

2021-03-21 Sermon 2 Tim 1:8-18 “The Right Side of History is a Place of Suffering”

Kevin McClure Geist Community Church

Main point: *Empowered by the Holy Spirit, share in suffering and guard the gospel by not being ashamed of it*

On Dec 6th, 2013 news personality Piers Morgan was hosting Pastor Rick Warren in front of a live television audience. They were discussing so-called homosexual marriage (I say “so called” because it doesn't actually exist in reality) Piers Morgan asked Rick Warren if he could ever see himself “evolve” on the issue, especially since professing progressive Christians like Rob Bell and Jim Wallis had already done so. In his response Rick Warren said: “I fear the disapproval of God more than I fear your disapproval or the disapproval of society.”¹ Now I don't appreciate a lot of things that Rick Warren says or does, but I do appreciate seeing a Christian unashamed of the gospel and its implications in on a national and public stage.

Have you felt this pull of the world's approval? Have you ever felt the pull to say or do something—or not say and do something—because you wanted to fit into a certain crowd? Do you remember all the crazy fads and toys and fashion trends that you participated in growing up? Why did we do all these silly things? It's because the drive for acceptance is strong in each of us. CS Lewis describes the desire that we all have to be part of the “Inner ring” This desire to be part of an accepted “in” group is the very desire that creates scoundrels and crooks and criminals out of otherwise decent people. Lewis describes a hypothetical conversation between you and a senior coworker over a cup of coffee, where the coworker talks about bending the rules morally because that's the way “we always do” it.

“And you will be drawn in, if you are drawn in, not by desire for gain or ease, but simply because at that moment, when the cup was so near your lips, you cannot bear to be thrust back again into the cold outer world. It would be so terrible to see the other man's face—that genial, confidential, delightfully sophisticated face—turn suddenly cold and contemptuous, to know that you had been tried for the Inner Ring and rejected. And then, if you are drawn in, next week it will be something a little further from the rules, and next year something further still, but all in the jolliest, friendliest spirit. It may end in a crash, a scandal, and penal servitude; it may end in millions, a [lifetime achievement award] and giving the prizes at your old school. But you will be a scoundrel.”²

The desire to please other people lives in all of us. One of the reasons God breathed out our passage is to guard us from the eternal ruin of caring more about what other people think about us than what God thinks about us. Please turn with me **2 Tim 1:8-18** on *page 995* in the seatback bibles. Lets remember the very final verse of **2 Tim 4:22** is addresses the entire church. What this means is that as Paul is addressing Timothy, he is also addressing every Christian who hears this letter. everything that Paul commands Timothy in this passage is applicable to you as a Christian in one way or another.³ As I read, try to notice all of the motivations that the Apostle Paul for not being ashamed of the gospel and for sharing in suffering.

2Tim. 1:8 ¶ 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, 2Tim. 1:9 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, 2Tim. 1:10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our

¹ Piers Morgan Live, aired Dec 6, 2013, Transcript, Accessed March 19, 2021. <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1312/06/pmt.01.html>

² C. S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 141-57.

³ Not every Christian has Timothy's same stewardship of guarding the gospel as a pastor/elder, but every Christian has a general stewardship of the gospel and their spiritual gifts; see 1 Cor 12-14.

Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 2Tim. 1:11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 2Tim. 1:12 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. 2Tim. 1:13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 2Tim. 1:14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. 2Tim. 1:15 ¶ You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 2Tim. 1:16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, 2Tim. 1:17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— 2Tim. 1:18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

We have two points in our text today:

1. Suffer Without Shame
2. Note the Examples

1. Suffer Without Shame

For Timothy to serve as a faithful Christian would open him up to the possibility of shame. Have you ever felt very ashamed? Shame is the embarrassing distress we feel from the disapproval of others. It's what a 15-year-old-girl may feel when her pregnancy is made public (Mat 1:19), or when the soccer player feels after missing the goal in a World Cup shootout, or what a politician feels (or should feel) when a scandal of his is made public. Now, shame is not a bad thing in and of itself. There's a name for people who experience no shame: sociopath. Don't get rid of shame. We *ought* feel shame when our sins are made known. Shame is good when it leads to faith and repentance. But shame is a potent weapon in the hands of the sinful world.

