

2Timothy 24-09-01a

Good morning. Welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 1st of September, 2024.

We're in the book of 2nd Timothy, and we are picking up here at verse 8 through 12, verse 8 through 12. It's a wonderful section. It has two really important truths that we are going to look at this morning having to do with our position in God's plan, our position in Christ, the nature of our suffering, and the encouragement that Paul gives Timothy via his own example.

Let's ask God's blessing on our fellowship and our study, and we'll begin. Father, we are so grateful for the sustenance that comes to our hearts and our souls through your word. We know that just as our physical bodies are nourished by what you provide for us, and we thank you for it as we partake, we are equally thankful for this manna from heaven that is essential to our strength, our guidance, our functioning, our walk before you in a way that pleases you.

We pray that as we look at these portions of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will minister them to each of our hearts in a way that is uplifting and edifying, so that as we negotiate the circumstances, the challenges, and the opportunities of each day, that we will redeem the time, we will bear fruit, fruit of the Spirit, fruit that is reflective of your glory and will, in the observation of others, draw them toward you as they see your grace and your love expressed in and through us. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's read our passage. It's been a couple of weeks because we took a pause in order to do our special, but in verse 8, having done the greeting and calling to remembrance the past relationship that Paul has had with Timothy and his family, and drawing a similarity, Paul saying that as I have the enthusiasm and the desire to worship God that my forefathers had, you have the enthusiasm and the desire to worship and serve God as your mother and grandmother have. That was in verses 3 through 7. And Paul very subtly, but effectively ties himself and Timothy together, not just in a bond of love, but also in common experience, in a shared sense of heritage, that there is a larger context in which Timothy's life exists and in which Paul's life exists.

I was reading one of my favorite authors earlier this week, and I was reminded, as I often remind all of us, of the importance of context. Let me read you a sentence of four words, and I want you to write it down. If you have notes, it's only four words.

Write it down or write it on the chalkboard of your mind, or the whiteboard, or whatever you use in your mind. It's four words. It is so still.

It is so still. What does that mean to you? I was sitting on the porch with Patty, and there wasn't a breeze stirring a leaf anywhere in the panorama off our front deck. Birds were

singing.

Squirrels were cavorting. It was a beautiful morning, and you could look out there and say, it is so still. However, that is not at all what this means in the context that C. H. McIntosh uses it in the volume that I was perusing as a part of my morning devotions.

Let me read you the context. He is talking about Aaron and his sons who did all things which the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses, the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical priesthood. Without the word of the Lord, neither priest nor people could take a single step in the right direction.

It is so still. We still cannot take a step in the right direction without the word of the Lord, neither priest nor people. As it was in the Old Testament days, it is so still.

Notice the galactic distance between how you initially took that sentence and how you take it with context. Context is essential, as we have seen innumerable times in interpreting the word of God. Paul here in 2 Timothy chapter 1 is doing a similar thing with the view we have of our life we can just read the immediate sentence of what's going on today.

What have I got to get done? What is required of me? What's going to fall to the ground if I don't run over there and prop it up? What have I got to do soon? In the next hour? In the next half a day? In the next day? In the next couple of days? Where do I need to be? Do I need to travel? We get caught up in the immediacy of the moment and it is like reading that single sentence. Paul is encouraging Timothy and by extension God's Holy Spirit is encouraging us to take a wider view of our lives so that we will see the meaning of what's going on today. We have a valid sentence.

We have a valid statement. We have a valid circumstance and situation today. It's perfectly fine to prepare a meal, to clean a house, to take a trip, to prepare for work or function tomorrow, to take care of chores that are necessary.

We've got pets to care for. We've got cars to ensure maintenance is done on and so forth. And these are perfectly legitimate, but we will misunderstand the meaning of our circumstances, our situations, our opportunities, our challenges, and especially our sufferings, our hardships.

We cannot understand them without context. So notice what we saw in verses 3 through 7. Paul says, I serve God with a pure conscience. I start with my evaluator in a state of good repair.

We saw conscience in 1st Timothy, didn't we? Where it is the pure heart, good conscience, and sincere faith that are essential to our grasp of who we are, why we're here, and what we're supposed to be doing. Here it is a pure conscience. It is a functional evaluating system.

Our conscience tells us what's right, what's wrong, what's good, what's bad, what is proper, what is improper, what is to be celebrated, and what is to be regretted, what is praiseworthy, and what is shameful. Our conscience determines these things. We talk often in the sense of our thinking of goals and values and priorities.

