Not Being Ashamed of Christ, Part 3
2 Timothy 1:11-18
55-4

This morning, let's open our Bibles to our study of 2 Timothy verses 6 through 8 in chapter 1...the very first chapter of 2 Timothy. We're really just getting started in completing this first chapter which is in many ways introductory. I would remind you that at the writing of this, the Apostle Paul is facing death. He is looking, as it were, down the barrel of the gun that will take his life, or rather at the blade of the axe that will sever his head. He realizes it is only a brief time. In chapter 4 he said, "I am ready to be offered and the time of my departure has arrived." He is at the very end. He is in a dungeon in Rome. The ministry that God had given to him has been completed. He has finished the course. He has kept the faith. He awaits his reward.

But before he exits this world, having fulfilled faithfully that which God commissioned him to do, he writes this letter to his beloved son in the faith to encourage Timothy to carry on. Timothy, as we have been learning, was a bit on the timid or meek side, tended to be easily intimidated by those who were opposing him, whether in the church or outside the church and perhaps was in a time at the very writing of this epistle when he desperately needed to be strengthened and called to courage. So it is important for Paul as he is ready to give his life for Christ to call on Timothy to carry on the work. The strength of Timothy's testimony could be that which impacted so many many many other people, positively or negatively.

Now as we have learned as Paul writes this epistle, its intention is to strengthen him. That's...that's kind of the key and it is in chapter 2 verse 1 that Paul says that, "Be strong in the Lord," which may be the focal point of all that he says. But here in chapter 1 before he gets into specific exhortations as to how Timothy is to carry on the work, he calls for Timothy to have the right attitude, underlying what he does is the way he feels and how he thinks. And the attitude that Paul knows Timothy must have is an attitude of great courage. And so here in verses 6 to 18 three times there is mention the idea of not being ashamed of Christ...once in verse 8, once in verse 12, and once in verse 16. And that's the theme here. Timothy, you cannot be ashamed of Christ. If you're going to be effective you have to be bold, you have to be courageous, you have to take your stand and then you will influence others and then you will advance the Kingdom.

I was reading this week about the Boxer(?) rebellion years ago in China and the rebels captured one of the mission stations and they sealed off every exit to the mission station except one gate which they left open. They took a cross and they put the cross down in the dirt in the center of that gate and they said to all of the missionaries and all of the students that were there, for it was some kind of a mission school, that they were to walk out that gate and if they would trample the cross under their feet they would go free. And the record states that the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet and were allowed to go free. The eighth student was a young girl who came to the cross, knelt down, prayed for strength, stood up, walked around the cross right into the firing squad. Ninety two of the remaining students which was all that were left did the same thing and walked to their

death rather than deny Christ and trample His cross. The strength infused into the ninety two from the strength of the one girl. What a tremendous lesson that is in the possibility of the impact of a courageous life. And as you and I live courageously for the cause of Christ, as we live unashamedly for the cause of Christ, we have a tremendous impact. And that's what Paul wants Timothy to have.

But how? How is it that you can be impactful for Christ? Well you have to be a fanatic of sorts. I was reading a book this week by Lloyd Billingsly in which he said, "This is the age of fanaticism." He said, "If you don't think this is the age of fanaticism, then ask yourself how much a fanatic a person has to be to murder the baby in their womb, that's fanatical behavior." The fact that a mother would murder her own infant in the protected place of the womb means that that woman for some philosophical or personal reason is an incredible fanatic. That they would do that kind of bizarre behavior and not be ashamed but rather flaunt it is a commentary on the fanaticism of that kind of behavior, that kind of attitude. And yet when we come to Christianity, how few fanatics there are. And those who are fanatics seem so to be looked down on not only by the world but often by the church.

Paul is calling for some fanaticism here. He's calling for a level of commitment that says, "I really don't care what the world has to say, I know what I'm mandated to be and do and that's what I'll be and that's what I'll do. I will boldly stand for Christ."

It wasn't easy for Timothy because there was internal pressure in the church at Ephesus where Timothy was laboring. The church had gone corrupt. It had bad leaders and it was full of sin. Not only that there was persecution coming on the outside because Nero had blamed the Christians for burning Rome and that persecution had ended up in Paul being incarcerated and Timothy knew because of his association to Paul that he was also vulnerable. And so Paul writes to strengthen this young man in his mid thirties and strengthen him in the faith so that he can carry on the work.

