

# Suffer For The Gospel

*2 Timothy*

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Please open your Bibles to the book of 2 Timothy 1. That's where we're going to be today. I've entitled this message "Suffer For The Gospel" and I've spoken on this passage a few times in the last month so there will be some overlap from our Wednesday night messages but it was so important to me that I thought it was necessary to preach it to the whole church today and it will be a little bit of a different emphasis than what it has been on Wednesdays.

But what a year it has been. My goodness, with COVID and all the racial tensions and now this election, this year is going to go down in the history books as Sean Connery died, just distraught, man. So no, seriously though it will go down in the history books for a number of reasons and I don't want to say a whole lot about the outcome of the election or how we should handle it but I'll just say this: let God be true and every man a liar. In a world of lies, God's word is truly the only thing that we can trust. Seriously. You can't trust science because it's studied and interpreted by sinful self-motivated people. You don't know who's speaking the truth and someone might be speaking the truth one moment and lying the next. You don't know. People are corrupt and if nothing else, if we don't learn anything else from this year we should learn that the Scripture is absolutely true. If we are rooted in the Scripture, none of this surprises us. We're not in heaven yet and so, I mean, let me just read a couple of passages to you.

Romans 3:10-18. "There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless," together, "there is none who does good, there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps," or snakes, poisonous snakes, "is under their lips," this is how they speak to one another. "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood, Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Is that not true? It is distressing to see so much chaos and disorder and vitriol aimed from people and at people on all sides of these issues. It's distressing, and rightly so.

These things are important. Politics is important. The honesty and integrity of our culture is important and we are responsible for our decisions, our elections and all of this, and we

will be impacted by the decisions of others on all kinds of levels, but as Christians we recognize that the ultimate reality, the ultimate reality is that God is sovereign and in control, utter and total control. And we hear this often, God is on the throne, and it has become cliché but it is absolutely true and it cannot be overstated how important it is to the Christian life to recognize this. Today's message is not about this but I do want to read these two passages to you, Psalm 2 and Isaiah 6, because we read this, we sing this today, you know, God is on his throne. It is absolutely true.

Listen to Psalm 2. "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together." They are conspiring. There are true conspiracy theories. Some of them are true. Many of them are not but some of them are true. The kings are conspiring together to take their counsel together, "Against the LORD and against His Anointed." Who is "His anointed"? It's Jesus Christ, the one true King of all. That is the anointed of the Lord and this is what they're saying in verse 3, "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" They don't want God's rule. They don't want his reign. It's restrictive to them. Well, is God bothered by this? Is he distressed? No, verse 4, he says, "He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at the puny efforts of these arrogant men." Then verse 5, it says, "Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 'But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy hill. I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You."'" That is speaking of Jesus Christ. Verse 8, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.' Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence," or fear, "And rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled."

The wrath of God is upon the heads of these so-called powerful people and forces, even the demonic forces are absolutely terrified of the power of Jesus Christ and they know that they will be thrown into the abyss, the lake of fire forever and they are thrashing around seeking to cause the Lord and his people as much pain as they can until that day. And then it ends with this short Gospel message, "How blessed are those who take refuge in Him!" While there is time, take refuge in Jesus Christ because as Charles was saying, our hope is not in the politicians, our hope is not in doctors and lawyers, our hope is not in kings and princes and whatever else. Our hope is in Jesus Christ. He is our only refuge.

So then I want to read you from Isaiah 6, chapter 6, verse 1 and he says, "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." The New Testament says that that was Jesus sitting on the throne that Isaiah saw and I just want you to take note of this, the year of King Uzziah's death. This was the end of a long stable reign of one of the longest serving kings in Israel's history. This is a very distressing time when the king dies. All kinds of insecurity about what on earth is going to happen? What's going to change? And in that year he sees this vision and the Lord Jesus is sitting on the throne.

Verse 2, "Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke." Okay, this is the reality. You see, present tense, "the earth is full of His glory." If we could see things as they really are, we would see his glory everywhere. It is full of his glory. The train of his robe fills the temple. He is ruling everywhere.

And notice what Isaiah now considers his biggest problem to be. It's not that the king has died but it is that the King is on the throne and the King is holy and he knows you and me. Look at what he says, verse 5, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." He recognizes that the things that he says are not anywhere near worthy of the glory of this King. I know I can relate to that. The impatient words that I have in any moment towards the people in my life is not worthy of the glory of this King. Woe is me, for I am ruined! Your and I biggest problem is not the election results or the economic results, it is that the King who rules all things, whose glory fills the earth is holy and you are not.

But look at this, verse 6, "one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.'" Praise God. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" It is out of this forgiveness that now we are now empowered to take the message of this glorious King, to go for him wherever he sends.

And he says here, verse 9, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand. Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed.'" He's saying he's sending him on basically a fruitless mission, a mission in which he will proclaim the truth of the glory of God and these people will reject it and that is his mission.

