

High School...shared Christ with team mate. Made fun of me. Suddenly I was ashamed. How did that happen? One minute I felt really good, Jesus and me sharing the gospel. The next minute I felt shame as if Jesus had tricked me. "What's up with that Jesus? I put in a good word for you and my reward is shame and embarrassment? I don't get it." Apparently neither did Timothy...v. 8.

Paul was in prison, not under house arrest but in a dungeon; a dark, dank, dingy, deathtrap of a dungeon. He was out of the game, on the sidelines, so his only choice was to turn the game over to the rookie. And we all know the danger of having a rookie at quarterback; when they get pressure they don't have the experience to remain calm - they run! Timothy is scrambling. Paul's predicament proves that you will not get a gold medal and worldwide admiration for preaching the gospel. Timothy knows his message will be greeted with opposition resulting in imprisonment and even death. So Paul reminds him of his divine resources. He had a godly heritage (v. 6). He was gifted (v. 7) The Spirit of God living within him will replace the spirit of fear in Timothy's heart.

In verse 8, Paul identifies another unwelcome guest in Timothy's life - shame. When you feel weak, unloved and confused, you are a good candidate to receive a visit from shame. There is only one effective way to overcome the crippling effects of shame and our passage today tells us how. Let's start with a definition of shame.

Guilt is judicial; shame is relational. Guilt is failing to live up to a certain standard or law. Shame is failing to live up to someone's expectations. Guilt is feeling bad for something you did. Shame is feeling bad about who you are. There is **true shame and false or toxic shame**. If I sin against God and offend Him, or if sin against another and damaged my relationship with them, I *should* feel a sense of shame. Shame is a healthy response to the fact that I have contributed to a broken relationship. False shame is the belief that I am guilty when I am not. Whenever we feel shame, the temptation is to run and hide - just like Adam and Eve did in the garden after eating the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:7-8). Just like Timothy is tempted to do. There is a better way to deal with shame.

When you feel shame coming on here are a few things to remember....

The power of God...v. 9. "He saved us." From what? From the inevitable consequences of violating God's standard. What is that standard? Simple - perfection. It's the only way to Heaven. But we are not perfect. So God provided a way for us to be made perfect in His eyes.

Notice, "He saved us AND called us with a holy calling." God's purpose in saving us was not so that we could **escape** this fallen world but so that we would **engage** this fallen world. God's purpose is revealed in Jesus' work on the cross...v. 10.

The power of the cross. Christ's death on the cross "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The cross demonstrated that where the gospel is concerned, there is no gain without shame. The price Jesus paid for our salvation involved shame. Everything about a crucifixion was designed to shame the victim. "**Shame was stripping away every earthly support that Jesus had: his friends gave way in shaming abandonment; his reputation gave way in shaming mockery; his decency gave way in shaming nakedness; his comfort gave way in shaming torture. His glorious dignity gave way to the utterly undignified, degrading reflexes of grunting and groaning and screeching.**" Piper. There is nothing dignified about being crucified. That's why the cross is stumbling block. The scandal of the cross is too hard to swallow for those who want a god unacquainted with shame.

Why would Jesus endure such shame? The writer of Hebrews tells us when he says we are "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising (disregarding, scorning) the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:2. Joy.

A few verses earlier the writer talks about Moses and how he was willing to give up all his privileges of being part of Pharaoh's household in order to suffer with the people of God. "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Heb. 11:26

The power of the gospel. Never be ashamed of a message that has the power to eliminate shame. The only way to get rid of shame is to replace it with the love and forgiveness of Jesus. Luke 7:36-50. A woman came to Jesus in a Pharisee's house weeping and washing his feet. She felt shame as the eyes of Simon communicated to everyone present that this woman was a sinner and that Jesus had no business letting her touch him. And she WAS a sinner. There was a place for true shame. But not for long. Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). And when the guests murmured about this, he helped her faith again by saying, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (v. 50). How did Jesus help her battle the crippling effects of shame? He gave her a promise: "Your sins are forgiven! Your faith (your

response to Me) has saved you. Go in peace." Think of it - she walked into that house clothed in shame. She walked out covered with shalom.

If anyone should have been burdened with a load of shame it was Paul. He had persecuted Christians to the point that he was responsible for the deaths of many. Why was he not ashamed of this? Because Paul ruthlessly remembered the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross. The sins that used to cause a sense of toxic guilt and shame no longer did. That is why he says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation." Ro. 1:16.

The power of purpose. Notice the progression of Paul's thoughts.

He saved us - to call us - to repurpose us ("because of His own purpose and grace") - to bring immortality to light through the gospel so people could be saved...v. 11. Isn't that good news? So why is he in prison? The gospel is only good news if we fully embrace the bad news. When we tell people they shouldn't feel bad about who they are, we limit the glory of the gospel. Jesus didn't come to save good people who do bad things. He came to save bad people who wanted nothing to do with God. That is why Jesus had no patience with the Pharisees. They didn't think they were bad. If you're not bad, then you don't need to be saved. But we were all born bad to the bone so, "*Cheer up! You're a worse sinner than you ever dared imagine, but you're more loved than you ever dared hope.*" That's the gospel.

When you engage the world for Jesus Christ remember...you will experience shame. You won't win any popularity contests. You will be criticized and ostracized and marginalized and trivialized and stigmatized and antagonized. In other words, you will be swimming upstream in a downstream world. (There is only one kind of fish that swims downstream - a dead one!). Don't be surprised when your message is opposed. It has always been that way. That's why Jesus reminded His disciples: "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Mt. 5:11-12

We can rejoice knowing that "No one who believes in the Lord will be put to shame." (Romans 10:11; 9:33). That's exactly what those first Christians did - rejoice. When the Pharisees met to discuss what to do with those who were preaching the gospel, they decided to round up the disciples and "after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So they went on their way from the presence of the

Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." Acts 5:40-42

No one can boldly "live out their God-given purpose in Christ" if they are weighed down with a load of shame. Some of you came in here wearing your shame like a garment. Maybe as a child someone dumped a whole load of shame on you in an attempt to control your behavior. You may even believe that God loves you just the way you are but **you** don't love you just the way you are. You may feel shame because you're guilty. You have offended a holy God and you know it. The Good News of the gospel is that you can be set free of that shame. Either way, here is what we all need to hear, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

So there is only one thing left to do this morning - entrust to God what He has entrusted to you...v. 12. He gave you your life, now offer it back to Him and let Him take away your shame. Leave your shame behind, and walk out of here with shalom.