



2 Timothy 1:8-12 Have You Answered God's Call?

Summary: Christians are prone to experience suffering and shame but counter them by focusing on Jesus and the gospel.

I'll begin this morning by asking a strange question. When was the last time you felt embarrassed, ashamed, or awkward about your Christian faith? I phrased the question that way on purpose, *when was the last time* – because I'm sure it has happened – either publicly or privately. You've had a moment or a season where you felt out of place, unsure, or uncomfortable with what it meant to be a Christian.

Maybe it happened in a conversation with a friend or family member who called you out and said, hey, you're a Christian, so does that mean you think what I'm doing is wrong, do you think I'm going to hell? Maybe you were in a class and the professor or instructor mocked some aspect of the faith - maybe you had a hard time reconciling Science and Scripture. Maybe you heard what some pastor or church just did or said and you felt guilt by association. Maybe you've felt like the smart people, the cool people, the rich people, or the powerful people – whoever it is that you think it better than you - they snicker and sneer at religion, particularly your religion, and so you shrink back, you stay silent. You're ashamed.

I'm not sure exactly how it happened, but I'm pretty sure it did. And that was just *the last time*. There were times before that, and there will be times again. For you, for me, for all of us. There will be times when we feel a little twinge or a massive downpour of embarrassment, shame, or social awkwardness because of our identity as believers in Christ. It has happened, it does happen, and it will happen again.

This morning we're going to explore why. We'll also look at how we should prepare ourselves for those moments and how to best respond to them.

We'll do that because it's what we find the Apostle Paul talking to Pastor Timothy about. You remember, Paul has been mentoring Timothy, he's adopted him as something of a son spiritually, and he's writing this letter to encourage the young man who is trying to lead a congregation in a difficult city at a difficult time. Paul faces difficulty himself – he's writing from prison in Rome and recognizes the end of his life is near. So, he writes, reminding Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of

our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

The Warning is for a Reason

I'm sure we've all seen some interesting consumer warning labels. There's the one on baby strollers that says: remove child before folding. There's one on a dryer saying you should never climb inside. And then there's one on Dremel tools – a Dremel is like a small drill or grinder used for fine wood working projects – the manual says, no joke, it is not to be used for dental work.

Well, the thing is, there's often a story behind the warnings, like the famous warning on the bottom of coffee cups – contents may be hot – well, yeah, we hope so. But the thing is – back in 1992 a 79-year-old lady ordered coffee at a McDonald's drive-through and tried to hold it between her knees in order to add cream and sugar – she wound up spilling the scalding hot coffee, received third-degree burns, and needed skin grafts. Later investigation would show McDonalds knew it was serving dangerously hot coffee, but didn't take action to prevent risk of injury to its customers so although the woman sued them asking for \$20,000 to help cover medical expenses and lost wages, the judge awarded \$2.9 million because of McDonald's negligence.

The point is, even when it seems silly, there's probably a reason behind the warning.

Well, Paul had to tell Timothy – **do not be ashamed of the testimony of Jesus** – a savior who was shamefully executed as a common criminal on the cross **or of me**, an apostle, a leader of the church, a communicator of this message, who is sitting in jail awaiting execution. Timothy **do not be ashamed** of any of this.

Christian, you *will* experience a pull in that direction. Or perhaps a push. It can be either strong or subtle, but it's real. Don't give in to it, stick to what you know and believe. Stand firm, there is no need to be embarrassed, ashamed, or apologize. There is no reason to feel small or stupid if you keep the right perspective.

Look at what Paul says in verse 12 - **I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed**. In other words, I know what those people think – the ones who would try to make me feel ashamed, the ones who want to think they're better than me, smarter than me, I know what they think. But I also know Jesus and I know His voice and I know His presence, and I know the difference He has made in my life.

