

2 Timothy 1:7-10 — How Do I Speak About Jesus in a Culture That is Against Him?

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Do you know the most popular restaurant in America? For the last few years, Chick-Fil-A was named America's favorite restaurant based on food and quality. It beat out McDonald's, Burger King, KFC, and Taco Bell. It also beat pizza restaurants such as Pizza Hut, Papa John's, Domino's, and Little Caesar's. Who can resist that tasty chicken sandwich and those waffle-cut fries?



That is why it was a surprise when the San Antonio City Council prohibited Chick-Fil-A from opening a store in its airport. Why would anyone ban the king of chicken from coming to town? The San Antonio City Council claimed it banned Chick-Fil-A because it has a legacy of anti-LGBTQ behavior. What does that mean? Does Chick-Fil-A refuse to serve chicken sandwiches to people that are not heterosexuals? Absolutely not. Anybody who wants a sandwich is welcome. Does Chick-Fil-A refuse to hire people if they are not heterosexuals? Nope.

What gave Chick-Fil-A a reputation of being opposed to the LGBTQ agenda? That reputation comes from CEO Dan Cathy's history of donating to Christian organizations. For example, Dan Cathy gave a \$1.6 million donation to the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. It states in its charter that it believes marriage is exclusively the union between one man and one woman. It also

states the belief that sexual intimacy should be reserved for the context of marriage. Dan Cathy's donations to openly Christian organizations have cost him many business opportunities as his franchises are banned in cities such as San Antonio.

This doesn't surprise us. Today, when anyone openly speaks about Jesus or makes choices that reflect biblical behavior, we expect they will pay a price. We expect people will mock, ridicule, and undermine them.

Paying a price for Jesus isn't just something Chick-Fil-A experiences. It is something all of us can expect to experience when we talk about Jesus and what he has done for us in public. When we are reaching people about Jesus in school, we should expect some friends will look at us like we are religious freaks. If we bring up Jesus at work, we should expect to be told to keep our opinions to ourselves. We do not live in a world that is neutral toward Jesus. We live in a society that is actively fighting against Jesus.

To avoid the pain of insult and injury as we speak about Jesus, many of us have chosen to keep quiet about Jesus. We only speak about Jesus on Sunday, at home or with our friends, but we don't speak about Jesus around the people who most need to meet him. This leaves us with a problem. If we never speak about Jesus in public, we will never be able to reach people with Jesus. Look how the Bible reminds us of this truth.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? Romans 10:14 (NLT)

The problem is clear, we can live a comfortable life where nobody mocks our faith as long as we never talk about Jesus in public or we can live an

uncomfortable life where we pay a cost because we talk about him at work and school.

What should we do? That is the question we are answering this morning.

How can I speak about Jesus in a culture that is against him?

Last week, we began our study in the book of 2 Timothy. This letter was written by the apostle Paul from the bowels of the Mamertine prison in Rome while he was awaiting his execution by Nero. What was his crime? Did he storm the Capitol building? Nope. He was simply boldly telling people about what God did for them through Jesus, and for that, he would soon lose his head.

In Paul's final days in that prison, he wrote this letter to Timothy. Timothy was a young man that was Paul's assistant for 15 years. When Paul was gone, Timothy would take his place.

At this time, Paul left Timothy in charge of the large and often difficult church of Ephesus, the second largest city in the Roman Empire. In this letter, Paul was preparing Timothy to be a church leader for the next generation and to be faithful to the end of his life. In this letter Paul was preparing Timothy to stand strong under the opposition, suffering, and possible death that Timothy would face for Jesus.

Last week, we looked at the first five verses of this letter. In those verses, Paul's goal was to motivate a discouraged Timothy. Today, we begin a new section of the letter that goes from verses 6-18. In this section, Paul told Timothy the mindset he needed to handle the cultural opposition and social backlash he would face as a Christian leader.

This is an especially appropriate topic for us this morning. We are living in a post-Christian society. Respect for Jesus and the church is on the continual decline. Our society is actively anti-Christian. We need the same mindset that Paul wanted Timothy to have. We need to expect and know how to handle opposition and stay faithful under that opposition to the end of our lives. We won't be able to cover all of the verses in this section this morning. We will cover half of them. Let's read 2 Timothy 1:6-10.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 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, 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, 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... 2 Timothy 1:6–10 (ESV)

There are four points Paul gave us on how we speak for Jesus in a world that is opposed to him: 1. In a world that is opposed to Christ, don't stop using our God-given gifts; 2. In a world that is opposed to Christ, remember God has given us a courageous spirit, not a cowardly one; 3. In a world that is opposed to Christ, expect and accept suffering for Christ when it comes our way; 4. In a world that is opposed to Christ, remember the incredible power of God that is behind us.

