

Carried by Charisma

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2 Timothy as we continue with "Beautifying the bride, part 2, her form and her fashion." Paul is writing to Timothy as he pastors or oversees the church in Ephesus and the Apostle Paul is telling Timothy what to do in the church, but in writing to Timothy about these things, he has a lot to say to Timothy. It, it gets more personal in this second letter, 2 Timothy, because Paul is imprisoned, he's at the end of his life, he knows his execution is imminent, and so he's saying some things more personally and more directly to Timothy as a younger minister. And we come today to 2 Timothy 1:8 and we'll just spend all of our time there this morning and our purpose is to cover much more territory than one verse next Sunday morning.

2 Timothy 1:8, Paul writes from prison in Rome and says,

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,

I've entitled this "Carried by Charisma." Carried by charisma, referring back to the word "gift" he uses up in verse 6 where he tells Timothy to kindle afresh the gift, it's the Greek word "charisma." It means that special spiritual enablement you received at the new birth, and Timothy received an extra portion, you might say, in his ordination by the Apostle Paul. But nevertheless, we all have a charisma. We all have a gift given to us that strengthens us, that emboldens us, that enables us to stay faithful at the task of honoring Christ and not falling back.

Now, I., let's talk again about the charisma that carries you. The charisma that carries you. He begins verse 8 with the word "therefore," and that just means look back at the previous verse and you'll find out why therefore is there. So he says, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of me." Well, based on what? Well, verse 7, "For God has not given us," "given" refers to that charisma, that gift, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline." So, "Timothy," Paul writes, "you have a special enablement that the Spirit of God has put in you whereby you have the capacity now to not grow fearful and be ashamed of the Lord or ashamed of me, His apostle. You have the capacity to stay strong and stay faithful and not shrink back when the difficult season comes along." This charisma is there, in effect, to carry us. Now listen

to me, it doesn't mean you have no responsibility and you're not to be diligent and determined about some things as far as being faithful, but it just means – listen to me – we are not in the self-help business, self, self, uh, uh, uh, invigoration business or, or behavior modification business. We are in the heart transformation business. I'm not trying to get you to take your natural born strengths and abilities and serve God well. That's blasphemy. No man of his natural fallen sinful flesh can honor God. But I am charging you to draw up these special charisma, the Holy Spirit in you and the power it gives you, and rely on that to carry you and to remain faithful in your service to Christ.

Now once again back in verse 7, he mentions three components or elements of this gift, this charisma. He mentions power, love and discipline. These are the things God's given us to enable us to progress in our sanctification. We're saved at one time, you believe on Christ, you are saved but then you are also being saved and that's what this charisma enables you to do, to keep walking out and living out the salvation you have been giving, given by God. So as I used the illustration last week, as a blacksmith will pump the bellows to keep the air going on the fire, we're to pump the bellows, if you will, on the charisma gift and keep it strong inside of us.

Now there are things we can do, uh, that, that parallel this pumping of the bellows like listening to the preaching of the word, reading the Bible on our own, studying the word of God, always having a verse or two you're memorizing and you're meditating on. I think that's one of the most wonderful gifts God gives a pastor is that every week I have a new text I'm chewing on. Literally the word "meditation, meditation," rather in the original language meant chewing the cud like a cow chews the cud and there's, you should be chewing on some of the word of God and that helps blow the bellows on the flame, that helps strengthen the charisma gift that will keep you from falling back. Then of course, the fellowship of the church and fellowship with other Christians that gives you the encouragement and the accountability. And also not only are these things that you should be putting on, things you should be practicing, people you should be spending time with that help strengthen you, there are also those things you must stay away from, or I could say those people that you must stay away from. Remember what Proverbs told us, Proverbs 13:20 says the companion of fools will suffer harm. So stay away from the right people and hang out with the right people, and do the right spiritual disciplines and you'll be pumping the bellows to keep the flame full and keep the strength in your life to stay faithful to Christ. And that's what he's telling Timothy, "Timothy," Paul is saying, "I'm in prison. I'm suffering." And I'll have a lot to say about that in a moment. "I'm about to be executed but Timothy, I'm charging you to stay faithful to the finish. Keep on keeping on."

