

## 20250309 “NOT ASHAMED” – PS PETER ANDERSON

2 Timothy 1:6-12

It is a great joy and privilege to be back at MBCC today. As some of you know, I was privileged to serve in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China from 1976 up until 2005. It was after that, from 2006 through to 2016 that Elizabeth and I had 10 wonderful years serving here at MBCC.

Our work in China working with NGO Jian Hua Foundation involved recruiting foreign Christian professionals (like teachers & medical personnel) for positions in China and engaging in relief and development projects in various parts of the country. On one occasion, back in 1996, the head of Nankai District in the city of Tianjin invited my late wife and I for a feast to thank us and the Jian Hua Foundation for the help we were giving to various projects in the city. The district chief (with the ranking of a deputy mayor) also asked me about what JHF was doing in other parts of China. He was clearly impressed and this communist official then turned to me and asked, *“Mr Anderson, how is it that having grown up in Africa you like the Chinese people so much?”* How was I going to answer? Foreigners are not supposed to “spread religion” in China. If I mentioned my Christian faith, might it adversely affect JHF’s projects in Tianjin and elsewhere? I will tell you later what happened next.

A moment ago, we had the Scripture reading, 2 Timothy 1:6-12. The letter of 2 Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy. Timothy was serving as pastor in Ephesus. Paul says in v.3 that night and day he constantly remembered Timothy in his prayers. That is amazing, don’t you think! In v.6, Paul encourages Timothy to fan into flame the gift of God he had been given. I guess, being young there must have been times Timothy felt overwhelmed. Paul wanted to encourage him not to give up. What Paul writes is not only helpful for pastors and Christian workers—it is applicable to all Christians. So today our first heading is:

### 1. Serving Effectively (v.7)

In the church in Ephesus, Timothy had to relate to all kinds of people. Obviously, as in any church today, there were many wonderful people who loved the Lord and were a joy to have around. However, sadly, there were also some who were more of a problem than a blessing. Paul mentions two church members in chapter 2:18, Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had **“...wandered away from the truth.”** These two brothers were denying certain basic Gospel truths and Paul says of them **“...they destroy the faith of some.”** How sad when believers, even some who have been leaders, wander away from the truth! Notice, Paul uses the word “wander”. It was a gradual drifting, bit by bit going their own way. Rather than pressing in to know and love the truth more and more, Hymenaeus and Philetus wandered away. They compromised with the world. Tragically, it not only affected their own witness and their own walk with God, but it also destroyed the faith of some. No wonder Timothy felt overwhelmed and discouraged.

Maybe you are dealing with discouragement, with difficult people or tough situations. Maybe someone at school or at work, or even at church, is giving you a hard time. Well then, listen to what Paul says to Timothy

in v.7. He says, **“God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”** Notice what Paul says God did NOT give us and what he says God DID GIVE us.

God did not give us was a spirit of timidity. Paul tells Timothy that he must not be timid. He need not be afraid. Having to deal with difficult people or situations, naturally speaking, Timothy might have been hesitant or even afraid to say or do anything.

Most of us would feel the same, don't you think! We don't enjoy arguments or being criticised or laughed at. Paul's advice to Timothy applies to us today. We too need not be afraid when witnessing for Jesus, or when standing up for what is right. We need not be timid or afraid—why? Because the Lord is with us. If our conscience is clear, then we can rely on the Holy Spirit to give us the courage that we need *when* we need it. Yes, **“God did not give us a spirit of timidity.”**

Now notice what God does give us. Number One---He gives us **“power”**. The word Paul uses is *‘dunamis’*, from which we get the English word dynamite. The Holy Spirit gives us power, dynamite. This is what Jesus Himself told His disciples in Acts 1:8, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”** You and I cannot effectively serve or witness in our own strength. We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength. To live for Jesus and witness for Him we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is the One who gives us the power we need.

Secondly, Paul says the Holy Spirit gives us **“love”**. There must have been times when Timothy wondered how he could love some people. Maybe you too find some people difficult to love. Well, the Greek word used here for love is *agape*. It is the love Jesus has for us. It is sacrificial love, it is supernatural love, and the Holy Spirit will pour this love into our hearts as we allow Him to do so.

Love is the great motive of mission. It is also the quality that most characterises God Himself, for God is love—and love is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Ask God to give you His love for that difficult person. Ask Him to help you forgive those who have hurt or sinned against you. And remember we must forgive others as God has forgiven us. And remember too that all of us need to examine our own hearts. Do we come across to others as proud or insensitive or self-focussed? Are we difficult to get along with? If so, we need to repent. We may need to say sorry to those we may have hurt or sinned against.

