

2 Timothy 1:8-11 “The Importance of the Right Perspective”\*\*

Main Idea: In 2 Timothy 1:8-11, Paul challenged Timothy to develop a proper perspective of three things.

- I. We need a proper perspective of the gospel (8).
  - A. If we have it, there are some things we won't do.
  - B. If we have it, we'll look at suffering differently.
- II. We need a proper perspective of God (9-10).
  - A. Consider God the Father's plan (9).
    1. He saved us.
    2. He called us to a holy calling.
    3. He chose to give us grace.
  - B. Consider God the Son's work (10).
    1. He abolished death.
    2. He secured life.
- III. We need a proper perspective of ourselves (11).
  - A. The gospel shaped Paul's identity.
  - B. The gospel should do the same for us.

Make It Personal: How does my perspective need to change today?

*Recognition of Graduates*

*Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:1-12*

A week ago Saturday night I found myself unable to sleep due to another divine appointment with migraine pain. I wrestled the pillow for quite a while until I decided to just go out in the living room, and sit, and ask for the Lord's help.

Not just with the pain, but with my attitude about the pain. When you have a good night of sleep, which I had the *previous* night, it's easy to think you should have such rest *every* night. And to become irritated when it doesn't happen.

It was at this point on that Saturday night that a word came to mind.

*Expectations.*

That's why I was struggling. Not due to the migraine pain, but due to my *expectations* regarding what was happening that night.

The Lord was opening my eyes to something I needed (still *need*) to learn. And so I wouldn't forget His lessons, I pulled out my iPhone and dictated the following thoughts (at 2:26 a.m., according to my iPhone).

Expectations. What did you expect?. Expectations always get us into trouble.

What should I expect? If I expect to feel good, then I struggle with depression if I don't feel good. If I expect a sleepless night, I will be discouraged when I can't sleep. But if I expect God to always be working in ways that will help me know Him better and help others know Him better, then I will see those opportunities in every situation. I have joy when my expectations line up with God's purposes.

I know that some of that may not make sense (after all, it was 2:26 in the night).

But that word is critical, isn't it?

*Expectations.* It's the difference between having joy and *not* having joy. It's not what happens to us, but what we expect to happen to us.

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

Earlier that night I'd been listening to the audio book, *Escape From Camp 14*, by Blaine Harden. It's the heartwrenching New York Times bestseller about the only known person born inside a North Korean prison camp to have escaped.

Shin Dong-hyuk is his name. In the book, Shin describes the unthinkable conditions he and hundreds of thousands of other North Koreans endure.

One observation in particular stuck with me, Shin's observation regarding suicide. Prisoners who once lived outside the camp committed suicide far more often than those, like Shin, who were born in the camp. And why? Because they knew life could be different, *better*. But for those who'd been born in the camp, it's all they knew. The beatings, the starvation, the degradation, the hopelessness. Those inside couldn't imagine it could be any other way.

Your perspective on what you expect makes all the difference in the world, even in a prison camp.

So what did you expect? When I went to bed that night, I expected to sleep, not be awakened by migraine pain. The expectation robbed me of the joy the Lord intended to give me, and did give me, once I confessed the sin of my idolatrous expectation, and by grace accepted God's good purpose for me that night.

When it comes to living life God's way, our perspective is vital. That's what an expectation is, a *perspective* on life, my *present* perspective.

Keeping our perspective right is a daily battle for us all. In fact, if you are upset about something this morning, perhaps perhaps your spouse, or your children, or maybe even your church, or something at work, it's likely connected to this question. *What did you expect?*

"I expected my wife to be more understanding, and she wasn't."

Or, "I expected my kids to be respectful, and they're weren't."

Or, "I expected my brothers and sisters to notice I'd missed church, and they didn't."

And while they may be some validity to your expectation, your problem, at least in part, is the same as mine was last Saturday night, a *perspective* problem.

So what should our perspective be in life, especially when things don't go as we'd like? To help us answer that question, I want us to consider the words of another prisoner, the apostle Paul, as we return to our study in 2 Timothy.

One of the main reasons Paul wrote 2 Timothy was to help his son in the faith live with the right perspective. Frankly, Timothy was struggling, as we do at times.

