

Week Seven: 2 Timothy 1:1-18

“Never Be Ashamed!”

2Ti 1:1-18 (ESV) Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, 7 for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

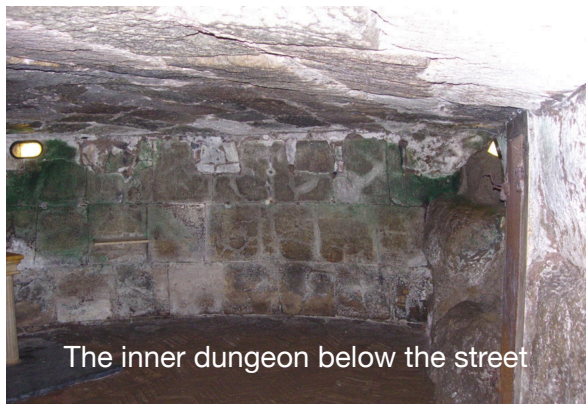
8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 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, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— 18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

Paul is in prison in Rome for the second time. But this time is much different. This is not house arrest, which allowed some comforts even though always under guard. This time Paul is in the Mamertine prison. Notice the pictures. If we called this a “hell-hole” it would be an understatement.



The inner dungeon below the street



The only access to the street above

I will let Tom Wright, one of the world's leading historical scholars, describe it from his biography of Paul:

In Paul's world, unlike ours, prison was not a "sentence" in itself. It was where magistrates put people while they decided what to do with them. No provision was made for the prisoners' welfare. They had to rely on friends or family to bring them food and other necessities. Sanitation would be minimal; rodents and other vermin would be normal. The company would not be one's first choice of friends. A few days in such a hole might well make one hope for almost any punishment, a heavy fine, or banishment at least, if only one could get out of the horrid place.¹

So imagine you are relying on friends and supporters to bring food and clothing. The only way into this prison was to be lowered down through the hole if they were going to visit you and offer comfort. This was “guilt by association” as far as the guards were concerned. And it was a guard who gave you access, maybe held the rope so you could climb down. What would his mood be? You can see the problem. His state of mind would determine how you get back out! (Or when!) This is probably why many true friends would bring the sack of food and simply have it passed down, hoping the guard would not take too much of “his rightful share.” This makes Paul’s love and praise for Onesiphorus that much more poignant. Think of it. This faithful friend traveled from Ephesus and ...*when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me. (1:17)* When he found out he was in The Mamertine ...*he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains... (1:16)*. Onesiphorus was not afraid of guilt by association. He did not shy away from the risks and *he often refreshed me*. This is love of the highest sort.

The last time Paul wrote Timothy he was free, traveling and preaching after his house arrest in Rome. It may have been in that time period from 62-64 when he actually got to Spain, no one knows for certain. After the fire in Rome in 64 Nero began a campaign of persecution against the Christian Church. He blamed the Christians for the fire. He needed a convenient scapegoat, because the populous was looking for someone to blame. Nero did not want them looking too closely at him. So somewhere around 64-65 Paul is arrested and he writes Timothy this final letter.

Paul was executed in 66-67. Paul knew he was going to die because this was the fate of all the Christians around him who were being captured, including Peter. This was not only the end for these two great Apostles, this was the end on a larger scale. The Roman-Jewish war began in 66. Commander Vespasian led 50,000 Roman troops to Rome and after a four-year siege completely sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple in 70 AD. Nero did not get to celebrate this great Roman victory. He died in 68.

Paul's greatest concern is that the Christian faith be passed on and preserved. He is counting on Timothy to endure and persevere in his faith and ministry. Persevere in witnessing, or testifying, about Jesus the Christ, the true Anointed King. Persevere in teaching sound doctrine grounded in the Scriptures. Persevere in your duty, even in the face of suffering and opposition. Paul certainly has questions in the back of his mind, *“Will the Church last? Will men prove faithful in light of the suffering that has come upon us? Will Jesus return and establish the Kingdom promised all the way through the Torah and proclaimed by the prophets?”* He knows there are some, like Onesiphorus, willing to risk it all and to endure in faith, staying loyal to the message he preaches. But so many have deserted! He names two of them here: Phygelus and Hermogenes. And he reminds Timothy there were more than these two: *all who are in Asia turned away*

from me. (1:15) He doesn't say why. He speaks no ill because there is no bitterness in him. He can let it go. He stays grateful in all things, even the pain and the suffering.

After his greeting the first thing Paul says is *I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.* (1:3) If we carefully read these words we get the sense of the profound love Paul has for this man who he remembers as *my true son in the faith*. He remembers the tears they shed upon parting, he remembers Timothy's mother and grandmother and their faith. He remembers his love for them all. As he prays for Timothy night and day in the darkness of this dungeon Paul can meditate on these things and nourish his heart. But there is an urgency as well. Even though he is confident of Timothy's faith, he wants Timothy to remember. *I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God* (1:6) This is a vivid metaphor if we allow ourselves to dwell on it. A fire left to itself will die. An ember will grow cold. What is the gift and the real source of the fire? That *fire* is Paul's word for *zeal*, a zeal, or zest, for life. The GNB doesn't even use the metaphor, it simply interprets it for us and says *Keep alive the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you*. Paul is talking about the life of God living within him, the Holy Spirit, that Jesus told His disciples *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses ...to the uttermost parts of the earth.* (Acts 1:8) When the disciples began to see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on people around them, including Gentiles, they called it *receiving the GIFT of the Holy Spirit.* (Acts 10:45) The gift is the person and the message. The Spirit of Jesus lives in our hearts and minds and the message we carry is our *witness to the ends of the earth*. Fan the flames, don't pour water on the fire. *Do not quench the Spirit!* (1 Thess 5:19) And if we feel timid, or afraid, or ashamed of this message and this Savior who loves us? That is our spirit, not God's. Because *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power* (the strength to endure) *and love* (for the people who need to hear) *and self-control* (the discipline it takes to do the job). The Holy Spirit gives us all of this, and yet Paul knows from his experience, and from what others have done, we can turn away and the life in us dies, the fire goes cold.

