

Feed the Flame of Gods Gift

by John Piper

The sermon encourages Timothy to feed the white-hot flame of God's gift in him, which is the gift of unashamed courage to speak openly and suffer well for the gospel.

Duration: 58:26

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:6

Topics: "Courageous Faith", "Eternal Grace"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift, focusing on unashamed courage to speak openly about Christ and to endure suffering for the gospel. The main point is to keep nurturing this courage through the power of God's grace, which was ordained before the ages began. Paul encourages Timothy to have authentic faith, points to his own example of courageous suffering, and highlights the eternal purpose and grace of God in empowering believers.

Transcript

Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, I believe that in this conference, you do mean to set some young men, mainly men, I think, perhaps some women too, free. You mean to set them free from some long-time bondages. I'm thinking particularly now in this message about bondage to fear.

So deeply rooted, they don't know where it came from. Mother, perhaps, maybe like Timothy, or grandmother, like Timothy, maybe. So deep, they don't know why they act the way they act, why they turn away from opportunity, why they won't take stands, why they don't make themselves clear.

They don't know. They're enslaved and they don't know their slave master. So, God, I believe that now and throughout this conference, you mean to arrive, show up in power through your word and set people free, amazingly free.

They will date from these days liberation to come and do that. May there be a touching of our tongues like that dumb man. You spit, you touched his tongue, and he spoke clearly.

So, God, come, touch tongues, touch hearts. I ask for your help now to be faithful to this paragraph in 2 Timothy, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's go to 2 Timothy chapter 1, my assignment is verses 1 through 12. So, I'm going to read it with you and then we'll chew on it like a dog. Where is 2 Timothy, by the way? I can't...there it is.

Here we go. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve as did my ancestors.

I would rather they translate that as or from my parents because I think there's a link with the mother and grandmother here. I thank God whom I serve as did...from my parents with a clear conscience as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day as I remember your tears. I long to see you that I may be filled with joy.

I'm 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. 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. For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and of love and of self-control.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord nor about me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, 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 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 for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 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. Amen.

So, what I'm going to do is begin by stating the main point of the paragraph. When I say main point, I don't mean most important point. I mean the point which everything else supports and explains.

If I say, I'm hungry because there's a great famine, it's much more important there's a great famine than that I'm hungry. But the famine is explaining my hunger. The main point of that sentence is I'm hungry.

So, know what I mean by main point. I'm looking for that in every text. What is everything arguing for, even if the arguments are massively more important than the point? You're going to the point.

So, here's the point in my words and then we'll unpack it. The point of this paragraph is Timothy, so I'm just going to be Paul here now. I'm going to... You're Timothy, I'm Paul, even if you're old.

You're Timothy, I'm Paul. Timothy, keep feeding the flame, the white-hot flame of God's gift in you, namely, the gift of unashamed courage in speaking about Christ and suffering for the gospel. That's the main point of this paragraph.

I'll say it again. Timothy, keep on feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift in you, namely, unashamed courage to speak openly of Christ and to suffer for the gospel. That's the point of this paragraph.

Everything else is arguing for it or explaining it. So, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to open four parts, four aspects of this passage.

I'm going to lay it out for you in four steps. Number one, where does that point come from? Number two, is it the point only of this paragraph or the whole book? Three, how does Paul intend for us to feed the white-hot flame of his gift in us? And fourth, let's do it. Let's take how he did it and do it.

Okay, that's where we're going, four steps. Number one, seeing the main point in the text. You just heard me say what I think the main point is.

You shouldn't give a rip what I think the main point is. And you should preach in such a way so that people don't give a rip what you think the main point is. All that matters is if they can see it, okay? Preach that way.

Preach that way. Your people get bored because they hear you generalize, generalize, generalize. You, you, you show me the text like a dog or whatever.

So, where do I get it? I get it from verses 6 through 8. I'll read it then show you all the pieces of the point in the text. For this reason, verse 6, for this reason, I remind you to fan the flame of the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands for God has given us a spirit not of fear but of power and of love and of self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Timothy, first part, keep on feeding the white hot flame. That's verse 6, first part of the verse. I remind you to fan the flame.

All I do is add a couple of words to draw out what's here. Namely, I'm adding the words white hot. There's hot and then there's hot.

You say, I got a fever. I'm hot. I touch your forehead.

You're not hot. Put my hand in a fire, that's hot. You're not hot.

