

**Preaching Christ....  
...by the power of the Holy Spirit  
...and the authority of the Word of God**

**Date:** 21 July 2018  
**Talk:** 1  
**Occasion:** Ridley college – ordinands' conference  
**Book:** 2 Timothy  
**Passage:** Various  
**Title:** How will you respond when ministry gets tough?  
**Outline:** **Joys and privileges of ministry**  
**When suffering for the Gospel**  
: Fan into flame your gifts  
: Do not be ashamed  
: know whom you believe  
: be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus  
**When dealing with 'terrible times'**  
: continue in what you have learned  
and have become convinced of

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**1. Joys and privileges of ministry**

- Phone rang – 'can you bless my new wedding ring'?
- All my protestant sensibilities began to kick in – what? We don't bless things...
- But then of course – I saw an opportunity – book it in...
- Tell Mike and Jay story....
- 'make the most of every opportunity' – Paul – Ephesians 5:15-16 - *Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil*
- Colossians 4:5 - *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.*
- Ministry – such a privilege... to be set free from working for a living; to be set aside to bring the gospel to bear in people's lives; to teach the Bible and have time to study it and learn it... massive privileges... which in the thick of challenges – in the thick of opposition from within and without – overwhelmed by what is on your 'to do' list... it's so easy to forget...
- Ministry – a joy and a privilege...
- But... I want to ask this morning – and this is the title of my talk – how will you respond when ministry gets tough?
- Because it **will**...
- Marriage – when I prepare people and take them through their vows... for better for worse – I assure them the hard times will come... and what you're saying in the vows is that when the hard times come you'll never ask 'how can I get out?', rather, you'll always be asking 'how can I fix it up'
- In ministry too, you can guarantee... that ministry at one point or another will get tough...
- That you'll suffer for the gospel... you'll suffer something specific arising from your ministry... the promise comes in 3:12 – *Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...*
- There's a promise for you!

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- So let's have a closer look now at 2 Timothy and what Paul wants to say to this up and coming leader.

**2. When suffering for the Gospel...**

- *3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. 4 Recalling your tears, I **long to see you**, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*
- do you hear his longing?
- Friends, in pastoral ministry, part of your suffering will come merely from your love for people
- If you have a pastoral heart... you'll care when people hurt.
- Just as I was preparing on Sat 23 June, I had just come from hospital where a lovely 80 year old lady... very dear... had said good bye to her non-Christian husband... we stood in the room beside his bed and hugged.
- And then on the phone, I was talking to a man in his 30s who our church helped out of homelessness with his family... off his drug habit and into relationship with the Lord Jesus... and we bought forward his wedding to the mother of their 3 children, because Cassie has terminal cancer...
- Yes, you will long for your people... as Paul longed to see Timothy that he may be filled with joy...
- We read on...
- *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*
- How will you respond when ministry gets tough?
- You will fan into flame your **gifts**...
- In the end, ministry is not about **you** on your **own**
- It's about **you** and the **gifts** God has **given** you //
- Perhaps you've worked out what your gifts are from what other people have said to you...
- I don't think gifts in the end, are too hard to work out... although there have been plenty of courses written and workshops run...
- I think the gifts God has given us, are you **usually** - what we **enjoy** doing and what we're **good** at.
- ...Sunday school teacher at my former church – just starting out... responded to the plea from the front – even though the thought filled her with dread. I found out that every Saturday night, as she anticipated Sunday school, she was physically ill.
- I met with her and said – I don't think that's your gift.. and released her. When we talked about what she loved and what she was good at, she spoke of cooking and hospitality... and came alive with that ministry!!
- What are **your** gifts?
- **Fan** them into **flame**...

