

A Spiritual Legacy: Women's Bible Study: Winter 2011

Passing on What You Know

Guarding What God Gave You: 2 Timothy 1:8-18

February 16, 2011 – Jacqui Stahl



In the old classic movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy and her three companions follow the yellow brick road in hopes of receiving the things they desire. Dorothy simply wants to go home to Kansas. However, the Scarecrow wants a brain so others will think of him as being smart and not just stuffed with hay. The Tin Man believes only a heart will make him a “kind of human.” And then there’s the timid lion, who yearns for a little nerve to match his ferocious roar.

Well, after many obstacles, the group finally arrives in Oz. While waiting to see the great wizard, the lion pretends he is finally a real king of the forest. But when he finishes being honored, crowned, and adored by his three companions, reality sets in. The lion wants to know of all the subjects in his kingdom, “*What have they got that I ain't got?*” And his three friends unanimously cry, “*Courage!*”

Timothy was a lot like the lion in the *Wizard of Oz*. He was timid and shy; he lacked confidence and strength; he had some physical weaknesses. But Paul reminded him in last week’s verses of the great truth that God had not given him,

“...a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (2 Tim. 1:7)

Today’s passage follows this grand statement and begins with the little word “so.” It connects what Paul is about to tell Timothy with the truth of God’s provision. It shows a cause and effect. Like Gretchen said last week, Timothy is no longer a sidekick. He must step up to the responsibility of leadership. It’s now his solemn obligation to hold fast to the gospel truth that has been passed on to him so he can pass it on to others.

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to 2 Timothy 1:8-18 where Paul tells Timothy to guard the spiritual truths of our faith by first

Courageously Proclaiming Christ

Paul writes, ***“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the***

appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (vs. 8-10)

Testifying about the Lord is not always easy to do, is it? Moses wanted someone else to speak to Pharaoh, Jonah ran in the opposite direction of Nineveh, and Peter three times denied knowing Christ. David warned Solomon about the consequences of turning his back on God. In 1 Chronicles 28:9 David says,

“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him he will reject you forever.”

And about 1000 years later, Jesus echoed this warning to his disciples as he sent them out two by two and said,

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32-33)

And God’s exhortation to Jeremiah about the consequences of being afraid to testify about God and the truth of his Word is my personal favorite...

“Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them.” (Jer. 1:17)

Now that’s what I call a warning for pastors and teachers!

The point is we need to guard our faith by having the courage to testify *for* Jesus and *about* Jesus. We give testimony *for* Jesus when we **speak his name**. Every time we say the name of Christ, we confess our faith in Him as our Messiah.

This was important for Timothy to grasp as a group of heretics known as the Gnostics was starting to form about this time in the first century. They denied that Jesus could be both fully God and fully man. They considered the body to be evil; therefore, they believed it was impossible for the spirit of God to have been in Jesus’ body at either his birth or his death. And if this were true, it meant it would have been impossible for Jesus’ sacrificial death to atone for our sins.

So when Paul and Timothy confessed, “Jesus is Lord” they silenced the heresy of the Gnostics and other false teachers. In the same way, when we speak the name of Christ, we make a confession of faith - a statement of what we believe. Paul wrote,

“... if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

Speaking the name of Christ is the first step in affirming our beliefs and receiving salvation. As Christians, Jesus’ name should flow freely from our mouths with thanksgiving, honor, and praise. The Bible tells us to call on the name of Jesus (Rom. 10:13), ask anything in the name of Jesus (Jn. 16:24), and do all that we do in the name of Jesus (Col. 3:17). And some day every knee will bow at the name

of Jesus (Phil. 2:10) – whether we choose to confess him before others now or not. And when that day comes, we want to be sure God acknowledges us just as we have acknowledged him.

We also give Testimony *about* Christ when we **speak his gospel message**. Paul succinctly defines the “what” of the gospel in verses 9 and 10.

