



2 Timothy 1:13-18

Follow the Pattern in Faith and Love

6th Sunday After Epiphany – February 12, 2017 (am)

INTRODUCTION

Today is a day for a heart-check. Paul is finishing off his opening instruction in this second letter to his beloved child (2) in the faith. He's urging him toward diligent, faithful gospel ministry in the face of increasing pushback from the culture around them. This is Paul's final letter, and he's getting Timothy, and all his readers, ready to carry on in life and gospel ministry without him. And in so doing, he leads us to ask ourselves an important question: Where do I feel tempted to be *ashamed* of the gospel? Let's walk through this passage: three assertions, two explicit, one implicit.

FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE IN CHRIST – 13

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Timothy is being called to follow (with) faith and love the pattern of sound words he's heard from Paul. It's the pattern that he's (following) in this way. So, he's not just preaching word-for-word everything Paul preached. Rather, he's using Paul's preaching as a guideline. This word pattern was translated as example back in 1Ti.116 (L&G 195). And that's a good way to think of it. So the faith and love that are awakened in Timothy through his union with Christ by faith, enable him to trust and delight in Paul's line of thought, in his approach to gospel ministry, and then to minister along that same line himself. What, then, does this mean? It means the manner in which Timothy maintained his (right belief) was as important as the (right belief) itself (Guthrie 150). It means Paul (wanted) Timothy to be loyal to the (apostolic) message, but he left him (some freedom) to express it with his own personality (L&G 195). He just wanted to make sure that the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus characterize Timothy's words—that Timothy preached sound words, saturated in faith and love.

And that's going to happen anyway, right? Doesn't an apprentice usually end up reminding us of his mentor? One of the sweetest and most undeserved compliments I ever received came after preaching at a marriage retreat for Kishwaukee Bible Church. A man came up to me afterward and asked if I were acquainted with the ministry of D. A. Carson. I proceeded to tell him, yes, and how I very much appreciated his ministry! The man replied: I thought so, you reminded me of

him when you spoke. My response: Luk.22^{9(KJV)} Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰for mine eyes have seen thy salvation...! We follow the pattern of those we respect.

What Paul is telling Timothy to do here is something Timothy would delight to do under normal circumstances. And the better he does it the better his ministry will go. Nothing would please him more than to remind people of the Apostle Paul..., except, perhaps, for right now—because of Paul's chains (2:9). That seems like what Timothy was struggling with, seeing that Paul had just urged him not to ⁸ ... be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.... But even now, while Paul was in Roman chains, Timothy should still ¹³ follow the pattern of the sound words that (he has) heard from (Paul)..., and in so doing, guard the good deposit entrusted to (him).

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE IN CHRIST – 14

And that's just where he goes next. He turns his attention from calling Timothy to *follow* his example, essentially to calling him to set a good example himself: ¹⁴ *By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.* I believe Paul is amplifying his reminder to Timothy to *fan into flame the gift of God* (6). He's already urging him to *fulfill (his) ministry* (4:5)—to preach and teach and correct and shepherd in such a way that he can call his people to *follow (his own) pattern of... sound words*. That's what it means to *guard the good deposit*: to preserve the purity of the content of the full apostolic gospel, and to do it in such a clear spirit of *the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus* that it's worthy of being imitated. And that's just what Paul will tell Timothy to do just a few verses from now (2:2).

We *guard this good deposit* (¹⁴) in our lives and ministries in a way similar to God's (*guarding*) of the promises He's made to us *in Christ* (cf. ¹²)—Paul uses the same word. And this can only be achieved by the ministry of the *Holy Spirit* in us. He alone can enable us to *guard the good deposit*, and to do it *in faith and love*. He alone can cause us to remain true to the content of the apostolic gospel, and to wield that content *in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*.

AFFIRM GOOD EXAMPLES IN CHRIST – 15-18

That is just what *Onesiphorus* did. And it's what *Phygelus and Hermogenes* did *not* do. Paul wrote: ¹⁵ *You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from (deserted [L&G 792]) me.* And of course Timothy was *aware* of this! Ephesus was the capital of Asia at this time! If most of the Christians around him were turning away from Paul, would it have even been possible for Timothy *not* to

be aware of it? Also, this could easily explain why Timothy might have been wavering in his gospel confidence. He was surrounded by a sea of doubt and uncertainty regarding Paul's ministry. He must've wondered about specific individuals—where they stood. So, when Paul added, *among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes*, I'm guessing that clarified a lot for Timothy, not just about where these two men stood, but where a lot of others stood based on their relationship with those two.