Now we've already learned that their first...the first four elements that Paul talks about to strengthen him are very very important. The first thing he says in verse 6 is to renew your gift. "And for this reason I remind you...the reason being because of your true faith, that you're a genuine believer...I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

Every true Christian has a gift. Paul says, "Timothy, you have a spiritual gift. You have a capacity energized by the Holy Spirit to preach, teach, lead, evangelize. You can't let that fall into disuse. Fan the flame. Don't let it die. Kindle it afresh, renew your gift." And I've been saying to you that courage initially in ministry rises out of a sense of giftedness. I can be bold and unashamed and courageous when I know that I'm doing what God has gifted me to do. Now if I was trying to do something that I had no aptitude or skill to do, I might well be embarrassed to do it. But why would I be embarrassed to do that which God has designed, gifted me to do? Courage then rises initially out of a sense of giftedness, that I have been enabled by the Holy Spirit, infused with a spiritual gift for the purpose of ministry in the name of Christ and for the advancement of His Kingdom. And if I know that I am divinely prepared and enabled to serve Christ and to proclaim His name and to represent Him and to build His body, then I have to do what I was designed to do. And frankly, if I don't do that I have violated the very reason for my existence. Not to use my spiritual gift is to place myself in a mode where I might as well be dead as far as usefulness to the church or the Kingdom. If I am not doing what God designed me to do, if I'm trying to preserve my life so I say I don't want to do that, I might lose my life, and then I do with my life something that God never designed for me to do, I might as well lose my life. Better that you should do what you're designed to do and lose your life then save your life by not doing what you were designed to do. What gain is there in that?

So the sense of giftedness is where he starts with Timothy. You've been given a gift. That gift has been affirmed to you by prophecy, by the laying on of my hands, by the laying on of the hands of the elders of your own church. You know what it is. You know what you're to do, now get on with it and do it with great courage because God has designed you to be able to do it.

Secondly, consider your resources. If you're timid, he says in verse 7, God has not given us a spirit of timidity, if you are unashamed...if you are rather ashamed or if you are weak or if you are a bit intimidated, if you are cowardly, you didn't get it from God. What God has given you, already you have it, is power, love and discipline. Power because Jesus said you will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, Acts 1:8, every believer has the Spirit, every believer has power. Not only that, Romans 5:5 says the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts. You have that love. Furthermore, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control or discipline, Galatians 5:23. You have power, you have love, you have discipline. You have the power to minister effectively. You have the love of God and the love of men that draws you into ministry. And you have the ability in the Holy Spirit to construct your life, order your life, prioritize your life to get the maximum effect. Those are your divine resources.

So, Timothy, renew your gift, that is take a good hard look at what you've designed...been designed to do and consider the resources God has given you in which to do that. Thirdly, and this is very important, accept your suffering, verse 8, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me as prisoner but join with me in suffering for the gospel." Anticipate it. Expect it. If you buy into the health, wealth, prosperity lie, if you buy into what really is a Satanic message that Jesus wants you only happy, only content, only fully well healed, prosperous, healthy, no problems, cashing in on every possible goodie that you could ever imagine, if you buy into that theology then you start to suffer, something's going to go wrong at the very core of your life because it will be totally contrary to what you expected from God. But you need to anticipate suffering. You need to anticipate opposition. You need to anticipate that the truth of God thrown into the midst of an ungodly world is going to get a negative reaction. Opposition is inevitable, it goes with ministry. Loyalty to the gospel means conflict with Christ-rejectors. Learn to expect it.

In fact, I've learned to expect it as a confirmation that I'm doing the right thing. That's part of it.

Fourthly, we saw, remember your God. Verse 8, he speaks of the power of God and then defines that power of God as demonstrated in its greatness in salvation, the saving work. "Who has saved us," took great power to do that, save us from hell and death and sin and Satan, "and has called us into a holy calling," that has not only saved us but made us holy who were unholy. And He did it all, and this is the thing you want to underline, "Not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

Now let me give you the perspective. Way back literally from before eternal times, the Greek says, God purposed in His own mind by grace to save us in Christ and make us holy and He did the whole thing beginning to end not according to our...what?...works. Now get the picture. He did it all without us. That's the idea. He did it all without us. And then He revealed it in verse 10, He now has revealed it by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, that is His appearing in resurrection, who abolished death and brought life and immorality (immortality) to light through the gospel. He did the whole saving work by His own plan through His own Son. He saved us. He made us holy. He gave us life. And He planned it all and did it all without us. And what Paul is saying is remember your God, the

God who saved you without your help will also be able to preserve you without your help, so you don't have to orchestrate your life for its own protection. Do you understand that? Boy, that's a tremendous truth.

