

'Not Ashamed'

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[0 : 00] We're ready for you to turn back in your Bibles to Timothy as we kick off a new series. Well, in life we can often feel embarrassed or ashamed because of others.

like this little kid who thought it would be his parents thought it would be cool to dress up at a restaurant and sing happy birthday loud to him in public. Cute? Yes, appropriate for the public? Maybe not.

And that poor boy looks like he's counting the seconds until it's over. I have no idea what his parents are wearing, but he's clearly hanging his head in shame.

But sometimes the shame is not just in terms of embarrassment. Sometimes it's more serious and it's in terms of dishonor. Like the nine-year-old son of Kendra Long.

The son found a bag of drugs, of cocaine in her house. Turned it into the police only to discover that his mum was the drug dealer.

[1 : 12] And so the police came and arrested his mum in front of him. And the police body cam footage shows him in tears because it was shameful. He was dishonored by his own mother.

The point is we can sometimes feel shame, rightly feel shame in terms of embarrassment or dishonor because of others.

But sometimes we can wrongly feel that because of others. For example, a student who wrongly is ashamed to do well at school because he might get teased by others in his class for being a nerd. I mean, that's a wrong kind of a shame, isn't it? Or an adult who wrongly feels ashamed because they need help from others. I can sometimes feel like this because I find it much easier to help others than to receive help.

I don't know if you like that as well. And so when a help comes, sometimes I'm embarrassed or feel a bit ashamed. But that's a wrong kind of shame because we all need help from time to time, don't we?

[2 : 15] And of course, we can wrongly feel ashamed because of Jesus. When people ridicule us for believing in Jesus or call us fanatics for organising our lives around Jesus, we can wrongly feel ashamed of Jesus.

And it seems Timothy is feeling a little bit that way in our passage today. But first, let me give you some background as we're beginning a new series today in the book of 2 Timothy in the Bible. And it's called 2 Timothy because it's the second letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to his young apprentice, Timothy. Actually, Timothy has graduated from his apprenticeship and has been given the job of leading a church in Ephesus, modern day Turkey.

And now Paul is actually in prison in Rome, soon to be executed. Now, while Paul is keen for Tim to come and see him before he dies, and he says that later on in the letter, the big theme of this second letter is to guard the gospel.

And I think the key verses for the whole letter in our passage today, verse 13 and 14, Paul says to Timothy, what you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, because there are false teachers in Ephesus who are doing unsound teaching.

[3 : 38] So keep the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Timothy is to guard the good deposit. What is the good deposit? Well, it's the gospel. The good news about Jesus who brings us life.

And we know this because verse 13, the pattern of sound teaching that Timothy is to keep is also the gospel. In fact, in verse 8, that's what he's to suffer for, the gospel. Verse 11, that's what Paul proclaimed, the gospel.

The good news about Jesus. Timothy is to guard the gospel with God's help. But why? Well, again, because there are false teachers in Ephesus who are changing it.

And Paul is soon to die because of it. And so Paul wants to make sure the gospel doesn't die out with him or gets altered by these false teachers.

[4 : 38] And so Timothy is to guard it. And not by locking it away as we might guard some gold. Gold. Who has gold? Whatever is precious to you, whatever it is.

You know, some jewelry or a watch or something or other. We often lock things away to guard them. That's not how we guard the gospel. Rather, we guard it by making sure it doesn't fade away or get forgotten.

How? Well, faithfully proclaiming it, living it, sharing it, defending it, standing up for it. And so Paul in chapter 4 will tell Timothy to preach the gospel.

In chapter 3, he'll tell Timothy to live out the gospel. Next week in chapter 2, he'll say, persevere and pass on the gospel. But before all of that, today, he'll say, don't be ashamed of the gospel.

Because if you're ashamed of something, then you won't share it or live it, will you? Rather, you'll shrink back from it. Keep quiet about it.

[5 : 40] Even hide it from others such that it fades away and gets forgotten by others. It's kind of like some fashion trends. Back in the 70s, wearing track suits like this was apparently all the rage.

But thankfully, they've faded away and are largely forgotten today. Why have they faded away and been forgotten? Well, because apart from fancy dress parties, no one wears them, do they?

And why did no one wear them? Because they don't want to be caught dead in them, will they? In other words, they're embarrassed by them. You see, embarrassment and shame leads to hiding away, which leads to fading and being forgotten.

It's the same with the gospel. And so to guard it means making sure that doesn't happen. And so Paul says, don't be ashamed of it. But before he gets to that, he begins by remembering Timothy's faith.

Point one, verse one. He starts by saying, Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God in keeping with the 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.

