

10/6/2019 Pentecost 17. This is My Gospel: I am not ashamed! – Timothy Priewe

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.

Picture this: you don't know how many days you have left to live. But you know the end is probably coming soon. You've got a lot of time on your hands to think because frankly you're trapped in the same room all day. You're a bit lonely because most of your friends and loved ones have either already moved on or they're busy with riggers and vigors of life.

As you sit with a chance to think of all those who you will leave behind when you're gone, you decide to write something to leave with them—a final encouragement to hold onto the things that were most important to you in life. You can well imagine the tears that would stain that page as you pour your very soul out to the children or friends you love so dearly. This letter will be theirs to hold onto even after you're gone.

Today we have before us just such a letter. The Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy is the last letter written by him in the Bible. He writes it from a prison cell in Rome, where he sits in chains for preaching of about Jesus. He's got a good deal of time on his hands as he sits, trapped in the same room all day with few people to spend the time. As he awaits yet another trial, he knows that his time is getting short. The end is near.

And so, he writes this last tear-stained letter to Timothy, his young travelling companion and brother in the ministry. He writes, hoping that Timothy might receive it and visit him one last time, but knowing full well he may never get the chance. So this letter pours out the confession he held so dearly. *"This is my gospel." I am not ashamed 1) to proudly claim it and 2) boldly proclaim it.* He addresses the letter **"To Timothy, my dear son."**

"I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy."

Paul and Timothy had been through thick and thin together traveling from church to church spreading the gospel together. If Paul needed someone he trusted to go somewhere on an important mission, Timothy was his right hand man. The last time they parted, they said an emotional "goodbye" and now Paul, missing his protégé and son in the faith, longed to see him again.

"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." Paul had first met Timothy on his second missionary journey in the city of Lystra. We're told in the book of Acts that Timothy's father was a Greek and probably an unbeliever, but his mother and grandmother were devout believers. These God-fearing women had brought Timothy up **"from infancy [to know] the Holy Scriptures which make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"** (2 Tim 3:15)

Maybe it's because this letter is written to Timothy and my name is Timothy, but I can't help but think of my mother and grandmother. They both went to heaven last year, Mom first after a 4-year battle with cancer, and then Grandma after 90 strong years. Together with my father and grandfather, they gave me a gift that will last long after their gone, the knowledge of salvation. They brought me to baptismal font where I became God's child. They raised me to know the gospel. There's no greater gift a parent could possibly give their children than to know their Savior. No matter how much of a struggle it is to sit through church, or to read Bible stories before bed, or pay tuition, it is all worth it.

Paul recognizes the amazing blessing given to Timothy from little on and now he makes a passionate appeal to his dear Son. **"I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."** Timothy had been taught the gospel which created faith in his heart, and now he had also been given the great privilege to serve in the ministry. Just a few months ago, a number of pastors gathered here for this same custom, the laying on of hands, as they offered a special encouragement for the ministry. Now Paul encourages Pastor Timothy to grow in the ministry and cultivate his gifts. Picture using a bellows to blow air into kindling to get a fire blazing. In the same way we channel God's Word through our faith so that the Holy Spirit can make our gifts grow.

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“**Fan into flame the gift of God,**” which you received, Paul says. “**For God did not give us a spirit of timidity.**” Do you think Timothy might have had good reason to feel a bit timid? Here his mentor Paul is locked in chains, on trial for preaching about Jesus, the very thing Paul is encouraging Timothy to keep doing. This crazy Emperor Nero guy was rounding up Christians and putting them to death in awful ways. That certainly would give me second thoughts about speaking too loudly about Jesus. **Timothy** faced a huge temptation to become **timid**.

Over the years I’ve grown very fond of having the name Timothy. It means “honoring God.” Yet as I look back on my life, that other word paints a much better picture of me—“**timid**.” That word tells a more accurate story of what “Tim” is really short for. Timid, afraid, fearful, silent, **ashamed!**

Have you had those same moments? Tongue-tied and timid about what you believe when someone actually asks you. Anxious and afraid that you might actually get the chance to talk about “religion” stuff. Fearful and fretting that someone might think your pushy or brainwashed or they might slam a door in your face. The weight of this world and all its hatred for Jesus hangs like a thousand-pound chain on our lips, keeping them securely shut. It makes us timid, sometimes afraid to even claim Jesus. We’re in good company too. Peter, one of Jesus’ closest disciples, had some trouble remembering who Jesus was when his life was on the line. Remember what he said, “I swear I don’t even know the man!”