I don't have to spend my time trying to design a comfortable life because I'm responsible to protect myself. Remember your God, he says. And you remember in 1 Peter 4:19, "Therefore let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful creator." Give yourself to God. You remember in the fiery furnace the friends of Daniel said, "You can throw us in the fiery furnace but our God will deliver us," Daniel 3:15 to 17? The Apostle Paul writing to the Philippians said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Remember your God.

If you approach ministry that way, you approach it in a way that's going to give you courage. You renew your gift, you consider your resources, you accept suffering as inevitable. And you remember the God who from eternity past planned the plan of redemption, brought it to appearing in Jesus Christ, saved you, made you holy, gave you life. That same God is your God. So remember the power of God.

Now let's look at the last four. Number five in our list, realize your duty...realize your duty. Paul then transitions in verse 11 in this rather personal section here to a look at his own life and ministry. "For which...referring back to the gospel, the gospel...for which I was appointed a preacher and an Apostle and a teacher; for this reason I also suffer these things." Now we'll stop at that point.

Paul says because of the gospel, I...that's in the emphatic position in the Greek...I myself was appointed by God, epithan(?), literally given a divine commission. Paul on the Damascus Road was commissioned by God, he was chosen as a vessel unto God. Ananias got the word from the Lord and passed it on to Paul in Acts 9. He was chosen as a vessel by God to serve in preaching the gospel. He says in Acts 20, "I do not consider my life dear to myself. I only want to finish the work the Lord has given me, namely preaching the gospel." I'm not in to self- preservation, I'm in to duty...I'm in to duty. I have been called and commissioned. Just like the Apostles, Jesus had said to them, "Go into all the world and make disciples," so to Paul Jesus on the Damascus Road said you're a chosen vessel, go and preach My name. "And this He spoke concerning the things that Paul would suffer in that preaching." In Colossians 1:23 he said, "I was made a minister." I didn't choose it, I was made a minister.

In 1 Corinthians 9 he said, "Don't commend me, I didn't choose to do this. If I do it I do it because God compelled me. Woe is unto me if I don't do it, so don't honor me, pray for me, I didn't choose to do it and I'm in great trouble if I don't do it right." I have this tremendous fear, he says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, that I might be a castaway, useless to God because of some sin. I'm in duty to serve Him with my whole heart.

So, Paul had a great sense of duty. Now what specifically was his duty? Well he was appointed a preacher, that talks about function. That means a proclaimer, a herald, one who announces publicly a message. Secondly, an Apostle, that speaks of his authority. As an Apostle he was chosen directly by Jesus Christ and he had a divine commission. So I am a divinely commissioned and sent preacher. Thirdly, a teacher speaks of his content. Preacher is function, Apostle is authority and teacher is content...to teach, that is to disseminate the truth of God. That's how he sees himself. You ask Paul to identify himself, he says I have been sent as an Apostle under authority to communicate the truth of God through proclamation. That's his calling. That's my duty, he says. And for this

reason, verse 12, "For this reason I also suffer." For what reason, Paul? For doing my duty. I suffer because I preach. I suffer because I preach truth. I suffer because I claim to be the representative of God who preaches truth, that's why I suffer. I bear in my body, Galatians 6, the marks of Christ. In other words, they're whipping me because I'm so identified with Christ. They would rather whip Christ but He's not around so they whip me instead. I suffer all these things, he says, for the sake of the gospel. That's the reason I suffer. Imprisonment...that's the reason I have been shipwrecked, that's the reason I have been stoned, that's the reason I have been beaten with whips and beaten with rods and all that chronicle of things he gives in 2 Corinthians chapter 11. That's the reason I'm in jail right now, I'm in a dungeon, a stinking smelly hole in the ground. I'm here. I'm suffering because of my duty...my commission. And he loved it though it brought him great pain.

