

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Pass It On

PART

2

TITLE

Unashamed

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1:8-18



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Providence family, welcome. It's good to see you. If you call Providence Home, welcome home. And if you're a guest here with us, we're really glad that you've joined us. If you're in a room over the way or if you're at home, we're also glad that you are with us. If you have a Bible in your hand, turn with me to second Timothy chapter one. If you don't have one and you're in the room, there's lots of Bibles in the chairs near you. And if you don't have one of your own, take that home as a gift. We'd love for you to have that.

We're in a series we started last week, in this book we're going to go verse by verse through it. It's going to take us nine weeks, and this is week two. It's called Pass It On. And my hope in it, our hope in it, is that not only will the book and its contents serve this purpose, we also hope that the season as well as this little booklet in my hand right here that is, it's in the lobby, it's free, it's been made to supplement what we're doing right now.

And so each page is a day and it's going to go through all nine weeks. And it just helps each one of us to read things that we will look at when we meet on Sundays. And it's also created to help us to pray specifically how God would you have me to activate my life in this season of my life, for your mission to make Christ known in the world and for you to know him personally. And what we have done is we created a sort of a list of things. Now for some of you, the way for you to activate is simply continue to do exactly what you're doing because perhaps you're doing every one of these things or at least many of them. But the fact is, is for some of us, when we move through seasons of life, certain seasons change, our life dynamics change, and suddenly we're looking, we're going, I want to leverage my entire life right now. How should I do that?

And so there's a site that we put, at least there's a page on the site and it's pray.org/passiton. And you're going to find a number of things there. But what our hope is, is ultimately that we would be able to see the vision come to pass. And the vision is to see every single one of us who call Providence home intentionally and willingly extending ourself to the point of discomfort, to be able to help people become followers of Jesus Christ. We want to reach people in our own lives. We want to reach our city and we want to reach our world. And so this has been created to help each one of us to consider and ask the Lord, how would you have me behave and live and what should I be pursuing in this season of my life? I hope that you will participate. So let's pray.

Father in heaven, we bow before you and we believe that you are our maker. We thank you that you have given us within the Bible your word and your word on who you are and who we are and how we are to live in your world. God, we recognize, or for many in the room who've walked with you a long time, there is a learned goodness that's associated with living our life in agreement with how you tell us to live in your world. And for many though, this is all brand new. And so would you help their eyes and their heart to be able to see this morning by the power of your Holy Spirit, the need not only for them to put their trust in your son Jesus Christ and what he did for us, but God, would you also convince them of your goodness and your strength and your power and that they would be convinced that being and living in agreement with you and your words to us are in their best interest. So we look to you in faith, would you speak through weakness and bring glory to Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Shame. Every one of us experience shame. And shame is something that is really a strange commodity. It's a

really interesting thing where we typically, what it creates within us is the desire to hide. Whether it's to hide in another room, whether it's to not be around people, whether it's to put a bag over our head, which is pretty rare, but it makes the case right? Shame is typically associated with people's eyeballs. Let me show you what I mean by that. Shame, if I had to sort of define it, is it's the horrible feeling of falling short in front of people whose approval we want very much. And that's why shame is typically associated with people and their eyeballs seeing our life and our moments that perhaps aren't the best.

We typically experience this kind of shame in one of three categories of life. One is when we sin, we sin against God. We do something that perhaps other people recognize as a violation of the way that we're supposed to be living morally before God. And it's interesting is that if no one's watching, we are still just as guilty, but we feel less shame. But if everyone's watching, suddenly we feel all the eyeballs of everybody. So for example, if I walked in the room last night, nobody was here, lights were off unlocked the door came in, turned the lights off, walked up to see what it was going to be like to stand up here and I tripped and for whatever reason rage fell out of my heart and I took this stand and I threw it across the room. I would still be guilty, but I wouldn't feel as shameful because you're not here. But if I came and did that when I was just walking up here, I would probably feel really ashamed right now because you would've seen me behave poorly.

