teach your children about Jesus or your grandchildren or nephews and nieces about Jesus, then realize what an important job you're doing.

And fathers and grandfathers, we're not to be like Timothy's father or grandfather, but we're to do what we can to teach our children about Jesus. Whether it's by praying for them, reading the Bible to them, buying them a Colin CD that teaches memory verses to kids.

Or whether it's buying a Bible book or even bringing them here to Sunday school. We need to keep teaching, taking the time to teach our children and grandchildren about Jesus. And thank God for Ruth and her team who does that for us so that the gospel might be preserved down through the generations and people saved.

Well, after remembering Timothy in prayer, Paul now reminds Timothy not to fear, but to fan into flame. Point to verse six. He says, therefore, or literally for this reason, I remind you to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.

[9 : 22] Now, Paul says, for this reason, or therefore, that is, because I know you have a sincere faith, Timothy, therefore live it out. It's as though Paul says, just as I've been reminded of your faith, let me now remind you, Timothy, to live out that faith, which for him means keeping ablaze, or better, I think, the NIV, fan into flame the gift of God.

But what is this gift? Well, I think it's the preaching and teaching of the word. That's what Paul encourages Timothy to do in chapter four, to preach the word in season and out of season, to do the work of an evangelist.

And it also seems to be the gift that the elders acknowledge back in 1 Timothy chapter four. On the screen there, if we have the next slide, is some verses from 1 Timothy four. Paul writes this, he says, until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, and to teaching.

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. You see, it seems likely that the gift he is not to neglect is the preaching and teaching that he's to devote himself to.

Do you see the connection? In other words, preaching and teaching seems to be his gift. And this gift was acknowledged by a prophetic word, it says. That is, some elders in the church said, hey, this Timothy guy can preach.

[10 : 41] They acknowledged it, in other words. And then they commissioned Timothy by the laying on of hands. This is the gift that Timothy is to fan into flame. That is, to make full use of, so that he keeps preaching and then preaches some more, if you like.

He's to keep preaching when it's easy and when it's hard, in season, out of season, even if he fears persecution from the false teachers. He's to preach without giving in to that fear.

Why? Verse 7, You see, Paul reminds Timothy that he has a certain spirit that will help him to preach in the face of false teachers.

Now, most translations have a little S there for spirit, but it can't be talking about Timothy's human spirit because it's his human spirit who needs help and encouragement, isn't it?

Rather, it must be talking about the Holy Spirit who gives us power to endure, love for others and sound judgment to know what to say. In fact, in verse 8, Paul will say something similar.

[11 : 50] He will say to Timothy, rely on God's power. And in verse 14, he will say, guard the good deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit. And so it makes sense that here in verse 7, it's the Holy Spirit who helps Timothy to keep preaching, to fan into flame, to make full use of his gift and so guard the gospel.

And so feel free to take a pen and put a capital S there in your inserts, if you like. In fact, I'm even happy if you take the Pew Bibles and put a capital S there. That's a radical idea, I know.

But it will make the point that Paul makes, wouldn't it? That we're not to rely on ourselves, but on God by his spirit so that we won't give into fear of persecution.

I'm not sure what you are afraid of in life, whether it's snakes, spiders, cockroaches. Apparently, when electricity was installed in the White House, Benjamin Harrison was the president of the US at the time and he was so fearful of electricity that he would not touch the light switches.

And so at night time, if there was no servants to turn off the lights, he just went to sleep with the lights on. He feared electricity. Or take my brother, for example. He's actually scared of seaweed.

[13 : 00] Seaweed. In fact, a few years ago, we were at the beach with my brother and my son, Timothy, who was five years old at the time, and Timothy started chasing my brother with some seaweed. Now, my brother tried to pretend he wasn't scared of seaweed.

After all, he was 29 years old. But as soon as Timothy came near him with that seaweed, my brother jumped up with such haste that he didn't fool anyone and he got out of there. He's still scared of seaweed.

Now, I don't know what you're afraid of in life, but I do know that sometimes as Christians, we can be fearful of standing up for Jesus. We can be fearful of talking to people about Jesus because we may be ridiculed for being different or a fundamentalist or something like that.

Now, it's important to realize that we are not called upon to do what Timothy is called upon because we don't all have his gift of preaching and evangelism. But we are all called upon to make the most of every opportunity Colossians 4.

