

2 Timothy 1B

- In the opening of his second letter, Paul implored Timothy to stand firm in his faith and in his appointed role as the leader of the church in Ephesus
 - In the midst of growing Roman persecution, the church leadership was feeling pressure to shrink back from public ministry
 - Public proclamation of the Gospel now carried a serious price
 - And association with men like Paul was automatic cause for suspicion
 - Paul obviously worried his timid protege, Timothy, might follow suit in Ephesus
 - Paul told Timothy he didn't receive a spirit of fear but a spirit of courage and power and self-discipline
 - If Timothy would walk by the leading of the spirit in him, he could stand up to his fears and worries
 - This was Christ's calling on every servant
 - For just as Christ faced persecution for telling the truth, so must His servants be prepared to endure the same
- Therefore, Paul commanded Timothy to not be ashamed of Christ's testimony nor of Paul's own ministry as Christ's prisoner
 - It's interesting that Paul chose to use the word "shame" in v.8
 - I doubt Timothy himself would have described his instinct to hide from persecution as being "ashamed" of Christ
 - He might have argued that he was not ashamed of Christ; he just worried for his life or those of his flock
 - But scripture testifies that when we put our needs above glorifying the name of Christ, we have declared we are ashamed of our mission
 - It means we reject its very premise, its claims
 - The Gospel declares that the world is spiritually dead and under judgment
 - The Gospel declares that true life is found only in Christ

- And the Gospel declares that nothing in this world is worth trading for eternity
- So when we consciously choose to silence this message to preserve our earthly life, we communicate an opposite testimony
 - We declare (by our choice) that the world's judgment of us is more convicting than that of our Lord
 - We declare that the life we possess in this world must be preserved at all costs, even at the cost of silencing the message of eternal life in Christ
 - And we declare that this world is more precious to us than the one we receive by faith in Jesus
- In that sense, we demonstrate that we are ashamed of Christ when we let the world's desires drive our choices
 - And if we distance ourselves from others who serve faithfully, we communicate disapproval with their faithfulness
 - We are saying we're ashamed of them too
 - At the moment persecution arrives, few believers will have the presence of mind to recognize the implications of shrinking back
 - Which is why we must give careful thought to what we will do before we face that moment
- As we return to Paul's letter, we move directly to that question
 - Specifically, what will hold us to the mission when the world threatens to take everything away?
 - In human terms, what answer do we give to the missionary entering a dangerous place?
 - How do we justify the loss of a father, husband, mother or wife to persecution?
 - How will we stand firm in our message and in our mission when powerful people threaten to take our life or those we love?
 - Intellectually, we may all agree that Christ is greater than anything in the world, and we must never be ashamed of Him or His testimony

- But if intellectual agreement were enough to hold us to the mission, then how do we explain Peter's denial of Christ?
- And how do we know for certain that we will do better than Peter, who famously declared he would never abandon Jesus?
- Clearly, good intentions may not be enough in the face of death
- We may have never faced such a choice and perhaps we never will
 - But the early church faced martyrdom daily
 - And in many places today, Christians still face it
 - And in the coming years, the church will face it more and more
- So what do we say to those who waiver? Here's what kept Paul going:

2Tim. 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

- Paul says "for this reason" I also suffer these things rather than living in shame of Christ
 - And what follows is Paul's anchor, Paul's shield against his own fears and doubts, as he served under threat of persecution
 - That anchor and shield was something he knew which in turn gave him confidence in the face of suffering
 - Notice that the solution to remaining faithful to Christ in times of trial was found in knowing, that is in spiritual knowledge
 - In contrast to spiritual knowledge, the church today has become absorbed in "experience"
 - We crave excitement and stimulation in our walk with Christ, and everything spiritual is judged against this standard
 - When believers evaluate the quality of a church service, for example, their assessments usually turn on details like the quality of the music
 - Or the cleverness of the pastor's jokes or illustrations
 - Or on the novelty of his stunts, videos or props

