

2 Timothy 1:3-14

“**Shame** on you! You ought to be **ashamed** of yourself! Shame, shame, shame!” How do you **feel** when someone makes a comment like that to you? If you have done something **wrong**, you will probably feel extremely **guilty**, and may respond with a defensive comment of your own. In fact, the odds are pretty good that even if you **haven’t** done anything wrong, you will still start to **blush**, and will feel very **uncomfortable**. What **is** shame, and why does it bring such a **reaction**, even from the **innocent**? The first definition of shame in the dictionary calls it, “A painful feeling of having lost the respect of others because of the improper behavior, incompetence, etc. of oneself or another.”

How does shame fit into today’s text? Actually, it **doesn’t**, and that’s the whole point. In this final letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul is strongly urging his young friend **not** to be ashamed - not of his **faith**, not of **testifying** about what God has done, and not of **guarding** the message of the Gospel. This morning, using the theme, **Don’t Be Ashamed Of The Gospel**, we will see that there is no reason for Timothy, or for us - to be **ashamed**, to be **fearful**, or to be **inactive**.

Our text begins, *“I thank God, whom I serve as my **forefathers** did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember **you** in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere **faith**, which first lived in your grandmother **Lois**, and in your mother **Eunice**, and I am persuaded now lives in **you** also.”* There is a lot of unstated **history** behind these words - history which goes all the way back to the patriarchs - to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It’s important for us to note that fact, because when Paul wrote these words, he was in **chains**. Paul had been **imprisoned** by the Roman authorities, for helping to spread an **illegal** religion.

The Roman emperor, **Nero**, was attacking Christianity with a great vengeance. In one of the most famous fires of ancient history, much of the city of Rome had gone up in smoke. And, in an effort to cover up his own guilt, Nero had pinned **his** arson on the group known as **Christians**, and he had **banned** them from **gathering** for any purpose - including worship. He tried to make them appear as a group of left-wing radicals, painting **Christianity** as something **new**, and **different** - a harsh **departure** from the religious beliefs of the **past**. But in our text, Paul shows us that this was **not** so. The focal point of **his** faith was the same as that of **Timothy** - which was the same as that of his **mother** and **grandmother** - all of which could be traced back **centuries** earlier, to Paul’s **forefathers**. The believers

of the Old Testament merely looked **forward** to the Savior whom God would send in the **future**, while Paul looked **back** on the Savior whom God had now **sent**.

At any rate, because of Nero's decree, Paul was in **prison** - with **death** staring him in the face. As he sat there in his prison cell, Paul had lots of **time** - and he used **much** of that time to **pray**. It could **not** have been used more **wisely**. Although prayer had **always** been an important part of Paul's life, isn't it interesting how God frequently finds ways to provide us with time to pray - whether it is through a **crisis**, or through an **illness**, or perhaps even through **imprisonment** - something which **forces** us to step **back**, to take a look at the important things which are **missing** in our daily lives, and to turn to our **Lord** for help.

One of the **people** whom Paul remembered in **his** prayers, was his dear co-worker, **Timothy** - a man whom Paul **commended** because of his sincere **faith**. As the day of Paul's death grew nearer, he realized that Timothy would be one of the **key people**, who would keep the fires of the Gospel burning **brightly** in this world. So in this letter, he **reminded** Timothy to use his God-given gifts **wisely**. He wrote, *"I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline."*

Paul was not asking Timothy to do **more** than he was **capable** of doing - just to do **everything** that he could. It may well be that Timothy was **shy** and **reserved** by nature. Paul didn't expect him to **change** that, just to remember the **power** which he had received through the Holy Spirit. There are some things we can do **nothing** about. There are times when we have **no power** to change our ways. But when it comes to sharing the **Gospel**, there is a Source available to **provide** the power we need. It is the **Holy Spirit**, who is within us. **He** will remind us of our **responsibility** as disciples - to **fan into flame** the gifts and the talents which God has **given** to us.