It's a bittersweet thing. John had the same experience in Revelation when he ate the little book and it was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly. There's a bittersweet thing in ministry. Spurgeon really put his finger on it beautifully when he wrote, "A man shall carry a bucket of water on his head and be very tired with the burden. But that same man when he dives into the sea shall have a thousand buckets on his head without perceiving their weight because he is in the element entirely surrounds him. The duties of holiness are very irksome to men who are not in the element of holiness. But when once those men are cast into the element of grace then they bear ten times more and feel no weight but are refreshed thereby with joy unspeakable." That's a beautiful thought. Ministry and duty can be a tremendous burden if you're not in the element of holiness. But once you get in the very element of ministry and duty and holiness and grace and you begin to function as a way of life, then no single duty is a burden at all, it is a joy unspeakable.

Someone said to me yesterday, "How do you do it? How do you keep sustaining sermon after sermon, two sermons a week and writing and how do you do that week after week, year after year? That seems to me to be an overwhelming duty." I didn't know how to answer that because to me it is not a burden. I don't sense it as a burden. People say, "Well, that's like writing two major term papers every week and then having them scrutinized by six thousand people on Sunday morning and another two or three thousand Sunday night and thousands all over the world on tape. How do you do that? Isn't that a burden?" That has never been a burden to me, that is a joy to me because I am in the element of doing what God has designed for me to do and it bears no weight upon me. What is the burden to me is my sin and my weakness, not in my duty.

You know, duty can be the greatest joy or the deepest pain. And I'll tell you how. You do it and it provides the greatest joy. You don't do it and it provides the deepest pain. Duty undone is a killer. There are men whose lives are a shattered pot, as it were, or a vase simply because of duty undone. They've disintegrated. They've come to pieces. There is no evil that can bring such great retribution to the mind of man as the evil of a duty undone. There is no joy that is greater than a duty fulfilled. And I pray that God will give us the grace to do our duty. Paul says, "Look, I suffer these things because I was appointed to do this," very much like the gift point in verse 6. We have a duty. We are bound to do this. There is not a decision to be made. We are compelled to do it. So that's a very important thing, understand your duty.

Number six, and we get into a beautiful truth here, trust your security, verse 12...trust your security. Look at this, "But I am not ashamed even though I suffer...why?...for I know, I know..." Now stop there for a minute. "I know" is oidaalong with ginosko, it has the idea of knowing something because you have perceived it with your senses and come to the conclusion that it's true. And he's kind of summing up his testimony here. Others may be ashamed, I'm not ashamed. Others may want to

deny Christ, I won't. Others may want to be cowards, I won't. Others may defect, I won't. Why? "For I know," in other words, I personally have come to grasp something...what is it? "Whom I have believed." And whom had he believed? The Lord. He says, "I know first hand and personally the Lord. I can't bail out. Too much intimacy. My faith is a fully settled faith in the one I have personally experienced." Literally, "in whom I have believed" is a perfect-tense verb which means in the past he did it with continuing results. I continue to believe in the one I have already believed in. My faith is in the Lord. This could refer to God, revealed in Christ, and can refer to the Savior Christ Jesus mentioned in verse 10. I really think it's just general for specific reasons it refers to both. The Lord, the Lord God and the Lord Christ...literally I know by personal experience and observation the one whom I have trusted.

Please notice it's not in what I have believed, it's in whom I have believed. The thing that sustained him in suffering was not his theology, it was his God. Do you understand the difference? The thing that sustained him in trials was not doctrine, but fellowship...basic. So he says I know whom I have believed. And because I know Him, follow the verse, "I am convinced." Beautiful word, wonderful thought, I am persuaded, I am utterly confident, "That He is able...dunatos...powerful enough, powerful enough to guard...that's a military term, it literally means to guard...to guard what I have entrusted...that's one word, paratheke, the deposit, the deposit.

Now let me give you the big picture. Paul says I minister unashamedly, I suffer unashamedly because I trust my security. Nothing can take me out of the hand of God. Nothing can pull me out of the love of Christ. I know that. I know by personal experience. You remember, this is the end of his life. I have been through years and years of trials and years and years of tests and years and years of struggles. I have seen the power of God again and again and again. I have seen Him heal. I have seen Him save. I have seen Him do providentially things that had no other explanation than the evasion of God. I have seen it all. I have walked with Him. I have seen the living Christ three times, in personal experience he had. He had ascended to the third heaven, seen things too wonderful to speak. He knew God. He knew Him intimately, personally by experience and observation. And knowing Him in that way, "I am absolutely convinced that He will guard my deposit." And what was the deposit? His life...his life, his soul, his ministry, his time, his eternity, everything he was. I don't have any fear because I trust my security. Boy, what a way to live. I just give my life to God and go on about my business. That's the confidence that you have to have. I made a deposit with God. What did you deposit? Paul, I deposited Paul. I said, "Here, God, here's Paul. Have him. I no longer count him dear to my life or to myself, I'm not interested in preservation, I'm interested in duty. He's yours, take care of him. When You want him to go, he goes."

