

Being Unashamed of Christ (Part II)

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[0:00] 2 Timothy chapter 1, we're going to cover a lot of ground tonight, almost two verses.

! And I listed it as being bold in Christ, but really the thrust of the lesson, and probably a more accurate title, is not being ashamed of Christ.

I like being bold, but we can be bold by not being ashamed. It's very easy for us sitting in the middle part of America on the buckle of the Bible belt to say that we would never be ashamed of Christ. But what if our situation changed? Right now, in Iran, an American pastor celebrated, and I've got that in quotations, his second year in prison yesterday.

His charge was embarrassing Mohammed by engaging in Christian missionary work. Before we awake in the morning, someone in the world who is a follower of Christ will be executed because they refuse to utter the words, I deny Christ.

[1:42] I've actually been with families who have lost loved ones in that very way when I work with VOM. And then we have to look inward and say, would I be that strong?

Or would I cave in to the pressure to deny and get a ticket home to my loved ones? And I don't think any one of us can answer that question until we've been in that situation.

I really don't. Well, in this section of 2 Timothy, we will deal with the topic of not being ashamed of Christ.

And Paul has already laid the foundation of our study. Now he wants to build on what has come before. And you may recall that we spoke last time about the authority that we have in Christ to make, and Paul had that authority in Christ to make certain demands of those he was instructing. We talked about having an unselfish concern for the welfare of others. We talked about our service to Christ and being motivated by appreciation for what he has done, motivated by the fact that the Lord ever lives to make intercession for us and he loves us.

[3:04] And lastly, the Lord is very much aware of our faith in him. In fact, he's the one that gave us that faith, Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. Now, having done all of that and much more for us, we should never be ashamed of the Lord.

But let's be honest, there may be times when we actually pull back. Maybe some guys don't want to be seen walking into work carrying a Bible. And they kind of put it away.

People can deny Christ in very subtle ways. We don't have to be Peter who denied him thrice and the last time to a slave girl, a little bitty girl, cursing her out.

Cursing her out. The great Peter. Strong. Fisherman. Now, we cannot be certain as to why Paul sent this message to Timothy.

I mean, he's telling Timothy, and we've seen Timothy doing some great things. He has sent this message to Timothy. And there is a possibility, and we can't be dogmatic about it, that perhaps Timothy had become somewhat timid.

[4:33] Maybe Timothy had become apathetic in fulfilling his ministerial duties. We're not dogmatic about that. We do know that Timothy had to deal constantly with false teachers.

They were plaguing the church, and there could be no doubt that they took a toll on Timothy. A close reading of this book reveals that Paul only had one commendation for Timothy, and we saw that in verse 5 where he said, I'm mindful of your sincere faith.

Well, now there's not going to be any more commendations. The remainder of the book, Paul fills up with admonitions. Paul never accuses Timothy of sin, never uses the word backsliding, but neither will he, for the remainder of the book, lavish praise on his young protege.

So we're just not sure, but something appears to have been going on in Timothy's life, and I think the conservative theologians say it's probably the constant attacks of false teachers.

Now, when it comes to Jesus, there is no middle ground. We either are serving him or we're not serving him. We are either confessing him or we're not confessing him.

[6:04] If you don't want to deny him but are concerned about confessing him, you cannot find a third area to go and hang out for a little while.

Well, I'm not going to be over here to... I'm not going to deny him, but I'm not going to confess. I'll just hang out here for a while. There's not a third area. We might like to think there is, but there's not.

The words of our Lord are quite instructive here in Matthew chapter 10, verse 32 and 33. Therefore, whoever confesses me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven. Pretty strong. Very strong.

Another great verse on this topic is found in Mark's gospel. For whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation... Does that apply to our generation?

[7:07] The Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Mark's gospel, 838.

People who refuse to proclaim Christ, when the opportunity opens up to them, give evidence of backsliding or even not belonging to Christ.

He plants that desire in his children. One need only read Fox's book of martyrs to see the cost of being a true follower of Christ over the generations.

VOM has now published an updated version of that starting back in like 33 A.D. But coming forward through the 1980s, 90s into our century and adding some of those stories.

The question is why a true Christian would, or one claiming to belong to Christ, be ashamed of the Lord. And there can be several answers to that question. But generally speaking, it is evidence that the person is not willing to pay the price demanded by the Lord for being his disciples.

[8:22] And there are some demands. Now, Paul here speaks to Timothy, and through him, he's talking to every believer who ever lived. And that's us.

It's down to our generation. He is speaking to us tonight. Paul is. How are we to guard against ever being ashamed of Christ?