So it's the charisma Paul is saying. By using that word "therefore" in verse 8, "That's going to carry you to do what I'm charging you to do, Timothy." Well, what's he going to charge Timothy to do? Well, II., be righteous concerning shame and honor. So what I'm presupposing here is that there is a righteous honoring and there is a righteous shaming. Did you hear that? There's a right and righteous way to honor and those who are righteously honored, and there's a right and righteous way to shame are those who should be ashamed.

Now again, Paul is in prison in Rome. He writes to Timothy and says, "Timothy, don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord and Timothy, don't be ashamed of me." Now here's Timothy, he was Paul's associate for 16 years. Timothy loved Paul's Christ. Timothy loved Paul's churches that he started. Timothy loved Paul's doctrines. Now I don't mean it's Paul's, it was God's but Paul was the instrument. And Timothy embraced all these things. He was widely known as Paul's first lieutenant in the work of the ministry. So Paul is telling, telling Timothy, "After all this, Timothy, don't become fearful and deny association with our Lord and with me."

Now the reason Paul is saying that is because when the world really comes down hard on you as a Christian, it's easy to get fearful and it's easy to grow ashamed of things you ought to be honoring, and it's easy to start honoring things that you ought to be ashamed of when the fear comes. Will Timothy do this? Will Timothy turn against the Christ Paul taught him and preached? Will Timothy turn against the churches Paul started? Will Timothy turn against the doctrines Paul taught him? I agree with W. E. Vines as he describes this phrase in verse 8, "do not be ashamed," the idea there is do not fall into fear and let that fear lead you to being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of me. "So you have to be unashamed, you have to control the fear that comes when opposition comes against you and against our faith and, Timothy, you must maintain the discipline of rightly or righteously honoring that that God says ought to be honored and rightly and righteously being ashamed of or shaming that that God says ought to be shameful." Now you and I live in a world that's upside down. You and I live in a world that honors that which is shameful and wicked and dishonors that which is truly honorable, and they're putting more and more pressure on us, church. More and more pressure on us and we can shrink away and start being afraid and start being ashamed of the wrong things and honorable of the wrong things.

Now it's interesting to note the phrase "do not be ashamed" is not in the present tense. The present tense means continual action. If it was a present tense verb, it would mean, "Timothy, you've started being ashamed, now stop it. Timothy, you started being ashamed of the Lord's testimony and of me, now stop it." But that's not what it is. It's actually the aorist tense which means something that starts and continues. His point is, "Timothy, don't let it start. Up to this point, Timothy, you've run well but be careful as you go forward, don't ever start letting fear get control and you become ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of me. And Timothy, you've been giving in the new birth and by the anointing of your ordination special charisma, special gifts that will strengthen you and help you. Rely on these and don't become ashamed."

Now let's talk about two things for just a moment. Let's talk about, first of all, don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. That's the first thing he says, then in a moment we will talk about "and don't be ashamed of me," the Apostle Paul. Now Romans 1:16 reminds us, "For I am not ashamed," now this is Paul, of course, "I'm 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." So Paul says, "I've never shrunk back in fear and become ashamed of my Lord in any public setting, in any context, anywhere in the culture. I've

been clear about my loyalties to Christ and my love for Him." And you know, it's a serious thing, the Bible teaches, to let fear come in and you fall back into being ashamed of your Lord. Mark 8:38, "For whoever is ashamed of Me," Jesus says, "and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." It's serious. Hebrews 10:38 and 39, "But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul."

Now getting back to the immediate context here, who we're talking to. We're talking to Timothy, a young preacher. He's being advised by his older mentor in the ministry. So now Timothy of all people would be the most guilty if he succumbs to fear and starts being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. Now Timothy's heard more of it than anybody else. His mom and his grandmom poured the word of God into him and he sat 16 years to be an associate of Paul and he's heard Paul preach it and preach it and teach it and it. Nobody's heard more at this point in history possibly than Timothy of the truth of Christ in the gospel. Not only that, in his life for many years now he's strongly embraced and experienced the power of the Lord and the Lord's gospel. He's shown it in his life. And then he's also for many years now proclaimed this very gospel and this very Christ.

