

An Encouragement to Timothy – Part 3

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul opens 2 Timothy by encouraging his protégé to fan into flame the gift of God
2. aim – to cause us to grow in assurance, not being ashamed of the gospel in Christ Jesus
3. passage – 2 Timothy 1:1-18

b. outline

1. Fan the Flame of Faith (2 Timothy 1:1-7)
2. Do Not Be Ashamed of the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-14)
3. Guard the Good Deposit (2 Timothy 1:15-18)

c. opening

1. the **main point** of the second letter (redux)
 - a. **2 Timothy is a personal call for perseverance in the truth of the gospel in spite of opposition**
 - b. the “pivot” verses (**i.e.** the verses summarizing the theme of the letter) are **2 Tim. 3:12-15**
 1. the prediction (warning) that *persecution was inevitable*, how the attack *would come* (imposters deceiving people), and an encouragement for Timothy to stand firm in the faith *that so many people had taught him along the way*
 2. **2 Timothy is a very relevant letter of encouragement to the church for us to stay faithful to the apostolic message in the midst of great compromise all around us**
2. the **starting point** of the second letter (redux)
 - a. Paul’s *connection* to Timothy – the legacy of faith that Timothy confesses, coming (first) through Paul and (then) from many others around him (**i.e.** family, friends, coworkers, etc.)
 - b. Paul’s *encouragement* to Timothy – to “*fan into flame*” the gift that he possesses, to see himself rightly, to understand his place as one gifted by God
 - c. Paul’s *admonition* to Timothy – to embrace the “offense” of the gospel of Jesus Christ
 1. **never to be ashamed of the testimony, nor of the suffering that will arise because of it**
 2. the “*testimony*” = the gospel – the message of the power of God, who has chosen to save us, even before the ages began, for his own good purposes, in Christ Jesus, by abolishing the power of sin and death, bringing life and immortality
 3. **IOW:** to be ashamed of the gospel is to **deny the power of God**, to deny Jesus himself
 - d. (**now**) Paul’s *personal plea* to Timothy – to guard the “*good deposit*” entrusted to him
 1. to understand the value of the apostolic teaching he has received, to allow the Holy Spirit within him to hold him fast to what he has been given so that he does not fall away like so many others have done
 2. there **is** a good deposit, that deposit is **important**, that deposit **sifts** the church

III. Guard the Good Deposit (2 Timothy 1:13-18)

Content

a. the content of the good deposit (v. 13)

1. “*sound words*” = healthy instructions; valuable lessons; important understandings
 - a. see also **1 Tim. 1:10** (“*sound doctrine*”); **1 Tim. 6:3** (“*sound words*”); **2 Tim. 4:3** (“*sound teaching*”)
 - b. (**again**) lit. **healthy words**; words rich in meaning, that encapsulate great truths, that are given to bring health and vitality to the follower of Christ
 - c. the richness of the entire apostolic message – all that the apostles had come to understand about Jesus through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which now flowed out into their various writings
 1. “*that you have heard from me*” = that has been delivered *by me* to you
 2. **i.e.** a *systematic theology* – a consistent end-to-end understanding of redemptive history
 - a. all of what God has revealed about himself, his work of creation, the nature of man, the person and work of Christ, the nature of the church, and how it all comes together
2. “*pattern*” = a sketch; an outline; an imitation; lit. an example
 - a. (**again**) a word that appears *only* in **1-2 Tim.** (see **1 Tim. 1:16**; Paul as “*an example*” of the patience of Christ in having bestowed mercy upon him)

