

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (26-1-1997 Guisborough Evangelical Church)

2 Timothy 1:8-11

Additional Bible reading: Mark 8:34-38

### Introduction

Now Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed – of Christ, or His people, “of me, his prisoner” or of the Gospel, but rather to share in suffering for it, by being filled with the power of God.

There is a temptation that comes to us all, which is strong and insidious – to be ashamed of Christ, His people and His Gospel. We are all more sensitive to public opinion than we care to admit. Jesus anticipated our weakness. **If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels** (Mark 8:38). Paul himself felt the temptation and had to assert: **I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile** (Romans 1:16).

This leads Paul to discuss Gospel of which he asks Timothy not to be ashamed. He sets out the essentials of the Gospel in all its glory. He sweeps from eternity past, through time to eternity future. There are few passages in the New Testament which have in them such a sense of the sheer grandeur of the Gospel.

### The Gospel purposed in eternity

**This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time** (2 Timothy 1:9). We are reminded again that we are not saved by our own works but by God’s sheer grace. We owe everything to Him. Before we were born, before history began, before the world was created – God’s plan to save man was drawn up. The river of salvation can trace its source to eternity past. The Godhead looked forward to creating the universe and this world. The Father planned salvation, and then, in time, the Son achieved it when He died for us, and the Holy Spirit applies it when He draws us to repentance and faith in Christ. **He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake** (1 Peter 1:20).

Also God planned and purposed to bestow salvation on God’s people. **For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ** (Ephesians 1:4,5). This is one of the great mysteries of Scripture. It raises questions to which we cannot give answers. And yet it is as scriptural as John 3:16, and we are not to try to explain it away or ignore it. It is not intended to baffle or mystify, but it has a very practical purpose – to engender deep humility and gratitude. All boasting is excluded. This truth brings stability to us and puts real backbone into men.

In the past, men have been enabled to face tremendous odds and win through. They have not cowed in the presence of kings. They have held on in face of temptation and trial. Their confidence in this truth has filled them with comfort and assurance. We can be confident that as we preach the Gospel, God’s Word will not return to Him

void but will accomplish what He designs. Our safety does not depend on our feeble grasp but on God's almighty purposes of grace. The Gospel springs from God's eternal purposes.

The knowledge that God planned this from the beginning of time gives purpose to life and to the whole world. God is at the back of it all. He made it, sustains it, controls it, He started time and He will end time. Before Napoleon invaded Russia, he had a plan worked out in detail about the line of march for each division, where to be at a certain time, and what equipment to have. We cannot conceive of God creating the universe without a plan embracing all that would happen.

### Manifested in history

**It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus** (2 Timothy 1:10). **When the time had fully come, God sent his Son** (Galatians 4:4). **At just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly** (Romans 5:6). John Stott's book *Basic Christianity* carefully presents the evidence for the person of Christ – that He was the eternal Son of God, the importance of His death and what it means, the evidence for the Resurrection. He quotes a K.C. who says the evidence is conclusive: "Over and over in the High Court I have secured a verdict on evidence not so compelling."

Why is this so important? Because Christianity is Christ. Who Christ is and what He did is the foundation rock of the Gospel. Take Him out, and we are left with an empty casket without its jewel. Christ is at the centre. All else is on the circumference. Christianity is the only religion in the world which rests on the person of the Founder. Christianity is not a philosophy, a set of changing ideas or ethical values. It is based on what happened in history – the person of Christ, born in Bethlehem, His death on the Cross, His Resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Salvation depends on these events. Christians believe these things. If they did not happen, we have no Gospel. Christ was not merely one of the world's greatest teachers, as some would like to concede, that and no more. No, when people define Christianity, it cannot be done without reference to the person of Christ and a personal relationship with Him.

### Centred in Calvary

The Lord Jesus Christ is Saviour because of what He did at Calvary. The angels foretold that He would be a Saviour when they sang to the shepherds at His birth (Luke 2:10,11). The truth is contained in His name: **you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins** (Matthew 1:21). **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost** (Luke 19:10).