And that conviction was nothing new - earlier in his life Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome and said something similar,

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

The temptation or the pressure to feel ashamed, embarrassed, or awkward was real, he just didn't give in to it. What others saw as weak or silly, he saw as strong and full of wisdom. Paul had seen the power of the gospel in his own life and in the lives of others. Others wanted him to back down, to cower, to stay quiet, or to adopt and approve their values and way of life and Paul said no. I'm not ashamed of what *or who* I believe in.

And that's good because Jesus said something supremely important on this subject:

Mark 8:38 "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Jesus just said if you're ashamed of Him in front of people on earth, He'll be ashamed of you in front of God in Heaven. Ouch! That's hard-hitting truth, I know, but these are the words of Jesus. He doesn't tell you to go looking for conflict. He doesn't tell you to go start arguments or to make a scene or go protest, but He's warning us – when you side with Jesus your faith will produce tension in other relationships and there will be a temptation to avoid conflict because you're either ashamed of Him or some other aspect of what you believe.

Jesus gives this warning to a crowd, Paul gives it to a pastor – it's a warning we all need to hear – men and women, young and old, leaders and servants. **Do not be ashamed.** There's a warning for a reason.

Here's what's happening – faith in heaven produces tension on earth.

Faith Produces Tension

Faith sets the conditions for conflict because it opens up a dialogue between heaven and earth – it reminds people here and now that there is more to life than just our daily rhythms. Remember what it is was like when you were not a Christian, you just went through your day without thinking much about spiritual matters. And you liked it that way – you didn't worry about sin or righteousness, or heaven or hell, you didn't worry about eternal consequences – that's heavy stuff – you were just living for today and the things you cared or worried about.

When God and heaven come into the picture everything gets complicated. Now there's even more to think about. Now you have to deal with the possibility that some things in your life might be right, but other things might be wrong. You start to worry about being judged, and being found wrong or guilty, and not being able to do the things you enjoy. And so, *faith produces tension*. Bringing God into daily life causes conflict.

It produces tension in me, if I don't know where I stand with God. But it also produces tension between me and you if you're the one reminding me of the spiritual realm. I might feel like you're judging me even if you've never said anything to me about my sin. Just the fact that you exist and that I know what you believe, what you stand for, makes me uncomfortable. I was able to ignore God and heaven and righteousness and tell myself my own story about religion until you showed up.

And so, I may begin to lash out at you – I might give you the cold shoulder. I might say things about you. I might say things to you. I might do things to you. And again, you might not have any said anything to me, or at least not said anything confrontational. You might not have anything against me, you might even care for or about me. But I don't care back because you make me feel condemned, you make me feel wrong, you make me feel judged.

And so, I try to take all the spiritual angst I feel inside and point it all at you so that I don't have to deal with it myself. I try to mock you, I try to belittle you, I try show that you're not so high and mighty or holy, you're a hypocrite, you're a bigot, you're backward, you're behind the times, you're an idiot and a fool who believes stupid and silly things. I – pay attention to this - I shut you out and push you away, and I encourage others to do the same thing because I'm trying to diminish my own guilt and shame.

I want you to feel small, stupid, and isolated. I want you to feel ashamed. I want you to abandon your beliefs and tell me I'm right. Tell me my ways are right. Tell me I'm OK. I'm not wrong. Because you, Christian, Jesus lover, Bible reader, you make me uncomfortable. You make me think of all the ways my conscious is already convicting me that I'm wrong.

Friends, I want you to see: this is nothing new. All the way back at the beginning of the Church, Christians felt these same pressures – there was a warning for a reason, their faith produced tension in towns like Ephesus, they needed to be told: **do not be ashamed**. And they needed to know what to do instead, which brings us to our third point this morning:

Focus on God, not people

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

Church, listen! When you feel the tension because of your faith, remember it's because God has called you with a holy calling. **Before time began**, He had a plan for your creation. He knew of your failure and so He created a plan for your redemption as well. And He took it upon Himself to bring it all together by sending His Son Jesus to be our redemption and rescue. This has been His plan since **before time began**.

