Follow The Pattern — Delivery Transcript

2 Timothy 1:7–18 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 10, 2016 · *Entrusted*

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All right, well good morning. How's everybody doing? I read an article the other day about what people can't stand about preachers, other than, you know, their preaching. But it was when preachers have a whiny, nasally voice. And I just happened to have been attacked by the allergy monster over the past couple of days or weeks or something, just incredibly kind of off today. I'm a little bit drugged up, so if I say something out of character, that's probably why. I just want you to just deal with me for just a little bit with the nasally voice.

I'm going to try my best not to whine, but I can't help the amount of—oh, well, anyway—mucus in my head. If you've been paying attention, you know that Christianity, and I'm not saying Christianity like everyone's-a-Christian Christianity, but the Christianity embraced by people who actually go to church, who read the Bible, who believe the Bible is actually inspired by God, that it was true that God actually took men and through the Holy Spirit had them write exactly what he wanted them to write, that kind of Christianity people in the South believe.

I would think that we believe it; we're a kind of church that pushes that kind of Christianity. You could call it evangelical Christianity. Traditional Christianity, the things that all Christians have believed at all times and in all places. That kind of Christianity is becoming increasingly unpopular. Would you agree with that? In our culture today—and I'm not trying to, you know, this is not some bash on culture, let's just state the facts. In our culture, that message, the message of the gospel, is becoming more and more unpopular and a really pretty odd message.

The word gospel literally means good news, but the message of the gospel is only good news if you believe what it has to say about mankind and God and how you get to heaven. And most people just kind of don't believe that. That Christianity would submit that we are all sinners, that all of us have sinned, fallen short of God's standard, and that in light of that sin,

God's just in judging us for our sin, and his judgment will be on us unless we in faith choose to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.

And for most people to think that in order for me to have a relationship with God, I've got to put faith in some crucified Jewish carpenter who lived two thousand years ago just kind of seems absurd in a lot of people's minds. Now I know we're in the South, we're in the Bible Belt. A lot of people in the Bible Belt, you know, you grew up with it. That kind of cultural Christianity exists here, but I'm just here to say fifty years from now we're not going to be in Kansas anymore.

That's kind of a play on Dorothy and The Wizard of Oz, maybe showing my age there. Well 50 years from now, our culture, Bible Belt culture, Abilene, is going to begin to look more and more like the culture in the North, and not just the culture in the North, is going to begin to look more and more like the culture of the first century, not in terms of everything, but in terms of how they think and treat the message of the gospel. We're going to have more and more of a culture that looks like what Timothy and Paul faced, and less and less a culture like what my grandma and mom faced.

And good, bad, indifferent, it doesn't really matter. That's just the facts, ma'am. And how do we, as believers, if we are going to continue to embrace this traditional message of Christianity, how do you exist in a culture that's like that? And then more importantly, how do you entrust that gospel faith to the next generation because they're going to be raised in a climate that treats that gospel message with indifference at the best and straight up hostility at the worst. And that's really why we're studying the book of 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy was written by an old guy to a young guy.

You might think of it as a baby boomer writing to a millennial, but the baby boomer was the apostle Paul, church planter extraordinaire, incredibly gifted, sold out to the gospel, finished well, he's like the epitome of what you would want in a Christian believer. And so this guy, Paul, writes to a young guy, Timothy, who is an insecure, pretty timid, but pretty effective, strong leader in the church at Ephesus. And last week if you were with us, you know we were introduced to those characters, and the reason we're looking at it is because our church is unique in that we've got a lot of Pauls, older believers who are mature in the faith, who've run a good race, and who have much to offer to the next generation.

We got a big demographic of those folks in our church, and then we've also got a big demographic of Timothys, of young people, some of us insecure, some of us not, but all of us wondering how do I take this true, genuine faith that I possess, that I need Christ, that he is my foundation, he's my security, he's my entrance into heaven, he's how I have a relationship with God. How do I take that faith and live in this culture? How do I advance it in this culture, in a culture that's increasingly becoming more and more hostile to that belief.

And I truly believe that one generation can really help the other generation. And the way that it could happen is through this book, 2 Timothy, because 2 Timothy epitomizes what it looks like to entrust the gospel to a new generation. And we started last week, and last week for those of you who were not with us, basically what Paul tells Timothy is, stop being a wimp. You've been filled with the Holy Spirit. So grow up, get up, and do what God's called you to do. And this week, what Paul's going to do is show Timothy.

