

An Unashamed Guardian

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Our Father, as we come together now to get ready to hear your word,! I pray that indeed you would strengthen us by your grace!

and you would also strengthen us to have a renewed resolve You wanted to be a doctor because, hey, doctors save lives, right?

Or maybe a lawyer standing up for justice Or perhaps you were the creative type You didn't want to be put in the usual Asian box So you aspired to be a painter, a dancer, maybe even an artisan baker Something that lets you bring a little more beauty and joy into this world Whatever it was, deep down you probably wanted to make a difference To grow up and make your life count And that longing for your life to count isn't a childish impulse at all It's deeply human I dare say it's even what every parent wants for their child And Paul wanted that for his child too Because that's who Timothy is Not his biological son, but his spiritual son Have a look at verse 2 To Timothy, my dear son

Or again in 2 verse 1 You then, my son For Paul, Timothy isn't just some colleague from the office He's family Maybe not by blood, but by faith By shared history By years of serving Christ side by side In fact, if you flip to the start of Paul's other letters Like Philippians or Colossians, for example You'll see that familiar opening line Paul and Timothy They've been partners in the gospel for years and years A father and son team in all but name But now They're separated Paul is being held in chains in Rome While Timothy is pastoring in Ephesus And Paul realizes And Paul realizes time is short Death is fast approaching for him

And so he wants to make sure he gets his last words down He writes this final letter to Timothy from prison And as he does so He's saying to him This is what I want you to grow up to be And what does Paul want Timothy to grow up to be?

[3 : 0 0] Well, if you listen carefully through this letter You will hear it again and again Join with me in suffering for the gospel 1 verse 8 What you heard from me Keep as the pattern of sound Teaching 1 verse 13 You, however, have followed my teaching My conduct My purpose 3 verse 10 You hear it?

Paul is saying Timothy, I want you to be like me I want you to carry on the same mission The same faith The same gospel Paul wants Timothy to grow up to be an unashamed guardian of the gospel Just like him But hold on a second If you were Timothy's actual biological father Is this what you really want for your child?

To be like Paul? This Paul? Because let's think about it Who is Paul? Well, in the Bible there are two Pauls really There is the pre-conversion Paul And there is the post-conversion Paul And that first Paul The pre-conversion one Is a pretty impressive guy Paul himself knows it Listen to how he describes his credentials in Acts 22 verse 3 Speaking before a crowd in Jerusalem I am a Jew Born in Tarsus of Cilicia But brought up in this city I studied under Gamaliel And was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today In other words Look at my education I might have been born in Tarsus But I got my schooling here in Jerusalem That's like saying I may have been born in Kuching But I went to Oxford or Cambridge And not only that I studied under Gamaliel himself One of the most respected rabbis of the day I was on the fast track I was the rising star within Judaism And he goes on to say My ambition kneel no bounds Galatians 1 verse 14 I was advancing in Judaism Beyond many of my own age Among my people And was extremely zealous For the traditions of my fathers So Paul says Want to know how well I was doing?

I was advancing Literally cutting ahead Like a pioneer clearing a path Or an overachiever outpacing his peers I was going places I was making waves within the religious establishment I was such a zealous guardian of the law I was probably destined To be a member of the prestigious ruling

Jewish council The Sanhedrin So This Paul That's the kind of person You might want to be Or your kid to be A moral Disciplined Zealous young man With a bright future And influence within the wider community Who wouldn't want that?

[6 : 46] But then That's the other Paul The post-conversion Paul And well This Paul He cuts a sorry figure Doesn't he?

I mean look at the end of verse 8 This guy is a prisoner He's a guy wearing an orange jumpsuit In a Roman cell And if you're in prison Well You've got no future Do you?

Especially if Like Paul You're actually on death Row And verse 15 This is a guy who's been abandoned by Everyone Even those who have known him And worked with him for a long time Like these guys Phygelus And Hermogenous They haven't hung around And why would they?

To be associated with such a prisoner Would have been shameful Just like No one wants to be associated With Jeffrey Epstein today So no one wants to be seen As close To Paul For this Paul Isn't someone who is on the way up But on the way Down This Paul Isn't someone who prospers But someone Who suffers Because this Paul Has chosen No longer to be a guardian of the Torah Of the law But a guardian Of the gospel And the gospel Appears to be the primary reason His fortunes Have changed So dramatically And now he says to Timothy Timothy I want you to be Like Me The post-conversion Paul

The guardian of the gospel Paul The suffering Paul Are you crazy? What father would wish that upon your child?