Let me resketch the setting for you. The year was around 67 AD. Paul, the man who had once persecuted Christians, was now himself facing execution because of his commitment to Jesus Christ. He was incarcerated in a dark Roman dungeon. For nearly 30 years he had poured every ounce of his life into this consuming purpose--to know Christ, and to make Christ known to others.

Timothy was in Ephesus. Timothy was Paul's #1 associate. Paul had led Timothy to the Lord on his first trip to Lystra. And Paul had recruited Timothy for missionary service on his second trip. For 15 years, Timothy had served Christ at the side of his mentor.

Here was the problem. Paul would soon be gone. Timothy would soon be thrust into a new position of leadership. The future success of the gospel depended on the

faithful efforts of people like Timothy. But Timothy had three strikes against him. He was young, prone to illness, and a timid introvert by personality.

If Timothy was going to continue to be used by God in the Gospel ministry, he needed a perspective adjustment. So Paul wrote 2 Timothy, the most personal of his 13 NT letters, to help him.

In 2 Timothy 1:8-11, Paul challenged Timothy to develop a proper perspective of three things: the gospel, God, himself. We need the same, the proper perspective of the gospel, God, and ourselves. In the middle of a migraine night, when you've just graduated and are making plans for the future, at the office, and whenever.

### I. We need a proper perspective of the gospel (8).

Verse 8, "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God..."

Apparently, Timothy was afraid, even ashamed.

I used to make my kids ashamed. "You're not going to wear that out in public are you, dad?! That striped tie with that plaid shirt?! If you do, I won't be seen with you!"

Timothy was ashamed. It was a little embarrassing to know that his spiritual father and personal friend was in prison. Not visiting prison, but IN prison. Basically, as a convicted felon. A political prisoner. The Romans said Paul was a menace to civilized society.

Do you know what happened in July of the year 64AD? A great fire devoured the city of Rome. Massive destruction. The Romans attributed the fire to the wrath of the gods. The Emperor was Nero. Some felt he started the fire by arson. Do you know what Nero did to divert attention from himself and appease the gods of Rome?

He found a scapegoat. He blamed the Christians for the problems in Rome. He instigated severe hatred and persecution against Christians. The ancient historian Tacitus records that under Nero some Christians were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn by wild dogs. Some were crucified. Others he burned as torches in the night sky. That began in the year 64 AD.

It was three years later when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. Public opinion was still hot against the scum of society known as Christians.

No wonder Timothy was ashamed.

How could he overcome his shame and fear? He needed a perspective adjustment, starting right here, with the gospel.

Paul gave Timothy two sets of instructions regarding the gospel. First, negative instructions, then positive. The right perspective of the gospel affects us in these two ways.

#### **A. If we have it, there are some things we won't do.**

Here's the first negative. Paul told Timothy, "So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord." Or in another translation, "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."

When God saves us, why doesn't He just take us immediately to heaven? Why does He leave us here? The answer is simple. He has given us a job to do. Every one of us.

Acts 1:8 "You shall be my witnesses," said Jesus.

Our mission is clear. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Cor 4:5). That is our calling in life--to testify to this world what Jesus Christ has done.

Do you remember why the apostle John said he was exiled to Patmos? He says in Revelation 1:9, "I was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Timothy, don't be ashamed of the testimony of Jesus Christ! Don't be intimidated by the slander and attacks of Nero. Don't be silenced by the biased accounts of the media.

To us he would say, don't be shocked by the abusive treatment that the Press gives Christianity today either. The gospel message is not popular.

It's not popular to tell people we are all sinners, born under God's wrath, and heading for eternal punishment. Nor to say there's nothing we can do to remedy the problem. Nor to explain that God has sent into the world but *one* Savior, His Son, Jesus the Messiah, and that He promises to pardon those who believe in His Son and His atoning sacrifice, but *only* those who believe in His Son.

It's not popular. But it's the gospel truth.

So Timothy, don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord. Are you ashamed to speak up for Christ?

A second negative. "Or ashamed of me his prisoner."

Timothy, don't be ashamed *of me*! Look carefully at Paul's wording. Notice his perspective. He was chained in a Roman cell. He was a prisoner. But whose prisoner did he say he was? Nero's? No! "*His* prisoner," referring to the Lord.