All right, I've given you the challenge and the charge. Here's what it's going to look like in your climate. Stop being a wimp. Grow up, stand up, do what God's called you to do. What does that look like? What challenges are you going to face? Well let me tell you. And he tells him. So this morning we're going to look at a text that shows all of us what the spirit-filled life looks like. Because Paul concluded last week with what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He said last week, and if you want to take your Bible, you can turn there.

2 Timothy chapter 1. 2 Timothy 1, verse 7. Paul tells Timothy, you've been filled with the Holy Spirit. And the spirit that God has given to us is not a spirit of fear. Talking about the fear of man, what people think about you. Am I going to be accepted? What if they don't like me? What if I don't make enough money? All of those questions that keep us from stepping out in faith and doing what we believe God's called us to do. Paul says, the Holy Spirit is inside of you, Timothy, and it's not a spirit of fear.

But the Holy Spirit produces in you a spirit of power and love and self-control. Power not to abuse, but to return abuse with love. To endure suffering faithfully, not to cower underneath it, not to let suffering destroy you, but instead let it refine you and strengthen you. That's what the Holy Spirit is doing in you. You want to be a spirit-filled Christian? This is what it looks like. In the context of suffering in a hostile culture, you're filled with power and love and self-control. Now, when we think of being filled with the spirit, and then I'm not saying this is wrong, but immediately what comes to our minds is usually something in relationship to a worship service and raising your hands maybe in a worship service or spinning around and dancing, some cool dance moves.

Blaze showed us some cool dance moves last night. We put it on Facebook. He could really shake it, shake it, shake, shake it, better than his dad. But when we think filled with the spirit, you think freedom, you know, freedom of expression. This emotional engagement with what God is doing in the midst of a community, in the midst of your life, and you're just not ashamed of it. You're expressive. And I'm not saying that's wrong and that's bad, and I'm not saying that's not spirit-filled, but that's not all of it.

Okay? That's not the full story of what it means to be a person filled with the Holy Spirit. A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit, the effects of the Spirit are not just expressed in the context of a worship service. The effects of being filled with the Holy Spirit are maybe even more clearly expressed in the context of suffering. Or in the context of maintaining and

persevering in the Christian faith, even in the midst of hostility and opposition. That's how you really know if a person is walking by the Spirit, that instead of retreating, instead of giving up, instead of fighting back with hate and anger and bitterness, they instead respond with love and self-control and godliness and righteousness.

That's what a spirit-filled life looks like. And I think that's what we want. I think that's what's going to make the church effective in the future. And our text today, Paul's going to show us how to get it done, how to make it come alive in our lives. So we're going to read verses 8 to 18. We'll kind of read and then talk a little bit along the way. But basically the idea from Paul to Timothy and from Paul to us today, when it comes to being spirit-filled, living out the Christian faith in a hostile culture, shake the shame.

Share in suffering, and stay empowered. And we'll talk about what that power is in just a little bit. So chapter 1, verse 7. He didn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, here's what it looks like, Tim. Don't be ashamed. Shake the shame. Don't be ashamed. Ashamed of what? Of the testimony about our Lord, of the gospel. Nor of me his prisoner. So Timothy, don't be ashamed of the gospel, and don't be ashamed of gospel preachers or people who have embraced the gospel. But share in suffering.

So shake the shame. Share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. So stay empowered. Shake the shame, share in suffering, stay empowered. If you can get that one verse, I think you get the whole passage. And the rest of the passage just builds on the essence of that message. What's that look like? How do you do it in your life? How do you do it in this culture? So let's start with shaking the shame. The temptation for Timothy to fall back, to be ashamed of the gospel, was not just a figment of Paul's imagination.

Okay, Timothy is existing in a climate. He's there in Ephesus. The first century, and if you think Christianity is a little bit unpopular now, take what it is now and multiply that unpopularity by a bajillion—that's a little much—a thousand. And that's how unpopular it was in the first century. It was opposed by all sides. Right now Christianity is not a minority. You got a lot of people who call themselves Christians, there's still a little bit of cultural respect for Christianity. But back then nobody respected it. Nobody thought that it was a cool and hip and a real alternative to what you might believe about reality and God.

Paul said it was a stumbling block to the Jews, that it was foolishness to Greeks and Gentiles. So one side of the culture thought it was just utterly ridiculous. The other side of the culture thought it was a blasphemous message: how could you say those kinds of things about God? And so for Timothy to be ashamed of the gospel was a very likely thing to happen. I did a little research this week and discovered that the first drawing really of a crucifixion didn't surface—well, they didn't find it—until around three hundred A.D.[1] And I've got a picture of it.

