

ENDURING HARDSHIP

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
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Let's Begin

The missionary, Hudson Taylor, once asked during an excruciating time in his life, "What circumstances could have rendered the Word of God sweeter and the presence of God so real, the help of God so precious?" Not a single person is immune to hardship, pain, trial and suffering. Another missionary, Adoniram Judson, endured indescribable hardships trying to reach Burma for Christ. He spent seven years in deplorable conditions including imprisonment for almost two years. His body was literally covered with scars from being tortured. It is said that one ruler who had him punished but nonetheless denied him the freedom to preach offered as a reason, "My people are not foolish to listen to what you might say, but I fear the impression of your scars might make them turn to your religion!"

Paul was a soldier of Jesus Christ who was facing tremendous hardship. From prison, he penned the last words he would record. We have those words in 2 Timothy. It remains no surprise to us that this apostle would encourage others to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as we make our way through chapter one, let's turn attention to the apostolic advice Paul gives on enduring hardships. The outline below will serve as our guide:

- I. Believers must be Courageous (vv. 1-7)**
- II. Believers must be Confident (vv. 8-12)**
- III. Believers must be Consecrated (vv. 13-18)**

I. Believers Must be Courageous (vv. 1-7)

Paul pens his final letter to Timothy under entirely different circumstances than his first letter. His permanent dwelling place is a muddy dungeon. Food is lowered through a hole in the ceiling. It is cold, damp, and lonely. The emperor Nero had set fire to Rome and blamed the Christians. Paul awaits trial. His instinct tells him he will never walk the shores of the sea nor see his friends again. He will never lead another communion service in a local church. His hour was upon him. Paul had faced many enemies during his years of apostolic ministry. He had but one enemy remaining—death.

He opens his letter with his standard greeting, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:1-2). In these verses are three main personalities. First is the *writer*, Paul himself. The letter reveals Paul's humanness through and through. Even the name "Paul" means "little one," and suggests a weak bodily presence. One tradition describes Paul as of "moderate stature, bow legged, bald-headed, and long nose." But while Paul won no contests for physique or beauty, he nonetheless was a giant in spiritual qualifications. He was an "apostle"—that is, one sent by Jesus Christ Himself—and his calling came "by the will of God." No matter the weaknesses any of us possess if we are called by God to do His service. What God calls us to do, He empowers us to do! No wonder courage came easily to the apostle. He was called by God!

Note also the *reader*, Timothy. Timothy is described as Paul's "dearly beloved son," surely words of affection he had for Timothy. Paul had won Timothy to Christ. Hence, he looked upon Timothy as his son in the faith. There exists no joy which surpasses the joy of winning someone to Christ. Finally, notice the *Savior* Paul mentions in these opening lines. Paul was not writing to Timothy to tell him of his

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horrible experiences, a topic upon which you or I would be tempted to expound. Instead Paul writes about Jesus. He is the One we serve; He is the One Who gives life; He is the One Who defeats death; He is the One Who gives eternal life now.

Paul moves from personalities to prayer, “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:3-5).

And because Timothy had real faith, the spiritual foundation was set to display courage in difficult times.

Reflection Connection

What characterizes your prayers during difficult times? Do you normally pray for yourself or others?

Again, Paul is unconcerned about his impending doom. Instead he focuses his prayers on behalf of others. Timothy was ever on the Apostle’s mind. He recalled not only his *tender* heart (v. 4), but also his *true* heart (v. 5). Timothy possessed “unfeigned” faith. The Greek term translated “unfeigned” is *anupokritos*, and literally means “unhypocritical.” In other words, the faith Timothy possessed and had received from his grandmother via his own mother was *genuine* faith.

The Apostle continues, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:6-7). Paul remembered. Now Timothy must remember too. And because Timothy had real faith, the spiritual foundation was set to display courage in difficult times. Timothy must be *fervent*; that is, the gift in Timothy must be “stirred up,” an action bearing the image of hot coals being stirred up in a smoldering fire. When the fire in Timothy is stirred, so his confidence will awaken (see below). For the young protégé did not receive from Christ a spirit either of fear, weakness, or indulgence. Instead he received power, love, and sound judgment.

II. Believers Must be Confident (vv. 8-12)

Not only must Timothy be courageous during difficult times, he must also be confident. Paul writes, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2



Tim. 1:8-10). Frequently, young believers are intimidated when their faith is challenged. But rather than be ashamed, we have something for which we may boast. And, our boasting is not related to us but to our Lord. In what do we boast?

First, we have a story worth telling. “The testimony” about which Paul refers is the Gospel. The Gospel begins our story and ends it. It is the opening and conclusion and everything in between. Our story has a *past* dimension (v. 9). We are “saved” because we are “called.” His own purpose in grace came to us even before the world was (cp. Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 1:11; 3:11; Tim. 1:2). Salvation is not an afterthought with God. God’s salvation is a plan conceived in eternity. Nor is salvation “according to our works,” but depends exclusively on His mercy. If we could do something to get saved, we could do something to get unsaved. But our eternal salvation in Christ is based totally on God’s amazing grace. His “holy calling” came to us, and through faith we are now in Him (cp. Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2).

