

Main Idea: How do you help a friend who is wavering in his faith in a hostile world? According to 2 Timothy 1:8-10, we need to think about two soul-fortifying subjects.

- I. Think about the God of grace (8-9a).
 - A. God saved us.
 1. We need more than an example.
 2. We need a Savior.
 - B. God called us.
 1. It wasn't because of anything we did.
 2. It was because of what He chose to do.
- II. Think about the grace of God (9b-10).
 - A. Grace was given to us by the Father (9b).
 1. The gift was given in Christ.
 2. The gift was given before time.
 - The Father gave a gift to His Son.
 - The Father gave a gift to us.
 - B. Grace has been revealed to us by the Son (10).
 1. Christ appeared.
 2. Christ gave death the death-blow.
 3. Christ brought life to light.

Make It Personal: If you have grown weary or know someone who has...

1. Resolve to think rightly about God.
2. Resolve to fill your life with grace-reminders.

Romania trip report – I taught the Doctrine of the Church in Braila this past week.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:3-10

Weary. At times followers of Christ become *weary*. Even devout followers who have walked with Him for years. Do you know anybody who is growing weary in the faith and wondering if it's worth it to keep following Christ in this hostile world?

We find some practical help for the weary in Paul's second inspired letter to Timothy. If we're going to help the weary, as Paul did with Timothy, we need to think about two soul-fortifying subjects.

*I know not why God's wondrous grace to me He hath made known,
Nor why, unworthy, Christ in love redeemed me for His own.
I know not how this saving faith to me He did impart,
Nor how believing in His Word wrought peace within my heart.
I know not how the Spirit moves, convincing men of sin,
Revealing Jesus through the Word, creating faith in Him.
I know not when my Lord may come, at night or noon-day fair,
Nor if I'll walk the vale with Him, or meet Him in the air.
But I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able
To keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day.²*

It's amazing what happens when we ponder *grace*. In 2 Peter 3:18 we're told, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." We need to

**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.

¹ For a previous message on this passage, see the "Amazed By Grace" series in 2001 at WBC.

² Daniel W. Whittle, *I Know Whom I Have Believed*

grow in grace. And that's what we're seeking to do in our current series called *Amazing Grace*.

Our approach is to investigate five classic texts on grace from the Bible. Last time we learned that no one is too far gone for grace, as we pondered Paul's personal testimony recorded in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. This morning, we turn to the second letter Paul wrote to his ministry successor, Timothy, an epistle the apostle wrote just prior to his execution. Guess what subject was on his mind? Once again, it was grace.

Paul begins the letter emphasizing grace (1:2), and he ends the letter the same way (4:22). And tucked away in a paragraph in chapter one is one of the most amazing statements about sovereign grace you'll find anywhere in the Bible.

The teaching of sovereign grace is God-exalting and pride-crushing. When you come to a text like ours, you may struggle with what you see.

In preparing for this message, I ran across a statement by Charles Spurgeon as he introduced his teaching on the text we're about to consider. Spurgeon, of course, preached to thousands from his pulpit in London in the late 1800's, and was a champion of the "doctrines of grace." Here's what he said in his work, *Grace: God's Unmerited Favor*:

"Please remember that it is not my objective to extol doctrine that is the most popular or most palatable, nor do I desire to set forth the views of any one individual. My one aim is to give what I judge to be the meaning of the text. I probably deliver doctrinal principles that many of you may not like. Truly, I would not be at all surprised if you did not like it. Even if you become vexed and angry, I will not be at all alarmed, because I have never believed that I was commissioned to teach what would please my readers or that I was expected by sensible and gracious people to shape my views to suit the notions of my audience. I count myself responsive to God and to the text. If I explain the meaning of the text, I believe that I will give the mind of God and will be likely to have His favor, which will be sufficient for me—whoever may contradict me. However, let every candid mind be willing to receive the truth if what I am expressing is clearly in the inspired Word."³

And I would agree. If what you are about to hear does not come from God's Word, forget it, for it is merely human opinion. But if it, indeed, is the teaching of Scripture, believe it and build your life upon it. I am convinced that once we understand *grace*, we will never be the same again. And now to the text...

Let me sketch the backdrop for you. The year was around 67 A.D. Paul, the man who had once persecuted Christians, was now himself facing the sword because of his commitment to Jesus Christ. He was incarcerated in a dark Roman dungeon. For nearly thirty 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 disciplined young Timothy on his first trip to Lystra. Then he recruited Timothy for missionary service on his second trip. For fifteen years, Timothy had served Christ at the side of his mentor.

But there was a problem. With Paul's impending death, Timothy would soon be thrust into a new position of leadership. The future success of the gospel depended on

³ C. Spurgeon, *Grace*, pp. 34-5.

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.

The heat was getting to him. He was fearful. It's hard to live for God in a world that rejects His Son. Timothy knew that firsthand.