Preaching the Gospel in Rome was a crime in 64 AD, and being in prison is an embarrassment. Ask the average man on the street why a man is in prison and he will say "because he is a criminal. He broke the law." Therefore, after reminding Timothy of the legacy of faith that goes all the way back to the forefathers of the Old Testament, Paul says do not be ashamed of me and do not be ashamed of the Gospel message, which is why I am suffering in chains. Fear and shame are two emotions that can cause a man to cut and run, to shrink from his duty. The power to stand and fight the opposition, or endure under it, comes from the Holy Spirit inside us. But that power has an outside source. It is the message we preach. Paul told the Romans: *I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (1:16). We must be gripped by this Gospel message so that we have the power to *share in the suffering for the Gospel by the power of God.* (1:8) None of this is happenstance. Paul says, *I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do.* (1:11-12) Paul is devoted to a Lord who saved us from sin and judgment, *not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...*(1:9).

Those central verses, from 1:8 to 1:12, are a powerful summary of Paul's life of suffering. Or we could say it is the life that Christ lives in him. What he says is both painful and glorious, both scary and hopeful. Paul is exhorting Timothy using what in Greek literature is called a *chiastic structure* (an "X" structure). In the first line he gives a command *Do not be ashamed...share in the suffering...*(v.8) The last line says *which is*

why I suffer. But I am not ashamed...(v.12). That is classical Greek chiasm! *Ashamed — suffer...suffer — ashamed*. The focal point lies in between, the center of the “X”. What is that point? It is the focus of Paul’s life, the power of God and the Gospel, of Jesus and His glorious purpose. Paul’s words to Timothy are what God is telling us today. “Do NOT be ashamed of the testimony, or of being in prison, but join and volunteer for suffering because that is what I have called you to do, to sacrifice for Me, and if I light that fire in you and you fan that flame you can say ‘I am suffering but I am not ashamed!’ because you will KNOW that I am going to always be with you—until I take you into the Age to Come.” Because of the Gospel we are both humble and confident. Humble because we have a salvation we have never deserved or earned. Confident because we have a Victor who has not only defeated but abolished death! Then He brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...(1:10) Jesus became one of us, fully human, so that *through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2:14-15)* The Devil held men in bondage by the fear of death. But the resurrection of Jesus is a pledge that we will rise from the dead to die no more. Death is no longer our master, but a powerless servant of God which carries us to the gates of heaven. You can hear the joyful praise in Paul’s voice when he wrote to the Corinthian Church: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Cor 15:55) Paul is recalling Isa 25:8, *He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth...* C.H. Mackintosh said this:

What are death, the grave, and decomposition in the presence of such power as this? Millions that have been mouldering in the dust for thousands of years shall spring up in a moment into life, immortality and eternal glory, at the voice of that blessed One.²

This is not arrogance, but confidence. Full trust in One greater than we are. We boast about Him, not ourselves!

The miracle of the resurrection, our resurrection in the future, is beyond our comprehension, even our best imaginings. Paul knows this! No matter how much he suffers, no matter he is chained in a dungeon filled with vermin. “I may be filthy and I stink” *But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. (1:12)* I KNOW Him, I am CONVINCED, I am COMMITTED. *Entrusted* means he has placed his future in the hands of another, like someone turning his estate over to a trusted executor. But what is Paul *banking on*, or putting into trust? Certainly not money: gold or silver. I think (and this is purely my opinion, you will not find this in the Westminster Confession or anywhere else), I think he is looking and thinking about the resurrection body that he knows is his. It already IS. It is his future body, made especially for him, with all of the scars and the marks from the beatings and the stoning which will be marks of honor and service, like Medals of Honor for the Lord he served. On *That Day* the stink of this dungeon will not make a difference. It will only ADD to his glory! ***For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. (2 Cor 4:17-18)*** C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Weight Of Glory* thinking of this passage in 2 Corinthians. In it he says this:

...the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship. ...it is with the awe and the circumspection

*proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit —[who will one day face] immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.*³

Every person ever born will live forever. It will be in an age without end. A person will live on either in the Glorious Kingdom *with* Christ, or in the loneliness of separation *away from* Christ in the darkness of our own making. This is why, as sinful people, when we come to God and seek Him we find we are loved by Someone far more than we can imagine. He lights a fire of desire within us. A desire to please Him, “...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in, as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.”⁴

SO it is!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forever and ever! Oh God, One true God! This is a song we will never weary of singing as we see You in the throne room of glory. Our praise for You will never end, and we will never grow tired or weary or bored. Your beauty will be overwhelming! May this be our vision, even in the darkness of our days, even as we mourn over our present sins. ‘Be Thou my vision...’ Amen.

Resources: Tom Wright’s *New Testament For Everyone. The Pastoral Epistles*. Westminster John Knox Press 2011

Kruger, Michael, Ed. *A Biblical Theological Introduction to the N.T.*

Barclay, William, Contrib. *2 Timothy* Crossway Press. Wheaton. 2016

¹ Wright, Tom. *Paul: A Biography* SPCK Press. London. 2018 p.182

² MacDonald, William. *Believers Bible Commentary*. Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1995. [Part of e-Sword X Bible Study software]

³ Lewis, C.S. *The Weight Of Glory*. MacMillan Publishers. 1980 [Quotes from GoodReads online: <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1629232-the-weight-of-glory>]

⁴ Ibid.