So, his confidence didn't come from a creed, it didn't come from a theology, it didn't come from an association, it didn't come from a denomination, didn't come from an ordination, it didn't come from anything other than a personal intimate first- hand relationship with the living God whom he so implicitly trusted that he simply gave him his life and went on about his business. In fact, I personally believe that he wished the Lord would hurry up his death timetable. I think he kind of felt in his heart that he was sort of overstaying in this world. He was ready to be offered. He says that in chapter 4.

So he says I trust my security. He'll be able to keep me. Now notice this, marvelous truth, the end of verse 12, "Until that day." What day? What day is "that day?" Look at verse 18, "The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day." What day is that day? Chapter 4 verse 8, "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on...what?...that day and not to me but also to all who have loved His appearing." All believers.

All believers are going to have a day when they receive the crown of righteousness. On that day. What day is that? That's the day when the Lord comes to reward His church. That day, the day of rewards, the day of the judgment seat of Christ. Romans 14:10 talks about the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:9 and 10 talks about the judgment seat of Christ. There's coming a day when Jesus will come to reward us. Revelation 22:12, "Behold I come quickly and My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be." So the Lord Jesus, I believe, takes the church up in the Rapture and right after that we come to what's called the Bemaand we receive rewards. That's what Paul is saying. I know that the Lord is able to hold on to my life until I stand that day to receive my eternal reward. That's confidence, isn't it? I trust my security. I don't need to preserve my life. I believe in Him who is able to keep me from falling and present me blameless before His throne, Jude 24 says. I believe in the God out of whose hands I can never be plucked, John 10. I believe in the words of Jesus that all that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I have lost none of them but will raise him up at the last day. Paul is saying I'm going to go and give my life and abandon my life to the cause of Christ because I trust my security. And my security is the Lord Himself.

So what is there to preserve? Does He need me to do that? Does He need me to make sure everything works out right? No, we have supreme assurance. Oh what a marvelous thing. Just imagine if that one doctrine wasn't true. Just imagine if everything in the gospel was true except the fact that the Lord kept you saved. How would you like that? What a horrible horrible fearful omission that would be. But you can trust your life to the Lord and not all the demons in hell can touch you. Great truth. So you want to be courageous, renew your gift, consider your resources, accept your suffering, remember your God, realize your duty and trust your security.

Number seven, affirm your doctrine...affirm your doctrine. Boy, this is so important. He says to Timothy, "Look, now, retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you." He just talked about...Paul just talked about his life being entrusted to God, now he talks about God entrusting the treasure to Timothy. It goes both ways.

What's he talking about? He's talking about doctrine. Go back to verse 13, "Retain" means to hold tightly or firmly, to grasp, hold tightly to the standard, hupotuposis, it means the structure, the outline, the model, the pattern of sound words, healthy wholesome life-giving words...true doctrine, truth. That term is used in 1 Timothy, the strength of calling this young man to hold to truth and sound doctrine, so much at the heart of everything that Paul instructed him. In fact, you remember that we said at the close of the first epistle, you look at it there, chapter 6 verse 20 when we were studying this, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you." And what was entrusted to him? The truth, sound doctrine...sound doctrine.