How do you encourage someone who's disillusioned, fearful, and struggling with life? Do what Paul did. Put the focus on God. But what about God? What subject has the power to transform the timid? It's the two soul-fortifying subjects Paul explores in 2 Timothy 1:8-10, the God of grace, and the grace of God.

I. Think about the God of grace (8-9a).

Paul begins in 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."

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. 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 64 A.D.? A great fire devoured the city of Rome. There was 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 the followers of Christ.

The ancient historian Tacitus records that under Nero some Christians were covered with the skins of dead beasts and torn by wild dogs. Some were crucified. Still others Nero burned as human torches in the night sky. That began in the year 64 A.D.

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—which is what Paul gave him.

To begin with Paul addressed Timothy's fear head-on. *Don't be ashamed to testify about our Lord or of me his prisoner.*

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

In Acts 1:8, we find the last words of Jesus to His followers, "You shall be my witnesses." 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.

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

Are you ashamed to speak up for Christ? Listen to Paul's counsel. Don't be shocked by the abusive treatment the Press gives Christianity today. Don't be silenced by the biased accounts. No, the message is not popular, but it never has been.

Timothy, don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Furthermore, 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. He refers to himself as the *Lord's* prisoner.

Now that's perspective! Timothy, I'm here because of Christ! I'm not ashamed, so don't you be! Rather, do this.

Paul continues in verse 8, "But join with me in suffering for the gospel." Now that's quite an invitation! Timothy, I invite you to join with me in suffering. Suffering? For what? If I am going to choose to suffer, I need a good reason. And I have one. It's the gospel. Join with me in suffering *for the gospel*.

The gospel is good news. It's such good news that it warrants paying a price to make it known. In fact, no price is too great for the sake of the gospel.

But how can we do it? We're not super humans! How can we endure suffering for the gospel? Here's the answer, the final words of verse 8, "*by the power of God.*"

There it is. How can weak, timid people like Timothy (and us) suffer for the gospel without caving in? The answer is, *we can't but He can!* God makes available to us His *power*.

It's true. The omnipotent God offers us His unlimited resources. He will strengthen us, enable us, and fight our battles for us by unleashing His mighty power.

"I sure could use some of God's power," you say. "But how do I experience it?" Paul shows us in verse 9. The key is to know, and then grow in our knowledge of the *God of grace*.

Beloved, if we're going to stay on the cutting edge of living for Christ, we need to know the God of grace well. The God of grace is Paul's subject in verse 9. "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."

One of the things that strikes me about Paul is that he never got over the wonder of what God had done for him! Paul constantly thought about and talked about God, and what God had done for him.

*There's the wonder of sunset at evening, the wonder as sunrise I see, but the wonder of wonder that thrills my soul is the wonder that God loves me.*⁴

Just what has the God of grace done for us? Paul highlights next two astonishing actions taken by God.

A. God saved us. The fact that He saved us implies that something was wrong. Indeed, it was. We were *lost*.

There's a popular misconception today. If you asked the average person on the street what he thought about Jesus, he'd probably say something like, "Jesus was a great person. He is our example. We should try to live like Him in our lives. And if we do, we'll go to heaven."

But is that true? Yes, Jesus was a great person, but did Jesus Christ come merely to be our example? No, He came to *save* us.

Notice something. What does Paul call Jesus in verse 10? He is "our *Savior*." That's key. Before Jesus can be our *example*, He must be our *Savior*. Is He your Savior? Do you know for sure that God has saved you? Don't miss these two, unmistakable implications.

1. *We need more than an example.*
2. *We need a Savior.* And God provided One for us. God saved us.

⁴ "The Wonder of It All," by George Beverly Shea.

B. God called us. Paul isn't telling Timothy something new, but is reminding him of bedrock, doctrinal truth he already knew. The reminder is intended to motivate him to live for Christ in the tough times.

There's a constant cry for "relevant" teaching in the church. Know this. There is no more *relevant* teaching than sound doctrine. We need doctrine.

Listen to Spurgeon again, "The ministry at large needs to heed this lesson. Certain earnest preachers are incessantly exciting the people but seldom, if ever, instructing them. They carry much fire and very little light. God forbid that we should say a word against appealing to the feelings—this is definitely needed in its place—but there is a balance to be observed with it. A religion that is based upon, sustained, and maintained simply by excitement will necessarily be flimsy and insubstantial, and will yield very speedily to the crush of opposition or to the crumbling hand of time."⁵

Strong Christians are those who have developed an appetite for sound doctrine. They know what they believe and why—and it's based on Scripture, not human opinion. And when they face trials, their understanding of doctrine will sustain them.

That's how Paul motivated Timothy. He reviewed theological truth. He reminded him of what the God of grace did for us. He saved us and He called us. He called us to a holy calling.