If you show the next one real quick. Because this is a sketch of what's actually drawn into the side of a rock. Show the rock one, the one right after that. This is this is a thing called the Alexamenos graffito. It's basically a picture of the crucifixion. If you go back one picture, this is what it really looks like. And this is how the culture thought about Christianity. They thought they were fools because they were worshiping as God some donkey. A guy with the head of a donkey. In other words, you're an idiot if you think that some Jewish carpenter is somehow going to be the savior of the world.

There it is. That was widespread. That was popular. That was what people thought. And it's similar to what some people think today about Christianity. And as a result, Christians had to battle shame in their life. Now, shame comes from a lot of different places. I looked up the Webster's dictionary definition of shame. Here's what it says: that shame is a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety. So guilt, shortcoming, impropriety, those are the sources of shame. Everybody knows what shame feels like, right? You've probably felt shame before, but think about why you felt it.

Maybe a lot of times it's because of guilt, you do something that's wrong. And for a lot of us, we don't feel shame for doing something that's wrong. We don't feel shame until what we did is made public. So you maybe, you know, cheated on your spouse and you didn't feel much shame. You felt guilty for it, but you didn't feel a lot of shame until it was made public. And then you were like, wow, I'm really ashamed of myself. Or maybe you lied on your taxes. This is tax season and you know some people lie on their taxes and you don't feel any shame because the government shouldn't get your money anyway, you think, and then all of a sudden you get audited and the IRS comes and exposes your sin and then all of a sudden you begin to feel shame.

So people feel shame because of guilt. But they also feel shame because of shortcoming. They don't measure up, okay? Performance anxiety. You had a certain standard that you had set for yourself and then you fell short of that standard and it was exposed. It wasn't a sin, you didn't do anything wrong, but you feel shame as a result of it. And some of that's what Timothy felt about being associated with the gospel. I remembered this last week. I felt a little bit of shame. I'm not necessarily dieting or anything like that, but there's a little crew I work out with in the gym and they go to church here.

And it was on Tuesday night that we were at Celebrate Recovery. By the way, Tuesday night Celebrate Recovery has amazing desserts. And I was enjoying one of those desserts. It was a cookie, and one of the people that go to the gym with me, she was about three tables back, and she was one of the really healthy people that make you feel like you're not healthy because she's just so healthy. And I was like, I want that cookie, but I don't want her to see me eat the cookie. Okay, so I tried to put myself in front of the cookie and broaden out my frame, my constitution, my body a little bit.

And I got the cookie stuffed into my mouth real fast and then immediately went back to pineapples and strawberries and filled my plate with pineapples and strawberry while I was chewing the delicious wedding cake cookie and turned around, thought I was scot-free. And then the next day in the gym, the lady says, I saw you eat the cookie. And shame. I was like, man, this is a painful emotion that would cause my life. Shame. Why? Because I sinned? No. Is it a sin to eat that cookie? Of course not. But at least I don't think so.

Is it? No, it's not. So, eat cookies. But because I fell short of some standard, I felt shame and you do this all the time. You have standards you set for yourself, you have physical goals, you have weight goals, you have all these goals and you don't meet the goals and then you feel shame. And that's not necessarily odd or weird, but sometimes it's not proper. It's not God given shame. God did not put that shame on you. And then of course we have shame of impropriety. Shame of impropriety is where it's a cultural faux pas, it's a party foul, you might say.

You were supposed to wear this to the concert or that to the party and you didn't. You preached with your fly down, I'm going to check that, and all of a sudden it was exposed and you feel the shame in that way. It is in the second two ways. It wasn't that Timothy did anything wrong. He didn't sin in embracing the gospel, but it was culturally a faux pas. It was a party foul, and it was a shortcoming. Maybe people had expectations of Timothy. And Timothy is a people pleaser. And he was letting the expectations of people—he applied them to himself, and because he couldn't meet the standards that he thought he should have met, he felt shame.

And what Paul is doing is telling Timothy, when it comes to the gospel, when it comes to the narrative that you are sinners separated from God and that Jesus Christ was sent by the Father in love to live a sinless, perfect life that none of us could ever live, and die a sinner's death on the cross for our sin in our place, and then he was buried, and then three days later God raised him from the dead. And the message that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord and repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, that anyone who does that can be saved, that message is not a message that you should ever be ashamed of.