In a world that is opposed to Christ, don't stop using our God-given gifts.

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands... 2 Timothy 1:6 (ESV)

Timothy was in a difficult city. It would feel like pastoring a church in Portland. Just as the people in Portland love to riot, the people in Ephesus loved

to riot. If you doubt me, look at Acts 19, when Paul planted the church in the city. The people in the city rioted against the church. Ephesus was also a city steeped in magic and the occult. The book of Acts tells us of a huge bonfire new Christians in the church had where they burned their magic books after becoming Christians. So Timothy's church was filled with a bunch of former rioters and former Satanists. That is a tough first pastorate.

While his church was filled with former rioters and former Satanists, the church was in a city of active rioters and Satanists. It should be obvious why Timothy began to get quiet about his faith. It should be obvious why Timothy was not using his gifts and actively speaking about Jesus in public.

Paul reminded Timothy not to do that. "Don't ignore your gift. Use your gift." Paul reminded Timothy that before Paul left Timothy Paul and the council of elders put their hands on Timothy and prayed for him. At that time, God supernaturally gifted Timothy, enabling him to accomplish the work God gave him to do as the pastor of that church.

The opposition Timothy faced in that city led to him ignoring and neglecting his gifts. Timothy was keeping quiet about Jesus instead of using his gifts to reach people with the message of Jesus.

Paul's message to Timothy was that when the culture around you is opposed to you and you want to start ignoring your gifts, don't fall into that trap. Don't neglect your gifts. Develop and use your gifts!

What was Timothy's gift? We don't know. Paul didn't specify his gift. It probably had to do with leading the church and preaching the gospel. I think the

reason Paul did not specify Timothy's gift is because Paul was giving us a principle that applies not just to Timothy but to us.

God has given each one of us a gift. Our God-given gifts will enable us to accomplish the work God has given us to do in the church and in our time for Jesus. The problem is that the world around us is opposed to Jesus. The world around us will discourage us from using our gifts. The world around us will tell us we are not making a difference. The society we live in wants us to neglect our gifts, not develop our gifts.

Paul said, "We must not believe that." Satan wants us to be a church full of spectators. Satan wants us to attend church but not get involved using our gifts to serve and help others in the church. Why is Satan committed to having us do nothing more than attend church on Sundays then leave? It is when we get involved using our gifts that we make a difference. It is when we use our gifts that lives change and God's kingdom grows.

This is why I want to give each of us a practical challenge this morning. In a world that wants us to be nothing more than spectators for Jesus, find and use your gift to serve others and reach people with Jesus.

If your gift is serving, find a way to get involved with other people. If your gift is hospitality, that is a hard gift to use during COVID so rather than having people over for a meal, be willing to bring a meal to people. If your gift is teaching, find at least a bite-size way to pour into the lives of others for Jesus. If you don't know your gift, just find a way to serve in some way that feels like it fits and let God steer you where he wants you to be.

In a world opposed to Jesus, remember God gave me a courageous spirit, not a cowardly one.

...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. 2 Timothy 1:7 (ESV)

Paul reminded Timothy that in a culture that is pressing back against Jesus and wants people who love Jesus to neglect using their gifts for Jesus, we must remember the spirit of God has given us more than a gift to serve him. He has also given us a temperament to use that gift.

Paul told Timothy God didn't give him a spirit of fear but of power, love, and self-discipline.

Last week, we learned Timothy was by nature a timid person. He was a shy person who didn't want to be the center of attention. When God supernaturally gifted Timothy to serve him, he also gave Timothy a change in temperament to use that gift.

This is one of the verses I memorized in high school. It is a verse I have said to myself thousands of times. I grew up as a very timid person. Ask my wife, I am still uneasy in crowds even if I have no social responsibilities in them. That is my natural temperament. When I started to realize God gave me the desire to teach the Bible, I had to constantly remind myself that God would also be changing my temperament and giving me the ability to speak in front of people if he gave me some gifts to teach the Bible to people.

The same is true for each one of us. If God gives us a gift to serve him, he will also give us the needed change in temperament to use that gift.

Let's look at the change in temperament God gave Timothy and that the Holy Spirit gives us. It is a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline. Let's look at what these words mean.