Now that's perspective! Timothy, I'm here because of Christ. I'm not ashamed, so don't you be. What a perspective of the gospel!

There's a great need today for people who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ. People who are...

--Like Paul in Rom 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..."

--Like Onesiphorus in II Tim 1:16, "he was not ashamed of my chain."

--Like Paul in 2 Tim 1:12, "For which cause I suffer... I am not ashamed..."

So how can I have a proper perspective of the gospel? Here's where it starts. On the negative side, I must make a commitment, that by God's help, I won't be ashamed of His testimony, or of His people who are suffering for Him.

If we have the gospel, and we're truly living in light of it, that's something we won't do. On the positive side...

**B. If we have it, we'll look at suffering differently.**

Here comes Paul's positive instruction. Verse 8, "But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God." In the KJV, "Be thou partaker of the afflictions."

That's one Greek word, and Paul seems to have coined it himself for the occasion. It means "to bear evil treatment along with." He uses the same word again in 2 Timothy 2:3, where our English Bibles translate it, "Endure hardship."

Now that's quite an invitation. Timothy, I invite you to join with me in suffering. Suffering? For what?

If I am going to suffer, it's going to be for something worthwhile. Some of you have been through physical therapy before. I heard a man tell me once, after the first therapy session on his shoulder, "Man, I thought the guy was going to kill me!"

So why did he go back and endure more of the suffering? Because the reason warranted the suffering.

What reason warranted Timothy's willingness to suffer? "Be a partaker of the afflictions of the GOSPEL (KJV)."

The gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ warrants paying a price. In fact, no price is too great to pay for the sake of the gospel.

But how can we do it? We're not super-humans. So how can we endure? The text tells us. Verse 8, "by the power of God."

Brothers and sisters, if our perspective of the gospel is right, we'll be willing to suffering for it. If we're not willing to suffer, it's an indication our perspective is out of whack.

Remember how thrilled you were when you learn that, for Jesus' sake, God had forgiven you all your sins and given you the free gift of eternal life? You wanted the world to know! Because your perspective was in the grip of the gospel.

You say, "I need help here." So do I.

Here's the question. How could Paul have such a perspective that he would be willing to suffer for the gospel? It had to do with a second perspective.

## II. We need a proper perspective of God (9-10).

Do you know what strikes me about Paul? Paul never in his life got over the wonder of what God had done for him.

As the old song by George Beverly Shea puts it, "

*There's the wonder of sunset at evening,*

*The wonder as sunrise I see;*

*But the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul*

*Is the wonder that God loves me.*

*Refrain*

*O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!*

*Just to think that God loves me.*

*O, the wonder of it all! The wonder of it all!*

*Just to think that God loves me.*

So what has God done for us? Paul tells us in verses 9-10.<sup>1</sup>

"...who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

God is a triune being. Here Paul puts the spotlight on God the Father and God the Son. First...

### **A. Consider God the Father's plan (9).**

Do you know what God did in the beginning? Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth..." But do you know what God did even before that? Verse 9 tells us. It takes on back in time, "before the beginning of time."

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<sup>1</sup> Though this is a personal letter to Timothy, Paul also wrote it for public use. The final "you" in 4:22 is plural, "Grace be with *you* all."

What did God the Father do even before the world began? He designed our salvation! Notice the action verbs in this text, and notice that in the mind of God, these actions took place *before the beginning of time*.

This is God the Father's plan, three things God the Father designed for us:

1. *He saved us*. The verb means "to rescue, to keep, to deliver. Timothy needed that reminder. And this.

2. *He called us to a holy calling*. Holy. To be set apart from the world unto Himself. This is God's intent for us. He called us to this end, to a holy life.

Again, notice carefully what Paul is saying to Timothy. "My son, Timothy, God saved us. God called us. God did it. God the Father designed a plan whereby sinful people like us could be forgiven of our sins. God the Father designed a plan so that we could be made holy. Just think, Timothy, that's what God has done for us!"

That's what God has done for us too, if we're His child.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 "For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

1 Corinthians 1:2 We are "called to be saints" (=holy ones)

So why did God the Father choose to save and call us in eternity past? On what basis did He do it? Was it because as He looked ahead and saw us, He was impressed with us? Was it because we were worthy? Was it even because He knew that one day we would pray the sinner's prayer and believe in His Son?