No matter what culture may say, no matter how much opposition you may receive, stand confidently behind the message of the gospel. You've got to embrace this grit, Timothy. You've got to grow up, you've got to have a spine and stop being ashamed of the gospel. It's not godly shame. God did not give you that shame. And some of us need to hear that. Some of us exist in climates where the message of the gospel is incredibly unpopular. Maybe students, you know, we got some students here when it comes to your school and then the mood and the culture of your school.

To be a confessing Christian, to be someone who trusts in Christ and advances that biblical message, to think that the Bible's true and that the Bible's teaching on hot topics that we find

ourselves addressing today, that those things are true, you need to be reminded that there is nothing about the gospel that you should be ashamed of. You may feel the shame, but shake it. Shake it off, as Taylor Swift, the great theologian, said. Haters are going to hate, hate, hate, hate, hate, and I'm just going to shake, shake, shake it off.

Shake the shame. Shake the shame. Now you laugh, but how many of us cower? Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas around the table, having coffee with your family. Topic of religion comes up and you back off because of shame. And it's not godly, it's not proper. And it's certainly not going to advance the kingdom when you are cowering always in shame. Now I just thought of a couple of worldviews in our culture. Man, it's already—wow, we've got a little time left. In our culture, we've got some worldviews that push against Christianity. When they interviewed a lot of millennials, they described a millennial's worldview as moralistic therapeutic deism.

Which is a mouthful. Basically, it means that moralistic, so you have a moral standard. It's not from God. It's what culture defines. This is right, this is wrong. And we kind of define our morals—grievous sins. Moralistic, therapeutic, so God exists, but he exists to make me happy. He's my God. He's my God in my pocket. Who gives me a good and happy life and then deism is the view that God exists, but he exists kind of aloof and detached and he's not really interested until I need him to be interested.

You might think of it as a genie-in-the-bottle kind of Christianity. That's what most young people believe about God, which is absolutely absurd and ridiculous and totally not biblical, but that view is widespread and prevalent in our world, and it would seek to shame the Christian gospel by saying, who are you to say that I'm wrong? Who are you to say that I should live my life this way? How could you say that I'm a sinner separated from God? I get to define my own code of morality. And for you to say that people are going to go to hell when they die just because they don't believe in some Jesus Christ is pig-headed and arrogant and way too exclusive.

And how could you, a smart thinking person, believe that? That's a view in our culture that gets pushed on us and it's only going to grow. That's the soft version by the way. There's a hard version. There's the new atheism. The new atheism, you know, Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, the four horsemen of the new atheism. It was one thing to be an atheist back in the day where you just didn't believe in God, but now you've got atheists who don't just not believe in God, but they actively treat with disdain and disrespect anyone who does believe in God.

And they write these books that ridicule and mock people who believe in the historic Christian faith and, you know, I like reading those books and arguing with them, but the point is it's a growing demographic of people in our culture. It's only going to get bigger, and when it comes and pushes itself on you, you need to resolve today: Am I a Christian? And if

I'm a Christian, am I going to be someone who pushes and shakes off the shame that's going to be inflicted on me from my culture? And if you decide today to do that, it doesn't mean you're mean or arrogant or pig-headed.

It just means that you're not going to emotionally be controlled by what other people think about the gospel. You're controlled by what you know to be true, and you're going to hold fast to that, shake the shame. Jesus in Mark 8, Mark chapter 8, verse 38, he says, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words"—so it's not just the person of Christ, it's the teachings of Christ—"whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in his glory"—or "when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

So Jesus is saying, shake the shame, identify with Christ, the person of Christ, and the teachings of Christ. It seems like everyone wants to associate with Jesus, so long as we can remove certain teachings of Jesus from the New Testament, but Jesus is saying, it's a full meal deal if you embrace me. You embrace all of me. Paul's telling Timothy the same thing. Timothy, you don't have that spirit of fear. The Holy Spirit is alive in you. The Spirit points to Christ. The Spirit encourages you to have boldness. Encourages you to advance the cause of Christ and the kingdom of Christ in the world in which you live.

And some of us, like I said, need that encouragement not to be ashamed of the gospel, the person of Christ, or the teachings of Christ. And maybe some of us need to hear we don't need to be ashamed of other people who are associated with Christ. Because I can tell you, I mean, there's a lot of times in which I've thought to myself I don't want to be associated with that guy. I mean I know he's a brother and he's a Christian, but the guy's Looney Tunes. I don't want to be associated with him.