Conscience is what establishes the validity of our values and therefore what is virtuous by way of a goal. What is most important in terms of priorities? Our conscience, hopefully enabled and empowered by God's Word and enlightened by God's Holy Spirit, using that Word to shine the light on our path. This is how we know that those things are solid, that our lives, like the church, are a pillar and ground of truth.

So, once again, what does Paul do? He says, I thank God. I serve him with a pure conscience as my forefathers did. Then he talks about his awareness that Timothy is struggling.

Timothy is shedding some tears. Tears come from stress or great excitement. You can have tears of joy.

You can have tears of sorrow. But he greatly desires to see Timothy, in verse 4, being mindful of his tears so that he can be filled with joy. And there is some lack, there is some hardship.

Timothy doesn't have tears of joy or Paul wouldn't be worried about trying to come see him and share his own joy with him. But, I am filled with joy when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you. Paul says, I'm serving God.

I'm thankful to God with my pure conscience as my forefathers. And he says, I am mindful of the faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother and in your mother. What does this do for Timothy? I know you're going through a tough time.

I know you've got some tears here. You may be wishing that, you know, the apostolic presence was there to shore up the defenses and to motivate and encourage and lead and guide. But there is a separation.

I'm mindful of your tears. I know you're having a hard time. But remember, your faith isn't just yours.

You come from a heritage of faith. There is a past experience. And this is a particular kind of context.

There's lots of contexts we can think about. Not all of us have a family tradition of interest and faithfulness in the word. Some of us came to Christ and we're kind of the outlier in our family.

But there are other contexts. We can think about the past in our own life where we have

made a decision based on faith and it was difficult and we couldn't see around the next corner. But God vindicated our faith by fulfilling his promises and providing and protecting and blessing as a result of our faith, our obedience, doing what we're supposed to do even though it was difficult.

And that is a context. We think outside the immediate moment to the past. It can be the past in our family.

It can be the past in our own life. It can be the past as it is recorded in the word of God. We can reflect on the way God has worked in the lives of individuals in the scriptures, in the nation of Israel, which pictures many truths that pertain to us as individuals in this age.

But to get outside ourselves and to look at the larger fabric into which the thread of our life is woven is a means of establishing or restoring objectivity, the bigger picture, and to see the meaning of the moment as it should be seen. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but many times the immediate moment engenders fear, tempts us to uncertainty, to worry. So, I want to ask you, stepping back, it is so still.

What does that really mean? Let me back up and read the paragraph in which my life exists. And I see that there is a meaning that the author intends that isn't the meaning I initially saw. I was thinking, I thought about dredging up a lot of examples, but I will just give you one.

Those of you who saw, and it's getting to be an old movie now, but it was called The Karate Kid. And I think it had Ralph Macchio in it. And there's an old oriental guy that is going to teach him how to do karate.

And he's a reluctant student, but he takes him out to his driveway and has him wash his car. And if you remember the movie, wax on, wax off, wax on, wax off, over and over and over again. And young Ralph gets very frustrated.

He doesn't see the point. You're supposed to be teaching me karate. All you've got me doing is washing your car.

What's up? But if you recall, as time goes on, the muscle memory and the skills that he unconsciously develops in washing the car turn out to be essential to his success in competitive karate. And when he's getting ready to do these moves, the old guy says, remember wax on, wax off. This is what you're now going to use.

You didn't see the value, but now you're going to appreciate it. And it's a great secular metaphor, if you will, for what God is often doing in our lives. So Paul is encouraging Timothy very subtly, very beautifully, very effectively, and in somewhat of an appeal to his emotions.

You think about your mother. You can't help but be a little bit emotional. You think about your grandmother.

She's a woman of faith. You can't help but be emotional. I like to never got through my grandmother's funeral where I was supposed to speak because the emotion of her effect on my life, her example as a wonderful woman of faith, whether I think about my mother or my grandmother, it's immediately emotional.

And Paul uses this avenue to pull Timothy out of his tears and out of his absorption with his current problem, which involves suffering. So he does it first by this appeal to history. I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did.

You have faith, which first existed in your grandmother and in your mother. So now in our passage this morning, when he concludes in verse seven above by saying, God has not given us a spirit of fear. There was a band, I think, called Tears for Fears.

And both of those concepts are in this passage. Timothy has tears and he has fears. And Paul says, you need to work your way out of these tears.