It's true that God calls everyone to repent and be saved (Rom 10:13), but that's not what Paul has in mind here. This "call" refers to God's effectual, saving call of believers. It's called an "effectual" call because when God extends it, it produces the "effect" God intended.

But why? On what basis did God save us and call us? There's a twofold answer.

1. *It wasn't because of anything we did.* Rather...

2. *It was because of what He chose to do.* How do I know? Because the text says so, "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.*"

Please notice carefully what Paul told his associate. "Timothy, God saved us and God called us. God did it. God designed a plan whereby sinful people like us could be forgiven of our sins. God instituted that plan so that we could be made holy. Just think, Timothy. That's what God did for us!"

And if you're a Christian, that's what God has done for you, too! He saved us—notice it's past tense. It's not, "He *will* save us," but "He *saved* us." It's already done. Believers in Christ are saved.

Let that sink in. According to God's Word, at this very moment every man and woman is either *saved* or *lost*. It's not that we'll be saved when we die and go to heaven. Right now, we *are* saved if we are in Christ.

God saved us, not partially, but totally. And the reason we are saved is because the work of salvation is done. From the Cross, Jesus shouted, "It is finished (John 19:30)!"

Just as we were utterly lost the moment Adam sinned, even before we had ever committed a sin, so every person in Christ was saved when the Second Adam finished His work. In the mind of God, the work is done. We are saved. God saved us.

Furthermore, He called us to a holy calling (a more literal rendering). 1 Corinthians 1:2 says we are "called to be saints (i.e. 'holy ones')." Paul elaborates in 1

⁵ Spurgeon, *Grace*, p. 32.

Thessalonians 4:7, “For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.” That’s our calling.

But again, why? Why did God save and call us? It had nothing to do with us. It had everything to do with two things—His purpose and grace.

At this point Spurgeon observed, “Oh, how some people squirm over those words, as if they were worms on a fisherman’s hook! Yet, there it stands, and it cannot be eradicated.”⁶

Why did God choose to save and call us? On what basis did He do it? Was it because He looked at us and was impressed with us? Was it because we were worthy? Did He choose to save and call us because He knew that one day we would choose to believe in Him? Was it because He knew we'd pray the sinner's prayer?

The answer is *no*. Look carefully at Paul's explanation. It was *not* because of anything we have done. God chose to save and call us on the basis of His own “purpose and grace.”

Dear friend, if any man is saved, it is not because he purposed to be saved, but because God purposed to save him.⁷ The Scriptures state in Romans 9:16, “It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy.” Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.”

But the natural man resists the notion. He thinks he can patch things up with God. He’s convinced he has something to offer God to merit His favor. He believes the notion, “Do the best you can, and God will save you.” That is a lie from the pit itself, and the consequence of believing it is eternal condemnation.

There is only one way for a sinner to be reconciled to God. The God of grace must do for the sinner what he cannot do for himself. He must reach down into the pit and rescue him from the mire. And that is what God did for you in His sovereign grace, fellow Christians. He saved us and called us.

The story is told that once when Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court.

The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That'll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit."

Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner!

"That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!"⁸

It’s true. God saved us and called us, not because of anything we have done, but solely on the basis of His grace. If we’re going to stay on the cutting edge of living for Christ, we must know about the God of grace. But there’s more, a second truth.

II. Think about the grace of God (9b-10).

⁶ Spurgeon, *Grace*, p. 49.

⁷ Again, I am indebted to Spurgeon’s helpful insight, p. 49.

⁸ Progress Magazine, December 14, 1992.

“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.”

You’ll notice two passive verbs (actually participles in the Greek text) that highlight two actions associated with God’s grace.

A. Grace was given to us by the Father (9b). “This grace was given us.” God, namely God the Father, chose to give us grace.

The question is *when*. When did God extend His grace to us? When did He choose to save and call us? You’ll find the answer at the middle of verse 9: “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”

The first thing Paul did was to explain how grace *operates*. Next he shows us where grace *originates*. He uses two prepositional phrases to explain the origin of the grace-gift the Father has given to us. First, we learn...

1. *The gift was given in Christ.* “This grace was us in Christ Jesus.” God chose to extend His favor to us, not based on what we would do, but based entirely upon the merit of Christ.

Someone has observed, “When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day’s pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award--yet receives such a gift anyway--that is a good picture of God’s unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God.”⁹

Grace is a gift, and the Father gave it to us in Christ. Secondly...

2. *The gift was given before time.* “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”

Answer this. Where were you before the beginning of time? You weren’t anywhere, were you? You did not exist before the world began. In the beginning there was God, and nothing else.

But at some “point” in eternity past, the Father decided to demonstrate His grace. By nature God is a giving God. The Father exhibited His grace by giving two related gifts. First...

