

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Not Ashamed

PART

4

TITLE

Not Ashamed Of His Gospel

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1:1-12; Romans 1:16



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Well, it's great to see you, Providence family, and all of you who are new with us, guests, thank you so much for being here. We're glad and we're honored that you have come.

I want to just say just a few words to those who call Providence their home, just a few words of thanksgiving. I'm so grateful for you, your response last weekend really was so encouraging. It was inspiring to me. When I think about how many of you prayed for last weekend, Easter. When I think about how many of you invited people to come. Literally hundreds of new folks who were here last week, which was obviously very encouraging.

But also, so many of you served. You served with the children, you served with hospitality. There was like 85 people that served in this room on this stage singing and leading worship and all the lighting and technology. And then, so many of you did exactly what we asked and you made room by simply adjusting your life, your schedule, in the parking lot of where you park, as well as which service you came to. And as a result of that, all four services, we were able to fit everybody into those four services. We needed all four and we would not have been able to enjoy what we did without your sacrifices.

And so I simply want to say thank you. It was stunning to me and it made me think of something that Paul said to a church in the first century when he says, "Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you." He says, "For you indeed have been taught by God." In fact, he says this is exactly what you have been doing. But then he urges them one last time and he says, "But I urge you to do this more and more," or excel still more.

And it's to that end. And the fact is, as I look at you, and I don't feel like I have to teach you about love because has taught you how to love and it's an inspiring thing to watch how you care for each other and how you care for people.

And yet when he says there excel still more, it's a calling not only to me, but to all of us, it's that we can even go deeper in that area called love. And so next week, we actually start a new series. It's called, Stunning Love. And the idea here is this, it's that love, by its nature, in a dark world, is noticeable. When you see it in the midst of other things, when you see kindness, when you see patience, when you see a lack of envy and how we related to one another, it's an inspiring noticeable thing in this world.

And the fact is that nobody has ever lived like Jesus Christ on this earth. The greatest to ever live is the greatest who ever loved, and Jesus Christ called us to demonstrate that we are his followers by the way that we love one another.

Well, in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul writes, these are the characteristics of biblical Jesus oriented love. They are actually characteristics that were perfected by Jesus himself, seen in Jesus in perfect form when he walked on this earth. And so what we're going to do is look at each one of those over the next two months. And we're going to look to apply them to our life, to our friendships, to our relationships.

And my hope is at the end, is that we're going to grow even stronger in our skill and our ability and in our willingness to be a great friend, to be a great parent, to be a great spouse, a great co-worker, a great neighbor while in live in relationship with other people. And so I hope that you will be involved over the next two months.

So let me pray for us as we get started. Father, we thank you for your grace in our life. And as we've looked over the last month, we confess to you, we've sung it, we've read it, that we are not ashamed of Jesus Christ. We're not ashamed to be associated with Jesus Christ. And yet, when we leave this place and we're all alone, there are times when we feel timid, we feel frightened, we don't want to lose people's respect. We wonder about the social risk of associating ourself too closely with you when there's so many people who ridicule your Son, or ridicule your ways.

And so I pray that you would inspire us by what we read here. Thank you for Paul, thank you for his younger son in the faith, thank you for Timothy. And thank you that you have recorded what you wrote to him, for us to be able to study this morning. So I pray that you would speak through weakness.

We also pray for every visitor who was here last week who doesn't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We pray that you would be gracious to each one, to take the seed that they have, that was planted in their life. And this week, I pray that you would remind them, that you would cause things to happen in their life that would lead them to remember that there is a message of hope because you arose from the dead.

We also want to pray for our family of faith around the world, and in particular in southern Asia. Where when we gathered and we enjoyed a wonderful morning of worship celebrating the fact that your Son rose from the dead, many of our brothers and sisters in Christ gathered in churches and lost their life. The same intentions to come and worship you, and yet the hands of evil caused the loss of life. And I pray for them today as they re-gather, or try to re-gather, or wonder if they should re-gather.

I pray, Father, for them, that you would comfort their hearts, that you would give them strength, that the blood of those martyrs, that they would be the seed of the church in dark places where the Gospel is not prevalent. I pray, Father, that you would be gracious to them. Would you make your face to shine upon them and comfort them today.