Now let's come down to us a little bit here. We must remind ourselves that all of us are bound to Christ. Now listen to me, stop right there, you are bound to Christ. You are Christ's slave. All of us. You've been bought with a price by his precious blood. How can we fall into fear and deny him or be ashamed of him? We must never shrink back to that. But looking at Timothy as the example here, as a minister, ministers whom God has set apart and God has called to be the proclaimers of the testimony of the Lord, they are the most guilty if they fall back. Do you know how many pastors I know who for at, at one level or another are pastoring their churches ashamed of Christ? "We just kind of leave this doctrine of and we'll leave this standard off, we'll leave this, uh, conviction and discipline in the church off. We'll start leaving some things off because in the present culture that might cause a lot of trouble." Fear comes and they shrink back and begin to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. The testimony of the Lord means the doctrines of Christ, the doctrines of Christianity.

Well, the second thing Paul says, "Don't just, I'm not just talking to you about being ashamed of the testimony of the Lord," this is interesting, he said, "or of me." Now that's a horizontal plane right there. Paul puts himself right as an extension of the testimony of the Lord. It reminds me of Ephesians 3:21, the horizontal plane that's there, "to Him be the glory in the church," horizontal, "and Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever." So here Paul says, "Just as you would not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, don't be ashamed of me, your mentor, your, if you will, pastor in the Lord." Scripture allows no separation of one's support of God and God's causes and one's support of God's man. Scripture don't allow you to separate those.

We've talked before in our exposition of the previous book about the man of God who has a long proven reputation of working hard at preaching and teaching is to be shown

double honor. Two weeks ago, you celebrated my 40th anniversary and I don't know that you showed a double honor, you probably showed triple honor. You went overboard. You were deeply joyous and generous in, toward me and toward my family. My true honor, though, now listen, church, my true honor is that you showed me this double or triple honor out of your deep love for Christ and because I'm Christ's pastor. It's got to be that way. Those can't be separated. God forbid, I'd be the kind of pastor that wows you or impresses you with my skills and abilities and charisma and personality, and that's kind of laughable, or my humor, or my ability to plan and strategize and organize and cast division. I could do that as a lost man. God forbid, you'd feel good about me on that, but you must want to honor God's man because you love the God of the man. That's what blesses a pastor God called.

So by, by Paul writing Timothy and about every scholar I looked at agrees with this fully, well, I find no one that disagreed, just not all of them mentioned it, that, "Timothy, if you fall back on honoring Christ, you fall back on honoring me. And Timothy, if you fall back on honoring me, you fall back on honoring Christ." There is no righteous way to bypass the man of God in order to serve God. Now there is a balance here. We have people come to our church sometimes and they come from another congregation somewhere and they're convinced the pastor is walking in willful compromise, not just a pastor that struggles and fails, we all do, but just as a willful purpose and intent, things are unsound, so I understand in those cases you may not can honor that person the way others honor their pastors. So there is a balance there, I get that, but even in those situations, if those people want to come into our fellowship, we strongly exhort them you leave that other fellowship honorably, respecting the office of pastor even if you believe there were serious compromises and failures there.

Let me give you an illustration of how you can't be ashamed of Paul without equally being ashamed of Christ. Paul is Christ's ambassador. He's Christ's representative. So was Timothy but in our context Paul is the one we're looking at here. Let's, let's say you and your wife are out somewhere and someone approaches your wife and wants to talk real personally and directly to her. Well, you're out of bounds. You don't approach a man's wife without going through her husband. Can I get an amen there, guys? He's there to be her head in the sense of loving her and protecting her. You have no right to approach a woman in any personal or direct way unless you get permission of her husband. They go together. And you can't go around Paul and say, "I'm going to get to know God." You've got to go through God's ordained means. You can't separate those off. You can't separate a husband and wife once the marriage has taken place.

