

## "Not Ashamed" | 2 Timothy 1:6-12

I have told you the story before of the one road race that I ever ran, and it was so long ago that historians call it ancient history now. I was 18 years old and to pass my PE class I had to finish the road race. So I trained for months so I could run 15 km. The race took us down into a river valley and up the other side, back down again to finish on top of the valley hill.

I will not bore you with the details of the race, but will tell you I finished the race and passed the PE course. But an event took place that day that I will never forget. I had just passed the 13 km mark, so I knew the end was in sight. Unfortunately I was just about out of gas as we had just finished running up a long hill to the top of the valley. As I was plodding along a 10 or 11 year old boy ran right past me. I was impressed he had so much energy. Then to my horror he started to sit down on the lawn just ahead of me, ready to quit.

I called out to him, and huffed and puffed the good news that he was just about at the end of the race. Just a little further and he would be done. Don't quit now. He took my words to heart and started to run again. I tried to keep up, but could not, and I watched him cross the finish line a full 15 seconds ahead of me.

That moment has always stuck in my mind as an illustration of what it is like to be a Christian. We are in a race. The Apostle Paul would say, "Run the race to win!" (1 Corinthians 9:24). But it is more than simply crossing the finish line. That is important, but we have not run the race well if we have not encouraged others to not only join the race, but to finish it. We are to encourage others so that they too can win the prize.

This is what the Apostle Paul is doing as he writes two letters to young Timothy. The Apostle recruited Timothy for ministry when he saw that the faith of his mother and grandmother now resided within him. Timothy appears to be shy and timid, but the Apostle could see there was potential for a great leader in this young man. So the Apostle writes to him to encourage him to run the race well, and to finish well.

In 2 Timothy 1:6-12 we read words meant to instruct and inspire young Timothy. I believe these words can inspire and instruct us as well.

Hear the Word of the Lord: - text –

Paul starts by reminding Timothy to "fan into flame the gift God gave to him" (v. 6). The picture here is on a fire that is starting to die down. If it is stirred up the flames will leap back to life and bring a warm glow to the people in the room.

Paul does not say what the gift is that Timothy received when Paul laid hands on him. As Timothy is called to be a pastor, I am thinking it might have been the gift of prophesy, or proclaiming the Word of God. You may call it the gift of preaching.

Why I say this is that in the next verse Paul says that the Spirit of God does not make us timid. Timothy might have been naturally shy, but because of the call on his life, God was making him a bold proclaimer of the Gospel. Paul reminds Timothy that the Holy Spirit gives power, love and self-discipline (or a sound mind) (v. 7).

Power is the ability to stand up to opposition and trials, but it must be tempered with love. There are those who speak boldly but there is no love. They loudly proclaim that everyone is going to hell, and they almost seem happy about it. That is not the work of the Holy Spirit. The sound mind, or self-control, speaks of the ability to stay stable despite the battles all around. A preacher of the Gospel needs this, for sure, but so does every believer in Jesus.

Timothy, do not withdraw to a small safe group of believers so you will not be challenged by unbelievers. Go ahead – step out in faith and watch how the Holy Spirit helps you to be bold and strong for Jesus.

Oh that we would have Christians like that today – filled with power, love and a sound mind so that a world hungry for good news could hear about Jesus.

Paul goes on to encourage Timothy not to be ashamed.

First he says that Timothy should not be ashamed about the testimony of our Lord. This is the Gospel message, that God came in Christ Jesus to rescue us from sin, death and Satan. By the sacrificial life and death of Jesus, and through his resurrection, eternal life is now available to all who put their faith in Jesus alone for salvation.

The Gospel message will always focus on the One who died on the cross of Calvary. We will celebrate that fact this morning as we come to the Lord's Table for Communion. The bread speaks of Jesus' broken body; the wine speaks of his blood shed for us. Both take us back to a cross on a hill called Golgotha, the place of the skull.

And this fact of the Gospel message, that Jesus died on a cross, was a stumbling block for the Jew and the Roman.

The Jew believed that anyone who was hanged, which includes being nailed to a cross, was cursed by God (Deut 21:23). They simply could not wrap their heads around the fact that Jesus, who was clearly crucified, dead and buried could be the Messiah, little own the Son of God.

The Romans believed that crucifixion was for the lowest of people, slaves and non-Romans with no status. They would never crucify a Roman citizen, no matter what his crime, as it was far too demeaning. No, if Jesus was really someone important, as Christians say he is, how could he have met such a terrible death?

They have found in Rome some graffiti on a wall that dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It is meant to mock Christians, for it depicts a soldier standing by a cross with a man crucified there. The inscription says, "Alexamenos worships his god." It is not clear if this was sketched by a

Roman or a Jew, but they gave the human figure stretched out on the cross the head of a donkey. For the Roman and the Jew a man dying on a cross was a symbol of shame, not victory.

