

As Paul moved beyond his opening of his second letter to Timothy he spends the rest of chapter 1 focused on Timothy and believers not being ashamed of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, “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.” (2 Timothy 1:6-7) Paul is calling for believers not to be ashamed of Jesus and to live in such a way as to witness courageously, being unapologetic witnesses and sharing the gospel with passion in order to be effective for the expansion of His kingdom.

God has always commanded that those to whom He has given spiritual life, beginning with Adam and continuing to us this day, should be unwavering in their witness of Him. King David who knew what it was to be persecuted wrote, “I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation (*the congregation are those who are believers and gather to worship the true God*); behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.” (Psalm 40:9–10) In 1st Samuel, David was called a man after God’s own heart and He refused to conceal the truth of God from any and all nations. King David declared, “My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge.” (Psalm 71:15)

Both King David and Paul were fully committed to God. Their level of commitment demonstrates that they did not care what the world thought or says or does. They were committed to live for the glory of God. Paul is concerned with Christians living the gospel and brings this theme forth three times in the first

chapter. Jump to verse 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.” (2 Timothy 1:8) Now down to 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.” (2 Timothy 1:12) Paul’s third call, “May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus (on·ay·sif·or·os), for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.” (2 Timothy 1:16) The question this then raises is if King David and Paul and other believers were this dedicated to God what does this mean for us? We know from the scriptures that David and Paul were not perfect and failed to fulfill God’s calling consistently and completely all the time. And to be honest we must confess of being ashamed of the Lord at some point in our own lives. We were afraid of what people might think or how being open about Christ as our Lord might affect our social standing or even affect our business or career path. One that I have felt guilty of at times was would people wonder why my life was inconsistent, at times, with my proclaimed faith. To my shame at times my actions failed to show my love of Christ.

At this point in time, Christians in America have not had to fear the same persecution as Christians in many parts of the world who pay a heavy price for practicing their faith, suffering the loss of property, harm to family, imprisonment, torture and death. CNN reported in January of 2016 “that last year (2015) was the most violent for Christians in modern history, rising to ‘a level akin to ethnic cleansing.’” Fox News reported on January 6, 2017, just 2 days ago, “Christians continued to be the most persecuted group across the globe in 2016.” A January 2017 report from Italian-based Center for Studies on New Religions said it has, “determined that 90,000 Christians were killed for their beliefs worldwide last year and as many as 600 million Christians were prevented from practicing their faith in 2016.” At the end of 2016 The Philos Project told Fox News, “There are many

places on earth where being a Christian is the most dangerous thing you can be.”

An eye-opening statistic is when the US Military invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 there were 1.5 million Christians, today there are about 275,000. The USA failed to protect Christians from genocide.

With this kind of pressure Christians may fail at times to be faithful in their witness. Even when the pressure is less we fail. Look at Peter denying Christ 3 times.

Jesus’ disciples fled when He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane in Matthew 26. We gain experience from Peter, from Christians throughout the world and from our own failure to testify of Christ and we can grow from these experiences. Look again at Peter a short time after he denied Christ during the feast of Pentecost he is fearlessly proclaiming Christ before a large crowd in Jerusalem.

Peter continued to preach the gospel of Christ without compromise or fear until his death. Peter was brought before the same council that sentenced Christ to be crucified and the same council whose chief priest’s outer court is where Peter denied Christ three times, but Peter had grown and was no longer the man who denied Christ. The council demanded he stop preaching Christ and he declared with John, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge,²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19–20)

Have we learned from Peter and Paul and Christian martyrs? It is only when we move from living in shame and fear to a life of conviction and bold commitment to Christ that we become useful in the Lord’s service. Living as a follower of Christ is straightforward. Jesus said, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32–33) The sins of the world have not changed with time. Again, Jesus said, “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the

glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38) Are we more afraid of living our mortal life in material comfort or living for the eternal rewards of heaven?