So our service to Christ flows down one channel, it flows through our local church and how we function under our pastors and elders, and then our Christianity and our influence flows out in various streams into the home, in the marriage, into child raising, into the workplace, into social life, but it flows down one channel and then goes out into those streams. You can't go rogue and go independent. So if Timothy succumbs to fear and Timothy becomes ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, he will also be ashamed of the Apostle Paul, the Lord's minister because in God's economy, you cannot claim to love

and honor Christ and at the same time withhold love and honor to the pastor God has placed over you.

"Timothy," Paul was saying, "I'm over you in the Lord. Don't dishonor Christ and don't dishonor me." Remember the conversion of the Apostle Paul? Paul's on the road, he's persecuting Christians and a bright light shines from heaven and he's knocked down and, and Paul says, "Who are thou, Lord?" What is this, Acts 9:5-6? "Who are You, Lord?" He said, "I'm Jesus whom you are persecuting." And Paul could have said, "What do you mean I'm persecuting You? I'm just persecuting these Christians." Jesus said, "Well, time out, you can't separate us. I'm in them and they're in Me. You persecute them, you're persecuting Me." Same principle. "Timothy, you reject me, you reject Christ."

Now think about with me just for a second, why would Paul write this like this? Why wouldn't Paul just say, "Timothy, don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord"? Why does Paul add "and me His prisoner"? I think I know why, because Paul had seen so many false teachers in his day and backslidden Christians do just that. The Gnostic heresy false teachers rose up who taught they had a superior wisdom than the doctrines of, of this Apostle Paul and the other apostles. Then the Judaizers cult and their false teaching rose up who said, "Yeah, you've gotta believe on Christ but you also must add components of the Mosaic law to be pleasing to God." Then you had others began to rise up, and generally speaking their modus operandi was this, "Now we love this Christ and we embrace His teaching but we, we don't know about the Apostle Paul. We don't really agree with all that Paul. Now we love Jesus but we just don't know if we can go along with Paul." And, and, and Paul's writing to Timothy and says, "Timeout, that's impossible. You cannot throw me out and say you love the Christ who called me to establish the doctrine for the church in writing the New Testament." Powerful principle here.

Talking to the Corinthians, the Corinthians were claiming to be Christians. I'm sure most in the church there were, but there was an uprising in the, in the Corinthian church against the Apostle Paul. Matter of fact, he had this everywhere he went. Everywhere he went, there were people who claimed to be Christians who would rise up and start chipping away at the foundation of Paul's office of authority. They would start undermining and questioning all of Paul's doctrines. "Oh, but we're good Christians." Well, the Corinthians had some of that going on. "Well, we're Christians and we believe this gospel but now, Paul, Paul's not impressive at all in his speech." Of course, the Corinthian culture was one where they would put high esteem on the great orators of the day. Paul just wasn't a great orator, he wasn't a great, a great speaker, as such. Then Paul writes to them and he says in 2 Corinthians 11:5, "I may be unskilled in speech but not in knowledge. I might not be impressive in ways that would make you want to think I'm special but I do know the truth because God's given it to me."

Now we've talked about "don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, don't be ashamed of God's man," Paul says "or of me." Now let me for application's sake talk about this concept of being ashamed or shaming. When we talk about shaming someone, generally what do we mean? When someone is put to shame or if we shame someone by

our, our actions are our words, we're calling them dishonorable, we're calling them unacceptable, we're calling them inappropriate, we're calling them, uh, uh, uh, disgraceful. In a Christian context, we're calling them unrighteous. That's what it means when you shame someone. You know, in our culture today we have all these catchphrases. Have you noticed that? About every week some radical liberal comes out with a new phrase, a new part of the narrative, and if you don't agree with them, then you're a bad person and they'll shame you. We, we've, uh, uh, heard of fat shaming. You know, or, or, or mask shaming. You go into a store and somebody thinks you should have a mask on and they're wearing their mask and they criticize you and condemn you and call you out and what they're saying is, "I'm putting shame on you," and consequently also and it's always like this, "I put shame on you and I'm honoring me. I'm virtuous and I'm careful and I'm compassionate." Sometimes that's true but like I said, in our culture, our culture is so unbiblical and so full of error, they turn things upside down and they'll shame you for what's righteous and good and they honor what's unrighteous and evil. Well, we have a lot of that going on in our culture. Putting shame on another person conversely always puts honor on yourself or on something else, I guess I could say. There's always a shaming and a corresponding honoring.