Now the world, as we've been seeing in John's gospel recently, is that societal system that is opposed to God and His people.⁴ The World is always seeking to seduce God's people away from following Jesus. Sometimes the World is more subtle. For example, when Elsa belts out "Let it Go" and Lady Gaga dances to the song "Born This Way," you are hearing some of the anthems of the world. Every TV unmarried couple blissfully living together, every science textbook that affirms macro-evolution, every company policy that requires you to use a person's preferred pronouns—all of these examples are examples of the world trying to influence you in subtle ways to think that right is wrong and wrong is right. Sometimes the world is more overt and life-threatening, like when China imprisons Christians and bulldozes their churches.

Whether it's subtle or overt, Christian: the world wants to pry from your fingers those very places where the gospel and its effects are most offensive and chafing to the world. Right now, the world in our specific western culture hates that the Bible teaches the exclusivity of Jesus for salvation, that sexuality and marriage are only for a biological man and biological woman in covenant together, that men and women are different and have different roles in the home and the church, and that there is an eternal hell for all who do not repent of their sins and believe in Jesus. The world hates that we actually believe these things as Christians. And so they make efforts to change our thinking through economic, social, and sometimes

⁴ While I speak of "the world" collectively as Jesus does in John 14–17, the world is comprised of variegated societies that confront the gospel and its effects at different beachheads, as it were. To oversimplify, the biblical command in Ephesians 5 for wives to submit to their husbands is likely going to be more repelling in a (feminist-influenced) western culture than in an eastern culture where traditional roles of men and women are the norm. To take another example, the idea that the God redeems people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation in Revelation 5 is not going to be very offensive to a western culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion. But in a country like India, with a well-defined social caste system, this type of gospel inclusivity is going to be more repelling. The specific area of friction between gospel truths and what the culture celebrates is going to be different in various societies, even though all of these non-Christian societies will oppose Jesus and his teachings at some area. Collectively, this opposition is summarized as "the world."

governmental coercion. This coercion communicates a collective disapproval of your beliefs and actions, Oftentimes, the goal is to produce in you a shame that causes you to abandon controversial parts of following Jesus Christ. If you compromise or evolve to the world's ways of thinking and doing, the world will honor you and praise you. And you won't even need to shed the Christian label. The world is quite alright for you to embrace a bland and progressive so called "Christianity" that is devoid of morality. You will get more likes, you may get a promotion, and you'll reach an inner ring of approval from others.

But friends, this type of praise is all utterly worthlessness in the end. It's Vanity! Friends, The Almighty God has breathed out these words from 2 Timothy 1:8 to strengthen you against the world's desire to make you ashamed for the gospel. I would not be surprised if God is preparing some of you to have the courage to lose your job or experience significant persecution because of your allegiance to Jesus in the next month. These are weighty words, and I want you to look at them with me verse 8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel," Praise God for this clear reminder to us who too often feel this temptation to be ashamed of Jesus. Paul could have finished the sentence right there at "gospel", but instead he keeps on writing four additional verses. Taken altogether, this passage gives us five powerful motivations to share in suffering.

1. You Have the Power of God.

Paul tells us to share in suffering for the gospel "by the power of God" The power of God in this context is referring to the Holy Spirit. We know this because Paul had already mentioned that the Holy Spirit that God had given us is a "Spirit of Power" in verse 7. In fact, this is why the "Therefore" is there in verse 8. Paul is telling Timothy: 'Because you have the Holy Spirit of Power, share in suffering by this same Spirit' Why is this an encouragement to share in suffering and resist being ashamed of the gospel? Its because the Holy Spirit gives us power to witness for him. You may be the most shy and reserved person, but if you are a Christian, then you have the Spirit inside you that empowered Samson to tear a lion in pieces (Judg 14:6) and raised Jesus from the dead!

