

2 Timothy 1:8-14

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Paul points to the purpose God gave him, to preach the gospel and serve as an ambassador for God, reconciling sinful men to Him through faith in Jesus. It is a special purpose, one which Timothy was also given, and Paul does not want Timothy to abandon that calling through fear of rejection by the world. Paul has suffered for Christ without shame, for he fully believes Jesus will reward him on the Day of Judgment.

So then, to perpetuate the spiritual inheritance that Timothy gained from his mother and his spiritual father, Paul admonishes Timothy to live his faith courageously. Choosing the *power, love and discipline* that God has given us in order to persist in standing strong in living out our faith in obedience to Christ. Given all this, Paul now says *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.*

It would be natural to distance one's self from being connected with someone imprisoned, and on death row to be killed for their testimony. By associating himself with Paul, it seems likely Timothy, who is following in Paul's shoes, would be nominating himself to be killed next. You might expect Paul, the spiritual father, to tell his "beloved son" Timothy to lay low, and stay safe.

Paul says the exact opposite. He tells Timothy to *not be ashamed* of Paul for being a *prisoner* for the name of Christ. If he were to be *ashamed*, Timothy would be being *ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*. Jesus learned obedience, even to death on a cross. As a result He was given the greatest of rewards (Philippians 2:5-10). Paul is more interested in Timothy gaining all he can from life than he is in Timothy being physically comfortable.

Paul is about to die for his *testimony*, which is *the testimony of our Lord*. He wants Timothy to emulate his courage, and be willing to die as well, if that is where his courageous faith leads. Paul's perspective is Christ-focused. It is the Lord Jesus *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling*. Jesus *saved us* from the penalty of sin, and *called us to a holy calling* to live as His children, as heirs to the kingdom of God. It is worth noting that the phrase *has saved us* is past tense, and unconditional. The scripture makes clear that all will be saved (be born again as God's children) who have enough faith to look upon Jesus on the cross, hoping to be delivered from sin and death (John 3:14-15). That is a gift given unconditionally. Timothy has this, along with Paul.

But Timothy also has a *holy calling*. And Timothy can fulfill that calling or not. It depends on Timothy's choices. As Paul will make clear in chapter 2, if we choose to walk a path that fulfills our calling, we gain great rewards. But if we do not, we lose the rewards. Paul considers the rewards from living faithfully to be worth his very life. It is why he is a *prisoner*. Paul admonishes Timothy to choose the same perspective. Rather than avoid a path that could lead to being in prison, on death row for the gospel, Paul desires Timothy to *join with him in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.*

The New Testament is clear that *suffering for the gospel* should be the norm, if we live our faith so as to please God, and gain the great rewards He promises for faithful stewardship of the gifts He endowed us with. Later Paul will state that, “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). One universal aspect of *suffering for the gospel* is rejection from the world. Darkness hates the light (John 3:19). Hebrews 12:1-2 notes that one of the key things Jesus did that we should emulate is to live as “despising the shame” (rejection) heaped upon us from the world. The world uses rejection to manipulate us, to demand we conform to it. But scripture exhorts us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). That means choosing to adopt a perspective that is true. This is what this letter focuses on.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he mentions the great reward that comes from *suffering for the gospel*. In Romans 8, Paul says:

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”
(Romans 8:16-17)

Being a child of God is something given as an unconditional gift. We are “heirs of God” regardless of our actions, because we are children of God through no merit or efforts of our own; we are redeemed only through appropriating the merit and effort of Christ by faith. But if we want to receive the great reward of being *fellow heirs with Christ*, and reign with Him in His kingdom, then we must choose to “suffer with Him.”

To be “glorified with Him” in His kingdom is to reign with Him. The way Jesus stated it was that if any believer overcomes, as He overcame, Jesus will share His throne as a reward (Revelation 3:21). In chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, Paul will state this principle, focusing on the need for endurance in order to receive the reward of reigning with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12). The action we must endure in is to *suffer with Him* by courageously persevering against rejection, loss and even death for living the truth of the gospel, in love.

We are not suffering for Christ if our rejection stems from insufferable behavior. Suffering for Christ is *suffering for the gospel according to the power of God*. If we are rejected because we behave like a jerk, perhaps through judgmental legalism, that is not *suffering for the gospel according to the power of God*. If we live through *the power of God*, then we will be rejected because darkness hates light, and falsity hates truth. We are to suffer because we are living out the *holy calling* we have been given to exercise our gifting with the “spirit” we have been given, a spirit of “power, love, and discipline.”