He says the gospel is:

- * A Saving Gospel – It is for salvation.
- * A Holy Gospel – It calls us to a holy life.
- * A Purposeful Gospel – It was given to reconcile us to God.
- * A Grace-filled Gospel – Salvation is by grace and not by works.
- * A Timeless Gospel – It was given in Jesus before time began; it has always been or will always be a part of God’s plan of redemption.
- * A Revealing Gospel - It was manifested in the appearance of Jesus.
- * A Victorious Gospel – Jesus has rendered death inoperable, destroying its final sting.
- * A Living Gospel – All who believe have the promise of immortality and eternal life.

Paul understood that the whole gospel message was the power of God for salvation for everyone who believed. (Rom. 1:16) That makes it an inclusive gospel. It’s a gift of hope to those who are hurting or oppressed, lost or overwhelmed, rich or poor. However, in order for anyone to believe the gospel, people need to hear the gospel. (Rom. 10:17) And therefore, we must speak the gospel.

But besides being careful to impart the full truth of the gospel message, we must also be concerned about *how we present* the gospel message. Not only do we speak about Christ in the words we say but in the way in which we say them.

As a child, I learned about Jesus in church and school, but the tone I heard it in was often one of condemnation for my sins and the wrath of God to come. It wasn’t that I didn’t believe these truths of hell and damnation; I did. Rather, I felt judged, shamed, and guilty because the truth wasn’t balanced with love. As I grew older, I eventually turned away from what I needed most.

In college I hit rock bottom as I began to deal with abusive issues from my past. Ultimately, I attempted suicide. As I walked through the long slow healing process, a family from a new church I was attending invited me to live in their home. They didn’t preach to me or jam the gospel down my throat. They just quietly lived out their faith before me day after day. Many times they simply said, “Jesus loves you,” gave me a hug, and walked away. They prayed for me, even fasting once a week in prayer during a particularly difficult time. They laughed with me and cried with me. They loved me right where I was at. My new obedience and love for Christ as my Lord and Master and not just my Savior was not because I didn’t know the truth of the gospel. It was because I now knew grace.

Jesus did not come into the world to condemn sinners, but to save them. (John 3:17) Like Robin talked about when we studied Titus 2, we must be careful that when we present the gospel to others we not only convey its truths but its grace. It’s grace which calls us, grace which trains us, and grace which leads us home.

So we defend our faith by not being ashamed to proclaim Christ. We testify *for* him by speaking his name and *about* him by speaking his gospel of truth and grace.

Next, Paul tells Timothy to guard the spiritual truths of our faith by...

Courageously Suffering for Christ

In verse 8, Paul invites Timothy to, ***“Join with me in suffering for the gospel.”***

In the summer of 1900, 239 missionaries were martyred in China in what is known as the Boxer Rebellion. At one particular mission station school, insurgents blocked all the gates but one. In front of that one gate, they placed a cross flat on the ground. Those inside were told that any who trampled the cross underfoot would be permitted to go free, but that those who refused to trample the cross would be shot. Frightened for their lives, the first seven students trampled the cross under their feet. But the eighth student, a young girl, knelt beside the cross, prayed for strength, stood up, moved around the cross, and faced the firing squad. Strengthened by her example, every one of the remaining ninety-two students joined her in suffering for Christ and were killed for their convictions.

One girl infused strength into ninety two others. That’s what Christ’s suffering did for Paul; what Paul’s suffering did for Timothy; and what our suffering can do for each other.

Suffering covers a wide range of human experiences. It includes mental, physical, spiritual, or emotional affliction. It may be due to hardships, circumstances, or collateral consequences from others’ behaviors. We suffer with Christ and for Christ (though not in the same way) when we obediently endure suffering of any kind in a Christ-like manner.

So Paul gives three reasons for why we should join him in suffering for Christ. First, he says we are **compelled by the cause of the gospel**.