I remember while in Bible college going to a secular college campus to share the gospel with strangers. I remember walking down a long hallway and feeling like I was going to die because I was so afraid of people's response to me. What I had forgotten is that in any gospel conversation, there is always at least three people present: you, the Holy Spirit, and the other person. When you know have an ally with limitless power, this gives you greater confidence to witness for Jesus' sake. But beyond the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Paul gives us another motivation to share in suffering and not be ashamed. '

2. God has called you into Salvation and Suffering by God's grace (vs 9)

Look with me at verse 9, "[God] 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," Friends, this is the gospel message. God is an infinitely holy God who is morally perfect. We have deliberately broken God's law through sin: our pride, our selfishness, our anger, our sexual sins, our greed, our apathy and our bitterness. We deserve an eternal death in hell. And Islam, Mormonism, Judaism, Hinduism, Jehovah's Witnesses— They work generally the same: all these religions are trying to do a bunch of good works to try to earn their way into God's good graces. The problem is, have rebelled against an infinitely holy God, and no amount of good works can fix this infinite offense. This is why the good news is such good news. In the midst of our impossibility plight, verse 9 sings: "God saved us"—Paul is referring to Christians here—"not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began" Jesus Christ bore God's punishment for sin on the cross so that we might be saved, not on the basis of good works that we'd done, but by faith in the work that Christ has done.

Friend, the way to become a follower of Jesus Christ is not to clean all your sins up and then come to Jesus. You know the person who only flosses their teeth right before the dentist, or cleans their house before someone comes over? Jesus is not like that. You call out to him in the mess and muck of your sin by faith, and he begins the work of cleansing and purifying in your life. And this is all on the basis of God's unmerited kindness, which is another word for grace. Friend you don't have to earn your way into God's kingdom.

But once you're in, God has a plan for your life. notice at the beginning of verse 9 that God did not only save Christians. He "called us to a holy calling" Our holy calling includes everything that God commands us to do as Christians, including suffering for Jesus. And when did God give us this grace of our holy calling? The end of verse 9 tells us that God gave it "before the ages began." So let me tie this together. Before time even began, when only the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existed, the Father gave to Christians this grace: that they would not only be saved apart from their works, but that they would also live out a holy calling, which includes suffering for Jesus' sake. Isn't this amazing? Christian, All of the suffering that you experience for Jesus's sake is all part of God's plan from before time. When we are persecuted and shamed for Jesus, we can endure this knowing that it's a normal part of God's will for our lives: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim 3:2). Church, we're going to be alright, He's got the whole world in his hands. And if this was not motivation enough, Paul continues with the third motivation to suffer.

3. Jesus has abolished death (10cd)

Friends, the very worst suffering that can happen to you as a Christian is the suffering of death. And the apostle Paul proclaims Jesus's victory over death in order to encourage us to share in suffering. Look with me at the beginning of verse 10: "[God's grace" from verse 9] 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," The worst type of suffering that can happen to you is nullified by Jesus's victory over the grave. Through Christ, death becomes an entryway into an eternity with your savior. In Christ, death is still awful, but it becomes a passageway into eternal life and immortality.

Now It's embarrassing to talk about suffering in our context when brothers and sisters throughout the world face torture and even death for their faith. But here's the logic: If Jesus has overcome death for us, then social exclusion and disparaging comments and losing our job are just small potatoes. And friends, if you follow Jesus by faith, you no longer need to fear death: whether through persecution or natural causes. But Jesus gives us another gospel motivation to suffer and not be ashamed.