Our actions should show love for the world, even in the face of it hating us in return. In Matthew 24:12-13 we are exhorted to not allow the lawlessness of the world, with all its evil and rejection of truth, allow us to let our love grow cold. We need to endure to the end, in order to be delivered from the very negative consequence of ceasing to walk in the spirit of love.

Both the salvation and the *holy calling* are *not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity*. The sovereign God chose who would be His *from all eternity*. But it is also clear from Paul's exhortation that Timothy's choice really matters. It is paradoxical to us that these two things can coexist. But God is paradoxical to us. God the Son is fully human, with a body, and fully God, who is spirit. God is at rest, and always working. He is One, and Three. He exists, and is existence. He made all things, and is in all things. In a nutshell, God's ways are higher than ours, and beyond our comprehension (Romans 11:33-34). He is paradoxical to us, and truth is paradoxical. But it also fits with what we know, and rings true, since we are made in the image of God, who placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We can reconcile these dilemmas through faith in our Creator.

Paul will make clear the importance of our deeds. They matter immensely, and will have enormous impact. But *our works* have no bearing upon the salvation of being justified in the sight of God, which He *granted us*. That is according to *His own purpose and grace*. Jesus did all the work. We can only receive the gift of being born again through faith in Jesus. Further, *our works* do not cause God to grant us a *holy calling*. That is also *according to His own purpose and grace*.

The word translated *grace* is "charis," which means "favor." The context determines who is granting favor, and for what reason. This can be seen in the gospel of Luke, which says:

"And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."
(Luke 2:52)

The word translated "favor" in this verse from Luke is also "charis" so it could be translated "grace." In this case, humans in Jesus' community were attributing favor to Jesus as he was growing in stature and wisdom. In this case the "grace" or "favor" was being attributed due to a value judgement of Jesus' life and character by those in His community.

Another instance of the Bible's use of "charis" is in Luke 1, when the angel addresses the Virgin Mary:

"And coming in, he [the angel] said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."
(Luke 1:28)

"Favored one" here is a translation of "charitoo," the root of which is "charis." God granted immense favor, or *grace* to us when He loved us enough to send His only begotten Son to die on our behalf, and mend the breach in relationship between God and humanity. He did not do this because of *our works*. We did nothing to deserve His favor. He did it due to His own *purpose*. We get some insight into God's purpose for humanity from [Psalm 8](#) and [Hebrews 2](#), which quotes Psalm 8. The reader is encouraged to refer to those commentaries for more insight into God's *purpose* for granting us His *grace*.

Part of God's *purpose* for those whom He called is to fulfill a *holy calling*. The word translated *holy* means to be set apart for a sacred purpose, a purpose dedicated to God. God has something

special for His people to do. God's people Israel were given a holy calling to be a priestly nation, showing His ways of living in self-governance and love toward one another to the neighboring pagan nations, who practiced exploitation and domination (Exodus 19:6; Leviticus 18). In a similar manner, God has called the church to demonstrate living life in a highly functioning and harmonious body, the Body of Christ. A body where each loves the other, and serves a common purpose, contributing their gifts (John 13:35).

When believers love one another in this manner we fulfill our holy calling. We are shutting up Satan, and qualifying ourselves to reign with Christ (Psalm 8; 2 Timothy 2:12). It is likely God's purpose is even greater, but this is a part He has revealed. That this was *granted* to us *in Christ Jesus* demonstrates that there is an amazing, once-in-an-existence opportunity to live obediently, as Christ lived, by faith, and in doing so, share in Christ's reward to reign.

This is why Paul is not seeking physical comfort for Timothy, but rather eternal gain, through *suffering for the gospel of Christ*. Paul was allowed to see heaven, but was not allowed to speak of it (2 Corinthians 12:2). We might infer the amazing greatness of what he saw in heaven from his urgent tone with Timothy, his "beloved son" in exhorting him to suffer the sufferings of Christ, that he might gain the eternal benefit offered from living faithfully in this life, and experience the great rewards that will be given in heaven for such faithfulness.

This amazing "holy calling" granted by God in Christ Jesus, according to His "grace and purpose" was granted "from all eternity" *but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. God's purpose and plan was established in eternity past, but *now has been revealed through the appearing on earth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ* was in eternity past. The world was created through Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:16). He was there in the beginning (John 1:1-2). But now that purpose, and His holy calling, have *been revealed* physically, visibly, through Jesus' advent on earth. His birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension as God become human flesh.