He says, "How long am I going to do this?" He says, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate." We will do this until there's no one left to talk to. "The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. Yet," he promises, verse 13, "there will be a tenth portion in it," there will be a remnant, "And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump." There are chosen people out there who will come to faith in Jesus Christ and we will preach until they're the only ones left.

Our charge, our charge is like that of Isaiah, to speak for the Lord in the midst of a crooked and a perverse generation, and when we do that faithfully, we will eventually

suffer for it and Isaiah himself was eventually sawn in two because of his preaching. But the authority belongs to God and he has purified you, removed the worst thing, your sin, the judgment that was upon you, and has now commissioned you unto service in the service of the Gospel of this great King. And so then he says in Matthew 28, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." All authority belongs to Jesus Christ and that is what we are in this culture to proclaim is the authority of Jesus Christ and salvation to be found in his name, and he demands loyalty and obedience from all people and the natural state of man is to reject that authority and to kill the messenger.

So as our culture grows increasingly hostile to biblical truth, we will be called upon to suffer for the name of Christ. It will happen eventually and it is going further down that path. The period of prosperity that we have enjoyed for 100-200 years is very unusual in the course of history and what we are about to face as a nation will not be better than what we've just walked through. I don't know what it will look like or how fast it will go, but it will not be better for us in terms of freedom, in terms of it being a pleasant road. And so we will be called upon, all who are faithful, all who are godly in Christ Jesus will be called upon to stand for him and to be willing to face persecution, and so it's with that in mind that we turn to 2 Timothy 1:6-12. 2 Timothy 1:6-12 and this is our passage for today. It says,

6 For this reason [Paul speaking to Timothy] For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

Let's pray.

*Father, we draw near to You as people who are, we are people of unclean lips, Lord, we can't even get our speech right and we say things we ought not, we think things we ought not, we do things that we ought not to do. We are worthy of judgment and wrath. It is not worthy of the glorious King that we proclaim to serve, Lord, and we confess to You our sin and the sin of our people, Lord, our culture. We are unworthy of Your glory but, Lord Jesus, we are amazed that You are compassionate toward sinners and gracious toward*

*us, and that You did what was necessary to purify and cleanse our conscience, Lord, to purify us from every lawless deed and now to put us in the service, Lord. So I pray that today You would help us. Help us, Lord, motivate us, teach us, guide us, instruct us, convict us, turn us from any harmful way in us, Lord, that we might serve You as You have called us to. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as we get into this, I am often amazed at the Apostle Paul and every time I read the things that he has to say and the things he's gone through, I'm just blown away that this normal man, the things that he went through, the motivation that drove him, the love that he showed, and he says so many things that are profound and really unexpected and really Scripture is that way. It's not according to our reasoning that Scripture walks things out, right? Scripture and our reasoning are at odds with each other and he says something here in this passage that is very unusual. He says in verse 8, "join with me in suffering," the second half of verse 8, "join with me in suffering." Think about that. I mean, in case you don't know what suffering is, it involves pain, right, anguish, trouble. And he says to his beloved Son in the faith, a man that he cared deeply for, he says, "join with me in suffering." This is not something that you normally would say to somebody that you care about, right? Typically our advice to people is based on, "Hey, I went through some hard things. I want to save you some pain. Here's how to get around that pain. Here's how to avoid that suffering."

And there's many situations where it's appropriate to avoid suffering, right? I mean, much of the book of Proverbs, the wisdom is offered and some of the motivation is, "Hey, do this or else you're going to have a hedge of thorns, you're going to go through some trouble, you're going to cause destruction in your relationships." So some of the motivation to do wise things is to avoid the unnecessary pain that comes from foolish decisions and foolish character traits, and Paul even, you know, he shows concern for people in 1 Corinthians 7 where they're going through a distressing time and he says, "Hey, it might be better for you to remain single right now, people in Corinth, because of the hard things that are going on because when you get married, you incur more concerns, you have to be more concerned about life." In 1 Corinthians 7:32 he says, "I want you to be free from concern so for right now, why don't you, you know, not get married. You're okay to get married, you're free to get married, it's good to be married, but you will have more concerns on your plate and now may not be a good time for that."

So there are times in which avoiding pain and suffering is a legitimate route to go but there is a sort of suffering that comes as a result of being faithful. It's on the path of faithfulness. If you're going to be faithful, you have to endure suffering to do it. We understand that to some degree, right? We think if you have to get in shape, right, you have to endure some pain and suffering. You have to avoid certain foods and you have to get up early and go exercise and that involves some level of pain. We understand going through pain because there's some goal that we're trying to get to. An even greater example of this is the way that women suffer in childbirth, right? They know it's coming and they go through it anyway, right? They know it's temporary. That's amazing to me. I just, I cannot imagine knowing that that's coming and doing it anyway. So women are very, they're much tougher than we give them credit for.