The fire's hot. This is the flame here. Jesus spits lukewarm preachers out of his mouth.

There's hot and then there's hot. And Jesus hates lukewarm. They gag him.

He spits them out. So, I add the words white hot just to get it hot. I'm saying hot, not just hot.

It's white hot. He is, Timothy, stir this thing, breathe on this, use oxygen, do what you have to do to make this thing burn with white hot, hot. Paul said in Romans 11, chapter 12, verse 11, do not be slothful, but boil in the spirit.

Zeontes, boil in the spirit. Don't fizzle, boil in the spirit. Same idea.

So, the second thing I do is add the words keep on. Keep on feeding, Timothy, the white hot flame. Why do I say keep on? Because the problem here in this paragraph is not that Timothy's having a sudden once-in-a-lifetime low, which needs a single fanning.

He's having a typical repeated low and you do too. And the present tense of this infinitive means keep on fanning it, Timothy. Keep on fanning it.

Do whatever you have to do. Get up every morning and do this. Don't die in the ministry.

Don't go cold in the ministry. So, you just add a few words, white hot, keep on, and you see where I'm getting the point from verse 6. So, Timothy, keep on feeding the white hot flame of what? The gift that is in you. God's gift is in you.

For this reason, I'm still in verse 6, for this reason, I remind you to fan the flame of the gift of God. God gave Timothy a gift. It includes fire.

The ongoing existence of that fire depends on Timothy's obedience to verse 6. That's the way the gifts of God are. They're not automatic. If you obey verse 6, my gift in you will burn.

If you don't, it won't, unless you think that God is held hostage by Timothy's weakness such that he can't make his gift effective or successful in blessing Timothy's church and reaching the lost. I'll just remind you, and then we'll see it in the text in a few minutes, that God makes the flame of his gift dependent on the feeding of the flame that Timothy does. And he makes the feeding of the flame dependent on his grace.

He's not held hostage by Timothy's weakness. But I haven't shown you that yet, so you shouldn't believe it. That's just Augustine.

That's all that is. Who cares about him? Timothy, keep feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift, namely, the unashamed courage to speak openly and to suffer for the gospel. Now, that comes from verses 7 and 8. Let's start reading in the middle of verse 6. The gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands for God has given us a spirit not of fear, but of power, love, self-control.

Therefore, don't be ashamed. So, God's given a spirit, and the spirit is not of fear, but what's the opposite of fear? Courage. Yes, it's powerful courage, loving courage, self-controlled or sober-minded courage, but the focus here is on the courage because of what follows, namely, therefore, don't be ashamed.

Don't be ashamed. Have unashamed courage. That's the gift God gave Timothy.

Verse 8, therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me, his prisoner, but share in the suffering for the gospel. So, don't be ashamed of speaking about Christ and don't be ashamed of the circumstances of others who've spoken about him and are in shameful situations like jail, and be ready to suffer because you will suffer. Second half of verse 8, share in suffering for the gospel.

Embrace this, Timothy. Don't walk away from this. Embrace it, walk into it.

God's given you a gift for this. He's given you a gift of unashamed courage to speak openly and suffer well. Notice the last phrase of verse 8, by the power of God.

So, when all your feeding, this flame, this white-hot flame of God's gift, when all your feeding is done and your flame burns brightly and you are speaking boldly and you are suffering well, know where it came from. Came from God. God did this in you.

He didn't just start it way back there in the ordination service. He's doing it by God's power. You are suffering and thus the feeding that is standing, that suffering, sustaining flame is God's work.

Know that, Timothy. You're not left to yourself here. When I'm telling you to feed that flame, I'm telling you to depend on power.

It's coming from outside you. How does Timothy get the gift of this power? We're still unpacking the main point. We're still on point one in the outline.

Let's read verse 6 again. Get it, through the laying on of my hands. This is where the gift came from.

Through the laying on of my hands. For this reason, I remind you to fan the flame of the gift of God, which is in you, through the laying on of my hands. This is almost the same as 1 Timothy 4.14. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

So, Paul and the elders are laying their hands on this young man, setting him apart for ministry. And here's my picture of what happened. And this picture is created not out of my imagination, but out of pieces of the text, which I think you'll hear.

Timothy may be kneeling. They're gathered around him, and they've put their hands on him. And they start praying that God would come.

It's not automatic. This isn't like some kind of artificial ceremony. God, come, come, gift this man.

