

BIBLE TEXT | 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12

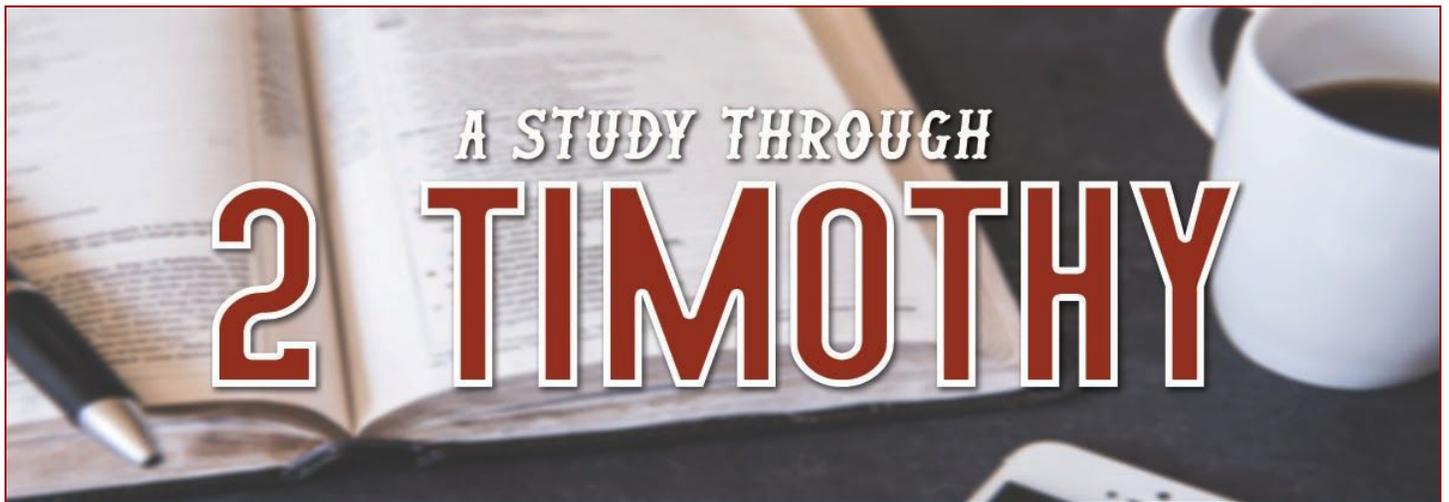
8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, **9** who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, **10** 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, **11** for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, **12** which is why I suffer as I do. 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.

DEVOTIONAL FOR 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-12

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Oswald Chambers once wrote, "Suffering is the heritage of the bad, of the penitent, and of the Son of God. Each one ends in the cross. The bad thief is crucified, the penitent thief is crucified, and the Son of God is crucified. By these signs, we know the widespread heritage of suffering."

For some reason, as Christ-followers, who happen to be Americans, we can unintentionally assume that our faith in Jesus should exempt us from hardship, suffering, and difficult days. Many people in our culture mistakenly believe that a deep belief in Jesus Christ gives us power and authority over disease, peril, persecution, famine, and government oppression. Oftentimes I've listened to people quote Isaiah 53 by saying "*by his [Jesus] stripes we are healed*" and I have heard that applied as a statement of faith over our lives as a means of physical protection rather than spiritual healing and forgiveness for our iniquities. In essence, by faith, people have proclaimed "in word" that we are exempt from hardship in this world simply by our verbal proclamation. However, as we read our Bible we continually see tyranny, war, injustice, sin, fascism, torment, and pain experienced by Christ-followers at the hands of merciless men.



If Jesus was persecuted and killed, what exempts us from such deadly peril? Even as we read this letter from Paul to Timothy, we are reminded of his unjust imprisonment due to his belief in Jesus Christ. And, they were not alone! Stephen was stoned to death (Acts 7), and the apostles were persecuted severely. Matter of fact, at the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., of the 318 delegates attending, fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith.

In 2 Corinthians 12:10 Paul said, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." John, the beloved disciple wrote this in 1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you."

The reality is that we have been blessed in our lifetime to not face the radical, harsh, and unpleasant persecution that Jesus, Paul, the apostles, and many other Christian martyrs have endured over the centuries. While we are thankful for the freedoms we enjoy, we must seek to discern scripture clearly and realize that all biblical authors and devoted Christ-followers were willing to withstand relentless physical, emotional, and spiritual maltreatment because of their faith. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Following Jesus may be difficult in this life, yet we have peace because of the comfort of knowing there is freedom in the life to come. Paul encouraged Timothy and the believers in Ephesus to "share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God" because Jesus "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." This hope allows us to rejoice in suffering, to be patient in affliction, and to guard the good deposit entrusted to us (1 Timothy 6:20).

Questions:

1. Read Psalm 34:19; 2 Timothy 3:12; James 1:12; and 1 Peter 1:6-7 and take a few moments to write down things that are likely to come to pass as a result of being a Christ-follower.
2. In John 16:33 Jesus says, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." After reading 2 Timothy 1:8-12 and the words of our Lord, why can our hearts be encouraged?
3. As a Christ-follower we may endure trouble, hardships, and pain, but as we consider what Christ has accomplished our hearts should be encouraged and strengthened knowing that Christ has given us eternal life. Take a few moments and write a list of ten things that you are thankful for because of Christ and His grace in your life.