What are the keys here? What are the principles? Paul is going to set forth eight standards by which we are to live and conduct ourselves.

And the first one we are going to get in, and John and I were talking beforehand. MacArthur stole every one of these eight from me. Never gave me credit.

He does that a lot. First principle, so that we don't want to ever deny Christ or be ashamed of him, is this. Kindle afresh.

[9:18] Kindle afresh. Two words. Kindle afresh. 2 Timothy 1.16.

And for this reason, I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

To kindle afresh is to renew oneself. That's probably in our century a better phrase. Renew oneself. To go back and examine your conduct in light of the revealed word of God. It is very possible that Timothy's zeal and devotion had cooled.

Paul has a very simple solution. And if you ever find yourself in that predicament, here's the solution. His advice to Timothy is to renew or rekindle his commitment that he made to the Lord Jesus at the start.

[10:23] Just renew that. Rekindle that. Timothy had committed himself to a life of proclamation. He was a preacher. To be a defender of the faith.

And every believer is to do that, right? We're to follow strong doctrine and refute those who reject it. And to shepherd the flock that God gave him.

Paul wanted Timothy to kindle afresh which in the Greek language says keep the fires burning. I really like the Greek language.

I knew Greek. I hope when we get to heaven we learn it instantly. You know, I could just pick up a Greek New Testament and start reading it. If we have to study it, it will take a few millennia for me to keep the fires burning.

Keep the home fires burning. By doing that, Timothy would be yielding to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit working in and through him.

[11:28] Now, there is a lesson for us here. And I encourage you. Start every day by rekindling the fire that was in each of you when you started with Christ.

Sometimes I will lay there, even if it's just 30 seconds, and I'll be talking to the Lord. I haven't got up yet and just saying, you know, make this your day.

And you've privileged me to live in it. And, you know, guard my eyes and guard my speech and, you know, go through a process here. If the fire was never present, then examine yourself.

Go back to the beginning to make sure you're in the body of Christ. Paul tells us that in 2 Corinthians chapter 11. You know, examine yourself. Prove yourself. Make sure you're in the body of Christ if you pass the test.

Paul speaks here about the gift that is in every believer. That word gift comes from the Greek language and is directly related to the word grace. Well, what is grace?

[12:38] But the ultimate gift of God to us. Unmerited, undeserved, unearned. We all know that salvation was a grace gift from God.

We receive this gift apart from merit, apart from qualification, even apart from seeking. There are none who seek God, Paul says in Romans chapter 3.

I said that to a former member here, and he said, well, that verse is wrong. I sought him. I said, he sought you before you sought him. He sought you. We get a little uncertain about Paul's laying on of his hands.

We're not exactly sure what that is. The theologians have discussed and debated. Let's remember something, though. When Paul wrote this, he's not with Timothy.

He doesn't lay his hands on anybody. He's in a Roman dungeon. You know, he's in a Roman dungeon. Paul may have laid hands on Timothy when he gave him the charge to preach the word.

[13:45] But the message here that we need to focus on is, in the Greek language, continually rekindle the zeal you had at the beginning.

And Paul says, if you do that, you will not be ashamed of Christ. And then Paul, in the next verse, verse 7, says, depend on your resources.

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Another way to guard against being ashamed of Christ is to remember the divine resources we have been provided by God.

In fact, if we enter into a spiritual endeavor and have a spirit of timidity, we can be sure that spirit is not from God.

God never makes us timid. That's another spirit operating. It may come from the world. It may come from the devil. Most likely, it comes from our fallen nature.

[14:58] And we do live in unredeemed flesh. We're still in the battle. Paul wrote about that in chapter 7 of Romans. I do those things I don't want to do. I leave undone those things I want to do.

Know what I should do? What a wretched man am I. Who will deliver me from all this bondage of sin and death? I love the Holy Spirit's answer in Romans 8.1.

Paul, I know you can't do it. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. A legal declaration unearned by us.

No condemnation. Well, that's powerful. So what resources do we have from the Lord? Well, he tells us in that very verse, we have been given power, love, and discipline.

Those are spiritual gifts that the Lord gives his children, his sons. And the first there is power from the Greek word dunamis.

[16:02] Now, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that. We actually get English words, two English words from this Greek word.

And we're familiar with one, right? Dynamite. It's the word dynamite. But we also get the word dynamic from dunamis.

The connotation is that this is power under control. Well, who controls it? The Holy Spirit controls it. The indwelling Holy Spirit.

He indwells every believer. Never leaves you. Never forsakes you. Because of that, we can use it effectively and productively.

