

Sermon Notes

Sunday, September 16, 2018

“The Testimony About Christ”, 2 Timothy 1.6-9

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Deeply personal letter // Leader → dear subordinate // Advisor → young leader // Prisoner → to free man

Paul(P, hereafter) & Timothy (T) had travelled together for about 2 years – Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea; P went to Athens & T & Silas stayed in Thessalonica; later T went to Athens and Corinth....and now Ephesus

Written ~ 33 years after Pentecost - about 70 years after Greece had been overthrown by the Romans. In spite of Jewish and Roman opposition Christianity reached North Africa in just 8 years. It took only 16 more years for the message of new life in Jesus to not only travel 1300 miles to Rome, but for Christianity to thrive there by 57 A.D. That was under the reign of Emperor Nero, who after the destructive fire of 64 A.D. Rounded up a "huge crowd" of Christians, convicting them and sentencing them to die by various heinous means. cruelly punished the in Rome. Paul, likely under house arrest, writes to his faithful friend and understudy....

Read the text

This morning, I am going to lead you on a 3 step journey. →

1. Instruction
2. Testimony
3. Application

- 4 points of application, posted already for your use at the Facebook page of Hillcrest Church

- (included here:)

Applications from 2 Timothy 1.6-9

a. motivation: I will identify selfish, self-aggrandizing, self-centered patterns of thought and behavior and confess them to God and maturing believers

b. perspective: I will acknowledge the pain, discomfort and losses experienced in this life and actively trust God, despite my pain and confusion

c. personalization 1: I will turn my back on all former strategies, persons and pleasures in which I trusted to establish my place in this world, and the next, & place my faith in Jesus as Christ and my Savior

d. personalization 2: I will set a course of study, with attainable goals, so that I might give better answers to better questions about Jesus

1. Instruction.

a) Fan the Flame, .6

Within you, there is a powerful force – here characterized as 1. a flame and as 2. a gift of God.

As you might imagine, in the Ancient Near East (A.N.E.) – fire was known to be effective for heat, light, cooking, metallurgy and even as a weapon. Fire had a universal presence – from the Emperor’s palace to the pauper’s lean-to – everyone understood its powerful potential...not a few had experienced its consuming potential either. This fire is a gift of God; it is the grace of God, not generally, but specifically the grace of God which has culminated in God’s love being made manifest in the believer’s heart, leading the sinner to place his/her faith in Christ and as a result to engage in an on-going relationship with Messiah, Jesus.

This gift is personal. It is the product of the Father’s Love, the Son’s Sacrifice and the Spirit’s Application of that perfect Sacrifice to the believer’s inner most being.

This gift is not static, note: It responds to the action of each who possesses it– it can be made to grow...to become more active, more powerful, more useful,...transforming of the one in whom it resides.

But note this, the “flame” may be caused to grow...and....it may be caused to “shrink”.

Please understand, I am not teaching that it is possible for one to lose one’s salvation. But this gift is ...remarkable – it completely transforms the soul and yet its effects can spread to every facet of one’s thinking, behaving, the very attitudes of one’s heart.

We expect it to do this.

If you’re sitting here this a.m. Saying “yeah, I did that. I trusted in Jesus.” And your habits, manner of living has not changed, you have reason to ask “Have I met the Savior?”

Those who know Him want to follow Him. They choose to act in ways that are consistent with His character and those actions are consistent with His Word.

Your choice matters; God will not force you to take action AND, btw, He will not be thwarted by your choice.

At first glance, it may seem that Paul has not instructed us on what action to take, but as we read on, we read

b) Stand for Jesus, vs. 7,

...for God gave us a spirit of not of fear but of power and love and self-control. .8, therefore, 8, t/f do not be ashamed of the testimony about the Lord nor of me His prisoner...

The whole 2nd point of this talk is about the testimony about the Lord, we will turn our attention there in a moment

Not only has each believer received eternal life now and for forever, but each has been given the very Spirit of God...the Holy Spirit resides, tabernacles within each who loves Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who applies covers the sinner’s debt with the sacrifice of the Son’s blood. The HS leads us into truth, instructs us concerning righteousness and convicts the world of sin. The Spirit’s work produces a spirit, an

ethos, an ability and even a mindset characterized by 3 things: power, love and self-control.