But you know, you hear the phrase no pain, no gain, and, you know, we have a certain sense that a certain amount of suffering is necessary, but when you look at this passage and you see Paul saying, "join with me in suffering," this takes it to a whole new level. The Greek word literally means "to suffer together; to assume your share of the suffering," and when you look at Paul here, Paul's saying, "join with me in my suffering, the type of suffering I'm going through, and join with me in the cause that is causing this suffering," namely the Gospel, right? So "join with me in this very painful pursuit."

Now think about this. Paul is writing this from a cold, damp, dark prison in Rome. This is his worst prison experience. He's had other prison experiences where he was under house arrest and that was okay, he could have visitors, it was generally fine, he just wasn't allowed to leave the house. That's hard enough, but this one is the very worst imprisonment he faced. He was awaiting execution at the hands of Nero, the emperor in Rome. Nero was persecuting the Christians. He blamed them for setting the city on fire and now he instituted a terrible persecution against them in which he did things like wrap them in animal skins and sic his hunting dogs on them. He would have them drawn and quartered and then light his gardens with, he used their limbs as torches in his garden. It was sadistic. It was horrible. This was the persecution he was facing in Rome. He killed many, tortured others, and it was just awful. And so Paul is in the midst of this persecution and he says, "join with me in suffering." He's not just saying to Timothy, "Hey, Timothy, do hard things. You know, hey, be disciplined. Get up. You need to read more books." You know, it's like he's not saying like, "Hey, just, you know, get tough." He's saying, "join with me in the suffering."

Then you think about this, what Paul has gone through his entire life since being saved. I mean, right out the gate when Paul gets confronted by Jesus on the road to Damascus and then he's blinded and he's sitting there waiting for a guy named Ananias to come and heal him and give him his sight back. The Lord tells Ananias, "I must show Paul how much he must suffer for My sake." Right out the gate Paul knows, "I'm going to suffer in service to Jesus." I mean, it was the whole call, it was one of the very first things that he heard. And in 2 Corinthians 11:23, and I've read this before in preaching and I'll just go through it quickly, but this details out a lot of what Paul suffered and I just want you to think if you went through even one of these things, what would be your response?

He says, "I was in many labors and imprisonments, beaten times without number, and often in danger of death." Verse 24, "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes." That was with a whip and with several leather straps on it embedded with steel balls, broken bones, broken glass, and the strongest soldier would tie them to a pillar and they would whip them with that and rip their back. Thirty-nine lashes. He experienced that on five separate occasions for no other reason than for preaching the Gospel. All he had to do was stop. You know, if I went through that one time, I'd be traumatized and I'd be like, "Okay, I got my combat medal and I'm retiring now. I'm going to go and get an office job, you know? Send someone else out to go do that." He experienced that on five separate occasions. That's incredible.

Verse 25 it says, "Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned," that was in the city of Lystra where they picked up boulders that were, they would take them out and they would surround them. A mob would drag them out to a location where there was lots of boulders and rocks and there was plenty in the Middle East, and they would take these boulders and slam them on the guy. That's what it means to be stoned. They're not just pelting them with little pebbles just trying to irritate them, they are trying to kill them. That's what the intention is. And if you could imagine some of these riots that we've seen on tv where they drag somebody out of the cab of a truck and start beating them and throwing things on them and kicking them, that is our Apostle Paul and just imagine them taking the rocks around them, bricks and whatever and slamming it on the back of his head. That is what he experienced in the city of Lystra.

He says here beyond that in verse 25 three times he was shipwrecked. I mean, if I was shipwrecked one time, I don't know if I would get on another boat, right? He was shipwrecked three times. One of those times the boat broke up and there was, you know, driftwood in the water and so he's basically hanging on to this wood floating in the ocean for a day and a night, that's what he says here.

Verse 26 he says, "I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers," okay, that doesn't have anything to do with persecution, it's just the inherent danger of traveling and the reason he was traveling was to take the Gospel to all these cities where it hadn't been proclaimed before. So dangers from rivers, "dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren." So people that were his countrymen, people that were Gentiles, people that were outside the church, people that were inside the church, dangers everywhere. I mean, I think you might have a little PTSD, right? I mean, think of it. I mean, "Hey, Jesus is Lord." And you see him duck, you know what I'm saying? Like this is, the type of danger and the type of suffering that he faced was absolutely, I just can't, I don't know if you could possibly do more than that and it was all voluntary.

He says, "I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." What a drive to take the Gospel to the lost. And then in verse 28 he says, "Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" You know, those last two verses, 28 and 29, that is enough to drive many men completely out of ministry, the pressure of concern for the churches. You're not even talking about opposition, you're just talking about the pressure of dealing with having to work through the most difficult things in people's lives and seeing many fall away. I mean, the pressure of that drives men out of the ministry. They can't handle it.