Now if someone publicly dishonors or disgraces let's say, let's use this illustration again, your wife. You're in some sort of public setting and you're there with your wife and a person comes up and they say something to her that's a clear, disgraceful, dishonoring thing. You've got a choice. There is no neutral ground here. You can either reprove him or more. Sometimes a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. The Bible says don't speak in the hearing of a fool. Some people are just so foolish you can't help them, just get away from them. But it could be that if a fool loses a few teeth, he might not be so foolish next time. So this man has disgraced, dishonored your wife, you reprove him and correct him and then ask him to ask her forgiveness, and what have you done? You've taken his shame he put on your wife and you put it back on him. I'm shaming you and I'm honoring her. But if you're silent or worse, if you agree with that man, then you're saying I'm putting shame on my wife and I'm honoring you, her accuser. It always works that way and basically that's what Paul's telling Timothy here, "Timothy, by the grace gift that's given you, this charisma gift, walk righteously in what you shame and what you honor. Now whatever else you shame and honor, make sure you never shame the Lord and make sure you're never ashamed of me, His apostle."

What we find ourselves doing if we're not comfortable, are you listening this morning? You get out in the workplace, you get in the school, you get in the neighborhood and I want to say this first, much of the time the right response is being quiet, okay? But things are said and suggested and the gangs kind of go along with it and they're dishonorable to God and they're things that are dishonorable to Christ and you don't deal with it, so what have you done? You, you've joined in the shame on your Lord and you've thrown honor on his enemies. Are you with me, church? It almost always, there's no, some of you think, "Well, I'll just be on neutral ground." There's no neutral ground. Jesus said, "Who is not for Me is against Me." Now there is a context. I want to be balanced here, where if you go out there and you correct everything you run into that's anti-Christ, you, you, don't do that. But there's appropriate settings, especially the people you've got to be around a lot,

people you live around, people you work around that you need to set saying things straight, always in a gracious and honorable spirit that you're not going to dishonor your Christ or me. Is that okay with you? Or his man. Paul said those go together.

So in Christianity, both our actions and our words must draw on the charisma, the power, the love, the sound thinking he's put in us so that we righteously shame that, that which ought to be ashamed and we righteously honor that which ought to be honored. And by the way, strap in here for a moment. Keep listening. What you shame and what you honor, the Bible says, is a powerful exposure of the validity of your faith in Christ. Those you honor and those you shame reveals the nature of your faith. Is it a true faith or what James says a dead faith or a false faith?

So I'm going to go through these and I don't want to get taught, caught up in the minutia of these verses. I want you to get, I want you to get the general principle of when you shame and are embarrassed or dishonor that which God honors, then you are exposing you might not be God's. James 2:15 through 17. You've just studied James in small groups. If you did not teach this in the context of the local church and ministering to Christians particularly, you missed it. Don't feel bad, I missed it for about 25 years because that's what this is. James writing to local churches who are being fiercely persecuted like Paul was. Paul was in prison, about to be executed, that's persecution and so he says, "Timothy, keep identifying with me. Don't be ashamed of me in this setting even though it might cost you greatly, Timothy, to show association with me. Don't do it. Keep honoring me. Don't be ashamed." Same context here, James 2:15 to 17, "If a brother or sister is without clothing," why are they without clothing in this context? Because the persecution is so bad. The persecution was so bad many families wandered like nomads not knowing where the next set of clothing was coming from. That's literary true in this age. You've got to interpret it in that context. "And in need of daily food." Many Christians literally didn't know where they were going to eat next because they lost their job because if they professed faith in Christ. "And one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,' and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?" In other words, you didn't associate with them. You didn't identify with them and you didn't help them. You actually put shame on them and you've conveniently separated yourself so that that malady, that difficulty might not come on you too. That's what this is saying. "Even so," verse 17, "faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." You see, you've got a faith but it's not Christian saving faith. If it was Christian saving faith, you could not as a pattern of your life disassociate from Christians who are struggling under the persecution. You would identify with them and you would help them. You've exposed the non-validity of your faith. Now thank God we don't have that right now, amen? But they are locking pastors in prison in Canada right now. Who knows how close that kind of persecution may be to us.