These 3, power, love and self-control are made manifest in the life of the believer, but specifically, they produce a life which is characterized in STANDING FOR Jesus: with your peers, your parents, your children, one's dates, co-workers, strangers, etc. A whole sermon could be preached on vs. 7 alone, but note this, the 3 traits remove every barrier you and I would hold up as a valid reason why we cannot obey Jesus and His Word:

I don't speak well – I've given you My power,
Those people are wretched – I have given you My love,
I am so weak, God, I keep failing! – I have given you self-control.

The tho't came to me this week, Moses suffered from all 3 weaknesses and God overcame them. Moses, a terrible sinner! Moses the greatest prophet before Elijah! No more excuses, when I'm standing by the grace of my Lord. And can fan the flame of my salvation by living according to His power, expressing His love and exercising His self-control, and....

c) Stand with Jesus people, vs. 8

And I can stand with His people. "Do not be ashamed of me His prisoner!", Paul is instructing His dear friend. Yes, Christians have been kicked out of Rome. Yes, we are hated all across the empire. Yes, a huge throng was executed by Nero. Do not shrink back, Timothy. He who sustained 'them' is the One who sustains me and will sustain you!! (all the way to glory!)

I have found that Jesus people do crazy things – they refuse to let their conversations continue without authenticity – they're cliché killers; they reach out to people in leathers and denim and patches and piercings and ink, they trust God's wisdom for their marriage and sexual purity, they proclaim the truth of God's love in varied ways, they seek counseling help when they feel stuck, they give away all kinds things including cars, homes, careers, and money – believing that God is delighted when we trust in Him. All this and more...Jesus people are awesome. This gift grows, this flame spreads when we stand with one another, providing for the well being of one another – spiritually, physically, emotionall.

But there's a cost to this, and we should expect it....

d) Share in the suffering, vs. 8

Fanning and standing will result in suffering. Suffering for the gospel. That beautiful message –

you're wicked,
God is righteous,
you can't reach Him on your own,
He has provided the way...His name is Jesus.

That's the gospel! It's glorious, but it's upside down! You win by losing. If you're foolish enough, you'll receive wisdom. Your weakness is a great strength in Jesus. Share in this suffering, Timothy. Stand strong. And do it in the power of God – don't cut corners. (mini applications):

You're not doing it in God's power

by taking things that aren't yours,

by lusting after your neighbor's possessions or lusting after your neighbor.

It's not God's ability on display when you

falsify your expense report, or the balance sheet or your declaration of income.

It's not improving God's reputation when you pretend to read His Word, or

when you crush your spouse's spirit to prove you're right.

You are free to suffer in each of the above settings – now, this is FAR short of the

suffering Paul was referring to, but we need a more robust doctrine of suffering. We

need to learn to suffer now, in the small things, and to grow now in suffering, so we can

handle more when it comes. NOT if it comes, when it comes. Jesus loves you too

much to give you all that you want. He is all that we're supposed to want, Yet we so

frequently find ourselves turning from him for so many things.

In closing, Note: This instruction can be neatly summarized in this,

All of our fanning, our standing, our suffering...all of it should be for the gospel and by the power of God

2. the Testimony (about Jesus)

a. Biblical

b. non-Biblical

1) non-Jewish

1a Luian of Samosata

Lucian – 2nd century Greek Satirist –

“The Christians worship a man to this day – [a] distinguished personage who introduced their novel rites, and was crucified on that account...[it] was impressed upon them by their original lawgiver that they are all brother from the moment they they are converted and deny the gods of Greece and worship the crucified sage and live after his laws”

1b Pliny the Younger

Pliny – early 2nd century Roman Governor of Bithynia (Asia Minor), wrote to Emperor Trajan in 112 A.D., saying

“a great multitude of every age, class and sex stood accused of Christianitythey [were] in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ as to a God and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind”

2) non-Jewish

2a Josephus

Josephus – 1st century Jewish historian

- in describing the condemnation of “James” by the Jewish Sanhedrin, identifies him as the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ”

AND

confirmed that Jesus lived, was wise - admitting there was reason for not thinking of him as a man, even calling Him the Christ. And confirmed he...wrought surprising feats... Was crucified under P. Pilate, had followers who did not desert Him at the cross, [He] rose from the grave on the 3rd day and had a group of followers that continued late into the 1st century

2b Talmud

(the content of this portion of the sermon was provided to me for the purpose of preaching by Dr. Gordon H. Johnston, Ph.D., a personal friend and professor of Hebrew at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.) It is only briefly summarized below.

