

2. Not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus

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If you are like me, you are so fed up with Hollywood actors' and actresses' marriages and their divorces. They go through their spouses like there is no tomorrow. From gossip tabloid magazines to a TV show 'Entertainment Tonight', they report about who is getting married and who is cheating on whom and going through another divorce. I have six words of a Hebrew sentence for them, "Tell-it-to-somebody-who-cares."

You do have to wonder what kind of commitment they make when they get married. Is it another publicity stunt or do they ever understand the true meaning of commitment of marriage – "until death do us part"?

The same can be said of a relationship with God. There are times when you feel great joy, passion and excitement about being a Christian. And there are times when you don't feel anything other than bummed and bummed. But that doesn't mean you say, "Well, that's it. I'm bailing out on following Christ as of now." Some actually have done that. They are known as 'Backsliders.'

In the second portion of the first chapter of the Book of 2 Timothy, apostle Paul teaches us about not being ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and declaring it to everyone whom we come across. This is a great place for all of us to have a spiritual self-examination.

A. NOT ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD

2 Timothy 1:8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

In v7, Paul just has told Timothy about a spirit of power, love and a sound mind rather than a spirit of fear. Fear can generate many different things – depression, worry, isolation and shame.

Let's face it, folks. None of us enjoys suffering by nature. I know that there might be someone who wants to tell others, "I'd love to suffer for Jesus." But in reality, none likes it. Even our Lord Jesus prayed in Luke 22, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Apostle Paul himself prayed three times for the Lord to remove his painful throne in the flesh 2 Corinthians 12.

However, we all admit that suffering may well be apart of a faithful Christian life. Christians should not suffer because they have done wrong or being obnoxious; rather, they sometimes suffer because they have done right and serve the Lord Jesus.

When we suffer for doing good, then we are sharing Christ's sufferings.

Philippians 3:10-11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Suffering for Jesus' sake is no longer painful, rather it is an honor to any believer of Jesus Christ.

Today, Christians have sanitized Jesus, and disinfected the cross, making it all “safe.” Many Christians think that following Jesus Christ ends with going to church once in a while on Sundays and putting a few dollars in the Agape Box a couple of times a year. No, it is more than that. We need to share what we know with others as servants in the Lord Jesus – willing to sacrifice our comfort, willing to suffer for the purpose of God.

Think about what He teaches us:

- If you want to be great, be the servant of all. – It totally goes against the “Me First” worldly concept.
- Be like a child
- Be like a slave
- Be the last instead of the first

This kind of concept would make immature Christians ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus.

Apostle Paul knew that the plan of God in Jesus Christ seemed foolish to many, but he also knew it was the living, active and power of God to save souls and transform lives. He would not be ashamed of it, and neither should Timothy – or should we.

Do you know that there are 100,000 Christians being martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ around the world each year on average for the last twenty years according to the “Voice of Martyrs” magazine? I do seriously hope that you pray regularly for these brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus who are being persecuted. By doing so, you are sharing their sufferings.

Then one might ask, “If God is so powerful, why doesn’t He rescue His own people from harm’s way? Why would He allow them to be tortured and murdered? What glory does He find in that horrible situation? I do not have an answer to those who ask, because I don’t know why He does what He does.

But I can tell you this much:

January 8th, 1956, Jim Elliot and four other missionaries landed their small airplane along the Curaray River, Ecuador to evangelize to the Huaorani Indians. All of the missionaries were murdered by the Huaorani Indian warriors. Time Magazines declared that it was a complete waste of lives. A book “Through gates of splendor” was written by Elliot’s wife Elizabeth Elliot in his memory.

A few years later, a young man was on his way to a Marine Corps Boot Camp late at night. In his Gray Hound bus, under the little dome light, this man read the book by Elizabeth Elliot and rededicated his life to the Lord and promised to live for the Lord for the rest of his life. After he got out of the Marine Corps, he joined the Dallas Theological Seminary and became a pastor.

Later he started a radio program called “Insight for Living”. The pastor’s name is Chuck Swindoll. In 1987, another young man got saved through an introduction to Jesus Christ by his tax accountant. The tax accountant told him that he should listen to the local Christian Radio as much as he could. The young man started to listen to “Insight for Living” programs by pastor Chuck Swindoll and studied the Bible every-day. He began to grow leaps and bounds spiritually. Chuck Swindoll became the most influential Bible teacher to this man.

