

7/14/24 - 2 Timothy 1:8-11 - "Sovereign Suffering"

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to 2 Timothy 1, verses 8 through part of 12. 2 Timothy 1, verses 8 through part of 12.

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, an apostle, and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Amen.

Amen. It's great to be gathered to open up his word and to glean from it and to feast on it, just as the nation of Israel was brought through the wilderness and feasted on the manna.

[1 : 31] And we turn to his word now to feast and hear from him and to expose what he has for us today. And the text today presents a challenge that faces the Christian life.

A challenge that faces the Christian life. And that's known as suffering. The challenge is laid out very quickly in verse 8 for us.

He says, Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.

He says, But share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. With this single verse, Paul extends to Timothy a holy and divine invitation to suffer.

How about that? The therefore here connects the invitation to his calling, which we established last week in the last set of verses, all of which reinforced his calling in ministry.

[2 : 51] And remember, Oswald Chambers, as we quoted last week when we are in the passage, he wrote on this passage, And in the passage, all through history, God has chosen and used nobodies.

Because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. Now, he chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources.

Remember last week, if this is true, Timothy was the right man for the job. He wouldn't have been the first round draft pick for the NFL.

He wouldn't have been the first guy chosen on the backyard matball league. He would have been last. He wouldn't have been the first human pick to fill the pulpit even in the church in Ephesus.

And this frail leader is essentially invited to suffer well. And this suffering is directly related to standing firm in the gospel message in life.

[4 : 05] As it says, Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. Now, speaking culturally within Timothy's day, to think of the message of the gospel, that's centering upon the crucifixion.

What happened leading up to the cross and what followed the cross. And that was supremely scandalous. For that to be something to even boast about.

The cross was meant for criminals. And to say that this Jewish man, this nobody on this cross, was the propitiation, as we just read in 1 John, of the world and of sin.

To say that he's the substitutionary atonement and satisfaction for sin and the wrath of God. That would be a humorous thought from a Jewish audience.

And to think from the Greek audience as well in this time period, they were probably laughing at this whole thing because they're like, Well, you know, we got Zeus. We got Poseidon.

[5 : 19] If you guys ever want to come over on our side, we got some strong guys. Not these nobodies who hang on a cross. And so you kind of look into the Ephesian church then.

The appointment, the calling of Timothy. And Timothy had opponents that were coming against his calling. And one of them being Hymenaeus. We'll learn about some other ones next week and the weeks to follow.

And they saw Paul's suffering, Paul's imprisonment, as confirmation that God has rejected Paul and his message and, for that matter, all of his followers.

He's rejected. And in fact, we can even observe in our Christian culture today, our cultural ideologies today, and see the same concepts that went on in that culture being repackaged in this health and wealth gospel that people adhere to in our day.

As if suffering is somewhat connected to God's disapproval of people's way of life. That if you're going through suffering, there's obviously something wrong with you.

[6 : 34] Which is why they throw out the Apostle Paul with it. And throwing away the, undermining the authority of Scripture as well. Now, sometimes we tend to think of suffering in extremes, I think.

When we think of suffering, we think of like Christians being beheaded, lined up with a shooting range and things like that. We may think of Polycarp even, who refused to renounce Christ in the face of impending martyrdom.

He said to his opponents, he said, 86 years, meaning 86 years. I love how old guys talk.

Eighty and six years have I served him and he never did me any injury. How then can I blaspheme my king and my savior?

Now, that's an extreme. That's like this major swing, you know, beheading and everything like that. But also, we kind of like, in our comfy American culture, we think of suffering being weather-related.

[7 : 37] Like this God-awful heat. Why are you making me suffer, Lord? Right? Or we might think of the God-awful traffic construction or the God-awful drivers that are in front of us making us late.

And we attribute that to suffering. You see the, we kind of swing from these major, like persecution to bad drivers. And so, we find Paul having in mind a specific type of suffering within the context.

We see that it's not necessarily martyrdom for Timothy. Though martyrdom still applies regarding suffering. But Paul is reinforcing Timothy to stand firm in his calling.

That's what the therefore is there for. Which marries his calling with suffering within the church of Ephesus.

And so, we may inquire of a question upon this invitation, quite an invitation. We might think, what reason do we have to stand firm in our suffering?

[8 : 49] Whatever that might look like. Or, how can we have hope or find hope and resilience in the face of life's pain? And so, Paul's invitation, while it reaches Timothy, I believe it reaches us today as well.

To stand firm in the gospel and persevere. Whether we are bound to a hospital bed or we receive the worst news that we could have ever imagined in our life.

Or whatever circumstances play out within our Christian life as God allows them to. Paul will answer Timothy and us today.

You want to know how you have hope? You want to know how to find hope and resilience in the face of pain? The main point of the text is that suffering, rather than being remedied by the gospel, is a blessing of the gospel.

Take that for a counter-cultural message. So, the sermon title is Sovereign Suffering. And I want us to examine two premises that are sandwiched between verse 8 and verse 11.

[10 : 11] And we're going to unpack these two premises of such a scandalous claim of where we can stand firm in the message of the gospel and share in the suffering of the gospel.