But Paul also mentioned another name whose service Timothy well (knew) ⁽¹⁸⁾. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. Paul is speaking of him in the past tense, so he may have already passed away. The fact that he mentions his household ^(16; 4:19) and not just him suggests the same, ¹⁷ but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me—and it wasn't easy in those days to track down prisoners in the Capital of the Empire. And in light of what we've already said, imagine what a risk Onesiphorus was taking by pressing hard to find Paul. And it sounds like that's what was required—he searched earnestly (diligently ^(KJV)) for me....

The writer of Hebrews gives us a taste of what that could've involved. Heb.10³² But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction (that's verbal and physical abuse ^(France 144)), and sometimes being partners with those so treated, (watching friends endure it). ³⁴ For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering (seizure ^(NAS), confiscation ^(NIV)) of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. So, you could be exposed to public derision and beatings, and the loss of your personal property if you identified yourself as being linked with those who were in prison—and especially, it seems, with those who were in prison for the gospel.

But that is our calling. Three chapters later the writer of Hebrews said: Heb.13³ *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. We're one with them; it should show. Jesus taught that on the final Day: Mat.25³⁴ ... The King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For..., among several other acts of service, ³⁶ ... I was in prison and you came to me.* These actions He listed display true saving faith,

because, whatever ⁴⁰ ... you did... to one of the least of these my brothers, Jesus said, you did it to me."

And this is just what Onesiphorus did with Paul. He earnestly searched for him, and found him. And he refreshed Paul with his presence, not ashamed) of (his) chains ⁽¹⁶⁾. For this Paul said: ¹⁸ may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. Quick aside: this is a key verse in Scripture that some want to say teaches us to pray for the dead. But I don't think that's what Paul's doing here at all. I believe he's talking to Timothy, not to God. He's just telling Timothy his desire for Onesiphorus to know God's mercy at the final judgment because Onesiphorus had been so merciful with him.

And Paul is calling Timothy to that same sort of faithful *service*.

CONCLUSION

That's what we need to hear in our day as well: a call to faithful gospel service, even as times get hard. And they very well could. Many say they already have. What do you say? Is there any pressure in our day toward a disposition among Christians to keep quiet about our faith? Perhaps we think our day isn't nearly as hard as Paul and Timothy's day, but that's only because we live in America. I don't believe we'd convince believers in North Korea or Somalia or Afghanistan or Pakistan or Sudan that our day is any easier. And if we're Heb.133 (remembering) those who are in prison, as though in prison with them..., we can agree with their assessment of our day. So, if we hear Paul's word to Timothy as a word to us in increasingly similar times, what do we hear him telling us to do? How do you believe he would have us respond?

As we pointed out earlier, it seems like this chapter hangs on the word ashamed (8, 12, 16). Timothy—possibly through fear (7) of the desertion of Paul that was happening across the province of Asia—needed to be reminded that it was precisely for the sake of the gospel, for which (Paul) was appointed a preacher, that (he suffers as he does) (10-12).

But even so, he felt the need to charge Timothy to not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of (Paul) his prisoner (8). For surely, Paul himself was not ashamed (12), but was fully trusting God to guard the promises of his salvation until the day he fully and finally received it.

Paul finishes this opening chapter in our text today listing two names who deserted him in this present crisis. Then he mentions one who didn't: Onesiphorus, who was not ashamed of (his)

chains (16). Is it possible he wanted a second name on this side of the ledger as well? Remember, Timothy was in Asia.

This was a hard season for Paul's protégé. He was on a tough assignment in a tough area. He should be getting a break soon (cf. 4:9). But he needed some encouragement now. Do you? Do you need to hear this same charge: do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord? (8) Rather, follow the pattern of should words that you have heard from (Paul), from (Scripture)? (13) Guard the good deposit entrusted to you? (14) Do you need to hear these charges again in our day? I do.

As we close, then, I want you to take a few minutes, an extended time, in silence, to ask God: When, where to I feel tempted to be ashamed of the gospel, or of God, or His Word? Where do I personally need to hear the gentle, generous, strengthening reassurance Paul has been giving to Timothy in 2Ti.1?

Let us now close in prayer together, and seek God to help us hear Paul's instruction to Timothy as His word to us today, at just the places where we're tempted to be ashamed. 13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.