Let me put it to you very simply, folks. The reason most people don't have the courage of their convictions is because they don't have convictions. Before you can put your life on the line for what you believe, you have to believe it. And I was on a radio talk show this last week and I said, "Do you know what I believe is plaguing America..." they were asking about what I thought was tragic about the PTL scandal and I said, "what is tragic in my mind is abysmal mistreatment of the Word of God but the fact that the church and so many people who call themselves Christians weren't particularly concerned about this until it finally exploded." In other words, people are all in the name of love wanting to accept any kind of theology that allows for anything. And the reason we don't have the courage of our convictions is because we don't have the convictions to start with. So he is saying guard the truth, verse 14, retain the standard of sound wholesome life-giving words, be committed to

the proper theological structure, the proper interpretation of Scripture, the proper outline of the truth that produces spiritual growth, spiritual maturity. Have a theology. We live in a time in the Christian church when the church is atheological. In fact, if you hold firmly strong doctrine people think you're unloving and antagonistic. And sermonettes for Christianettes and pious platitudes and atheological kind of sort of Pablum stuff that's being passed off as Bible teaching is woefully lacking in building backbone into Christian people because it has no sense of conviction. People want to hear fair speeches and words that tickle their ears and make them feel good about themselves. So he says hold to the truth.

And, beloved, I'm just telling you this, part of courage in ministry comes because you have such strong convictions. People with strong convictions tend to be bold. But notice the balance of it in verse 13. While you're retaining this structure and pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, that's the apostolic doctrine that Paul had passed to Timothy under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he says the things that you have heard that you're holding on to, retain in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. What does he mean by that? He means you hold them first with a right attitude toward God, that is trustingly in faith. Don't hold your theology with doubt, hold your theology with faith. Don't have a theology that is a theology of doubt...well, I think I know what I believe, but I'm not sure, I was surer a few weeks ago before I read this, now I don't know if I know anymore...don't hold your theology in doubt, hold it in faith and hold it in love. Speak the truth in love, it says in Ephesians 5..4:15. Speak the truth in love. So you hold it in faith, not wavering, as James says, "If anybody wavers he's like a man who's tossed and driven by the sea," unstable soul. Don't be like that. Don't have doubt. Be assured that what you believe is true. Don't have a doubting orthodoxy, and don't have a dead orthodoxy, a loveless cold insensitive orthodoxy.

So, retain it but hold it with faith toward God and love toward man. In that way you'll be doing it in the Spirit of Christ Jesus who provides that faith and provides that love. And then verse 14 he says the same thing another way. "Guard..." keep safe, it means, preserve from corruption or destruction. He sees Timothy as a defender of the faith. "Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." Romans 8:9 says that every Christian has the Holy Spirit, "If any man have not the Holy Spirit, he's none of His." So everyone has the Holy Spirit who knows Christ. And he says the Spirit is in us. Then through His power guard...what?...the treasure...that's that paratheke...which has been entrusted to you. And what is the treasure? Truth, the Word of God. I said this when we studied 1 Timothy 6:20 and 21, we are as a church the guardians of the truth. That's our primary function. We are to guard the truth. We are to secure the truth. We are to hold to the truth. I said yesterday at a meeting we had at the college to some people who were visiting, the primary role of this institution is the same as it is the church, that is to guard the truth, to raise up a generation of young men and women who will hold to the truth, who will retain the truth, who will pass the truth on. That's the issue. What a challenge.

Now the deposit of my life with God is secure, how secure is the deposit of God's Word with me? Boy, I tell you, those people who defect, those colleges and seminaries and churches and so forth that deviate from the Word of God will indeed have a day of accounting to face because they have done the one thing that God warned not to do and that is they have failed to retain the truth. They have failed to guard the truth...the treasure, the deposit that was entrusted to you. God has entrusted His Word to me. This is the most solemn responsibility that I have in my life. And I have a solemn responsibility for the trust of my wonderful wife. I have a solemn responsibility for the trust of my dear children. But they combined do not come to the level of the trust that I have to maintain the integrity of the Word of God. That's the most sacred trust I have. I am more than anything guardian of the truth and so are you, all of us are.

So, he says, "Look, Timothy, hold on to your sound doctrine. If you're going to have courage you have to have convictions to have courage about." And you ought to thank God if you have a solid conviction in your heart about the truths of God's Word. You're rare, you know that? You're a rare person. In fact, when your other Christian relatives come to visit you may even have arguments because you believe some things so strongly that they don't believe. And they vaccilate but you don't. Thank God that you have a strong understanding of Scripture and stand for your convictions. And hold your doctrine in faith toward God no doubting and in love toward men not abusing.

