

THE GOOD FIGHT - PART 1:
“GUARD THE GOSPEL”
2 TIMOTHY 1:1-18

Personal Introduction

Good afternoon everyone. I'm Jeff - one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to preach the Word of God for us today!

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Sermon Series Introduction

We're starting a new sermon series called "The Good Fight" - where we're going through the book of 2 Timothy together.

Now this second letter to Timothy is widely known as Apostle Paul's final letter before he was executed. The title of this sermon series comes from one of Paul's famous last words from this letter - he said, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

As Christians, isn't this something that we'd want to be able to say at the end of our lives? We don't want to say that we've been ashamed of the Gospel or that we've abandoned it. No, we want to be able to say that we've fought the good fight till the end.

The title of today's sermon is "Guard the Gospel."

Before we begin, let's pray.

<prayer>

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Introduction

Let me start by asking us a question: what's your earliest memory of you being ashamed or embarrassed of someone or something?

You may have something in mind already. If not, that's ok. Maybe you'll remember it later.

For me... It was from when I was about nine years old. Some of you may know that I moved from Indonesia to California when I was younger, and I started to go to school there. One day, in 3rd grade - I remember all of my classmates taking out their food for lunch - pizza, sandwiches, and mac & cheese. And do you know what I had? I had bacang.

All of my classmates were looking at me with a disgusted & confused face, “what’s that?” And I’m like: “It’s meat in rice” (which doesn’t sound much better to them). So as I was peeling my bacang leaves, I felt really ashamed and embarrassed.

Now, why was I ashamed of my bacang?

- Because it made me stand out when all I wanted was to fit in.
- It caused me to be ridiculed when I wanted to be complimented.
- It made me look bad when I wanted to look good.

And I know it sounds a bit silly, but it’s funny how no one taught me (or any of us) how to feel ashamed or embarrassed. Naturally, we just want to fit in with everyone else. Even as we get older, that feeling and desire don’t go away, right?

- None of us want to stand out for the wrong reasons and be the weird one out.
- No, we want to feel like we belong, and we want to be accepted by our family members, friends, co-workers, and the general public.

And this feeling and desire is not only something that we feel today, but also what people have felt in the past as well. Including during Paul & Timothy’s time.

So in our text today, Paul is going to encourage Timothy to not be ashamed of the Gospel (that many people around him have ridiculed and rejected), but he’s to continue to be confident in it, and to proclaim it, and to guard it.

The One Thing

Don’t be ashamed to guard the Gospel that our Lord Jesus has entrusted to us.

Scripture Introduction

If you have your Bibles with you, please turn to 2 Timothy 1:1-18.

For context:

- Apostle Paul is writing this letter while he’s imprisoned in Rome. And he’s been in and out of prison before. But he knows that this time, it’s different. It doesn’t seem like he’ll be getting out and he knows that the end of his life & ministry is near.
- So in what can be considered to be his farewell letter - he writes a very heartfelt letter to his dear friend Timothy - who’s been his faithful ministry partner, and is like a spiritual son to him.
- And in his final moments, it’s so like Paul that he’d use this time to encourage Timothy and to advance the Gospel.

I’ll read 2 Timothy 1:1-18 for us...

2 Timothy 1:1-18 (ESV)

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my beloved child:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. 4 As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. 5 I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. 6 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 God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. 13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— 18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

This is God's Word.

Overview

Paul tells Timothy:

- I. Remember your Gospel story (vv. 1-7)
- II. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel (vv. 8-12)
- III. Guard the Gospel (vv. 13-18)

I. Remember your Gospel story (vv. 1-7)

Let's begin by looking at the first 7 verses. When we read the passage earlier, you might've noticed that Paul's tone here is very pastoral and fatherly - And as he tells Timothy that he shouldn't be ashamed of the Gospel and that he's to guard the Gospel, Paul understands that that's not gonna be easy.

It's not easy to be bold and to openly share about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, especially when doing that can risk you being rejected or ridiculed by others (or even can lead to you being put in prison, like Paul - who's about to be executed for his faith).

Paul knows that it's not gonna be easy for Timothy... So notice how even before Paul tells Timothy to guard the Gospel, he first reminds him of his own Gospel story - Paul reminds him of how God is already working in him and around him, and that his life is already a living testimony of the power of the Gospel!