Beyond anything he's known in his life so far, we all know Timothy's weaknesses. He needs a fresh, unusual gifting. Come.

So, they're praying, and God speaks to Paul. And Paul speaks over Timothy words something like this. Timothy, in answer to our prayers, God, the Almighty, is going to give you a flaming, unashamed courage for Christ beyond anything you have ever known.

And at that moment, I think Timothy weeps. Wouldn't you? The reason I think he weeps is because of verse 4. Paul says to him, as I remember your tears. Out of the blue, where'd that come from? You read commentator after commentator after commentator.

You know what they all say? When they said goodbye to each other. I said, what? Give me one clue in the text that that's why he cried. I got clues.

I mean, you're young. This is the most authoritative human being on the planet with his hands on you, telling you, God just told him, you're going to be amazingly courageous, and you're going to suffer. How could you not cry? I mean, it would just be so absolutely overwhelming.

So, I can't prove it. I can't prove that's what verse 4 is talking about, but I'm sure not going to jump outside the text to say, whoa, I think they said goodbye one time. Young man, against all your predilections, against all your weaknesses, against all your timidity, you're going to speak for me unashamedly and courageously, and you will suffer.

Now, this is the point in the message where I prayed God would begin, if he hasn't already, to do that right now. Because I'm Paul, and I'm old enough to be the father of most of you. And I just want this to happen real bad.

I don't have my hands on you, but God does. And be asking the Lord in the next minutes, do it. I'm enslaved.

I'm a chicken. I'm over and over again, I wimp out in what I should preach and what I should say on the plane or the bus or in the classroom. So, there it is.

That's the main point of the text. Timothy, keep feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift in your life, namely, the gift of unashamed courage to speak openly for Christ and to suffer well for the gospel. That's the point of the whole paragraph unpacked, and that's the first point of my outline.

Number two, is that an isolated thought of paragraph number one, or is it the burden of the book? Now, my prayer here is that as I give you a litany of 14 restatements of this point in this book, God will come down. I'm just going to read them, bullet them. And they come for me like hammer blows on a nail on a cross.

1.16, Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chains. 2.3, share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ. 2.9, I am suffering for the gospel bound with chains like a criminal.

2.10, I endure everything for the sake of the elect. 2.12, if we endure, we will reign with him. 2.15, do your best to present yourself a worker who does not need to be ashamed.

2.24, the Lord's servant must be patiently enduring evil. 3.1, in the last days will come times of difficulty. 3.10, you have followed my persecutions and sufferings.

3.12, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted. 4.5, as for you, endure suffering. 4.6, I am already on the point of being poured out like a drink offering.

4.7, I have fought the good fight. 4.16, at my first defense, nobody stood by me. End of book, except the Lord.

It's the point of the book. This is what Paul is so jealous to see happen in this young man and what I am so jealous to see happen in you. There's way more in the book and you will hear, what, six messages on this and, oh, may it never, ever let you go.

May 2 Timothy never, ever let you go. If you are in the ministry for an easy, secure, esteemed, untroubled, comfortable, safe life, get out of the ministry quick. And if you're single, don't marry a woman who wants that.

There are a lot of glorious young women who want to partner with you in those risks. If you don't have your church, come to my church. There aren't enough men to go around for these women.

Women are more radical, more mature, more everything almost. It's a hard road to follow Jesus. He would follow me, must take up his cross, deny himself.

Whoever would save his life will lose it. Whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will find it. The Calvary road is a hard road.

Just happens to be the most joyful road there is. Timothy, keep feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift of unashamed courage to speak openly of Christ and to suffer for the gospel. How do you experience? Let's go to number three, point number three.

The point number three is how Paul intends for Timothy to feed the white-hot flame of this gift. How do you do it? We've seen the end of verse 8 as the first part of the answer, by the power of God. You're going to suffer by the power of God.

You're going to be unashamed by the power of God. This flame is going to burn hot by the power of God, and therefore, you're feeding of it is by the power of God. And so the question now simply shifts over, how do you get that power? What would you do right now if we were done, and I just gave you 15 minutes to get it? Go get it.

Because this text says, feed it by the power. So go, get it, do it. What would you do? The answer comes in linking chapter 1, verse 2, with 2, verse 1. I got to sneak into Phil Rikens' text.

I'm going to sneak out again quick. Don't worry. Won't say too much.

