



Entrusting the Sacred - 2 Timothy 1.8-18

*For the people of the Inversion Fellowship
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2 TIMOTHY 1:8-18 (ESV)

⁸Therefore 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, ⁹who 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, ¹⁰and 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, ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which 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. ¹³Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

¹⁵You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, ¹⁷but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— ¹⁸may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

REMINDERS FOR THE JOURNEY

SACREDNESS

We live in a time when we have lost the sense of the sacred. In a culture that is obsessed with novelty we are hard pressed to see the value in the ancient, the eternal and sacred trust of the gospel. We need to see that some things should never be treated trivially and are worthy of our greatest hope and stewardship.

NOT ASHAMED

Paul knew that Timothy would face pressure in his call to follow, teach and lead in the cause of the gospel. Therefore he exhorts young Timothy to not be ashamed of the gospel or of Paul's condition in chains. Paul offers his own life as an example—that he was not ashamed because he knew his trust was in the living God rather than his circumstances.

GUARDING THE TRUST

Finally, Paul wanted Timothy to know that he had a great trust to guard and fulfill. He was being entrusted with the very words of God and the calling of a gospel minister. This would not be an effort of willpower but a work of faith and love which would be empowered by the very Holy Spirit of God. Paul was about to give Timothy a great charge in the latter parts of the letter; he wanted to be sure the gospel and his responsibility were clear. If Timothy would walk in guarding the good deposit of the gospel; he would be able to fulfill the calling of his ministry.

WALKING ON—SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

2 Timothy chapter 1 contains an amazingly long and amazingly beautiful sentence. Now you may think, Reid, it is just weird to call a sentence beautiful. The fact is there is so much wonderful theological truth packed into this sentence that I almost called it a sexy sentence—but that is definitely weird. Let me go ahead and share the sentence with you:

⁸Therefore 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, ⁹who 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, ¹⁰and 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, ¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which 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.

There is much to say about this sentence, but here I want us to focus on the nature and description of the manner in which God saves. When we break down what is said here we will be coming very close to biblical teachings on election (God's choosing and calling of sinners to himself) and a word that causes many people to twitch—predestination. I know even writing these words may bring an emotional response, but stay with me as we look at what our sacred writings teach us about these things...for as we do, I do believe that worship will be the end of our discussion. In this essay I have very modest goals. First, I want to track through the above verse and cross reference what it is teaching with other parts of Scripture. Hopefully, it will become clear as to what Paul is saying here. Second, I want to look at some objections to what is being taught. The first of these objections will be theological in nature, the second with be existential—or dealing with our thoughts, emotions and experiences surrounding this teaching. Since I believe it is pre-ordained, let us begin.

On Self Salvation— The first phrase I want to look at is this: it is God who “saved us.” Let me build a bit towards my conclusion which will simply be this: The Bible knows nothing of “self salvation.” First of all there is no self creation. The universe and every particle that makes it up only exists because the creator God desired it to be so. Neither we, nor stars, nor pulsars, nor dark matter, nor monkeys or eggplants choose their own existence or bring their own existence about. Our sacred Scripture teaches us that *all things were created by him and for him* (Colossians 1:16) and *for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Romans 11: 36). Secondly, there is no ultimate self determination. Think about how much of your life is simply out of your control. I know it feels a bit un-American to realize that you are not the captain of your own destiny, but think about all the things of your life you did not, and could not choose. We did not determine the time or place set for our birth. In fact, Scripture teaches that God determined these things for his purpose (Acts 17:22-34). Furthermore, you did not choose who your parents would be—whether we like it or not our parents are the culmination of a long line of circumstances that we had nothing to do with. Additionally, we do not choose to get sick, get hit by a bus, create your own personality, or choose the actions of others (whether good or bad). I know there are books out there that will tell you “the secret” is that you can control all things, make reality obey you...but let me tell you, that is a devastating lie. Now I am not saying that our attitude is inconsequential, your choices do not matter, or that good or bad consequences do not result from wisdom or foolishness. This of course is true. But we must not believe the nonsense that you can control everything and everyone around you—everyone who is in therapy is trying to get off of that drug. Only God could sit in such a sovereign position—so just realize that we have very limited control. Finally, there is simply no self-salvation. I know there are aisles and aisles of books in Barnes and Nobles which will tell you how to fix it all, but new ones must be written all the time promising the same things as the old ones. We know that humans are seeking redemption, salvation and ways to fix ourselves, but the only book which holds the truth of that matter has already been penned...and its author is God.

