

DON'T BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

II Timothy 1: 8 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Shame is a powerful emotion that can overpower the strongest of God's followers. Ask Simon Peter. Oh, how ashamed he was of denying Jesus! Mary Anna Martin grew up during the depression, born to older parents. In poverty, her family survived and thrived as her mom and dad were rich in love and happiness, joy, and laughter. Anna's Dad whistled while he worked. Her Mom sang at home as she worked. Mary Anna had a wonderful heritage. Her Dad was a baker, but he lost that job in the depression. Her Dad worked a while for the local YMCA, and when that job was done, he worked for the WPA—under the New Deal of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Then that job ran out, and Mary Anna's Dad found a job as a janitor. He was an older man, small and gray headed. It was hard work, but he still whistled while he worked. Mary Anna was happy and carefree in elementary school until she entered junior high school when she was 13 and wanted to be popular. She knew her Dad was a janitor, but she never asked him where he worked. One awful day, Mary Anna was seated at the table eating beside her new friends. A student dropped his tray and food went all over the floor. In moments, Mary Anna heard her father being summoned by the principal to come to the lunchroom immediately. In moments, in he walked, with a mop, mop bucket and some old rags. One of her girls said to her, "That janitor has the same last name as you do, Martin. Do you know him?" Mary Anna raised her head and looked at the little gray headed man cleaning up the spilled food. She hesitated and then she said, "I've never seen him before in my life."

Instantly, she was filled with embarrassment. She felt embarrassed of her own daddy, in many ways, her dearest friend on earth. She hated herself for her words, but she tried to make it all up, by loving her father more. When he sat in his easy chair, she would comb his hair. She would sing to him and read to him, but the memory haunted her. Years passed and her Dad developed Alzheimer's disease. One day seated beside him, she knew he didn't even know who she was. She began to bawl. Her mother asked what was wrong. Finally, it all came out, as Mary Anna poured out her heart. She had kept the truth hidden until now, when her Daddy couldn't even respond to forgive her as he surely would have done.

I ask us today. Are we ashamed of each other? Are we ashamed of Jesus? Are we ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus? These words of Paul to Timothy are among his last earthly words to his son in the faith. Paul was nearing the day of his martyrdom. He knew Timothy would face great temptations to deny his Lord. Would he fall? In America, we are yet living in a land and in a time when there is still freedom to preach the Word and to witness for Christ. If we are having trouble staying true to the Lord in this land of peace; if we are struggling to witness for Jesus in free America, what is going to happen when our freedoms are taken away? Paul spoke in II Timothy 1: 7 to his beloved son saying, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear/timidity, but of power and of love and of a sound mind/or of discipline." Having just spoken of guarding against fear, Paul says in II Timothy 1:

8, “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner; but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God.” What is this therefore there for? It’s because this problem of being ashamed of Jesus and His Gospel, is standing in silence waiting to entrap you. This theme runs throughout the Word of God, as you must have noticed as Pastor Will read from Romans 1: 16 and Mark 8: 38. Even the psalmist David in Psalm 119: 46, fought this temptation. Therefore, he called out, “I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and I will not be ashamed.” The Greek word Paul used with Timothy for ashamed is a strong word—**epaischunomai**. This word means to disfigure, disgrace, fear or cause shame which paralyzes a person and prevents them from doing or saying anything to affirm or stand up for a person. It is shame regarding a person or the cause they stand for.

As we prepare our hearts today to share the Lord’s Supper, this warning of the apostle Paul gets down to the bedrock of our faith and our association with the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we ashamed of God’s message, of the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, of His messengers, or of His ministry? I propose to you all four questions to penetrate our souls and spirits today, to arrest our attention. Jesus said, in Mark 8: 38, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Paul echoed this great call to loyalty to Jesus in Romans 1: 16 as he declared, “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Now let’s examine ourselves with four penetrating, arresting, and challenging questions. Ask yourself...

