

Title: Not found wanting  
Text: 2 Timothy 1.6-14  
Theme: Share in suffering for the gospel  
Series: 2 Timothy #3  
Prop Stmtt:

Charles Jack Price was the administrator of the Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas when in 1963, that hospital became the focal point of our country, and much of the world. In a memo that he sent to the hospital employees, he praises them for how they responded to all that happened.

*“To: All Employees*

*At 12:38 p.m., Friday, November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy and Texas' Governor John Connally were brought to the Emergency Room of Parkland Memorial Hospital after being struck down by the bullets of an assassin.*

*At 1:07 p.m., Sunday, November 24, 1963, Lee. H. Oswald, accused assassin of the late president, died in an operating room of Parkland Memorial Hospital after being shot by a bystander in the basement of Dallas' City Hall. In the intervening 48 hours and 31 minutes Parkland Memorial Hospital had:*

- 1. Become the temporary seat of the government of the United States.*
- 2. Become the temporary seat of the government of the State of Texas.*
- 3. Become the site of the death of the 35th President.*
- 4. Become the site of the ascendancy of the 36th President.*
- 5. Become site of the death of President Kennedy's accused assassin.*
- 6. Twice become the center of the attention of the world.*
- 7. Continued to function at close to normal pace as a large charity hospital.*

*What is it that enables an institution to take in stride such a series of history jolting events? Spirit? Dedication? Preparedness? Certainly, all of these are important, but the underlying factor is people. People whose education and training is sound. People whose judgement is calm and perceptive. People whose actions are deliberate and definitive. Our pride is not that we were swept up by the whirlwind of tragic history, but that when we were, we were not found wanting.”*

As followers of Christ who live in a sin-cursed world, tragedy, adversity, suffering, and challenges will find you. We do not have to look for them; they will look for us. But, when they find us, by God's grace we will not be found wanting. We will face it, accept it, respond to it, grow from it, and press on. Our mission is to run strong, Jesus strong. This is the message of 2 Timothy. The purpose statement of this book is captured in our text this morning. *“Share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.”*

Read Text:

Verses 6 and 7 transition us from the greeting to the big idea of this book. Verse 6: Timothy do everything you can to deepen your dependency and joy in God because you will be called upon to suffer for the sake of the gospel. But, when you face suffering, you do not have to be afraid of it. God provides you with power, love and self-control. But, if the muscles of power, love and self-control are going to provide you with the strength you need then, you need to work out these muscles now.

Therefore, i.e. here is how you fan into flame the gift of God. Here is how you get ready for adversity. And what follows is a very lengthy run-on sentence that Paul is so famous for. His run-on sentences are challenging to follow, but worth the work because of what they say and how they say it.

When I study Paul's epistles, I diagram the sentences so I know the relationship of the words. This helps me emphasize what the text is emphasizing so that I can follow the flow of thought. But, when you get one of these sentences, it is pretty challenging to diagram, but here (SLIDE of DIAGRAM) is what my notes looked like this week. Now, I normally would not do this in a sermon, but would do this in a class. However, I think it is worth it because I want you to see that Paul is giving a very lengthy, detailed and powerful argument to the bold command that lays out. If Paul is going to go to such lengths to support his point, then obviously, his point matters a lot. What is his point? What is the command? It is basically one command with two parts: Do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of me his prisoner, but instead share in suffering for the gospel. Everything that follows is pressing this home to us. And when you follow the flow of thought in this sentence you realize that Paul ends up right where he began.

So, based on the grammar of this sentence and the flow of thought, I developed this outline for this text. Remember that Paul is helping us work out our spiritual muscles. Paul is helping us now get ready for adversity. The idea is to make up your mind now as to how you are going to respond then and prepare yourself for it.

## I. **Do not be ashamed of Christ.** (8a)

What was the testimony of "our Lord"? The Lord was publicly executed by the Roman government. Think of how different that is from today. Today we have Christian radio stations that play Christian music, Christian talk shows and sermons 24-7. We have an entire genre called gospel music that generates (by one estimate) over \$600 million in annual revenue. We have Christian movies in public theaters. Christians are using billboards to publicly display messages. Christianity has a footprint in our culture. Therefore, any suffering that we do for Christ is generally a little more subtle.