Marcus Felix answered this question in the late 2nd century; he was one of the earliest Christian apologists and penned the story *Octavius* to educate non-Christians. Quoting from *Octavius*, “It’s a beautiful thing to God when a Christian does battle with pain. When he faces threats, punishments, and tortures by mocking death and treading underfoot the horror of the executioner; when he raises up his freedom in Christ as a standard before kings and princes; when he yields to God alone and, triumphant and victorious, he tramples upon the very man who has pronounced sentence upon him. God finds all these things beautiful.” (Marcus Minucius Felix, *The Octavius* 37, c. 200) This is the battle of faithfulness. I am neither seeking battle nor avoiding it. My desire is to be faithful. Paul charges us 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.” Considering the breathe of scripture from Genesis to Revelation when a believer is ashamed of Christ he is acting like an unbeliever. The shame of an unbeliever should never be the same mark upon a believer. We all fail at times whether in public or private and the Lord knows and He is grieved. Hopefully the conviction of the Holy Spirit comes upon our heart and our heart becomes repentant seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with Christ.

The motivation behind a Christian being ashamed of Christ is self-interest and unwillingness to pay the price of being a faithful disciple. Here is the amazing thing – despite our many sins and failings, including at the times we experience shame of Christ, God the Son, the Christ who lived among men and never sinned, is not ashamed of His children. In fact God inspired the writer of Hebrews to say, “For he God who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That

is why ~~he~~ *Christ is not ashamed to call them brothers.*” (Hebrews 2:11) We may show shame for Christ but He never is ashamed of us.

Paul lays out in verses 6 to 18 of chapter 1 - 8 ways Christians may guard against being ashamed of Christ. Christians are to renew their gift in verse 6, rely on the resources of God in verse 7, be willing to suffer for our Lord by the power of God in verse 8, remember our calling in the second half of verse 8 through verse 10, realize and live out our duty to Christ found in verses 11 and 12, place your trust in Christ in the second half of verse 12, study and know the sound and true doctrine of God as instructed in verses 13 and 14, and finally, know well those whom you associate and work with for the kingdom as expressed in verses 15 to 18.

This morning we will spend our time on the first two of these eight guards against being ashamed of Christ. Next week our focus will be the remaining 6 guards found in verses 8 to 18.

Fan the Flame

Paul calls Timothy to attention, writing, “*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 this reason*” refers to “*your sincere faith*” found in verse 5. The result of “*sincere faith*” is faithful service. The heart of “*faithful service*” is when we serve using our gifts for the glory of our Lord. The scriptures say that every believer at the time they accept Christ are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and are given spiritual gifts. “*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ... ¹¹ All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6 and 11) Later in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians he wrote, “*Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may*

[prophecy.](#)” (1 Corinthians 14:1) We need to be careful here for many take this to where God did not intend. “[That you may prophecy](#)” means to bring forth a message from God. What is the greatest message God has given? It is His holy Word, the Bible! We are to pursue love and spiritual gifts that we may be effective messengers of God’s Word, of the gospel of Christ. What of our life is of value if it is not undergirded with the Lord’s gifts given so we may serve Him? When we take Christ as our Lord and Savior we become His and the foundational purpose of our lives is service to Him. We are called to live His prophecy, the Bible and share His prophecy and Christ with others. The church is the living body of Christ and made up of many members, each with their own set of gifts. It is in coming together we can be effective in evangelism. The whole is much more than the individual.