- That's why Paul begins his letter by thanking God - Because, as he's remembering Timothy in his prayers & while he's thinking of him as he's writing this letter, he knows that it's all because of God.
- And Timothy should be encouraged by the evidence of God's work in his life.

So let's focus on **3 things** that Paul is encouraging Timothy to remember here...

The first thing is that Timothy is to remember his Gospel heritage.

- Which points to how God and His Gospel have been working in His people's lives...
- And the reason that Timothy is able to have faith in Jesus is because other saints before him have been unashamed in their sharing of Jesus!
- Verse 5 - "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well."
- What a beautiful reminder to Timothy. Paul is basically telling him, "Timothy, remember your faith in Jesus, and remember the faithful saints who've come before you. Remember that the God that you believe in is the same God that other Christians also believe in."
- What a great reminder that each Christian's story is part of God's bigger Gospel story - And the same ol' Gospel that Timothy believes in is the same Gospel that's working in his mom Eunice's life, and in his grandma Lois' life, and in Paul's life... and in our lives as well...
- Our Gospel heritage reminds us that our individual story is bigger than ourselves, and we're a small part of God's bigger Gospel story.

The second thing that Timothy is to remember is his gift from God.

- Which points to the Holy Spirit's presence in him, and how God has equipped him to do good Gospel work.
- Verse 6 - "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"
- What is this gift that God has given to Timothy?
- It's not mentioned specifically here, but Paul already mentioned it in 1 Timothy 4:13-14 (ESV) - "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you."
- The gift that God gave Timothy seems to be the gift of reading, exhorting, and teaching Scripture.
 - He's been uniquely equipped for Gospel ministry.
- And what is he to do with this God-given gift? He's not to just let it be unused and shrivel away. No, he's to use it, exercise it, and fan it into flame, so that it'll grow!
 - He's to continue exhorting & teaching God's Word, and he's to continue to persevere & get better in that.

And Paul could've stopped there, and I think it'd already be clear to Timothy how God is working in his life and how God has equipped him and prepared him.

- But again, Paul is very pastoral and fatherly here... So on the off chance that Timothy may be tempted not to exercise his gift of teaching - Maybe because of fear of being rejected or ridiculed or imprisoned... Paul reminds him of...

The third thing that Timothy is to remember is the Spirit in him.

- Look at verse 7 - The Holy Spirit that dwells in Timothy (and in all believers) is not a Spirit of fear, but a Spirit of power, love, and self-control.

If Timothy remembers his own Gospel story, he must know this to be true...

- Because something we should know about Timothy is that he's not someone who we'd immediately think is impressive.
- From Paul's first letter to him, it seems like Timothy had a chronic stomach illness & he'd often get sick. I guess we can say that he's physically frail. And emotionally, there's hints that he may be a timid person.
- But - though he may be considered as weak or timid by others - God's Spirit is working powerfully in him - and God is using him to boldly preach and teach and spread His Gospel.
- And the Holy Spirit in Timothy is not only empowering him with strength, but also growing in him love and self-discipline.
 - To the point where Timothy loved God and His people so much that he was willing to leave his home to go with Paul on his missionary journeys.
 - And to the point where Timothy grew - and continued to grow - in his spiritual discipline... that he was recognized as an elder & he became a pastor at the church in Ephesus.

- And in Paul's first letter to him - he even trusted Timothy to be the one to raise up and recognize even more Biblically qualified elders & deacons.
- If Timothy looks back on his Gospel story, he should know how God has - and is - already working in him, and that his life is already a living testimony of the power of the Gospel!

<pause>

Brothers and sisters, how about us today? Even before telling us that we should guard the Gospel... First, can I ask each of us to think back on each of our own Gospel stories...

- Remember how God has, and is working in you...
 - **Remember your Gospel heritage** - think of the faithful Christians that God used to share the Gospel with you.
 - Our Gospel heritage can be traced all the way back to these early Christians. And each of our stories is a part of - and is connected to - God's bigger Gospel story.
 - **Remember your gift** and how God has equipped you to do good Gospel work.
 - So that you may point others to this Gospel story as well.
 - The spread of the Gospel is not meant to end with us.
 - **And remember the Holy Spirit in you...**
 - And how God has empowered you when you're feeling weak...
 - How God has grown your capacity to love Him and His people (even when it's not easy)...
 - And how God is continuing to grow your character and self-discipline... That you may continue to honor him with your lives.
 - And even if you don't feel like you're growing in some of these areas, please don't be discouraged... If you've truly put your faith in Christ, then the Holy Spirit is in you and working in you, and by the power of the Spirit... there will be spiritual growth over time.
- But I hope what we can see when we look back in each of our lives (or even as we look at the lives of the brothers and sisters around us) is that our lives are already proof that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful, and is actively working in us...