Standing tall and firm in our calling and our appointment to suffer well in this life. So, as we unpack this, I pray that we can come to the Lord's word and just rest in it, be humbled by it, and be challenged by it, especially in our theology of what suffering looks like in our lives.

So, let's pray as we unpack these two premises of what he's getting at. Let's pray. Father, thank you for just this time to be gathered around your word.

And it wasn't my first choice to come and talk on the 14th of July about suffering, but you ordained this to be happening for us as your church body.

Help us to grow today through our theology of suffering and what that means and how that transpires and give us this robust, profound faith in the midst of life's hardships.

[11 : 23] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. And so, the first premise is what I'm calling him today is we're going to be looking at suffering as it's related to the reality of salvation.

Okay? Suffering and how it's related to salvation. And we're going to see this from verse 8 all the way to verse 9. And I invite you to turn to your Bibles.

We have them available all in the little racks on the chairs where you have cool little apps you can access. And have this open and travel with me through the passage.

Because as we ponder the questions that this invitation raises, how can we have hope? How can we, how can this pain be brought with purpose in our life? we find very quickly that God's divine and His eternal plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, that plan that has been ongoing for all eternity brings reassurance in His divine plan of suffering in our lives.

this is what verse 8 through 9 brings us. Look at the language He uses here. He says, Share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God who saved us the power of God who called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of His own purpose which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

[13 : 04] God who saved us, who called us, who gave us. Here we realize that if Timothy is to suffer in a godly way by the power of God in verse 8 it is only rooted by understanding God's sovereign grace in His life.

this means that according to His own purpose in verse 8 or verse 9 sorry this Greek word means God's decision to save and to call and this was His plan all along all along and Jesus Christ was the means of salvation before even the foundation of this world as 1 Peter 1 verse 20 states.

But what does this mean for Timothy? Well to this weak last choice last round pick in the NFL draft this means that God saved him God called him God gave him grace through Jesus Christ Christ and before the foundation of the world God saw Timothy and God adopted Timothy man this runs against the grain of our society today many pulpits today that preach more moralistic therapeutic deism deism which it's called the belief that if you do good or feel good or believe in some higher power that everything's going to pan out for you well in the end that sounds like many sermons around this country however the Bible tells us that this way of thinking this belief is tragic it's ignorance and it's foolish why?

well because the God of the Bible doesn't just exist the God of the Bible reveals himself to us because God defines morality and immorality will be judged by God because the central goal in life is not good vibes to feel good it is to glorify God it's because no one is good enough to get to heaven we need Jesus you see God saved us God called us and God gave us and the only works our salvation is based upon friends is the works of Jesus Christ alone who died in our place on the cross and so this is where suffering meets the reality of salvation because not only that but what this means for

Timothy is that if God saw him if God still sees him he is not alone in his suffering as a Christian if God saw him God still sees him while suffering God remembers Timothy in suffering just as he knew him at the foundation before the foundation of the world in other words just as our very own salvation is not based upon anything that we have done so too is this facet theologically informing the reason for suffering at times and not being ashamed of suffering now sometimes we're our worst own enemy right did I say that right you know what I'm saying and we cause a lot of our own suffering we make decisions that are terrible decisions but even in discipline as God is allowing this self inflicted suffering to enter our lives still resounds his great love for us and that he still will not leave us and forsake us you see if by

[17 : 38] God's sovereign grace we are saved it is also by God's sovereign grace that we suffer as well it is a gift church suffering it is a gift it's never intended to push us away though suffering does that in many people's lives but God intends suffering as a gift to draw us close maybe you're not in Christ today and you're like man I got stuff going on and I'm sure that many of us do but what a miracle that you find yourself here today an unbeliever finding yourself here why is it a miracle because God brought you here God is revealing himself to you today why to save you to hear the gospel to find reason and purpose of all that life has been unfolding for you to find that purpose and he calls you if he's revealing himself to you today he calls you to respond by repenting and believing in the gospel and now we never know the precise mind of God if you do that's a red flag he's an infinite

God his ways are not our ways so you're fooling yourself if you know intricately the mind of God so rebuke for for you we don't know it precisely we don't know precisely how our response fits precisely in with God's sovereign plan that he's had before the foundation of the world we don't know the precise inner workings of the mind of God but what we do know is that our response from

hearing the gospel and if you're not a Christian today your response of hearing the gospel is evidence through our repenting and our belief as being fruit of God's sovereign choice if you're wondering about the intricacies of salvation and how it all fits together we are assured that if you are repenting and you are believing you are brought into the fold of God before the foundation of the world and you have been led here today to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ to believe to repent and believe this is certain church

J.I. Packer says it wonderfully in his book he says Spurgeon was once asked if he could reconcile these two truths to each other of God's sovereignty and human responsibility and Spurgeon replied I wouldn't try he said I never reconcile friends and this is the point that we have to grasp he says in the bible divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies they are not enemies they are not uneasy neighbors they are not at endless cold war with each other they are friends and they work together and friends if you are here today hearing the gospel for the first time this invitation to suffer is extended not just to non Christians but to all Christians to Timothy but also to us today it is an invitation extended to unbelievers believers who repent and believe and find true purpose in life of which especially includes inevitable suffering and see this is the plan of God in salvation being linked to the plan of God's use of suffering in the

