



river west church

Not Ashamed of the Gospel, Part 1

2 Timothy 1:8-14

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In the End, it's All About the Gospel

The deep father-son kind of relationship shared between Paul and Timothy is beautiful. It's personal, emotional, loving, supportive, and encouraging. But there's something at the core of their relationship that goes beyond a natural connection or even deep admiration. Their shared faith in Christ is at the center of their relationship. Even more pointedly, it's the Gospel itself that gives meaning and shape to their relationship.

Paul is concerned about Timothy, for sure. But it's safe to say that Paul is even more concerned about the Gospel! Paul writes to Timothy, not just to reminisce about old times or to remind him that he cares deeply about him. He writes because he cares about the Gospel above all; and Paul knows that the best thing he can actually do for Timothy is point him to the Gospel. If Timothy is going to be strong, it's because he is strong in the Gospel. If Timothy is going to be effective, it's because he is basing his ministry squarely on the Gospel. So Paul focuses on the Gospel, knowing that's the very best thing he can do for Timothy, for the church, and for all the believers who will follow Timothy through the years – including us.

Paul wants Timothy to believe the Gospel, be strong in the Gospel, teach the Gospel, and defend the Gospel. In the end, 2 Timothy is really all about the Gospel.

The Push to Know the Gospel

It's fascinating how Paul speaks about the Gospel as he writes to Timothy. He says things about the Gospel that Timothy certainly already knew (2 Timothy 1:9-10 & 2:8). Paul isn't writing these things just to "inform" Timothy of truths he has never heard before. Paul is highlighting the glorious truths of the Gospel in order to strengthen Timothy and inspire him in his Christian life and service.

The way we come to "know" the Gospel is a process. We begin by learning and knowing the basic facts of the Gospel message. This is crucial! Every Christian needs to learn the basic truths of the Gospel. We need to know these truths clearly and hold them tightly. But we also learn to live in the light of these truths. With each new challenge in our lives, we have the opportunity to apply the Gospel in its power and implications.

This is why Paul takes Timothy back to the glory of the Gospel in this paragraph. Timothy is coming under attack for being a Christian who truly lives for Jesus. This attack might cause him to be embarrassed and fearful. So what does Paul do? He shines the light on the full glory of the Gospel. Then he shines that Gospel light on Timothy himself. All of this is designed to strengthen Timothy through the amazing truth of the Gospel. This is exactly what we need too!

The Push to Guard the Gospel

In 1:13-14 Paul turns to the subject of guarding the Gospel. He says: "keep the pattern of sound words" and "Guard the good deposit." Both of these phrases are about protecting the truth of the Gospel.

If you have a treasure, you need to take care of it. The Gospel IS a treasure! It has been entrusted to Timothy (and to us). Paul knows that there will always be attacks on the truth of the Gospel. There will always be people and movements that deny, distort, or dilute the Gospel. So Paul tells Timothy that he must defend it. The same holds true for us today. But defending the Gospel leads to controversy. This is especially true in our contemporary world, where it's hugely unpopular for anyone to take a stand for a particular belief system or truth claim. It was very much the same in Timothy's day. That's why he was experiencing opposition!

Why We Have to “Push” Ourselves

Paul's tone in 2 Timothy isn't always the voice of encouragement; it's also the voice of challenge. Paul is “pushing” Timothy, past his fears, reluctance, and complacency. He simply has to, because he knows that Timothy needs this to keep going and growing in his Christian life and service. We need this too!

The only thing you need to do to get out of shape is: nothing. But getting in shape is tough. It's easier to sit back in the comfort zone and eat chips. Sometimes we need a bit of prodding to get ourselves in shape! The same is true in the Christian faith. It's true for us as individuals, and as a whole church too.

So let's listen to God's word in 2 Timothy. This is God's personal word for our lives and our church. We need to let the word of God both encourage us AND push us. God is pushing us to live as “servants on assignment” for Christ. He is moving us to know the Gospel deeply; to hold it, live it, and share it without shame. He is asking us to guard and defend it as our greatest treasure. If we do these things, by the grace of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit, great things are going to happen in and through us, for His glory!