

## 2 Timothy 1:8-14

**So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Instead, join with me in suffering for the gospel while relying on the power of God. <sup>9</sup> He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, <sup>10</sup> and it has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. <sup>11</sup> For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles, <sup>12</sup> and that is why I am suffering these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know the one in whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.**

**<sup>13</sup> Hold fast to the pattern of sound words that you heard from me, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Through the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.**

Dear children of God by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus,

Are you a bold person who has little fear and is always looking to be in the spotlight and to take the lead on things? Or are you a more timid person who fears being the center of attention and is always taking the more cautious approach? How does that play out in your Christian life? Are you bold in your faith as you wear your Christianity on your sleeve or are you timid in your faith -- almost as if you don't want to draw any attention to yourself? What is interesting is that God is talking to us today through his Word to remind us that we never need to be afraid or timid when it comes to living our faith and sharing God's Word. God wants to reassure us that he called us to faith and has given us the strength that we need to live our faith and share that faith.

Our text is from Paul's first chapter of his 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to Timothy – a fellow Christian and fellow Pastor. In the opening verses of this letter, just before the words of our text for today, Paul starts this letter like lots of his other letters in the Bible — by offering thanks to God. He begins by thanking God for Timothy, for who he is and what he has done. Most of all he is thankful for the sincere faith given to Timothy and cultivated throughout his life. What follows in the next verses and chapters is an encouragement to take that sincere faith and put it to use. It is an encouragement to increase that faith and express that faith. It's a message that is just as important for us. Paul is remind us to.

### **Sermon Theme: Live As Bold Christians**

- 1. Our boldness is found in Jesus**
- 2. Our boldness is found in God's Word and the Sacraments**

Sincerity is important in our world today. We don't want to be fake or phony or hypocritical. And so we can appreciate how young pastor Timothy must have felt when the Apostle Paul commended him for his sincere faith as Paul writes, **“I remember your sincere faith.”** As much as we value sincerity, we realize how rare it really is. And it's not just rare for the people around us in our lives. It's rare inside us too.

Ever feel like a complete pretender? Ever wonder how people might change the way they think about us if they actually knew what we were really like? We hear about ongoing investigations and authorities want to go over all the security camera footage to see what happened before and after a major event. What

would it be like if people would review all the non-stop footage of our lives? They would see the times when we are giving less than 100% at work. They would notice all the times we let crude and foul words come out of our mouths. They would see the “real us” rather than the “Sunday Church” us. What would it be like if our lives were like a comic strip, where every thought was captured and revealed in one of those thought bubbles? People could see all of our hurtful and inappropriate thoughts, and what a mess that would be.

And when it comes to our faith, people would realize we are not always on our game as a Christian. There are times when we do the exact opposite of what we know we are supposed to do. Those little thought bubbles would reveal all the weaknesses and deficiencies in our faith. Paul begins this section by expressing gratitude for the sincere faith passed down to Timothy from his mother and grandmother. He instructs Timothy **“to fan into flame the gift of God.” (2 Timothy 1:6)** Just like Timothy, you and I need to give that faith passed down to us some serious attention and care.

When we look inside ourselves, we many times see our faith starting to burn out and in danger of becoming extinguished. We get so deflated by living as sinners in this sinful world, and for the many times we seem to fail can be very hard on our faith. We look inside and, no matter what other people think of us and our faith, we see the doubts creeping in and our faith wavers as we ask ourselves, Is it really worth it?

Paul tells Timothy and us to give care and attention to faith, to keep it alive so we don’t develop a spirit of timidity and we so that we become **“ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.” (2 Timothy 1:8)** But when we feel like faith pretenders, we naturally become timid, cowards of faith. When we see our own hypocrisy, we have no reason for confidence. When the Lord doesn’t seem to be making a substantial difference in our lives, we lose that boldness to testify about him.

Did you notice the solution God gives to this faith we feel is so often weak and deflated and borderline hypocritical? Paul doesn’t give Timothy a typical pep talk like we would hear in a locker room. His solution is much simpler and so close it’s easily overlooked: **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.” (2 Timothy 1:6)** “Fan into flames” is an expression like a blacksmith would have used for stoking a fire. You take a flame, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant it might seem and make it bigger, hotter, better. That’s a great picture of the faith inside you, the gift God has given you. We have faith, and God wants to make our faith grow and become more bold.