We are all called upon to give an answer for the hope we have and to give it with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3. And so when those opportunities come our way and our hearts start to pound and our nerves kick in, have you ever found that?

[14 : 10] Kind of the nerves start to race when we start to talk about Jesus with someone who doesn't know him. When that happens, remember, we have the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of power, love, and sound judgment.

As our hearts start to pound and those nerves kick in, pray the word help, then go for it. Rely on God's Spirit for help. For if we all give in to our fears, then no one will be sharing the gospel, no one will be talking about Jesus.

And instead of being guarded and preserved, the gospel will fade from people's memories and from history. Well, Timothy is not to fear but to fan in order to guard the gospel. But he's also not to be ashamed but suffer for the gospel, which brings us to point 3, verse 8.

He says, So, or therefore, don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, the gospel of our Lord, or of me, his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, he says.

Now, because God has given Timothy the spirit of power rather than fearfulness, therefore, says Paul, don't be ashamed of the gospel or of me who is in prison for preaching it.

[15 : 21] You see, preaching the gospel has not meant riches for Paul, has it? It's meant prison. And that would have been potentially embarrassing for Timothy to see his beloved mentor and leader locked up as a madman or troublemaker.

But Paul says, don't be embarrassed about me and don't be ashamed of the gospel. Instead, be willing to share with me in suffering for it. Now, you'd expect the final advice of someone in prison about to be killed.

You'd expect the final advice from someone like that to be, keep your head down, Timothy, otherwise you might end up like me. But Paul actually says, keep your head up, Timothy, and you too could end up like me, suffering for the gospel.

Now, Paul knows this is a little countercultural. He knows it goes against our natural instincts, which is why he reminds Timothy again at the end of verse 8 to not rely on himself but on God's power by the Spirit whom he just mentioned in verse 7.

Timothy is not to be ashamed but suffer with God's power at hand, you see. But he's also to do this with the gospel in mind. You see, after Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed but to suffer for the gospel, he then reminds Timothy of this gospel.

[16 : 32] See verse 9? He says, He 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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

You see how great this gospel message is? The gospel message tells us about Jesus who has abolished death and offers us life and immortality just as Paul mentioned back in verse 1.

I remember speaking with a man called Roy who was close to death and while he was sad at the prospect of, you know, leaving his loved ones behind, Roy was actually excited about dying.

There was a bit of excitement there. Why? Because he had heard the gospel and he had believed in Jesus. Jesus who abolished death at the cross and brought Roy eternal life and the certainty of immortality.

[17 : 36] And so even though he was about to die physically, Roy knew Jesus would bring him through death to a new physical life forever. And so he was almost excited. See, he understood how amazing the gospel is.

What's more, verse 9 makes it clear that this offer of immortality is not based on any good work we do in life but it's based on God's own purpose and grace, it says there.

In other words, Jesus offers us immortality for free. Do you know that people spend billions of dollars every year trying to live longer and stay younger? And Jesus offers us life forever for free.

That's what grace is. God's great generosity which costs us nothing but Christ everything. we simply believe.

The gospel is an amazing message, isn't it? That is by believing in Jesus we can have the certainty of free immortality and so can I ask do you believe in Jesus? Do you have that same certainty of life after death?

[18 : 40] If you don't but want to then please speak to me afterwards. I'd love to talk to you about it. And for those of us who do believe then do we see how great this gospel is? That's what Paul wants Timothy to remember.

I mean why else does Paul remind Timothy about the gospel at this point? Surely Timothy already knew the gospel. Well I think Paul reminds Timothy at this point so that Timothy might remember that the gospel is worth never being ashamed of.

It's worth suffering for. Certainly Paul thought so. Have a look at verse 11 and 12. He says for this gospel the one I just talked about I was appointed a herald, apostle and teacher and that is why I suffer these things.

But I am not ashamed because I know the one I have believed in and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

Jesus, sorry, Paul knows Jesus and he, Paul is convinced that Jesus is able to, literally it says verse 12 that he is able to guard my deposit until that day.

[19 : 46] I had a footnote there but due to technological difficulties it didn't come out. literally he is able to guard my deposit until that day. That's what it says. Now my deposit could refer to the gospel or more likely I think it refers to Paul's life that God is able to guard until that last day.