Sometimes it's not morally, sometimes it's not sin, sometimes it's shortcoming. For example, you may enter a race and come in last place. You've done nothing morally wrong and yet you may feel ashamed because you came in last. Some of us, we remember ninth grade speech class and you stand up and the fact is there's people watching and they are peers and their approval means something to us in that moment. And so if like me, you crashed and burned in that moment, the fact is if you make mistakes in your room the night before when you're practicing, you don't feel any shame. But suddenly when you stand in front of other people, you're like, "Wow, I really fell short."

And then there's one other kind of shame and it's the kind of shame that Paul has on his mind when he writes chapter one verses eight through 18, and it's the shame of association. Of being associated with somebody who's a little quirky. And other people might look and go, "Wait a minute, are you connected with that person?" And suddenly you have to make that decision, am I ashamed to be associated with this person or not? Several of us perhaps have had some person that means a lot to us and we want to bring them home, we want to introduce them to our family and it's Thanksgiving and we all have that weird uncle who comes. And if you don't have one, you may be that weird uncle and you have a guy or a girl you want to bring over and you're like, "Hey, I want to introduce to my whole family." And you're like, "Oh, wait a minute. I should probably tell you about somebody first." What are you doing in that moment? You're saying there's somebody who's connected to me that I would prefer to distance myself from.

And what Paul has to tell us is this, is there's a million reasons to be ashamed and a million associations that you can be ashamed of, but being associated with Jesus Christ is not one of them. Paul is in prison for the last time. He's literally chained to the ground. He says he's chained. He's condemned as a criminal of Rome. He's been sentenced to die for his faith in Jesus Christ. And what we're told about this season of his life is really

quite remarkable, is that not only is he sentenced to die, but he's also has memories of everything he's already been through, extending himself to the point of discomfort in order to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ has created upon his own physical frame all kinds of scars, which is why looking at his skin, he's going to say, "I bear on my body the marks of Christ."

In other words, he's looking down and he's seeing the results of the beatings and the lashings and a stoning and a shipwreck and cold and hunger and thirst and all kinds of different marks upon his body. And every one of them is there because his persistence to tell people about his savior. To be unashamed of the gospel. Now, he has been in prison a number of times before. Philippi, Caesarea, Jerusalem, and in Rome, which is where he's in prison when he writes second Timothy. His first imprisonment in Rome was, I shouldn't say it wasn't intense, but it was house arrest. And so he was able to enjoy some of the comforts of his home, even welcoming guests, and he wrote several letters including Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

He enjoyed six years of freedom where he went out and enjoyed the opportunity to go and tell people about Christ. And suddenly Nero unleashed this fury of Christian persecution and Paul was one of the leading spokespersons. He's a follower of Christ and he was arrested, condemned, and sentenced to die. And now chained to the ground, he chooses to write one last letter and the letter that he chooses to write, it could have been to a church or to a region that had lots of churches, they could have shared the letter. Instead, he wrote it to one man. His name was Timothy, his son of the faith, his mentee, his protege, who he is invested and mentored for 15 years. Paul's now in the sixties and Timothy is in his thirties. He's mentored him for a long time, beginning when he was a teenager. And what the entire letter is is him telling Timothy it's, I want to pass this responsibility of leadership and gospel proclamation to continue to finish the mission, to let people know that Jesus Christ died for sin. He was buried and he rose from the dead.

If you need a picture, I won't show this every week, I promise, but if you need a picture of what the letter is about, it's an exchange of a baton. You have one person who's finished the race and he says, "I'm about to die. I'm waiting to hear the steps of my executioner." And there is this gospel and there's this commission from Christ himself to see to it that it reaches all the places and all the people's groups of the world and he's trying to pass it to his son that he's invested in, not his real son, just his spiritual son. But there's a problem. And the problem is that this man, Timothy is feeling tired in his soul. He's feeling ashamed, he's feeling timid. He's feeling hesitant to reach out and receive the baton knowing that the person who's giving it to me is losing his head. And I could share the similar end.

And so Paul, on the very end of his life begins or almost at the beginning of his letter, in verse eight, he tells Timothy and he tells us the reasons why it's so critical that we be unashamed to associate with Jesus Christ, to receive the gospel and to pass it on. So let's read it starting in verse eight. He says:

"Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now

has been manifested through the appearing of our savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed for I know whom I have believed and I'm convinced that he's able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."

"Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me and the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit dwells within you, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me. May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus."

Now, in just a few moments, we're going to take the Lord's supper and the basis of the Lord's Supper is not only to remember what Christ has done, it is to unashamedly proclaim that we are still putting our faith and trust in Christ and what he did for the salvation of our soul. It's saying I continue to believe and I don't care who knows. My hope is set on Jesus alone. And what this passage does is it gives us some evidence as to why there's a basis, a rationale, for why we can be unashamed of Christ.

And so I want to show you three ways. It won't be exhaustive, but the first is this. He says here that we need not be ashamed because Christ has rescued us. He's rescued us. Now you notice in verse eight that it begins with the word therefore. And anytime you see the word, therefore it indicates that what has been said just before that he's building upon that. And so what he's saying is in light of what I've just said, don't be ashamed. So what did he just say? Verse six and seven, he says this, for this reason I remind you of the fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not a fear, but of power and love and self-control."

And so the gift that Paul is referring to here is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who comes to live and abide and dwell within the hearts of every single person who repents of their sin and puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. The Holy Spirit comes into our heart, lives within us, and so God is dwelling within us. As he comes, he seals our heart for the day of redemption. He guarantees what is to come. He convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment. In moments of tension, he's our comforter. In moments of confusion, it says that he's our teacher. He lives within us to guide us and prompt us and to show us his will and to show us his word, to show us his ways. If you understand anything spiritually today, first Corinthians two says, it's because the spirit of God is actually taking his words and maybe some of these words and helping them to make sense within your heart.

In fact, the Bible even says this, that nobody has the capacity individually to say with their heart Jesus is Lord unless the Holy Spirit is at work within their heart to enable them to see that and to believe that. This is the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Bible says, uses a metaphor to describe the Holy Spirit and it's the metaphor of a fire. Many times you may have seen like a book cover on the Holy Spirit and there'll be a flame on it. And

the reason is because the passages like this where he says, fan into flame the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the idea with a flame is this, is that when a fire is fanned, it gets brighter and warmer and when you pour water on it, even a portion of it, it gets cooler and a little bit more dim.

And so it is with our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit is not a fire. The Holy Spirit is like a fire. And when we sin against the Holy Spirit by sins of commission or omission, when we're not walking with the Holy Spirit, suddenly our relationship with Jesus Christ, it feels dim and cold. But when we fan into flame the Holy Spirit, when we're walking with him, when we're practicing his presence, when we're responding quickly to his promptings, when we're confessing our sin quickly, repenting quickly, obeying quickly, when we're paying attention to him, when we're praying through the day, we're pouring on oxygen to this fire and suddenly our relationship with Christ feels warmer and brighter. It's critical that you understand today, you all walked in and if you are a believer in Christ, the coolness of your relationship with Jesus is indicative of the Holy Spirit's pleasure and power and brightness within your heart. Am I quenching him or am I fanning into flame the Holy Spirit?

And what he says is this, is that when the Holy Spirit is fanned into flame, a few things happen within our personal life. We experience spiritual power. We experience the ability to love people in unusual and even supernatural ways, and we experience self-control over the urges and impulses of our flesh that would disqualify our witness. That what we would pass somebody would actually want. What he's saying is this, is that God doesn't gift us with his spirit and then equip us with cowardice that would negate the gift. And because of that, Timothy, because you have the Holy Spirit within your heart and because you can fan him into flame, therefore verse eight, do not be ashamed. Do not be ashamed of the testament about our Lord nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

And then what he does is he says, now Timothy, let me just remind you of some of the reasons, the reasons why being ashamed of association with Christ is absolutely unfitting. He says, we were dead in our sin, we were bound for hell and we had our foot on the gas pedal. In verse nine he says, and then Christ saved us. He saved us. He saved us from our sin. He saved us from death. He saved us from Satan himself. He saved us from sin. And this is the beauty of Christianity is we're not just saved from something, we're saved to something. He says, and we're called to a holy calling. He's given us the capacity to live differently, to want different things than we've ever wanted before. You fan into flame the gift of the Holy Spirit, suddenly courage begins to envelop your heart and you begin to want different things because your wants now align with a holy calling.

