

2 Timothy 1:8-14. ⁸So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, ¹⁰but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. ¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. ¹³What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

A Call to Arms: God has called us to a Holy Life.

- 1. Declare and live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ**
- 2. Live knowing that the Spirit lives in you and heaven is your home.**

In 1775 Patrick Henry addressed the Virginia Convention at St. John's Church in Richmond, Virginia. In his speech he called his fellow countrymen to take up arms and fight against the British forces. He delivered a speech that was once described as "one of the most bold, vehement, and animated pieces of eloquence that had ever been delivered." His speech was so passionate and poignant that it was widely credited with swinging the balance in convincing the convention to pass a resolution delivering Virginian troops for the Revolutionary War. In his speech he spoke of taking action against the British forces, the odds of victory might have seemed insurmountable, but in his mind there was nothing left to do but to stand tall and fight. He believed so passionately in this course of action, that he reportedly ended his famous speech with the words, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" A few months later, not only were the colonial forces willing to fight, but the American leadership was willing to sign the declaration of Independence and risk their very lives for the ideas of freedom and liberty which they held so dear.

The following are a few excerpts from his speech. *"They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year?... Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and*

foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power.... Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.... Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

It is a spectacular speech that reflects the American spirit that we still celebrate today. This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. This call to action resonates within us as members of this proud nation.

This type of call to action should also resonate with us as Christians. God uses his apostle Paul to declare a call to arms of sorts for the Christian. **Our God has called us to live a Holy life and to declare the gospel of Jesus. He calls you to live a holy life knowing that the Spirit dwells with you. He urges you to live a holy life knowing that heaven is your home.**

Paul wasn't exactly in a favorable position to speak words of inspiration and confidence. Paul was in jail because of his faith; and yet he was not ashamed to testify about the Lord. Despite his lowly appearance and his difficult predicament he encouraged others to live their faith and proclaim the gospel. ***8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord.*** Where would such confidence come from? It wasn't like Christianity was the clear frontrunner religion or even very popular compare with the majority in that ancient world. It didn't appear that living a life of faith was that rewarding. In fact, it appeared the opposite. Paul, God's greatest missionary was in jail, and he was sentenced to die. Some viewing the possibility of similar hardship, and a gruesome death, would certainly be tempted to give up, and yet Paul encouraged others to suffer with him. He called others to action. He called others to use the time that had been given on this earth to live their Christian faith. Why could he speak with such confidence, such boldness, with such bravery, when it seemed like he was so outmatched by the forces of this world.

At this point it is interesting to look at how Patrick Henry spoke about the perception of long odds that faced the fledgling American forces. *"They tell us, that we are weak unable to cope with so formidable an adversary."* Remember how Mr. Henry shoved aside such feelings of trepidation that went with such opposition as he asserted that their American forces were as well equipped as they were going to be, saying, *"Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction..."* going on, he says, *"Sir we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power..."* In his mind this was the time for boldness, for bravery, for action.

As the Lord calls us to arms to live a holy life we might have similar thoughts of trepidation and timidity. It seems that our enemy the devil, the world around us, and our sinful flesh never grow tired up advancing against us. These are powerful forces who

often work together in a terrible alliance. Our flesh tries to convince us that to fight against temptation, to live your faith, to obey your God, well, there is really no point to it. In this world we are outnumbered and outmatched. Perfection is beyond your reach, living your faith would lead you in different direction than many around you, it would be uncomfortable, painful, at times shameful and therefore you don't need to fight against temptation and the ways of the world and your flesh; instead stick with spiritual apathy and inactivity and fall into line with the rest of the world. This is one the many ways that the devil, the world, and flesh march against us.