Then he says to Timothy, "join with me in suffering." Well, it's a whole new level when you consider what Timothy himself had witnessed of Paul's suffering. You see, this is not something where, this is not sort of like an FYI, Timothy is not receiving reports of this, it's not like reading it in the newspaper. In 2 Timothy 3:11 Paul says that Timothy himself

had followed him in his persecutions and the sufferings that he had endured in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, and you can read about that in the book of Acts and I forget what chapter it is, it's like 14 or 15, something like that. But Timothy had witnessed that stoning at Lystra. He was there for it. So Timothy not only is hearing Paul say this, he would have a visual in his mind of what this looks like. He knew what it looked like to suffer for the Gospel. He knew what Paul was saying here. Timothy would remember the shouts, the sound of fist and feet slamming into Paul's body, of stones crunching his legs and skull. He would remember the smell of the blood, the sweat, the tears, the spit. He knows what Paul's saying when he says, "join with me in suffering for the gospel."

Now how would you respond to such a call? Who would respond to that? Who would say, "Yes, sign me up for that"? How would you respond if you had personally seen this and then someone's calling you into it? If you had been screamed at, rejected, slandered, and physically attacked, what would be your response? Would you get up and go back? Would you do it again? I honestly don't know what I would do. I would like to believe that I would have the courage and the fortitude and the love and the motivation to get up and keep going but I would be quite, I would be tempted to quit.

And Paul says here, "join with me in suffering." Well, here's three typical responses to suffering or persecution or opposition that I would probably expect you would have and I would have, and they're listed here in our passage by three different words here and I'll just list them out here. First would be a diminished zeal in verse 6 where Paul says rekindle the gift of God that is in you. Okay, when you go through this kind of suffering, you see this kind of thing, the temptation is to have a diminished zeal, you're more withdrawn, you slink back into your shell and protect yourself and Paul says to rekindle this gift. Why? Because it's burning low. It's still burning, it hasn't gone out but he's saying don't let this gift go out.

So a diminished zeal would be the first way, the second would be timidity. In verse 7 he says we have not been given a spirit of timidity or fear, and really the word is better translated cowardice. Cowardice is a type of fear, it's self-protective and it keeps you from doing what you ought to have done. It's like a firefighter avoiding the fire and letting someone die in the flames. It's like the Parkland Campus cop who had the tools and the training, the experience and the responsibility to go and meet the threat of that campus shooter and instead he hid himself out to protect himself so that he didn't have to die, and instead he let the people he was charged to protect die. That's cowardice. We have not been given a spirit of cowardice, that's what this word is. It's not talking about the emotional feelings of fear and trepidation, everyone goes through that. Paul experienced that. Jesus had to encourage him to preach in Corinth because he had many souls there and he says, "Don't be afraid." God's people are often afraid but we are not to be cowardly.

So we are tempted to diminish our zeal, to be cowardly, to not do what we ought to do out of this fear, out of this self-protection, and the last would be shame. In verse 8 he says don't be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of me or don't be ashamed of the testimony of Jesus. It means to be characterized by guilt or embarrassment. It means to experience the pain of



feeling a sense of loss of status because of some particular event or activity. So it's this idea that when you are ashamed, you see someone and you know that they're looking down on you and you break eye-contact, you kind of duck, you kind of you avoid them, you avoid being associated with someone that you're embarrassed about, right? If you're embarrassed about Jesus, if you're ashamed of him, then you don't want people to know that you're associated with him. If you're ashamed of one of his servants, a faithful preacher. You're ashamed of him. You don't want people to know that you're associated with him. That's what that means. You lower your head, you avoid notice and you're afraid of their judgment so you hide. In this context to be ashamed would be to act in accordance with that sense of embarrassment, to not want to be associated with Paul or Jesus and not let people know that you know Paul or that you worked with him and many had already demonstrated this. In verse 15 of the same chapter, Paul says, "You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me." So here's Paul who has endured all of these things, he's now in prison and now the people that were his friends and associates, many of them turned away, are now avoiding him. They don't want to be persecuted with him and they're ashamed of their association with him. 2 Timothy 4:16, he says, "At my first defense no one supported me but all deserted me, may it not be accounted against them." In chapter 4, verse 10 it says that, "Demas having loved this present world has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." So Paul when he needed him the most, instead of sticking with him, Demas, it says having loved this present world meaning he probably wanted the pleasure and the enjoyment of a normal life and so he deserted Paul when he needed him the most.

Well, Timothy to this point had faithfully served Christ alongside Paul. He has not yet been unfaithful, but Paul is now experiencing the desertion and the defection of many of his trusted associates and he's concerned that Timothy might be tempted to abandon his calling or to pursue it with half-heartedness, tentatively, and so he says to him, "join with me in suffering." And again, it's worth noting it's not suffering for its own sake that he's saying here. It's not virtuous to pursue suffering for the sake of suffering. You're not doing this to be a martyr or to be self-righteous. And again, it's important to note as well that this is not suffering that's incidental to life, it's not talking about disease, this is not talking about just the normal natural suffering that we all experience, you know, injuries from accidents and all that kind of stuff. Now Scripture does speak to those sorts of things but that's not what this passage is talking about. This is talking about, "join with me in suffering for a purpose, for the gospel, for the advance of the gospel, for faithfulness to the gospel. Join with me in suffering for that purpose." It is a voluntary form of suffering that comes as a result of that faithfulness.