And then he says, he goes on, he goes, and let's just get this clear Timothy and Providence. It's not because of your merit, it's not because you're attractive, it's not because you're awesome, it's not because of any of those things. It's because of his own purpose and grace, his purpose, his sovereign will. God, as the sovereign over all things, determined if you're in Christ to save you, that's why you're saved. And it took his grace. He had to give what we did not deserve, unmerited favor that was poured out toward you and me and notice when

it happened, which he gave us in Christ before the ages began. In other words, God's concrete purposes to save us were poured out before the world began. And when were they activated? Verse 10. In verse 10, he says, which now has been manifested through the appearing of our savior Christ Jesus. In other words, God's purpose to save each and every one of us was activated when Christ took on flesh, came to the earth, lived without sin, gave his own life to pay for our sin.

He was buried in a grave and then rose from the dead on the third day. This is how God pulled it off. And when he rose from the dead, he invited us to believe in him. And everyone who does believe in him, puts our full trust, our full weight upon him, he forgives us of all of our sin and he gives us his righteousness. And do you know what that does for us? It abolishes in our life everlasting separation with God and it gives us everlasting life. This is the gospel. And so now imagine, and this is ultimately what he's trying to say to them, just imagine Providence. Imagine the inconsistency of being ashamed of the firefighter who pulled you out of the burning building. Imagine you having a heart attack, a paramedic comes over, does CPR and resuscitates you, and then you are ashamed to associate yourself with the one who saved your life.

In other words, what he's saying is Timothy, there are so many reasons to feel shame, but being associated with Christ is not one of them. And not only is shame unfitting because Christ rescued us, but second, because Christ has called us, he's called us. Why be unashamed? Because he, the one who saved us, told us to do something. Now, the Bible uses the word, uses really two words when it talks about how God almighty by his spirit through his word tells us to do something, when he sends us out to do something. One of them is called a calling. And sometimes he uses the word an appointing where God almighty calls or appoints.

A calling is simply a word from God. Like if I wanted to call you, I'd get your phone number. It'd become direct. I'm speaking to you, I pick up, "Hello, this is Brian. I have a word for you." Okay, God Almighty, by his spirit, through his word, he calls us, he speaks to us. And when you hear his calling, here's what happens. It creates within our hearts a determined passion to do what he asked. If you're in Christ today, you've already received a calling. You may not know that that's what it was. There is a number of times in my own life where I share the gospel with somebody. You can tell that God is working in their heart, he's drawing them and they utter these words, "I believe, what do I do?" You see it? God is calling them. It's creating a determined passion. I have to act, but I don't know what to do right now. And so when he calls us to believe in Christ, it creates this determined passion to repent of our sin and put our faith in Christ.

When I was 16 years old, I still remember the very night I got on my knees. There was a basketball player, his name is Hank Gathers, and he died on the basketball court. I was watching. I was home alone watching ESPN, a guy, all American basketball player, everything that I wanted in life, fell on the ground and he died. I went in my room. I didn't know what to do. My parents had faithfully shared the gospel with me my entire life, so I knew what to do. In that moment, there became a determined passion. I believe in that moment when I was born again is that Christ by his spirit was literally calling me, pulling him, and I had to get on my knees and I had to express my trust in him that night.

Once you begin a relationship with Christ, it's interesting as you continue to open up the Bible and suddenly you're confronted with different instructions. And it's interesting how since it's... One instruction is absolutely pertinent to your life right now, it really creates this passion that you have to pull it off right now. Sometimes people when they see it, they're like, I have to do it right now. I have to call that person. I have to apologize because of what this says right here. And so there's these callings where God almighty, he moves in our life in such a way and it creates this urgency within us that we have to obey what it is that we see in this moment.