We have received gifts from the Holy Spirit and we are to use them until we depart this earth. Just like a fire, its flame can grow hotter or colder and flicker on the verge of going out. Paul says, “[fan into flame the gift of God.](#)” A fire has to burn at 500 degrees to maintain itself and a well-stoked fire can burn as hot as 1500 degree. But when you add billows, when you fan the fire, then the fire can burn as hot as 2500 degrees. Christ does not want us to use the gifts He gives to maintain a fire of 500 degrees that offers some warmth. Christ wants us to surrender to His Spirit and let the Spirit breathe life into our spirit to fan the flame of our faith to white-hot fire touching the hearts of the unsaved with our spiritual gifts bringing warmth and life into dead souls. We are to prophesize speaking the truth of the Bible. John says we conquer evil and the devil by the using of our spiritual gifts. He wrote, “[They faithful have conquered him Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.](#)” (Revelation 12:11)

To stoke the spiritual fire within us we must continually bury our self-will, which will quench the flame. As Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica, “[Rejoice](#)

always,¹⁷ pray without ceasing,¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.¹⁹ **Do not quench the Spirit.**” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–19) Surrendering our self-will to God’s Spirit allows Him to breathe life into our spiritual flame; the more white-hot our spiritual flame becomes.

God Given Spirit

The means of guarding against being ashamed of Christ is to understand the source of our divine resources. Reading verse 7, **“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”** The word structure here **“gave us”** means God has already provided us with His resources. His resources may not seem to be with us at times, but they are indeed there waiting for us to seek them through God’s Spirit. Jesus told His disciples, **“When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour.”**²⁰ **For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”** (Matthew 10:19–20) When we submit our lives to God and His Spirit we have every resource we need to live our daily lives for His glory. If persecution comes, if trials come in life and they surely will, God will give us everything we need to be faithful and to flourish.

Sudan is ranked as one of the worst countries to live in for Christians. Sudan’s dictator Omar al-Bashir is listed as the worst dictator in the world and the International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir. He is the first sitting government leader to be charged with crimes against humanity. al-Bashir’s travel outside of Sudan is limited to a small number of countries. Christians are regularly imprisoned without evidence and have disappeared or been executed. Meriam Yahia Ibrahim was arrested and thrown into a dark and dirty prison. She was born into a Christian family and married a Christian man. She was charged with having been a Muslim and leaving Islam to become a Christian. She

was charged with apostasy and received the death sentence. She was eight months pregnant and was told she would be executed once the baby was born. The judge called her before the court and told her he would free her if she renounced Christianity. Meriam refused and risked becoming the first woman to be hung for apostasy in Sudan. However before she would be hung she was to receive 100 lashes for infidelity for having children with a Christian. Because she was convicted of being a Muslim apostate her marriage to a Christian was invalid and she was also guilty of adultery. Her 20-month-old son and her yet unborn daughter would become wards of the state and raised as Muslims. Those Christians living and working in Sudan were able to get Meriam's story to the outside world. This resulted in a worldwide firestorm of protests by Western countries and their embassies in Sudan. International legal aide was given to Meriam and the battle became an international story. During the legal battle for her life she gave birth to her daughter in prison while in chains. The Islamic court would not repeal its guilty sentence but released Meriam with the understanding she would leave the country. At the airport in Khartoum Meriam was again arrested by the Islamic National Intelligence and Security Services and accused of using forged travel documents. She was released while she awaited trial and sought refuge in the American Embassy. International pressure forced Sudan to drop these latest charges and the USA arranged for her to leave Sudan.

Meriam's story had a happy ending, but there are hundreds in Sudan and thousands throughout the world being killed for their faith in Christ and their unwillingness to recant their faith. God's gives each person the power needed to remain faithful. Do not fear and know God is with you and will give you every resource needed for every trial in life and empower you to remain faithful. The worst thing that can happen is that you are martyred for your faith and you are then in heaven with God. Being in heaven with our Lord and Savior is the most wonderful blessing for

eternity. The enemy cannot succeed against the love of Christ, so have no fear. If you trust Christ you will have the “[power and love and self-control](#)” needed just as Meriam and all the martyrs for the true gospel and God throughout history.