•The Father gave a gift to His Son. What was this gift? It was a people, a chosen people that would exist for the Son’s praise forever and ever.

Paul explains in Ephesians 1:11-12, “In him were we also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

So before time the Father demonstrated His love for His Son by giving Him a gift, a chosen people that would exist for His praise. And in this pre-time, inter-Trinitarian decision, the Son reciprocated His love for the Father by saying, “I, too, will give a gift. I will redeem the love-gift You are giving Me by entering the world and giving My life as a ransom payment.”

⁹ G.W. Knight, Clip-Art Features for Church Newsletters, p. 53.

Jesus talked about this love-gift on several occasions. For instance, when Jesus was arrested, He told the soldiers to let the disciples go. He did so, according to John 18:9, to fulfill these words, "I have not lost one of those you gave me." One of whom? The people the Father had given to Him.

In John 6:39 Jesus explained further, "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that He has given me.

Do you know what occupied the Savior's attention the night of His betrayal? The love gift did. Listen to the conversation He had with His Father in John 17:

Verses 1-2—"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to *all those you have given him*."

Verse 6—"I have revealed you to *those whom you gave me* out of the world. They were yours; you *gave them* to me and they have obeyed your word."

Verse 9—"I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for *those you have given me*, for they are yours."

Verse 24—"Father, I want *those you have given me* to be with me where I am and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

Thus, before God created the world, He gave His Son a gift, a people that He would redeem for His glory. That act of giving provides the backdrop for a second gift, the one Paul mentions in our text.

•The Father gave a gift to us. "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time."

Do you know what God the Father did for us before time ever began? He gave us a gift, a grace-gift. You say, "But surely He knew we'd be sinners!" Yes, He knew. But He chose to love us in spite of our sinfulness—that's what grace does. He chose to save us from our sins and call us to holiness.

Romans 8:28 says He "called us according to His purpose." And what was His purpose? And Romans 8:29-30 indicates that before God ever made us, five decisions took place in His mind. He foreknew us. He predestined us to be like His Son. He called us to Himself. He justified us (declared that we would be righteous). And He glorified us (though to us that is yet future, in God's mind it's as good as accomplished)!¹⁰

The doctrine of election may be controversial for some, but it wasn't for Paul. True, it baffles our finite minds, yet be assured of this. Election is a biblical doctrine. It flows out of the grace of God.

John Stott explains, "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 quiet 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."¹¹

¹⁰ The text of Romans 8:29-30 reads, "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."

¹¹ John Stott, p. 36.

Listen to his testimony in 2:10, “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

The grace of God motivated Paul. It gave him confidence while he was sitting in the dungeon for Christ. And he knew the doctrine of God’s grace would stabilize Timothy as well.

Paul mentions a second action related to grace...

B. Grace has been revealed to us by the Son (10). “But it [grace] 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 the Father devised the plan. God the Son accomplished the plan. How did the Son do it? How did the Son reveal grace? He did so with three actions. First...

1. *Christ appeared.* Grace has been revealed “through the appearing of our Savior.” Christ appeared, that is, He came to earth as the God-man. What did He do when He arrived?

2. *Christ gave death the death-blow.* He “destroyed death.”

Death is man's greatest enemy. It plagues us. It haunts us. We can't escape it.¹² But Christ “destroyed” it. He “abolished” it, a term that means “to render inoperative, to make ineffective, and powerless.” Christ dealt death the death blow!

3. *Christ brought life to light.* The text says he “brought life and immortality to light.” The phrase is loaded with implications. Jesus Christ offers us two things: *life*—that’s abundant living in the here and now, and *immortality*—that’s incorruptible living in the life to come.

Just think of it! Jesus Christ provides us with life that's both abundant and eternal. You can't improve on that!

And how can people have access to this life? Verse 10 concludes by telling us it’s available “through the gospel.”

Now do you see why Paul urged Timothy to join him in suffering for the gospel? The gospel is worth suffering for. Why? Unless people hear the gospel, they’ll never know about the God of grace and the grace of God.

Beloved, I hope you cherish *grace*. But know this. There is a ‘catch’ to grace. In the words of C. S. Lewis, “St. Augustine says ‘God gives where He finds empty hands.’ A man whose hands are full of parcels can’t receive a gift.” Grace must be received.

Perhaps you can relate to Timothy this morning. Perhaps you, too, are struggling with life. If so...

Make It Personal: If you have grown weary or know someone who has...two resolves.

1. *Resolve to think rightly about God.* Not “God” in the abstract, but God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible. The God of grace.

2. *Resolve to fill your life with grace-reminders.* Sing songs about grace. Memorize verses about grace. Spend much time with the people of His grace.

¹² There are three types of death according to the Bible, *physical* death (the separation of the soul from the body), *spiritual* death (the separation of the soul from God), and *eternal* death (the separation of both soul and body from God forever).