You don't seek it but if you're faithful to it, it will come and while it's voluntary, as I said, suffering is not the point. It's not masochistic, it's not because you enjoy it. We have to recognize this, it is wrong, it is plainly wrong to inflict pain and suffering on yourself as a way to pay for your sins or to relieve yourself of some sort of turmoil or anguish, right? So to cut yourself is wrong and you need to seek help for that. To cut yourself or to punish yourself because you sinned is wrong. That is to deny that Jesus Christ has paid for it, to think that you need to pay for it yourself. He was punished for you. There's nothing left to pay. It is only by faith in him that you are saved and forgiven and it is only

by living according to his love by the power of his Spirit that you are able to change into his likeness and character. You do not do it by denying yourself certain foods. Okay, fasting does not make you more holy. Pagans do it all the time. That's not righteous in itself. Whipping yourself or like the Catholics do penance in order to pay for their sin. It doesn't pay for it and it doesn't make you more holy. It gives an appearance of godliness but has no power against the flesh. So we're not seeking suffering for those purposes. We don't need to go run into the LGBT center and start screaming at them hoping for a martyr's death. We don't seek this but if it comes, we are not to avoid it and Paul makes it very clear that suffering comes with the territory. In 2 Timothy 2:3 he says, "suffer hardship with me as a good soldier." And later he says that "all who desire to be godly in Christ will suffer persecution."

Now what are the sources of this? Why is this the case? Why does suffering come because of faithfulness? Well, if you're going to proclaim the authority of Jesus against sin and against the lust of people, they're going to hate you. Listen to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. He says, "realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come." 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Difficult times will come. We're to expect this. Why? What makes it difficult? Verse 2, "men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable," you can't get them to reconcile their differences, they are embittered against one another and they stay there, they're "malicious gossips," seeking to destroy one another through their words, they're "without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power." If you interact in a society like this, those people are going to hate you and they're going to cause you trouble.

In 2 Timothy 4:3-4 says this, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." That's why godliness results in suffering, because you will confront these kind of people and they will turn on you.

Now why would we want to suffer? Why would we be willing to do this? Why would you respond to this call? Why would you not be ashamed? Think about it. What would motivate you to do this? It's certainly not going to be because this life has great promise. It's certainly not going to be simply for the sake of your own self-righteousness. To sum it up, if we're going to be willing to suffer for Christ and his Gospel, it's because he has purchased our loyalty. The bottom line is it is loyalty to Jesus. It's because we love him. And Paul points this out to Timothy here. He reminds Timothy in verse 9 that he saved us. Admit that we needed saving, right? We were saved from wrath, saved from our own self-destructive lusts and pleasures. We were once dead in sin and then he made us alive.

Whatever suffering that we experience for the Gospel is nothing compared to what we have been spared. Whatever we suffer for the Gospel, whatever we suffer in this life is nothing compared to what we have been spared, an eternity of wrath. And on the flipside, Romans 8 says that what we suffer in this life is also nothing compared to the glory that

will be revealed in us. So not only is the suffering in this life not worthy of being compared to the suffering of hell, it is not worth being compared to the glory of heaven. And I'm not saying it's minor. I'm not saying it's minuscule. I'm not saying it doesn't matter. What I'm saying is in comparison to what you've been saved from, it's a small bit of suffering compared to that and compared to what you have been saved to. It is temporary, it is short and Paul says when we get there, we will look back and say, "It was all worth it."

Jesus Christ because of his great love for you, decided to save you from that hell and save you unto heaven and that's what he says, he's called us with a holy calling. He's called us out of sin, called us out of darkness and called us with a holy calling, that means that we've been set apart. So to be holy simply means to be set apart, set apart to service unto God. It's not simply a matter of not sinning. It's not simply a matter of not doing bad things. It is what you do instead. He has called you to holiness, service unto him. Your whole life now belongs to him and verse 9 it goes on, it was "not according to our works." None of this was deserved. It was not by your design or mine. He did it of his will, of his own initiative. And verse 9 goes on, "according to His purpose." He didn't save you to leave you to yourself. He didn't save you to just set you, you know, get you home and then leave you alone for the rest of your life. No, he saved you and he gave you a purpose, the purpose was to glorify him, the purpose was to worship his Son, the purpose was to serve him forever and enjoy him forever and that is the entire purpose of your existence, and notice it was by his grace. It was a gift to you. He loved you and gave you this gift and it was granted to us from all eternity. This was his plan all along. From eternity past, looking through a sea of humanity who would come into existence, he marked you out and said, "I'm going to spare that one wrath. I'm going to save that one. I am going to instead of pouring My wrath out on his sin, I am going to forgive him through the death of My Son and I'm going to call him into My kingdom and grant him an eternal future."