What's interesting for Paul, he also received another kind of call, and that was a call the vocational ministry, to become, as he says in verse 11, a preacher and apostle and teacher. But notice what he says, which is why I suffer as I do. Now this is what you'll find is that when God Almighty calls you to a task, even if doing it causes you embarrassment, like repenting of your sin in front of somebody else, you don't care what anyone else thinks. And the reason is because there's this urgent determined passion that I have to do what Christ told me to do.

Now the fact is is that Christ does not call every believer into vocational ministry as a pastor, apostle, preacher, he doesn't do that. But Christ has called, commissioned every believer to go therefore and make disciples in all nations. And what you will find in life is this. Is that this calling, no matter your occupation, some of your engineers, school teachers, it doesn't matter. Every one of those areas is a platform where there's human beings who are in need of the gospel. And what happens is once you sense that this is God's calling upon your life as well, it creates a determined urgent passion to leverage our time and our talents and our treasures to be able to take the baton and pass it along, in spite of the fact that some people might not like what they hear.

And that gets to the third and last reason why there is no need to be ashamed, and that is because Christ secures us forever. He secures us forever. Sometimes we have a hard time imagining. Some of us, we read the Bible as an old book and therefore we treat it as such and we just read it like, "Okay, it's old." It's really important to when you read the Bible to say, God, would you help me to have a sanctified imagination? What that means is this, okay? You don't make stuff up, okay? That's why it's sanctified. Okay? Inside the words of scripture, inside what you have given me, would you help me to imagine what it looked like? Help me to imagine what Paul smelled like in that dungeon. Help me to imagine what he looked like in that dungeon, how unkept, how dirty he looked.

You see, if you can imagine what he probably looked like in that moment, you can imagine that anybody from the outside who didn't understand Paul could look at Paul, and the only thing that they could see in Paul is things to be ashamed about. He's got no family. He's got no wife outside the prison crying for him because she's going to miss him. He's got no kids crying because they're going to miss him. In fact, he says here that literally only Luke, we'll see it in chapter four, it says that everybody around me has left. This is man who's literally given his entire life, his entire adult life to share the gospel with people around the world. And none of those people are near the prison to say thank you. He's dying alone.

You can imagine how he smells. You can imagine what he looks like. You can imagine a prison guard walking into the prison and Paul saying, “Believe the gospel. It’s a trade up. Can’t you see?” Everything in Paul looked ashamed, looked shameful, a life that nobody really would want. Misunderstood by even his friends, of the people who believed in Christ. Here’s a man that looked shameful. But notice what he says in verse 12. He says, “But I am not ashamed for I know whom I believed.”

I think this is just amazing to me. Did you notice he doesn’t say, because I know what I believed? He says, I know whom I believed. It becomes entirely personal to him. You see, you’ll leave an idea way before you’ll leave a friend. And what Paul is saying is this, I simply have too many memories with Christ to be able to abandon him now. He has stood by me when no one else stands by me. He has forgiven sin and taken away my shame when nobody else had the power and capacity to do so. He has given me encouragement. He has blessed me time and time and time again. I’m 50 years old. I became a believer when I was 16 and I look at it now and there are all kinds of ideas that I have left, that I formed at one point in time and then all of a sudden I continue to learn and I’m like, I don’t know if I can hold to that anymore. This is what I believe. But one thing I just simply cannot change right now is I can’t get away from him. He’s immutable. He never changes, and he’s simply been too close. There’s just too many memories that I have of Christ himself to say I should be ashamed of him.

He says, I know whom I have believed. I look at Christ and I simply cannot, I cannot bail at this point in time. And then he goes on in verse 12 and notice what he says, “for I know whom I believed and I am convinced that he’s able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” Do you see what he just said? He said, because I know him so well, because I know him so well, not because I know religion or because I know a system of ideas or thoughts, but because I have a relationship with the son of God who literally visits me in this prison cell, I have become so familiar with his power over sin, with his power over authorities, that I am absolutely convinced that he has the strength and ability to take what has been entrusted to me and protect it until that day.

Now, what is that day? He tells us in chapter four when he says, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day. The day that he’s looking for is the day when Christ rewards his people for their faith. He’s saying, I don’t have to be ashamed of Christ because not only did he save me, and not only did he commission me and call me to something, but he has promised that no matter how much adversity I face, he is going to reserve and preserve everything that is my treasure until the end. Nobody can take it from me. Nobody can dismantle me from eternal life.