So, how do you avoid being ashamed of Christ? Renew your gift, consider your resources, accept your suffering, remember your God, realize your duty, trust your Savior, affirm your doctrine, and lastly, choose your associates. Boy, this is so important. I couldn't figure out how this last section fit in and I was going over it and over it and over it in my little study and I just didn't see how it all fit in. And all of a sudden it just hit me like a bolt...I know how this fits in, he's throwing in this little deal at the end here to crystallize into groups those that are ashamed and those that aren't. You say, "I read that once and that was obvious to me." Well I'm a little thick. It took me about a whole afternoon to land on that one. And that's what he's saying, choose your associates. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Bad company corrupts good morals." Who you run around with is very important. You get around courageous people and guess what? You start feeling courageous. You get around weak spineless people and you'll begin to feel like they feel. One's boldness and one's courage has a lot to do with one's associates. And so he gives two options.

Group 1, verse 15, "You are aware of the fact that all...boy, what a word...all who are in Asia...Asia Minor where Ephesus was a leading city...turned away from me among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." You are aware. Why was Timothy aware? Because these people were in Asia where Timothy had been for several years, ministering in Ephesus. You're aware that when I was taken prisoner and the persecution came against the Christians that all those people who are in that area of Asia Minor turned away from me. They didn't want anything to do with me, they were ashamed of me because once I became a prisoner they didn't want to be identified with me at all because they feared that they too would be imprisoned. That's what he means when he says don't be ashamed of the Lord or of me, His prisoner. You see, being identified with Paul was a dead giveaway about what you believed. And if they had put Paul in prison, there was every reason to put you in prison if you were associated with Paul. And so what happened in Asia Minor was many of the teachers and those who had gone along with Paul, as soon as Paul was incarcerated, clammed up, wanted nothing to do with Paul and wanted no one to know they had anything to do with Paul. They were very much like Peter standing by the fireside at the trial of Christ saying, "I never knew the man," and cursing with an oath. They were ashamed. They were cowardly, trying to protect themselves. And he says all who were in Asia repudiated, or literally deserted me, that's the Greek word in its literal sense. Deserted me.

I'll tell you, the pain of ministry, disloyal people who when the going gets difficult disappear very fast and get critical and start picking at you. The people that you have spent your life feeding and nurturing and that's a heart breaker and it's a heart breaker for Paul and for anyone. They weren't even willing to identify with Paul at all, though they had gained everything he had to give. They had literally taken his life. He had spent himself to get them the message of Christ to save them. He had given himself to teach them. He had carried the burden of their defections and their spiritual failures and longed as a woman bringing birth to a child that Christ would be formed in them. And here they are denying they even know the man. Sad, no wonder he was lonely as verse 4 of chapter 1

indicates, sitting in that dungeon. And so he says to Timothy, you're aware of the fact, not speculation but the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me. And then he names two, Phygellus and Hermogenes. We don't know anything about them but Paul certainly didn't sweep this under the rug. I mean, he tells the whole wide world for every generation yet to come that these two guys were well-known defectors. Maybe they were leaders, pastors, elders in one of the churches in Asia Minor, maybe even in Ephesus. Maybe they went around saying how much they were enchanted with the proclamation of the gospel. Maybe they sought to do that. But once the persecution started they were not interested in being identified with Paul at all.

Paul doesn't let them off the hook. He doesn't in the name of quote/unquote "love," slide it under the carpet and deny it. He articulates their names for the whole wide world to hear because they are defectors. He doesn't have some loving obligation to hide that. In fact, in his own teaching in 1 Timothy he says the elders that sin rebuke before...what?...all that others may fear. It may well be that these were two elders. Let the church know who they are. Let the church know of their spiritual defection and cowardice. I want to label that group, that ashamed group, that cowardly group, the defector group. So, Timothy, if that's your group, then go on over to that group of the Phygellus/Hermogenes association. That's the Hall of Shame, not the Hall of Fame. That's for people who deny Christ. Choose your group, Timothy, choose your group.

Do you ever think about that? The way you live your Christian life identifies with a whole wide group of people who choose to live that way. I don't know what group you want to be in. I'd some...I'd sort of like to identify with the Hebrews 11 group if I had my choice. Or with the group that Paul was in. I'd like to be in that group. Or the group that the great missionaries and faithful saints of God through the centuries are in, that's the group I'd like to be identified with. So choose your group.

Then in verse 16, "The Lord...here's the second group...the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus; for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains: but when he was in Rome he eagerly searched for me and found me. The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day...that's that day of rewards, that day when we see the Lord Jesus...and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus."