That was his eternal purpose and that's the entire purpose that you live and exist and now it's been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ. He showed up, he proclaimed the Gospel, he made it known, he finished the work necessary to save his people, and now it says that he abolished death. He conquered your greatest enemy. Death no longer has power over you as it says in Hebrews 2:14-15, that he has set you free from the slavery of the fear of death. Now how does the fear of death enslave you? Well, think about this. Whatever you obey, right, that is your master. Whatever you obey is your master. You can say whatever you want, you can make boasts about who your master is, but what you do and what you say or what you do, who you obey, that is your master. This is what rules you, whatever makes the final call on your decisions, what the trump card is on your life, and if death is the end, if your perspective as you're looking at life and death is the end, then you have to get whatever you want in this life because that's the terminal point. There's nothing beyond that. And so you are enslaved. The worst thing that can happen to you is you die or you live a life of futility and then die, right? So you've got to get everything that you can in this life. That is slavery because you only have a limited time to get all the pleasure, all the power, all the money, all the

possessions, all the fun until you get too old to enjoy it and your whole life is built on that. That is a slavery to the fear of death.

YOLO, you only live once, that's slavery built on a lie. You don't only live once, you live twice and the second one is far better. This is where the midlife crisis comes in. You get to 40 years old and you look back and you're like, "Man, I haven't had any fun. I've been working so hard. I've got to get it all now." That is a perspective that death is the end for you, Christian, and that this life is all that there is so you put all your hope, you put all your hope in politics. Why? Because they control how much you enjoy your life to some degree. You put all your hope in doctors. Why? Because they're the ones that ease your pain in this life and prolong it as long as possible which, by the way, they will always fail. They will always fail. They will not save a single life in the end. Now it's a worthwhile goal to do that. I would love for people, that's good, but when that is your hope and that is the whole focus of your life, that is slavery and it's built on a lie that you only live once. But for those who do believe in an afterlife, the religious, the self-righteous religious ones, they see death as representing judgment and so you have to do all of these works to pay your sins off, you have to do all these religious rituals, you have to give a certain amount of money, and you have to whip yourself, or you have to do these good works and hoping that they will outweigh your bad works.

Death and the fear of death is slavery but in Christ the power and dominion of death have been abolished. Eternal life and immortality have been brought to life so that we could see that it was there, we could see that there's immortality available, we could see that there's eternal life available in Christ. He brought it to light and so now we have seen it and we have believed and now death is not the end, it is no longer the controlling factor in our decisions. Think about that, that death is no longer the controlling factor in your decisions. Instead faithfulness to the one who saved you is because you will face him and live with him forever. Death is now just a milestone on the way to eternal life and that eternal life there will be no pain, turmoil, suffering, discomfort of any kind. It will be a life of harmony, peace, love forever and this was purchased because Jesus suffered for you.

So therefore we're no longer controlled by the fear of death but now we're controlled by the love of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." So we are loyal to Jesus, this one who loved us with such a holy love, saved us, called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to his eternal purpose, and it was a gift granted to you and now, Christian, you are immortal. Do you realize that? You're immortal. What are we afraid of? You are immortal and so we are loyal to the one who gave us this amazing gift and we are willing to suffer for him.

Now we're going to fly through the rest of this passage but how are we going to go about this? How are we going to remember this? Well, and this will be review for some of you who were here on Wednesday nights, but the first thing that we need to do in order to suffer faithfully for the Gospel is we need to focus on your job, right? Focus on your job.

Don't focus on the fear, focus on the job. As Paul said in verse 6, "kindle afresh the gift of God." Paul had taught Timothy everything he knew. Timothy had observed him closely and had seen everything. He was taught the Gospel, sound doctrine, godly character, and he was gifted by God with the ability to teach the word, shepherd people, and lead the church with fruitful effectiveness. This gift was identified in him by Paul and the other elders who had laid their hands on him and they had prophesied about this gift and then they had commissioned him to a life of service to Christ. And Paul has seen his giftedness.

He was personally invested in Timothy's giftedness and he was very concerned that Timothy not waste it and this was demonstrated in both 1 & 2 Timothy. In 1 Timothy 4:14 he says, "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you. Don't neglect it." Verse 15, "Take pains with these things. Be absorbed in them." Verse 16, "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching and persevere in these things." In 2 Timothy it says this in chapter 1, verse 14, later on in our passage, he says, "Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." What is this treasure? It is the word of God, of the Gospel and he says, "Guard it. Keep it. Treasure it." The Gospel is the most precious thing that you and I possess and it has been entrusted to us just like it was to Timothy. And so 2 Timothy 4:1 says this, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." "Timothy, you've been given this, now use it, guard it, preach it, fan it into flame, don't let it die out." You hear the emotion in his voice right here in 1 Timothy 6:20, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you."