Our story also has a *present* dimension (v. 10a). At the first appearing of Jesus, when Christ died on the cross, He put the devil out of business (cp. Heb. 2:14-15). Death’s hold on us was put to an end by the Lord

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Jesus Christ. Paul earlier had said to another church, “O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55). In addition, the story we tell offers a *prospective* dimension (v. 10b). Jesus is not only the destroyer of death, He is the revealer of life and immortality.

Second, because of Who Jesus is, we have a Savior worth trusting. Paul writes, “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:11-12). In these verses, the Apostle reveals three aspects of our relationship with Christ. We have a *personal* relationship with Christ—“know whom.” Incredible as it may be, a Christian who knows Jesus as his or her Savior has a personal relationship with the God of the universe. Also, we have a powerful relationship with Christ—“He is able.” The believer is not his or her own. Were our salvation dependent upon our ability to stay close to God, we would be in big trouble. We are no more “kept saved” by works than we were born again by works. Rather Christ is able “to keep” us! In addition, we have a purposeful relationship with Christ—“committed.” God calls us to Himself for a specific role to play out in the redemption of men.

Reflection Connection

Take a few moments to reflect on your story of salvation. When did you receive Christ as Savior? Under what circumstances? Be prepared to share with the entire study group.

III. Believers Must be Consecrated (vv. 13-18)

Paul’s last words to his young son in the faith were filled with exhortation. One thing in particular Paul emphasized to Timothy was to remain holy and consecrated to the Lord Who saved him. First, we have Paul’s exhortation to



Christian *duty*. He writes, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

The Word of God is described primarily in two ways within Scripture—*sound words* and *sacred deposit*. Paul emphasizes both in this passage. He tells Timothy to hold fast to *sound doctrine* (v. 13). The term translated “sound” carries the idea of health and hygiene. The right kind of teaching produces strong Christian leaders who live consecrated, holy lives. And, while the words we read in Scripture are human words written by human beings, the words are also God’s words fully inspired by the Holy Spirit (cp. 2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit holds us to the truth. Hence, we are to contend for the faith without being contentious.

Additionally, Timothy was to keep the *sacred deposit* (v. 14). On the one hand, our eternal destiny was deposited with Christ the moment we believed (v. 12). Now, the doctrines of the faith have been deposited into our care to teach, proclaim, and evangelize the world. Hence, we must at all costs protect the *sound* teaching of the *sacred* deposit.

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Second, we have Paul’s explanation of *disappointment*. He continues, “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes” (v. 15). Naming two men who led those who “turned away” Paul explains the disappointment he personally experienced. Of note is Paul’s mention of “some” who turned away from him in his first correspondence to Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3). Unfortunately “some” now became “all.” A darker hour for Paul cannot be imagined. No one stood with him. He was alone (cp. 4:10). Paul undoubtedly recalled the Gospel tradition which would later record that all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled (Matt. 26:56).

Third, we have Paul’s appreciation of *delight*. Note the Apostle’s words, “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well” (2 Tim. 1:16-18). A refreshing exception existed in the midst of abandonment. Onesiphorus was a cool drink of water to the Apostle’s fatigued soul. When Paul faced trouble in Rome, Onesiphorus did not stumble upon Paul and feel sorry for him. Rather he actually searched for him to offer his hand of brotherly love and companionship. Paul’s description is revealing—“he ministered unto me.” Whatever darkness had come over the Apostle Paul, Onesiphorus was a shining light at the end of a long, black tunnel. Onesiphorus oftentimes “refreshed” Paul. The term translated “refreshed”



literally means “to make cool,” the type of coolness a drink from a mountain brook would bring or a cool breeze blowing over the body under an oak tree on a hot summer day. Christian companions frequently rescue us in our difficult times in life, rescuing us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Golden Greek Nugget

Paul encouraged Timothy to not give in to fear but to depend upon Christ Who had supplied power, love and a sound mind (v. 7). The Greek term translated “sound mind” is *sophronismos*, and carries the idea of discipline and soberness. Timothy had received from the Holy Spirit the mental exactitude to think well, think right, and think from a decidedly Christian perspective. Fear is pushed out of our minds while confidence and courage are sown back in.

Wrap Up

Paul's words to Timothy offered both encouragement and exhortation. If he was to survive the difficult times coming his way, he would need to remain courageous, confident, and consecrated to the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps we may be facing a hard road to travel presently. We may even feel like giving up. Consider the words the Apostle gave to Timothy. Be courageous; you are not alone! Jesus is always with you. Do not allow your confidence to fade. Remain fully consecrated to Him Who loves you and gave Himself for you.