When Paul wrote this to Timothy, Christianity was not a tolerated part of the culture. If you identified with Christ you were choosing to invite serious conflict into your life. So, on the one hand, we can and should be grateful for the freedoms that we have. We should acknowledge with humility and gratitude that we can gather this morning without fear of

losing our lives, our children, our jobs or our reputations. That may change in the future, but for now we do not face the intense backlash that Paul or Timothy would face.

Again, we should be grateful for that, but then again, do you not wonder how you would respond if and when that happened to you? There is definitely a blessing to not being persecuted for Christ, but persecution tends to reveal those who really believe from those who are convenient Christians. How do you know if you are a convenient Christian or the real deal? How do you know if your faith is genuine if it has never cost you anything?

In other words, if you are in a conversation where Christ and Christianity is being attacked, you probably have an opportunity to speak up. Speaking up may cost you some social capital. You may risk being laughed at, even though you may not be thrown into jail. But, if you are not willing to speak up when you don't get thrown into jail and you don't lose your job, you probably won't speak up if you would. Have you ever lost a relationship because you consider Jesus more important? Have you ever realized that you cannot get into a serious relationship with a person who does not follow Christ? You may really care about that person, but when a follower of Christ tries to marry someone who isn't following Christ, it is like trying to paint two different pictures with different paint, different brushes, different technique and different styles on the same canvas. No matter how earnest you are, it will never blend. But, here is my point. If you do not consider Christ more important now, you are not preparing yourself for more serious forms of suffering, which are going to come sooner or later. So, fan your ember of faith into a flame by choosing now to identify yourself with Christ.

## II. **Do not be ashamed of those who suffer for Christ.** (8b)

Did you notice that Paul does not consider himself a prisoner of Rome, but the Lord's prisoner? He knows that his imprisonment is directly related to his service for Christ.

Life in a Roman prison was bad. Rome did not care if you lived or died. In order to survive, someone had to bring you food. If you wanted clothes or a blanket or a pillow, someone had to bring them to you. But, who would do that? If the person you were visiting was considered to be an enemy of the state, and you were associating with that person, it was not a big stretch for you to be considered to be an enemy of the state as well. Here is how it played out in Rome.

You may remember the term Pax Romana (the peace of Rome). Keeping the peace was very important to the Roman government, and anyone caught disturbing the peace would be charged with a serious crime. The Roman Empire believed that it was protected by a series of gods and goddesses. If something bad happened (like losing a war, famine, disease, pestilence), then it was because one of the gods or goddesses was unhappy and was throwing a fit until he or she got the attention it was demanding. Attention to the gods and goddesses was given in the form of public festivals where everybody (and I mean everybody) went to sacrifice to this god or goddess. Every city had its god. To be a loyal citizen of the community you participated in the annual public ceremony to the god or goddess. If you wanted to do business in the town, you participated in the worship. If

you were a Christian, you did not believe in these gods and goddesses and you did not go to the festival and you did not offer sacrifices. Do you see why it was so easy, natural and logical to blame all of society's problems on the Christians? If disease broke out (which it did perpetually, if a drought happened, if a storm messed things up, if invaders from the north threatened, it was thought to be because the Christians refused to sacrifice to the gods, the gods were angry and were punishing everyone else. It's like life in the army, right? If you fail to make your bed the right way, everyone in your company loses privileges. The peer pressure is enormous. To become a Christian was to become an enemy of the state, even though you loved your city or country like others. Nero was the emperor at the time Paul is writing 2 Timothy. He hated Christians. But persecuting Christians, while intense under Nero, ebbed and flowed for about 200 years until A.D. 250, when a full scale assault against Christians broke out and lasted until A.D. 313.