Got to get into chapter 2. Look at chapter 2, verse 1. You then, my child, be strengthened. Now, that's the power of verse 8, all right? You're going to burn, and you're going to speak, and you're going to suffer by the power of God. In chapter 2, verse 1 says, be powerful, be strengthened.

Get that by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Now, quick, jump out of that text, okay? That's Phil's business. But I'm going back up, back up to verse 2 of chapter 1. Because what I want to know now is, okay, you're telling me that in order to feed the flame of this gift of courage, I have to have the power of God.

And you've just told me in chapter 2, verse 1, that I'm empowered through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. How do I get the grace? You just keep pushing me out, or down, or up. How do I get it? Because you're telling me I got to have power, and now you're telling me the power comes through the grace.

So how do I get that? And verse 2 is the key. Seeing it big. Verse 2, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, peace from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord.

My, do we breeze over these introductions. Here's something I did not see. What book was I working on? God, I forget.

I didn't see it until about three or four years ago. Every single epistle of the Apostle Paul, all 13 of them, without exception, begins with some form of grace to you. All of them, no exceptions, grace to you.

All of them, without exception, all 13 end with some form of grace be with you. Why? Why to you at the beginning of the letter and with you without exception at the end? This is big. Here's my answer.

Very few commentaries comment on this. I don't know of anybody. I mean, I've just missed it if it's out there.

So, you know, test all things, hold fast to what is good. My answer is Paul is very aware that as he begins to write or he knows they begin to read, person or church, as they read his apostolic word, grace is flowing to them, to them. Grace is coming to them as they are absorbing the truths that he is saying, writing, they're hearing.

And when they get to the end and he pictures the epistle finishing, the church is about ready to dismiss or discuss or whatever they did after they read the letter or the individual, he says, as you end my letter, the grace that's been coming to you through it will go with you. Hold to it by faith. Hold to it by faith.

It will go with you. You go back out into the world where you face all the problems. It's been so nice here to hear the epistle read.

And now you go, that grace, that grace will go with you. So my answer to the question, okay, you're saying that feed the flame, Timothy, feed the white hot flame of the gift of God, which is unashamed courage to speak and suffer. You're saying feed it by power.

Okay, where's the power? You will be empowered by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Okay, where's the grace? My word. I'm speaking the grace into your life.

My word is the grace. I have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that I might understand the things that are from God and I impart them in words not taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Holy Spirit. That's the point of verse 1, Timothy.

I am an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am an authorized spokesman of the living, reigning, all-authoritative Christ, and I didn't choose to be it. I was chosen.

It's by the will of God. And the focus of my apostolic, divine-inspired word is not just anything under the sun, it is life. And you have that life, and that life is sustained, it's fanned into flame with courage again and again and again and again as you listen to me.

You come back to this book again and again, you, and then my young pastors, this is what your people need from you. There's no other way to mediate grace to your people. That last goes deep.

When it's done, we'll be heard. Grace will be with you as you go out. That's a throwaway phrase if they haven't heard the Word of God.

This is such a powerful summons to hear and preach the Word of God. Timothy, do you remember the beach of Miletus? You remember this. You were there.

You're in the elders that were there. You remember what I said. Don't you remember what I said? I said, Acts 20, 32, I commend you to God and to the Word of his grace, which is powerful to build your courage.

I added your courage. That's all I added. I'll read it without my addition just so you feel the full biblical force of it.

I commend you to God, you elders, and to the Word of his grace, which is powerful to build you. And courage is one of the things that has to be built again and again and again. Word, grace, power through Word.

So, my answer to the question, how do you feed the white-hot flame of unashamed courage, Timothy, is that you feed it by giving heed seriously, deeply, meditatively, contemplatively, with faith to my Word, which has as its central truth grace, which will be the means of your power, which will be the means of your courage, and you will speak and suffer well. Last point, number four. Okay.

If that's the way it happens, main point, keep on feeding the white-hot flame of the gift of unashamed courage to speak openly and suffer well. If that's how it happens, then what sorts of things did Paul say in addition to how it happens to make it happen that are here? And there are three, and we'll do them. Number one, he said that Timothy's faith was authentic, and he's speaking, he says, as a father loving his son.

Your faith is authentic. I'm speaking to you as my beloved child, and I'm your dad. I'll read that to you.

It's verses three through five. I thank God whom I serve from my parents with a clear conscience as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day, as I remember your tears, how long to see you, that I may be filled up with joy. I'm reminded of your authentic, sincere, unhypocritical faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now, I'm sure, I'm sure, dwells in you.

