

**Leaving a Legacy of Faith
(Week 3)
2 Timothy 1:8-18
“I Am Not Ashamed”**

Introduction

How would you like to be remembered? I was sitting on the beach this week (don't judge me. I needed a break), when I noticed that someone had left a pair of sunglasses lying in the sand. I was thinking that maybe I could turn them in somewhere in case the person who left them came back. A hour or so later a man and woman came to the beach walking their two dogs. They were immediately followed by an older couple. The older couple noticed the lost glasses and took them to the young man and woman with the dogs. They assumed that they were the ones who had lost them, but I knew that they weren't. I quietly watched to see what would happen, and to my dismay, the young man said that the sunglasses were his. He assumed that no one was the wiser I suppose, but he was sadly mistaken. I saw that man trade his integrity for a pair of sunglasses. Sadly, many people have sold their integrity for much less.

As Christians the reputation that we leave behind is of vital importance. It is our legacy, our heritage. It manifests to others that the faith we claimed to have was genuine, or false, depending on how we live, not just when others are watching, but when they are not. God sees us at our best, as well as our worst, and every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of our life choices. For the next few weeks, we will be discussing just how to live a genuine legacy of faith. We will either be “all in” for Christ, or we will not. The choice is up to us. The Apostle Paul left behind a true legacy of faith. So much so, in fact, that we are still looking to his writings today to learn just how to live this Christian life that we claim to earnestly desire.

Just what will people say about us when we are dead and gone? Will we make a lasting difference? Just this past week we all watched in horror as a lone gunman in Las Vegas chose to leave a legacy of more than fifty dead and over five hundred wounded. He then committed suicide, leaving investigators perplexed trying to understand the why of it all. What a horrific way to step out of this world and into eternity. They have said that this mad killer didn't believe in God, but I am certain that he does now! Why can people not see that the consequences of life choices have an eternal significance? The decisions that we make, good or bad, do not just “go away” when we die. There is a Great Judge who will weigh our life's work upon the balance scale, much like He did for the Babylonian King Belshazzar (**Daniel 5:27**). When my life is placed upon those scales, I do not wish to be found lacking! Those of us who have surrendered our lives to Christ have no need to fear the scales of eternal judgment, but we do have to stand before Christ and explain our life's choices. I don't know about you, but I want to stand in confidence before Him when the time comes. I want to know that I left behind a lasting legacy of faith.

The Apostle Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy when he was facing his own pending execution. He wasn't worried about his own life, but rather he was longing for the reassurance that young Timothy would continue that glorious mission of the gospel that had meant everything to Paul. This high and holy calling to preach Jesus to any who would hear is all that Paul really cared about. He wanted to leave a legacy of faith. In his letter to young Timothy, he admonishes the young man to not be afraid (**2 Timothy 1:7**), but rather to go and preach the gospel with boldness, trusting the power of God for the results. What an encouragement this must have been to his young protege, who was no doubt fearful for his own life in those perilous times of Nero's ruthless persecution. It was well known by believers that Timothy and Paul were

inseparably linked with a bond much like that of a father and son. Surely it was only a matter of time before Nero's soldiers knocked on Timothy's door! Paul wanted his young son in the faith to not waiver for a second in the face of such uncertainty. God was in control. The most poignant verse in all of second Timothy reads:

"Yet this is no cause for shame, for I know whom I have believed and am CONVINCED that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."
2 Timothy 1:12

Paul would not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, even though it would cost him everything. He was willing to pay the price. If we are to leave a lasting legacy of faith, we too, like Paul, must determine that nothing can cause us to be ashamed of our Lord or His calling. We must not be ashamed in Death, Discomfort, nor Desertion.