And there's a sense in which maybe you can do that. Paul's not saying associate with all believers no matter what. Sometimes some believers are arrogant and rude and mean-spirited, and you don't want to associate with that. But when it comes to people who are being persecuted for the cause of Christ in your schools, at your workplaces, in your circles of influence, and they're getting pushed back, what Paul is saying is step in and reject the shame that you feel, step in and share in the suffering which is the second point.

You shake the shame, you share in the suffering. He's not saying choose suffering for the sake of suffering. Some people think they're spiritual when they choose suffering. You know, they just try to find the path that's going to create the most amount of suffering in their life and say to themselves, wow, look at how spiritual I am. You know, Jesus suffered and I'm suffering. I'm so spiritual. And that's not spiritual, okay? There's another S word to describe that, but it's not spiritual. Choosing suffering for the sake of suffering is not spiritual.

What you want to do is choose obedience, choose God's will, choose allegiance to the gospel, and if in choosing that it entails suffering, which most oftentimes it will, then share in it. Paul said, I'm not afraid to share in the suffering. He tells that to Timothy a little bit later. Jesus in John chapter 18, verse 20,[2] he said, if they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you. The servant's not greater than his master. If you're in it with me, just know they did it to me, they're going to do it to you.

Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, when he gave the Beatitude, the ticket to the blessed life. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn. Basically, Jesus says, once you've mastered those seven qualities, those seven virtues of poverty of spirit and mourning and meekness and spiritual hunger and mercy and purity of heart and peacemaking. Once you get all that down, the blessed life, the crown jewel of the blessed life, is suffering. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.[3] So even from Jesus, from the beginning, he says, just know embracing the gospel doesn't mean a happy-go-lucky life for the rest of your life.

It's going to entail in this age some degree of suffering. It doesn't mean you did something wrong. It doesn't mean that God's mad at you just because you have pain in your life. It just means that God is using you to advance the kingdom through the vehicle of suffering. So that's why Paul says Colossians chapter 1, verse 24. I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. In my flesh I'm filling up what's lacking in Christ's afflictions. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 12, he tells Timothy the same thing. All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer.[4] And the reason I want to really harp on this is because we live in a culture where there is this brand of Christianity on TVs and selling books that would basically submit that if you just have enough faith and you just live right, God's going to bless you and He's going to give you everything that you need and He's going to give you the nice big house and you just declare what you want and God's going to give it to you because you're a man or a woman full of faith and that's just simply not biblical according to 2 Timothy.

In fact, what Paul is addressing in 2 Timothy is just that. There was a group of false teachers in the church there at Ephesus who had basically submitted that the resurrection had already happened. Like, so Jesus rose spiritually, not bodily, but Jesus rose spiritually, and you can have a resurrection too spiritually and if you really believe in Jesus the way these false teachers were believing, then that means you're not going to have suffering in your life and it's going to be so great. So it's going to be totally awesome. And then those teachers were pointing to the apostle Paul and they were saying, you know that guy, the apostle Paul who planted this church, you know he's in jail and he's suffering.

That's because he's not a spiritual person. That's because he doesn't believe. He doesn't have enough faith. And Paul is saying, it's because I believe, it's because of my faith that I'm in this prison. It's because I was unashamed of the gospel that I'm in this prison. And so don't

be so foolish or led astray to believe that just because you believe in Christ means your life is going to just be totally amazing. Share in suffering. Share in it through the power of God. Share in suffering through the power of God.

Look there back in 2 Timothy chapter 2, I think it's verse 8.[5] You shake the shame, you share in suffering, and then you stay empowered. Paul says, how do you stay empowered? You stay empowered through the power of God. What is the power of God? Look at what he says in verses eight and following, or verse nine. Share it through the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling. So he saved us at salvation in the past. He called us to a holy calling; that's talking about right now, if you're a Christian, he is saving you, presently, making you holy.

So justification saved in the past, sanctification, you're being made holy, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace. So you're not holy because your moral effort made you holy, but you're holy because God purposed to make you holy through his grace, his unmerited favor, grace which he gave us in Christ, this blows my mind, 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. So you want to know how to have the power of God activated in your life.

How do you stay empowered? It's by meditating on the grace of God. Paul says, you think about grace? It is sovereign grace. God chose me. God chose you. It wasn't that you chose him. Yeah, you responded. You prayed the prayer. And there was a role that you play. But salvation from beginning to end is because of God's amazing grace. It's not your merit. You don't get saved because you somehow impressed the Lord with your moral aptitude. You got saved because God was full of mercy and grace. Before the ages began, before time began, before you had an opportunity to be good or evil, before any of those moral things came into the equation, God said, I'm saving you.