Thirdly, says Paul, the Holy Spirit gives us a spirit of **“self-discipline”** or as an older English version translates it, **“a sound mind”**. This means being sensible, realistic and reasonable. It is having self-control, being discerning and wise, being focussed. It is like tuning our radio to the correct wavelength so that we hear clearly, without distortion or interference. The Holy Spirit helps us to tune our lives to the right wavelength, the wavelength of God's Word. In a world full of confusing and conflicting voices, we can know for sure what to believe. In a world that has lost its way, we have the moral compass of truth, given to us in the Bible. The

Holy Spirit gives us a sound mind. He enables us to stay focussed and to exercise self-discipline. Self-discipline is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

And as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:16, quoting Isaiah 40:13, **“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”** As Christians, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us focus on what pleases our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We can view the world through a Christ-centred lens, taking our thoughts captive—reading and meditating on God’s Word, asking the Lord for His wisdom, His insight, and His strength.

Not being timid but having power, love and self-discipline in our lives we can begin to **serve effectively**. Now secondly:

## **2. Standing Bravely (v.8)**

Thinking about all that the Holy Spirit has given him, Paul tells Timothy in v.8, **“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me His prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.”**

**“Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord”**—may these words of the Apostle Paul be a challenge to us today. Let us not miss opportunities to witness for Jesus through fear of what others might think or say. Don’t feel embarrassed inviting that friend or neighbour to church or to Alpha. Share your testimony with them, if the opportunity allows. Don’t be over-zealous or insensitive but certainly do not be afraid or ashamed. Offer to pray for others—as Elizabeth did recently with a young lady who had become a friend through doing a job for us. As she was about to leave after checking on her job, Elizabeth asked if she could pray for her. The new friend said no one had ever prayed for her before. The next day she texted Elizabeth to say something amazing had happened. Indeed, the Lord did truly touch her.

Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed to testify about the Lord even if this gets him into trouble. Paul also urged T not to be ashamed of him [i.e. Paul], but to join him in suffering. Both Paul & Timothy were keenly aware of the danger they and all Christians faced in a growingly hostile world. We know from Church history that Paul was executed under the Emperor Nero in about AD67, not long after he wrote this letter to Timothy. And like his spiritual father and mentor Paul, Timothy was able to endure and even rejoice in his sufferings because he did so **“...by the power of God.”**

Today, in the Twenty First Century, followers of Jesus face discrimination and even persecution in many nations. Recently in NE Congo ISIS or Islamic State-related rebels rounded up seventy Christians and took them to a church in a neighbouring village where they beheaded them, leaving their bodies piled up in a church. Of course, what Christians living in secular western nations suffer cannot be compared with what those believers suffered in NE Congo, or in nations like North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. These were the top ten worst nations in terms of persecution on the 2025 World Watch List of Open Doors.

However, even here in NZ Christians are under pressure. Our nation was founded on Christian beliefs and values—as is reflected clearly in our national anthem. However, society has become increasingly secular with a turning away from Christian morality and the breakdown of the traditional family. There are powerful forces in society trying to silence the Church and exclude Christians from the public square.

If you suffer criticism or misunderstanding because of your faith, do not lose heart. You are in good company. Some of the greatest saints through church history, including Paul & Timothy, have suffered far worse. And as Paul says a little later in 3:12, **“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”**

Sadly, however, not all who claim to be Christians suffer because they have been living godly, Christ-like lives. Some who claim to be Christians suffer because of their own foolishness, hypocrisy, insensitivity, dishonestly, or lack of integrity. If this is why we suffer—who is to blame? Of course, we alone are to blame, and we bring shame to the name of our Lord. However, if we are living a godly life, we must not be surprised if the world hates us. Just as the darkness hates the light, the world will hate us.

As we mentioned earlier, Paul told Timothy, **“...do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me His prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.”** As we think about the situation in our world today, what Paul says to Timothy still speaks with powerful relevance. We must then **stand bravely** for our faith. Finally:

### **3. Sharing Confidently (vrs 9-12)**

Paul goes on to describe the gospel, the Good News, which is the focus of our witness as Christians. The gospel is so wonderful it is certainly worth suffering for and worth sharing confidently.

Paul writes in v.9, **“He has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.”** The gospel is all about being saved, about being rescued, about being delivered from sin, being liberated from both the penalty and the power of sin. There is power in the gospel to break every chain and set us free. The gospel makes people new. No wonder Paul writes in Romans 1:16, **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”**

Not only is the gospel about being saved from sin, but it is also about being made holy. As Paul writes to Timothy, **“He has saved us and called us to a holy life.”** The gospel not only proclaims forgiveness for those who repent and believe, it also calls us to a life of holiness.

Last year I watched the online memorial service of Karel Jasper, a friend in South Africa who with his wife had prayed for me for 40 years. Karel was a senior partner and later, after ‘retiring’, a consultant in a well-known commercial law firm in Johannesburg. It was moving to hear the tributes of some of his work associates. One said, “He was a very supportive colleague, mentor, friend—fair but firm, and a man of faith who loved his wife and family so dearly.” Another said, “He was a man of exceptional integrity, purpose and dignity, a man who led by example, a man of impeccable morals and character.” A receptionist/support staff

member said, “He was the sweetest person I ever met. He greeted everyone in the morning when he walked in the office and always asked after you and your family.” And another lady staff member said, “Karel always acted with self-restraint and humility. He was always sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others and above all, he was a man who drew his strength and inspiration from God.”