Put yourself in the larger context. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear. He's given us a spirit of power.

And remember, this is dunamis. This is ability and potential. You've got potential that you don't realize.

As you're washing the car, you don't realize the muscles and the skills that you are building to fight the fight. It doesn't seem so at the time. It can be frustrating.

It can be discouraging. But God hasn't given us a spirit of fear. It's power.

It is love. The measure of our faith and our hope. Start with faith.

Work toward hope. Hope is always big picture, isn't it? If I'm seeing a thing, it's not hope. Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

Evidence of things not seen. And hope is the driving motivation. And the outworking of it is love.

Love is outward looking. This isn't self-love. This is looking at others.

Not only my own interests, but the interests of others. The mind that was in Christ Jesus, Philippians 2. And self-control, sobriety, a sound mind, stability. Therefore, verse 8, this is our passage.

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Do not be ashamed of me, his prisoner. People are disparaging Timothy because of his association with a criminal.

Why do you listen to this Paul fellow? He's a seditionist. He's a criminal. He's locked up.

The Romans have him in prison. Why are you parroting his message? Why don't you come over to us? We're a group. We represent a tradition of Judaism or of secular reason.

And you're adhering to this guy that you ought to be ashamed of. Paul says, don't be ashamed because to be ashamed of me is to be ashamed of the gospel that I preach. And Paul puts that gospel first.

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Do not be ashamed of me, his prisoner. It's by his design.

It is a part of his plan and purpose that I am currently in chains. Share with me in the sufferings. Share with me.

Notice again, this is pulling Timothy outside himself. He's not alone. He's not unique.

He's not isolated. Paul says, I'm suffering. Share with me in my sufferings.

If you concentrate on your own, you're going to be oblivious to others. Think outside of yourself about your family heritage. Think outside of yourself about the hardships that I am undergoing for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

It's a worthy cause. It is the only truly worthy cause to suffer for is the testimony of Jesus Christ. According to the power of God, Paul is talking again about power here and what a wonderful opportunity.

This power of God, once again, is dunamis, ability, the ability of God. God is able to sustain. God is able to lead and to guide.

So this spirit of power in verse seven originates with God. This is suffering for the gospel according to the power of God. It is spirit led.

It is spirit energized. God, who in verse nine has saved us and called us with a holy calling. Once again, your current suffering, your current conflict with people who are disparaging you, who are calling you into question because of your association with an arrested apostle, who are questioning your message, questioning your authority, questioning your age, your position.

Should you even be here doing what you're doing? And it is suffering. It is hard to endure the bad opinion of people. Even when you tell yourself, why do I care about the opinion of someone I don't even respect? But if they are respected by others, then we begin to doubt.

And he says, do not be ashamed. Circle that word ashamed in verse eight. What is

shame? Think about it.

I was musing on this. What is the nature of shame? If you're stranded all by yourself on a desert island, can you be ashamed? When I was a child and I would misbehave and I knew better, my folks might tell me, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. So could you potentially mess up in a way that all by yourself you would be ashamed? I'm ashamed of myself.

I knew better. I did something foolish. Shame on me.

That's one brand of shame. Generally speaking, shame is an embarrassment at falling short in the eyes of others. We're gaining a negative opinion.

People think poorly of us. And we are made ashamed or we feel ashamed in the view of others. This is why men love darkness rather than light when their deeds are evil.

If you do them in darkness, you don't have as much possibility of being ashamed. You don't feel bad that you did wrong. You feel bad that you got caught and then you're ashamed and then you're going to try to plead to the court that you feel sorry and you hope you'll get a lighter sentence.

But what is shame? It's a combination of embarrassment and knowledge of a reduced or low opinion of you on the part of others. That's basically what shame or being ashamed is. There is also an element of regret, wishing you had done something different.

So when Paul says, do not be ashamed, don't be made to feel embarrassed. Don't be made to feel regretful. Don't think that you did something you should not have done in manifesting and preaching the testimony of Jesus Christ.

It's not a bad thing and you should not be ashamed. It is a good thing. There are times when we might express a sentiment or say something and later we shut our eyes and wince and say, why did I say that? Words come back.

I'm ashamed. I'm sorry. I wish I could unsay what I just said.

That would be being ashamed. I'm ashamed that my self-control left and I spewed forth in an impulsive and insensitive way something that I wish I could take back. In the heat of the moment, I just went way outside the lines.