[9 : 00] And if you were Timothy Do you want to grow up To be That? Indeed Why would any one of us Want to grow up To be That?

But the big shock Of 2 Timothy Is that This is exactly What God Expects us To grow up To be If We call ourselves Christians To be a guardian Of the gospel More than that To be an Unashamed guardian Of the gospel In other words To be willing To safeguard What seems to bring about Shame And abandonment And even suffering Why?

Well it all Comes down In the end To what we think The gospel Is Doesn't it?

You see We will only Suffer And risk Rejection And humiliation For something That we believe Is true And precious And of Infinite value We won't do that For anything less So what is the gospel? Does it meet Such a criteria? Well if we think That the gospel Is primarily A message About following The rules Being a kind Person And living A decent life Then frankly I don't think I would be willing To guard this To the extent Pulled us Now of course Good moral values Matter We want our kids To grow up Decent And kind But what is so Unique About that Message?

[11 : 02] You can find The same kind Of advice In other religions And philosophies There is nothing There that changes The heart Nothing that Transforms If that is What the gospel Is It doesn't Stand Out At all If we lose That gospel We can still Find the same Message Elsewhere Or what if We think The gospel Is mainly About how Jesus came To make me Healthy Wealthy And successful Well I'm Certainly not Going to Suffer Or risk Rejection For that Kind of Message Am I?

Because That gospel Says The whole Point of Following Jesus Is to Avoid Suffering And rejection So if it Ever Caused me To suffer For it It betrays Itself The message Falls apart It can't even Live up to Its own Claims Or what If we think The gospel Is mainly About social Activism And political Transformation Again Jesus has Plenty to Say about Caring about Injustice Caring for The poor Caring for The weak And vulnerable Those things Matter deeply To him As it Should To us But if We make That The gospel Itself If we Think the Good news Is simply About fixing Society Or changing The structures Of power Then we've Missed Its essence Because in The end That kind Of gospel Can expose What is wrong Out there But it Cannot deal With what Is wrong In here In the Human heart It can Name the Problem But it Can't remove The guilt Or forgive Sin Or reconcile Us to God It can Call for Justice But it Can't Make Us just And so If that's All the Gospel is It might Stir our Activism But it Can't deal With our Pride It can't Renew Our souls And the Thing is In Timothy's Day As in Our day Plenty Of people Thought that The gospel Was one Of these Messages Because that's What many People Were teaching

I will Meet some Of them In a Couple Of weeks In chapters Two And three But Post gospel The real Gospel Is none Of those It's far Richer Far Deeper So what Is Paul's Gospel What is It Verse 11 That he Says he Was appointed A herald And an Apostle And a Teacher of Well look With me At verses Nine And ten He That is God 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 This grace Was given Us in Christ Jesus Before the Beginning of Time But it Has now Been revealed Through the Appearing of

Our saviour Christ Jesus Who has Destroyed Death And has Brought life And immortality To light Through the

Gospel Do you See it The real Gospel First of All Isn't What we Do For God It's What God Has Done For Us He's The one Who Saved Us Who Called Us Who Gave Us Grace And All Before The Beginning Of Time That Means Your Salvation Is a Pure Gift God Did not Look down The Corridors Of Time And decide To save You Because he Saw your Good deeds In advance No He chose You because He is Gracious And that Takes all The pressure Off The pressure To perform To achieve To prove That you are Somehow Good enough For God Or for Your family Or even

[15 : 46] Yourself Because the Gospel says You don't Have to Earn His Acceptance You simply Live out The calling He's already Given you A life Set apart For him Because he's Already said You Are Mine And you Can do All this Because the Real gospel Second of all Is rooted In the Person Of Christ Did you see That at the End of verse Nine This grace Is given In Christ Jesus He's the Reason we Are accepted By God His death And resurrection Is the reason We are accepted By God But he Accomplished More than That You see What are the Two biggest Failures Or fears Sorry That every Human being Carries Number one

The fear Of Failure That we Will never Measure up In this Life And number Two The fear Of Death That there Is nothing Beyond this Life And Paul Says When Christ Appeared He conquered Both He won Our acceptance By grace And he Abolished Death Don't let Those words Lose their Force Because it Means that On the day You are Staring Death In the Face You will Find Christ Has already Been there And he Has turned Death Into an Usher Who walks You home That's the Gospel you Trust If you Are a Christian Not Moral Advice Not a Prosperity Plan Not a Social Movement But a Cosmic Rescue From Sin From Shame From Death Itself All by Grace Through the Appearing Of our Saviour And that Is why Paul can Say I'm Not Ashamed Because this Gospel doesn't Just improve Lives It raises The dead It doesn't Just reform Society It recreates Humanity Now that Is a Gospel worth Suffering for That is a Gospel worth Gutting And in The end Get this The Gospel Paul Guards Is actually The very Gospel That guards Him Let me say That again The Gospel Paul Guards Is actually The very Gospel That guards

Him That's the Essential Meaning Of verse 12 He doesn't Fear Any Suffering Shame Or Abandonment That might Result from Being associated With the Gospel Because the Gospel Itself Has already Dealt With all Of that So Timothy!