ARE YOU ASHAMED OF THE MESSAGE/GOSPEL OF CHRIST? (I.) Paul challenged Timothy, “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. To paraphrase it, Paul is telling us, “Do not be ashamed of speaking Christ’s message and testimony, even if our country makes it unlawful to do so.” Be proud of the message of Jesus. Be proud of the story of the cross of Jesus, His passion, and His pain suffered for you and me. It could land us in trouble. The word Paul uses here for message or testimony, is the Greek word, **marturion**. It is the word from which we derive our word martyr. It means to speak forth the evidence—of the Gospel story, even if in telling the story, we lose our lives. Nothing is more important in bringing the lost to Jesus, than without shame, speaking forth the message of Christ. The enemy, the devil, lies to us, and tells us we are rather to live our message, and not worry about speaking our message. Living our message is vital, but that is not all our testimony of Jesus is to be. Turn with me to Paul’s important words in Romans 10: 14-17. Paul asks us, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

We all face Timothy's first question, "Are we ashamed of the message, the testimony, the Gospel of Jesus Christ—in school, in church, in our neighborhood, among our relatives, our friends, or with strangers?" Are we ashamed to identify ourselves with the cross of Jesus? The cross of Jesus purchased our salvation. The cross stands as the dividing line between sinners and saints. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 1: 18, "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God." What happened on the cross at Calvary makes all the difference in life. If we repent, believe, and receive Jesus, we escape eternal hell and go to heaven forever. The cross of Christ is why we are here today, not living in guilt, in the gutter, or are already in the grave. Instead of being ashamed, do we glory in the cross? Paul wrote in Galatians 6: 14, "But God forbid—may it never be that I should glory or boast, save, or except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." The Gospel is the only message that delivers what it promises—salvation. Jesus said in John 14: 6, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Are you ashamed of the Gospel? Secondly,

ARE YOU ASHAMED OF YOUR MASTER JESUS WHO DIED FOR YOU? (II.)

Paul told Timothy, "Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..." Timothy had a problem in his DNA. He was a fearful man. Paul had to tell him, "Let no man despise thy youth." (I Timothy 4: 12) Paul had to warn the church in Corinth in I Corinthians 16: 10, "Now, if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid; for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am." In II Timothy 1: 7, Paul told Timothy, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear or timidity, but of power, and of love and of discipline." Natural timidity breeds becoming ashamed, and it begs us every day to deny our Lord, as Peter did in fear and shame, as he warmed himself by the enemy's fire. None of us are so stalwart that we do not need to be called to a fresh loyalty to Christ. Have any of us, have you disowned Jesus privately or publicly? When Jesus comes again, as King of kings and Lord of lords, it won't be hard to honor Him then. But today, where do you stand with the Man of Sorrows—who died for you? When the subject of Jesus comes up at work and He does, do you evaporate into the woodwork? Whose side are you on? Jesus said in Matthew 10: 32, 33, "Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." Are you ashamed of the One who saved you from the wrath of God by bearing that wrath we deserve, Himself for us at Golgotha? Are you ashamed of the One who has given you His matchless unmerited favor and mercy in spite of your sin? Are you ashamed of the One who abolished death forever and took the sting out of death for everyone who believes? Thirdly,

ARE YOU ASHAMED OF THE MESSENGERS OR MENTORS OF YOUR SALVATION? (III.)

Notice verse 8 closely, "Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, His prisoner..." Are we ashamed of the messenger of the message of the Master? Are we ashamed of the Lord's anointed in our lives or in our midst—the one we once saw as a hero in our lives, a father in

the faith? Have we changed now, when we used to be proud beyond words to be found in his or her company, to be counted as one of his helpers or servants? Would that change for you if we as pastors were put into prison for our faith? When Paul was cast into that rat infested prison, into that flea-ridden cold dungeon in Rome, did it override his position as God's apostle? Should it have? A thousand times no! But did it change things? It did. Go to the end of II Timothy and read the startling words of Paul under inspiration in II Timothy 4: 16-18. Let me read it to you. It is sad! Will we too, be ashamed of the one God used as His messenger, the one whom the Son of Man delights to honor? When we turn on our messengers, God and His word is mocked every time. How you talk about your pastors behind closed doors is a strong measurement of the health of our church. One of the first signs of decay and deterioration in the church of Christ is when God's people start to speak disrespectfully, of their under-shepherds, behind their back. It's like the old story of the honeybees brought to the island of Barbados to make the economy their strong. For whatever reason, the honeybees forgot their mission and began stinging the natives.