We don’t want to minimize the danger of weaknesses in our faith, and the sins that combat our Christian lives, and the doubts that might creep into our minds. But when we focus on how deflated these failures make us feel, we are paralyzed. That’s when we starve the fire of our faith of the fuel it needs to survive and grow. That’s why the Bible turns our attention to what we have through God’s gift of faith. Paul reminds us and Timothy: **“For God did not give us a timid spirit, but a spirit of power and love and sound judgment.” (2 Timothy 1:7)** Where is God directing us? To the power and love of God! For the times we feel frozen in our faith and life, Paul presents a challenge: **“So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Instead, join with me in suffering for the gospel while relying on the power of God.” (2 Timothy 1:8)** That’s the key. Do not dwell on our deficiencies and weaknesses which come from our sin, but let’s build on God’s power and love.

When we look at ourselves, we see plenty of reasons for timidity and being a coward. Looking to God gives confidence. That is why Paul keeps pointing us to God and to God’s power: **“He saved us and called us with a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace.” (2 Timothy 1:9-10)** God flexed his muscle for us by saving us and calling us into his family. His power is found in his grace: **“And it has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus,**

**who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.**” (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

That same power God used to create faith in our hearts is keeping our faith strong and alive.

If you're like me, certain types of projects can be challenging. The new kitchen remodel or the car repair or whatever it might be. We all learn in different ways, but most of us need something more than a book or someone telling us how to carry out a project. One of the most practical helps is having a pattern to follow. That is exactly what God says to do in our Christian lives. Paul provides such a template: **“Hold fast to the pattern of sound words that you heard from me, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.”** (2 Timothy 1:13) Sound teaching is healthy and very important. It is teaching grounded 100% in Scripture. These words of God are grounded only in Jesus Christ and are the power to bring our faith to a roaring, blazing fire. It leads our faith to express itself in thanks to God and love for our fellow human beings. We have and hold fast to the pattern given by Paul himself – which is found in God's Word. Paul himself provides this framework for sincere lives of faith by preaching and teaching God's Word, and we are doing the same thing today as we follow that same pattern 2000 years later as we faithfully teach God's Word.

And yet Paul didn't come up with this pattern on his own. Christ's own dealings with Paul are the pattern which he shares with others. In the same way, we trace our model to the way Paul was brought to faith by the words of Jesus himself. Paul uses a neat picture to describe the gift of faith and salvation that God has given us. Paul tells us: **“Through the Holy Spirit, who lives in us, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.”** (2 Timothy 1:14) We have a deposit of faith which assures us of heaven. This all comes from the Holy Spirit. All aspects of forgiveness and heaven and even Christian living are impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works to combat our biggest problem of sin and he helps us guard and faithfully use the good deposit as we faithfully make use of God's Word and the Sacraments.

When we look at the deposit entrusted to us by God, that's when we see a real treasure. Through faith we have God's gift of forgiveness and heaven. Here's what that gift does: **“For God did not give us a timid spirit, but a spirit of power and love and sound judgment.”** (2 Timothy 1:7) We have been given the gift of Jesus' forgiveness and power. Jesus came to this earth for one purpose. Jesus came in love **“to give his life as a ransom for many.”** (Mark 10:45) For all our sins of thoughts and words and actions, the deposit of the Holy Spirit assures us that Jesus did everything to secure for us the treasure of salvation.

When Jesus came to this earth, he came to entrust to our souls the benefits of his victory. This victory over sin, death and the power of the devil is not some sentimental trophy that sits on a shelf gathering dust or sits in a box in the basement. It has real value for us each day and for eternity in heaven, **“And it has now been revealed through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”** (2 Timothy 1:10) The good news of Jesus' saves us and leads us to live our lives for Jesus. His death and resurrection rendered death and sin obsolete and completely powerless against his gift of salvation. Death and sin no longer can defeat anyone in Christ. Instead we have life and immortality through the work of your Savior. It's real power for living our sincere lives of faith. It is what makes our faith bold and active as we live to serve Jesus and others.

All too often we want to escape who we are or pretend to be someone else, but we don't need to pretend to be someone else or hide anything. By God's power we are a children of God. By faith we have the good deposit as the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts through the Word and the Sacraments. Thank goodness we are not resting on how good we are, but we are resting completely on God's power and love and mercy which leads us to live boldly. God works to bring us the confidence of a sincere faith and fans that faith into flames to express itself with confidence in our lives. Amen.