Paul Says Verse 8 Join With me In Suffering For the Gospel By the Power Of God Guard The good Deposit Verse 14 That was Entrusted To you Guard it With the Help of The Holy Spirit Who Lives In Us Become Its Unashamed Guardian And that Is the Call to Us To Grow Up God Tells Us To be Unashamed Guardians Of the Gospel Because This Gospel Alone Speaks To the Two Deepest Fears Of Every Human Heart The Fear Of Failure And The Fear Of Death Now Before we Proceed There might Be one Little Question At The Back Of Your Mind And That Is If The Gospel Is Such Good News Then Why Does It Provoke Such A Hostile Reaction

[20 : 12] Why Does It Even Need Guarding Because Even Though It's Good News The Gospel Also Begins With Bad News It Tells Us We Can't Save Ourselves That All Our Goodness Our Success Our Best Efforts At Love Or Justice Still Fall Short That Kind Kind Of Message Offense It Humbles Our Pride And Confronts Our Idols It Says The Real Problem Isn't Just Out There In Other People But In Here In Our Own Hearts And It Says The Way To Glory Is Cross Shape We Have To Die To Our S And That's Why Some People Resist It So Fiercely They Hate Being Told That But That

Is Exactly Why We Must Guard It So The Question Now Is How How Do We Become Such Unashamed Guardians Today's Passage Gives Us Three Ways And Let's Work Our Way Through Each One Of Them Firstly Keep The Pattern Keep The Pattern That's Verse Thirteen What You Heard From Me Keep As The Pattern Of Sound Teaching With Faith And Love In Christ Jesus So What Is Paul Asking Us To Do He's Saying The Gospel Has A Particular Shape You Can't Just Make It Up As You Go Along!

No If You Want To Stay Faithful To Its Core You Need To Keep It As It Is Or To Put It Another Way The Gospel Is A bit Like Kue Lapis Now As Everyone Knows I Know Nothing About Baking And I Certainly Don't Know Anything About Making Kue Lapis But Recently I Read About Someone Who Went Into The Kue Lapis Making Business And Apparently You Everything Into The Pan And Hope For The Best No You Have To Get The Temperature And Timing Exactly Right Steaming Each Layer At A Time Waiting Patiently Before Adding The Next You Have To Follow The Pattern

Otherwise If You Over Steam It The Texture Changes Or If You Under Steam It Even By Just 30 Seconds The Layers Won't

Peel Cleanly In The Same Way Paul Is Saying To Timothy Don't Improvise The Gospel Don't Try to Over Steam Or Under Steam It Keep The Pattern The Beautiful Layered Truth About Christ Intact Pass It On With The Same Faith And Love In Which You Received It So That The Gospel's Beauty And Integrity Remain Clear For The Next Generation For If You Don't The Kue Lapis Will No Longer Be Kue Lapis The Gospel Will No Longer Be The Gospel So That Means We've Got To Be Absolutely Clear On What The Gospel Really Is It's All About Jesus It's All About Grace It's All About Good News Not Good Advice And

That's How We Got The Gospel For People Like Me Who Are In Pastoral Positions Like Timothy That Means This Has To Be The Message I Keep Preaching Week In And Week Out And For People Like You Who May Not Be In The Same Row It Means You Must Still Know The Gospel So Well That You Can Tell When Something Is Off So That When You Hear A Counterfeit An Understeam Gospel You Can Say With Confidence No That's Not The Gospel That's Not The Real Thing But I Suspect Paul Isn't Only Talking About Preserving The Teaching Pattern I Suspect He's Also Talking About The Living Pattern He's Saying Timothy It's Not Just Your Message But Your Life As Well That Has To