“**Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord**” Paul says. This verse came to life for me last Saturday as I was manning our booth at Oktoberfest. We had a number of free things to pass out to all those walking by who might stop for a moment. We had Bibles and devotion books, we had invites to come worship and to Fall Festival, and we had balloons that said Mount Olive on them. The balloons were of course the big hit with any children passing by. We could have handed out thousands. But then the moment of crisis came early in the afternoon when we ran out of balloons. This thought occurred to me, “Now what are we going to hand out, all we have left are these Bibles.” Before, with a full stock of balloons, I felt like the most popular man on earth. Kids were running to me, they’d smile and go away happy. On the other hand, with a full stack of Bibles, I felt like a traveling phonebook salesman.

Do you see how silly that is? What is more valuable, a 5-cent rubber balloon that could blow away in 5 seconds on a windy September day or the book that contains the testimony about Jesus, the words of everlasting life, the words that make you wise for salvation. It doesn’t make any sense, but that fear naturally fills our hearts. **We’re ashamed to claim what we believe, the gospel!** And that is without having the pressure of being put to death for what we believe. We are just that afraid of rejection!

When we’re ashamed **to claim it**, then were afraid to **proclaim it**. What we end up doing is putting our star player, the eternal gospel, on the bench while we muddle along like the 3rd string quarterback. That’s when the next temptation becomes so much more tempting! “I know how I won’t be ashamed of this message. I’ll change it. I’ll make it make more a little more sense. I’ll make it a little less harsh about what we can and can’t do. Let’s forget some of that boring Old Testament stuff, and just keep it relevant to me. Cross a few things out here, rework this a little bit and then this gospel can be something I can be proud of.”

So how do we overcome the shame that gives us lock-jaw? How do we follow Paul’s encouragement to not be ashamed about our Lord? We open up this gospel and remember again what God has done for us in it. “**He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus.**” God made you his own even before the world began, and then he put into motion a plan to save you from your sin by sending his Son.

Jesus was born to take on sin, death, and the devil, in a one-on-three match on the battlefield of this earth. He sent sin packing because he never fell into it. He fought even to death on the cross. He conquered death because on the third day, when everyone thought the match was over, he got up out of that grave. He got up and broke death’s prison forever, delivering the blow that crushed the devil’s head.

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“Our Savior, Christ Jesus, destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” He died and rose just as God had promised!

This is your gospel and my gospel. This message was written down by people who saw it with their own eyes, by people who walked with Jesus, who felt the nails holes in his risen hands. This message was written down as the Holy Spirit breathed words into men like Paul, men who died holding onto this gospel. This is the world’s largest, 3,000 carat diamond of our faith. Put this diamond ring on a woman’s finger and see if she’ ashamed to claim it’s hers. See if she’s not prouder than proud to show it off!

You are the bride of Christ, and he deposited this gospel diamond in your hand. Through it, he called you to be his own forever. He went to hell and back to rescue you. He gave you the Holy Spirit to help you guard what he entrusted to you. There is the most glorious message ever. What could we possibly be ashamed of. Through this gospel, Jesus gives us the strength to proudly claim with Paul, **“This is my gospel!”** Read with this with me. **“I am not ashamed, because I know him whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.” (2 Tim 1:12)** He entrusted this diamond to us and we entrust everything that we are to him. All our eggs are in his basket for the last day, and we know they’ll be safe.

In the meantime, while we wait, **we join in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.** He does not give us a spirit of timidity but of power, love, and self-discipline. That power makes us able to say, *“I am not ashamed to proudly claim what I know has saved me.”* When I know what it’s done for me, then *I’m not ashamed to boldly proclaim it,* just as I received it. This gospel love story between Christ and his bride is so beautiful, it doesn’t need any rewrites. So Paul encourages, **“Keep the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”** Guard that gospel diamond like your life depends on it, because it does. But don’t be afraid to show it off in all its beauty. This is my gospel: I am not ashamed to proudly claim and boldly proclaim it. Amen.

I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Amen.