Look carefully at Paul's answer. No. It wasn't because of anything we have done. Verse 9, "NOT according to our own works".

On what basis then did God chose to save and call us to Himself? Verse 9, "Not because of anything we have done [i.e. like praying, walking an aisle, doing good deeds], but because of his own purpose and grace." The KJV says, "according to His own purpose and grace."

There's the basis. His grace. In eternity past...

3. *He chose to give us grace*. Verse 9 concludes, "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."

When did God the Father give us His grace? Before the first day of creation ever occurred. Before the first start was set in space.

You say, "I'd like to know more about this!" And God *wants* you to know more. That's why He has so much to say about it, so that our salvation will result in praise to Him, and specifically, the praise of His *grace*.

Let me call attention to two wonderful texts.

The first is Romans 8:28-30. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."

According to verse 28, what are Christians? They are people who have been "called according to God's purpose." And because of that calling, they respond in love for Him. And they also become something. Verse 29 says they become like His Son.

This divine plan takes us back to pre-time. What did God the Father do for this people that He purposed would resemble His Son? Verse 30 says He *predestined*<sup>2</sup> them, and *called* them, and *justified* them, and *glorified* them.

And He did all this before time ever began. Before God ever made us, these four decisions took place in His mind. He predestinated beforehand that we would be His. He called us to Himself. He justified us (declared that we would be righteous). He glorified us (that is yet to happen, yet in God's mind, it's as good as accomplished).

Another helpful text is Ephesians 1:3-5. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will."

What should salvation produce? Debate? No. Boasting? No. Praise to God the Father. *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus.* Why? What did He do? He *blessed us.* He *chose us in Christ.* When? *Before He ever created the world's first molecule.* And why did He choose us? *To be like His Son, holy and blameless.*

How certain is this plan? *In love He predestined us to be adopted as His Sons.* On what basis? *Through Jesus Christ.* And what motivated God to do such a thing? Nothing outside of Himself, for indeed, He did it all *in accordance with His pleasure and will.*

Some see the doctrine of election as controversial. It certainly wasn't for Paul. It's what inspired him on death row, as he intended it to do for Timothy.

John Stott said it well, "The doctrine of election is never introduced in Scripture either to arouse or to baffle our carnal curiosity, but always for a practical purpose. On the one hand, it engenders deep humility and gratitude, for it excludes all boasting. On the other, it brings both peace and assurance, for nothing can quieten our fears for our own stability like the knowledge that our safety depends ultimately not on ourselves but on God's own purpose of grace."<sup>3</sup>

So election and predestination are precious truths. In 2:9-10 Paul says this is the doctrine that motivated him to do evangelism. "I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus..."

What can help a timid person like Timothy get back into the race? Paul knows. There's nothing that can inspire a fearful heart like getting a renewed perspective of *God*, beginning with God the Father's plan.

But that leads to something else. Not just God the Father's plan, but also...

### **B. Consider God the Son's work (10).**

Verse 9 takes us back before time. Verse 10 takes us back 2000 years. Verse 10 says, "But it [this grace that God purposed to give us in eternity past] has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus."

So God the Father devised the plan, but God the Son accomplished it. He did the work. And what did God's only Son, Jesus the Christ, do? He accomplished two things for us, says Paul.

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<sup>2</sup> Predestinate = to determine beforehand; to ordain beforehand

<sup>3</sup> John Stott, p. 36.

1. *He abolished death.* Verse 10, “Who has destroyed [KJV, ‘abolished’] death.”

I did a memorial service on Friday, and I’ll do another tomorrow. Death is man’s greatest enemy. It plagues us. It haunts us. We can’t escape it.

There are three types of death according to the Bible. There’s physical death (the separation of the soul from the body), spiritual death (separation of the soul from God), and eternal death (the separation of both soul and body from God forever).

But Jesus *abolished* it. The word means “to render inoperative; to make ineffective, powerless.”

How did Jesus destroy death? By Himself dying, and then by leaving His tomb alive!

So God revealed His saving grace through what His Son did to death. *Who has destroyed death*, not only for Himself, but for all who place their faith in Him. But there’s more.