Paul says, ***“And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am.” (vs.11-12a)***

And to the church at Colossae Paul wrote this:

“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of his body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God...” (Col. 1:24-25)

Christ commissioned Paul to preach the gospel at all cost and Paul suffered greatly as a messenger of the Good News. Five times he received forty lashes minus one, three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned, three times he was shipwrecked; he spent a night and a day in the open sea; he labored and toiled and went without sleep; he knew hunger and thirst, and was naked and cold many times over. (1 Cor. 11:24-27)

But that suffering didn’t deter Paul. He understood people were watching, and how he responded while suffering would either hurt or help the gospel message. For many, the gospel’s mystery that ***“...while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8)*** carries intellectual weight but lacks personal meaning. As Christians, we become the catapult for spiritual growth as others watch how we respond to various persecutions.

When we respond to suffering biblically, Jesus is revealed in us in the midst of our difficulties – we fill up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions. John Piper put it this way, *“God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of his people... so that when we offer the Christ of the cross to people, they see the Christ of the cross in us... His sufferings are completed in our sufferings because in our sufferings the world sees his, and they have their appointed effect. The suffering love of Christ for sinners is seen in the suffering love of his people for sinners.”*¹

I must admit I never desired to enroll in the school of suffering. But God had other plans. And, like Paul, I know others are watching to see how I deal with pain and adversity – whether it’s my children or those inside or outside of the church. What I have learned from the example set by Christ and by Paul has become my strength and grace for hard and often hurtful situations. So let me quickly share with you my top 10 list of *“How to Suffer Well”* so others may see the Christ of the cross in us. (By no means is this an exhaustive list!) As Christians, we should:

1. **Rejoice in our sufferings.** (James 1:2-4)
We need to recognize our trials are refining us in holiness and hope. (See also Rom. 5:1-8)
2. **Not be surprised by our sufferings.** (1 Pet. 4:12)
Walking in obedience to God often causes the world and the prince of this world to lash out in hostility towards us. (consider the whole book of Job)
3. **Count it a privilege to enter in to the sufferings of Christ.** (1 Pet. 4:13)
Our sufferings cause our relationship with Christ to deepen because we know he understands what we are going through. (Is. 53:3, Rom. 8:17; Heb. 2:18)
4. **Endure suffering as discipline and ultimately as God’s love** (Heb. 12:7-11)
A father disciplines those he loves. God’s discipline will produce a harvest of righteousness and peace for all who are willing to be trained by it.
5. **Trust God’s sovereign plan for our life.** (Jeremiah 29:11, Rom. 8:28)
God knows what’s best for us and he alone can see the big picture (Lamentations 3:33, 1 Pet. 4:19, Psalm 139:5-12)
6. **Walk by faith, not by sight.** (2 Cor. 5:7)
Faith is not a feeling or an emotion. It is an attribute of humility which causes us to follow in obedience. It says, “Not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42-44)
7. **Embrace suffering as an opportunity for God to display his glory.** (Is. 48:10-11, John 9:3) God can choose to relieve us of our suffering in this life or in the life to come. Either way, He will always choose the path that brings Him the greatest glory and us the greatest spiritual transformation.
8. **Forgive others.** (Luke 23:34)
Often people have no idea they’ve hurt us; but even if they are aware of the pain they have caused, we can rise above the situation. Don’t retaliate, become bitter or harbor hatred. Offer grace instead.
9. **Bless those who hurt us.** (Luke 6:28)
We are to be merciful just as our heavenly Father is merciful. And when we do so, the Bible promises that great will be our reward.

¹ Piper, John. “Filling Up What is Lacking in Christ’s Afflictions.” Sermon message from High Pointe Baptist Church. Austin Texas. October 19, 2008. <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/conference-messages/filling-up-what-is-lacking-in-christs-afflictions>

10. Comfort others with the same comfort with which we ourselves have received from God. (2 Cor. 1:4)

It's this relay of compassion which advances the Gospel. We become the hands and feet of Christ as we comfort others in similar situations which have the very suffering we ourselves have endured.

