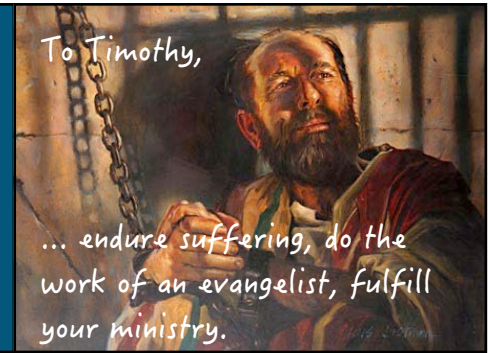


2 Timothy

Fulfill Your Ministry

Lesson 3



In lesson 2 Paul urged Timothy to share in suffering for the gospel and told him not to be ashamed of his mentor's suffering. Paul suffered for his Lord with no regrets because he completely trusted Christ to do all that he had promised. The faith of the Christian is in the person of Jesus Christ and that faith will be rewarded on that Day when Jesus returns as Lord and judge.

A Challenge to Timothy 1:13-14

If there is any doubt that Scripture is of utmost importance, Paul clears it up in verse 13 as he strongly instructs Timothy to *"follow the pattern of sound words you have heard from me."* Timothy had personally heard Paul teach and preach and had been mentored by him. Paul's teaching and all of Scripture serves as a pattern, like the blueprint for a building, which must be followed so that the church of all generations stands on the foundation of God's Word.



1. If Scripture provides a "pattern" of "sound words" why are there so many differing doctrines and denominations today?
2. How would you answer those who say that the church must change with the times?

Timothy is further instructed to hold to the sound words *"in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."* Truth must be shared in a way that is faithful and loving. It is not enough to know the right "things" an evangelist must share the truth in a way that exhibits the love of Christ. There have been times when Christians, who have had the right doctrine, have spoken in harmful and hurtful ways. We cannot ever compromise truth, but we must love people even as Jesus loved them.

Timothy is told to guard the good deposit that has been entrusted to him. The word translated *"guard"* originally meant to protect from marauders and thieves. There were false teachers about who would do all they could do take the precious deposit of the gospel from Timothy.

Paul tells Timothy, you must not compromise the truth of the gospel. You must guard this great deposit though the power of the Holy Spirit. While Timothy may have had a special gift, from the Holy Spirit given through the laying on of the apostle's hands, every Christian has the powerful indwelling of the Holy Spirit who assists us to live a faithful life. (See Romans 8:9-11).

Paul has made clear to Timothy that he is going to suffer for the gospel, but that God's power will assist him (v. 9) and that his Holy Spirit enables him to guard the deposit given to him. No Christian has the power to overcome trials for Christ apart from God's power and the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

The "*good deposit*" is the pattern of sound teaching found in Scripture; it is the message of the Gospel. Persecution will come from outside the church and false teachers will arise from within. The precious message of Christ must be protected and proclaimed.



3. What has God entrusted to Christians today and how should this deposit be guarded?

The Pain Brought by Deserters 1:15

The brevity of verse 15 should not obscure its significance. Paul says he had been deserted by all in Asia including Phygelus and Hermogenes. Asia here is not the continent, but rather the Roman province which was located in what is now the western part of Turkey. Paul's strong challenge to Timothy to guard the good deposit of the gospel comes in the light of those in Asia who had failed in this task.

We can sense Paul's discouragement as he writes about those who had deserted him. It feels like no one is with him though he uses the word "*all*" in an exaggerated manner since Timothy himself was in the Asian city of Ephesus. Perhaps the leaders of the churches or others he had mentored had deserted him.

The identity of Phygelus and Hermogenes is unknown since this is the only place in the New Testament where they are mentioned. We can draw three conclusion about these men and the others in Asia who turned back.

- 📍 First, the majority is not always right. The use of the word "*all*" even as hyperbole tells us that most people turned their back on Paul.
- 📍 Second, people can fall away from the truth no matter how well they have been taught. Many of these people would have been converted to Christ through the preaching and teaching of the Apostle Paul.
- 📍 Third, those who desert a friend in need bring pain. As Paul sat in a Roman prison awaiting execution his heart was torn by those who had turned their back on him and on the gospel.