As you can see, this was important to Paul and so he says to, "Get it going, Timothy. Don't let it die out. Don't let cowardice and timidity and shame snuff it out." And to you, church, you have been given a job. Each one of you have been gifted by the Spirit with abilities, resources and opportunities to strengthen the body of Christ and to advance the Gospel. Every single one of you. Some of you are teachers, you need to teach faithfully and rightly divide the truth. Some of you are preachers, you need to preach boldly. Some of you are counselors and you need to do it with excellence, with focus, with determination and with endurance keep doing it and excel in it. Some of you have money and a generous heart, use that for the benefit of the Gospel. Some of you are great at seeing the needs and organizing people to meet those needs. We must all do our job even if it leads to rejection, persecution and pain. Christian, the first thing you need to do is know what your job is and focus on the job. Do not get distracted from the job by the fear of suffering.

So, number 1: focus on your job. 2. Use the tools that God has provided. As it says in verse 7, we have not been given a spirit of timidity, a spirit of cowardice, the attitude or the disposition, a disposition of timidity or cowardice does not come from God. If that is what you're struggling with, you need to recognize you have no justification in Christ for cowardice. It is inconsistent with the nature, the character and the promises of God. Name it for what it is. Don't accept it and explain it away and don't pretend like it's okay

if your fear is leading you to unfaithfulness. We have not been given a spirit of cowardice, instead what are the tools that we've been given? It is a spirit of power. Power is not something that we talk about much, at least I don't hear much about it, but it means the ability and the energy to accomplish a task. It's the strength to do something. One commentator put it this way, it's the forcefulness of character that can use authority boldly. The power comes by the Holy Spirit and through his Gospel. It is that power of God that accomplishes salvation for people, and for us to walk in that power is to act like we have the most powerful weapon in the whole war, the Gospel. That gives you some confidence, doesn't it? And so you live in that confidence. You proclaim it in that confidence. You don't trust in your own powers of persuasion to save people, it's in the power of the word of God by his Spirit. And so we can walk into any Congress, into any mob and proclaim the Gospel knowing that if God has people marked out to be saved, it will save who it's intended to save and I don't need to be ashamed of it or apologize for it. And one commentator or actually, yes, listen to this, Acts 1:8, it says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the earth." By the Holy Spirit you will receive power. You have the Holy Spirit, do you not, Christian? You do and that power is meant to cause you to be a bold witness for Christ in your house, in your neighborhood, on Facebook and to the ends of the world.

2 Timothy 2:1-3 says, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." To effectively proclaim the Gospel, we have this power and we must use it. We have the power to withstand any temptation, 1 Corinthians 10:13, right? We have the power to endure any trial, the power to have hope in the midst of suffering. And I'm just pulling this from the New Testament, power to know the love of God that surpasses all understanding, power to stand firm against the schemes of the evil one, power to build up the body of Christ, power to be content in any circumstance through Christ who strengthens us. That is the power that we have. What more power do you need? And by his power you will be resurrected from the grave and given a new heavenly body when the time comes. And this power is most displayed in us not when we exalt ourselves but when our weakness is on display and we trust in the power of Christ, then his power is on display. That's 2 Corinthians 12 and you can look that up later, verses 7 through 10.

It's on display when we trust the Gospel to do its work. Listen to 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, "when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God." Do you notice that Paul had the emotions of fear and trembling but he preached anyway? It was fear but it wasn't a cowardice. He was faithful and in that. I mean, by this point Paul was probably pretty messed up with all kinds of scars and, you know, they didn't have modern technology and

reconstructive surgery. I mean, you can imagine him hunched over, limping around, probably a crooked nose from some beating he had received, scars all over his back, and this is the guy saying, "Let me give you some hope." Right? "Follow me." And he preaches the Gospel knowing he'll probably suffer for it and people get saved and so their confidence is not in this weak little man who gave them this Gospel, it was in the power of God to save. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

So we've not been given a spirit of cowardice but of power that boldly trusts in God while we do his work. We've also been given a spirit of love. This is what comes from God. You see, selfishness and cowardliness is selfishness, it's self-protective. Love is the opposite. This love is a spirit of love that is consistent with the nature, the spirit, the promises of God is a selfless desire for the well-being of another. It is a love that endures all things, hopes all things, believes all things. It's a love that lays down its life for its friends, love that overcomes all obstacles, love that will last forever. Of course, this is the love that Christ has for his people and it's the love that Paul had for Jesus and for the elect.