God has a purpose in *all* suffering. But the greatest purpose is always that it provides an opportunity for us to share our faith. The disciple Thomas believed only after he had seen Jesus' scars. Likewise, showing our scars to others points them to the cross where we can share our faith and hope in the saving truth of the gospel message.

Now besides being compelled by the cause of the gospel, we can also join Paul in suffering for Christ because we are **convinced of the object** of our faith. Paul continues in verse 12,

"That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet, I am not ashamed because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him..."

Notice Paul does not put his hope in a what – in an idol or a religion; but he puts his hope in a who. Salvation is not the result of believing certain doctrines – although doctrines are important in helping us define our faith. Salvation is given by grace from the Father through the Son. Paul deposited the care of his soul to the Savior. We should, too.

The indwelling of the Spirit gives assurance of Paul's salvation. The future hope of Christ gives him strength to press on. He knows God the Father has been faithful to keep his promises. He watches over Paul and provides for his every need, even in death. Paul in turn trusts him with his life, his ministry, and the souls of those who have been converted to Christianity because of his obedience to be a minister of the gospel. God will not fail Paul. God will not fail Timothy. And as the object of our faith, God will not fail us.

So we can courageously suffer for Christ because the gospel compels us, because we are convinced of whom we have believed, and because we know that one day we will be **crowned as victors**.

Paul entrusted all he had to God, ***"...for that day"*** (vs. 12) Paul saw his current light and momentary troubles as achieving an eternal glory that far outweighed all his problems. (2 Cor. 4:17) His affliction was achieving or "preparing, effecting, and bringing about for him" a glory beyond comparison to anything he had ever experienced. For Paul, there was a connection between the suffering he endured and the degree of glory he would enjoy.

Ultimately it is the promise of eternal glory alone which eclipses all of our current sufferings. Paul wrote, ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us."*** (Rom. 8:18)

When we endure to the end, we will stand blameless before God (1 Cor. 1:8), the good work he began in us will be completed (Phil. 1:6), we will become fully aware of what God has accomplished through us (Phil. 2:16), and we will be robed in righteousness. (Is. 61:10) Like Dorothy in Oz, we will understand there truly is "no place like home."

So we protect the spiritual truths of our faith by courageously proclaiming Christ, courageously suffering for Christ, and finally by...

Courageously Living For Christ

My daughter Faith has a high interest in fashion design. We and others who are involved in the fashion industry have told her that the one thing she must do to succeed in fashion is learn to sew. My mother is from the old school of sewing, where you cut, pin, press, and baste all your seams. And if it's not perfect, you rip it out and start again. So this summer, my mom took Faith for 2-3 hours every week so she could begin to teach her the finer points of sewing. They began with a lesson on the parts of the sewing machine. Then they moved on to different kinds of stitches. Eventually they bought a pattern. And with that pattern, Faith won a blue ribbon at the county fair for her jumper.

A pattern is no more than a framework or template. It represents a plan, diagram or model to be followed. It has consistent characteristics, forms, and styles. It's considered worthy of imitation.

We need to remember that Bibles did not exist in the first century. Parchments were few and far between because only the rich could afford to hire a scribe to copy them. Instead, words were memorized and passed on to those who listened. Beliefs, lifestyles, and messages were openly modeled for disciples to follow.

Paul writes to Timothy in verse 13, ***"What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching..."***

Timothy is instructed to hold on to, follow, and grasp the healthy teaching he has learned from Paul. And as an apostle, Paul's doctrine is the same as the other disciples who consistently characterize Christ's teaching in its form, style, and method. It was a doctrine or teaching worth imitating. And it's not just based on words. Rather, it's done in ***"faith and love."*** Christianity lived out by a pattern of **sound teaching, faith, and love** guards the truth of the gospel for which we are witnesses.