You see God knows the reality of the human predicament. The Scriptures teach a very high and very low view of human nature. We are created in the image of God and therefore the most important and valuable creatures in the world. Yet Scripture is also clear that we are sinful and in rebellion against God. No one by nature is running to God; we are running away. Romans 3 teaches us *there is none that seeks God, none that does good.* Additionally the prophet Isaiah teaches us that *we all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way* (Isaiah 53:6). We are in rebellion, our desires are for self, sin, not submission to and the worship of God.. Paul in his first letter, the book of Galatians, he is clear that self salvation is pure mythology. In his last letter to Timothy he again is clear. If we are to be saved, it is he that saves us—there simply is no self-salvation. If we could save ourselves we would not need a Savior. We would declare ourselves without need of God for we could make ourselves perfect without his initiative. Friends, this is the very essence of sin.

The Scriptures make this clear from beginning to end. He saved us! He saved Noah and his family when God's judgment fell upon the wicked on the earth. He saved Abrahams family again and again. He saved Israel from brutal slavery in Egypt, warring nations and its own self-destructive tendencies. He redeemed Israel from exile in Babylon by raising up leaders such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel to bring people back to the land. Ultimately and finally he saves his people and calls them to himself through Jesus Christ, the great high priest, the sacrifice given for our sins, the great King and Savior of the world. *Salvation is of the Lord!* This is the clear message of Scripture. As such it is therefore of his initiation and volition. He created, he redeems—all worship, credit praise and glory then go to God. We have no place to boast in self-righteousness or self salvation; we only marvel that he saves sinners such as ourselves.

On Calling — The second thing Paul tells us is that God calls us. Calling is a theme throughout the Scripture which states that God calls to all people generally and to those whom he saves particularly. In other words, there are two ways described in Scripture by which God calls people back to himself. The first we simply call a *general call*. It is a theme of the Bible that God desires all people to be saved and come to him in repentance in faith (See 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). He gives *common grace* to all by allowing us to have life, breath, gladness, sunshine to grow food to eat and rain for water to drink (see Matthew 5:43-45; Acts 14:17). He also reveals himself to us in nature and conscience (see Romans 1-2). This common grace is an expression of the love and care of God for all he has made. Yet people resist this call because they do not desire God. Hence, God further calls to some with *saving grace* and what we might say is the effectual call of God. We see this when people's hearts are changed so that Jesus now looks lovely to them, God gives them new desires, a new heart and saves them. Jesus himself described this reality when he said *for many are called, but few are chosen* (see Matthew 22:1-14). In a similar parable he tells his servants to go out and bring people in to his wedding feast. The wording he uses is “compel them to come in.” He calls them, liberates them from the bondage to sin, so that they now want to love, follow and worship God. Additionally, Jesus also said that no one can come to him except he be drawn by the Father (John 6:35-44). Finally, Paul discusses calling in 1 Corinthians 1 and Romans 8. Those whom God desires to save, he calls to himself such that they can and do respond to the gospel. This calling brings us to God, gives us a desire for holiness and makes us part of his people.



Not Because — The third thing Paul tells Timothy is that our salvation and calling is not because of our own works. By saying that God's salvation is not based upon works, something unbelievably liberating is revealed here in the gospel. If we are saved by grace, not by works, not from our selves (See Ephesians 2:1-10) then no matter how bad we are, God can forgive and redeem us. There is no one too bad for the grace of God. Furthermore it devastates human pride and self righteousness. No Christian should see themselves as saved by God because of how good they are. In fact, such pride in one's own "goodness" is an offense to the gospel. Paul over and over in his letters stresses that our only boast is in Jesus (Galatians 6:14) not in our own goodness. He saved us not because of what we have done good or bad. Nobody is good enough, no one is too bad. This is great news guys, unbelievable news. In fact, many will not believe it as the default nature of our souls is to want to "do it ourselves" or "make ourselves better" or "prove our worth to God." Such is the ruin of our hearts—only when he calls us to the free grace of the gospel are we set free from the dance of trying to earn the favor of God and man. In the cross we receive the gift of salvation to us—and worship and obedience is now a response, not a dreaded duty. So why *did* God save us?

Because — Here we have only a marvelous mystery to ponder. God saved us for his own purpose and grace. His own purpose of grace is another way to put it. One of the great mysteries of the Bible is why God saves rebellious, undeserving people. Why am I loved and forgiven and accepted by God? Because of grace and for whatever purpose he has. I know that I deserve God's wrath, his judgment as I am guilty of sinning against him. If not convinced quickly read the 10 commandments—guilty! Yet God gives grace. Why? I have no freakin clue but I am glad he has a purpose. All who come to him will in no way be cast out—yet we will not come. What is the solution? God saves us, calls us, for his purposes in the gospel. I have no access to the master game plan of God. Yet he picks me for the team, places me in positions in life, calls me to follow him and gives me a part to play. A Gift Given provokes gratitude—gratitude wells up into worship.

