

Not Ashamed

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- [0 : 00] Well, when my wife Michelle was 10 years old, she was given a little male guinea pig whom she decided to give him the very masculine name Blossom.
- Now, Blossom was very precious to Michelle and so she protected him, guarded him. She guarded him from the family dog who had already shredded the tennis ball and was looking for his next victim.
- She guarded him from her younger brother who had offered to teach Blossom how to skydive and she guarded him from the cold by giving him his own blankie.
- And of course, she would guard Blossom by putting him in the cage, locking him in a way and so on. But Blossom one day got sick, so Michelle brought him inside, laid him on a hot water bottle under the doona in her bed and unfortunately, Blossom then died.
- And to this day, we're not sure if it was natural causes or whether she smothered him to death in a kind of suffocation by sauna kind of thing.
- [1 : 07] But the point of the story is we often guard things that are precious to us, don't we? We do it all the time, whether it's our iPhone, some jewellery, our favourite toy, whatever it is.
- And tonight we're starting a new series into Timothy. And the main idea of the letter, the thread that pulls it all together, that runs throughout, is Paul's desire to see the gospel guarded.
- That is, Paul wants Timothy to guard the gospel. And I think the key verse for the letter is in our chapter today, chapter 1, verse 14. If you've got your Bibles there, have a look there. He says to Timothy, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, guard it with the help of 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, the good news about Jesus. And we know this because that's what Paul entrusted to Timothy, the gospel.
- And in verse 8, that's what he, Paul, is suffering for, the gospel. And in verse 11, that's what Paul is proclaiming, the gospel. And so Timothy is to guard this good deposit, which is the gospel of Jesus, the message about Jesus.
- [2 : 25] You see, the background for this letter comes from 1 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 3. Paul leaves Timothy at Ephesus to be the pastor of the Ephesian church.
- And in particular, to stop certain false teachers from teaching a false gospel with wrong living. Instead, Timothy was to preach the true gospel with right living.
- And it seems Timothy is still facing some tough times from these false teachers. It seems that the gospel, the true gospel, is still under fire from these false teachers.
- And what's more, Paul now knows that he's about to die. And we read that in 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verse 6, where he says that he's being poured out like a drink offering, that his time for his departure is soon to come.
- And so Paul wants to make sure that this gospel that is precious to him does not die with him, but rather that it is protective from those false teachers and faithfully preserved long after Paul is gone.

[3 : 35] And so Paul writes this letter to Timothy, the very last letter we have of Paul, and his dying wish, as it were, is to see that this gospel is guarded, preserved. But Timothy is not to guard the gospel by locking it up in a cage, like we might lock away some precious piece of jewelry or even a guinea pig.

It's actually the opposite with the gospel. To guard the gospel means making sure it is proclaimed, that it gets put out there, that it's passed on faithfully.

For if every Christian locks it away, then no one would hear it, would they? And if no one hears the gospel, then gradually it will fade from people's minds and memories and then from history and be lost.

Rather, guarding the gospel for Timothy will mean, chapter 4, preach the word, says Timothy. In chapter 3, Paul will say, follow my example, Tim, and live out the gospel.

In chapter 2, he'll say, persevere in the gospel and pass it on. Sandra made reference to that already. And tonight he'll say, don't be ashamed of the gospel, but be willing to suffer for it.

[4 : 43] Because in these ways, you're going to guard the gospel. You're going to make sure that it continues down through the ages. But before we get to the big idea of chapter 1, Paul firstly remembers Timothy, which is point 1 on your outlines, verse 1.

So we had a look at the background and how the letter hangs together. We're at point 1 and verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, in keeping with true promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

To Timothy, my dear son, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience.

As night and day, I constantly remember you in my prayers. Remembering your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. And I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice, and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

To start with, did you notice how Paul refers to Timothy in verse 2? He calls Timothy his dear, or literally his beloved child.

[5 : 56] Of course, Timothy was not Paul's physical child or son. He is Paul's spiritual child in the faith, as it were. Nevertheless, there is some intimacy here, isn't there? Such that Paul is concerned, not just to see the gospel guarded, but he's concerned for Timothy as well.

You see, some people, I think, get this picture of Paul that he's like a machine. All he cares about is pounding out the gospel, and he doesn't care so much about people, but we see the reverse here, don't we?