Would you help us, Lord, not to be ashamed and to use 2 Timothy to inspire us this morning. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

So if you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me to Paul's second letter to Timothy. As we finish out our series, it's called, Not Ashamed. Now shame, what we've looked at over the last month, is that awful feeling that each one of us feels from time to time of falling short in front of people whose approval we really want. It happens in a variety of different ways.

It can happen with a moral fall. For example, if you cheated on your taxes, you lied on them. You may right now feel guilty, but you may not feel shame. But if the IRS comes knocking and all of a sudden your picture is on the evening news and then all of a sudden there's a lot of people in Raleigh who know that, now all of a sudden it moves from guilt to shame.

It can also happen with things that aren't necessarily moral. For example, just a few weeks ago I was actually at a track meet and I was one of the timers. And there was a race and there was this poor girl, and she finished last by a good distance. And she crosses the finish line and she puts her hands over her face and I can hear her say, "I am so ashamed." Now she didn't do anything wrong, she was just slower than the other people who were racing in that race. But what happened? There was people who were observing. She wanted the approval, she wanted the affection, she wanted the attention, she wanted the, "That's fantastic!" And she didn't get it because she finished last.

So shame can come in those two ways. It can also come in a different way and that's the way that we've been looking at. And that is that when there is a particular person that's ridiculed by culture, that's seen as silly or funny or odd. Well, the people that associate with that person can also be seen as silly and odd, and it can cause within us this feeling of shame to be associated with someone. And every one of, we live in a culture that ridicules, not only Jesus, but Jesus' word and Jesus' ways. What he has said, how we should live. The claims that he made, the demands that he made upon his followers. And many of us in this room have wondered about the social risks of being publicly associated with Jesus Christ.

And if that's the case in your life, which I believe that it is because it's the case in all of our lives. We all feel fear from time to time, I want you to know that you're not alone, because that's exactly what we find here in 2 Timothy. Timothy felt the risk of associating with Jesus Christ.

Now, before we read it, I want to give you the setting because this is one of the most remarkable pieces of literature in the history of the world. 2 Timothy is Paul's very last letter. He's going to die a martyr's death and he knows it when he's writing it. It's a different kind of letter. You see, Paul, one day, when he was hunting down Christians to put them in prison, Jesus, the resurrected Jesus, who one of the people that he appeared to on this earth was Paul.

And he comes to him and he reveals himself as the resurrected Christ and all of a sudden Paul becomes so overwhelmed with the reality that he's looking at somebody who is risen from the dead. And then all of a sudden Jesus says, "And from this point on, you are going to be one of my apostles. You are going to be a disciple, you're going to be a spokesman. By authority I'm giving you, you're going to go and you're going to proclaim what you've seen with your eyes, that I am alive and I can forgive people of their sin. But Paul, I want you to know something, you're going to have suffer in significant ways if you're going to be obedient to the calling that I've given to you."

And for 30 years, Paul did just that. He went out and he preached and he went from city to city, and he would preach the Gospel and he would plant a church. Then he'd go to another city and he'd preach the Gospel and plant the church. Because he was so consumed with the reality that he had seen a man who had come back from the dead. People had to hear the good news, it's called the Gospel.

Well, after 30 years of beatings, after 30 years of whippings, after 30 years where at least one time he was shipwrecked, one time he had spent a night and a day adrift in the sea. He was homeless, he spent many times in prison, many times he was cold, many times he was homeless.

He gets to the end of his life and he looks at his own body, and in one of his letters he says, "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." In other words, this was a man that could look at scars over his body and say, "I remember when I got that one in that city because I preached this sermon and that person didn't like it." He had suffered so much and now he is in prison for the very last time. He knows he's going to die. In fact, he's been condemned at this point as a criminal, and he is waiting his execution. History tells us that he would lose his head by the sword. He knows it's coming.

At the end of the letter, he even says, "I know the time of my departure is at hand." And so this is a man, who every time he hears footsteps out in the hallway outside of dungeon cell, he's wondering, "Is that water? Or is that the executioner?"

And what's amazing is, in the midst of this dungeon, the only thing that permeates within his heart, it's just bubbling up, is the mission of Christ. More people have to hear that they can be forgiven of their sin. More people need to hear that they can actually be made righteous by God himself. And he knows it can't happen now from his lips because his lips are about to be silenced.