- Or even on the length of the service itself or the comfort of the stadium seats
- Rarely do they comment on the theology of their statement of faith, the pastor's biblical knowledge or the godliness of the congregation
- Therefore, it should be no surprise that many believers prioritize experience over scripture when evaluating spiritual truth
 - When personal experience defines our understanding of Christ, then our relationship will be one-sided and self-serving
 - Moreover, it will be ever changing, because contrary experiences compete in our mind as we seek to find truth
 - God is "good" when he heals someone we love, but what about when He doesn't heal another?
 - Hell is real for you, as you thank God for saving faith, but will it still be real after your unbelieving parent dies?
 - Our experiences lie, because at best they are incomplete and at worst they are reflections of our preferences and moods
 - You can spot a Christian who defines spiritual truth through experience:
 - Their past experiences will trump any teaching from the Bible
 - Questions about God's blessings and gifts, or about angels or the Spirit, or heaven and hell...all these issues will be decided based on personal experience
 - Any teaching to the contrary is dismissed out of hand, since "...no one can tell me what I experienced..."
 - In that sense, truth becomes relative, since different believers possess different experiences
 - Which means that experience-based learning is highly subjective and easily manipulated to suit our preconceived notions and desires
 - We embrace some truths and reject others on the basis of how we feel, since there is no objective standard

- Many of the popular heresies plaguing the church today have gained a foothold because immature believers have bought into experience-based truth
 - For this crowd, the more powerful and dynamic the speaker...
 - The more wealthy and successful the church and pastor...
 - The more engaging and entertaining the church service...
 - Then the more “real” and “true” the message seems
- But when we turn off the jumbo screens, silence the driving rock beat and clear the smoke machines, what do we find enduring?
 - If our understanding of spiritual truth is based in our experiences rather than in an abiding study of scripture, we are standing on quicksand
 - The foundations of our faith are forever moving under our feet
 - We hold something to be true only until something better comes along...
 - A more convincing teacher or a more compelling presentation becomes just cause to change our views or practices
 - So we’re tossed back and forth by the waves of church fads that come and go
 - We snap up the next bestselling book by a smiling Christian pastor...
 - Or set the DVR for that popular Christian miniseries everyone is talking about, hoping it may hold the secret to revolutionizing our walk with Christ
 - A church body standing on the quicksand of experience, rather than on the firm foundation of God’s word, will suffer
 - In times of ease, the church built on experiential truth will be superficial, vain and beset by sin
 - It will serve only itself
 - And it will remain forever vulnerable to the temptations of its flesh and the enemy’s lies
 - But in times of persecution, the stakes increase considerably

- Believers who rely on experiential truth will be unprepared to face existential tests
- How will they respond to demands like “Renounce Christ or die”
- If our theology is little more than “God wants me to be happy” then how will we justify martyrdom?
- Certainly that was the concern for the church in Ephesus
 - A life of ease and wealth hadn’t prepared them for Nero’s purging of the church
 - And now that being Christian involved real risks, what was true? Was faith in Christ worth dying for?
 - What experience could justify watching loved ones fed to lions or going to the stake?
- Only by abiding in His Word may we stand faithfully
 - The Word of God is food for our soul
 - It’s a light to our path
 - Truth is found only in God’s Word, and therefore believers only grow and strengthen through an abiding study of the Word
 - This is the central truth Jesus taught in John 15:

[John 15:1](#) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

[John 15:2](#) “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

[John 15:3](#) “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

[John 15:4](#) “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

[John 15:5](#) “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

- Like the analogy of branches on a vine, we are drawing our spiritual supply from Christ
 - To strengthen us for greater production, the Lord may prune us at times
 - If we respond to that pruning in the proper fashion, we produce even more fruit

- But if we disconnect ourselves from that supply, we have no hope to sustain our walk
- And experiences with God, however genuine, do not equal, much less replace, an abiding knowledge of God in His Word
- When Paul says he knew in Whom he believed, he's saying he knew where his supply came from
 - He knew the master who pruned him
 - And that knowledge from God's Word sustained him through suffering
 - Regardless of what kind of persecutions we face in this life, our ability to sustain our faithful walk also depends upon our devotion to God's word
- As the psalmist says:

Psa. 119:33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes,
And I shall observe it to the end.

Psa. 119:34 Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law
And keep it with all my heart.

Psa. 119:35 Make me walk in the path of Your commandments,
For I delight in it.

Psa. 119:49 Remember the word to Your servant,
In which You have made me hope.

Psa. 119:50 This is my comfort in my affliction,
That Your word has revived me.