He cares about people. He cares about relationships. After all, the gospel is concerned about people and right relationships, is it not? And so he remembers Timothy.

And the word remember, you might have noticed it as I read it out there, it pops up three times, doesn't it? And so Paul remembers three things of Timothy. The first, he remembers Timothy in his prayers.

He prays for Tim. Presumably that Timothy might stand firm in the faith, among other things, like preaching the word and so on. But I think this is instructive for us.

[7 : 01] You see, when we pray, do we include prayers for our fellow Christian friends and family? Or are they just for our needs and our concerns?

I don't know if you've seen those cooking shows. What's the latest one? My Kitchen Rules, that kind of thing. MasterChef, you've kind of seen some of those ones, yep. You know how they score a meal out of ten?

And Manu always says more sauce, that kind of thing. Our kids have seen bits of this, because it's usually on while they're getting ready for bed. And so they've actually started scoring my wife's cooking out of ten.

And one night, things didn't look so good. It didn't go to plan, and the meal didn't look great when it was put down. And, I mean, it didn't look great to the kids. They said it didn't look great, just to be clear.

And so poor Michelle got a three out of ten. We've since stopped this practice. But one of our kids, when they said grace, they said this.

[8 : 00] They said, even though mummy cooked a three out of ten, thank you that she follows Jesus. The point of the story is, we're trying to teach our kids, even when they say grace, to pray for others, that they would follow Jesus.

You can see we're having limited success. We are to keep praying for one another. Pray for your church family, your 6pm congregation, that we would keep standing firm.

Pray as Paul prays for Timothy. We are to remember one another in prayer. Pray for one another. And pray for those particularly who are suffering for the gospel, as Timothy was, as our persecuted brothers and sisters are this day.

Pray for the church. Well, Paul remembers Timothy in his prayers, and he also remembers Timothy's tears, and he longs to see Timothy again.

Here is that deep and sincere relationship that we saw earlier in verse 2. And it's a relationship, no doubt, forged in the trenches as they did ministry together.

[9 : 08] But it's a relationship that has been created by the gospel. They've been saved and brought together as brothers in the gospel.

And I don't want to make too much of this, because it's not the main point here, but again, it is a little reminder that the gospel creates relationships. Which is why I don't understand why some Christians will only come to church every so often, you know, when it suits them.

I'm not having anyone here, by the way, I just know that's generally the case all around the world. You see, church is actually the goal of the gospel. The gospel is there to create relationships, and we express our relationships as family by meeting together.

And we see that relationship that the gospel creates between Paul and Timothy here. Now, that's more of a passing comment. The third reference, though, to remember, comes in verse 5.

Have a look at verse 5 again. He says, Here it seems that Timothy grew up in a mixed household.

[10 : 28] As Paul remembers his faith and how it was passed down from grandmother to mother to Timothy, did you notice there's no mention of the men in the family?

And in Acts chapter 16, I forgot to put this on the slide, sorry, but in Acts chapter 16, we're told, Paul met Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek.

And the kind of vibe is that the father didn't believe. Yet one believing parent was enough to pass on the faith from grandmother to mother to son.

And so Paul thanks God for this, for this sincere faith, and for those who passed it down to Timothy. And I think this highlights for us the importance that older people can have in teaching younger people.

Whether we are parents of children or uncles or aunties or older siblings of younger brothers and sisters, or even if we teach Sunday school or creche and the like. You see, just on the next slide, there are three occupations.

[11 : 34] We've got a teacher who teaches kids, a doctor who saves kids, and a person who teaches kids about Jesus. Which one do you think the world would say is most important?

It's not rhetorical. Number two, okay, yeah. Yeah, probably a doctor. Yep, I used to be a teacher myself. We always got the raw industry. But lots of holidays.

Which one do you think God would say is most important? It's obvious, isn't it? Number three, yeah. And so, if you are like Lois or Eunice, not if you have their name, but if you take time to teach younger kids whether they're related to you or not, then please remember that what you are doing is an incredibly important job.

You are passing on the gospel. You are guarding it. Helping it preserve to the next generation. But Paul remembers Timothy's faith for a reason, which is to essentially encourage Timothy not to fear, but to fan into flame.

So point to verse 6. Have a look at verse 6. He says, For this reason, I now remind you, Timothy, to fan into flame the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

[12 : 57] For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline, he says. Paul says, for this reason, verse 6, doesn't he?