[6 : 52] Before we go on, it's worth pointing out there in verse one that the promise of life is in Christ Jesus. Jesus is the one who gives us true life.

Life with God now with true meaning and purpose and peace and with real hope and help in this world. Plus life even after death.

Indeed, life eternal. That's why the gospel is worth guarding. Because eternal life is at stake. But again, first Paul encourages Timothy by remembering three things.

So verse three, 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. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy too.

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. In verse three, Paul firstly encourages Timothy by saying he remembers him in his prayers.

[8 : 04] In other words, he prays for Tim. And that would have been encouraging. I mean, don't you find it encouraging when you know people are praying for you? I do.

And it means we should be praying for each other, shouldn't we? And so do we? Do we pray not just for our own family, but for one another? Because we are actually Christian family, aren't we? Aren't we part of God's family? And we see that with Timothy too, because in verse four, Paul secondly remembers Timothy's tears and says he longs to see Timothy too.

Why? Well, because they are family. In fact, back in verse one, they're even close family. Paul calls Timothy my dear son. Not biological son, but spiritual son.

Because they're not just part of God's family. Paul trained him and mentored him and worked side by side with him. And so they developed this close father-son bond, which means, verse four, Paul longs to see him, which would have encouraged him too.

[9 : 09] And so do we long to see each other here in our Christian family, particularly those we know and have served with? We often take this freedom we have together as God's people for granted, don't we?

Until something like COVID happens. I still hear people who are grateful for the online services, but when they're able to come back here, they say online is just not the same.

It's so much better being here with family. Do we long to see each other like that? And then in verse five, thirdly, Paul remembers Timothy's faith.

A faith that is firstly passed down to him and not by his dad, since his dad was not a Christian, but one believing parent is enough. To pass the faith on to him.

So from grandmother Lois to mother Eunice to son Timothy. And I think this highlights the important role that we can play in the lives of younger kids.

[10:10] Whether we are parents or grandparents, uncles or aunts, or even just older siblings or kids and youth leaders. We can play a part in passing on the faith to the next generation.

So that they might have that promise of life that is in Christ Jesus too. I know it depends on the kind of relationship you have with the child. And sometimes it's hard to know what to say.

I mean, you all know for those who have kids, no kid likes listening to their parents any more than parents like listening to their kids. Right? It can be hard to know what to say. But it's worth saying something.

It's worth encouraging them to believe in Jesus. Just recently someone at Bible study did this. His granddaughter is getting married this month.

A week or two, I think. Overseas though. And sadly they cannot make the trip. Distance has also meant their relationship is not as close as he would like it to be.

[11:09] But he still wanted to point her to Jesus in an appropriate way. Especially since she's long since stopped going to church. He even read the message out to our group to see if we thought it was appropriate.

This is what it said. Darling Maddie, in just a month you and Tyler will be starting a new phase of your lives. It is our prayer that your union with Tyler brings you lasting joy and happiness.

I remember well seeing you for the very first time. It was such a thrill to meet you, my first grandchild. You're a beautiful baby looking every bit like your mother. It has been wonderful to watch you grow into a joyful child.

An energetic and intelligent teenager. And now an accomplished young woman. How it breaks our hearts that we are unable to share in your marriage celebration. But it's our prayer that your lives together will be filled with happiness, joy and contentment.

We hope you will always make a place for Jesus in your marriage. The love of God can be the glue that holds your union together. And provide a secure foundation for your future children.

[12:17] With all our love, grandpa and nana. It's beautiful, isn't it? Appropriate, but also pointing them to Jesus. Where to do the same?

Paul highlights Timothy's faith that was passed down to him. But he also highlights Timothy's faith that's sincere and lives in him, verse 5. He's reminded of his sincere or genuine faith, he says.

And he knows it's sincere because Paul talks about it living in him. Living not just in the grandmother Lois and Eunice, but also now lives in you.

And so if you want to know if your faith is sincere or genuine, then ask yourselves, is it a living faith?

That is, does it shape your life? Is it living within you such that it directs you?

Influences how you spend your time and how you act and think and speak? That's how you know it's a genuine, sincere faith.

[13:19] And Paul remembers Timothy's faith is a living faith, which then prompts him to remind Timothy to live out that faith. Point to verse 6. He says, For this reason, because I remember you have a sincere faith, let me remind you to live out that faith.

Which for Timothy means fanning into flame his gift. What gift? Well, the gift of preaching. We know that from 1 Timothy.

I'll put the reference on your sheets. And so to fan into flame his gift of preaching means to fire up his gift and get preaching. Even in the face of opposition.

