

Group Study Outline

LAUNCH QUESTIONS

Have you ever been ashamed to tell someone you're a Christian?
Why? What happened?
What are the pressures in our culture that make us ashamed?

READ 2 Timothy 1:8-14

QUESTIONS

What is the big command in v8? What shouldn't he be ashamed of?
Why might Timothy have been ashamed of the gospel? Why are we?
What would it look like if a minister like Timothy was ashamed of the gospel?
How about those who aren't church leaders or preachers?

Why might Timothy have been ashamed of Paul?
Imagine if one of our Leadership Team got put in prison for talking about Jesus.
What would we do? What might we be tempted to do?
Would it affect how open we were about our faith?
Would it affect what we did and said as a church?
What would Paul tell us to do?

Paul gives three reasons not to be ashamed...

- *because we have a powerful Spirit*
How does v7 give us a reason not to be ashamed?
What difference does it make that we don't have a Spirit of fear?
What will Timothy / we need to use God's power for in v8?
Is this what we'd normally associate with "the power of God"?
How does this help us not to be ashamed of the message or messenger?

- *because we have a wonderful gospel*
What does Paul tell Timothy about the gospel in v9-10?
Anything strike you as especially good?
What difference does it make that Paul was on death row?
How is this good news a reason not to be ashamed?

- *because we have a reliable guard*
What is Timothy told to do in v14?
How does v13 help us understand what "the good deposit" is?
As a minister, how will Timothy guard the gospel? (*Hold that thought...*)
Why is Paul suffering? (v10b-12a)
Despite that, why isn't Paul ashamed?
Who does Paul say will ultimately "guard the deposit"/gospel?
How is that an encouragement? How does that help us not to be ashamed?

How can we support church leaders like Timothy to apply this passage?
How should we apply this passage to our own lives?
What has most encouraged you from this passage?
What do you feel you need prayer for after reading this?

PRAY

2 Timothy 1:8-14



2 Timothy at a glance

The apostle Paul was in prison in Rome for preaching the gospel. Any day soon he would be executed. And so he wrote one last letter to his young protégé, Timothy, to pass on the baton.

In it he urges Timothy to continue his ministry, boldly preaching the Word despite his own timidity, the pressures of persecution, the disappointments of team mates abandoning ship, the plague of false teachers, and the many people who are all too quick to believe them. The letter is warm and personal, as Paul encourages Timothy from his own example to fight the good fight and finish the race, guarding the gospel by passing it on.

The main audience is Timothy, a church leader in Ephesus. As such, much the application is aimed at preachers and elders, spurring them on to hold the line. It's important not to lose this emphasis in an effort to apply it more widely.

Of course there *is* lots here for non-ministers too! Some of that comes from better understanding the task and responsibility placed on church leaders, so that we can pray for them, support them, seek out leaders in keeping with Paul's description, as well as consider whether we ourselves should pursue such a role. Other applications come as we see the role of all believers in testifying about Jesus and holding firmly to the gospel despite the suffering it brings.

Where this passage fits in...

This is the first part of the letter where Paul introduces the pressures on those in ministry, urging Timothy not to be ashamed but to guard the gospel.

Theme Sentence

Ministers (and all Christians) mustn't be ashamed of the gospel message nor of its persecuted messengers.

Application

- Don't be ashamed of the gospel message. Keep believing and declaring it.
- Don't be ashamed of suffering gospel messengers. Stand by them.

[NB]

Commentary

[these notes follow the 26 April 2015 sermon at Emmanuel]

- 8 This is the big command of the passage – “do not be ashamed.” What Timothy should not be ashamed of is the gospel message (“the testimony about our Lord”) and the gospel messenger (“me his prisoner”). Preaching the gospel would get you into trouble, as it had for Paul, and it would have been very tempting to stop proclaiming it or to distance oneself from persecuted Christians like Paul, to keep that trouble away from yourself. Timothy shouldn’t cave in like that.

One reason for not being ashamed is given in v7, as shown by the word “therefore” in v8. The kind of Spirit we have been given is one of power rather than fear. It is this same power of God which will be needed for Timothy to “share in suffering for the gospel”.