- To be sure, God also uses experience from time to time
 - Miracles have a place in God's economy
 - But generally, they serve to get someone's attention to hear the Word of God
 - Moses used miracles to gain Pharaoh's attention for God's Word
 - Jesus used miracles to gain an audience for the Gospel
 - And in the church, the Spirit may produce miraculous signs from time to time, but only as a means of calling attention to Christ in His Word

- Which brings us back to Paul in v.12
 - He says he was willing to suffer for the Gospel because of two things He knew from the Word of God
 - First, he knew in Whom he had believed – speaking of Christ
 - Paul knew Christ
 - Obviously, Paul knew Christ in the simple sense that Paul was a believer in Jesus Christ
 - Every believer “knows” Christ in this way, by definition, which is important
 - But Paul was speaking about a knowing that went far beyond obtaining a saving knowledge of Christ
 - Paul knew Christ intimately from a study of His Word
 - We could talk for hours on all that Paul came to know of Christ by His Word
 - But three aspects of Christ probably directly supported Paul’s willingness to suffer
 - Knowing Christ’s character, purpose and power
 - First, Paul knew Christ’s character
 - He knew Christ was merciful and good and a rewarder of those who seek Him
 - Paul also knew our God is a God Who keeps promises
 - And he knew that the passing of time had no effect on the faithfulness of God
 - As Paul himself wrote...

Rom. 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,
Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Secondly, Paul knew God had good purpose in allowing His children to suffer for His name sake
 - Just as the Father determined that the Son would suffer to bring about our redemption, so may He ask that we suffer at times
 - Paul also knew that the Lord does not call us to suffer more than the Lord has suffered already
 - And that like Him, we may be glorified through suffering
 - That after we're tested and found faithful, we may receive a reward that cannot perish
- Finally, Paul knew that His God was a God of power
 - Nothing can stand against the Lord
 - God's will be done, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against His Church
 - So when persecution comes against the church, it's not evidence of something gone wrong, but rather it was part of God's plan
 - Therefore, Paul could face troubles in this life with confidence and peace knowing that God was at work through them
- Of course Paul also had unique personal experiences with Christ, which no one else in the church has equalled
 - But ironically, Paul's extraordinary encounters with Christ were necessary to equipping the apostle with spiritual understanding
 - So then Paul could supply the rest of the Church with that biblical knowledge
 - Ultimately, even Paul's experiences with Christ became the Word of God for us
 - In the end, everything Paul knew was according to the Word
- So from study of God's Word, Paul knew in Whom he believed, and in that knowledge he gained confidence to suffer for His name's sake
 - Then in the second half of verse 12, Paul adds that he was convinced that Christ was able to guard what Paul had entrusted to him
 - At first reading, this statement may sound a little backward

- We might have expected Paul to say that he was convinced he would guard what Christ had entrusted to him
- That is, Paul would guard the message of the Gospel and the care of the church, which Christ had entrusted to Paul
- But that's not what Paul said, for that's not what Paul is speaking about
 - Paul said he was willing to suffer for Christ because he knew that Christ was guarding something for Paul
 - And of course, knowing Christ's character, purposes and power, Paul was confident that Christ would guard it faithfully
 - And whatever Paul is entrusting to Jesus, it must be important
 - Because this comment is Paul's main argument for why he serves Christ without hesitation and without shame
- So what was Paul entrusting to Jesus that Jesus was guarding?
 - The answer is Paul's eternal reward
 - The heavenly reward Paul knew he would receive for having served Christ faithfully
 - For having suffered in this life for the sake of the Gospel, Paul was storing up an eternal reward that no one could take from him
 - A reward that Christ was guarding, ensuring
 - And that was all the reason Paul needed to suffer for Christ
- Paul was trusting that when all was said and done in his life, his sufferings would be worth it
 - That the eternal outcome of his life of suffering as a disciple would be well worth the sacrifice
 - Which is why Paul says that we can't compare the two

Rom. 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

- This is one of the most important and profound truths of the New Testament for believers

- A commitment to serve Christ as a faithful disciple holds opportunity for eternal rewards
 - These rewards are reserved for us in the Kingdom
 - And we will only see them after we are resurrected
 - We aren't talking about earning salvation itself
- As Paul just reiterated in v.9, we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone
 - But Paul says he was willing to suffer hardship and accept the world's scorn to share that message with others, because he was convinced that Christ would make his sacrifice worth it in the end
 - No matter what the world might do to Paul in retaliation for his obedience to Christ, Paul knew he could trust the Lord to guard his eternal reward
- Friends, concern yourself with pleasing Christ, because one day we will stand before Him for our judgment
 - And at this judgment, the Lord will determine the degree of our Heavenly reward
 - As Paul explains