Power — The Greek word is the word *dunamis*. It is the source of our English word dynamite. It means dynamic power. It is the power to not just make a bunch of light and noise, but the power to produce results. The power to make a difference. God has given us a spirit that doesn't cower in fear and paralysis under pressure but a spirit that handles pressure and the Holy Spirit works through us to make a difference in the world. How much of a difference can the spirit of Christ working through our life make in this world? Look how Paul describes this power.

...and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1:19–20 (ESV)

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Jesus in heaven at the right hand of God is alive and well working in us. There is no energy shortage when it comes to the amount of power that God can display working through our lives. When the Holy Spirit is in us and we are relying on him, we have the ability to make a lasting difference in this world no matter how much opposition we face from the world around us.

Look how the Bible talks about the amount of difference the Holy Spirit makes in our lives.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, Ephesians 3:20 (ESV)

When the Spirit of God is at work in our lives, God does in us and through us far more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Love — The Holy Spirit doesn't just give us power but he gives us love. The word for love is specific. It is *agape* love. That is love of choice. God enables us to choose to love people even if they are really hard to love. The Spirit of God dwelling in us enables us to love people in a supernatural way because there is nothing lovable about them. When people in the world around us are mocking us on social media and trying to ruin our reputations or boycott our businesses, God's Holy Spirit in our lives gives us a supernatural temperament change that gives us the ability to love people we would normally hate.

Some of you know that I take the manuscripts of sermons I preach and put them into ebooks on the iBookstore and Amazon. It is not for money. It is to tell more people about Jesus. Every once in a while people give my books a review. Many of the reviews are encouraging. Sometimes I get nasty reviews that only have one star. One review was particularly hurtful, calling one of my books chauvinistic and homophobic along with other insulting things. I got to the end of the review and the reviewer closed his review by saying he never read the book. He just wanted to give a bad review because it was a Christian book. At first, I was angry he was ruining my star rating. Then my heart changed and I felt sorry for him. He is the reason the book was written. He needs to read the book and meet Jesus and that would change the hate in his heart.

Where did that change of heart come from? It came from the Holy Spirit at work in my heart, reminding me I needed to love that person, not hate him. The

Holy Spirit works the same way in each of our lives, softening our hearts toward hurtful people and giving us love for them.

Look what Jesus said:

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...” Luke 6:27 (ESV)

How can anyone love their enemies? The only way we can love our enemies is if the Holy Spirit changes our hearts.

Self-Discipline — This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. It means to control one's self in the face of praise or pain. The Holy Spirit gives us the supernaturally ability to stay focused and not be brought off task even when we face praise or pain.

I was reading about this in the early church yesterday in my daily Bible reading. I was in Acts chapters 4 and 5. In those chapters, the apostles were facing opposition and threats from the Jewish leaders because they were inviting people to trust in Jesus and making the religious leaders look bad for murdering Jesus. Look how the apostles stay on focus to their mission even though they are threatened and eventually beaten for sharing about Jesus.

...saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.” Acts 5:28–29 (ESV)

The point is that while we live in a world opposed to Jesus, we are not alone when we tell others about Jesus. We have the Holy Spirit supernaturally gifting us to make a difference for Jesus in this world. We have the Holy Spirit changing our temperament to enable us to use our gifts. The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is alive and working in us. The Holy Spirit

enables us to keep sharing about Jesus even when it costs us and we suffer for doing it.

In a world opposed to Jesus, don't be afraid to suffer for Jesus.

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... 2 Timothy 1:8 (ESV)

Paul said, "Even though the Holy Spirit has gifted you and given you a spirit of power, know you are going to face times when you suffer because you speak about Jesus. Don't be ashamed of those times. Don't be afraid of those times. Expect those times."

When I was growing up, in sixth grade I was hit by a car while riding my bicycle home from school. It was a serious injury. I bruised my brain. I was in a comma for days. I was not supposed to recover. They called my parents in to say their final good-byes. By God's grace, I lived. While recovering in the hospital, I began rummaging through the night stand next to the hospital bed. There, I found a Gideon's Bible in the nightstand. I didn't know anything about the Gideons. I thought my mother put the Bible in the nightstand because my mom would do that kind of thing. While in the hospital, I began reading the Gideon Bible and it began speaking to my heart in a way it had never done. At that time, I took ownership of my faith, and my faith went from my parents' faith to my faith. I was growing in my love for Jesus by leaps and bounds. Months later, when I was well enough to return to school after the brain injury, I carried that pocket Gideon New Testament with me and read it in my free time.