So first, remember your Gospel story. Second...

II. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel (vv. 8-12)

Verse 8 - "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner..."

So Timothy has personally experienced the power of the Gospel in his life. Therefore, he's not to be ashamed of the Gospel, or of Lord Jesus, or of his apostle, Paul.

But, again, Paul knows that that's not gonna be easy. Even though Timothy has no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel, the reality is that he'll be tempted to be ashamed of it.

Which begs the question: Why do you think a Christian would suddenly feel fearful or ashamed of the Gospel?

- Now, before we answer this for ourselves, let's see what it'd be like for Timothy.
- Because during that time, there was a *negative stigma* surrounding Christianity...
 - Just look at Paul - who's been so vocal about his faith, people probably knew that he's a Christian. But then look at his public reputation - he has a criminal record, and he's been in and out of prison multiple times (He's not someone who the public would see as a role model, but maybe more as a troublemaker).
 - And for those who are familiar with the message that Paul is carrying, they may see him as a madman or a fool who just spews out nonsense about Jesus of Nazareth who resurrected from the dead.
 - So to be associated with Paul at this time can destroy your reputation among your family and friends.
 - Also at this time, there's a real physical danger in proclaiming the Gospel and in being associated with Jesus - you can be put in prison, you can be beaten, you can be executed (as Paul is about to be).
 - So the *negative stigma* is that following Jesus seems to lead to either the end of your reputation or the end of your life...
 - And this can tempt any Christian (including Timothy) to remain quiet about their faith and to distance themselves further away from Paul (fearing that they'll share his fate).

So why would a Christian suddenly feel fearful or ashamed of the Gospel?

- **Because of the sin in our self-centered hearts that care more about guarding our own lives & reputation instead of guarding the reputation of Jesus Christ...**

But if we think about it - If anyone should feel ashamed, then shouldn't it be Paul himself?

- Because Paul used to be a respected Pharisee (In the Jewish community, that's a high status. Paul would've been highly regarded as a religious leader), and now he's seen more as a convicted felon - that's a huge drop in status and reputation.
- But is Paul ashamed?
 - No, he's not.
 - And that's why he tells Timothy that he also shouldn't be ashamed.

Paul then gives his reason on why he's not ashamed - Because... He's confident in the Gospel message that he's carrying.

Look at verses 8-10 - "8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace,

which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, 10 and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”

- **Paul is not ashamed because the Gospel message he’s carrying is the Good News of hope and eternal life that’s available only in Christ Jesus!**
 - So how can he be ashamed of that?
 - He’s not thinking about his life & reputation on Earth, he’s thinking about his life & reputation in Heaven.
 - And He knows that because Jesus died for his sins - and because of his faith in Jesus - he’s now in right standing before God. And so he knows that what’s awaiting him after death is not eternity in Hell, but eternal glory in Heaven!
 - And he knows that even though his life on Earth is about to end, his life in Heaven is about to begin, and he’ll finally see his Lord face-to-face, and there will finally be no more tears, no more pain, and no more suffering for Paul... But he will experience immortality & eternal joy and peace.
 - So at this time, as he knows that his life is about to come to an end... he’s not feeling ashamed and hopeless; it’s the opposite... because of Jesus, he’s feeling confident and hopeful.
- And so by pointing Timothy back to the Gospel - Paul is reminding him to view his life in light of eternity...
 - He’s saying, *“Timothy, don’t worry. God has already saved us from our sins. And remember, it’s not because of our own works - we didn’t earn our salvation... It’s completely because of God’s grace through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And how can we be so confident in it? Because Christ Jesus appeared before us - he lived, and died for our sins, and resurrected from the dead, which proves that he’s truly who he says he is.”*
 - And how can Paul be so confident in this? Because the resurrected Jesus was the one who appeared before Paul - back when he was a Pharisee hunting down Christians. So Paul was converted because the resurrected Jesus himself appeared in front of him, and then basically told him to stop persecuting his church, and to share his Good News to the Gentiles.
- And so this is why Paul was in prison... because he’s been sharing this Good News of salvation to anyone who’d hear it - that eternal life and immortality is available to anyone who’d repent of their sins, and put their faith in Jesus Christ!
- How can he keep such Good News to himself? No, for the sake of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, he’s willing to suffer for the Gospel, so that others may also have eternal life, and that God would be glorified!