Power and Love and Self-control

Paul wrote, “[for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.](#)” The Greek word “*deilia*” ([di·lee·ah](#)) translated as “fear” can also be translated as “fearfulness or cowardice.” Christians are to have a proper sense of fear of God meaning respect, awe and reverence. The word Paul uses here is not this type of fear. *Deilia* means cowardice and God is not responsible for a person’s weak or cowardly faith. God gives believers everything they need to establish a strong faith; the Word of God, the Bible, the Holy Spirit to dwell within their souls and His Church to give protection and encouragement through community. God gives us these resources so that we can possess “[power and love and self-control.](#)” These are His gifts to His children. The Greek word translated, as “[power](#)” is the same word we get our English words: dynamic and dynamite. This is power that is dynamic and even explosive. It is through God that we can possess great power, dynamic power. He has all power and all strength, while we are weak and fearful people.

When Paul was praying for the saints in Ephesus, he did not pray that they would be given divine power but they would become aware of the divine power that God had already given them through Christ and the Holy Spirit. Let me read to you out of Ephesians chapter 1, beginning in verse 17, “[that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,](#) ¹⁸[having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,](#) ¹⁹[and what is the immeasurable greatness of his](#)

power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:17–23) Through Christ we possess the resource of God’s power. His supernatural power He used to raise Christ from the dead. We have access to this power through Christ our Lord.

Even though the Old Testament saints did not have God’s Holy Spirit indwelling them in the same way New Testament saints do, as you and I do, He used His supernatural power for their benefit. God sent His angel to Zechariah to help him understand God’s purpose for Zerubbabel and that what Zerubbabel was going to accomplish was not through human power but the divine power of God.

Zerubbabel was the descendant of King David who led the first return of the Jewish exiles back to Judah and oversaw the rebuilding the Jerusalem Temple. The angel said to God’s prophet Zechariah, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷ Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’ ” (Zechariah 4:6–7) God gives His power and takes away His power. He does not give His power for us to inappropriately use for our own interests and gain. King David, Zerubbabel, Paul, Timothy and the many saints throughout history that have accomplished great things for the kingdom of God did not do these things by their power but by God’s supernatural power. With the coming of Christ and His conquering of death, all believers have God’s supernatural power to faithfully live for His glory, to accomplish His calling in our lives and to stand up to persecution and evil.

It is through God's supernatural power that we can love those who hate us. Jesus calls us to a life style that makes no sense to the world, but makes perfect sense for those who believe. Jesus taught, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! ²³ Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven ... But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either." (Luke 6:22–23 and 27-29) God's love is unconditional, it is agape love. God's love is not affected by the events of the world or by our sin. John said it this way, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:18–19) This is why believers throughout history have been able to go to their deaths singing hymns and reciting scripture – they have the power of God and His love and His love casts out all fear. Paul wrote to the believers in Rome who were being persecuted; arrested, covered with pitch and made into torches, and killed in the arena. Paul wrote to them, "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." (Romans 14:8–9) Paul believed in every word He wrote for they were words inspired by God. According to tradition and the writings of the early church fathers, Paul went to his death in July of 64 AD by order of Nero by decapitation and he went without fear and with love for Christ and prayers on his lips for both his fellow believers and his enemies.

Those we have read about and heard about this morning lived unashamedly the gospel of Jesus Christ. While they lived they were deeply concerned that the gospel

of Christ go out to the nations and the lost hear the gospel. Many died for the gospel of Christ. At the beginning I asked what the scriptures and the testimonies of these believers means for us. What is God's calling for your life? Are you living without fear and by the "power and love and self-control" of Christ? I cannot answer these questions – only you can. But, I can tell you that if you are not living as Paul wrote, "For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8) If this does not describe you, then you are living in fear and missing out of the greatest blessing one can receive in this mortal life and the life to come.

Lets gather in small groups and pray for our faithfulness, pray for those being persecuted throughout the world, pray for the political leaders who can stop this persecution. Pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ and pray for our enemies that they might come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Pull your chairs around and lets pray.