[25 : 00] Follow The Pattern Of What I Preach Because The Gospel Isn't Just Like Kue Lapis It's Like Kue Bahulu As Well Now You Know Which Kue I'm Talking About Right If You Don't Just This One On The Screen So Kue Bahulu It Half Unshaped Batter You Know It's Just Eggs Sugar Flour Baking Powder And Cooking Oil All Mixed Together But Then You Pour That Batter Into A Brass Or Aluminium Mold Usually Shaped Like Little Flowers Like Those And Here Is The Key That Mold Has To Be Heated Because It's The Heat That Gives The Kue Its Shape It's The Heat That Transforms That Sticky Formless Mixture Into Something Solid Beautiful And Sweet In The Same Way Paul Is Saying Our Lives

Are Like That Better And The Gospel Is The Mold And It Is Often Through Heat Through Hardships Pressure And Pain That God Shapes Us Into The Lightness Of Christ It's How God Patterns Our Lives After The Gospel And That's Why I Suspect Paul Says Join With Me In Suffering For The Gospel Let The Gospel's Grace Lead You Down The Path Of Inconvenience Of Sacrifice Of Other Centredness Because That Is The Path That Shapes Your Life After The Gospel And When You Do So You Are Actually Guarding The Gospel Because If Our Lives Don't Match The Gospel Why Would Anyone Believe It It Would Just Be Theory Just

Fantasy But If It Does Why Wouldn't They Believe It So Keep The Pattern God Then Secondly Fan Into Flame Fan Into Flame You See Paul Isn't Actually Telling Timothy Something That He Has Never Done Before Remember Paul Has Been Working With Timothy For Years And Years And At The End Of Verse 6 We Discover That Paul Has Even Laid His Hands On Timothy Now That Isn't Just A Pat On The Back Have A Look At 1 Timothy 4 Verse 14 Notice It Is What The Elders Did To Timothy When They Commissioned Him To Carry Out The Ministry Of The Lord And So When Paul And The Elders Laid Their Hands On Timothy They Are Releasing Him To Exercise His Ministerial Gifting And Calling In The Power Of The Holy Spirit That Seems Six So That Means Timothy Has Already Been Guarding The Gospel He's Been Keeping The Pattern As He Teaches And Lifts It Out But Paul Tells Him Keep Fanning Into Flame This Gift You've Been Given Keep Renewing Your Zeal For The Work You've Been Called To Do Keep Actively Exercising Your Gifts Instead Of Letting Fear Shame Or Fatigue Dampen It Now Why Does Paul Have To Remind Timothy Of All Of That A Common Answer Is Because Timothy Is Naturally Timid But If We Look At The Rest Of The New Testament We Know

That Can't Be Right Because It Seems! Like Every Time A New Testament Church Is Facing Problems And Conflict Who Does Paul Send Answer Timothy Let me Give You Just One Example 1 Corinthians 4 Verse 17 For This Reason I Have Sent To You Timothy My Son Whom I Love Who Is Faithful In The Lord He Will Remind You Of My Way Of Life In Christ Jesus Which Agrees With What I Teach Everywhere In Every Church Now If We Know The Church In Corinth We Know That This Is A Church Full Of Strong!

[29 : 39] Person And Big Problems! And Would Paul Send A Naturally Timid Guy To Deal With This I Don't Think So And It Is Not Just Corinth Whether It Is Thessalonica Or Philippi Paul Doesn't Hesitate To Send Timothy So It Can't Be Because Timothy Is Timid Rather It's Because There Is So Much Discouragement In The Air I Mean!

Timothy's Spiritual Father Is In Prison Right? And Many Of Paul's Ministry Partners Have Abandoned Him Right? And There Are So Many False Teachers About Who Seem To Have Become Popular No Wonder Timothy Is Tempted To Shrink Back Even If You Are Not Naturally Timid You Will Find This Hard But Paul Says!

Find Your Source Of Strength In The Holy Spirit Verse 7 For The Spirit God Gave Us Does Not Make Us Timid Or Cowardly That's Another Way To Translate It But Gives Us Power Love Love Service For The Lord Whether In Our Workplaces Or In Our Schools In Our Homes Or Amongst Our Friends So What Dampens Your Flame

Maybe Like Timothy You Are Discouraged By What You See Around You Sometimes It's Hard To Speak About Jesus At Work Or With Your Neighbours Because It's Just Too Easy To Be Misunderstood Or Wrongly Labeled You Attempted To Shrink Back Maybe Your Discouragement Is Internal You've Been Serving You Teach In The Children's Ministry You Lead A Bible Study You Play Music You Serve On The Welcome Team And You Are Just Tired It Feels Like You're Doing This All On Your Own The Zeal You Once Had Has Faded The Flame Is Low Or Maybe Your Discouragement Is Relational There's Friction In Your Family Maybe Even With Someone Else In This Church And That Conflict Makes You Want To Pull Away To