See I think Paul is convinced Jesus will guard his life until that last day when Paul will be given that new immortal body to enjoy forever and that's why Paul is not ashamed of Jesus or the gospel message.

That's why he's willing to suffer for it because he knows it is worth it and he wants Timothy to have this gospel in mind so that Timothy too might know it's worth suffering for and so that verse 13 Timothy might hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that he has heard from Paul in faith and love that in Christ Jesus and that Timothy might guard the good deposit entrusted to him through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Paul wants Timothy to guard this gospel by not being ashamed but rather willing to suffer for it keep preaching it whether that suffering comes in the form of ridicule or humiliation or even death Paul reminds Timothy to not be ashamed but suffer for the gospel with God's power at hand with God's gospel in mind and finally with these examples in sight see verse 15 he says this you know all those in Asia have turned away from me including Fugelos and Homogenes but may the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he has often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains on the contrary when he was in Rome he diligently searched for me and found me may the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from him on that last day and you know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus it seems Fugelos and Homogenes were ashamed of Paul and his chains in the gospel because they deserted Paul they left but in contrast to them is Onesiphorus who is not ashamed we're told in fact

Onesiphorus' name means profitable he was a profitable servant of Christ for he often refreshed and encouraged Paul in fact verse 17 says that he searched diligently for Paul when Paul was in prison that is Paul was actually hard to find whether or not the Roman guards were unhelpful in showing Onesiphorus where to go or whether or not they just didn't know where Paul was there was lots of prisoners Paul was hard to find but Onesiphorus didn't give up he searched diligently for Paul and found him and encouraged him and in the process it seems as though Onesiphorus actually died for in verse 16 Paul prays for mercy for his household rather than him as though he's no longer with them and in fact in verse 18 he then prays that he will find mercy on that day which refers to the last day as though Onesiphorus has died and is awaiting his resurrection body the point though is Paul puts up these men as examples for Timothy to show him how he is to live and is not to live and the implication for Timothy is don't be like

[22 : 57] Fugelos and Homogenes no no be more like Onesiphorus who was not ashamed even to the point of death for Jesus will bring you back to life and immortality on the last day just as he will for Onesiphorus Timothy don't be ashamed but be willing to suffer for the gospel and the same is true for us I mean sure we don't have the same responsibility that Timothy had we don't have the same gifts but that does not mean we can be ashamed of the gospel does it no no we're not to be ashamed of the gospel we're to be willing to suffer for it as well for us it might mean being happy to be known as a Christian it means not being ashamed to mention the name Jesus to people I mean why is it that Christians even Christians find it easier to mention God rather than Jesus have you ever noticed that we're happier to say God in conversation with non-Christians but not so much Jesus that's a bit harder to say why is that is it because saying God is a little safer in society's eyes and if that's the case then what we're really saying is that we fear what society thinks more than what God thinks and whether we realise it or not we're actually saying that I'm actually too ashamed of Jesus to mention his name in public and I'm not really willing to suffer that much to say his name

I remember I remember once travelling in a car with a mate of mine called Stuart it was summer time the windows were down and we pulled up to a set of traffic lights next to another car whose windows were down and in this car the guy in this car was playing some music and it was Christian music and my friend Stuart recognised the music as Christian and so he yelled out the window to this guy at the top of his voice he said hey you follow Jesus too that's great how did you come to know Jesus oh sorry mate the lights are green gotta go keep following Jesus he's the greatest and then we drove off now you know what I was thinking that whole time Stuart was yelling out the window about Jesus I was thinking please go green please go green so I could get out of there and then it occurred to me I was actually ashamed of Jesus because I feared people hearing Stuart talk about his name and I wasn't willing to suffer for Jesus who gave his life for me and I tell you what the rest of that car trip

I prayed prayers of apology to my Lord Jesus friends we must be more like Stuart who's happy to mention Jesus name we must be more like Ones Sepphoris who was willing to suffer for Jesus sake even to the point of death the next time someone asks you how your week was why not tell them I was reminded about how great Jesus is and see how they respond and as you wait for them to respond and the nerves kick in and the heart starts to pound remember the Holy Spirit who lives in you pray the word help and rely on God's strength for in this way we can play our part to guard the great gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who abolished death and secured life and immortality for us let's pray positive any people mean to the God you know and that's you too and you