Do not be ashamed. There's a wonderful example of this that we're going to see in a moment. But notice what Paul does here because he is still pulling Timothy out of myopia and out of concentration on himself.

You're ashamed. You're thinking about yourself and your standing and the way you're treated and spoken of by your associations or your testimony for Jesus Christ. Paul says, don't be ashamed.

Don't be ashamed of Christ. Don't be ashamed of me, his prisoner. We're suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.

What can pull you out of this temptation to be regretful, to shrink, to fall back, to stop, to no longer be committed? The power of God is there to sustain us. We might not have that power in and of ourselves. I can't always pull myself out of myself.

I can't always quit being subjective and self-absorbed and sorry for myself, self-centered, looking to relieve a bad feeling that I have. I don't have the power. This is why psychologists and psychiatrists make hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to talk people out of feeling bad.

God has the power. That's what Paul reminds him of in verse 8. This is according to the power of God, God who has saved us and called us with a holy calling. Turn with me to 1 Peter.

Go to the right. Finish the letters of Paul, past Hebrews, past James. You get to 1 Peter.

1 Peter chapter 1. Now we've been over this before, but if you don't recall, this is one of the most heinous mistranslations in the King James and the New King James, and I don't know how many other versions. Right here at the beginning, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. You have some of the same elements here in Peter's greeting that you have in Paul's early thoughts expressed to Timothy.

These people are pilgrims. They are displaced persons. They have been driven out of their homeland and scattered.

That's a circumstance, and you could feel sorry for yourself. We had opportunities. We had standing.

We had possessions. We had stability when we were in Israel, but because we are Jews, because we are Christians, we have been driven forth and we are now dispersed. Pilgrims of the diaspora, the dispersion, and we've gone all the way to Pontus, to Galatia.

These are the people to whom Paul will write Galatians, to Cappadocia, to Asia, to Bithynia. Remember Asia. Jesus is going to send seven letters to the churches of Asia because there are so many believers out there.

Here's the horrible mistranslation. You may have a note in your Bible. If you remember this from the past, let me give you this in Greek.

1 Peter 1-2 says in your Bible, elect according to the foreknowledge of God. In Greek, let

me give you the first six words of this letter. Petros, Apostolos.

If you want to just write them in English and not worry about Greek or Greek spelling, it's Peter, Apostle, Jesus Christ. Those are the first four words in Greek. They've got cases and they relate to one another because you've got a genitive.

Jesus Christ is a genitive. It means Peter is an apostle of Jesus Christ. Petros, Apostolos, Iesou, Christou.

Those are the first four words. We've only got two more to go. Peter, Apostle, Jesus Christ, chosen, elect, elect.

That's word five. Word six, par epidemios. This is the word pilgrims.

So if you're doing it in English, Peter, Apostle, Jesus Christ, chosen, to the chosen pilgrims. This is a dative, locative, or instrumental. So it means you add the preposition to.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen pilgrims. They are chosen not according to the foreknowledge of God. Look at what the translators have done.

They've taken the fourth word of this letter and shoved it all the way down into verse two, because they want to push Calvinism. You're chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. Sorry, no.

What Peter is saying here is you were chosen to be scattered as pilgrims in the diaspora to these places. Elect comes before. Pontu, Galatias, Cappadocias, Assias, Cai, Bethunias, all of the places chosen to be pilgrims of the scattering to these places.

That's what you are chosen for this circumstance. Why? Because God has a purpose in it. You were part of a larger plan.

You were chosen to be the point of the spear. You are now in a position to carry the gospel outward to the Gentiles. You started out as Jews in the land.

You are now witnesses for Christ in Gentile areas. You are missionaries. Your circumstances are working together for good because you love God and you are what? Eclectos.

You are the called according to his purpose. Remember Romans? All things work together for good. Romans 8, 28 and 29.

All things work together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to his purpose. Same word, eclectos. Your calling isn't about foreknowledge and predestination and you have no free will and so on.

Your calling is for God's purpose. You are chosen to carry out a purpose. What does that provide? Context.

I'm not suffering slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. I am suffering according to the foreknowledge of God for my blessing and his glory. That's the context.

That's what gives meaning to the sentence of my life. What a wonderful truth. Three different ways here.

Paul first appeals to heritage. He second appeals to common suffering. Now he is going to appeal to God's calling.

We are going to see that this is a part of a plan that was put in place before the world began. We'll see that when we come back from the break.