Like Titus, Timothy is to know his doctrine well so he is not swayed by doubt as he hears false teachers speaking false truths. He is to be sure and unwavering in his theology, firm and steadfast in his faith, and live out the love of Christ for others. Paul reminds Timothy the essence of the gospel message is love. John tells us God's love is the model for us to follow -

"We love, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

Theology established by faith in God and lived out in love towards man is a pattern worth imitating. That's the nature of Autumn Ridge Church's mission statement, too...Loving God, serving people. A faith built on sound doctrines overflows in love towards God. Our love for God leads to obedience in serving others. A healthy doctrine, a sincere faith, and a holy love help us live courageously for Christ and protect the beautiful spiritual truths – the good deposit of the gospel – God has given to each of us.

But consistently adhering to sound teaching, faith, and love can only be done by the ***"help of the Spirit who lives in us." (vs. 14)*** Not only do we have the Spirit providing power, love, and self-discipline, which we noted at the beginning of the lecture, but we have the wisdom, guidance, and comfort of the Spirit also. Jesus said,

“...the Holy Spirit, who the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.”(John 14:26)

Though Timothy would no longer have Paul available to teach him, he would not be alone. And neither are we. God is in us and with us at all times in the person of the Holy Spirit. We can overcome this world because the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. He fixes our faith on the promises of Scripture. He empowers us with grace. He convicts us. He intercedes for us. He pricks our conscience to help others in times of need. And He teaches us by giving us understanding of Scripture as he reminds us of the things Jesus taught and modeled for his disciples.

So we courageously live for Christ by following a pattern of sound teaching, faith, and love, by the help of the Holy Spirit, and, finally, **by doing good deeds**. James proclaimed, ***“Faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26b)***

In the final verses of this passage, Paul contrasts two different people. First there are those in Asia who have no courage. They’re ashamed to proclaim Christ. They’re ashamed to suffer for Christ. And they’re ashamed to live for Christ. They desert the faith. But Onesiphorus is different. He isn’t afraid to be associated with Christ or other ministers of the gospel. In fact he searches diligently for Paul so he can serve and refresh him.

Paul writes to Timothy, ***“You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.***

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.” (vs. 15-18)

Onesiphorus displays the fruit of kindness towards Paul. Kindness is doing for others what we want them to do for us. It means we take initiative. We thoughtfully plan to do something and then carry it out. We show concern, gentleness, and sensitivity. We actively seek out someone to bless.

This Christmas I received a pair of CW-X compression stockings as a gift. The socks have an intricate weaving of special fibers and materials. Their web design stabilizes areas of the foot, ankle, and lower leg. As you can see, there is nothing particularly attractive about them. Runners wear them to reduce fatigue, provide for a fast recovery, and offer support to overworked muscles and joints.

Someone thought about what I needed. They thought about my passions – running and theology. The socks were given to me not only in hopes of providing comfort to my aching arthritic legs but as a reminder to follow Christ every time I put them on – to testify, suffer, and live like Christ as I follow in his footsteps.

What if we all were like my CW-X socks or followed the example of Onesiphorus? What a blessing we would be to the many pastors and lay people involved in ministry if we encouraged, strengthened, and supported their work with simple acts of kindness. When is the last time we wrote a note of thanks, provided a meal, gave a gift card, or even prayed for those in the church who serve and feed us or our children spiritually week after week? Don’t be ashamed of those who minister for the gospel - support them. I can tell you ministry is hard work; but I can also tell you from my own experience that receiving

appreciation in any form refreshes and encourages a weary spirit who's involved in the daily battle of the well-being of souls.

We need to encourage one another to continue to guard the sacred truths of our faith. Those we spend time with, or we build into spiritually, or we let build into us influence our faith and actions. We can learn either cowardliness or courage from one another. We can become deserters of the faith or defenders of the faith. Deserters of the faith waver in their beliefs, walk away when things get tough, and watch out for only themselves. Defenders of the faith, on the other hand, are not ashamed to guard the truth of the gospel message. They courageously proclaim Christ, suffer for Christ, and live for Christ.

Which legacy will you choose to leave behind?

Let's pray...