Dunamis. The power. Here's an astonishing thing. We're talking about the power of God working in us.

[17:04] If the Lord's going to depend on my power, wow, we're not very much accomplished. First, this is the power of God working in and through his beloved children.

And let's face it. How much power does God have? You know, it knows no bounds. Elsewhere, Paul prayed for believers not to receive God's power, but to realize that they already possess it. Because there were people running around. And there are people running around today. Let's be honest. You know, if I could just get God's power. Well, are you born from above? Born again? Yeah. Well, then you've got it.

It came down like the dove came down when Jesus was being baptized. Now, as a caution, let me say that God never provides his power for us to engage in silly things.

The Holy Spirit never engages in foolish things, in silly things. And I'll tell you, I'm not a fan of watching some of these outlandish services on the Internet, like on YouTube.

[18:20] But they can be very instructive. And I won't even mention some of them. I mean, they're blasphemous. But the Holy Spirit doesn't engage in silly things.

I think it was the last verse in 1 Corinthians 14 where he said, do everything in an orderly manner. You'll know it's of me if you do things in an orderly manner.

I've seen a lot of disorder on some of these services that have been videotaped. We don't engage in silly things.

We don't have this power to get rich or buy Rolls Royces, name universities after ourselves. We don't have it to make trees walk and birds talk. The extreme charismatics, and I've got a lot of charismatic friends, and I know about saved ones.

But the extreme try those things, and they're wrong because those things don't bring glory to God. You know, if you don't know whether you should be doing something or not, ask yourself, is this going to bring glory to God?

[19:23] And if it is, you're on safe ground. Now, we will experience this power when we trust Him fully and desire to serve Him without reservation.

And you always have to be careful. You don't say, God, I'm ready to serve you without reservation. Well, I'm glad to hear that. You're going to Nigeria, you know. And, well, God, what about Niagara Falls, you know.

That sounds a little more appetizing. I've been to Nigeria. The other is love. Love given us by God is the next resource.

And obviously, when God gives love to His children, it's always agape. It's always the highest form of love.

Three loves in the Bible or in the Greek world. You've got agape, phileo, and eros. Eros isn't in the Bible. Sensual, sexual.

[20:24] Phileo is Philadelphia, city of brotherly love. I told you before, I've been there, it's not. But phileo is saying, I like you a whole bunch.

You're my buddy. Agape is totally different. That's the love that says, I will go to the cross for people who hate me and do not merit that act.

But I'm going to die in their place. That's agape. It's sacrificial. It is selfless. It is never self-serving. This type of love does not put self first.

We do not seek our own welfare. We do not seek our own comfort or success. By employing this type of love, we place God first and center on pleasing Him.

And again, God is the provider of this. Let me give you a challenge. For the rest of your life, when you go to bed every night, say silently to yourself, was God well pleased with me today?

[21:39] Just ask that question. Ask Him. Lord, were you well pleased with me today? If the answer is no, or I'm not sure, slip out of bed, go somewhere in your house to be alone, and enter into a session of prayer and confession.

Say, Lord, bring it to my memory if I don't remember. If it doesn't come, just say, Lord, whatever it is, I confess it. I depend on 1 John 1.9. You're faithful and just to forgive when I confess and to cleanse me of all unrighteousness.

Even the sins I've committed, you cleanse me of those. When God releases you, go to bed and get a good night's rest. Get a good night's sleep. The third power Paul speaks of here is discipline.

This is a matter of control. By exercising discipline, we're able to have self-control. And when we're there, we're approaching the mind of Christ.

We're approaching the fruits of the Spirit. You ever read all those? I mean, love, joy, peace, peace. That's Jesus. You realize that's Jesus. I mean, you ever read 1 Corinthians 13 on love?

[22:50] That's Jesus. And we're to be conformed in His image. But on nine of those, that was Jesus. Gentleness. Long-suffering. Patience.

Goodness. Faithfulness. So, we don't experience pride or bitterness or hopelessness when we're under discipline, when we've disciplined ourselves.

A disciplined life is an ordered life. This is the catalyst for living the sanctified life and being conformed to the image of Christ.

Paul wrote about that in the eighth chapter of Romans. We are being, that's the sanctification process. Being more like Jesus. Progressively more like Jesus. Godly discipline allows us to put priorities in their proper perspective.

By doing this, we are truly representing Christ as His ambassadors. Now, I've said before, you know what an ambassador is.

[23:53] An ambassador is someone who represents the sovereign and goes to a foreign land to represent the sovereign.

And the Bible says every believer is an ambassador for Christ. Well, what foreign land are we in? Planet Earth. Our citizenship's in the heavenlies. We're here because God wants us here right now working to build the kingdom.