Now he identifies another guy that Timothy knows. Timothy knew Phygellus and Hermogenes, otherwise Paul would have explained who they were. Likely they were elders in the church. He also knew Onesiphorus and his whole household were godly people. The gospel had come to that household and the whole family had embraced Christ and no doubt deserve commendation because of their love. In fact in chapter 4 verse 19 he encourages Timothy to greet the household of Onesiphorus. So they lived in Ephesus. They weren't ashamed of Paul. And he says in that day when they face Jesus Christ, I pray that He'll give them mercy, that He'll give them reward, in other words. Because they were never ashamed of me. It says in verse 16, "He often refreshed me." Often..often, eager to come alongside the inspired Apostle, eager to provide some encouraging personal ministry, not fearing the identification or association at all. He was not even ashamed of his chains, literally that means handcuffs or manacles, but it broadens to mean his imprisonment in general. This didn't deter the man, in fact when he came to Rome he searched eagerly for me until he found me. He searched all over the city trying to find where he was and found him in that dungeon. He had lived in Ephesus and come to Rome maybe on business or maybe specifically to minister to Paul. He pursued the location of Paul and he was a man who was unashamed.

And so he says, also, in the end of verse 18, you know very well what services he rendered at

Ephesus. You know his ministry there. He probably was very well could be an elder or pastor also. And you know the kind of service he did there. You know the kind of man he is. And the implication of these two groups, and he never does say to Timothy, "What group do you want to be in?" he doesn't need to, he just divides so clearly. And you say to yourself, "Boy, I want to be like Onesiphorus, I don't want to be like Phygellus and Hermogenes." Choose your associates, folks. You want to be among the courageous who name the name of Christ and pay the price? Or do you want to be among the cowards who deny Him? It's your choice. You want to be with those who are loyal, courageous, steadfast, faithful, bold, unashamed? Those who renew their spiritual gift in usefulness? Those who understand their spiritual resources for any situation? Those who accept and anticipate the possibility and reality of suffering? Those who remember the power of their God and His great grace? Those who recognize their duty? Those who totally trust their life into the hands of their Savior and are secure? Those who live to defend the truth? If you do, then choose your group. Your group is the household of Onesiphorus, that's your group.

You see, courage is demanded of any servant of God...moral courage and sometimes even physical courage. Martin Luther, and I'll bring our message to a conclusion with this account, Martin Luther the great instrument of God in the Reformation in the 1500s possessed this tremendous quality of courage. He stood against the whole Roman Catholic system, in fact the whole political system which was embraced in Catholicism. It has been asserted that he was perhaps as fearless a man as ever has lived. When he set out on his momentous journey to the city of Worms he said, "You can expect from me everything except fear or recantation. You can expect from me everything except fear or recantation." Then he said, "I shall not flee much less recant." They wanted him to deny salvation by grace through faith. His friends warning him, writes the biographer, of the grave dangers he faced sought to dissuade him. But Luther would not be dissuaded, "Not go to Worms," he said, "I shall go to Worms though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs." And when Luther appeared before the emperor he was called on to recant. They insisted that he should say in a word whether he would recant or no. "Unless convinced by the Holy Scripture or by clear reasons from other sources, I cannot recant," he declared. "To councils or Pope, I cannot defer for they have often erred. My conscience as a prisoner to God's Word."

When again given an opportunity to recant, he folded his hands, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God, help me." Recalling that incident, Luther described his feelings, "I was afraid of nothing. God can make one so desperately bold." Wonderful testimony.

How is it that we can be desperately bold? Listen to this testimony. Second Chronicles chapter 32, the people of Judah face the enemy of Assyria. Listen to this. Here comes the exhortation. It's wonderful. This is it from Hezekiah the king, "Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him." Then this, "For the one with us is greater than the one with them. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles." Tremendous confidence, tremendous courage when we understand who He is who has equipped us and is with us. Let's bow in prayer.

Gracious Father, how thankful we are for the exhilarating power of this passage that comes and breaks on our hearts, flooding us with a new sense of devotion, a new encouragement to be bold for the sake of Christ. Oh help us, Lord, not to preserve our own lives but to give ourselves away under proper motivation and with a pervasive attitude of courage, may we go forth in the name of Christ confident...confident that what we have committed in to Your care is safe until the day we see Jesus. That day, to receive the reward for our service done. Father, I pray that every one of us will renew

that commitment in our hearts for the Savior's glory. Amen.

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