That is, he says, because I know you have a sincere faith that was passed down to you from grandmother to mother to you, because I know your faith is sincere, Timothy, now live it out.

It's as though Paul says, look, I've just been reminded of your faith, so now let me remind you, Timothy, to keep living out that faith. Now, for Timothy, this means not fearing what other people think or persecution and the like, but rather fanning into flame, it says, verse 6, the gift of God.

But what is this gift? Well, I think it's the gift of preaching and teaching the word. That's what Paul encourages Timothy to do in chapter 4, to preach the word in season and out of season and do the work of evangelist.

And it seems to be the gift that the elders acknowledged back in 1 Timothy chapter 4. So I've got this verse on the slide, I think. So if you can put the next slide, there it is. So here we read, Paul says, until I come, Timothy, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

[14 : 10] Do not neglect your gift which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Now, it seems likely that the gift he is not to neglect in verse 14 is the gift in the verse before in verse 13, the gift of preaching and teaching.

The gift that was acknowledged by a prophetic word. In other words, some elders came around and said, hey, this boy can preach and teach. And so they commissioned him by laying hands on him.

I take it this is the gift that Timothy is to now fan into flame in 2 Timothy chapter 1. That is, he is to make full use of this gift. He is to keep preaching and teaching and then even more so.

He is to keep preaching when it's easy and when it's hard in season, out of season. Even when there is persecution from false teachers.

He is to preach without giving in to that fear. Why? Well, verse 7 again, he says, for the spirit God gave us does not make us literally fearful but gives us power, love and self discipline or better perhaps is sound judgment.

[15 : 27] Paul reminds Timothy that God has given him not a spirit of fear but of power, love and sound judgment. And this spirit I think is the Holy Spirit who gives us the power to endure suffering, the love for others, the sound judgment to know what to say.

For in verse 8, Timothy is to rely on God's power, he says, at the end of verse 8. And in verse 14 he says, guard the good deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit.

So I take it it's pretty clear that this spirit here is referring to the Holy Spirit whom Timothy is to rely on in order to keep persevering, to not fear but to use his gift and to flame and to flame to keep preaching the gospel.

I'm not sure what you're afraid of in life. Snakes, hand up for snakes, a couple spiders, a couple of cockroaches, how about seaweed?

My little brother is afraid of seaweed. In fact, at age 29, he's still afraid of seaweed. He's doing lots. In fact, anyone scared of electricity?

[16 : 46] To be fair, it was when it was first installed in the White House, Benjamin Harrison, the current president of the US, was so fearful of electricity because it was a new thing that he didn't dare touch any of the light switches and so if there was no servant around to turn the lights off, he just went to bed with the lights on, there was no servant to turn the lights on, he fumbled around in the dark.

We all have our own fears, don't we? And sometimes that includes standing up as a Christian and speaking up about Jesus because we may be ridiculed for being different.

I've experienced myself, I've seen my kids go through it, I've seen others go through it. But it's important to realise that we're not called upon here to preach and teach like Timothy was.

We don't all have the gift of evangelism or preaching, but we are all called upon to make the most of every opportunity. We are all called upon to give an answer for the hope we have and to give that answer with gentleness and respect.

And when those opportunities come our way or as we invite people along to our next apologetic series and your heart starts pounding, your hands start shaking, have you had a conversation about Christianity, have you experienced that?

[18 : 07] When that happens, remember Paul's encouragement to Timothy here, don't bail out and give in to fear, but remember the spirit, the spirit of power, love and sound judgment.

And so as your heart starts to pound and the nerves kick in, pray help and rely on God's spirit for help. For if we all give in to fear, then no one will be sharing the gospel.

And instead of it being guarded and preserved, it will fade from people's minds and from history. You see, Timothy is not to fear, but to fan into flame in order to guard the gospel.

Yet he's also not to be ashamed, but willing to suffer for it. And here's the big idea of the passage, I think, because fearing what people think really comes from being ashamed, I think, of what the gospel is and being unwilling to suffer for it.

And so Paul gets to the guts of the matter, I think, in verse 8. He says, So, or therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord Jesus, or of me, his prisoner.

[19 : 13] Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, he says. Because God has given Timothy the spirit of power rather than fearfulness, therefore, says Paul, don't be ashamed of the gospel.