Listen to what he says in 2 Timothy 2:8-10, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned," he says, and in verse 10, "For this reason," for this reason, "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." You see, you cannot, you will not overcome suffering unless you're motivated by love, a love that is willing to endure suffering for the sake of God's chosen ones. God has people marked out there. The reason that we're still here, people, is that there's people that God wants to save that he has not saved yet and we are holding that torch for their sake so that they might come to faith.

The love that Paul had, Romans 9:1 where Paul says he wished he could be accursed, separated from Christ if that meant that his fellow Jews could be saved. This is the kind of love that is supernatural in its origin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a man that produces this. It's a loving compassion that drives us to care for our neighbors though they might be deeply offended by us. It is the love that leads men to willingly be burned for translating the Bible into the common language. It's a love that crosses oceans to live in mud huts to get the Gospel to the elect. It's the kind of love that leads a wife to submit to an ungodly man that she might, that he might see Christ in her. It is the kind of love that leads a man to lay his life down for his wife that he might wash her and cleanse her with the water of the word. It is the kind of love that leads you to be willing to counsel unruly people, to serve each other even if you think they made a dumb decision, to help each other. It's a love that leads you to not be ashamed of the Lord that you love and to not be ashamed of those who are suffering for him.

Well, we've been given a spirit of power, of love, and of discipline. This word for discipline means a sound mind, the ability to control yourself through the use of good reasoning. It's a wise head. A sound mind allows you to stay focused on the mission. It keeps you from panic in the face of opposition. You're not led away by your emotions

and your feelings. It keeps you from the distractions, the distractions of everyday life. 2 Timothy 2:4 says no soldier entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life. We're not distracted by the politics. We're not distracted by the economy. We're not distracted by the threats and the conspiracy theories, true as all of those things could possibly be. It keeps you from being distracted by controversies and youthful lusts. You stay on target.

So we focus on the job, we use these tools, power, love, a sound mind, and we entrust our future to God. We'll end with this. 2 Timothy 1:12, "For this reason I also suffer these things," Paul says, "but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." He literally knew who he believed. He knew him personally. He knew his character. He knew his love. He knew he was really alive and that is the bedrock foundation on which all of this stands. Jesus Christ is alive. Paul knew him personally, saw him personally, and he'd staked his entire life on this and he was suffering it says for this reason. Why? What was the reason? It was because he had been given a job by Christ to proclaim the Gospel in verse 11. That's why he's suffering. So he's doing the job but he's not ashamed, he is not a coward. Why? Because he knew Jesus. He didn't have any doubts about the reality of Christ's existence, his resurrection.

He didn't have any doubts about his promises and so it says, "I am convinced." This is faith. That's what it means to believe. To be convinced, it's the conviction of things hoped for and what is it that he's convinced of? That he is able, powerful, strong enough to guard what I've entrusted to him until that day. He's using that word "entrusted" again. Well, he's basically saying that God has taken care of my eternity. I've entrusted my soul to him and now he has entrusted to me the Gospel. I've entrusted by soul to God who will guard it and God is entrusted to me the Gospel which I will guard. He trusted his very soul to him. Paul had surrendered his life. He counted everything else as loss that he might gain Christ in hopes that by faith in him God would deliver him from all of these trials and bring him safely into his eternal kingdom. That's what he was trusting God to do and he was convinced that he was going to do it.

So he was willing to deny himself now that he might be richly rewarded when Christ comes again and that, again, is faith. To believe God you must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. It's not self-denial forever, it's self-denial now that you might gain life in eternity. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" We have the opposite, we are forfeiting this life that we might have eternal life and so we deny ourselves. If you seek to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for Jesus' sake you will find it. We seek a better kingdom, Hebrews 11. We seek a better city. That is where our hope is and our eternity is protected. You are immortal, Christians.

Alright, well, how do you think Timothy responded to this charge? Did he endure? Was he faithful? The Bible doesn't give us much more information about him but he does show up in church history. On January 22, 97 AD, a day in which the pagans of Ephesus were celebrating a festival in honor of their idols, they were carrying their idols through the city while performing perverse ceremonies and songs, reveling in their immorality,



and in his grief and zeal for the glory of God, Timothy attempted to stop the procession. How do you think he did it? Protests? Signs? Chanting? No, he tried to reason with them by preaching the Gospel to them and they were so offended by his message that they beat him and dragged him on the ground and finally stoned him to death. An old man of 80 years old. And on that day his faith became sight. He entered the glory of his Master. He received the reward and he never suffered pain or fear again. He didn't allow that spirit of cowardice to control him but he suffered for the Gospel because God had given him a job, God had provided the tools and God had secured his future. Will you join Timothy in suffering for the Gospel? We've got to pray that we would all do that together.

Let me pray.

*Lord, we draw near to You and ask that You would strengthen us, Lord. This is beyond our own ability. But Lord, You are mighty and You are strong, You are with us to provide us the grace that we need in the moments that we need it. Lord, we look to You, we are convinced that You are able to guard what we've entrusted to You. Lord, may we guard what You have entrusted to us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*