13 years later, he became a pastor and started a church called "Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita." Now you are being taught by this man who was influenced by Chuck Swindoll, in turn, who was influenced by Jim Elliot whom Time Magazine called a "waste".

Does God get the glory through Jim Elliot's seemingly untimely death? I most certainly believe so. How many Christian lives did his death touch? Millions. How many Huaorani Indian lives could Jim Elliot have touched if he was alive? Maybe hundreds. While God sees the total picture, we only see a tiny portion of a brush stroke in that picture.

B. CALLED US WITH A HOLY CALLING

2 Timothy 1:9-10 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 given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, 10 but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

Some people say, "I found Jesus." I have to object to that comment. How can Jesus be found since He has never been lost? We were the ones who were lost. By the grace of God we have been found; we were spiritually blind, now we see the truth. So we must respond to His call when we sense it.

Not according to our works, but according to God's own purpose, He calls us. That is a holy calling.

Get this, ladies and gentlemen. Our infinitely wise all-knowing God directed His gracious work towards us when we only existed as a fact in His knowledge before the creation of the universe, before Genesis 1:1 was ever came into the picture. I know it is a very hard concept for us to think.

Because everything we do is connected with time and without time, we do not exist. But to our eternal God, every moment is "Present". He existed before time was ever created, and will remain when time is ended.

John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Do you know what the best part is for us from this? To those who are born-again in Christ, we get to live in eternity with Him after time no longer exists.

When we run out of time on earth, we get expired; we die; we become stiff. Death is the second biggest fear, after the fear of public speaking. I don't know why people are afraid of public speaking.

But Jesus abolished death. Death is no longer has its power over born-again Christians.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

To the believers of Jesus Christ, it is a graduation ceremony.

The understanding of the after-life was murky at best in the Old Testament. But Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. It is no wonder apostle Paul said,

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

C. NOT ASHAMED OF THE LORD'S PRISONER

2 Timothy 1:11-12 to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

Jesus Christ had met Paul on the Damascus road according to Acts 9 and had personally called him into the ministry. Paul was a herald which means preacher of the Gospel. In ancient times, a "herald" was the official messenger of the king or emperor, and his message was treated with great respect.

Paul was not only a herald, but he was also an apostle, "one sent with a commission." Not every Christian was an apostle of Jesus Christ, because a person had to meet certain qualifications and be chosen by the Lord personally, or through His Spirit. An apostle represented Jesus Christ. To reject an apostle was to reject the Lord.

Paul was a teacher of the Gentiles. All the Gentile believers in Asia should have shown their appreciation of Paul by rallying to his support, for after all, it was Paul who brought them the Good News of salvation. But instead they were ashamed of him and tried not to get involved.

Speaking of being called by the Lord, some may think, "That is for you guys who are in full time ministry." If you think that way, I have a question: "Are you a part time Christian, then? Only Sunday morning? Do you live like a heathen for the rest of the time and do whatever your carnal desire dictates and you do them?"

Listen, there is no such thing as full time or part time Christian. You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ if you are a born-again Christian. You represent Christ to this unbelieving dying world. Your words, your testimony and the way you live at home, workplace, and wherever you go, you represent Him 24/7. How do you represent Him? Do others give glory to God for what you say and do? Or do they mock at Him because of your hypocrisy?

We must know what we believe. But it is even more important to know whom we believe. When we know how great God is; when God and His glory becomes the great fact of our lives, then we have real boldness.

The Greek philosopher Socrates said, "Know yourself." That might be fine and dandy, but that knowledge may only lead a man to hell. But I say, "Know Christ, then you will know yourself." This shall certainly lead you to heaven, because the knowledge of Christ Jesus is the saving knowledge.

D. AN EXAMINATION

1) Ask yourself if you act in front of others as though you are ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus by not declaring Him as your Savior and Lord.

2) More importantly, ask yourself if your life reflects that Jesus is the Lord of your life, not yourself.

3) Ask yourself when was the last time you told others about the way of salvation through Jesus Christ.