As a result, Christians were shunned, expelled, hated, abused, jailed, persecuted and threatened. The perpetual temptation was, how can I follow Christ and stay undercover? The answer is, "you can't!" That is why this is a command. You need to know that before you choose to follow Christ. This goes with the territory. Following Christ means that you are following a leader whom the world hated and for the most part still hates. Following Christ means to be identified with people that the world has hated and honestly still hates. Listen to the lectures in many public universities and you know what I mean. Christians in Paul's day did not wear T-shirts. Witness wear would not have sold much. Here is the other side of the coin. Here is what we do. We choose to share in the suffering.

### III. **Share in suffering for the gospel.** (8c-14)

The rest of this text basically answers the challenge of this command. How do I share in suffering for the gospel and why would I do this. Brothers and sisters, this statement summarizes this book. Make up your mind to identify with those who suffer for the cause of Christ. But, if you were to do that, you would be doing something that makes no sense to this world. What makes sense to our world? What does your world consider to be wonderful? Live for whatever makes you happy, right? Go to awesome restaurants, take pictures of your food and put it on social media. Find great deals on clothes and take pictures of them and put it on social media. Go to a sporting event, a vacation, a concert, take pictures of yourself and put it on social media. You have the life! One of the subtle messages can be, if you only could do what I do, and then you would have the life too. But, Christianity presents a completely different message. Instead of promoting yourself, we live for another, name Christ, and we live for those who follow Christ. One of the ways we do this is by caring for those who are persecuted. One of the ways that we can share in suffering for the gospel is by praying for persecuted believers. Praying for believers who are being persecuted is so good for our souls, but it makes no sense to people who live only for self-gratification. That is why, the only way you could do this, would be to rely upon God's power and the choice to do this would have to come from a deeply held conviction.

#### A. **By depending upon the power of God.** (8c)

*“by the power of God”*

Unless you depend on God to supply you with the needed grace to sustain you, you will not stand up under the pressure. The call of this text is for us to lean into God for grace to stand up for him now as opportunities present themselves so that we are establishing a mindset of leaning into God for grace to stand up for him when things are more intense.

**B. By remembering what God has done for you. (9a)**

*“who saved us”*

The call to not be ashamed of Christ and to share in the suffering of others is a tall order. How do I know that this is not just a ridiculous and unnecessary sacrifice? Imagine if someone said to you that you need to give up eating all food with salt, all food with milk and all food with carbs. Some of you would rather die, right. Your question would be – why? What is the benefit of that? If the answer is, “I don’t know, I just think you ought to do it” well, then, you aren’t doing it. If I am going to give up ice cream, lasagna and barbeque, there better be a good reason, right? Now, if I have a knowledgeable person who can prove to me that unless I stop eating those foods that I will die, then I will do it because I will be comparing the sacrifice to the reward while factoring in my belief in the authority and integrity of the person telling me. Why would I choose to share in suffering for the gospel? Because the gospel is what has saved me!!! If I am convinced, as I should be, that the gospel is the greatest treasure, then I will be willing to pay the highest price for it. You will only sacrifice for what you consider to be valuable. If you really consider the gospel to be as valuable as God does, then you will be willing to sacrifice for it.

The same God who saved us through the gospel saved us in order for us to live a life as a follower of Christ (our calling) and there is a cost to discipleship, there is a sacrifice that I make in living for Christ and I need to consistently choose to embrace the cost of discipleship. But what I choose to give up is so worth it in comparison to what I already have and will have forever.

**C. By embracing the cost of discipleship. (9a)**

*“who called us”*

The calling of God on your life is a holy calling. Holy means to be set apart. If you are a follower of Christ, you are set apart from this world. That means that you do not fit in. You are not going to fit in. When you do not accept this world’s attempt at stuffing their views of personhood, sexual identity and morality, you will be treated as being odd.

Mike Pence was criticized, even mocked because he does not go out to meals with a woman, other than his wife. Are you kidding me? So, does that mean that he would not be criticized by the same people if he did? No. If you are a follower of Christ, you will not fit in, no matter what. It’s burden of discipleship. There is no way around it. Embrace it

for what it is and realize that if you are singled out for mockery, then praise God, someone is noticing that you are a follower of Christ.