Death

Paul had prepared himself for his coming execution. He wasn't in denial, but rather, he had come to accept the fact that his life on this earth was coming to an end. I'm sure like anyone else, he would have liked to have had more time, but the old apostle was not the sort to dwell on what might have been. He was fully aware that his race was nearly run (**2 Timothy 4:7**). At this point all there was left to do was to stretch forth towards the finish line, and Paul was using his "final push" in an effort to galvanize Timothy's resolve to run the race as he had. For even death could not be allowed to hinder the message of the gospel.

Paul reminded Timothy that it was indeed Christ that had **"destroyed death and had brought immortality to life through the gospel" (Vs. 10)**. Death was, therefore, nothing to be afraid of anymore. I heard a story once about two boys riding together in the back seat of their mothers car, when a wasp flew in through the window. The boys were desperately trying to avoid being stung, but as life would have it, the wasp stung the older of the brothers on the arm. The younger brother was screaming and crying, afraid that he too would be stung, when the older brother said to him, "Stop your crying. He can't hurt you anymore. I've got his stinger!" You see, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He took the sting out of death. We will all have to face the "grim reaper" one day (unless we are raptured first), but we have the assurance that death for the child of God is not the end. Jesus has removed the "sting" of death (**1 Corinthians 15:55**).

How could Paul face the violent end of his life with such amazing confidence? He answered that question for us all in **verse 12**. He told Timothy that **he KNOWS the one he has believed in and that he is CONVINCED that He is able to guard what he had entrusted to Him**. What had Paul entrusted to Jesus? His very life, that's what! Paul didn't just know "about" Jesus, He KNEW Him personally! There was not a shadow of doubt left in Paul's mind that Jesus wouldn't be there for him when he needed it. He had entrusted Jesus with his very self and was absolutely assured that he would be kept safe by his loving Savior. Paul BELIEVED in Jesus. The word that he used to describe this belief in the Greek means that it had been settled in then past and would continue in the future. Paul's faith had been and would continue to be firmly established, even in the face of death. Therefore, he would not be ashamed of the gospel, even in death, for Christ would never let him down! It was Paul's intention to preach the gospel of Christ until his final breath. He was not about to be ashamed of it now, with so much at stake and so little time left to finish strong.

Discomfort

We live in a “fair weather” society these days. It’s just a fact. People will bail out at the slightest sign of discomfort. Apparently our modern society believes that it is entitled to the “easy life”, but they are sadly mistaken. Paul doesn't shy away from the fact that living for Christ means suffering for Him as well. The first century church would be appalled at the “message” of the TV preachers today! For they had never heard of the “prosperity gospel”. They only knew about suffering for the gospel. Christians in the first century were tortured and slaughtered for their faith, while people today will quit the church because someone “stole” their parking place.

Jesus promises us that if we truly take up our cross and follow Him, then we WILL be persecuted for it (**John 15:20**). What would happen if we took that verse seriously, and not only continued serving when times got tough, but actually served with joy when they did? That’s what they did in the first century church. They expected to be persecuted, and yet they served with all their hearts. Paul didn't paint a rosy picture for Timothy, but instead, he told him the cold hard truth. He admonished Timothy to join him in suffering for the gospel and not to be ashamed of it. Not to run in the face of danger, but to face it boldly! Why? Because Jesus is WORTH IT (**vs. 11-12**)!

Why is He worth it? Once again let us look to our key verse (**verse 12**) of our teaching this morning. He’s worth it because He is able to guard what we have entrusted to him to keep! He is worth it because He alone has conquered death and hell. He is worth it because He is God! Just imagine the joy you will feel when you stand before Him one day, and He says to you **“Well done good and FAITHFUL servant.” (Matthew 25:23)**. Do you know what “faithful” means? It means that you didn't quit when times got tough, that's what! If you go around telling people that you love Jesus, sooner or later you will get a chance to prove it! That’s when everyone will know if you are faithful or not. Will you be ashamed of Jesus when times get tough, or will you be faithful? Paul wanted Timothy to be faithful. He wanted him to continue preaching the word that he had instilled in Timothy (**vs. 13**). And He didn't just preach it to him, he LIVED it in front of him. That is what a witness does. They are willing to stand and give truth in the face of great adversity.