2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the **judgment seat** of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- Paul says we will be recompensed or repaid for our service to Christ
 - As we fulfill our calling and please our Lord, we will receive a reward
 - But if our discipleship is found lacking, if our deeds in the body are bad, as Paul says
 - Then our rewards will suffer likewise
- This is a truth found only in God's word
 - You cannot find confirmation or even the suggestion of eternal rewards in everyday experiences in the church

- This is a truth known only from the counsel of God's word
- And it's a central truth for every Christian's walk
 - To know of eternal rewards as the Bible teaches it, is to be prepared to face the temptations of the world
 - Whether temptations of distraction and dissipation
 - Or temptations to give in to our fears of persecution
 - Either way, knowing the Lord is testing our faithfulness and will reward us accordingly gives us good cause to serve faithfully
- This is but one example of why a faithful and consistent preaching of God's word is essential to the growth and maturity of the church
 - As Paul reiterates to Timothy

2Tim. 1:13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 1:14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

- Reading between the lines again, it seems that Timothy might have been tempted to modify his preaching to avoid trouble
- But Paul tells Timothy that persecution is all the more reason to preach the truth
- Paul calls it the standard of sound words which Timothy heard from Paul
 - The Greek word for standard means "pattern", like a pattern used to make a dress
 - And sound words could be translated a healthy or safe message
 - There is one safe, healthy message and Timothy should pattern his speaking after that message: the one Paul delivered
- Paul spoke those words in faith and love in Christ
 - He spoke out of love for Christ and for love of the church
 - And he spoke in faith that Christ would put His own word to great use, even if Paul couldn't see how in the midst of his circumstances

- And that must be Timothy's view as well
- A willingness to speak truth no matter what he worried might come
- Doing so would ensure reward for Timothy and make opportunity for others to learn the same truth
- In fact, the sound words of the Word of God was a treasure entrusted to Timothy by Christ
 - I wonder what would happen in church pulpits if more men thought of the Word of God in this way
 - This is what God treasures above all else

Psa. 138:2 I will bow down toward Your holy temple

**And give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth;
For You have magnified Your word [above] all Your name.**

- God holds his Word as greater than even His name
- All men called to minister to God's people in pastoral ministry have been entrusted with the Word of God, something the Lord sees as a treasure
 - So what do we suppose the Lord thinks as He observes pastors like Timothy neglecting, or even changing, His word to suit their own purposes?
 - Especially when we know that the truth that leads men and women to abide in Christ is found only in the Word of God
- So Paul calls Timothy to guard or keep that treasure through the Holy Spirit
 - Which is to say Timothy was to value it above anything else
 - Above his personal safety
 - Above his popularity or the whims of his congregation
 - In season and out of season as Paul will say later
- This truth also has implications for the individual believer in the body of Christ
 - Knowing how highly the Lord values His Word (even above His name!), then a believer is on notice to treat the Word of God as the treasure it is

- First, we must have a personal goal of seeking to understand the depths of God's Word
- We must find our supply in it daily
- We should endeavor to study it in a comprehensive way, regularly and consistently
- We do that both as a matter of personal study and in seeking outside instruction
 - We are responsible for that pursuit, as the writer of Hebrew says in speaking to the churches of his day:

Heb. 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Heb. 5:13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.

Heb. 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Heb. 6:2 of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

- No believer is exempt from the biblical injunction to know the Word of God
- And not just superficially, but well enough to teach others regardless of whether we are personally called to teach
- This is a high standard that few today seem interested in meeting
 - Even among those Christians who engage in regular study of God's Word, many still seek an "experience" rather than a true in-depth study
 - Stand-up comedy routines and aimless discussion groups are fast replacing straight-forward, didactic instruction from knowledgeable instructors
 - No matter what methodology or curriculum we choose, in the end every believer is responsible to Christ for what we learn