I wasn't prepared for why that didn't go over well in school. While I was gone, the social landscape of my school changed. Many of my friends became

involved in drugs, alcohol and other sinful vices. Pulling out my little green Bible and telling my friends Bible verses did not go over well in my school. At that time, I was picked on relentlessly. Kids dumped my books and sometimes chased me home from school. Junior high was a rough time in life.

As a kid, I remember asking Jesus, “Why has this happened? Why are people so nasty whenever I talk about Jesus or refuse to join them in something sinful?” What I didn’t understand was people laughing at me and making fun of me is a normal and expected thing whenever you bring up the topic of Jesus around people who want nothing to do with him.

This is why Paul said to Timothy to not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. Expect people will oppose you when you talk about Jesus. Expect you will suffer when you talk about Jesus. That isn’t abnormal. That is to be expected. In fact, suffering for Christ is a privilege.

Earlier, I told you how I was reading about the suffering the apostles faced in Jerusalem when they first spoke about Jesus. Look what else it tells us about what took place at that time.

...and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. Acts 5:40–41 (ESV)

The apostles were giving one another high fives after being beaten for Jesus. They realized they did such a good job talking about Christ that they were getting beaten for Christ. That isn’t a bad thing. That was a compliment on their boldness.

This raises a good question. Why do some Christians seem to skate through life and never suffer for Jesus while others face a lot of suffering for Jesus? What is the difference? I don't have all the answers to that question but I do have one of them.

If we make a commitment to live a comfortable life and only speak about Jesus around people who already know Jesus and already love Jesus, we will never face opposition for speaking about Jesus. If we decide we will speak about Jesus around the people who actually need to meet him and who need to know him, we will experience opposition against him. Some people will be drawn to Jesus when they hear about him while others will rise up in opposition against us and Jesus when they hear about him.

Paul said to Timothy, "Decide in your mind that you won't be quiet about Jesus. Decide in your mind you won't be ashamed about Jesus and you won't be ashamed of me." Paul told Timothy that instead of trying to avoid suffering for Christ, to join him in suffering for Christ.

This was the mindset Paul wanted Timothy to have and he wanted us to have. Later in those letter Paul said these words about suffering for Jesus:

[Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted... 2 Timothy 3:12 \(ESV\)](#)

If you are a student who talks about Jesus in high school, expect people will alienate you and laugh at you. Take on your share of suffering for the gospel. If you are trying out for a sport team, and you are bold for Jesus, expect you may end up on the bench. Take on your share of suffering for the gospel. If at work you speak up for Jesus, expect someone may question your integrity or accuse

you of some kind of other cultural hot topic. That is to be expected. Take on your share of suffering for the gospel. There is no way we can reach people with Jesus if we don't speak about Jesus around people who need to meet him.

If we are going to speak boldly and publicly for Jesus, how should we speak those words? Peter has some words of wisdom on how we speak up for Jesus in a hostile world.

...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)

We are to speak for Jesus boldly, gently, and respectfully. This is why I don't like the people who walk around with sandwich boards that say, "The end is near. Turn now or burn later." That is not a gentle or respectful way to tell people about Jesus. That is why I don't like people who hold up signs that say, "God hates gays." That is not the gentle and respectful way to speak about Jesus.

When we start suffering for Jesus, how should we think about our suffering? Paul taught us how to think about our suffering for Jesus in these verses. Paul called himself "**His prisoner.**" Paul saw himself as a prisoner of Jesus, not as a prisoner of Nero. Why did he say that? Paul was very aware that it was not Nero in charge of his life. It was Jesus in charge of his life. Ultimately, it wasn't Nero who put Paul in prison. God is the one who put Paul in prison, and if God put Paul in prison, it was not a derailment in God's plans. It was part of God's good plan.

We can see how this worked in Paul's first Roman imprisonment. This summer, we saw how Paul was kept under house arrest in Rome during his first

Roman imprisonment. He was chained to elite soldiers of the Roman Praetorian Guard in six-hour shifts. Rather than thinking God's plans were derailed with his life, Paul realized being in jail was part of God's good plan for his life and that he was in jail for a reason. He looked at the Roman soldiers chained to his wrists and realized he had a captive audience. He started telling them about Jesus and many of them became Christians. This was how God planned to tell them about Jesus. This was the way God planned for the good news of Jesus to come to Caesar's own household.