Before you knew there was a God, He knew there was a you. And He had a plan for you. My friends, you are seen and known and loved by God. Watch this – even in the moments when you feel a pull toward shame. Even in the moments when you feel judged and condemned when you feel mocked and written off. Right then, right there, you’re still seen, known, and loved. Not because of anything you’ve done or have not done – it’s not [according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace](#).

Scripture says God knit you together in your mother’s womb. It says He determined your days before a single one of them came to be. According to Scripture God knows the number of hairs on your head.

He knows you. The real you. And that’s the one He called with a [holy calling](#). You heard and you repented of your sins and you invited Him further and deeper into your life and He saved you. Well, He knew He would do it even [before time began](#).

When God created the world He built in an option for us to rebel – for us to choose not to worship and honor Him. And you say, why would He do that? The answer is, because if He had not, then we would never have had the opportunity to not love Him and serve Him – we would have been like robots.

To be sure, there are some upsides to that – but one really, really, big down side is the fact that whatever relationship we had wouldn’t be authentic – things like love, respect, admiration, appreciation, and honor ring hollow if you have no choice but to show them.

So, God made the world, designed it to be full of blessings and beauty, and intended for humanity to enjoy and appreciate it. And then He gave one command – one tree in all of the garden that they were not to eat from. And of course, what did Adam and Eve do? They ate.

But you know what, it’s not much different today – look at all the things God has given us to appreciate and enjoy. Look at all the things that God has *absolutely no problem with you doing*. And yet, how little do we appreciate those things? Meanwhile, there’s this relatively small cluster of things we should not do, and which we find ourselves regularly drawn to.

The point is, *God knew we couldn’t rule ourselves*. We couldn’t handle our own freedom. We wouldn’t want Him as our king, but we couldn’t rule ourselves either. He knew we would break things we could not fix, and we would chase things we should not have. So, before He even spoke the world into being, He also devised a plan for rescue and redemption.

A plan to bring back the light. A plan to send Jesus, the Christ, our Savior. The light of the world, the giver of life. And anyone, absolutely anyone, who will confess their sins can receive a new life in Him.

You’re familiar with the famous words of Jesus in

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

This is God's plan – to redeem us. To renew us. To reinvigorate us. To give us a life worth living here and now *because of* the life we have been promised in eternity.

God – look at verse 9 - *has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*

So, my friends, if you are in Christ, you have *life and immortality through the gospel*. And if you are not in Christ, you could receive all of these things today.

But there's even more - we are not just given a life to live, we are given a purpose and direction for it. Paul goes on to say, (vs 11) *I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*

Paul received a life to live *and* a way to live it. He was called by God to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher. Timothy was called to be a pastor. You might be called to be a teacher, a coach, a trainer, an analyst, an accountant, a consultant or contractor, a physician or psychologist, a network engineer or a lawyer.

The point is: Christian, you've been given a path *and a purpose* for the life you've been given. So *go*, do it, and do it well for the glory of God and the good of others – invite God into every aspect of this life you're living and every day you're living it. Let there be no corner of your calendar where God is shut out or optional – He's given everything to you, now give everything back to Him.

Because, *this* is the life Paul is living. *This* is the life he encourages Timothy to imitate. It's the life we're all invited into as well. It's a life that hears the critics and doubters, a life that hears the skeptics and the mockers, it's a life that experiences conflict with people that think that you think you're better than they are, you think you're holier than they are – a life in which there is reason to feel ashamed *if* you give in to it or *if* you listen, *and yet, you don't*.

You're able to say like Paul in vs 12 - *I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

In other words, I believe that what I have received in Christ is worth whatever I may face here and now.

So how do you get there? How do you get this place of such strong conviction? Here are some practical steps.