Don't be ashamed of Paul, the prisoner. You see, preaching the gospel has not meant riches for Paul, has it? In fact, it's meant prison. And that would have potentially been embarrassing for Timothy to have his beloved mentor in chains, locked up as a troublemaker or a madman.

But Paul says, Don't be embarrassed or ashamed, instead be willing to share with me in suffering for the gospel. Now, you'd expect the final advice of someone in prison to be, I look, Timothy, keep your head down, otherwise you'll end up like me in here.

But Paul says, keep your head up and you'll end up like me in here. Paul knows this is countercultural advice. He knows it goes against our natural instincts.

But that's what he tells Timothy to do. Don't be ashamed, but join with me in suffering. And then to help Timothy, he reminds Timothy again at the end of verse 8 to rely not on himself, but on God's power by the Spirit.

[20 : 31] Timothy is not to be ashamed but suffer with God's help 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 that gospel.

Have a look at verses 9 to 10. You see how great this gospel is.

The gospel message tells us about Jesus who destroyed death and promises us life and immortality. Just as Paul mentioned back in verse 1. I remember speaking with a man called Roy, who was very close to death.

He wasn't from this church, he was from a different church. And while he was sad at the prospect of leaving his loved ones behind, he was actually almost excited to die.

Why? Well, because he had heard the gospel, because he believed in Jesus. Jesus who destroyed death at the cross and brought Roy eternal life and the certainty of immortality.

[21 : 59] So even though he was about to die physically, Roy knew Jesus would bring him through death to life again forever. And so he was excited. This gospel really is amazing news.

And what's more, verse 9 makes clear that this offer of immortality is not based on anything good we might do in life, but rather on God's own purpose and grace. In other words, Jesus offers us this life and immortality for free.

In 2013 to 2014, Australians spent \$4 billion on cosmetics and anti-aging gear and so on, so that we can look younger and live longer.

Jesus offers us immortality for free, not because of anything we have done, but because of God's grace, God's great generosity, which costs us nothing and Christ everything.

You see, although we don't deserve it, God offers us forgiveness and life eternal. This gospel really is an amazing message. And the way we receive this offer is by believing it's true, believing in Jesus who died for our sins so that eternal death might be destroyed, believing in Jesus who offers us forgiveness and life eternal.

[23 : 27] And so can I ask you at this point, do you believe in Jesus? Because it's only by believing in him that you can be certain of life eternal.

And if you don't yet believe, then please speak to me or Mark after the service and we'd be more than happy to talk to you. But this is what Paul wants Timothy to remember. I mean, why else does Paul remind Timothy about the gospel at this point?

Surely Paul wants him to remember the gospel so that Timothy knows that it is worth not being ashamed of. It's such great news that it's not something to be ashamed of, rather it's worth suffering for.

Certainly Paul thought so. Have a look at verse 11. 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 am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

Here Paul simply follows in the footsteps of Jesus, God's servant, whom we heard about from that first reading. In Isaiah chapter 50, we have a song about the servant of the Lord who does not hide his face from mocking or spitting, it says, but he relies on the sovereign Lord's help.

[24 : 48] And so the servant says in Isaiah 50, therefore I set my face like flint and I know I will not be put to shame. I will be vindicated. And Paul has this same attitude.

He knows that his suffering, his mocking will not end in shame because he trusts in God and his servant Jesus. He knows that he on the last day will be vindicated, that he'll be shown to be in the right and that he will inherit a new immortal body to enjoy forever.

And that's why Paul is not ashamed of Jesus or the gospel message. And that's why he's willing to suffer for it because he knows it is worth it. He knows the Lord Jesus whom he has entrusted his life to.

And he wants Timothy to have this gospel in mind so that Timothy too might know it's worth suffering for the gospel. And verse 13, that Timothy might keep the pattern of sound teaching that he's learnt from Paul, that he might in doing so guard the good deposit entrusted to Timothy.

And so Paul says don't be ashamed but be willing to suffer for the gospel. And to do that with God's helping hand, to do it with the gospel in mind and lastly to do it with these examples in sight.

[26 : 05] Verse 15, he says you know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me including Phygellus and Homogenes. May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesophorus because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

On the contrary, when he was in Rome he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

It seems Phygellus and Homogenes were ashamed of Paul and his gospel and they desert him. But in contrast is Onesophorus who is not ashamed of Paul's chains.