Christian life but we see something additional unfold here we see the second premise of suffering being related to the revelation of Jesus Christ and we see this continue to unfold in verse 10 so not only is God's grace sovereign not only is God's grace pre-existent in Jesus Christ but it became visible in verse 10 and Paul also goes another mile and says that it's not only visible it's effective God's grace he says in verse 10 of which has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus the appearance of our Savior Jesus

Christ is the central conviction of the gospel God God became flesh in Jesus who in his flesh lived a sinless life he who knew no sin became sin for us and died the death that we deserve and was resurrected in victory over death the glory that we are assured of according to the gospel is that this whole plan is God's plan all along for this entire universe it's a big plan it is sovereign it is preexistent it is visible and it all begins by his power alone just as he tells Timothy to share in suffering for the gospel by the power of

[23 : 36] God in verse 8 not only was it visible made visible in Jesus Christ it was also made effective in Jesus Christ he says he continues this is a huge run on sentence English teachers are probably scratching their heads he says who abolished death and brought life and immortality to life through the gospel this is good news for those who believe in the gospel for those whose faith becomes a fruit of God's sovereign election to salvation your sin has been defeated in Jesus Christ and you are brought to life not only today but it will continue through all eternity what a powerful foundation for suffering saints saints like

Paul saints like Timothy saints like Polycarp and even saints like us waving our fists at those drivers that are testing our sanctification if God's grace is sovereign preexistent visible and effective how quick how can we so quickly suffer and forget that God sees you that God is with you and that God is bringing you along in this life how do we forget that so quickly you might be in a season of darkness right now I know a lot of you are or uncertainty which I know a lot of you are but what a blessing that

God is speaking to you today that he has called you to this season not only has he called you to this season he is promising to sustain you through this season in other words he knows what he's doing and we have to trust him all of this is to finally have these two premises sort of resolve back to the original basis of Paul's calling to Timothy which he invites Timothy to embrace he ends with his own calling cash money oh boy that's bad for ADHD I'll tell you verse 11 he resolves on the very basis of which he began in verse 8 he says for his own calling for which

I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher which is why I suffer as I do Paul is embracing Timothy's calling in verse 1 to 7 last week he's reinforcing that his calling is going to equal suffering and he ends it saying I'm an apostle preacher teacher I'm called to this and this is why I suffer and so if we're asking what is the reason that we have to stand firm in suffering the answer is simply this according not to my opinion but God's word we are appointed to the suffering just as we're appointed to salvation maybe after all in our propensity to to find shame in our suffering we kind of hide those aren't the

Facebook and Instagram posts that people want to see agony those aren't the highlights of life and so our propensity to find shame in our suffering God is calling us to be content exactly where he is

meaning for us to be he's saying to stay there be confident content where where does suffering lead us leads us intimately dependent upon God alone to give us strength to help us to keep carrying on in this life love and now I can't undermine the difficulty that suffering has I can't just stay up here and say come on guys you know suffering is not that bad I'm not saying that the least bit I cannot undermine the difficulty that suffering has as I have to look someone in the face be put together enough to pray with them who they just lost a loved one especially when they're young and to say that

[28 : 58] God has a plan that's hard to look at mothers who have miscarried a child and to say that this is part of God's plan or to stillborns or to maybe even those who are struggling with infertility issues like I'm not trying to undermine or minimize the difficulty of suffering but what I can do is stand alongside of you as a pastor stand firm not in everything that we're trying to make sense in this life but to stand firm in God's sovereign plan of suffering that he's with us in that he's guiding us through we're not going to make sense of it all but we know his promise is true how because he made it visible and that which he made visible is effective to forgive us how could he neglect us in our deepest darkest seasons of suffering in this it doesn't matter the various particulars of your calling you could be called to various profession you could be called to being a parent that's some suffering sometimes you could be called to be a student at

YSU even worse or simply just a Christian sometimes being a Christian is enough to suffer and deal with difficulty and what we can understand that if suffering is part of the gospel then suffering will inevitably be part of your calling in this life there's no way around it friends you endure because God is keeping you and your pain is never wasted how can I have the audacity to say something like that well because God's word is true Matthew 28 20 Jesus said I'll be with you to the end Hebrews 13 5 I'll never leave you I'll never forsake you Romans 8 28 I will work everything together for your good Isaiah 41 10 I will strengthen you I will help you I will uphold you in 1 Corinthians 15 58 in the Lord none of your work is in vain suffering is not intended to push us away suffering is meant to draw us close I don't have the luxury of minimizing your suffering but I am called to be a pastor and to bring biblical perspective to it and be with you through it and every pastor of this church is called to that calling and for that we have hope in suffering because we have hope in our salvation a plan of long ago that God has been writing you see suffering rather than being remedied by the gospel is a blessing of the gospel amen let's pray