2. *He secured life.* “And has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Paul uses a phrase loaded with implications, for Jesus Christ offers us two things. One, *life*. Abundant living in the here and now! And two, *immortality*, that is, incorruptible living in the life to come!

Let this sink in. Let it grip your perspective. Jesus Christ provides those who know Him with life that’s both abundant and eternal. Everything we need *now*, and *forever*. He truly is all we need.

And how can people have access to this life? “Through the gospel,” emphasizes Paul again at the end of verse 10.

Do you see what Paul’s saying to Timothy? My dear friend, don’t be ashamed! Develop a proper perspective of the gospel. It’s worthy suffering for. And develop a proper perspective of God, of God the Father who designed your salvation, and God the Son who secured it by His work.

There’s a popular misconception today. If you asked the average person on the street what he thought about Jesus, here’s what he’d say. “Jesus? Yes, I know about Him. He was a great person. We should try to live like Him. And if we do, we’ll go to heaven.”

Is that true? Did Jesus Christ merely come to be our example? What word does Paul use in reference to Jesus in verse 10? He is “our SAVIOR.”

Friends, before Jesus can be our EXAMPLE, He must be our SAVIOR. Is he your Savior?

“How can He be?” you ask.

Just ask Him. Receive Him into your life. Put your faith in Him.

Now, there’s one more perspective that needs adjusting. First, of the gospel. Secondly, of God Himself and what He has done. Thirdly...

### III. We need a proper perspective of ourselves (11).

Look at verse 11, “And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.” Notice how Paul’s self-concept was directly related to His perspective of the gospel.

This is critical. If you want to develop a good view of yourself, you don't start with introspection. You must start by getting a good view of God and the gospel.

Paul, who's locked away in a filthy dungeon, had every reason in the world to be down on life and down on himself. But he wasn't.

Notice what he said about himself. Verse 11, "I was appointed." It's passive. Paul didn't volunteer. He was appointed by God to his lot in life.

God appointed me to be, first, a *herald*, a person who uses his mouth to proclaim something, in this case, the gospel, the good news concerning Jesus and His saving work.

Also, God appointed me to be *an apostle*, "as to one abnormally born," as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 15:9. At the time, of course, Paul was hunting down Christians, but Jesus met him, humbled him, brought him to faith, and then told him through Ananias, "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles...I will show him how much he must suffer for my name (Acts 9:15-16)."

So he became an apostle, not by choice, but by a divine appointment. And a *teacher* too, he says. Wherever he went, he taught, and eventually he taught by writing letters, about half of the NT books.

The point is this. Paul *knew* what God wanted him to be doing with his life. He's saying this here because he wants Timothy to remember and affirm the same. Timothy, God has appointed you to something. Remember, and by His grace, do it, no matter what the cost.

Friends...

**A. The gospel shaped Paul's identity.** How he viewed those prison walls, his time, the money he had in his pocket, how he responded when people called him scum. The good news of Jesus shaped the way he looked at himself. And...

**B. The gospel should do the same for us.**

You say, "It would be easier if I really knew what God had appointed me to do in life, like Paul." Perhaps, but the truth is, we do know a lot. We know He has appointed us to follow and honor Christ and make Him known to others. No, we're not apostles, but we are *witnesses* (Acts 1:8), and *ambassadors* (2 Cor 5:20). And if we have a family, we're to be Christlike husbands and fathers, and Christ-honoring wives and children.

The gospel should be shaping our identity. Is that happening in your life?

Let me be more specific. Paul wrote this letter to a 30-something year old man whom God had gifted for gospel work who was presently, at least in some measure, on the sidelines. Timothy needed a perspective adjustment.

If the Spirit guided Paul to write this letter to *you*, what would he say? For some he would say, by God's grace you are seeking to do exactly what God wants you to be doing with your life. Give Him praise!

But to others he would say, "What happened? You used to be, but not now. You used to never miss a service at church. You used to read your Bible every day. You used to pray fervently for your unsaved friends, and look for opportunities to talk with them about Christ. But now you've gone timid. Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's an unforgiving spirit, or the love of money, or the pursuit of earthly recognition. Whatever it is, you've lost sight of why you're here. You need a perspective adjustment, just like Timothy."

So let's all take a fresh look, as we close, at the gospel, at the God of the gospel, and at ourselves. And ask the question, *how does my perspective need to change today?*