1 John 3:17 and 18. Same context, local church, severe persecution. "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him." That's an important phrase. Instead of bringing him into your heart and identifying with him, being counted as one with him, you push him away. Well, "how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." If

that's the pattern of your life to disassociate and separate from those who are being persecuted for the faith, then you're probably not God's. You're shaming them, pulling away from them and actually honoring the enemies of God in doing so.

Hebrews 10:32 through 39. "But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings." Local church, great persecution and suffering. Verse 33, "partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations." Now stop right there. So Christians, there are some Christians who publicly are being shamed, reproached, they've become a spectacle to the community. He said, "What did you do?" Last part of verse 33, "and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated." You identified, you didn't shame them, you identified with them. You said, "I'm one of them and they're right and they love the God I love, and they serve the Christ I serve, and I'm one with them. I'm not going to shame them, I'm going to stand with them." And by doing that, what are you saying? "Shame on you governing authorities and you people of this culture who would persecute them." That's the position you took. You honored your Christian brothers and sisters and you shamed the enemies of God. That's righteous honoring and shaming.

Verse 34 of Hebrews 10, "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property." You so identified them and refused to shame those brothers and sisters who were being persecuted that then the persecution came upon you and they started getting your stuff, "knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." What enables you to know that if they take my home, if they take my clothes, if they take my income, whatever they take I'm still okay because I've got something glorious coming up? What enables you to think that way? The charisma he put in you, the Spirit in you that came in at the new birth gives you the power to do that and to stand on that.

Now I want all of us to turn back to that text I've looked at with you several times but we're going to do it again this morning. Matthew 25. Would you turn there? Matthew 25. What's the context? It's the context of suffering Christians and whether or not you associated with them and helped them or separated from them and shamed them. Now I'm going to insert a phrase as we go through so you'll get the meaning of what we're coming at here. Matthew 25:34, "Then the King," that's Jesus, "will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" You were God's elect predestined one before the world began and you're very special and here's how we knew you were one of those saved, elect, chosen ones. Verse 35, "'For I was hungry,' and you were not ashamed of me, I inserted that, 'and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty,' and you were not ashamed of me, 'and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger,' and you were not ashamed of me, 'and you invited Me in; naked,' and you were not ashamed of me, 'and you clothed Me; I was sick,' and you were not ashamed of me, 'and you visited Me; I was in prison,' and you were not ashamed of me, 'and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'"

The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine,' other Christians, "even the least of them, you did it to Me."

Let me just continue on, verse 41, now he turns to the unbeliever, the non-Christians and says here's what characterized you. He said to those on his left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry," and you were ashamed of me, "and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty," and you were ashamed to be associated with me, "and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger," and you were ashamed, "and you did not invite Me in; naked," and you were ashamed of me, "and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison," but you were ashamed of me, "and you did not visit Me." I.e., he did not visit Christians when they were in dire straits because of persecution. "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these,' who is the "these" in this context? The sheep, the ones he was just talking about. That's all it can be. What he's saying is, Jesus is saying, "You can't separate this. You can't say I honor the Lord but I'm not going to be associated with God's people. I honor the Lord but I'm not going to be faithful under a God-called preacher." Paul said, "That's impossible." Jesus said that's impossible.