So he's thinking about the next generation. For the last 15 years, he has discipled a young man named Timothy. He knows that Timothy is one of the people that's going to take this baton, and it's his responsibility to not be ashamed of the Gospel, to preach it to other people. And yet, he knows at this point in time, when he's about to die, that he's heard that Timothy is ashamed. He's timid. He's discouraged. He's the pastor in the Church of Ephesus.

And at that church, there's a lot of struggles that were happening internally. There's a lot of people that wanted to fire him, wanted to get rid of him, they didn't like him, they opposed him. And there was all kinds of Roman persecution outside, where people were dying a martyr's death. And so here, a public figure standing up for Jesus, it was highly likely that he would have to give his life if he continued on as being a pastor in the Church of Ephesus.

He knows that he's timid. He knows, also, that because he is his father in the faith, this is someone that he's mentored for 15 years, he knows that Timothy drew a tremendous amount of his own courage from Paul's courage, from Paul's strength. He was leaning on Paul for so many different things and now all of a sudden he knew that his death would likely shake an already timid Timothy at his core.

So what does Paul do? He takes the last few moments of his life, when he knows he's going to die, and he writes a coherent, clear, compelling letter to his son in the faith, urging him not to be ashamed of the Gospel.

This is what he says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 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, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."

So, Providence, I want to show you three things within the text of why we, as a church family, are not ashamed to be associated with Jesus Christ. The first reason is this, is that we are not ashamed of Jesus, who has given us eternal life. For people who are going to die, a promise of life is a great gift. And there's only person who's offering it and his name is Jesus.

You see, listen, we are all going to die. We don't like to think about it, we really don't like to plan for it. We also don't even like people to remind us that it's going to happen. Which is why funerals, they feel so strange, don't they? You go to a funeral, and all of a sudden what you're trying to do is honor a person's life that was created in the image of God. You're trying to grieve their loss, that it means for you and the family. And at the very same time, you are reminded in vivid form that you too are mortal. Which is why the collective sentiment at a funeral, you don't even have to say, but everyone's thinking it, "It's not supposed to be like this."

You see, the Bible says that God has written his law upon our heart. The things like beauty, justice, love, hope, mercy, he's written them on our hearts, so when we see them, we say, "That's right," or "That's wrong." "That's beautiful, that's hopeful, that's just."

And similarly, when we see things that aren't the way that they're supposed to be, something rises up within us and says, "It's not supposed to be this way." It's not. Did you know you weren't created to die. We're only going to die because the wage of sin is death and the Bible says we've all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But this wasn't his plan from the beginning.

But what's interesting is, in the face of death, there's something instinctively within us that's allergic to death. We resist death, we don't like to think about death, talk about death. And so, what happens is we become people that want self-preservation. We buy products to help preserve our youth. We don't want to think about those things. And what happens is this, is confronted by the reality of death and the natural rebound instinct is to preserve self, what happens is it creates a very me-centered life. A very selfish life, a safe life, don't risk kind of life. Don't risk for things that are really important because just be safe, live longer, you don't want to die.

All of us feel this. And let me tell you something, Paul felt it too. So what in the world could possibly be so valuable that Paul would be willing to endure such suffering unto death. See, I've told you his crime. His crime was that he believed in Jesus Christ enough to tell other people about it. That was his crime.

Why would he continue to endure all of this suffering for 30 years? And he tells us in verse one, he says, "I'm an apostle by the will of God, according to a promise of life." In other words, he found in Jesus the only hope over what he too dreaded, and that is that he is going to die. Only one person in the history of the world is offered eternal life, and it's because that only person in the world whose ever possessed it. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he arose to die no longer. The only people who can give you something, are people who possess what they're giving. There's only one person who owns and possesses the full quantity of eternal life and it's Jesus Christ when he arose from the dead, and he extended a promise to you and to me.

Jesus, when he was on this earth, he said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. That whoever believes in him should not perish, but receive,” what? Eternal life. That’s the promise of life that was set before him.

