

A DIFFERENT WAY OF SUFFERING

“So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.” 2 Timothy 1:8 NIV

Suffering is something that we all naturally try to avoid. It is not something that we ask for.

Suffering affects all of us for different reasons:

- Outward circumstances, sicknesses, events and situations that come unexpectedly.
- Our bad decisions and choices, and deliberate behaviour that we know is wrong.

In *2 Corinthians 11* Paul lists the sufferings he experienced because of his ministry for Christ and the Gospel.

Paul in prison writes to encourage Timothy in the ministry and reminds him to fan into flame the gift of God in him.

Paul encourages Timothy progress in his ministry as God did not give him a spirit of fear.

Timothy had God's love, power and ability to draw upon when experiencing confrontation, intimidation and hostility.

In *2 Timothy 1:8* Paul begins with the word '**SO**'.

“So God has now given to us a spirit of power, love and self-discipline do not be ashamed of the testimony (the Gospel) of the Lord, or ashamed of me, his prisoner (being imprisoned because of the Gospel).

RATHER (in the place of being ashamed) join with me in suffering for the gospel **BY THE POWER OF GOD**.

How was Paul able to walk through suffering, hostility and shame and come out the other side – no breakdown, no shrinking back from the ministry God gave him?

Paul declares in *2 Timothy 4:17-18* *but the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength...18: The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Examples for our encouragement:

Moses

Hebrews 11:26-27 NIV He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. 27: By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger, he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible.

Peter and the other Apostles

Acts 5:41 NLT The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus.

Acts 5:41 NIV The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

“People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege”. - David Livingstone

*“If I had not felt certain that every additional trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated suffering.”
- Adoniram Judson*

Jesus – the greatest example:

Hebrews 9:14 NLT For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrews 12:2 NIV Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame...

Believers who interact and work with people of different beliefs and worldviews, and opinions about life, God, current affairs and the future.

Christ calls and equips us to have an influence, and to speak the truth in love with those whom we interact with.

...there is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...
John 4:18

Jesus himself is that perfect love and he lives in each of us.

As I finish let me read my opening Scripture again from the Amplified bible:

2 Timothy 1:8 AMP “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord or about me His prisoner, but with me take your share of suffering for the gospel [continue to preach regardless of the circumstances], in accordance with the power of God [for His power is invincible].”