So Paul writes, "Timothy, if you allow fear to control you, if you do not utilize the charisma gift God has given you to strengthen you, then you could fall into shaming your Lord and shaming me because we always go together. And at the same time in shaming me and shaming the Lord, you honor those who are the Lord's enemies thus, Timothy, you start acting like an unbeliever." So church, my exhortation to you this morning at this point is are you by word or actions shaming the Lord and the Lord's preacher? I have walked into business after business place owned by our church members, and I'm telling you especially in the last 15 years since the persecution has toned down, I've been honored. I'm received with respect. I'm received with honor. It hasn't always been that way, but I am because you can't love our Christ and not love Christ's preacher. And it says a lot about you concerning the things you honor and the things you do not show honor or shame. If I walked up to you at the ballpark, I'm at the ballpark some, I've got grandchildren now playing ball, you know what I find? I find my church members run up to me and bother me while I'm trying to watch my grandchildren play ball. So am I ashamed of you? I don't mean it that way. No, but what I mean by that seriously is I get love and respect and honor. I can point out the businessmen in this church, I can walk in their companies, lots of employees, "This is my pastor." They're unashamed.

Are there any contexts out there where you're not real comfortable if Brother Jeff shows up? Brother Matt shows up? Brother Steve? Brother David? Brother Tim? And our other brothers? If you have a pattern of shrinking back and shaming or being ashamed of that which God said ought to be honored, and if you have a pattern of shrinking back and unfortunately honoring that which you ought to be ashamed of, then I charge you this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved us by his blood and to whom we

belong and whose church we are, repent right now and say, "God, the line in the sand is drawn. I will never again knowingly dishonor the things of God, the men of God, the testimony of Christ. It's not gonna happen because I know that says something about the validity of my faith."

III. I'll try to hurry. Some of you are already squirming a little bit on me. III. God's perfect sovereign path, and what I want to point out here is, is Paul is telling Timothy, "Timothy, being in prison awaiting my execution for Christ's sake is God's perfect sovereign path for me." He says there in verse 8, "I'm His prisoner and I'm a slave of Christ. Period." And by the way, we're all slaves of Christ but glory hallelujah, our Master is one whose yoke is easy and his burden is light. Paul would not allow himself, now notice this wording there, look at verse 8, "and His prisoner." He didn't say, "I'm Rome's prisoner." He said, "I'm His, I'm Christ's prisoner." Paul would not allow himself nor anyone else to view him as the prisoner of Rome. Paul says, "I am the Lord's prisoner. My Lord ordained this. The rejection I've endured, the suffering I've endured, this imprisonment I'm enduring is my Lord's doing. My Lord put me here. I'm His. He locked me up and praise His name. And Timothy, don't be ashamed of it." Woo! That's good stuff. I can get up here and rant and rave about it and you can sit back there and nod your head but lock you up in a jail cell, in your own filth with rats and scum, announce that your head is coming off in a month unless you denounce Christ, and then you raise your hand and say, "Hallelujah, I'm a prisoner of Christ." Do you know what that is? Paul had full charisma flame going up in his heart giving him that power and that strength. This stuff right here will preach, I'm telling you.

Here's what we think, "Pastor, I don't know if I can do it. Pastor, I, I don't know that I'd have that kind of strength." Listen, you don't get the grace to do it until you need it. It's all a part of God's perfect sovereign plan. Brother Tim, all those years in Louisiana and other places where you tried to build the church on the truth and God did bless your efforts and build a good church, but before and after that, suffering, persecution. God's perfect sovereign plan. You were suffering for Christ. Isn't God good?

Jesus told us the journey would likely be difficult. Ten times in the gospels Jesus himself says we will be hated for following him. John 15:18 and 19, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you." And that's just looking at one word. Hey, there's many many other words you could use to show you how exhaustively Jesus taught us, "I saved you out of a God-hating world and as you get closer to Me, they're gonna hate you more." Now we've had something of a respite here in America, here in the southeast, because in the past generally speaking we were of a Christian consensus. The culture generally supported our Christian values. That's eroding rapidly for the persecution will increase.

So Paul tells Timothy not only, "Timothy, don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord," not only, "Timothy, don't be ashamed of me," not only, "Timothy, am I God's prisoner, hallelujah, here in Rome." He said, "Also Timothy, join with me in suffering.