During Jesus's time on earth, He *abolished death* through dying on the cross, and being raised again on the third day. Death's days are numbered. At the end of the age, death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). For now, death is a "lame duck" having been defeated, but is still "in office," so to speak. Jesus also *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. The word translated *gospel* is "euangelion" and means "good tidings." Everything about Jesus' time on earth is "good tidings" for humanity. He brought redemption from sin. He brought truth and grace. He brought the light to shine in the darkness. He showed us the path to have our entire purpose redeemed, that we might have our deepest desires fulfilled.

Jesus is the way to *life and immortality*. He is the one who gave the *light* for us to follow in order to gain *life and immortality*. As Paul is making and will make clear, the way to gain the greatest portion of *life and immortality* is through living a faithful testimony, without fear of rejection, loss, or death.

It is this *gospel* or good tidings of Jesus, that brings the *light of life and immortality* to humanity, *for which Paul was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher*. The risen and ascended

Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, and gave him this calling as a *preacher* of the gospel, a *teacher* of the gospel, and an *apostle* of the gospel (Acts 9). Jesus appointed Paul in particular to take the gospel to the Gentiles. A *preacher* is a herald, who announces the good news. The *teacher* explains the meaning of the good news, how to apply and best benefit from it. Paul was sent as an *apostle* to the Gentiles. An *apostle* is a delegate, or representative. Paul was dispatched by Jesus to represent Him and His kingdom (apostle) in heralding (preacher) and explaining (teacher) the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul says that it is *For this reason*, the reason of proclaiming and teaching the gospel/good tidings on behalf of Jesus, that *I also suffer these things*. By saying *I also suffer these things*, Paul is referring to his persecution for the sake of the gospel, for which he is about to die. But he likely is also referring to the suffering of Jesus, in which he is participating. Jesus suffered rejection and death for His witness. Paul is simply following in the footsteps of his Master.

Paul is suffering, he is imprisoned. In spite of this Paul proclaims *but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day*. The term *that day* refers to the day of judgement. Paul speaks of it frequently, and lives his life for it. (For a few examples see 1 Corinthians 3:11-17, 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; Philippians 2:5-11). Paul will speak of this a lot more in this letter. Paul desires to gain heavenly rewards for his faithfulness. It is his primary life purpose, and it is all wrapped up in knowing Christ and reigning with Christ.

The language Paul uses here evokes the picture of making a bank deposit. What Paul has *entrusted to Him* (Jesus) are the good works done on earth that he has sent ahead to heaven. Paul has *believed* and is *convinced* that the words of Jesus are true, that we should "...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal..." (Matthew 6:20). Paul believes that Jesus *is able to guard* what Paul has deposited in heaven, and it will still be there when he arrives. Jesus is the best possible "bank guard." Paul believes that Jesus will do as He said, and Paul believes that all the suffering he has encountered on earth will be more than worth it.

He wants Timothy to believe that as well. He wants Timothy to live the same way, with complete courage. He wants Timothy to fulfill the spiritual heritage of his mother, and of Paul, his spiritual father in the faith. He wants Timothy to follow his example of being a courageous witness. Paul now makes a specific request of Timothy, to *Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*. The essence of the gospel is truth. Paul does not want Timothy to stray one bit from the truth, no matter the cost. He wants Timothy to *retain the standard of sound words*. There will be those who don't like the truth, and will bring pressure for it to first be bent, then be discarded. But Paul admonishes Timothy not to bend any at all. Paul admonishes Timothy to hold firm, and keep preaching and teaching the same things Timothy *heard from Paul*.

But just speaking the truth is not sufficient. Truth without love is not useful. So Paul adds an admonishment to speak the *sound words* Timothy gained from Paul *in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus*. The point is not to "be right." The point is to benefit others. The word translated *love* is the Greek word "agape." "Agape" love is a love of choice, with a purpose. It is

the love that is *in Christ Jesus*. Jesus loved the world, and chose to die on its behalf, even though it rejected Him. Agape *love* is making deliberate choices to seek the best for others.

Agape love is to seek the best for others, even when you pay a price for it. Often such love is not appreciated. Therefore, it requires *faith* that it will be worth it. Paul is 100% confident that each instance of truth spoken in love will make a heavenly deposit, a deposit that will be guarded by Jesus, and kept “until that day”—the day of the judgement seat of Christ, when every believer will receive rewards for deeds done during their life.

Paul further admonishes Timothy to *Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you*. The *treasure which has been entrusted* to Timothy is likely the *treasure* of the *sound words* that Timothy *heard from Paul*. The words of truth that bring *life and immortality*.

Biblical Text

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering 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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, ¹⁰ but now has been revealed by 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 an apostle and a teacher. ¹² For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. ¹³ Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to *you*.