Beloved, don't forget that if we are your heroes as pastors, you too are our heroes. Go to the end of II Timothy and follow with me in II Timothy 4: 19-22. Now turn to Romans 16: 1-16. Paul's heroes were Barnabas, Peter, the other apostles such as James, Apollos, Timothy, in the end, John Mark, Luke, Silas, Epaphras, Phoebe, Epaphroditus, Trophimus, Priscilla, Aquila, Epaenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Aristobulus, Herodion, Narcissus, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, and Olympus just to name a few. Don't forget your mission or God's mission and become a stinging bee. Don't dissect and rip your heroes to shreds, becoming ashamed of each other in the Gospel. God forbid! Are you ashamed of the messenger of the message of the Master? Fourthly,

ARE YOU AHAMED OF THE MINISTRY INTO WHICH YOU ARE MYSTICALLY JOINED? (IV.)

Paul wrote in II Timothy 1: 8, "Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but share in suffering for the Gospel by the power of God." Are you ashamed to confess what you are pouring your life out to do, in the strength of the Lord? Are you ashamed of the position God has placed you in, ashamed of when, where, and how He has called you to serve Him as an elder or deacon or teacher or nursery worker? Are you ashamed to continue to be willing, available, yielded, usable and faithful in His service, joined to Him as His Bride and Him as your Bridegroom? Here's where a critical spirit must become a buried hatchet, as we unite as brothers and sisters to finish the job God gave us to do, mystically joined to Him in ministry.

Here's where couples lose their joy in marriage as they often criticize, accuse, and disrespect each other. The same happens in the body of Christ. This ministry into which we are joined is not meant to be a cage fight with blood running all over our head and shoulders and back and legs. Are we entering-into the joy of being the church, Christ's mystically joined Bride? This is to be a joined spirit of joy in each

other's successes and a joined spirit of weeping in each other's failures or griefs. The Greek word for share with me in suffering is **sugkakopatheia**. It means to join with each other in suffering without breaking rank. We are not above the Lord, above suffering with Him, above suffering with His messengers, or with others who are part of His Bride in ministry. But how can we do it? Our text tells us the only answer. It is by the **power** of God, and never in our own strength. It is the **dunamis**—literally, the dynamite and the dynamo of God that strengthens us to remain united under the scourge and blight of suffering and persecution. One meaning of power is **God's prescription for salvation for the sins of the world.**

Let's define the Gospel in Romans 1: 1-17. Get out your pen and circle or underline. Let's define the Gospel. (1) **The Gospel is from God**—v. 1—"Paul a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God." Notice (2) **The Gospel is about Jesus.** vs. 2-4. (3) **The Gospel produces the obedience of faith.** v. 5-6. (4) **The Gospel is for everyone who believes.** v. 16. (5) **The Gospel is God's power for salvation.** v. 16—good for all eternity, God's only prescription for salvation, healing, transforming us and making us whole. (6) **The Gospel produces righteousness.** v. 17. Think of it. Are you ashamed of the Gospel? The test is how often do you share the Gospel every week or month or year? That is your test and mine. This is the best and only salvation news in the world. When anyone puts their God-given faith in Jesus, at Calvary, God the Father treated Jesus as our Substitute, thus deserving the sin and its penalty that we deserve. Jesus died to pay for all our sins, past, present, and future. You may think He paid for the sins you did in the past and the sins you are committing today. But Jesus died to pay for the sins you will do until you die. When Jesus paid for our sins at Calvary, all our sins He paid for were future. Would you be ashamed of Jesus and take advantage of His suffering on the cross? Would you continue in sin because He paid for your future sins? May it never be! (Romans 6: 1) Christ's forgiveness is not a license to sin, but the liberty to serve Him. When Jesus saves us, the Father treats us with the righteousness that Jesus in His holiness deserves.

Think of it. Would you keep the power of God from others? What kind of power is it? It's Boom!!!!!!!!!! Gospel power to make everyone whole. Don't worry that it won't work for someone you are praying for or witnessing to. It will transform them. The Gospel is God's power in verbal form—coming from the One who simply spoke galaxies into existence. That's sheer raw power. God's powerful Gospel power is the most powerful power in all the world. His powerful Gospel changes people. But you say, "I am shy. I can't speak." No, we all speak. The Gospel is not about the power of the Gospler—as John Bunyan said, but it is the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone. Are you willing to stand by in silence and keep people from being freed from the chains of hell? Are you willing to refuse to speak about the cleansing blood of Jesus to clean up the pollution of sin in our world? Would you agree to say, "I don't care if my neighbors go to hell!"? God forbid! Let's never be ashamed of the Message, our Master, His Messengers, and of the Ministry, into which mystically share as the Bride of Christ. Are you ashamed of Jesus and His Gospel? May it never be! God help us tell others today.