

2 Timothy: 1:10-18 Does Jesus have the answer to fear, depression, and Pandemics?

How's your life going? If you're single, how's that going? If you're married, how's your marriage? If you're married with kids, how's that going? If you're twenty-something and about to graduate, what's your future look like? If you're thirty, forty, or fifty-something and your life still has no direction, why not? What's gone wrong? Do you know the answer? If this pandemic has you terrified to go outside or has you depressed because you lost your job, house, savings, health, etc., is there an answer or do you just have to sit and wait till the pandemic is over or the Government sends you another relief check or they find a vaccine? What can Jesus do about any of this? What does Jesus have to offer to every one of these dilemmas and more?

1:10, as Paul writes Timothy, there's a serious danger in the air, Nero is persecuting Christians and Paul is currently on death row. So Paul is urging his spiritual son not to be afraid or ashamed of him or of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, even if it means he ends up on death row like Paul. He wants Timothy to realize that God's power will enable him to endure all this, the same God who saved them and gave them their holy calling to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. This salvation and calling were given to them by God's grace; they didn't have to work for it at all. The instant they believed in Christ as their Savior, He placed them in His Body with a specific purpose in mind. And God did all this before there was ever a concept called time.

Why shouldn't Paul and Timothy fear Nero, death, or anything else? Because Jesus Christ "has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." First, death can no longer harm you beyond the grave. Hell is no longer a threat and when you die, you'll be with God forever, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more pandemics; all those things are gone (Revelation 21:3-4). Second, what else has Jesus done for us? What kind of life can He give us today, right now? Why shouldn't we fear death or any of our current troubles or dilemmas? Because Jesus didn't just take care of death in all its forms, He's brought life immortal to us.

In John 10:10, Jesus promises that He came to give us not only life eternal but life abundantly. He took care of hell and death forever but He also wants us to have an abundant life now. Concerning everyday life and all its difficulties, in Luke 4:18 Jesus promises that He has Goodnews for the poor, that He can heal your broken heart, that He can free those who are enslaved in one form or another, that He can return your ability to see, and that He came to free you from your oppression. Can He deliver? Is He delivering Paul? It doesn't look like it; Paul's on death row. How is Paul going to escape this? What did Jesus do with death? He abolished it, took away all its power to hurt us. So what does this mean for Paul if they execute him? They may kill him, but Jesus will resurrect him and nevermore will he taste death or a cold Roman dungeon, or pain, or heartache, or pandemics, or depression, or failure, or let downs, etc., etc.

So it's not just after we die that we get relief, we can have it right now. Jesus has answers for you now: even a prison sentence can't take your joy away: Philippians 1:12-18—is prison supposed to give you joy? No, so why is Paul happy? What does he see with; which eyes does Paul see with? Jesus' (Galatians 2:20). What about everyday troubles, like this pandemic? Can Jesus give us relief, can He give us an actual life instead of the dead and depressing existence we now have?

1:11, God appointed Paul to give this marvelous news to the Gentiles. He appointed him preacher, apostle, and teacher. Why mention both preacher and teacher aren't they the same? A preacher proclaims the Word of God, expounds on it. So in some sense he's also a teacher. But a teacher of God's Word is going to do more with God's Word than merely teach a subject because the Bible is not a Textbook, it's a Manual for life. So a teacher must not only teach "what" but "how" and "why." He's going to get his hands dirty along with those he discipled the way Jesus did and the way He commands all of us to do (Matthew 28:20).

2 Timothy: 1:10-18 Does Jesus have the answer to fear, depression, and Pandemics?

1:12, why would Paul go through all this suffering for Jesus? Doesn't he know that he's giving up his life? If you gave up your life to follow Jesus, could He protect it, could He make it flourish? Did Jesus protect Paul's life or did Paul lose everything he had? What did Paul give up to follow Christ? Paul's desire was to be the greatest religious teacher that ever lived: he studied under the #1 teacher (Acts 22:3), he was at the top of his class, #1 in his field (Galatians 1:14), and he did everything perfectly (Philippians 3:4-11) so he was destined to succeed. Paul was like a Harvard graduate who graduated top of his class, got a job with the #1 law firm in the world, and was working on and winning all the biggest cases of the law firm. He was basically on his way to running the firm. Then one day he gave it all up to follow some guy named Jesus. Did he lose it all? NO, he actually gained it all. What?! What did Paul want to be? The greatest religious teacher that ever lived. Well, isn't that what he became? There are 13 books in the Bible that bear his name and he was one of a few in human history who had frequent, direct, face-to-face conversations with the God of the universe! It was Jesus who personally taught Paul what he knew (Acts 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; 27:23-24; Galatians 1:11-12). And what was the result for Paul? People have been studying his words and life for millennia!

Some think that becoming a Christian or fully committing your life to Christ means that He's going to take your life as you know it and replace it with a miserable one. But that's not who God is; He's a loving Father who made you with certain talents and abilities and He longs to see you use them (Psalm 139:13-16). That's how He made Paul from birth; it was always God's intention for Paul to be one of the greatest religious teachers that ever lived (Galatians 1:15-16). When we try to discover and live our life's purpose without God, that's when it's miserable: first, we may never discover what our purpose is. Second, if we do find it and live it, it won't bring life and peace because we're separated from the God of life and peace. Without God, there's only death (Romans 8:6). Paul knows the truth about the meaning and purpose of life; he knows that it's only the Lord who can give him the life He's always wanted, that if he gave up his life to follow Him, then Jesus would not only safeguard it but make it flourish.

1:13, Timothy is facing individuals in Ephesus who are teaching false and erroneous things. They're twisting God's Word and adding to it. To battle this and set things right, he must cling to the sound and error-free teaching and example Paul gave him. He must do so by means of the trust and love that are found in Christ Jesus; he must not rely on his own abilities but Christ's.

1:14, in 1:12 Jesus will safeguard what Timothy put in His trust. Now, Timothy must safeguard what Jesus put in his trust. The ministry and calling Jesus gave him, he must protect and allow to flourish. And here too, he must not rely on his own abilities but the Lord's, i.e., he must protect and fan its flame by means of the Holy Spirit who dwells in him.

1:15-18, Paul closes with some prime examples of the ashamed vs. the unashamed, the fearful vs. the brave. He shows Timothy the result of those who are fearful and ashamed: every Christian in Asia has turned their backs on Paul and he singles out two individuals by name. These were likely trying to protect their life, reputation and well-being. But instead all they did is become cautionary tales for anyone else who might be tempted to turn their backs on God and their fear stole their reputation and future rewards. In contrast to these two and everyone else who turned their backs on Paul, there was Onesiphorus and his household. Onesiphorus was not ashamed or afraid to be associated with Paul, even if it meant his life. He purposely sought him out in Rome and cared for him (he likely provided food, drink, and money since the State didn't provide for prisoners). Through Onesiphorus God says to us, "Even if the whole world abandons you, I will look after you. I will provide you help when you need it [Hebrews 4:16]." Paul knew this to his core: for Paul, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:19-21).