- Remember, we are called to know and abide in Christ by His Word
- Secondly, knowing how the Lord treasures His Word, every believer should think carefully about what kind of church or organizations he or she supports
 - In these days of waning understand of, and commitment to, the Word of God, believers must double-down in our efforts to promote proper teaching
 - If your church does not teach the Bible clearly, properly and routinely from the pulpit, then why support it?
 - If the church leadership doesn't value the treasure God has entrusted to it, how useful can it be helping you guard it?
 - With persecution right around the corner, the church needs to return to the confidence Paul had to face suffering
 - The confidence that comes from knowing and guarding God's treasure
 - Not everyone in the body of Christ will share our love and appreciation for the Word of God
 - And when difficult times come for us, many are going to face them standing on quicksand rather than on the rock, just as was the case in Paul's day
- In fact, most of the church in Asia was quickly abandoning Paul as a result of persecution

2Tim. 1:15 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

- Paul says "all" the church leadership in Asia turned away from him
 - The word all isn't an exaggeration
 - Christian leaders and many of the flock in and around Ephesus (which was located in Asia) had repudiated Paul in one way or another
 - They did so to save their freedom and livelihood, and the lives of their families

- But because they weren't rooted in God's Word they didn't realize what they were sacrificing in the process
 - If they could have seen into the future and gazed upon their heavenly reward, like a contestant playing Let's Make A Deal
 - And if asked whether they wanted to trade their job or freedom or even their earthly life for what lies behind Door #1
 - These Christians were readily saying yes...they would give up whatever was behind that heavenly door in exchange for temporary, earthly gains
- Clearly, this was a foolish bargain, and it was one they didn't need to make
 - If they had treasured the Word of God, they would have a better understanding of what lies behind that door
 - They could have appreciated the magnitude and permanency of that reward
 - Likewise, they would have appreciated the fleeting and worthless quality of our present life
 - As Jim Elliott once said

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose

- These Christians in Asia were making the fools trade
- Among the leaders were two Paul mentions by name
 - These men are not mentioned elsewhere, but apparently they were initially very helpful to Paul in Ephesus
 - But now had turned away merely because of persecution
 - These men may have been believers, but forevermore their names have been immortalized in God's eternal Word for their misdeeds
 - Not the kind of testimony any of us want
- Paul mentioned these men to give Timothy cause to think again about his own actions

- Imagine seeing one man's name recorded in scripture by an apostle and then wondering how your own history will be written?
- It would seem Paul wanted to give Timothy extra motivation to do the right thing
- We can only hope it succeeded
- Paul singled out another man in an unusual way

[2Tim. 1:16](#) The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;

[2Tim. 1:17](#) but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me –

[2Tim. 1:18](#) the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day – and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

- Paul asks the Lord to grant mercy to a man named Onesiphorus
 - Paul says several good things about this man's testimony
 - First, he often refreshed Paul while Paul ministered in Ephesus
 - He must have been a man who supported Paul in various ways while ministering in the region
 - Secondly, he was not ashamed of Paul's chains
 - As an example, Paul remembers a time when the man sought to find Paul in Rome while Paul was on house arrest
 - Clearly, the man was faithful to Paul and even courageous
 - But when Paul was in chains in Rome, it wasn't because of general persecution against the church
 - Rather, this was an attack against Paul by the accusations of the Jews
 - So in those days, a man like Onesiphorus could visit Paul without much personal concern
 - But now the days were different and all Christians were at risk, especially those who associated with Paul
 - And it would appear that under these circumstances, the man's faithfulness had waned

- Paul doesn't say anything specifically, but he implies the man fell like the rest in Asia
- Paul asks the Lord to have mercy on this man on "the day" which is a reference to the judgment seat
 - Paul's appeal for mercy would suggest very strongly that the man was in need for forgiveness concerning this issue
 - Which if true means that Paul felt sorry for the man in light of his previous diligence in serving Paul
 - I suspect Paul made mention of Onesiphorus to make an impression on Timothy
 - As Timothy contemplated whether to follow after the other leaders in distancing himself from Paul, the apostle gives Timothy an example of how it might go for him
 - As he contemplates Paul remarking on how much good this man did for Paul in the past, Timothy couldn't help but notice that now the man was in need of mercy
 - That at the judgement seat of Christ, there would be an accounting
 - Perhaps this would give Timothy added incentive not to sacrifice eternal things for the sake of temporal
 - If you're motivated to faithful service to Christ by nothing more than the love of Christ, then you are to be commended
 - Go forth and serve!
 - But if you are like most people, you will appreciate the reminder that God is a rewarder of those who seek Him
 - And furthermore, you will be strengthened by remembering that we will give an account before the Lord
 - And we want to hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."