Which for Timothy were those false teachers as well as his society. And that can be daunting for anyone, can't it? I mean, every time we share the gospel about Jesus or the good news about Jesus, our hearts can start pounding, can't they?

I still get nervous standing up here, actually. And so Paul reminds Timothy he has help, verse 7. For the spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

[14 : 40] Paul reminds Timothy that God has not given him a spirit of timidity or literally fear, but of power, love and self-discipline.

Or perhaps that last one is actually better translated as prudence or wisdom. Self-discipline of mind is what it's really getting at. And this spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

He gives us power or strength to overcome our fear and nerves. He gives us love for others that we want to see them saved, that we might then share the gospel with them.

And gives us prudence or wisdom to guide us in what to say. Now, we're not Timothy and we don't all have the same gift of preaching as he did.

But we do all have the same spirit, don't we? And we are all called to speak of Jesus as we have opportunity. Not to Bible bash, no, I'm not saying that.

[15 : 39] But nor to say nothing either. To speak as we have opportunity. And that can still sometimes be scary. And so if the opportunity comes with friends or family or perhaps work colleagues at lunch.

And your heart starts to pound. Then shoot up a one word prayer. Help! That God's spirit might help you. Give you power to overcome the nerves.

Give you love for the person you're talking to. And give you prudence to guide you in what to say.

Of course, the underlying reason for being timid or afraid is being embarrassed or ashamed.

I mean, if you were scared to wear this tracksuit to Coles or Woolies, it's probably because you'd be ashamed or embarrassed to be seen in it. Isn't that how it works?

And it's the same when it comes to sharing or even living out our faith in Jesus. Often the underlying reason for fear is embarrassment or shame.

[16 : 42] And so Paul now addresses that underlying reason and says, don't be ashamed. Point three, verse eight. This should start a new paragraph in your Bible. So he says, Because God has given Timothy the spirit of power rather than fear.

He says, Therefore, don't be ashamed of the gospel or the testimony about the Lord Jesus. Or of me, his prisoner, prisoner for preaching it.

You see, like today, not everyone believes in Jesus. And many mock those who do. And so we can feel embarrassed or ashamed because of Jesus.

What's more, for Timothy, having his beloved mentor, Paul, locked up in prison as a troublemaker or a madman, would have made him feel or could have made him feel dishonored or ashamed as well.

But Paul says, don't be. He said, on the flip side, be willing to suffer for Jesus. He says, join with me in suffering for the gospel.

[17 : 57] Now, you'd expect someone who's in prison for doing this to say something like, Timothy, keep your head down. Otherwise, you could end up like me here in prison.

Paul actually says, Timothy, keep your head up. And you too could end up here in prison with me.

Now, that's kind of not normal, is it? It's kind of countercultural.

And so he reminds Timothy again at the end of verse 8 to rely on God's power to help him do so. As we saw before, God's Spirit gives us power, love, prudence. And he says again in verse 14,

Timothy is to use the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

To summarize, Timothy is not to be ashamed, but willing to suffer with the Holy Spirit's help in hand and with the greatness of the gospel in mind.

Verse 9. Paul goes on to say, God 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.

[18 : 59] This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Do you see how great the gospel is, the good news of Jesus? This message tells us about Jesus, who by his own death paid for our sin and by his own resurrection proved he defeated death.

In other words, Jesus destroyed death and can promise us life and immortality, like we saw back in verse 1. Life with God now with true meaning and purpose and peace, peace and worth in this world with real hope and help too.

Plus, Paul adds here, immortality, life eternal, so that when our bodies die, our souls will live on and then on the last day, Jesus will give us a perfect immortal body to enjoy the perfect world to come.

Jesus gives us all this, verse 9, not because of anything we have done, but by grace. That is, by his generosity that we don't deserve, such that it's all a free gift.

[20 : 22] According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, in the financial year of 2024 to 2025, Australians spent \$207.5 billion on healthcare so that we can all live longer.

Well, Jesus gives us immortality for free, by grace. Not to mention life with God now, if, of course, we believe in Jesus.

And so do you. And for us who do, like Timothy did, we're to remember the greatness of this gospel so that we might not be ashamed of it.

I mean, Timothy knew the gospel already. He's been preaching it for a number of years. But Paul still tells him the greatness of the gospel, not because he didn't know it, but so that he might be refreshed and see it again and not be ashamed of it.

We hear it regularly too, don't we? But we can still take that gospel for granted. But we're to see its greatness afresh so that we might not be ashamed of it. Indeed, so that Timothy might realize it's worth even suffering for like Paul, verse 11.

[21 : 36] 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's able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day, just as we sang in our hymn before.

