

Jesus said that whoever is ashamed of Him and His words, when Jesus returns on the day of the Lord (in all of His glory), He'll be ashamed of them.

What does it mean to be ashamed of Jesus???

Well, to be ashamed of something, is to distance ourselves from it, or to keep our allegiance hidden...

e.g.

The behaviour of the Greens in Parliament at the moment – I find it “obscene”...

- *Adam Bandt removes the Australian flag from his press conferences. He's ashamed of our heritage; he's ashamed of what our flag represents.*
- *One of their senators was forced to restate her oath of allegiance to the Queen, after she called her “the colonising queen”ⁱ... But of course, to become a senator, she **has** to pledge her allegiance **to** the Queen...*

They are ashamed of what it means to be Australian. And I find that abhorrent – that people who are ashamed to be Australian, are in our Parliament.

But how could we ever be ashamed of Jesus??? Why would a Christian ever ‘distance’ themselves from Jesus, or keep their allegiance to Jesus hidden???

Well, it happens, and usually, it's because of persecution: Whether it's physical persecution, or whether it's because one might be mocked because of their faith in Jesus...

Now, depending on what company you keep, how often that's going to happen. If we only ever mix with Christians, we're probably not going to be mocked very often (at least we won't hear the mocking)... But if we genuinely get involved in the community, and live out our faith in the community, there **are** going to be times when Jesus and His followers, are mocked. I can promise you of that...

In other countries, it's not just being mocked – in some lands, it is downright dangerous to be known as a Christian. The risk is

- prison;
- beatings;
- their homes burned down;
- children can be removed;
- re-education; and even
- death...

And in Australia now (in our own land), we're starting to see laws being introduced, where Christians can and will be punished for:

- preaching the whole gospel;
- publicly reading scripture
- daring to say that particular things are sin; and
- for daring to say that an unrepentant sinner will go to hell

(if somebody feels that what is said, vilifies them, or offends them)

It gets labelled as “hate speech”, and that's illegal.

Now, to us, this comes as a dreadful development, because we're not used to being persecuted in this sort of way... But, let me tell you, "the lack of persecution" has been an anomaly – it's not normal... It's normal for Christians to be persecuted.

And this becomes evident, when we read a little bit wider as to what Jesus said about "being ashamed" of Him.

Luke 9:23-26 (ESV)

²³ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Alright, He's telling us, that persecution is normal for a disciple of Jesus, and we should expect it, and be prepared for it, and be ready for it...

That's rather sobering, isn't it... But let me blunten it just a tiny bit for you...

When persecution comes, sometimes every Christian cops it, but **more often**, it's either the Christian leaders, or those who

are more prominent (those who are in the public eye) who copped it...

If you remember back a couple of years, when TingTing shared with us what it's like being a Christian in China. And I asked her if she was afraid, and she said "Not really"... It's mainly the pastors who are in danger. And then she went on to tell us that we've learned, "Even if we get executed for our faith — GLORY!!!" ...

But it's not only church leaders who are in danger – it's also Christians who are in the public eye.

We saw this happening in the media over the last couple of weeks. The Manly Sea Eagles decided that for a particular game, their players had to wear a special edition "gay pride" jersey, to show their support for that lifestyle. But there were 7 players (Manly 7), some of whom are Christians (Not all, but some), who said, that they weren't willing to wear that jersey, because they can't support what God has said is "sin". They didn't want to be divisive about it – they just said, "I can't wear it"... And their club wouldn't let them wear any other jersey, and so they couldn't play...

And they copped it. They copped it from some sections of the media. They copped it from activists; They copped it from keyboard warriors...

And you know what? Even some Christians tried to distance themselves from them... "These men, they say they're making a stand because of their faith, But Oh, we would never do that – that's just hateful..."

These men were not ashamed of Jesus/what the Bible teaches. They were willing to say, “I’m a Christian – I’m a follower of Jesus, and so I cannot give my support to that lifestyle” ...

Are we ashamed of Jesus? Are we ashamed of our faith? Are we the sorts of people who tailor our words and our allegiance to Gospel, depending on the group we’re currently mixing with?

If I’m in a group and people are coming down on Christians for their obedience to the Scripture, do I hold my tongue and am ashamed of Jesus? Or do I give testimony to Jesus? And say, “You know what? I would’ve done the same thing, because I’m a Christian too. I am a sinner whom Jesus has forgiven, and for me to love others, I have to share the gospel, that life and forgiveness, isn’t found in self-justification, but in repenting of sin, and being forgiven by our Lord” ...

When the crowds are against Jesus, to be ashamed of Him, is to distance ourselves from Him, or to hide our allegiance to Him and His words?

Or, when the crowds are against a particular Christian because they’ve taken the unpopular stand and been obedient to God’s word, will we be ashamed of them? Will we distance ourselves from them?

You see, that’s what we see coming through in today’s reading. Paul (as a prominent Christian leader), has been imprisoned... He’s not ashamed of Jesus, and that’s why he’s

been imprisoned... But others have not only been ashamed of Jesus – they’re ashamed of Paul...

