

# Believe and Persevere

## 2 Timothy 1:8-12

June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2004

---

### ❖ Introduction

Recently, we reflected upon the fact that there have been numerous trials that families in our church have gone through and many continue to this day. Some are life-threatening others appear to have no end in sight and still others are have come through the difficult time and now is a time for reflection on what God has brought them through.

This second letter of Paul to Timothy was written to strengthen Timothy while he was in the midst of numerous difficult circumstances. What we will look at today are the *reasons* why Paul says Timothy should take courage.

### ❖ Background

We are jumping right into the middle of a correspondence between two faithful men who lived long ago. This is at least Paul's second letter to Timothy and is almost certainly his last as Paul anticipates that his death is imminent. (see 4:6) Paul had ministered in Ephesus for three years (Acts 19 & 20) and appears to have left Timothy behind to continue the ministry and stand against the false teachers as they arise (1 Tim 1:3). Ephesus had proven to be an especially hostile tour of duty and Timothy was tempted to lose heart. Paul seeks to embolden Timothy by reminding him of that which he knows to be true and expects that re-igniting these beliefs in Timothy will be the foundation for faith, courage and perseverance.

### ❖ Exposition

<sup>8</sup> *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,*

- .. Given the impact that the gospel had in Ephesus on the market for pagan idols, there was great opposition to the work of Paul and Timothy from those who were outside the church. There also appears to have been those who opposed Timothy not because of his message but because of his age. Timothy was tempted to fear that opposition and shrink back from defending the Gospel and defending Paul.
- .. We live in no less hostile of a era than Timothy did and our temptations are as real as his were. If the message of the Gospel was something thought up by clever men, we might have grounds for embarrassment. However, this message is the power of God unto eternal salvation for all who believe and it is foolishness and an assault on those who are perishing. We should not be surprised when the world tries to shame us.
- .. Paul's current imprisonment probably served as an opportunity for his adversaries (probably the Judaizers) to discredit him and thus discredit Timothy, his disciple. But the imprisonment was not an ill-reflection of Paul's ministry but was instead seen by Paul as further encouragement because other believers were emboldened to champion his ministry. In addition, Paul continued his ministry while imprisoned and even the palace guards believed. (Phil. 1:12-14)

<sup>9</sup> *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,*

- .. In His mercy, God has both saved us and He has called us. There are a number of possible ways to understand our holy calling. One way would be that this was a unique calling by God of Timothy to be in the ministry. But the rest of the sentence does not seem to be limited to the clergy alone so it seems that this understanding may be too narrow. Secondly, the calling may refer to the life of holiness which all believers are called to which can only be accomplished by grace through faith. But again, the rest of the sentence seems to use the word "holy" to describe the calling and not necessarily describe the life of a Christian. A third option (which I am assuming) is that Paul is reminding Timothy of the foundation for his salvation which is the divine purpose of God. It is God who calls us and we are His children. Knowing that He is sovereign over all things should lead us to great confidence and rest in the security of our salvation or calling.
- .. Here and in other places, Paul goes out of his way to explain that the grace of God was not given in response to our works but instead was given by the purposes of God. God did not look down the annals of time and see those who would live a life worthy of redemption. He did not foresee all those who would choose Him and therefore, in return, He chose them. No, when He looked down the annals of time all He saw in man was death, for in Adam the whole race died. We were not spiritually sick needing medicine, we were dead in our sin (Ephesians 2) and unable to choose His righteousness (1 Cor. 2). Our salvation is our first resurrection from the dead. He purposed in Himself to save some and not others. This removes any possibility for us to boast in ourselves and leaves only the kindness of God and His mercy in which we can boast.

<sup>10</sup> *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,*

- .. Formerly, God had revealed His plan of redemption through types and shadows. Those who were saved in the OT were able to faintly see God's plan. With the advent of Christ, we see more clearly how God intended to reconcile the world to Himself. The mystery of salvation has been made clear and we no longer fear death. (Hebrews 2:14-18)

<sup>11</sup> *to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*

- .. Paul reminds Timothy of the divine manner in which God had drawn him into the light. Certainly Timothy had heard the dramatic stories of Paul's conversion and may have been tempted to forget how clearly God had called him to minister to the gentiles. (Acts 26: 12-23) Paul was one who was "breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" and

Timothy was probably encountering some of the very same kind of opponents of the gospel in Ephesus that Paul would have at one time been in Jerusalem.

<sup>12</sup> *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.[NKJV]*

- “ As Paul testified to Agrippa, he was obedient to the heavenly vision. He believed Him who spoke. The nature of the calling that Jesus gave Paul was one that required him to give up all that he had pursued as a Pharisee. It required him to put himself in harms way and to trust a Lord for safety whom he had once persecuted. Paul had set aside everything only to gain everything.
- “ There is a day yet to come when all of the dead shall be raised. Some will be raised to eternal condemnation and others will be raised to eternal joy with our Lord. All of the believers will face a judgment of refinement where the things we have done will be purified by fire (1 Cor. 3). Paul was able to look forward to those days because he was by faith persuaded that the Lord would keep and fulfill the final promises that were reserved for him.

### ❖ What's the point?

Let's summarize the primary instructions that Paul gives to Timothy to encourage him to press on.

- “ Remember the genuine faith of your family.
- “ Listen to the faithful testimony of other faithful believers.
- “ Put your mind to using the gifts God has given you to bless the church.
- “ Remember that God has placed His Spirit of power in us.
- “ Declare with confidence the testimony of our Lord.
- “ Remember those who have suffered even more and yet have persevered faithfully.
- “ Remember you have been spared from that which we have earned—eternal judgment, and given that which we have not earned—eternal life.
- “ Grace was given to you in Christ before time began and it has been held for you from that time until now. Certainly these current circumstances are not significant enough to threaten it.
- “ In Christ we have no fear of death because He removed its sting, that is sin. (see also 1 Cor. 15:55-56)
- “ Not only has judgment passed from us, but eternal life with our Lord has been given to us.
- “ Remember God cannot lie and if He has begun His work in you He will complete it. What He has promised, He will do.

How could anyone offer you *better* news than these things? What information could be more overwhelming and joyful? What could bring you any greater joy? If these things are true, what events, what circumstances, what adversaries could possibly hope to threaten you? (Romans 8:37-39)

### ❖ Spiritual Alignment

Commonly when we are in the midst of a severe providence we are certainly tempted to forget these things. Forgetting them makes us look like those who do not believe them. In such times it is helpful to be reminded of these truths. Do not despise those who seek to love you by reminding you of them. Do not diminish the significance of the implications of what God has done for us.

When we are in a difficult situation, all it takes is an even more serious one to arise and all the others tend to become insignificant. It is as though the greater the hardship the more our priorities are put in line. The same is true here where Paul doesn't seek to diminish the burden that faces Timothy. Instead he emphasizes the glories which are infinitely more profound than our troubles and when we believe, the difficulties are put in proper perspective or alignment. This is how God calls us to rejoice in the midst of trials (James 1). Consider not the severity of your trial, instead consider the magnitude and certainty of God's grace, His love and care for you.

*Amidst every storm and tempest, that man will enjoy undisturbed repose, who has a settled conviction that God, "who cannot lie," (Titus 1:2) or deceive, hath spoken, and will undoubtedly perform what he hath promised. On the other hand, he who has not this truth sealed on his heart, will be continually shaken hither and thither like a reed. — John Calvin*

*Preached by Brett Baker*