



2 Timothy 1:6-12

Convinced

Transfiguration Sunday – February 5, 2017 (am)

INTRODUCTION

There are times when it can seem to us like it would be best to keep quiet about the *gospel*. I remember a time all the way back in middle school when my friends were joking about some crude subject or another, and one of them referred to *God* in a way that made time freeze for a moment. I don't even remember what he said, and it wasn't said to me directly, but he was poking fun at the idea that *God* may be listening to us. And he was clearly doubting whether that really happens. Time froze because I was instantly aware that I had a golden opportunity before me to affirm and defend His eternal existence, and His ever-presence among us, always listening. That split second seemed like an eternity to me. But I never spoke up. Eternity ended. And the conversation moved on with no witness being given.

I was timid about the *gospel* in those days. I still held the unexamined idea not only that it was really out of step with real life, but that the *gospel* was light and wispy, while life in this world was weighty and firm. I don't believe I heard anything else in that conversation. I was trapped in the silence of my own warring thoughts, forced to watch as my pitifully weak will proved beyond question that my confidence in the *gospel* was weaker still.

I remember that experience when I hear Paul's words to Timothy here (2Ti.1:6-7:995). I don't for a moment believe Timothy was as timid with the *gospel* as I had been—he was a proven partner with Paul in *gospel* ministry—but he was in need of being reassured that **7 ... God indeed gave (him) a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control**. Paul is talking about the impact of the of the work of the Holy Spirit in Timothy's human *spirit*. And *the Holy Spirit does not produce a spirit of "timidity" or cowardice* (L&G 189). Rather, the Spirit *produces power, assertive character that can use gospel authority boldly!* He *produces love that endures even the most cantankerous opposition with forgiveness and forbearance*. The Spirit *produces self-control, a "wise head," which provides... guidance for the use of power and love that overcomes fear and "timidity"* (ibid.). Because Timothy has all these internal resources from his gifting by the Holy Spirit, he would do best to **7 ... fan into flame the gift of God, which was in (him) through the laying on of (Paul's) hands—to exercise his spiritual gift**.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Timothy is in a tough situation there in Ephesus. And Paul's circumstances seem to have made it even harder for him. But Paul has written to help him see how he should best handle it, and to get him ready to carry on in trials like this even if Paul is not around any longer. Also, the Holy Spirit came upon Paul in this writing to cause it to be reliable and *profitable* for each of us in similar circumstances (cf. 3:16), when our confidence in the *power* of the *gospel* is feeling shaky. Let's call this *Reminders and Reassurance, in Three Parts*.

TIMOTHY IS REMINDED OF WHAT HE IS CALLED TO DO

The first thing Paul reminds Timothy to do is: **7**... *Fan into flame the gift of God. Blow on the glowing embers of the spiritual gift you've been given, Timothy, such that it kicks up into full flame!* It's not like Timothy has been neglecting the use of his *gift*, but it needs to burn bright and hot in this time of need. There are several hints throughout these two letters of what Timothy's *gift* is, what he's called to do. But I believe a good summary list comes at the end of this letter as Paul tells him straight-up what to do: **42** *preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.* **5**... *Endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* He's called to (*preach*) and defend the *gospel*, and to (*teach*) and shepherd God's people. That's what he'll be doing as he *fans his gift into flame!* What will you do?

The second thing Paul charges is: **8**... *Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. Do not be ashamed of the (gospel)* (Rom.1:16). Let's look at our responsibility first here. This is a stand-alone charge that needs to capture each and every one of our hearts. It needs to resonate in our ears, because I believe it expresses a mindset that is all too common in the church today. There's something about the *gospel* that just doesn't seem to be strong and truthful and undeniably dominant as a worldview when we're sitting in a corporate board room, or a university lecture hall, or a major sport stadium. In places like that it seems that other things are truer than the *gospel*. The crucifixion and resurrection of *Jesus* seem light and wispy in comparison to the weighty and real life things that are happening all around us right now! At such times we should begin rehearsing *gospel* truths in our minds, and celebrating them in our hearts. We should look for opportunity to refer to them, or mention them in a dialogue, lest in our own experience, **2Co.4:18**...*the things that are (unseen begin to appear) transient, (and) the things that are (seen appear) eternal!*

But Timothy was having a bit different challenge. Paul was in prison, *suffering for the gospel* (**8**), *bound with chains as a criminal* (**2:9**). And that was either causing Timothy to *fear* that his (*preaching*) of the *gospel* would sound hollow—how can *God* grant His children eternal freedom if He can't

even grant them temporal freedom here today?! Or, Timothy was beginning to *fear* for his own safety, not really wanting to share Paul's experience. Who would?!