Now listen, facing death, when you stare down death and you have no promise of life, what it feels like is walking through this kind of forest where all you see is trees. You see the injustices, you see another funeral and another funeral, another person dying, and another cancer, and another this. Just problems. And you forget, there’s nothing beyond this. This is what happens to people in the world today, they know they’re going to die and they have no promise of life afterward.

But the very same thing can also take place among believers, just like Timothy, who forget about the promise of life. Who live in the forest just like everyone else, where there’s funerals and death and cancer and all kinds of injustice, and we forget that there is a shelter in the midst of this forest called eternal life, called heaven.

And so, what does he do? He reminds him. He says, “Timothy, you cannot be ashamed.” Why? “Because not only has he saved us and called us, he abolished death and brought life and immortality to us through the Gospel.” You see, when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, he conquered the grave. That’s why he is utterly consequential to every single person on the earth who faces down death. We are all going to die. But Jesus has removed its ultimate sting. That’s what it means to abolish death, eternal separation from God.

Jesus has turned, for those who believe in him, he has turned death into the tunnel through which we enter heaven. In other words, Jesus has a monopoly on hope when it comes to the day of death. He has the monopoly on hope when it comes to a funeral. He’s the only one who has offered a promise of life. And among a people who are all going to die, we, as the people, look at Jesus Christ, who has the promise of death, and we say, “We are not ashamed to be associated with that man.” We’re not ashamed.

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ? Those of you who are in the room, who know you’re going to die, you know you’re going to die, right? Everybody? Yes? We all know we’re going to die. Have you trusted in the one person who has promised you life after that death? Have you trusted in him? You can do that today.

The second reason we’re not ashamed is because he has cleansed our conscience. We’re not ashamed of Jesus, who has literally cleansed our conscience. Notice what he says in verse three, he says, “I thank God whom I serve.” Have you ever thought about the fact that he is literally awaiting his execution and he’s giving thanks. He’s recounting the benefits that God has given him. “I’m so thankful for that, it has been such a good life, I’m thankful for ...” How in the world can a man be thankful at the point of death? Let me tell you how, he tells you how. He says, “I’m thankful and one of the reasons is because I have a clear conscience.” Do you see it? “I serve with a clear conscience.”



Now, this is the same man in 1 Timothy 1:13 who says that, “I was once a blasphemer, I was once a persecutor and an insolent opponent.” You know what those words mean? It means there was a time in my life that I cursed Christ. There was a time in my life that I actually sought to imprison, harm, and even kill, persecute people who wanted to trust in Jesus Christ. And I was an insolent, that means a rude and audacious, a hard handed opponent of Jesus Christ.

What I’m trying to say is that he had a terrible past and he stands right before his death and he says, “I have a clear conscience.” In other words, this is a man who can look back upon all of his past, all of his sin, and not lose sleep. This is a man who can look back at all of these things and fear doesn’t crash over his head like a wave at the beach. How is that possible? He tells, he says, “Don’t be ashamed.” Why? Because he has saved us. He has saved us, not because of our works, and he’s called us to a holy life. Is a holy is a kind of life that leads to a quiet conscience.

You see, Jesus came to this earth and he died on a cross, after living a righteous life. He was put into a grave, because that’s what you do with dead people. And then on the third day, he rose from the dead. And then he extended an invitation, literally ... I know, I know you thinking, “Oh, this is where he says the thing about justification. I’ve heard this before.” Let me say it again, because it’s really, really good, okay?

You know, there’s a thousand benefits that the Bible talks about. There’s actually 10,000 benefits that the Bible talks about, about being saved. There’s all kinds of different facets to the diamond. But I want to tell you just one. I just want to emphasize one, just one of the amazing things.

When he says even saved, and it’s the one that relates to the fact that he doesn’t have to be ashamed of his past because his conscience is clear. How is that possible? Some of you right now, you’re sitting there thinking, “I need know this. Because even though I’m a Christian, I live in the past and I’m so overwhelmed by guilt, by shame of something that I did so long that I can’t sleep at night. I keep thinking about those things. I just can’t be forgiven. He must not have forgiven me.”

Let me tell you, how is it possible? It’s the word, it’s one of the words, it’s called justification. And let me try to describe it for you in pictures, okay? You’re going to go, “All right, this is weird,” but hopefully it will be helpful. Okay?