He says “Everyone in Asia’s deserted me” (modern day Turkey). That’s a bit of hyperbole, because not everyone in Asia has deserted him – Timothy is in Ephesus, which is part of Asia, and he talks-up Onesiphorus, who Paul says, **was not ashamed of my chains.**

Onesiphorus travelled to Rome and searched for Paul. Apparently it wasn’t easy to find a particular prisoner in Rome. But he found him and Paul was refreshed by his coming.

But Onesiphorus was in the minority. Many Christians had turned their backs on Paul – Oh, he got in trouble – we don’t want to get in trouble.

As Christians, this life – this current physical life, isn’t the be-all and end-all. We have a holy calling. And it’s a calling of grace. We haven’t earned this calling – it’s by the will of God. It is God’s plan, and He worked out this plan before the ages began.

When Jesus Christ appeared, He **abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ...**

The Gospel, isn’t only what Jesus has done – it’s the Good **News about** what Jesus has done. It’s the message that we are all sinners in need of a saviour. It’s the message that Jesus is that Saviour.

And this is why we are not ashamed of Jesus. What's the worst that the world could do to us? Well, they could kill us. But why is that a problem when Christ has **abolished death and brought life and immortality.**

And so Paul says:

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.

Paul is not ashamed – he's not afraid,, because he doesn't only know a fact – he doesn't only know the outcome (how it all works out in the end) – he knows a person... **I know whom I have believed** – he **knows** the Lord Jesus Christ. And our Lord – He is able to guard – He is able to keep...ⁱⁱ Even if we die, and Paul doesn't have long to live – he's soon to be executed. But he knows, the one who has abolished death...

So, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has overcome death, is the one who is able to keep us (even through death)... But there's something also, that **we** have to keep. We are told to keep to the pattern, or to follow the **standard of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**

The teaching that the Apostle Paul gave, were sound words. Some folk like to change the Gospel a bit – they like to change

the Christian faith a bit, to fit what they like to believe... And some rale against “cookie-cutter” Christians... *“You’re very opinionated – you expect that Christians should all believe the same thing...”*

But you know what? When it comes to the essentials of the Gospel, we’re **supposed** to all believe the same thing, because there is **one** truth, and that is what we’re supposed to believe – Truth..

That’s why Paul says: ¹³ Follow the pattern [standard] of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

The truth of our Lord Jesus – the truth of the Gospel, is what the Apostles taught – it’s what’s written in our Bibles. And we follow that standard – we don’t change it; We don’t ignore it.

And ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, he says: guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

What’s the “good deposit”, that God has deposited into us? It’s His word.. And when the Holy Spirit is alive in us, we will love His word – we’re not going to want to change it, because we love God’s word, the way that it is.

And in this, Paul highlights 2 things: “faith” and “love”, only it’s not only “faith” as in “believing” – it’s “**the** faith” – the true gospel – what we believe – the true teaching of Jesus and the teaching of the apostles. This is what we guard. And of course, love.

When the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we will love the gospel – we love “the faith”, and we guard it – we keep it pure,, AND we will love our brothers and sisters in Christ.... That means we won’t desert them when they suffer...

That’s why our church is connected with Open Doors, and every Sunday we pray for the persecuted church.

So, let’s never be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord. By the Holy Spirit, we guard the good deposit that He’s made in us. But that doesn’t mean that we hide it away. If it’s testimony, that means it has to be spoken.

I’m reminded of the parable of the talents. And the parable of the talents isn’t about us using our talents for God – Talents are a measurement of gold. And so, the master left different sized deposits with different servants. Two of them put those deposits to work. One of them was afraid, and so he hid it. And it didn’t end well for that servant.

And that’s pretty much what Paul’s been telling us here. God has given us a deposit – He’s entrusted us with the Gospel. Those who are ashamed of Jesus and ashamed of God’s word and the Gospel, will hide it away.

But God has not given us a spirit of fear, and so by His Holy Spirit, we guard what He has given us, but there’s no way that we hide it, because we are not ashamed of our Lord or His Gospel.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father,

For many years, we've been privileged
to be very much free from persecution (in the land we
live).

And yet, to our shame,

It's almost been as if we've been ashamed of You.

We've hidden the message;

Sometimes we've hidden our allegiance;

Sometimes we've stood apart from Christians who are
suffering for their faith.

Lord, forgive us.

And we ask, that by the power of your Holy Spirit,

We would cherish and guard

the deposit of Your wonderful word...

And Lord, may we be never ashamed of you,

that we would share this Good News;

share this deposit,

with all who will listen.

in Jesus' Name,

Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/politics/greens-senator-lidia-thorpes-queen-gambit-backfires/news-story/226c18a928a80a9c9b2d3bf5ac210165>

ⁱⁱ NIGTC

What does Paul mean by “my deposit” (τὴν παραθήκην μου)? Essentially two answers are proposed: The first is that the deposit is what God has entrusted to Paul, usually understood as the gospel although sometimes of his ministry: “what has been entrusted to me” (*RSV*; cf. *TEV*, *NEB*). The second is that the deposit is what Paul has entrusted to God, usually regarded as his life or himself: “what I have entrusted to him” (*NASB*, *NIV*, and the marginal alternatives in *RSV*, *TEV*, *NEB*).