So, Paul had a third reminder for him, one that recurs throughout this letter. **8**... *Share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God*. Now, at this point we'd expect Paul to tell Timothy why he should expect to *share in suffering for the gospel*, what's going to bring it about, maybe what form it's going to take. But that's not where Paul goes. He doesn't focus in on *suffering* here, but on *the power of God!* He amplifies God Himself, **9** *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works (not because we asked for it, and certainly not because we deserve to be on special assignment from the Creator of the universe!) but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,* (He decided before the foundation of the world to shower His *grace* upon us *in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and to include us in the fulfillment of His *purpose!*) **10** *and... now (some sixty years prior to Paul's writing of this letter, God's grace was manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death (Wow, why worry about suffering?!) and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, [The resurrection of (Jesus) brought the nature of life out (into) public view for the first time (L&G 193). What happened with Jesus shows us in real space and time what's coming for us! This is the gospel) 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, Paul said (I get to preach this!), 12 which is why I suffer as I do. ... Paul's suffering is a direct result of his calling to gospel ministry, but Rom.8:18... the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. He's good with it! So, should Timothy be. And so should we!*

TIMOTHY IS REMINDED OF WHY HE SHOULD DO THIS

And if this reminder of the *power* and promise of God in the *gospel* isn't enough for us, Timothy still has the reminder from v.7 of why he should do this. He pursues his calling *in Christ* using the *gift* he's been given **7** *(because) God gave (him) a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

Also, he endures this *suffering* because God **9**... *saved (him) and called (him) to a holy calling by (His) power...* It's an indispensable entailment of serving a holy, eternal God in a fallen, temporal world. *Suffering* here and now is part of following a Savior Who (*suffered*) in the here and now. **3:12** *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, will suffer.* Just as it was for Paul, so it is for Timothy, and so it will be for you and me (cf.11): (*preaching*) and (*teaching*) the undeniably good news that saves us **12**... *is why (we) suffer as (we) do.*

TIMOTHY IS REASSURED BY PAUL'S CONFIDENT EXAMPLE

So, how would Timothy respond to this? How would we? Simple! We'd think: *This gospel better be true!* That's where our minds go! I'm sure that's where Timothy's mind went. And I believe Paul's did as well, because what he said next—his final thought in today's text—was not another exhortation to Timothy, but a word of personal testimony, almost like he's reminding himself of his own assurance of the reliability of the *gospel*, anchoring himself once again in the undeniable truth of it. Using the same word he used of Timothy's *sincere faith*—*I'm sure it dwells in you* (5)—he writes: **12**... *But I am not ashamed of the gospel, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced—I am sure—that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.* Paul is absolutely certain that the *God* Who has made promises to him *in Christ Jesus is able to keep them, and fulfill them on that day* He's appointed to bring down the curtain on this world of sin and *suffering*. For that reason, Paul is *not ashamed of his present circumstances, or of the gospel that landed him there.* So, why should Timothy be?

CONCLUSION

And why should we ever be *ashamed* of it? That's the question I want to place in our minds this morning as we prepare to celebrate communion, and then leave in our minds as we depart this room and go back out into this world of sin and *suffering*.

And the answer I want to propose is that there is never a time or place in this life when it is best to keep quiet about the *gospel!* Granted, we will not always be able to present the whole gospel—the sacrificial death of *Christ* as our Substitute, His resurrection from the dead in victory over sin and death, His ascent to the Father vindicating His work of redemption, His promised return—but we will be able at least to draw people's attention to the eternal existence of *God*, or His ever-presence among us. We will be able to mention His provision for us, His care in answering prayer, His goodness in creating such a beautiful day, and so much more. This, too, is *gospel* witness! And it is a form of *gospel* witness that we need to get better at before we'll do better at *not being ashamed of the gospel* in the public sphere, or certainly before we begin sharing it with people in all of its fullness!

This was a whole stage in the process of learning to share the *gospel* that we've done here in our Ladies Bible Study and our Pastoral Ministry Training. We need to get better at *God-sightings*, noting verbally when His *grace* is evident: thanking Him for near misses in the car, or for beautiful days, or mere scenery, comfortably praying over our meals, and of then of answering questions

about it winsomely to those who notice. Not all of these go all the way to a full gospel witness. But a full gospel witness will rarely happen if we're not doing these!

I had a great opportunity yesterday while giving blood. I was marveling at the intricate complexity of the human body with the young man who was attending to me. That naturally led to brief discussion of special creation vs. naturalistic evolution. I had an opportunity with a waitress in a restaurant in Minneapolis earlier this week to celebrate God's goodness with such mild, beautiful weather in the middle of winter!

We need to get better at doing this everywhere, even among ourselves! Look for opportunities this evening as you're watching a game. Speak to one another of the greatness of *God* and the glory of the *gospel!* Speak of Him *who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began!* What could be better to talk about?!

And toward that end, let's now remember who we are *in Christ*, the New Covenant people of *God*, saved by the sacrificial work of *Christ* on the cross, which we now remember through this celebration of The Lord's Supper.