This first picture is a bucket and it’s full of dirty water. This is our sinfulness. And the Bible says that each one of us, we’ve sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We have messed up, we are dirty at the core. We say things, we do things, we think things. And every single one in this room, you know that you’ve sinned. You know that. You know the feeling of guilt, every one of us do.

And this is what the Bible says that he looks at, “Then all of a sudden, Jesus died on a cross, he rose from the dead. If you trust me, one of the benefits, I’ll forgive you.” This is forgiveness. He takes all of the dirt, everything that’s messed up within our heart, all of the shame, all of that, he takes it and he just empties out. He says, “Now you are clean.” Forgive actually means send away. He takes all the dirt and he sends it all away, all the sin.

And you would think that that would be enough, that that would be an amazing gift. But let me show you one other, and this is what it means to be justified. He doesn’t leave us with a zero sum. He doesn’t say, “Oh, you are debt morally with me. I’m going to take away all that debt and leave you with a clean bucket to give you a second chance. Maybe you’ll do better the next time. That’s not what he does.

Now what does he do? He not only forgives us, but then he gives us his perfect righteousness. All the way to the top. And you say, “What does this do?” This is what it does, Romans 5:1 says, “Since we’ve been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” What a difference it makes to be assured in the imperfection of our daily life. That we have a righteousness that’s outside of ourself. See, in Jesus Christ, our best days morally do not add a dime to our account before God. And our worst days morally do not take away a dime in our account before God, because we have been given the full, complete righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Our righteousness before God is all about Jesus’ accomplishments. You see, it says in the Bible that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. And Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. So if God ever wants to wonder about your righteousness, he only looks at his Son who is sitting next to him. And this is why we’re not ashamed. Not only because the one who offers the promise of life to everyone of us who is going to die is remarkable in and of itself.

He says, “You know what? The benefits are not only for tomorrow, but they are for today.” And that is this, we can live our life even though we have an imperfect past and we will have an imperfect today and we will have an imperfect tomorrow. And because Jesus Christ, we’ve been cleansed of our sin and given a full supply of righteousness that cannot be diminished by our imperfection.

Now what does this mean for us? Some people in the room right now, you need to trust in Jesus Christ and be forgiven of your sin and receive his righteousness. You need to admit to him that you have sinned, you cannot save yourself. You need to place your belief, your faith in him, and you need to confess him as Lord. That’s what the Bible says, this is how we trust him. And you can do that today. You can talk to me afterward and I’ll help you do that.

Let me tell you something, there's a lot of people in this room who have already trust Jesus Christ, and yet they are overwhelmed with shame and guilt, and the reason is this, what you need to do is not believe in Jesus Christ, you need to believe Jesus. He has spoken. He said, "I have made a promise, I have forgiven you. If you have trusted in me, if you've confessed your sin to me, I have forgiven you." And so when you or I live as though our conscience has not been cleansed, what we're doing is we're not believing him. We're not believing his promises. But all these promises are for us in Jesus Christ, which is why we're not ashamed.

The third reason is this, is we're not ashamed of Jesus who has made us a family. He's made us a family. We have people to run with on this earth. Think about this for a second. He talks about Timothy's grandmother and his mother. You see, unlike his mom and his grandma, Timothy's dad, we're told in Acts 16:1, did not believe in Jesus Christ. He heard the Gospel and he rejected the Gospel. What this means is that Timothy grew up with a dad in the house that didn't trust Christ. Which means that he did not have someone to show him the ropes of being a Christian man. Just like many people in the room right now and around the world.

And you have to understand something about their culture, where Paul and Timothy are living. What's happening in that culture, because the culture still exists today, it's an honor/shame culture. The last thing you want to do is to shame your family. The only thing you want to do is to honor your family. It's to honor. Family is everything in this culture.

And so what that means is this, it's that you never wanted to shame your family and you never let anyone come between you and your family, because to divide your family is a shameful thing. And into this culture, Jesus Christ came and he said, "I have come to set a man against his father." He goes on and he says, "And a woman against her mother." Now why in the world? Was Jesus' mission to just create family strife? "That's what I'm going to do, I'm going to warm up and just going to ruin the place." No, that's not what he was doing.