The same is true for us. As we talk about Jesus, the opposition we face for Jesus may bring us places we didn't expect and let us meet people we wouldn't ordinarily know. That is not a bad thing. God is still large and in charge of our lives. He uses the opposition against us to bring us places he wants us to be to tell more people about Jesus. None of that opposition against us can ruin God's good plan for the lives of his people.

The next question is, how do we handle the hurt emotions that come when we suffer? How do we handle the feelings of rejection? Paul answered this for us in this verse. He said we handle those feelings by the **power of God**. The Holy Spirit gives us a gift to serve God. The Holy Spirit gives us a change of temperament that enables us to use that gift. The Holy Spirit also gives us the supernatural ability to suffer well. This is the same Holy Spirit Paul said would enable Timothy to suffer well if that is what God decided would happen to Timothy when he boldly spoke about him.

Peter reminded us that suffering for Jesus is different than any other kind of suffering. When we suffer for Jesus, the Holy Spirit works in our lives in an especially powerful way.

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 1 Peter 4:14–16 (ESV)

The same is true for us. In this world that is very much opposed to Jesus, when we end up suffering for Jesus, the Holy Spirit will be present in our hearts and lives in a special and powerful way, enabling us to handle that suffering well.

In a world that is opposed to Jesus, remember the power of God.

...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, 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... 2 Timothy 1:9–10 (ESV)

Paul's point was that as you are using your gifts and you are engaging culture, if you are suffering, don't forget who is really in charge. Don't forget who holds you up. Don't forget the power of God that is behind you.

The God who saved us is the God who is powerful enough to keep us.

...who saved us... 1 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

When Paul reminded Timothy of God's ability to save us, he reminded Timothy that God doesn't just have the power to save us from our sin but he has the power to sustain us in our lives. The God who saved our souls can hold our lives together and keep them from falling apart. No matter what we face when we speak to people about Jesus, the God who saved our souls can sustain our lives.

The God who saves us is the God who makes us holy.

...called us to a holy calling... 1 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

How powerful is God? Look at your life. God changed your life. We were in love with sin before we met Jesus. We were powerless over sin before we met Jesus. When we met Jesus we were born again and God made us into completely new people that are in love with pleasing God. If God is powerful enough to make us into new people and change our lives, he is powerful enough to watch over us when we face opposition and hatred for Jesus.

The God who saved us didn't save us because of our works but because of his purposes and grace.

...not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace... 1 Timothy 1:9 (ESV)

What did we do to make our salvation possible? We did nothing but contribute the sin from which we needed to be saved! Isn't God amazing and powerful? He saved us and there was nothing we contributed to our salvation. God did it all on his own! That is amazing power.

The God who saved us saved us in eternity past before we existed.

...which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began... 1 Timothy 1:10 (ESV)

This tells us more of God's amazing power. He saved us and chose to put us together with Jesus before the world began. Before the world was created he knew our names and planned our lives. He decided in eternity to save us by Jesus by putting us together with Jesus. That is amazing power.

The God who saved us did it all through Jesus, abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to us through the gospel.

...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... 2 Timothy 1:10 (ESV)

All of God's good plans for us planned from eternity are brought to fruition by Jesus. How can we not speak about him?

Someone who risked their reputation to speak about Jesus to us. God took the message of Jesus and quickened our hearts and God's good plan to save us by Jesus was brought to fruition in time and space when we heard the good news of Jesus.

When we tell others about Jesus, God will take his good plans from eternity and bring them to fruition in the lives of others as the Holy Spirit will soften hearts and draw them to Jesus when we tell them the good news of God's Son.

Of course not all people will respond that way. Some people will hear the good news of Jesus and rise up in opposition against Jesus. The good news of Jesus will always either draw people to Jesus or repel people away from Jesus. When people are repelled by Jesus, they will mock, insult, and demean you and me. That is what we should expect.

Conclusion

Let me read for you the verses I read for you earlier, but let me go a little deeper into Paul's words.

But how can they call on him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell

them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” Romans 10:14–15 (NLT)

This week, will you decide to be people with beautiful feet? Will you talk about Jesus with people who actually need to meet him, not just people who already know him? When we do, we will reach people with Jesus and people will be born again. At the same time, we should expect that others will rise up against us as they rise up against Jesus. We will face times of mocking and insult for Christ. That is the only way to reach the world with the good news of the gospel and have people be born again.



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