Stop Engaging To Let To Let The Fire Go Out Because It Is Just Too Hard Well Post Word To Timothy Is God's Word To You This Morning Keep Fanning The Flame You Still Speak Serve And Keep Going Trusting God Will Provide What You Need That's How You And I Grow Up You Don't Wait Before You Act But You Act In Faith And Let The Spirit Fan That Spark Back Into A Roaring Fire And Then Thirdly Pass It On Pass It On That's Two Verse Two And The Things You Have Heard Me Say In The Presence Of Many Witnesses And Trust The Reliable People Who Will [33 : 45] Also Be Qualified To Teach Others You Know Here's The Interesting Thing About Guarding The Gospel When It Comes To Treasure We Guard It By Making Sure That It's As Secure As Possible Right We Put It In Big Safes And Special Cases And We Have Lots Of CCTV And Booby Traps That's What The French Were Supposed To Do With Crown Jewels It Didn't Go So Well But When It Comes To The Gospel We Guard It By Handing It To Others By Transmitting It That's What Paul Says But The Key Thing Is Who We Are Entrusting The Gospel To They Must Be Reliable!

To Verse 2 Says That Means They Are Those Who Are Prepared To Suffer For The Gospel They Are Those Who Won't Be Ashamed Of The Gospel Even When It Will Cost Them And They Are Qualified To Teach Others They Must Be Able To Teach The Gospel Well So That It Is Transmitted Clearly That's What It Takes To Guard The Gospel You See It Is Not Just About Raising The Next Generation Rather As One Pastor Puts It We Must Not Only Pass The Gospel On But Pass It On To People Who Will Pass It On To The Right People We Must Raise The Next Generation To Be Able To Pass It On To The Next Generation That's Why The Entrust

Conference We've Been Advertising Quite A Lot In The Bulletin Exists Because We Understand That Is A Key Way! How The Malaysian Church Guards The Gospel Next Week Our Deacon Greg Gormung Will Preach From The Pulpit And One Reason A Young Man Like Him Is Doing So Is Precisely Because I'm Trying To Guard The Gospel By Passing It On And All Of Us Are Called To Support That Work Of Passing It On But Guarding The Gospel Is Hard Work No Doubt About It And We Need All The Encouragement We Can Get And That's Why I Think 2 Timothy 1 Also Draws Our Attention To The Faithfulness Of Others Did You Notice That's What Paul Keeps Doing Both At The Beginning!

In 1 Verse 3 To 5 He Recalls With Gratitude First Of Timothy's Own Sincere Faith Praise God For You He Says Praise God You're Still Not Ashamed Of The Gospel And Then He Goes On To Say Thank God For Your Mother And Grandmother They Too Gathered The Gospel They Passed It On To You And Then In Verses 16 To 18 He Says Thank God He Stuck With Me In My Time Of Need Even When Others Abandoned Me Thank God He Was Not Ashamed Of Me But Came Looking All Over The Place For Me To Refresh Me He Lifts Out The Pattern Of The Gospel And So As We Got The Gospel Let's Find Encouragement And Refreshment From The Faithfulness Of Others Be Thankful As I

Am For The Faithful Ministry Of Our Sunday School Teachers And Youth Leaders Who Pass Down The Gospel To Me Be Thankful As I Am whenever I hear people in our congregation trying to live for Jesus in their daily lives, who even try to protect their friends from cult groups like Shin Chion Ji, and let their faithfulness fan your flame and mind to keep guarding the gospel.

[38 : 06] For today, the scriptures are clear. Whether we are doctors, lawyers, teachers, musicians, digital creators, pastors, whoever we are, God wants us all to grow up to be unashamed guardians of the gospel.

This is our calling. So, what do you want to be when you grow up? We have our first answer from 2 Timothy today.

Let's pray for the Lord's help to make that true of us. Let's pray. Father, I just pray that we would hear your voice loud and clear this morning.

Help us to recall and be reminded again of that great gospel, the gospel which has abolished death, which has won acceptance of you, by you, has reconciled us to you.

And help us, Lord, to renew our zeal for that very gospel, to understand that it is the most important thing in our lives, that we might guard it with every fiber of our being, in every part of our lives.

[39 : 21] Lord, today, maybe there are people who have actually never known that this is what the gospel is, that they think the gospel is one of the other counterfeits. I pray, Lord, that you would open their eyes and help them to see that this is the wonderful gospel and to accept it for the first time in their lives.

All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.