These evil forces also find a common ally in death that final enemy of ours. "Give me liberty or give me death" is an inspiring bit of oration, but death is perhaps the most intimidating of our enemies. Death is one of those things that can leave us feeling so helpless and so vulnerable. We do our best to live our lives to protect ourselves, to stay safe. We utilize the blessings of medicine and technology that we have been given in this wonderful nation but then illness, or heart disease, or cancer comes unexpectedly and takes a friend or loved one. Despite all the medical advancements and education and tools at our disposal in this medically advanced nation of ours still there are babies who die. There are still sons and daughters, friends and classmates, coworkers and neighbors, who still die far too young. And we know that death will come for us one day as well, and so all this shakes us, it leaves us feeling helpless. It makes us feel powerless. Sometimes such suffering might cause us to feel like curling up into a ball, (or lying supinely on our backs hugging some phantom hope that everything is going to be alright) and giving up the fight of faith. Sometimes it makes us feel like just giving ourselves over to the slavery of selfish and sinful ways, because anything else would be pointless.

But, this is the encouragement that God gives us in his Word, this is the passionate message that delivers us from the slavery of sin and the doldrums of despair. Our God ***has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*** Christ has brought life and immortality to light. We have life in him. He will guide us through the perils of this life, the troubles of mortality, to the endless joys of immortality in heaven.

We have hope and purpose and life only because of the power of Jesus Christ and the power of his good news of salvation. For those who are in Christ Jesus not even death can destroy the victory that we have in him; especially when we use the gifts that God hath handed unto us. The LORD God has given us his powerful Word, in this life giving gospel he tells us that God's own son came to this world to defeat our enemies for us. He came to this world to destroy the devil's work. He came to overcome the world. He came to die for us, and when he rose again he crushed death under his foot. He came to cleanse us and equipped with the means of grace in word and baptism that we might and drown the sinful nature daily. He gives us the gift of the Lord's Supper so that you might

be personally assured of his love and then strengthened unto a life of obedience to our God. Jesus came to this world to take away our sins, to make us right with God and to give us the full assurance of eternal life in heaven. He has saved us through his life, his death, and resurrection, he has brought us to faith through the Gospel and now he has called us to a life of purpose, to use the days that God has given us for a life of faith in action. He has called us to stand tall and fight against the enemies of our new nature. He has called us to use our days on earth to fight against temptation, to stand tall against the influences of this world, and to struggle vehemently against the devil and all his allies.

He has called us not because we deserved it, not because of anything that we had done or any valor that was naturally in us, but because of his love. His love for me existed before I existed. His love for me sought me out and brought the gospel into my life to save my life, to change my life, to rescue me from fear and even death itself. And now through that powerful Gospel, now through His Holy Spirit working in you and me, we are assured that our God will lead us through the life in our native land until we safely stand in our fatherland of heaven.

So let us live to God's glory now, let us take up this message with joy and share it with others. Let us take heed to our God's call to arms and live a holy life, until the day that we die in peace, knowing that the Spirit of God was with us, and that we will live in the blessed land of heaven.

Much more powerful than any patriotic speech we have the very words of God. We have the message of Jesus who gave us victory over death itself. This powerful message will lead us to do some amazing things. As Christians we will live with confidence, we speak that message without shame despite what those around us say to dispute our faith – including those who shamelessly slander us on social media. The Lord Jesus will take us by the hand and he will inspire us to live for him so much that the tragedy of death, this horrible result of sin, this final enemy, is now limited in how it can affect us. We will be shaken but not destroyed. We will grieve, but we will still have hope. For the Holy Spirit, who dwells within each one of us through faith, is our guarantee that heaven itself is ours.

This is a compelling message. Christ has lived and died for us. Christ has won the victory for us. We have been set free from sin and from the powers of the devil. We have been released from death's paralyzing grip and we have been set free from sin and shame so that we may live out our faith. There will be challenges, there will be obstacles, at times we will seem badly outnumbered and outmatched, but remember Jesus has saved us and called us ***not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.*** He has saved us, he has called us to a holy life, and he has given us Holy Spirit to be our protector, our helper, our guide. Let us gladly take up this task, fearless of the pressures of this world, and even death itself. And with the Spirit's help may this always be our thought or even our battle cry, "Give me Christ in life and in death!" for he is the only one who gives us endless liberty. Amen.