- 9-10 Paul unpacks what the gospel is here. He can’t help himself but shout about how wonderful the good news is. God saved us. This is the heart of the gospel. He called us to be distinctively His people. And He did it not because of good things we had done but because He decided, even before the world was created, to show us grace.

God’s grace is shown through Christ, the one who saves us. He “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light”. Death is our greatest fear and He deals with it decisively. This is all the more striking when we remember that Paul wrote this, not just from prison, but from death row! He was soon to be executed but he declares that death is abolished!

This wonderful gospel is another reason not to be ashamed. It’s too good to want to change it or silence it. And even if we suffer for it, there’s nothing they can do to harm us since death is no more.

- 11-12a This glorious gospel doesn’t look very glorious in the lives of its representatives, however! Paul was appointed a preacher, teacher and apostle for this gospel and that has brought him suffering. If he were to stop doing those things, the suffering would end. Indeed, back in v8 he describes himself as the Lord’s prisoner! This has all come to him only because of the gospel and his commitment to proclaim it.
- 12b-14 But despite all this hardship, he is not ashamed. He knows the one he has believed in and knows that he will “guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me” (literally “guard until that Day *my deposit*”).

Some older translations make this verse about God guarding what we have entrusted to *Him* rather than visa versa, but this doesn’t make sense in the context. In v14, as well as back in 1 Timothy 6:20, Timothy is explicitly commanded to “guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (literally “*your deposit*”). There’s no way in which this can be taken to mean something which Timothy has entrusted to God. It’s safe to say that Paul’s deposit is similarly one God gave him rather than the other way around.

If it was something Paul had given God, what would that thing even be? Whereas v13 defines Timothy’s deposit as something given *by* God and that is the most sensible candidate for what Paul’s deposit was too. Otherwise Paul would be saying he’s confident God will guard the things he trusted God with BUT at the same time he tells Timothy to guard his own stuff, as if God *can’t* be trusted! That can’t be right!

In v13 Paul tells Timothy to “follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me”. These sound or healthy words are the gospel message, passed on to Timothy by Paul. They are a pattern or a model to follow, and follow them he must. He must not deviate from them, chop anything out of them, add anything to them, or forget to pass them on intact. Jude 1:3 talks about “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.” We have been faithfully given the gospel by God and it needs to be handed down from generation to generation as originally given; the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

In short, Timothy must guard the gospel – the good deposit is the good news. We will see later in 2:2 that the way he is to guard it is to pass it on; taking what he’s heard from Paul and passing it on to those who will likewise faithfully pass it on. Praise God for this process as that is the way in which the gospel has come to us.

Returning to v12 again, this understanding of the deposit makes Paul’s statement all the more striking. He is not ashamed of the gospel nor of the suffering it has brought him because he is convinced that it is God who will ultimately guard the gospel to the very end. It won’t die with Paul nor are his present struggles a bad sign for the future of the gospel. As Paul plays his part in protecting, preserving and proliferating the gospel, God is at work guarding the deposit.

How reassuring to realise that there is a reliable guard for this gospel. And that it’s not us! It’s the Lord Himself.

SUMMARY

The basic command of the passage is to be unashamed of the gospel message and its suffering messengers (8). What this will look like is sticking to the handed-down gospel (13) and guarding it (14), being willing to suffer as a result (8 again).

Paul gives three reasons in this passage why not to be ashamed. Because we have: a powerful Spirit (7-8), a wonderful gospel (9-10), and a reliable guard (11-14)

As we face suffering and shame for our allegiance to Christ, we need to be reminded of these truths. Ministers like Timothy especially need bolstering like this as they have a greater responsibility to pass on the gospel, plus it is church leaders who face persecution first and hardest.

However, all Christians undergo pressure like this. We too need to stick to the gospel and be willing to suffer, if not prison and death then shame. And we need to stand by those who are suffering rather than distancing ourselves to make our lives easier. Don’t be ashamed!