Notice that Paul doesn't just talk about the fact that we have entrusted our lives to Christ, but that Christ has also entrusted us with something. What have we been entrusted with? Christ has entrusted us with the gospel to be His witnesses (**vs. 13-14**). Paul calls it “the good deposit” (**vs.14**). You see, not only have we “entrusted” our very lives to Christ, but He has “entrusted” us with the task of being His witnesses. He is counting upon us to “go and make disciples”. This is a holy calling that we have been given, and He expects us to be just as faithful with it as He is in guarding our lives! He “guards” us, while we “guard” His gospel (**vs. 12-14**). Now I'm quite certain that He will do an excellent job of guarding what we have entrusted to Him, but what about us? What kind of “guards” are we! Are you living your life to make disciples? Are you investing the “deposit” placed in you to earn interest for the kingdom (**Luke 19:12-26**)? Or, do you find yourself ashamed, when discomfort comes your way? Don't quit on Him, for He will never quit on you!

Desertion

In **verses 15-18**, Paul actually names some of the believers who deserted him because of his imprisonment. They were afraid of facing similar persecution, so they shamefully deserted Paul when he needed them the most. It's bad enough when the world despises you for being a Christian, but we have been commanded to expect that. What really hurts is when fellow believers turn on you. I can tell you from personal experience, that the same folks that express their undying devotion to you, will often leave you when times get tough. Can I get a witness?

Not all “church folks” are genuine in the faith. Most of us in the ministry have had to endure being abandoned by other believers. It hurts. When we started Freedom Fellowship, one of the people groups that we wanted to reach were those who had become disenfranchised by the church. Let’s face it, sometimes the church seems to be the only organization that “shoots its wounded”! Many believers have been ostracized from the church when they should have been loved and supported instead.

However, that is no excuse for a believer to give up on Christ. We, like Paul, should not become “ashamed” of the gospel, just because others have hurt us. People may disappoint us, but Christ never will. He deserves our loyalty, even in the face of others disloyalty. When I was young, we used to sing a song in church, that said, “though none go with me, I still will follow.” What a great verse! Sometimes if you really want to take a stand for Christ, you may well end up standing alone. Stand firm anyway! Jesus has entrusted you to be His witness. He never said that we could be disobedient if everyone else was! We owe Him more than that. Stand firm. Do not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. In fact, Jesus said that **if we were ashamed of Him before men, then He would be ashamed of us before The Father (Mark 8:38)**. Now I don’t know about you, but I never want Christ to be ashamed of me. Don’t be ashamed to stand for Jesus, even if you have to stand alone.

All of these things that Paul encourages Timothy to do; stand firm in death, discomfort, and desertion, CANNOT be done in the flesh. Paul never told Timothy to “suck it up” or to “be a man”, for this would have been utter foolishness. We cannot serve Christ in our flesh. We will never achieve holiness by “trying harder”, we can only achieve holiness by being filled with The Holy Spirit! Just look what Paul says to Timothy in **verse 14**. He tells him to do these things “with the help of The Holy Spirit, Who lives in us.” Folks, if you want to leave a legacy of faith behind, then you must be a Spirit-filled believer. That means that we all must die to self and be completely surrendered to The Spirit. He is The One who makes the impossible, possible. We must die daily (deny our fleshly desires) and yield ourselves over to The Spirit’s control. It is not a once and for all decision, it is a daily choice that every believer must make. Do you want to leave a legacy of faith behind you? Then make it your life’s goal to be led by God’s Spirit daily. It’s not about being tougher. Its about surrendering in our weakness to His mighty power.

I want to leave behind a legacy of faith. I want to stand firm as a faithful witness even in the face of desertion, discomfort, and even death. I want to be able to say with confidence, **“I know whom I have believed and am convinced that HE is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”** How about you?

And ALL of God’s people said... TRUTH!!!