- b. not just words of advice (**see below**), but an example of living that flows out of a deep understanding of the things of God – the “living out of theology” – **practical theology**
 - 1. **i.e.** our responses to matters of life and death as we look through the “lens” of theology
 - 2. **e.g.** a proper grief – **1 Thess. 4:13**: not to “*grieve as others ... who have no hope*”
 - 3. “follow” = to imitate the example of Paul, who was given great understanding by the Holy Spirit, and lived out his life according to what he *knew* to be true (**i.e.** even in persecution and martyrdom)
 - a. “*in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*” = faith (in Christ) and love (of others) are **outflows** of our understandings of the things of God, revealed to us by the apostles
 - 1. **i.e.** we can only love a God we know, we can only love others in the love of God for us
 - 4. **the content of the “good deposit” is the pattern of sound words that Timothy had learned from Paul and had seen Paul live out**
- b. the guarding of the good deposit (v. 14)**
- 1. Paul (**again**) tells Timothy to “guard” this good deposit (**see 1 Tim. 6:20**)
 - a. “good deposit” (*parathēkē*) = the entirety of the revelation of God that had been given to the church by the apostles regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ (**see above**)
 - 1. which is located in the hearts and minds of the people of the church – the repository of truth being *the church*, made up of all who have come to stake their *destiny* on it (**1 Tim. 3:15**)
 - 2. a *simple* gospel that saves, but not a *simplistic* gospel that has only a limited substance, and leaves the adherent open to heterodoxy and apostasy
 - 2. **the guarding of the “good deposit” is a Holy Spirit-led work of teaching and modeling a robust understanding of the redemptive work of Christ, as it applies to the everyday life of believers**
 - a. **note**: in the course of encouraging Timothy to fan the flame of his gifting, to embrace the offense of the gospel, to guard this good deposit of truth, Paul’s mind *now* wanders to some examples of *both sides of this reality* – the *effect* of this good deposit in lives of some around him, which Paul will *use* as a reminder to his young apprentice about the truth of what he has just said
- c. the abandonment of the good deposit (v. 15)**
- 1. **first example**: those that had abandoned Paul (and his message)
 - a. “*all ... in Asia*” – probably not *every single Christian in Asia Minor* (**i.e.** Galatia, Ephesus, etc.); rather, a *strong contingent* of so-called “believers” who “ran” at the first sign of opposition
 - 1. **e.g.** Timothy, Onesiphorus, Prisca and Aquila (at Ephesus), Trophimus (Miletus) are all faithful
 - 2. probably *hyperbolic language* (exaggeration) designed to show the *magnitude* of how many have “run” when the opposition against the faith (**i.e.** against him) first arose
 - 3. **a modern-day warning in the face of rising opposition to Christianity**
 - b. “*Phygelus and Hermogenes*” = two (2) unknown and unreferenced men used as examples
 - 1. they are probably mentioned *specifically* by name because their abandonment was particularly hurtful – maybe they were deeply involved in Paul’s ministry, and their leaving cut deep?
 - a. “*you are aware*” = implying that these two men were known to Timothy himself
 - 2. although Paul does not accuse them of *apostasy* – they might only have abandoned Paul when the going got difficult (**e.g.** John Mark) – their “leaving” **signals** something *given the context*:
 - 2. **note**: the context is of “*guarding the good deposit*” – therefore, it seems *reasonable* that these men abandoned Paul not because the “going got hard,” but because there was something in Paul’s message that they could not hold on to in the face of opposition (**sanctified speculation**)
 - a. that Paul’s gospel, *by definition*, demands a standard of righteousness *far higher* than just “keeping some rules” and it could be that this demand was simply too much for them to bear
 - b. the *primary reason* that many “abandon” the faith is because it demands *too high a price*
 - 1. **the desire for a Christianity that is simple and easy rather than one that is transforming**
 - 2. **e.g.** the Rich Ruler (**Luke 18:18-23**) – although he was *more than willing* to keep the **simple standard** of following some rules (**i.e.** the horizontal commandments), he fell away when he was exhorted to an **immeasurably higher standard** in abandoning everything for Jesus
 - 3. **e.g.** the *simple standard* of modern preaching = advice-giving, designed to make Christianity just about following certain “rules” (**i.e.** law) – the *immeasurably higher standard* of biblical preaching = teaching that Christ has *already* satisfied the “simple” standard for us so that the Spirit can lead us to a life of real holiness and *Christlike transformation* (**i.e.** gospel)
 - a. the soteriological doctrine of **Satisfaction (Romans 7:4-6)**

“Likewise, my brothers, [just as in the marriage analogy above] you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.”

b. the teaching of Jesus in the **Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17, 20; 21; 27-28)**

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them ... For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven ... You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment ... You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

3. **the centrality of the "good deposit" is the truth that those who belong to Christ have been raised to an immeasurably higher standard of Spirit-led living, which will often be "too much" for those who desire a Christianity that is simpler**

d. **the faithfulness to the good deposit (vv. 16-18)**

1. **second example:** one who had refreshed Paul (in his message)
 - a. **(again)** a compatriot of *both* Paul and Timothy (**i.e.** someone Timothy *knows personally*)
 - b. **"Onesiphorus"** – an unknown man referenced twice as a *better* example (**not Onesimus**)
 1. he **"searched"** for Paul = he looked for concrete ways to be of help to Paul, even in jail
 2. he **"was not ashamed"** = he did not "fall away" because of the *possibility* of persecution
 3. he **"rendered service at Ephesus"** = he was a servant to the whole body of Christ
 4. he **"refreshed"** Paul = his commitment to Christ was a great encouragement to Paul
 5. he is *the opposite* of the Phygelus and Hermogenes – he is **committed**
 - c. **vv. 16-18** are structured as a **prayer** for Onesiphorus – that God would grant him "mercy"
 1. the mercy to be able to continue to help Paul and the church (**i.e.** not be arrested)
 2. the mercy to continue to mature in the faith and remain constant in Christ (**i.e.** "until that day")
 - d. **an example of the prayer of a spiritual leader over the life of a faithful member of the household of God – i.e. what elders are commissioned to do over the lives of their people**
 1. **the assignment of every household of GFBC to an elder, for regular prayer over them**
 2. not just for your *day-to-day existence*, but for *mercy* from God to live out the Spirit-led, higher standard of righteousness that comes in having received the "good deposit" of Jesus himself