Isn't this wonderful! It is a perfect example of what it means, in practical terms, of living a holy life and being an example and a witness to others, not least to those with whom we work each day.

Yes, God has **“called us to a holy life”**. I am sure many of you can testify that the Lord has saved you and begun to change you. One sign of the genuineness of our faith is a desire to grow in holiness. If there is no change, not even gradual change, and if there is no desire to grow in holiness, then something is clearly wrong. Being saved and growing in holiness go together.

The second half of this verse, **“...not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace”** emphasizes the fact our salvation is not the result of our self-effort. It is not something we work for or earn or deserve. It is the result of God's purpose, His plan, and His grace.

Paul now brings out something remarkable, something awesome about the grace of God. He writes, **“This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”** (v.9b) Can you get your mind around that? God planned our salvation ages before we were even born. In fact, He planned it before He created time and space, before the universe came into existence. And notice God's grace is **“given us in Christ Jesus.”** Jesus is the only way. Salvation is found in Him alone. It is only in Him that we find and receive God's grace.

The plan of salvation was already in the mind of God before He created the world. It was not an after-thought, a last-minute rescue plan when things went wrong because of Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. No, God knows everything. He is outside of time. And He planned our salvation in eternity.

But time and history are also important in God's plan. Paul goes on in v.10, **“...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus.”** Jesus Christ, the Saviour, entered history. He entered time & space. God's plan has been revealed, made known. God our Saviour has appeared in human form. This is where Christianity is totally different to other religions. It is not a man-made philosophy based on myths and legends. It is grounded in history. The appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus happened in time & space. He was born in Bethlehem & His birth divides time into BC (Before Christ) & AD (Anno Domini, Latin for *'In the year of our Lord'*). There is solid, reliable historical evidence for the life, death & resurrection of Jesus.

Paul goes on to say that Jesus **“...has destroyed death & has brought life & immortality to light through the gospel.”** (v.10b) Death is very real. When we are young, the fact we will one day die seldom crosses our minds. But the older we get that fact becomes more and more real. I mentioned our friend Karel earlier. Well, just a month and a half ago another dear friend, a former university classmate of mine, Professor Eric Bateman unexpectedly died after undergoing routine surgery. Eric was my age (just 77). He was a great long-

distance runner and a world-renowned medical specialist. Eric was a fine Christian whose godly life and witness impacted countless numbers of people. You can find lengthy tributes to Professor Bateman on the Internet but the two brief quotes I have included on the ppt, I feel, point to the fact that through his medical work, his sport, his church and family life, Eric was an unashamed and highly effective witness for Jesus Christ. Eric's wife Mary, who is also a medical doctor, wrote to tell us about his sad passing. She said, *"Words cannot express our devastation, but we are comforted by God's promises as we mourn."*

Yes, dear friends, Jesus has **"destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."** This wonderful news is desperately needed by our lost and dying world. While we mourn the passing of loved ones, we do not grieve as those without hope for we know that through Jesus we have eternal life and *"the best is yet to be"!*

Paul rejoices in being able to share this good news. He tells Timothy, **"And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher."** (v.11)

He had no regrets and so could write in v.12, **"I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him for that day."** Paul's faith was focussed upon Jesus. No matter what happened, his trust was in Jesus, the One who never fails, the One who is in control. Paul was convinced that all he had entrusted to the Lord would be kept safe till the day of Christ's return. He may have been thinking of those individuals and churches to whom he had ministered, or he may have been thinking of his own life, or he might have been thinking of others like Timothy and others to whom he had passed the baton. Maybe he was thinking of all these things. As he faced martyrdom, Paul knew his life had been lived to the full. He had not wasted any opportunity given to him. He could safely leave everything in God's hands.

I have not yet told you what happened at the feast when the Deputy Mayor in Tianjin asked me why I liked the Chinese people so much.

*"Well, Mr. Mayor," I said, pointing to the food on the big round table, "we love Chinese food, and we know China has a rich culture and long history, but the reason we love the Chinese people is simply that we are Christians, and as Christians we are called to 'serve the people'."*

The mayor exclaimed in surprise, *"Oh, you can quote Chairman Mao!"*

'Serve the people' had long been a political slogan used by Mao and the Communist Party. ... What followed was remarkable. The mayor asked if I could explain the basics of Christianity. When I said I did not want to be accused of 'spreading religion', the mayor assured me it would be perfectly fine—after all, he was the one asking.

Our theme for today has been "Not Ashamed" and we have thought about **serving effectively, standing bravely & sharing confidently**. Like Paul and like young Timothy, let us not be ashamed of confessing our faith and let us commit our lives and our futures into the hands of our Lord and Master.