What's all that about? Here's my paraphrase. You prepare a sermon, you know what to say. I mean, good night.

I don't ever preach on text this long, ever. I mean, this is just horrendously difficult for me. I want a verse, a phrase to chew on.

I mean, I'm feeling like I'm just jumping from piece to piece. This is not easy. So, I'm reading these verses three through five.

How's that fit in? Why is this throwaway affection or is it really, really part of how a young man becomes bold? So, here's my paraphrase. Timothy, I'm Paul now, you're Timothy. Timothy, I believe with all my heart, your faith is real.

Even though, oops, cool. Maybe that wasn't on the video. Now, it is.

I just spilled the water. Start over. Timothy, I believe with all my heart that your faith is real, even though it came from your grandmother and not your dad.

Even though it came from your mom and not your dad. I want you to know my faith too, my ministry is from my parents. It's okay.

Don't feel bad about this. Glory in it, glory in the lineage. But I know, Timothy, your dad wasn't there for you in these matters.

He never believed. We know that. I'm not making that up.

That's from the book of Acts. He's never mentioned. There physically maybe, certainly not there spiritually.

So, this man, this young man is becoming what he is as a future minister exactly the way I did. Well, exactly is way overstated. I'm resonating with this because my dad was away from home at least three-fourths of my young life.

I am a mama's boy. And if Jesus were a psychologist, he could explain probably most of my problems from that, and I'm not kidding. The kinds of fears, the kinds of timidity, the way I relate to my wife and my expectations are all shaped by being a mama's boy.

So, maybe I'm reading too much in. Maybe I've been unable to see what's really there. Paul is aware that he's got a grandmother, he's got a mother.

They shaped this boy. His timidity and his difficulty with boldness may be rooted right there. Mine, I think, probably was, is.

So, he is not simply going to say, my faith is coming from my parents like yours came from your mother. We don't have to be second-handers because of that. It's real.

It's authentic. I'm talking about your faith being authentic, unhyprocritous. There's no hypocrisy.

I'm looking at you, Timothy, as a mama's boy and a grandmama's boy, and I'm saying, you're real. I'm telling you, you're real. My beloved son, verse 2, my beloved son.

You didn't have a dad, I'm him. Can I tell you how many young men come to me, standing down there or whatever, and take my hand with earnestness, sometimes tears, give my dad. That's scary.

I never met this kid, 22 years old, 25, 30. My oldest son is 36 years old. So, if you're under 36, such a statement is not stupid.

It's biblical. It's heavy. Timothy, the grace that I'm delivering to you with my words right now, as I write this letter, is coming from a heavenly father and flowing through the words of your spiritual earthly father.

That's what I am, that's what you are, and that's grace, Timothy. Don't I speak like that to you, those words to you? That's grace, and power, and flame, and courage. I think that's what's going on in verses 3 through 5. Second, I'm working on three final things that Paul says to do the word that produces the grace, that produces the power, that produces the courage.

That's where we are. Number two, Paul gives himself as a pattern of courageous suffering with confidence in God's sustaining grace. Verses 11 and 12, I was appointed a preacher, and apostle, and teacher, 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.

So, Timothy, when you speak as a preacher or a teacher, I'm an apostle, you're not, but two out of three, when you speak as a preacher or a teacher, you're going to suffer. Consider my life. It has not been easy, but I'm not ashamed, and I don't want you to be ashamed.

He's putting himself as an example, sitting in prison. It's shameful to be in prison, shameful, even if you're there for good reasons. It's just, don't be ashamed of me as God's prisoner.

I'm not ashamed. I'm sitting here, glorying in my king. The reason we don't have to be ashamed, Timothy, is this.

The one who entrusted us with this gift and gospel, the trust, the deposit, which you'll hear about in these next messages, this deposit, the reason we don't have to be ashamed is because the gospel is powerful. He is...let's read it, verse 12, I'm not ashamed for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is powerful. It's the same word showing up again.

He's powerful to guard until that day what's being deposited, which means if it takes fire to fulfill my calling to be courageous in speaking and suffering, He gives it. He's faithful. That's how I know we don't have to be ashamed or fearful about our suffering.

He's put this deposit, this gift in us, and He's jealous for the gift of the gospel. He's jealous for the gift of courage. He's jealous for the gift of power.

He's jealous for the gift of grace. He's not putting these things in us to take a vacation. He's going to be there.