But we are ambassadors. Now, interestingly, historically, when war breaks out, the ambassador is allowed free passage.

He is withdrawn. And nations have pretty much always respected that. You allow the ambassador to return home. I think that's great evidence that the church is not going to go through the tribulation.

Disagreement on that? Do you have room to be wrong? I mean, do you have room to disagree with me? But the ambassador is taken out before the war starts and taken home.

[25:05] And we're all ambassadors for Christ. By doing this, we are truly representing Christ as ambassadors and working to build the kingdom of God. When we have godly power, love, and discipline, results will follow.

This was Paul's meeting when he wrote this to the Ephesian church, chapter 3, verses 14 to 21. For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, there's that word, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power, there's that word, that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Great passage of Scripture. Another one, and this is a hard one. Accept your suffering. The first part of verse 8.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me, that's Paul, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel.

[26:52] Now you all remember, when you see the word therefore, you've got to figure out what it's there for, right? The previous verse said he's given us power, love, and discipline. Because he's done that, therefore, you don't need to be ashamed of the gospel of our Lord or me, his prisoner.

And in fact, you can even endure suffering for the gospel. You've got power, love, and discipline. You can endure suffering. Now let me say this.

Americans don't care much for the idea of suffering or persecution. And that's a form of suffering. We don't like that thought, even when it comes to the service of the Lord.

When I consider suffering, one of the first things I think of is retribution. How am I going to get back at this guy? I mean, that's just natural.

But godly suffering, when it is right, is a beautiful thing. And being on the VOM board, I've been with people who have suffered greatly for the Lord.

[27:57] They wear it as a badge of honor. However, we can guard against being ashamed of Christ by accepting the consequences of being faithful.

And if faithfulness brings suffering, then God is sovereign. He's permitted that to happen. There is no doubt in this particular passage that Paul is preparing Timothy for times of misunderstanding,

animosity, and rejection.

And may I suggest, those storms are coming rapidly to our shores and, in fact, are already here. They are already here.

We probably haven't experienced a lot of it because we're on the buckle of the Bible belt, you know, where we're at. But it's happening, and with great rapidity.

I was listening to Dr. Sproul. My son got to be in his church a few weeks ago. I was listening to Dr. Sproul, and on the radio, he asked a question. He said, why aren't more Americans being arrested for their faith?

[29:05] I thought, well, I might change the channel. Christians are arrested daily throughout the world, but that doesn't happen in America.

And I do think that one reason is that we have enjoyed great freedom of worship, tracing back to our founding fathers. But I think there is a more sinister reason, and it may be that the American church has become so grafted in with the surrounding culture.

We're not a threat to the surrounding culture. Guys, we're supposed to be the sand in the oyster. We're the irritant. We're salt, and salt can actually sting a little bit.

It depends on where you apply it. You know, and we seem to be able to get along with the world much better than does the church in China, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, and so forth.

And I've been in all those places and many, many more. Paul's letter was written around 66 A.D. Being a Christian brought criticism, but it also brought persecution, imprisonment, and even death.

[30:18] It just depended on which Roman leader you were under. Paul even refers to himself here with the term his prisoner. And he's not talking about Caesar.

He's talking about Christ. I am his prisoner. Paul would tell us not to be afraid of the authorities. Fear only God.

What's the worst thing authority can do to you? Kill you. Kill you. What happens then? Kill you.

Instant. I was with Tom White, and we were going into a hard part of Indonesia, and he said, you know, if we lose our lives and we believe that book, what does it matter?

It's true. I felt it made me feel better. But Paul would tell us, don't be afraid of the authorities. Fear only God.

Fear him who can destroy both soul and body, not just the body. In Galatians, Paul even speaks of the marks on his body, which were a result of having faithfully served the Lord Jesus Christ.

[31:21] He bore the marks. Paul extends an invitation for Timothy to join him in suffering for the gospel of Christ. Now, we need to make some distinctions here when we speak about suffering.

First, we have to acknowledge men can suffer because they're obnoxious. Okay? I knew a guy. I'm not going to call him a name because some of you probably know him. He wanted to suffer for Jesus so bad that he was obnoxious about it. I'm not so sure the guy wasn't hoping he'd get martyred.

It was pretty amazing. And he was always bitter that Tom White had spent 18 months in prison in Cuba. I went and saw that prison, by the way, from the outside.

But he always held that against Tom because Tom got to go to prison. Well, it wasn't pleasant. I've talked to Tom about it when he was alive. But you can be obnoxious and pay a price for that, right?