In fact, Onesophorus' name means profitable and he was profitable as a servant of Christ for he often helped and encouraged Paul. In fact, verse 17 says that he searched diligently for Paul when Paul was in prison.

It seems Paul was hard to find perhaps because the Roman guards weren't all that forthcoming about which present cell he was in or perhaps because they just simply didn't know and didn't care.

[27 : 10] Whatever the reason, Onesophorus didn't give up but searched diligently for Paul and finding him, he helped him. And it seems that in the process of helping Paul, Onesophorus actually died.

For in verse 16, Paul prays for mercy for his household rather than for him, as though Onesophorus is no longer with his household. And in verse 18, he prays that he will find mercy on that day, which refers to the last day, as though Onesophorus has died and is waiting for the resurrection of his body.

But the point here is that Paul puts up these men as examples to Timothy, to show him how he is and how he is not to live. And the implication for Timothy is don't be like Phygellus or Homogenes, but be like Onesophorus, who is not ashamed of the gospel, even though it cost him his life.

For Jesus will bring you back to life and give you immortality on that last day, as he will for Onesophorus. Timothy is not to be ashamed, but be willing to suffer for the gospel.

And the same is true for us. Sure, as I said, we might not have the same gifts and responsibilities as Timothy has, and so it may not mean public preaching in the face of false teaching, as it did for Tim, but it does mean being happy to be known as a Christian.

[28 : 23] It does mean not being ashamed to mention the name of Jesus. You see, why is it that even us Christians are more comfortable to talk about God than Jesus? Have you ever noticed that?

Why is that? It may be because it's not quite appropriate. For example, you're just making inroads in a conversation, but I suspect more than often than not, it's because 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 people think more than what God thinks. And whether we realise it or not, we're actually saying, I'm too ashamed to mention Jesus' name, or I'm not willing to suffer for Jesus who gave his life for us.

some time ago in my younger days, so quite a while ago, I was travelling in a car with a mate called Stuart. It was summer time, the windows were down, and we pulled up next to another car at some traffic lights.

And this car next, he had his windows down as well, and he had the music up, and Stuart recognised the music as some Christian music. And so Stuart kind of leaned across, and he said, hey, you follow Jesus too.

[29 : 33] That's great, man, he's the best. How did you come to know Jesus? And on he went, having this conversation at the top of his voice. And you know what I was thinking the whole time we sat there at the traffic lights and Stuart was yelling out the window about Jesus?

I was thinking, please go green, please go green. Now I could try and justify my thoughts by saying I was worried about Stuart and wanted to just move on, but really, I was actually embarrassed.

I was ashamed of Jesus. I feared that people might hear Stuart talking about him. You see, I wasn't willing to suffer for the one who gave his life for me.

And I tell you what, I spent the rest of the car trip apologising to Jesus in prayer. What about you? Who are we going to be like? Figealus and homogenes who were ashamed, or Stuart, who was happy to mention Jesus' name, or Onesophorus, who was willing to even suffer, perhaps even die for Jesus?

The Coptic Christians, or the Kenyan uni students who gave their lives for Christ? Who are we going to join with? Now, I doubt it will ever cost us our lives, but persecution in the next ten years is only going to get worse here in Australia.

[30 : 45] And so we need to start practising now, standing up for Jesus without being ashamed, but willing to suffer for him. And can I say, I've been greatly encouraged seeing people here at this service do that very thing.

So keep going, keep doing it more. The next time someone asks you how your week was, do that easy line, oh, church was interesting.

Interesting can cover all manner of sins, even if church was boring, you didn't like, it goes under me, you can get a conversation going. Say, oh, I was reminded about how great Jesus was, and see how they react.

They might not react at all. And as you wait to see if they do react, as your heart pounds and as you fear what they might say, pray, help, and rely on God's spirit. For in this way we can play our part in guarding the great gospel of Jesus Christ, who destroyed death and secured life and immortality for us.

Let's pray. Our gracious heavenly father, we do thank you for the gospel of the Lord Jesus. We thank you that it has given us new birth into eternal life.

[31 : 53] We thank you that it is great news, news that we should never be ashamed of, but news we should be willing to suffer for. Father, this is hard, and so please help us by your spirit we pray that you might be pleased to use us to keep guarding your gospel for the glory of your name.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.