First, speak truth to yourself. Speak the truth – even an apostle like Paul and a pastor like Timothy were tempted to feel ashamed. If it happened to them, it should not be surprising if it happens to me. But, I will *not* feel ashamed, *because I know* God has called me. I *know* His eye is upon me. I *know* He has plans for me. As we saw a few weeks ago, God said in

Jeremiah 29:11 I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Think about that. And then add to it

Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who *can* be against us?

May your troubles seem small in light of your God.

And then add to that the affirmation of the Heidelberg Catechism that we've looked at so many times lately:

Q: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

When you are tempted toward shame, or feel embarrassed, lack confidence, or feel socially awkward because of your identity in Christ, remember these things. Review them in your mind. Speak truth to yourself: *I belong to God, not public opinion.*

I belong to God, not public opinion. I don't have to feel what others want me to feel. I don't have to approve what others want me to approve. I don't have to go along with what others are pushing on me. I am not my own, I belong body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful savior, Jesus Christ. He loves me and gave Himself for me. He called me with a holy calling **before time began**. He has abolished death and given me **life and immortality through the gospel**. I am not ashamed of Him or any of these things. I belong to God, and not public opinion.

I'll sum it all up like this, if you want to avoid being ashamed: *Focus on what God has done for you, not what people want from you.* Focus on what God has done *for* you, not what people want *from* you.

People want you to conform to their ideas, to approve of their choices, to agree with their positions. People want you to come and be like them, to give to them, to appreciate them. To say what they're doing is OK. People want something from you.

God says, look at what *I've* done *for you*. Look at what *I'm* giving *to you*: a life to live, a purpose for it, and a way to renew it. Why would you be ashamed? Do you know Me? Do you believe Me?

So, where do we go from here? What we do about these things?

First and foremost, take a minute to talk to God about the fact that you have felt embarrassed, ashamed, or socially awkward about your faith in Christ. Confess your sin. Tell Him you're sorry. Ask for forgiveness, ask for strength.

Then, give God thanks for what He has done for you, personally. Thank Him for the salvation you have received. Thank Him for never being ashamed or embarrassed of you. And if there's anything you've seen in the Scripture this morning that you sense is lacking from your life, ask for it.

And then, finally, become like Paul - meet others in their trials. Bear their suffering and shame with them. Pray for them, care about them, take appropriate action for them like Paul does with Timothy. Who can you set the example for? Who can you care for and about? Who can you encourage? Who can you pray for, right now, this morning, that they would not be ashamed, but would know the calling of God on their lives. You might want to pray this for your spouse, your kids, or your grandkids. Pray this for your roommate, your nieces and nephews. Pray this for the elected officials you know that are believers in Christ. Pray that they would know the calling of God on their life and that they would not be ashamed.

And then, come forward and receive the elements for communion.

I'll pray for us all and then, while the worship team plays, you pray and then come forward.

Let's pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

2 Timothy 1:8-12 Have You Answered God's Call?

Summary: Christians are prone to experience suffering and shame but counter them by focusing on Jesus and the gospel.

- When was the last time you felt embarrassed, ashamed, or awkward about your Christian faith?
- When have you experienced someone assuming you judge them, even though you've never said anything to or about them?

How do you react to Jesus' words in **Mark 8:38** "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"?

- Paul says we fight the pull toward shame, awkwardness and/or embarrassment by remembering our calling. Why? Does this really work?
- Why is it hard to accept or understand the doctrine of election? How/why is it comforting or encouraging to know God had a plan for you before time began?
- Paul knew and encouraged Timothy to remember, that he had been given not only a life, but also a way to live it – he was called to be an apostle, Timothy was called to be a pastor, what have you been called to be or do?

Pastor Jeff ended with two things we need to remember when we feel the pull toward shame. Which of these seems most helpful to you right now?

- o "I belong to God, not public opinion." and
- o *Focus on what God has done for you, not what people want from you.*
- Pastor Jeff has quoted the first question of the Heidelberg catechism several times lately. Has it been helpful for you to consider? Why or why not?

Q: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.