Paul, you see, simply follows in the footsteps of Jesus, a God's servant, whom we heard about from our first reading in Isaiah 50. God's servant who does not hide his face, he's not ashamed, doesn't hide it from suffering either, from mocking and spitting, but relies on the sovereign Lord's help and says, therefore I have set my face like flint and I know I will not be put to shame in the end.

Paul has this same attitude. He knows that his suffering, his mocking will not end in shame and trusts in God's help in the meantime. Indeed, he says in the middle of verse 12, this is no cause for shame because I know whom I have believed in, Jesus.

And I am convinced that Jesus is able to guard my life that I've entrusted to him on that until that day. He's convinced that Jesus will vindicate him on the last day, show the world that he and we were right to believe in Jesus and then enjoy that life and immortality he spoke of before.

[23 : 14] In other words, Paul knows it's worth it and that's why he's not ashamed but willing to suffer for it. And I wonder if we remember how good the gospel is, what Jesus has done for us that we might realise Jesus is worth suffering for too.

Well, not being ashamed and suffering for Jesus is one way that Timothy is the guard of the gospel in verse 13 and 14 as we saw before. And so Paul is basically saying him, don't be ashamed but willing to suffer for the gospel, firstly with the help of the Holy Spirit in hand, secondly with the greatness of the gospel in mind and then thirdly with some examples in sight.

So verse 15 to 18. You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me including Phygelus and Homogenes. May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus 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 how he helped me in many ways back in Ephesus.

Paul firstly holds up a negative example of Phygelus and Homogenes who deserted Paul, verse 15. Why? Well, because they were ashamed of Paul being in chains and of the gospel.

[24 : 46] And we know it was shame because on the flip side, the positive example in verse 16 is Onesiphorus who refreshed Paul and was not ashamed.

Indeed, he searched hard for Paul when he was in prison in Rome. Perhaps the Roman guards refused to help him or put Paul in a cell hidden far away.

We don't know. But Onesiphorus never gave up. That's how unashamed he was. The point is Paul puts up these men as examples as if to say to Tim, don't be like Phygelus or Homogenes who were ashamed and deserted me, but be like Onesiphorus who was not ashamed and never gave up and who will find mercy and immortality on that last day.

You see, the big idea of this passage is that Timothy is not to be ashamed but willing to suffer in order to guard the gospel. And he's to do it with the Holy Spirit's help in hand, the greatness of the gospel in mind and those examples in sight.

And it's similar for us. Yes, we don't have the same gift as Timothy nor the same responsibility to guard the gospel as Timothy, but we do have the same spirit as Timothy.

[26 : 01] And so we can help guard the gospel by living it and sharing it as we have opportunity. So the good news about Jesus won't fade away or be forgotten.

But it all starts with not being ashamed of Jesus and willing to suffer for Jesus. That's the big application. And so are we happy to be known as Christians amongst our family and friends or colleagues?

Or do we shrink back and keep quiet? Are we happy to even organise our lives around Jesus, even saying to others, sorry we can't make that thing or event because church is our priority?

Or do we shrink back from being called a fanatic? And are we happy to even mention the name of Jesus to others, even if we suffer ridicule from them? Or do we shrink back from that kind of suffering?

Let me finish with a confession. This is back when I was on my pea plates. And you know how pea platers are really cool, right? It's like a kind of rule.

[27 : 07] Anyway, I was driving with a mate called Stuart. It was summertime. The windows were down and we pulled up next to another car at a set of traffic lights because the lights had gone red. And into the car next to us was some music playing rather loudly.

And Stuart recognised it as Christian music. And so he kind of leaned out the window and said, hey mate, do you follow Jesus too? He's the best. How did you become a Christian? And he started yelling out all these things about Jesus and with cars with their windows down around us.

And you know what I was thinking that whole time? Go green, go green, go green. So I could get out of there. Now I could say it was because I was concerned for Stuart being half out the window. In fact, I floored it so hard he nearly fell out the window. But to my shame I was ashamed. I was afraid that people would hear us talking about Jesus because I was ashamed at that moment of Jesus.

And this quickly dawned on me as I floored it away and I spent the rest of the car trip obeying the speed limit but then saying sorry in my head and heart to Jesus for being ashamed.

[28 : 21] Like Timothy, we can help guard the gospel the good news about Jesus by living it and sharing it. But it all starts with not being ashamed of it but even willing to suffer for Jesus.

Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious Father we thank you so much for Jesus who died for us and was raised again. Help us never, ever to be ashamed of him but even willing to suffer for him.

That we might continue to live for him and even speak of him. And so help guard the gospel for generations to come. We ask it in his name.

Amen.