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- **Go with your gifting...**
- Now – because all Christians are to have servant hearts – there will be stuff you’ll do which may **not** be a natural fit... like – **putting out the garbage bin** – not many feel **gifted** and **called** for that...
- ...but to fan into flame your **gifts**, will mean seeking to **hone** those gifts...
- **Preaching?** Get to a preaching course and get **better** at it...
- **Youth – children?** – **read... find resources... do conferences...** that will spark your **creativity** in those areas...
- **Music??** – hone your **musicianship** – for the **glory of God...**
- For the Holy Spirit working within us – means we are not **timid** in our gifts... rather – we can use them in the **power** of the **Spirit** – in **love** – and with **self-discipline... /**
- ...so that when the hard times **come...** we are not floundering about in the dark wondering what we’re meant to be doing... but we already have **purpose, passion, direction, ability, boldness! //**
- Paul says to Timothy – fan into flame your gifts; don’t be timid... and v8 – *don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*
- When **suffering** for the gospel... do not be **ashamed** of the gospel! Or of **other believers** caught up in persecution!
- Paul knew all about suffering for the gospel – just recall the Corinthian correspondence.... Here’s a taste - *I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?* 2 Corinthians 11:23b-29
- Wow!
- I’m not sure we’ll ever face anything like that!!
- OSWALD CHAMBERS - : To **choose** to suffer means that there is something **wrong**; to choose **God’s will** even if it **means** suffering is a very different thing. No healthy saint ever **chooses** suffering; he chooses **God’s will**, as Paul did, whether it means suffering or not”. (Quoted in 1-2 Timothy and Titus, by Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell in the *Preaching the Word* series.)
- But there *are* Christians around the world today who **are suffering!!**
- Why is the gospel worth suffering for??
- Well he says ‘don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord’ ... and then goes on to **give** us that testimony...
- V9 - *He 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, 10 but*

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*it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*

- Don't be **ashamed** of this, because it is such **positive good news!**
- And continue to be **bold** in proclaiming this in our churches...
- He has saved us and called us to a holy life – **not because of anything we have done**
- Oh friends – there are still so many people who need to **hear** this...
- ...I can't believe sometimes when I'm seeing someone approaching death and they've been in church **every** Sunday I've been in Noosa and I ask that question – "do you know where you're heading?" ... and they say – like the Masterchef cooks – "I hope I've done enough...!"
- And I say – well – you know it's about what **you've** done for **God** but what **he's** done for **you**... and we reflect and pray together on the nature of the gospel... and how through Jesus, death has been destroyed and Jesus brought life and immortality...
- Don't be **ashamed** about this glorious news – rather – be **bold**, be **persistent**, be **consistent** in pointing people to **Jesus**... to **his work** – his **cross** – his **resurrection** – his **glory**...! //
- When **suffering** for the **gospel** – **fan into flame** your **gifts**, don't be **ashamed** of the **gospel**... AND
- **Know** whom you have **believed**...
- Have a look with me – from v11 - *And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.*
- That great news that it's not about what **we** do for **God** but what he has done for **us** through his Son?? Paul was appointed a **herald**, an **apostle** and a **teacher** of that glorious, liberating news!
- And that's why he is **suffering**!
- **Suffering** through his call to **proclaim**, to **persuade** and **teach** people the **gospel**...
- Yet such suffering causes **no shame**, no **embarrassment**, or **timidity**... because it's not about **him**... and he **knows** whom he has **believed**...
- ...his **present** life may involve suffering...
- His life may be in **danger**... but... he **knows**... he **rests** in the fact that he has a **future** in **eternity**... **guaranteed**... how does Peter described in 1 Peter 1:4 – *an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you*
- When you have an abiding trust in the one who has rescued you from **death** and brought you from **darkness** into **light**... then you **will** endure suffering knowing that he's **for** you, and that you are **eternally safe**... the **future** is in **his** hands! //
- So Paul can say at the start of ch 2- look with me - *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*
- We'll look at this again tomorrow – but I want you to note here... that he's not saying '**man up**', or 'get a **grip**' or '**take it on the chin**'
- ...he's saying – he has **saved** you Timothy and called you into a holy life because of his own **purpose**

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and **grace**... and **because** he knows God who has done this – and is **convinced** that he able to guard his very soul – then in the **face** of **suffering**... Timothy should then, be **strong** in that grace! -- strong **because** of that grace!!