When? The final section of our sentence tells us when he gives grace to his people. Here is where our heads begin to explode. Paul tells us grace was given before the ages began. Literally it says he gave us grace *before times eternal*. This means that God gave people grace before the universe was created, before time existed, before any humans were made, before my life existed, before I had done anything good or anything bad. It means grace was given to us before we choose anything or even existed to choose. Paul goes on to say that this was manifested in the first coming of Jesus to the earth, where he abolished death and brought life through his death and resurrection. This work continues today as God continues to save people through the sharing of good news, people believing and the church's continued mission.

Objection!!! Human beings react strongly against the idea that God is the author and initiator in salvation. We do not like that God would save whom he wants, when he wants. We like ultimate self determination (ultimately free-free will) and work hard to put everything back on our plate. Some Christians say God chooses us based on "foreseen faith" - that in God's foreknowledge he saves us based upon our choice in hearing the gospel. There is one problem I run into with this. The Bible. For God does talk about foreknowing "our faith." It actually says he foreknows "those" who will be called and saved, not simply their faith. He knows *them* before time, he knows *them* before they choose in time. There are many ways to wrestle with this issue. I want to give you some words to google to see how Christians have historically wrestled with these issues. Ready, set, here you go: Molinist, Ariminian and Reformed views. Have fun—I am almost out of space.

Another Objection!—Another objection is less intellectual, but more existential in nature. If God knows all that will be saved, what about my kids? What can we do? I will only say that the knowledge of God as to who will be saved is not our knowledge. We do not have any knowledge as to which persons will or will not respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ. To be honest, it is inappropriate to think as if it matters to our work as his people. We are called to share the gospel with all and allow God to save whom he will. One thing can be certain. God treats no one unfairly. All deserve his justice—what is unbelievable is that God saves the guilty. This is what Paul wrestles with in Romans 3—how can a just God, justify the guilty. A friend of mine with whom I debate these things uses an example with me often. He throws my daughters in the mix saying "What if God doesn't want to save them, then they are screwed and damned to hell." Of course using my daughters is a ploy towards my emotions—for I love them more than just about anything. Yet as I think about it, he is saying that their eternal destinies is in better hands if it lies in my own or their own power. Yet I am reminded that neither me, nor my daughters are all good, all wise or all loving. In fact, to put it lightly, we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. My response, both emotionally and biblically, is that God's hands are the best place to entrust the salvation of people—particularly that of my little girls. I trust him to do right more than any human being. So it is my hope and prayer that God will save them in his time. Additionally, I am going to plant churches in places where people do not want Jesus—I go in hope because I believe God can and does save sinners...even the ones like me who were not out looking for God. God brings new birth to people in surprising places all over the world—from Afghanistan to New Jersey and here in Middle Tennessee. He has chosen that we be his ambassadors who bring his message—and he saves people through our efforts.

Conclusion I am not a Christian because I believe in election and predestination. All Christians are saved because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, repentance and faith, and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Any Christian who follows Jesus based upon his atoning work on the cross is my sister or brother. I will say with full conviction that I worship much differently because I know that I have received grace upon grace from God the Father, mercy through the work of Jesus applied to me by the Spirit when I wanted nothing but self, sin and rebellion. It is interesting that the passages that deal most with the issues of election/predestination end in worship (doxology). In Ephesians 1 Paul reminds people that they have been chosen before the foundation of the world and that this was all to the *praise of his glorious grace*. In Romans 8 in that great passage describing God's work in the gospel we read this:

Those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Yet when he ends the entire section about God's purposes in salvation he ends with worship (See Romans 11:36 above). The teaching of Scripture about God's salvation is to provoke, awe, majesty and marvel at the grace of God in Christ. Where God himself takes our penalty for sin and gives us his righteousness in Christ. It is no small coincidence that Paul, in encouraging Timothy, reminds him of the gospel and all that God has done. For the sovereign, saving God will be Timothy's hope in all the changes and challenges to be faced ahead. I pray it would be so for each of us—Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved...so choose to believe. But do know that we are saved by him, called to him, by grace before time, set in play in your life so that you would live, suffer and WALK ON in mission for his glory and praise.

I am thankful today for the wonderful truth conveyed in one beautiful sentence in our sacred book. Yours in the name of the one *who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,*

Reid S. Monaghan

MY NOTES — 2 TIMOTHY 1:8-18

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⁹who 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,

A few thoughts...

- Self salvation?
- On Calling
- WHY – **not because**
- WHY – **because**
- A Gift Given
- WHEN?

¹⁰and 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,

¹¹for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹²which is why I suffer as I do.

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