4. Jesus will guard the message (12d)]

Look with me near the beginning of verse 12, "...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." "that Day" refers to the final judgment, the one who Paul has believed is Jesus, and th what Jesus has entrusted to Paul is the gospel message. Notice the implication of this verse. Jesus will guard the gospel message entrusted to Paul beyond Paul's lifetime throughout human history all the way until the judgment day. Why can you share in suffering for the gospel? Because you know that Jesus will preserve and further this message until the end of this age. Friends, contrast the changing passions and fads of the world with the gospel message that Jesus guards. 100 years ago so many things that are openly celebrated now would have been unthinkable. 100 years from now, there will be new things that are celebrated. And this is the folly of seeking to live for the approval of the world: it's always a moving target, and you always have to keep evolving your beliefs in

order to stay current. But Jesus has guarded the gospel, and so it hasn't changed. Friends, imagine a massive boulder in a great desert surrounded by sands that are constantly being blown by the wind. Over the centuries the sands shift and change around this giant rock, but the boulder remains immovable. This is what the gospel message is like in comparison to the shifting preferences and passing fads of the world: the gospel remains secure because Jesus guards it. You can share in suffering knowing that what you believe and teach has greater lasting power than the even the beliefs of the cultural "inner ring".

And notice how Jesus guards the gospel: he does it through his people. Look with me at verse 14. Paul tells Timothy, "By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." Now the good deposit entrusted to Timothy is the same gospel message that has been entrusted to Paul. So if Jesus is going to guard until judgment day the gospel message at the end of verse 12, then why does Paul command Timothy at the end of verse 14 to guard the gospel message entrusted to Him? Isn't Jesus enough? The answer is that our Lord Jesus uses human means to accomplish his purposes. The gospel baton is passed by *very human hands* to each successive generation, even as Jesus sovereignly empowers this process. And this is why it is so incumbent upon each church to guard this good deposit.

Now if you are given 100 gold coins and told to guard them, you would likely lock them up in a safe and not let anyone see them. But the gospel is the opposite. The gospel is guarded by passing it on. If you have some leaven and you don't want to lose it, your best strategy is to give some to every bread maker you know so that your leaven multiplies to others. You don't hide it, you pass it on to let it grow. This is one of the reasons why we as a church pray for and seek to raise up the next generation of laborers for God's harvest: it's a means of guarding the good deposit entrusted to our church until judgment day, which is the fifth motivation for suffering.

5. God has established "That Day"

Friends, "That Day" is a shorthand for the judgment day, when all people will be rewarded or condemned based on whether or not they loved and followed Jesus by faith. Paul speaks about "that Day" in the middle of verse 18 when he prays for mercy for Onesiphorus, and then later in 2 Timothy 4:8 he describes "the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on *that day*, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." Why mention "that day"? The Apostle Paul intentionally mentions "that Day" in this passage as another reminder of why we ought not be ashamed of the gospel.

Let's talk about how shame works for a moment. People can only make you ashamed of the gospel if you care more about what they think of you than what God thinks of you. The smaller your view of God, the higher your fear of man. This is why our view of God is so important. If our view of God is small, then of course we will care more about being accepted by the inner ring than caring about what God thinks about us. This is why reading your Bible is so important for those who struggle with the fear of man. It's very difficult to cave to the pressure of Piers Morgan when you have read about the God who speaks out of the whirlwind in the final chapters of Job. When you are reminded that the nations are like a drop of water in a bucket compared to God, it's very easy to not bow before Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

Listen to Mark 8:36-38, which we read earlier. Mark 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Mark 8:37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? Mark 8:38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Do you see how trite and inconsequential the approval and honor of the world will be

when Jesus returns to judge the earth? Friends, the very real question before you is this: are you ashamed of Jesus's words? Are you ashamed of His exclusivity in salvation in [John 14:6](#)? Are you ashamed of His denial of the innate goodness of humanity in [Mark 7:21–23](#)? Are you ashamed of his affirmation of only a one man and one woman marriage in [Matthew 19:4–6](#)? Are you ashamed of his belief in an eternal hell in [Mark 9:43–48](#)?

Imagine the regret that you would have on that day if you were ashamed of Jesus's words in this life, and then he was ashamed of you for eternity. Conversely, think of the joy that you would have when after being rejected and slandered and suffering much in this life you experience the approval of Jesus for all eternity in the next! Jesus is worthy to be suffered for. And the many examples of faithful Christians who have gone before show us just that as we move to our second point.

2. Note the Examples

Something is best commended when it is both taught and caught. Paul knows this. And that is why he not only instructs Timothy, but he also gives him many example to follow and not to follow.