<pause>

So friends, if you haven’t placed your faith in Jesus Christ yet, I urge you to consider this Good News that brought so much hope to Paul and to Timothy and to so many Christians... That they

were willing to suffer and die for it... If you still have questions about Christianity, please talk to me or to anyone around you, and we'd be more than happy to answer your questions, and point you to some next steps.

And now, for those of us who've already placed our faith in Christ, how are we feeling about all this?

I'll ask us again the same question I asked before: Why would we - as Christians - suddenly feel fearful or ashamed of the Gospel?

Now, let's think of our own lives:

- I'm sure we'd say that our confidence is in Jesus and his Gospel, right?
 - That's what we say out loud, but what do our actions say?
 - Why is it that sometimes we're hesitant in sharing the Gospel?

Let's do a case study: Imagine if you're spending time with your Non-Christian friends or co-workers. And let's say that somehow they're talking about religion. And then someone says, "It doesn't really matter, all religions point to the same God anyways." And then they remember that you're a Christian, so they go to you, "Hey, what do you think? Aren't we all gonna end up in the same place anyways after we die? Or do you think we're going to Hell?" What would you say?

- Let's say you know that this group consists of people of various religious backgrounds.
 - Would you be able to tell them that you believe that everyone is actually sinful, and deserves to go to Hell, but Jesus is the ONE & ONLY way to eternal life?
 - I hope so.
- But for the sake of this argument, what would prevent you from sharing the Gospel?
 - Maybe because we don't want to cause any trouble, right? And so the temptation may be to say, "I'm not sure" or "none of us can really know."
 - Why would we say something like that instead? Maybe it's like me and my bacang... We don't want to stand out, right? We want to fit in.
 - We don't want people to think that we're weird and to be the odd one out.
 - Especially in our context in Jakarta, it seems to be acceptable to say that we're Christians. But the unspoken rule is that it's not really okay to be too vocal about it. Or else we'd be considered a radical.
 - And so it's ok to believe in Jesus, but then not really... if it starts impacting your life too much - Not if it starts affecting your relationships, and who you date, and how you spend your money, and what you say & what you do in public...
 - And so then maybe that can cause us to be fearful of how sharing the Gospel may impact our reputation & how others perceive us, or how it'd affect our jobs, or our friendships, or even our safety...

But can I just invite us to look at verse 9 again - Paul reminds Timothy that God "saved us and called us to a holy calling..."

- Did you catch that? God didn't just save us, but also called us to live holy lives...
- What does that mean? The word "holy" means "set apart."
 - Which means we're to be different from the rest of the world, because while the world may have different standards of living, we're to live in accordance with God's standards - in accordance with His Word.
 - We're to be holy as God is holy.
 - And what God's Word teaches may seem like foolishness to the rest of the world.
 - The world thinks that everyone is generally good, but we know that we're sinners.
 - The world thinks that each of us can just define our own truths, but we know that it's all about God's Truth.
 - The world thinks that suffering for the Gospel is foolish because it values pleasure, but we know that there's more to life than what this world has to offer.
 - And this will make us "weird" in the world's eyes. We're not gonna fit in.
 - And that may not be comfortable for us because a part of us wants to fit in and not be made fun of and live an easy life. But for those who've put our faith in Christ, we've been called to stand out, and be different, and to showcase the Gospel with our words & with our lives.
 - We're to be salt & light of the world - A city on a hill that cannot be hidden!
 - That's our holy calling...

<pause>

Look at verse 11 - Paul knows that God also gave him a special calling - to be a preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gospel. And because of this, he knows that he's also called to a unique life of suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

But look at verse 12 - "...But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me."

Ultimately, Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel - not only because he's confident in the Gospel message itself - but because he's confident in God Himself.

- Paul knows that his God is so powerful, and loving and gracious and merciful and faithful.
- And he knows that God will ultimately be the one to protect His Gospel until the day Christ returns...
- And on that day, God will prove that Paul was right - that his confidence was not misplaced... And he won't be ashamed but exalted.
- That's why Paul is so confident...