Paul repeatedly tells Timothy not to be ashamed of his chains and in verse 16 he commends the household of Onesiphorus for not being ashamed of his chains. We can probably infer that those who deserted Paul in Asia did so from some sense of shame about Paul's imprisonment. Maybe they feared for their own safety and freedom or felt Paul was somehow responsible for his own situation. Since Paul had likely been charged with treason and arson (for the burning of Rome in AD 64) his charges were serious and anyone associated with him put their own lives in jeopardy.

4. Describe how these deserters affected Paul as he sat chained in prison.

5. Why would being alone through trials make them more difficult?

The Blessing of Those Who are Faithful and Dependable 1:16-18

Though many had deserted Paul he speaks with joy, admiration, and appreciation of the household of Onesiphorus. He prays that God will grant mercy to this family. Although Onesiphorus is mentioned only in 2 Timothy, tradition says that he was an early convert of Paul in the city of Iconium.¹



Onesiphorus often "*refreshed*" Paul and while this man and his family may have provided some material needs the greatest refreshment came from his encouragement and presence. Languishing in prison awaiting execution while alone is a trial almost beyond imagination. How heartening it must have been when Onesiphorus arrived to share with Paul.

6. Why is the physical presence of another Christian so important when going through trials?

Onesiphorus shared with Paul "*often.*" It is one thing to make a quick visit to encourage a friend, but a regular and consistent ministry of encouragement and help was exactly what Paul needed and Onesiphorus provided.

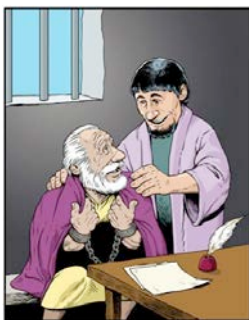
Those in Asia were ashamed of Paul's chains, but Onesiphorus was not. Paul's situation did not embarrass this man and his family. In fact he searched earnestly for Paul when he arrived in Rome. Apparently Paul was not easy to find in this large city. Paul was probably held in a maximum security facility not easily located by Onesiphorus.

Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus was that he would find mercy from the Lord on the Day of Judgment. Paul's concern was for his friend's spiritual well-being. This doesn't indicate any doubt about this man's faithfulness or readiness to stand before the Lord in judgment, rather this is Paul's prayer based on the hope all Christians have in Christ.

¹ Smith, James E. Exhortation Epistles. Lulu, 2011, p. 208.

The consistency of Onesiphorus is seen through his regular visits in Rome and his previous service in Ephesus. Since Timothy served the church in Ephesus, Onesiphorus and his household would have been well known to him.

There is a tradition that Onesiphorus was dead when Paul wrote this letter since he writes of what Onesiphorus did in past tense and asks for mercy for his household. Paul also writes in 2 Timothy 4:19 to “*Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.*” Greeting his household (instead of just naming him) may or may not mean that he had died. Whether or not Onesiphorus was still alive, Paul uses this man and his kindness to encourage Timothy to come to him.



Onesiphorus is largely an unknown figure in Bible history since he is seen only here in 2 Timothy. Isn't it amazing that God can use obscure people to serve important roles when they are willing to serve without fear, shame, or embarrassment? Paul needed encouragement and companionship as he sat in prison awaiting execution and while many deserted him, and more well-known characters are nowhere to be found, a unknown man rendered refreshment and help this servant of God needed.

Every Christian needs an Onesiphorus in their life. All of us need someone who will encourage, refresh, and stand by us no matter what trial we face. We need those who repeatedly love and care for us consistently over time.

7. Who is your Onesiphorus and to whom are you an Onesiphorus?

To Timothy, Paul encourages: Stand firm, guard the deposit of the Gospel, remain faithful to the pattern of sound teaching.

To Those in Asia Paul laments: They all deserted me including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

To the Household of Onesiphorus Paul says: This brother refreshed me and was never ashamed of me. May the Lord grant him mercy on the Day when Jesus returns.