Paul says to Timothy – do not listen to what they say. The cross is our glory – the symbol of God’s love and victory. Do not be ashamed of our testimony about Jesus Christ crucified. This is the heart of the Gospel, the place where your hope begins.

Then Timothy is instructed not to be ashamed of Paul either. At this time, Paul is a prisoner in a Roman jail. It was shameful to announce that your mentor and friend was in jail. Good people don’t go to jail, do they?

But Paul was in jail for preaching the Gospel. He did no wrong. He did not violate any laws of Rome or even of Judaea. He was a law abiding citizen except for this one fact, “He could not help but preach and teach those things that he had seen and heard.” He is in good company for these were the words of Peter and John before the Jewish leaders (cf. Acts 4:20).

Today is the Sunday churches remember those who are persecuted for their faith. In many places of the world Christians are being arrested, persecuted and even killed for their faith. I listened to the testimony of a missionary who went to Turkey to share the Gospel with Muslim people. He and his wife started the only Christian church in a Muslim city. One day as the missionary/pastor stood outside his church, a man from the city showed up with a pistol, ready to shoot the pastor. When the pastor would not move away from the entrance of the church, keeping the man from entering, the man produced a shotgun. It would be a massacre if he got into the church, so the pastor stood his ground in front of the church until help arrived.

Later this couple got a notice from the police to come to their offices. Thinking this was to do with their visa application, they went happily to the police station. There they were arrested as terrorists and a threat to the safety of the country. After two weeks the wife was released but the husband was detained in a cell designed for eight people with 20 Muslim radicals. He was held for over two years in that small cell, without any true charges except he was a Christian. His faith was challenged through this, leaving him ask, “Where is my loving Heavenly Father?”

We are not ashamed of our Christian brothers and sisters who are in jail today for no other reason than they are Christians, ready to share their faith with others. In fact, we pray for them and if we could we would applaud their courage.

This is what Timothy is instructed to do as his faith is tested by those who want to say Paul was a bad person, a problem in the church, a man who could not be trusted. Yes, Paul had those kinds of detractors. But Timothy is instructed by God through Paul, “Don’t be ashamed of me.”

Verse 9 reminds us that the Gospel is about what God has done for us in Christ, not what we are doing for God. God saved us and called us to live a life of holiness. This plan to save us started in the heart of God before the beginning of time – before the universe was created. At the coming of Jesus God revealed His plan: He would destroy death and bring immortality through the Gospel (v.10).

I am so glad the Gospel speaks of a life that is worth living now, and stretches through all eternity. I have no clue what eternity looks like but I like the idea of never getting old or having to face death again. All around us we are getting news of people dying, people who are terminally ill, or who are suffering. Next Saturday I am doing a funeral for the only child of a woman from the community. Her son was only 23 years of age. Death is all around us.

But there is also life because of the Gospel, a life we get to share with others. I want to share a few pictures of the hope the Gospel brings. These pictures show Muriel at Dufferin Place. Life is not easy for Muriel. She has almost completely lost her eyesight and she can no longer walk. But what is she doing at Dufferin? Whining and crying about how unfair life is?

No – she is sharing the love of Jesus with the people she lives with. Dale and Muriel have the privilege of sharing Jesus, showing his love, and praying for the people in that place. Muriel is running the race to the very end, and helping others join the race and finish as well.

Take a look at verse 12. Paul says there is no shame in the suffering he is undergoing. How can he say that?

“I know whom I believe in and I know that whatever I have given to him – ie. my heart, my life – he will protect and keep safe until the day Jesus returns.”

Notice Paul does not say, “I know WHAT I believe.” Right belief is important but it will not get you into heaven. What matters is WHO you believe in. Whom does Paul put his faith in? Jesus.

There is a hymn that comes from this passage. The words go like this:

**1. I know not why God’s wondrous grace**

To me He hath made known,  
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love  
Redeemed me for His own.

**2. I know not how this saving faith**

To me He did impart,  
Nor how believing in His Word  
Wrought peace within my heart.

**3. I know not how the Spirit moves,**

Convincing men of sin,  
Revealing Jesus through the Word,  
Creating faith in Him.

**4. I know not what of good or ill**

May be reserved for me,  
Of weary ways or golden days,  
Before His face I see.

**5. I know not when my Lord may come,**

At night or noonday fair,  
Nor if I walk the vale with Him,  
Or meet Him in the air.<sup>1</sup>

○ **Refrain:**

But “I know Whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I’ve committed  
Unto Him against that day.”

I am not ashamed to be a Christian. I am not ashamed of the Gospel. I am not ashamed of being a follower of Jesus. For in Him I have found life. If this is true for you, gladly come to the Table of the Lord and give thanks today.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel W. Whittle, I Know Whom I Have Believed, pub. 1883