Now, we need to **realize** that Paul was not accusing Timothy of not **using** his gifts. Instead, Paul was **reminding** him that it was becoming increasingly more important to **fan** the hot **coals** into **flame** - to use them to the **fullest**. After all, Timothy **did** live in a hostile environment - the Roman Empire. Christianity had been marked by the government as **illegal** - and the Apostle Paul, the foremost **spokesman** for Christianity, would soon be **dead** and **gone**. If someone **else** didn't step up and continue to share the Gospel message, it wouldn't be long before **everyone** would be **ashamed** to be associated with Christianity. So Paul

encouraged Timothy with these words, “*Do **not** be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of **me**, His prisoner. But join **with** me in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything **we** have done, but because of His own purpose and grace.*” **Don’t Be Ashamed Of The Gospel**, Timothy - and Paul could have easily gone on to say, as he did to the Romans, “*For **I** am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of **God** for the salvation of **everyone** who believes.*” **Don’t Be Ashamed Of The Gospel** - but rather, join **with** me in **suffering** for it. It is a message which we can’t **afford** to **lose**!

There are two things which can still cause **us** to be **ashamed** of the Gospel - and in the process, to **lose** it. The **first** is **ignorance** - the ignorance which made the Apostle Paul fail to see Jesus as his priceless **Treasure** early in life - back when he was still known as **Saul** of Tarsus. The **second** is **fear** - fear of a world which is **hostile** toward Jesus - the same fear which caused **Peter** to allow a little **servant** girl to scare him out of telling about his love for the Savior. Ignorance and fear are capable of causing **us** to be **ashamed** to **speak up** and to **speak out** about our faith in Jesus. There is certainly no reason for us to be **ignorant** about the Gospel, for we have hundreds of opportunities to hear and study God’s Word, and to receive His sacraments. And having received the priceless treasures of forgiveness, life, and salvation - there is no reason for us to be **afraid** either. The Apostle Paul calls us to action. He says, **Don’t Be Ashamed Of The Gospel**. Love it - live it - and proclaim it.

However, if the Gospel is not **preserved**, there will be nothing for us to **proclaim**. Therefore, the final words in our text take on great importance. Paul said, “*What you hear from me, keep as a **pattern** of **sound teaching**, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. **Guard** the good deposit that was entrusted to you - guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*” Before we go any farther, the question needs to be asked, “What **is** the good deposit which we must **guard**?” The answer is: it is the **sound teaching** which we have received through Christ Jesus. God tells us that it is **not enough** simply to have a sincere faith. It must be a sincere faith in the **sound teaching** which we have received - the **truth** of God’s Word!

The second question which comes to mind when we hear the words **guard** the good **deposit**, would be, “**How** are we to guard it?” Perhaps we would think of packing our deposit away in a safe place - like a vault, or a safety deposit box. But if we **did** that, the sound teachings of Jesus would never **get out** to anyone else - and in reality, they would be **lost**. To keep the Word of God **pure**, we must **share**

it with others. We dare not become so busy with **other** things, that the Gospel lies **buried** deep in our subconscious. We dare not **apologize** for the Gospel, even though some people will react negatively to it. We dare not try to adjust our lives to the **times**, when the times **conflict** with God's Word. Instead, never underestimate the enlightening **power** of the Gospel. Put it out there in the world, and let the Holy Spirit **use** it to accomplish His purpose.

Don't Be Ashamed Of The Gospel, because it **reunites** us with our God. That statement takes us right back to the beginning of our text again. Do you remember how Paul spoke of the great **sorrow** which he and Timothy experienced because they had been **separated** from one another? Bear in mind that when people are ashamed of the Gospel, the end result is the **ultimate** sorrow of being eternally separated from **God!** So, **Don't Be Ashamed Of The Gospel** - instead, follow the pattern of Lois, Eunice, Timothy, and the Apostle Paul, and **share** the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Share it with your children, with your grandchildren, and with **everyone** you encounter. Amen.