Timothy, if they did it to my Lord, they'll do it to me, and if they did it to my Lord and did it to me, Timothy, they're gonna do it to you." So, so, Grace Life Church, just like he's telling Timothy, gird up your loins, strap up your belt and get ready. If you're faithful to Christ, the world's going to give you some troubles. It's part of God's perfect sovereign plan. Actually, perfect and sovereign are redundant because if it's sovereign, it's perfect but I wanted to say perfect because you need to think about it as perfect. God's perfect sovereign plan. Matter of fact, God planned Paul's suffering. Remember in Acts 9, Paul's struck down and he's trying to get over this, this conversion experience. I say get over it but at least get over the blindness, and he's, he's there kind of doing nothing and God speaks to a man named Ananias and says, "Ananias, I want you to go and lay hands on him and minister to this Saul of Tarsus." And Ananias said, "Whoa, God, he's, he's having Christians locked in prison and, and he's standing by and having Christians put to death." And the Lord says, this is what the Lord says, Acts 9:16, "for I will show him," that's Paul, "how much he must suffer for My name's sake." I mean before, he's just gotten saved and God's saying, "I've got suffering planned for him but I've also got a sufficient grace for him to get him through the suffering."

Philippians 1:29 tells us that not only are we granted to believe but also granted to suffer. That means God ordains it and provides it for his name's sake. And as we suffer for what's right, it perfects us and it purifies us and it increases our joy. 1 Peter 5:9 and 10, "But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you." It's part of God's perfect sovereign plan to sanctify you and it's all going to end gloriously. By the way, you remember when Peter and Silas were in prison? What were they doing? Singing. Singing because the suffering perfected their joy. Singing. Brother Tom, you want to have a good choir? Pray God brings suffering in their lives.

I don't know about you but I'm not signing up for any more. I, I've experienced my name being scum. I've experienced being called everything in the book. I've experienced hordes of people who say, "We love Jesus, we love the gospel but that Noblit guy, we don't want have nothing to do with him." They never opened a Bible and said here's where you're violating true doctrine. I've been through enough of that. I've never been where Paul is. Matter of fact, I've thought recently – are you listening to me this morning – I've thought recently why does the Apostle Paul suffer in filth in a Roman prison awaiting his execution and I just celebrated my 40th anniversary and I have a host of church members that love me and honor me? I think I've got an answer for that. Are you ready? I think I've got an answer for that and it has nothing to do with me being any more worthy than Paul. That's not the point. Paul sacrificed, Paul gave up the blessed joys of being a part of a mature church family to go around and start as many churches as he could and to let his associates come behind and help pastor them and bring them to maturity because you don't enjoy what I enjoy as a pastor unless you've had a long long time, first of all, to grow yourself and your church to grow spiritually with you. Paul never had that. He spent all of his energy going from one place to another which was God's will for him, and so he

sacrificed, if you will, the joys of a healthy church home and life and pastorate to spread the gospel as far as he possibly could.

I'll not but mentioned number IV, let the charisma carry you, because like the press secretary for the White House, Paul circles back and at the end of verse 8 he circles back to what he was talking about in verse 7 which he alludes to at the beginning of verse 8. He says, "suffer with me with the gospel according to the power of God. Timothy, it's the power of God." What did he say in verse 7? "It's power, love and discipline. It's this thing God gives you that's not natural. You didn't get it in this world. It's a gift of the new birth. It's a charisma gift. Now Timothy, let me say it again as I am concluding this part of my remarks, you've got to do this according to the power of God. It's not the power of man. You can't grit your teeth and do this." If you do, you'll check a box, you'll dot an i, you'll cross a t and you will have no joy if you do it in the strength of the flesh. Only the Spirit of God in you can put you through difficulties for Christ's sake and you raise your hands and say, "Praise God, I'm Christ's prisoner." They lock me in prison, I'll just sing hymns. The joy comes when the power of God is holding us.

So I come to IV and I say the same thing I said in I., because he circles back to the same point, the same principle. Let the charisma carry you. Let it be your strength. So Paul reiterates at the very end of verse 8 what he said in verse 7, and that is, "He, God in you, Christ in you, only He can enable you to righteously endure this suffering and, Timothy, that's the only way I'm able to do it and that's the only way you're going to be able to do it," and, Grace Life Church, that's the only way you're gonna be able to do it. Let the charisma carry you.