At this point (9b), Paul, as he is prone to do, reminds us of the very nature of the gospel and why embracing the cost of discipleship is so worth it. You have been saved, “*not because of our works but because of his purpose and grace.*” The reason why you love Christ, trust Christ and follow Christ is not because you are smarter than someone else, not because you are better than someone else, not because you have done something to earn it.

#### **D. By relishing in the grace of election. (9b-10)**

*“...grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.”*

Did you get that? God gave you grace in Christ Jesus before the ages began. The ultimate reason why you are saved is because God purposed to save you. God chose to save you. God called you by name. God even gave you the faith to believe so that when you heard the gospel you heard it with your heart and you trusted in Christ. God planned to save you before he created the world. God planned your salvation in eternity past and then orchestrated all of the details necessary to bring it about. In the past, everything that God was doing to bring about your salvation was not always obvious, but by bringing Christ into the world, God’s amazing plan for saving people has now been put on display and look at what kind of a display it is! Christ accomplished our salvation by abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. What this means is that every single follower of Christ has eternal life now. We do not get eternal life when we die, we have eternal life now. When we die, we don’t really die, we just fill out a change of address card.

Every time I read this I am overwhelmed. Why? Why would God come after me? Why would God see to it that I heard the gospel and I believed the gospel? Yes, I know that this teaching of the Bible causes some of you to squirm a little and I am not pointing this out to make you squirm. The doctrine of election and predestination is always presented in the Scriptures to cause your heart to be amazed at God’s grace and to motivate you to trust God and to faithfully witness to others about the gospel. And that is what Paul is doing here. Look at all that God put into your salvation and calling. Look at all that God has done to provide you with salvation in Christ and to bring you to faith in Christ. Relish that! Let that overwhelm you and give you joy. Let that cause your heart to sing, and your soul to dance. If he is going to go through that much effort and detail to save you, if he is going to plan it out from before the ages began and oversee every detail along the way so that you become one of his, he is going to get you home where you belong.

But there are even more resources that motivate us and help us to share in suffering for the gospel.

#### **E. By following good examples (11-12)**

Paul's testimony is a great reminder to Timothy and us about how following Jesus is worth it. All believers are called to live a life of sacrifice. Some believers, like Paul live during a time of more intense persecution. Go and visit with Paul and hear him tell you about God's grace in his life as he sits in jail. You cannot help but feel the Spirit of God put a little more re-rod in your spiritual spine and pour a little more boldness into your heart. Paul knew that he suffered because he was a preacher, apostle and teacher of the gospel. But, he considered his calling to be so much more precious than the adversity that came with it. And why was that? He was able to guard the gospel in his own life because he knew that he was being guarded by God. We hold on to Christ because we know that he holds on to us. Our hope is not in our hold, our hold is our response of faith to his hold on us. But Paul mentions something else. He calls it "that Day". "That Day" is a reference to the Day of Christ when Christ publicly establishes his kingdom. That Day is THE Day. We live for that Day, while most in our world live for this Day.

Let's say that you are running a marathon and you are getting toward the end of the race, and look up and you see a sign that says, "Finish Line" and so, you dig deep and exhaust yourself with one final kick, one final push that gets you over the line and in so doing, you pass up about 6 or 7 other runners which means that you placed in your division. You collapse on the ground, having completely exhausted yourself, but, instead of being congratulated, you hear people laughing, and you notice that the other runners did not stop but kept going. You are totally confused, until someone tells you. They were playing a joke. This wasn't the real finish line. The real finish line is another half mile down the road and you just lost the race.

People who are not followers of Christ run after this day, meaning they are running for the wrong finish line. Today it may look like they are winning, but we live for THAT Day. And on that day, by God's grace we will not be found wanting. Share in suffering for the gospel. It is certainly not easy, not convenient, but it is so worth it.

**F. By following the Word. (13)**

**G. By following the Spirit. (14)**