A. Positive example 1: Paul

Paul holds up himself and as an example. Even the command in [verse 8](#) to not be ashamed and to share in suffering holds up Paul's example. Who is Timothy to share in suffering with? Paul himself! Look at [verse 11](#): "for [the gospel] I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed..." Knowing that your suffering is shared makes it so much easier to endure it. But Timothy is not only to follow Paul in his suffering, but also in what he preaches. Paul tells Timothy in [verse 13](#) to follow the pattern of the sound words. The gospel message has been followed and passed on for the past 2000 years through a pattern being given to every successive generation of laborers.

B. Positive example 2: Onesiphorus

But not only Paul, Timothy is also to follow the example of Onesiphorus. Onesiphorus was not ashamed to be associated with Paul as a prisoner, but rather he searched for Paul diligently and found him and helped him. Do you see how not being ashamed of the gospel also includes not being ashamed of true gospel ministers? This is why in the middle of [verse 8](#) Paul tells Timothy not to be "ashamed of the testimony about our lord nor of me his prisoner" It's very easy to stay silent when people are badmouthing a faithful preacher or teacher of God's word. In Paul's day, to be associated with a prisoner would open one up to ridicule and mocking, and potentially even imprisonment itself. Instead of being ashamed, Onesiphorus actively sought Paul out while in Rome, and he refreshed Paul.

Notice how Paul prays in [verse 18](#) for the Lord Jesus to do for Onesiphorus what Onesiphorus did for Paul. Onesiphorus searched and found Paul and refreshed him, and Paul asks that the Lord Jesus may grant Onesiphorus to "find" mercy from God the Father on Judgment Day. Friends, because the example of courage in the midst of suffering is so important, we ought be lovers of church history. We need to see the nerve of a Luther at the Diet of Worms, The wisdom of Spurgeon with the Downgrade Controversy, The courage Machen in the face of Princeton Liberalism, or the boldness of Lloyd Jones at National Assembly of Evangelicals in 1966. We need Christian biographies to put flesh and bones on these commands, and to remind us that our suffering is in a hallowed line of other Christian sufferers who were looking for the city that has

foundations whose designer and builder is God (Heb 11:10). What a great gift to get for a spouse or a child on their next birthday: an example of a Christian man or woman who suffered well for Christ's sake. We need those examples. And we also need to see with sadness the examples of those who did not persevere as a warning

C. Negative example 1: Phygelus and Hermogenes

We don't know much about Phygelus and Hermogenes apart from the fact that they deserted Paul when he was in Asia Minor. They counted the approval of others greater gain than the suffering and glory of the gospel. Like Demas who loved the world more than Jesus in 2 Timothy 4:10, they loved the approval of the inner ring more than they loved the approval of God. And now that they are dead, doesn't their choice seem so foolish? From a centuries perspective, their folly is made plain.

Conclusion

Friends, wisdom would dictate that we consider things in a long-term perspective. Eternity is a long time, and our life in this world is a breath by comparison. The suffering God has given us multiple warning and encouragements in His word to persevere. Jesus is so worthy to be suffered for. Brother or sister, If you lose your job because you are not willing to lie by calling someone a gender that they are not, if you are shunned from friends and family because they found out what you really believe, even if it should happen that you go to prison or are attacked or even killed for your faith in Jesus, —all of this will be vindicated and rectified one day.

Can you imagine? One day, and every suffering that you have experience in this life for the gospel will be an honor for which the Lord counted you worthy of. it will all be worth it! When you see the redeemed from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation stream into the heavenly Jerusalem, bringing all their treasures and glory. When walk among them through the gates of pearl, when you see your God with glorified eyes. All of your longings will be fulfilled. All of our apprehensions and fears about representing Jesus will seem so trite and silly. Friends, the world's approval means nothing if we have the approval of God. The Lord of History is on the right side of history, and you will show yourself to be on the right side of history as you, being Empowered by the Holy Spirit, share in suffering and guard the gospel by not being ashamed of it

[pray]