Hughes, *1001 Great stories and quotes pp 61, 62*

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the Holy Spirit's power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made; I'm a disciple of *His!* I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. . . . I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus.<sup>g</sup>

**3. When dealing with 'terrible times'**

- Look with me at 3:1-9 (read)
- The last days are of course **these** days! The last days are **all** the days between the **ascension** of Jesus and the **return** of Jesus.
- And the disturbing thing is that Paul is talking about the behaviour of people **inside** the church not people out there in the unbelieving world! *lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*
- why do I say **inside** the church? – *having a form of godliness but denying its power*. They **look** Christian. They turn up to church. Might be on parish council. Serve in other ways.
- But they **deny** the power of Jesus to change their lives. They **resist** any real change in their life.
- And –“always learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth” – they may even attend a Bible study, or they are doing some formal study – but there's no **point** – they are not getting any **closer** to the truth!
- Paul says - have **nothing** to **do** with them.
- **Wow**. Will there really be people in your church you decide to have nothing more to do with? (Man who gave \$250,000 building Sunshine Beach)
- Dangerous – because they are leading others astray.
- They've been identified by the Royal Commission these past years. The impact of their behaviour is **devastating!** They will not get very far because as in the case of Jannes and Jambres, their folly will be clear to everyone.
- **Sobering**. And in your ministry you **will meet** them. And you will need **wisdom** as to know what to do and how to **respond**.
- **Protocols**... are in place now... especially in regard to a reportable offence... make sure you follow

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them.. and the liberating thing is that if you follow them – then the matter is completely out of your hands.... And you've done all that is expected.

- But the question is – how will you **respond**?
- This is **one** of those areas which makes ministry tough!
- Well, we get a clue as Paul continues – v10 – read until the end
- Paul's ministry was a tough gig. He's making a point about how his life and ministry stands in clear contrast with those who have a form of godliness but deny its power.
- And it was his teaching and way of life – his faith, patience, love and endurance that led in turn to his persecutions and sufferings - *persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra.*
- And yet Paul's testimony – end of v11 – *Yet the Lord rescued me from them all....*
- Not a promise to **all** facing persecution... nor was it Paul's experience to the **end**... but it was Paul's testimony at **that** time...

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- So read again the promise of v12 because he knows that has this has happened to him so it will happen to Timothy and others: *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*
- This is what **Jesus** promised isn't?
- *'Truly I tell you,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life.*
- ... and Paul adds... evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, **deceiving** and **being** deceived
- GAFCON, SSM push... etc...
- How should **Timothy** prepare himself? – how should **you** prepare **yourself**?
- By **continuing**... v14. *Continuing in what you have learned and have become convinced of..*
- (a) because you trust those who've taught you
- (b) because you know the Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation and to equip you for godliness.
- You've had good training; you've had good models – trust them
- and you've known the Holy Scriptures... Don't swerve.
- Don't be tempted to think that the answer lies anywhere else but remaining true to what you have been grounded in.
- It's the Holy **Scriptures** which have made you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus...
- Don't miss what Paul is saying here... the key to the value of Scripture... turns common thinking on its head...
- So many – outside and inside the church – have no idea that salvation is by trusting Jesus... that's what

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reading and understanding and embracing God's revelation to us will **do** – make us **wise** for **salvation** – that it's not about **us** – but comes **only** by trusting Jesus..

- Don't turn **aside** from that.
- **Ground** your ministry in this **glorious truth**.
- And use the Scriptures for their intended purpose... *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...*
- Your preaching and other learning opportunities ought to reflect **those priorities**... ought to be aiming for what Scripture **itself** aims for...
- I remember a prominent member of the choir at St Andrew's Roseville... *we don't come to church to be rebuked...!* Really??
- And when your preaching reflects what scripture itself aims for.... *teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...* Guess what – you will be thoroughly equipping people for every good work!
- Note the order consistent with all scripture – **salvation** first – **then** good works...
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- Brother and sisters... ministry is an amazing joy and privilege...
- But there will be tough times – you will suffer for the gospel... you'll be left to deal with those who want to lead others astray... in one way or another, you will be **persecuted**.
- We've seen this morning, how we are to respond...
- **Fan into flame** your **gifts**
- Do not be **ashamed**
- **Know** whom you **believe**
- Be **strong** in the **grace** that is in Christ Jesus and
- **Continue** what you have **learned** and become **convinced** of...