Another way to say it is in a few days they’re going to sever my head, but they will never be able to sever me from all that Christ has given me. There’s a strength of courage because of this. And so he says in verse 13, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you’ve heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. And by the Holy Spirit who dwells within you guard, the good deposit and entrusted to you.” In other words, he’s saying because you know that Christ is holding fast to you, hold fast to the words that describe

and reveal him. And because the Holy Spirit lives in you, who has the capacity to guard what's been entrusted you to the end, he's going to give you strength to guard. To guard yourself and to guard the things in your own heart, to guard your own mind, to take your own thoughts captive in spite of the adversity that's in front of you.

And then what he does is something that I think is just remarkable. He just totally names three people. I think this is such a fascinating thing that he does in verses 15 through 18. And I think what he's doing is he's saying, Timothy, let me just show you two potential paths. They both have to do with a lack of shame or a presence of shame in Christ. In verse 15, he says, you're aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me. Among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. He totally names two people in eternal scripture. And he says, these people deserted.

And it's interesting that Paul knew that young Timothy knew who they were. Because he didn't say, you know, the guy with a beard? The like the big tall guy? No, he just says, you know who they are. He just names them and he moves on. But then notice he gives us another person in verse 16. "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me," and notice, "and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me earnestly and found me." In other words, what he's saying is this, this man Onesiphorus so unashamedly and within his heart, he went prison to prison in search of me not fearing being put into the same prison with me.

And I think he puts these out there in order to say, "Timothy, choose your camp. Timothy, if we had to add your name, would it fit in verse 15 or 16?" There is a million things to be ashamed of, Providence, but being associated with Christ is not one of them. So if you first of all have never put your trust in Christ, I urge you now surrender your life to Christ. He welcomes you. He calls you to himself. If you have the impulse within you to want to pray to him, it's because he's the one who's calling. So just give way, confess your sin to him and put your trust in him. Confess your trust in him, and he will forgive you of your sin. Second, Providence, let me urge us to form convictions from the Bible and hold fast to them. There are so many people in the world today, even people who profess Christ, who have no courage of conviction, and the reason is because they lack a conviction.

Many Christians and many people in the world have leanings and leanings only need a slight breeze to adjust. I may urge us to continue to open a Bible and form truth statements on the basis of what we read in the Bible, and then hold fast to those truth statements in spite of the opposition or adversity that you receive for holding fast to such things.

And finally, let's be willing to suffer for the gospel. He tells Timothy, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel." Jesus said if they persecuted me, they will persecute you. Jesus said that people hate the light because they love the darkness. In other words, if you receive adversity or opposition because you're holding fast to the gospel, it's something that you should

expect. It shouldn't be a surprise to us when it happens. If we stand on the tenets of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes the sinfulness of man, the reality of eternal hell and the exclusivity of Jesus to save, our lives and beliefs will serve as a rebuke to the conscience of all who reject Christ. Expect it.

But how? How do we carry this burden, this weight, and at the same time, how do we keep having a courage that remains a humble courage as opposed to a courage that turns into a false, strident, arrogant bravado? Jesus was not a punk when he told the truth. And you do so by living in the shadow of the cross. This is how Spurgeon said it. Okay? He says, "A man can carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden, but that same man when he dives into the sea shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving its weight because he is in the element." What does that mean? It means this. If we suffer for the truth and our eyes are solely fixed upon ourself, it's like carrying a bucket that gets heavier by the day. But if we dive into the sea of Christ's humble sufferings and consider his mercy and kindness to us, our courage will grow as kind as his courage.

And our sufferings, like Paul, may just feel light and momentary compared to the glory that awaits us all. I know that many of us are misunderstood in the world, and I know that many of you are in families and jobs and neighborhoods and different places where it's very, very difficult to stand for your faith in Christ. I urge you to look past the scorn and see Christ lovingly and mercifully giving his life for you, and then take the baton and pass it on.



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