It is the Single Most Authoritative Written Work in Orthodox Judaism

- contains Several Kinds of Material:

Rabbinic Commentary & Interpretation (Literal & Midrashic) of
Biblical Law

Reliable Historical Records & Traditions, and Non-Historical
Legendary Tales

It is a collection of Teachings, Interpretations, Rulings and Opinions of
Various Rabbis throughout Ages

(Teachings and Opinions of Earliest Rabbis Occur First in Order in
(Each Section, Followed by Later Rabbis

While it was not published until AD 313, it clearly contains materials that
were much earlier and were reliably transmitted.

Refers to “Yeshua the Nazarean” no fewer than 14 times

Portrays Jesus in detail, in a way that agrees with His portrayal in the
Gospels

Reaches a very different conclusion about Jesus, than the Gospels

2 Important Yeshua passages:

1. Tractate Sanhedrin 43b – concerning adjudication of those arrested
and condemned to die

SUMMARY

- The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of two crimes: (1) “practicing sorcery,”
and (2) “enticing Israel into apostasy”
- This harmonizes with the Gospels that reports that the Jewish leaders
claimed Jesus performed miracles by Satan and led Israel astray
(Matt 12:22-24)
- The fact that the Talmud accuses Jesus of “practicing sorcery” actually
confirms he was doing something not just highly unusual, but
something supernatural.

- The Talmud implicitly confirms the claims of the Gospels that Jesus was performing supernatural acts -- but what the Talmud calls “sorcery” the Gospels call “miracles.”
- The Talmud’s accusation that Jesus “enticed Israel into apostasy” confirms he made a major impact on the nation!
- This accusation implicitly harmonizes with Gospel records that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah and the Son of God
- What the Talmud and the Jews called “apostasy” the Gospels call “the truth”

2. Abodah Zarah 27b – concerning illness and especially, receiving assistance from Gentile doctors and the followers of Yeshua

SUMMARY

- As a case in point, §27b recounts the plight of Ben Dama, a young Jewish man who had been bitten by a snake and was about to die
- A disciple of Yeshua, Jacob of Kefar Sekaniah (Jacob son of Alphaeus or James the Little) heard that Ben Dama was dying, and offered to heal him
- Rabbi Ishmael, his own uncle, intervened and forbade the healing - for the disciples of Yeshua were heretics of the worst kind
- Ben Dama pled with Rabbi Ishmael to allow this disciple of Yeshua to heal him, but he refused to allow it
- Although Ben Dama died soon after, Rabbi Ishmael said it was better for him to die than to be healed by a disciple of Yeshua, an act of utter apostasy

Dramatic Admissions

- Clearly, the Talmud has a very negative view of Jesus and his disciples; they are branded as heretics of the worst kind
- However, it does not deny the possibility that this disciple could have healed Ben Dama if he had been allowed to do so
- The prohibition against being healed by disciples of Yeshua implicitly admits that they could perform miraculous healings
- The Talmud implicitly, if not unwittingly, confirms the core details of the Gospels - Jesus really was performing miracles and making bold claims about himself
- In light of the testimony of the Talmud, we may conclude that the core historical details about Jesus in the Gospels are historically reliable

This concludes are Testimony section.

Allow me to take us back to the text:

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God.”, 2 Tim 1. 8

And let’s make application of this.

Applications from 2 Timothy 1.6-9

- a. motivation: I will identify selfish, self-aggrandizing, self-centered patterns of thought and behavior and confess them to God and maturing believers

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- c. personalization 1: I will turn my back on all former strategies, persons and pleasures in which I trusted to establish my place in this world, and the next, & place my faith in Jesus as Christ and my Savior

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