The work of salvation finds its heart in His death. The Cross is where the work of Salvation was accomplished. Sins were transferred onto Him, and He was punished in our place. He bore the wages of our sin, which was death, that we might be set free. This is the only grounds for forgiveness, acceptance, and adoption into God's family.

*“Upon a life I did not live,  
Upon a death I did not die,*

*Another's life, another's death,  
I stake my whole eternity.”*  
(H. Bonar)

### Our holy calling

The result of our salvation is a life of personal sanctity. **He has saved us and called us to a holy life** (2 Timothy 1:9). The consequence of salvation is the consecration of Christians. Here is how these great truths become personal. We are saved from sin, and saved unto a new life of holiness, righteousness and Christ-likeness. We are not to live as we like, for we have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light. So we have to walk, live, speak and act as children of that light.

**For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight** (Ephesians 1:4). **For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son** (Romans 8:29). **And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again** (2 Corinthians 5:15). **We too may live a new life... alive to God in Christ Jesus** (Romans 6:4,11). We are **called to be saints** (Romans 1:7), i.e. called to be holy and separated people.

The vast majority start with man and end with man. They start with this world and end with this world. They live as if there is no God and no purpose beyond man. They are spiritually dead, knowing nothing of the spiritual realm beyond this world. They consider themselves and everything happening in the world to be victims of circumstance and chance.

The Christian has a dimension the non-Christian knows nothing about. He is spiritually alive. God is a reality. The Bible is the living Word. God's will is his concern. His aim is God's glory. God's people are beyond price, and they know that the best is yet to be.

Living as we do in a non-Christian world, we meet people every day – nice, decent, helpful people – with whom we talk about the many things we have in common. But there is a whole world, the most precious thing of all, that they know nothing of. Only with a fellow Christian do we have all things in common.

### The enjoyment of immortality

**Our Saviour, Christ Jesus, has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel** (2 Timothy 1:10). Death is defeated, Christ has drawn its sting, broken its power, so that though the believer still dies, death has a completely different meaning. It is no longer the ogre holding us in bondage of fear. But it is the doorway into the immediate presence of the King, and reunion with the dead in Christ who are waiting for us on the other side of the door.

There were many hints in the Old Testament of life after death with a few bright flashes of faith. But on the whole, the Old Testament is comparative dusk. But in the Gospel, in the light of the empty tomb of the first Easter and the Lord's glorious resurrection, life and immortality has been truly brought to light. It is not just our

spirits that live on, but even our bodies are affected – we will be given glorious resurrection bodies. How Christ has made a difference to the way we look at death.

Newspaper article read: “We are not prepared for death. Modern society has made the word unmentionable. We use our talents to avoid the prospect of dying, and when it comes we react with anything from excessive triviality to total despair.” The proper epitaph for a Christian is not a dismal and uncertain R.I.P., with black clothes, mournful chants and requiem masses, but a triumphant C.A.D., Christ abolished death.

Remember who was writing these things – Paul, who was facing a death sentence any day now. Already in his imagination he could see the executioner’s sword. But in the very presence of death, he could shout triumphantly, “Christ has destroyed death.” One of the most searching tests for any religion is its attitude to death. And where else apart from the Gospel of Christ do you have certain knowledge, confidence, victory and assurance?

#### Announced through Christian ministry

**Of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher** (2 Timothy 1:11). Three vital offices are mentioned here: (1) Apostles, who formulated the Gospel, (2) heralds, or preachers, who proclaim the Gospel, and (3) teachers, who instruct in doctrine and ethical implications of the Gospel.

There are no apostles today. They were specially commissioned and inspired to formulate the Gospel, found in its definitive form in the New Testament for the use of the church in every age and place. There is no other Gospel and no new Gospel. But there are still preachers and teachers. They are the main means by which the Gospel comes to us and its great truths are explained to us.

Only some are called to the ministry of preaching or teaching. Yet we are all to announce it. All are called to be witnesses out of our own experience. **Do not be ashamed to testify** – be witnesses to the Lord.

#### Conclusion

Paul may have been in the narrow limits of an underground cell awaiting execution, but his mind was free, his heart soared to eternity. He writes of the sweep of God’s purpose of grace from past eternity, through historical outworking, to our ultimate destiny, with Christ, and like Christ, in future immortality.