What was he doing? He was warning us on this, "When I rise from the dead, that's going to be the pivot point for all of eternity upon every person's heart. And some people will believe and some people will reject, and some people within the same family will choose sides over who I am and what I've done. And that will divide families."

You know, one of our partners in ministry right now over seas, he's in a place that literally you and I right now are not allowed to fly. He's one of our church planters. He just sent an email a few weeks ago to us and he said, "I want you to know that I'm sharing the Gospel and there's a guy, I can't share his name, but he's trusted Jesus Christ. The thing is, his dad found out from another village and his dad has ordered him to come home."

And he knows what that means. He knows if he goes home, which he's going to go home, he's either going to be condemned, he's going to be tried to be convinced to reject Christianity, or he's going to be killed. And he says, "Would you pray for him because he's saying, 'Listen, I'm not ashamed to testify about Jesus Christ and I'm not ashamed to die.'" The fact is, right now, where I stand, I don't know what happened to him. I don't know.

But this is the reality around the world and why I share any of this with you, this is why, because the two people that we're talking about here in this text, Paul and Timothy, they both gave up nearly all of their social, family, friendship structure in their life to follow Jesus Christ. The very people who are hunting Paul down, were his good buddies. And Timothy, his family was literally broken over some people saying, "I believe in Jesus," and some people saying not.

You see, Paul and Timothy, they lost so many people. So what does Jesus do for each one of us? Matthew 19 says, "Every one who has left houses and brothers and sisters and father and mother and children or lands for my name's sake will receive a hundred fold and will inherit eternal life." This is what he says in verse two, "Timothy, my beloved child." He wasn't his dad, he was his spiritual dad.

What's he saying? This is what he's saying for you and me, when we trust Jesus Christ, we're adopted into his family. And if you ever had to leave anything or give up anything for Jesus Christ, you've inherited it within the church. Look at all these people, look at all these mothers, all these brothers, all these sisters, all these people who can help, all these people who can love and who can encourage. This is the family of faith that he's talking about. It's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, men, women, young, old, everybody is one big family created in the image of God and redeemed by God's Son.

We are not ashamed because he has adopted us into a family. He's given us a clear conscience. He's given us eternal life. So what do we do with this? Let me give you a few applications, they are all found in the text. I love this text because what Paul does, he says, "This is why you shouldn't be ashamed and this is how you can fortify your own heart so that you're not ashamed."

The first thing that we learn here is this, it's let's stir up passion for Jesus' mission. He says in verse six, "Fanning the flame, the gift of God." In other words, he saying, "Timothy, I know that your batteries are low and the flashlight is dim, but they're about to take off my head. So fan into flame the gift of God. Fan into flame your love for Jesus. Fan into flame your courage to stand with him. Fan into flame your resolve to participate in God's mission to get the Gospel to the ends of the earth so that his Son can be glorified."

We all have a part to play here. 1 Peter 4:10, it says this, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." You know, for the past two years, we have been talking at length many times about planting three good seeds in three kinds of soil. One of them is we want to plant our lives in the church. We want to say this is our church. We want to pray for the church, we want to serve the church, we want to give, we want to be involved in worship, be involved in a small group. To say, "Listen, we want to engage with our life in a local body of believers."

Second is we want to plant the Gospel in our city. We want to be sharing the Gospel with other people in the hope that someone would come to faith in Jesus Christ and then to continue to meet with them, a help for them to grow in Christ to the place that they would then also have the strength to be able to share the Gospel with someone and train them to share the Gospel with someone.

And then the third thing we want to do is we want to plant churches in the world. We long to see the day when there's literally a little lighthouse called the church in every village, in every city throughout the entire world. A local witness within that village that says that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and as a result of that there's a promise of life for every one of us who are going to die.

And there's been so much faithfulness and fruit that we've seen, but I simply want to say, excel still more. And you say, "Well, where do I start?" This is where you start, you start with your heart. Always start with your heart. If it's Christian, you start with your heart. Period. Okay? Always start with your heart. Fan into flame your courage. Read the Gospels, read the cross and resurrection account until you get to the place where you're like, "I am excited about this, I am excited about telling someone about this."