I'm saving you. So your salvation cannot be because of your moral effort. And by the way, you can't lose your salvation because of your moral failures. Why? Because your salvation was never based on morals good and evils here on earth. It was based on the purpose of God and the grace of God in Christ before the ages began. And Paul's saying the more I think about that, the more I meditate on that, the more security I find. The more hope I have, and it's like this power comes from within me, the power of God, because I'm persevering, I'm advancing the gospel not in my own strength, but by the power of God.

And the more deeply I meditate on grace, the more deeply the roots of the gospel go down into my heart, the more alive I become and the more able I am to persevere in suffering. So shake the shame, share in suffering through the power of God, basically through meditating deeply on the gospel. Verses 11 and 12, Paul says, it's because of the gospel that I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and it's because of that gospel, verse 12, is

why I suffer as I do. So for Paul, it wasn't because he didn't have the Holy Spirit, it's because he was full of the Spirit and had an allegiance to the gospel.

I suffer this way, but guess what? I am not ashamed, for I know, I love this, whom I have believed. So for Paul, the gospel was not just content. You know, Paul knew what he believed. He wrote 13 letters of the 27 in the New Testament. So Paul was a theologian. He knew what he believed. But for him, suffering is endurable when you shift from not just knowing the gospel as a concept, but because of the gospel, you begin to know Christ as a person intimately and deeply. I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced, without a shadow of a doubt, that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

So for Paul, I'm not giving an account to the haters. I'm not going to have to answer for what they say is my bad theology. At the end of the day, I'm accountable to God, and I'm going to stand before him and give an account. And because I'm going to stand before him, I'm just going to tell you, I'm confident. I'm secure. I'm not all shook up. I have self-control. I'm full of power and love and self-control. And Timothy, you can be too when you believe. Not just in content, not just the gospel as information, but through the gospel knowing Jesus Christ personally and intimately.

And for some of us here this morning, that's what we need to do. You've been in church your whole life. You toyed with the idea of being a Christian. Intellectually, maybe it makes sense to you, but you have a few questions, a few doubts. But has the gospel ever come alive where the Holy Spirit makes it true to you that it's not just factually true, but that God loves you individually, that he intends to save you, that even before time began, before you messed up, you know, cheated on your spouse or cheated on your taxes or did all of those terrible things that you now regret and wish you could totally undo before any of those things happened in your life.

God loved you and He chose you and He's saving you. And if this morning it's coming alive, if this morning you find yourself able to say Jesus is Lord, and that means the Holy Spirit is at work in your life, and you can choose Christ today and be saved. And some of you need to do that. In a moment, the band's going to come, we're going to respond to the Lord. You can come forward and say, I'm giving my life to Christ. It's no longer just a subject. It's no longer just something church people believe, but I know God.

I know my Father now intimately and personally through Christ. And some of us need to be like Paul and re-embrace this vision of the Christian life that includes suffering. It's not because of something you've done wrong. It may be because of something you're doing right that you suffer in the way that you do. Paul says, I'm convinced that he's able to guard into that day what has been entrusted to me. I like what one guy, a young preacher in Zimbabwe, said. He said it this way: I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed.

I have the Holy Spirit's power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line, the decision has been made. I'm a disciple of his. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. I won't give up, shut up, let up until I've stayed up, stored up, and prayed up and paid up and preached up for the cause of Christ, for I am a disciple of Jesus. And Paul concludes, "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." Follow the pattern. Guard the deposit. I want to invite you to stand. The band's going to play.

[Recording ends.]

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "around three hundred A.D." and "drawn into the side of a rock"; the Alexamenos graffito was scratched into the plaster wall of a room on the Palatine Hill in Rome and is usually dated around AD 200 (late 2nd to early 3rd century). Source: Wikipedia, "Alexamenos graffito" (citing Harley-McGowan, 2020). ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "John chapter 18, verse 20"; the words quoted ("A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you) are John 15:20. Source: ESV, John 15:20 and 18:20. ↩
3. Transcript note: spoken as "kingdom of God"; Matthew 5:10 reads "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Source: ESV, Matthew 5:10. ↩
4. Transcript note: spoken as "will suffer"; 2 Timothy 3:12 reads "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Source: ESV, 2 Timothy 3:12. ↩
5. Transcript note: spoken as "2 Timothy chapter 2, I think it's verse 8"; the verses he goes on to read ("by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling") are 2 Timothy 1:8–9. Source: ESV, 2 Timothy 1:8–9. ↩