So first, remember your Gospel story. Second, don't be ashamed of the Gospel. And, finally, third...

III. Guard the Gospel (vv. 13-18)

Now a question we may have is: Well, how will God guard the Gospel till Christ returns? Well, God's ordinary means of guarding the Gospel is gonna be through His people...

Let's look at verses 13-14 - Paul instructs Timothy... "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you."

- What are "the sound words" and "the good deposit" that's been entrusted to us? It's the Gospel of Jesus.
- And what is Timothy to do with it (even after Paul's gone)? He's to follow it and to guard it.

Now, that word - "guard" - is actually very fitting, especially when we're talking about the Christian life as "the good fight."

Think of a fight or a battle in which soldiers are guarding a castle. They're not fighting for the sake of fighting each other. They're fighting for the sake of defending and protecting something. And why are they so motivated to fight for the castle - even if it means that they'd die in the battle? Because they know that they're fighting for and guarding something that's greater than themselves. For their loved ones in the castle and for their king.

And as a Christian, we're also guarding something that's greater than ourselves. And what are we guarding? The Gospel. For the sake of our King Jesus - In the hope that many souls will be saved.

And how can we possibly guard the Gospel?

- Verse 14 - "By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us..."
 - "a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."

And remember that for Timothy, he's been equipped by the Holy Spirit with the gift of reading, exhorting, and teaching Scripture.

- And this means that he's to guard the Gospel by defending it against false teachings & to continue to teach sound doctrine.

And as a pastor, this is very important for Timothy. Because there may be times when he may be tempted to water down his teaching to fit what the public wants to hear - he's not to do that.

- What a great reminder for pastors today (and for those of us here who may be future pastors) - that pastors are to guard the Gospel with sound teaching - They're not to

water down the Gospel just because they don't want to talk about sin or Hell or suffering. And they're not to adapt what God's Word says just to better fit our present-day context & culture (we know that that can lead to liberalism).

- Pastors are to faithfully teach the right Gospel.

And guarding and teaching the Gospel is not only for pastors. Yes, pastors do have a special office of teaching. But church members have the general responsibility of teaching one another. Consider Paul's letter to the church members in the Colossian church...

- Colossians 3:16a (ESV) - "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."
- Fellow church members are also to be bold and unashamed in teaching the Gospel truth to one another.

Let's ask ourselves: "Is there something that we've been wanting to bring up with another brother or sister but then haven't... Because we're fearful or ashamed?"

- Or is there a non-believer whom you've been wanting to share the Gospel with, but haven't... Because we're fearful or ashamed?
 - Well, in those moments when we're hesitating...
 - **Remember your Gospel story**
 - **Don't be ashamed of the Gospel**
 - **Guard the Gospel**
 - Remember how your life is already a beautiful testimony of the power of the Gospel.
 - Don't be ashamed of the Gospel that's saved our souls & that we've been entrusted to guard.
 - And remember our holy calling to live holy lives and to stand out from the rest of the world. We're to be bold in sharing God's Word...

Now, let's look at verses 15-18 - Paul provides Timothy with 2 examples

- The first example is of Phygelus and Hermogenes who left Paul because they're ashamed that he's in chains & in prison.
 - What does that say about what they're guarding?
 - Not the Gospel, but themselves - not Christ's reputation, but their own.
- But look at Paul's second example - Onesiphorus... who unashamedly kept looking for Paul. And once he did, kept coming back to Paul again and again refreshing him and encouraging him (putting his own life on the line).
 - What does that say about what Onesiphorus is guarding?
 - Not his own reputation, but the Gospel - Because he was not ashamed nor afraid to stand out for the sake of Christ.

Conclusion

Now as we conclude, let me point us to one more example... our Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ.

- Who's fully man and fully God - and so if anyone should be ashamed, perhaps Jesus should be the one to be embarrassed of being associated with sinners like us.
- But when he was on Earth, he ate and spent his time with sinners and tax collectors.
- And not only was he not ashamed to stand out and be different for the sake of his Gospel, but he was willing to die for it.
- Jesus died for us, so that sinners who believe in him will not be ashamed on that final day of judgment, but they may join him in eternal glory.
 - So if Jesus was not ashamed of his people (who were once sinners), how can we be ashamed of our Lord Jesus?

Church, let's remember our Gospel story, don't be ashamed of the Gospel, and guard the Gospel.