He is powerful to guard until that day what has been entrusted to us. So, Timothy, look at me, your dad sitting in jail, and not ashamed. You don't have to be either.

You never had a dad to model this for you. I'm doing it right now. I'm showing you what it is to be a man, Timothy, to be a man in jail, to be a man shamed by everybody, and not ashamed.

Learn from me, Timothy. You didn't have him to learn from. Learn from me.

Lastly, number three, you know, when I started by saying, I'm going to tell you the main point, and it may not be the most important sentence, this is the most important sentence. It's not the main point. I mean, Paul's always doing this, right? He's always saying, I'm hungry because there's a great famine.

I said, well, tell us about the famine. Well, he does lots of times. But the point is, I'm hungry, or fear the flame.

And now he's going to go way, way back and down to put a support under this courage that boggles your theological brain. But I don't have enough time to unpack the boggling. I'll just boggle you with it.

Let's read verses 9 and 10. So the power, this is the power, the power of God. You're going to be fanning the flame with this power, and courageous with this power, and speaking with this power, and suffering with this power, the power of God 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, 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. That's the kind of power with which you feed the flame. That's the food, the fanning that will show the grace which will produce the power which sustains the courage that enables you to speak and suffer with white-hot passion.

So, what does this mean? What does verse 9 and 10 mean in a few minutes? Listen, Timothy, listen very carefully. The grace of God, referred to in verse 1, which is the means by which you are empowered in chapter 2, verse 1. The grace of God that's coming to you through the writing of this letter, the grace that makes you powerful, the grace that saved you, the grace that called you. This grace was not given to you when you were converted.

It was given to you before the world was created. Takes your breath away. Creates so many problems you wouldn't believe.

Maybe you would. Timothy, your name was written before the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the Lamb who was slain. Revelation 13, 8. God set his face to make you his and to make you courageous before the stars were made.

This will help a mommy's boy get serious. This will put some steel in his spine if he starts to wimp out. God Almighty set his favor on me to give me everything I needed to be saved and called and empowered and graced and made courageous and speaking and suffering before anything else was.

I mean, Paul doesn't throw sentences like that around for nothing. This is the sort of thing your weak people need. You run away from them.

Shake them. Shake them. They're so bored with everything.

Shake them with the weight of a sentence like that. Now, why did he say it? I mean, why would he stir up such a hornet's nest of controversy? Why does Paul talk this way? He tells us why. He says, I want you to know with crystal clarity that your salvation, your calling into a life of courage and speaking and suffering is not based on according to anything you do, feel, think, or act.

Now, the reason I say it so radically and rule out everything he thinks, everything he feels, everything he does is because of the contrast that Paul speaks in this verse. The contrast is not between not your works but your faith. That's not what he says.

He doesn't say, he saved you and he called you not according to your works but according to your faith. It would be a good Pauline way to talk, and that's not the way he talks here. He says, it's not according to your works.

It's according to God's purpose and grace. Sounds like Romans 9, 1 to 13. Sounds like Romans 11, verses 5 and 6. Sounds like Ephesians 2, 8 to 10.

The contrast is, Timothy, I want to strip you of every possible reliance for salvation, calling, power, grace, boldness, courage, shamelessness, speaking. I want to strip you of every expectation that those things are ultimately dependent on you in any sense at all. That's a good place to stand as a mama's boy, is for me.

When Christ died for you, Timothy, to become your punishment, to become your perfection, and then rose again and abolished death and brought everlasting life to light, he manifested in that, that gospel. He manifested in that, that his eternal purpose was to be gracious to you from all eternity. What you should see in the gospel, what you should see in Christ crucified, covering your sins, providing your righteousness, triumphing over death, opening eternal life, what you should see in that is, from this text, from eternity, God planned to do you good forever, if you'll have it.

Keep on feeding the white-hot flame of God's gift, the unashamed courage to speak the gospel openly and to suffer for the gospel. Don't be afraid, because I am sure that he will do for you what he's done for me. Paul says, and I say with him, he will rescue you from every evil deed, and he will bring you safely to his heavenly kingdom.

To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. Let's pray.

So, Father, perhaps now would be the time when the liberator comes. Let's just wait. My clock here says I have three minutes.

I would like to be quiet for a little bit of that, would you? Let's just be quiet and ask God to do what in your life needs to be done with this. If grace has come to you in the ministry of the word, brothers, it will go with you. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/voQkikhTN88.mp4>

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