[32:31] That's deserved. That's deserved and not in focus here. We may also suffer because of our sins. People dying of AIDS know that or should know it.

They should know that. You could suffer because of sin. That's not what's in view here. But if we're going to love the Christian life as God has ordered us, then suffering will follow.

Now, we're going to get to this passage someday, but listen to these words. 2 Timothy 3.12 says, Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

It's an emphatic statement. I've said this before, but we have new guys. I told someone one time, I said, You know, I just haven't been persecuted. And he said, Be more godly, it'll come.

Because it says if you desire to live godly in Christ Jesus, you will be persecuted. Now, you corporate guys, if you don't think that will happen, start witnessing tomorrow at work and see what happens to you.

[33:39] You'll pay a price and a big one. The more godly we behave, I don't recommend that. We need your time. The more godly we behave outwardly, the greater the chances of persecution coming our way.

But again, this suffering for the gospel, that suffering for the gospel, and not for deserved suffering.

Not for deserved suffering. If you live a godly life, there will be a price to pay. You don't even know the full price until you get to heaven. We don't know. Tom White found out 25 years after he was in prison that guards were ordered to give him a very severe beating.

And he never got it. And there was a guy in prison with him. And when Tom got out, that guy remained and stayed many more years and got out. And he died. And Tom went to his funeral in Florida.

And his widow said, I can now tell the story, Tom. He took that beating for you. Tom didn't know that. Really powerful.

[35 : 07] Suffering for Christ is actually a very great privilege. We're to count it all joy. And it's temporary.

It's temporary. Paul was suffering when he wrote this. But it was temporary. He was soon going to have his head cut off and be with the Lord. For him to die was gain.

To die was gain. But there again, we don't go to one of these hard areas like the Sudan and put a bullseye on our chest and say, shoot me first. I want to get all kinds of rewards in heaven.

You know? I mean, it's like the guy that told his, said that if his kids were playing on railroad tracks, the train would fly over them.

And I thought, boy, if you put those kids on railroad tracks, I'm going to put you in jail. You know? I mean, crazy. Suffering for Christ, if you'll review the Word of God, was a great privilege.

[36 : 10] It was a blessing. It was not an ordeal. And again, we appeal to Paul in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 4 to 7. In everything, commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the Word of truth, in the power of God by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left.

Boy, Paul, he nailed it. He nailed it. In our Christian walk, we need to get to the point where we can say with the believers of the first century what Dr. Luke told us in Acts 5, 41.

So they went on their way from the presence of the Jerusalem council. That was a council run by James.

They were, you know, reviewing doctrine and everything. Well, this was after they'd been arrested.

By the way, Peter and John got arrested about four hours into Christianity.

And he said they went away from the council, that's a Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for his name.

[37 : 49] They didn't know what to do with them. They didn't know what to do with them. So they said they hadn't done anything wrong, so let's just beat them and let them go. Well, wait a minute. What in the world is that?

What in the world is that? They left with that power, that power that we talked about and rejoiced at it, rejoiced at it.

I always remember the story of Thomas Aquinas, a Roman Catholic guy, but has left a lot for the church, as was Augustine, also Roman Catholic, left tremendous things for the church.

Aquinas was in Rome visiting, and the Pope heard about it, sent an emissary to bring him to the Vatican, which he did, and they visited a while, and he took Aquinas on a tour of the Vatican, including the parts that are still there but we can't see, primarily the treasury, vast treasury.

And a lot of the treasury, I'm told, is the plundered treasury from the Roman Empire when they would go conquer nations in the known world and bring back their national treasury.

[39 : 08] And it's stored in there, billions of dollars worth of gold, silver, diamonds, precious stones, artifacts. So the Pope takes Aquinas himself on this private tour, and they go into this vast chamber with all this gold and glitter, and the Pope, rather pridefully puffed up, says, Well, Thomas, never again does the church have to say, as did Peter and John, silver and gold have we none.

So just look at this. We're wealthy beyond all compare. And Thomas spoke up, and he referred to the Pope as a good Catholic word.

He said, Holiness, although he's not. He said, Holiness, you're absolutely right. I see before me the wealth of the world. And never again does the church have to say, as did Peter and John, silver and gold have we none.

And then he said, But holiness, neither can the church say, as did Peter and John, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise and walk.

And Aquinas was really on to something. And it's come down even to our day. The church had all the trappings and all the wealth, but they'd lost the power. They'd lost the power.
[40 : 38] One of those ingredients we talked about, the dudamus. And they'd become amalgamated with the world, one of the world's riches. And they had lost that power.