And then identify a place to engage. Would you consider being involved in a life group this year, those of you who aren't. Would you consider, if you're in a life group, actually encouraging the life group to do what we've asked, and that is to spend a minute or two in each meeting and just simply say, "Hey, has anyone in here had the opportunity to share the Gospel?" To continue to fan the flame.

Why do we do that? Well, when you share the Gospel, sometimes it doesn't go so well. We can share those stories. Say, "You know, I tried, but man, this is what happened." And all of a sudden you have a hundred brothers and sisters all around you saying, "Hey, listen, God still loves you. It's okay, he's going to take that seed." This is the importance of these things.

Would you consider serving the church with your gift? Would you consider inviting someone over for a meal? To build a relationship with somebody that maybe you'd have an opportunity to share the Gospel at some point in time? Would you consider going on a mission trip? Or helping someone else go on a mission trip? To pray for one?

In fact, let me just give you one example of this. In January, the first week in January this year, we need 60 people to actually go to Spain. A team of 60. One every several years, a lot of people who love the Gospel enough to go live in other lands, they all meet in certain places to try to encourage them and they bring all of their children. And so they've asked us to bring 60 people to actually put on a VBS for the children.

Would you consider going? You say, "Oh, there's a lot of people." No, you. You, like think, "Oh, he's talking about me, not just you collectively." You, would you consider going?

Second is, let's consider our resources in Jesus. You know, he did not give us all these gifts and then a spirit of fear that would negate the use of these gifts. What does he say? He says God didn't give us timidity. He gave us power. The ability to change things. Love. Perfect love casts out fear.

My wife, Tabitha, she's threatened, I jump in without the thought of myself. If one of my little kids, when they were this big, if they jumped into the pool and they couldn't swim, I would jump in without thinking about, "You know, I've got these shoes on, I probably shouldn't jump in." Why? Because perfect love casts out fear.

And so it is with Jesus. When we see Jesus in his glory and his fame being tread on, the people who love him must jump in. We're not ashamed of the Gospel. We're not ashamed of Jesus. He gives us self-control. What is this? Well, this is the kind of self-control that Paul showed in writing a coherent letter as he waited to die. Have you ever read 2 Timothy and actually thought of that? The fact that he was over unbelievable stress knowing he was about to be killed. Read it and just think of how coherent it is. It takes a remarkable amount of self-control to be able to write something like this.

And the last thing is let's accept the suffering. Here he tells them, he says, "Do not be ashamed," verse eight, "of the testimony about our Lord, nor me as prisoner." And then he says, "But share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God."

You know, to the average observer of Paul, everything about him at this time looked shameful. Think about this, here's a man with a busted nose, it's probably crooked it's been broken so many times. He's homeless, he has no wife and kids outside mourning for him. He has no freedom, no health, no wealth. He's condemned, he's misunderstood. A guard comes in, "Hey, trust Jesus, you can be like me." "Why would I want to be like you?" Everything looks shameful, and yet, here he is, he goes out with his head high.

He says, "Timothy, I don't have a wife or kids outside wailing over me, I don't have wealth or health, but I am not shamed. You know why? Because I know whom I have believed and I am absolutely convinced that he's able to hold me fast. And now I am passing this baton to you and I'm asking you to put your hand out and take this baton. They are about to kill me and you are the next generation."

You know the good news about history is he tells that history says that Timothy was found faithful. He took that baton and he took this letter and he started running. And he ran and ran and ran until he passed it to somebody, who passed it to someone, who passed it someone. Throughout the ages, they passed it to us. It's in our hand. If we are ashamed of it, it will not move forward.

There are a million things, Providence, in this world to be ashamed of. But I'm telling that being associated with Jesus Christ is not one of them. And when you see him face to face, you will know that for certain.

So may the Lord grant us amazing courage to stand with Paul and say, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel. For it is the power of for salvation to everyone who believes."

Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace in our life. And we thank you for Jesus who saved us, Lord, gives us the promise of life and a family and a clear conscience. All these gifts we don't deserve, we know it's all grace, and so we praise you for it. And now we pray, Father, as we turn our attention to the baptistry and we see five people today stand in that water and say, "I am not ashamed to be associated with Jesus Christ," would you give them courage and would you give us encouragement as we observe their faith. We love you, we need you, and we pray all of this in Christ's name.



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