

A Call to Courage

2 Timothy 1:8-12

2 Timothy 1:8-12: *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,⁹ who 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,¹⁰ but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,¹¹ to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.¹² For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”*

Background Notes

When Paul referred to himself as a prisoner (v8), he was not using figurative language. Paul was literally a prisoner in a dungeon in Rome. You can visit the prison in Rome that is the possible site of Paul's final imprisonment.

Paul was particularly called as an apostle to be a missionary to the Gentiles: *“I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles”* (v11). In Galatians 2:7 Paul wrote, *“But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter...”* Paul recognized that God had given him this particular apostolic ministry - to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

A couple of words and phrases that Paul used in verse 10 need some explanation. Verse 10 says that Christ *“has abolished death.”* If Christ has abolished death, then why do we still die? The explanation is that word “abolished” does not mean to annihilate or to remove. It means “to make of no effect” or “to reduce to powerlessness.” So people still die - but death is no longer a tyrant to be feared, because Jesus Christ has conquered death.

Hebrews 2:14 says, *“...as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* So death has been abolished. It hasn't yet been removed, but it has been rendered powerless. If you're a Christian, you don't need to fear death!

2 Timothy 1:10 says that Christ *“brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* Doesn't the Old Testament mention eternal life and immortality? Yes, but only in glimpses. With the coming of Christ we now know more of the

details. In the Old Testament we only had glimpses of the teaching about the resurrection of the believer. For example, in Psalm 23:6 David said, *“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever,”* but that was only a brief mention of the life hereafter for the believer. Job said, *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26).* That was quite an Old Testament insight of the life and immortality to come, but still it’s only a glimpse of the eternal immortality of the believer.

So much more detail is revealed in the New Testament. (Read 1 Corinthians 15 in this connection.) With the coming of Christ and the gospel, life and immortality have been brought to light. These great truths have been revealed.

Doctrinal Points

1. Shame and spirituality do not mix.

In verse 8, Paul exhorted Timothy: *“Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.”* This comment doesn’t necessarily mean that Timothy was ashamed, but knowing Timothy was timid, Paul was challenging him not to become ashamed. Shame and spirituality do not mix.

In verse 7 Paul said, *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”* Then in verse 8 he reminded Timothy that God gives us the power, or strength, to stand and to handle suffering and persecution for the sake of the gospel. In verse 12, Paul continued with this theme: *“I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed...”* Shame and spirituality do not mix.

Are you ashamed to be a Christian? Are you too embarrassed to carry a Bible in public? Are you ashamed to stand with Christians who openly are against abortion? Are you ashamed to identify with Christians who are suffering for the sake of Christ? Are you embarrassed to bow your head in a restaurant and give thanks for your food? Shame and spirituality do not mix.

Recently I was in a store where the editing equipment for our radio program was being checked over. One of the managers asked that I bring along one of my tapes for testing purposes. So here we were in the middle of the store - and my sermon was being broadcast over the system! Everyone could hear it, and they were all looking over at me and wondering, “What is going on?!” Just for a moment, I felt like hiding - but then this verse came to mind - I had been reading it earlier in the day in preparation for giving this Talk. And I was convicted! The Word of God going out in a very unique way - and I was ashamed of myself for being somewhat ashamed!

Shame and spirituality do not mix. The more spiritual we are, the less ashamed we will be. Shame and spirituality do not mix.

2. Human works and God's grace do not mix.

Verse 9 says that God 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.”* Human works and God's grace do not mix. The Bible is teaching that here (as well as in many other places).

a. Works and grace don't mix when it comes to salvation.

Human works can't save us – we're saved by God's grace **alone!** I hope you don't think that somehow you make it to Heaven by your own human good works. No way! But in His grace, God provided salvation for you when Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins. All you have to do is believe, and you will receive this forgiveness and salvation as a gift. Human works and God's grace do not mix when it comes to salvation.

b. Works and grace don't mix when it comes to your calling.

Verse 9: God *“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.”* Even as a Christian, if you're trying to please God by doing your own thing, or trying to get God's stamp of approval on what you want to do, or if you're trying to serve Him without depending on Him for direction and strength - that's mixing human works and God's grace.

The “holy calling” mentioned here is primarily the godly life and lifestyle that we are called to live, but it certainly includes God's plan for your life. God created you and He knows all about you, so obviously He knows what's best for you - as far as job goes, as far as location goes, as far as marriage goes, as far as everything goes.

How long has He known all these things? Before time began! Verse 9 again: *“According to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”*

All of this has come to us in Christ – our salvation and our calling. It's all the result of God's grace, not our works. Remember, human works and God's grace do not mix.

Practical Applications

1. How well do you know Him whom you have believed?

In verse 12 Paul said, *“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”* Paul not only believed in Christ, he **knew** Him! How well do we know the One in whom we have believed?

It’s possible for us as Christians to grow in our personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus, because our relationship with Him is a personal relationship. Just as you can get to know a person better and better, so it’s possible to get to know the Lord Jesus better and better. He’s a Person. He’s God, but He’s a Person!

A couple that has celebrated fifty years of marriage can still grow in their knowledge of each other, and in their relationship with one another. We can continue to grow in our personal relationship and knowledge of the Lord, no matter how long it’s been since we trusted in Him for our salvation.

How well do we know Him in whom we have believed?

2. Did you know that you have a “safe deposit box” in Heaven?

Look at verse 12 once again: *“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”* Paul had taken advantage of his safe deposit box in Heaven!

What had Paul committed to the Lord, to be kept safe until the day when he would get to Heaven? There are several different interpretations of this verse, but I think what Paul had in mind here was **everything of eternal value!** He had deposited his soul, his salvation, his converts, the results of his ministry, his final rewards – all this and more Paul had committed to the Lord for safekeeping!

Rome could put Paul in prison and take away all his earthly possessions – and Rome could even take away his life. But Rome couldn’t take away things of **eternal** value! Those things were safely deposited with the Lord in Heaven. The Lord was keeping them absolutely safe!

Did you know that there’s a safe deposit box in Heaven with your name on it? Are you putting anything in there? Or are only you storing up treasures on earth?

Remember, you have a safe deposit in heaven. Don’t forget to use it!