

Text: 2 Timothy 1:13-18

Title: People Ashamed and Not Ashamed

Truth: Paul exhorts Timothy to observe the examples of others and hold fast what was committed to him.

Date/Location: Sunday June 19, 2016 at FBC

Introduction

Do you blush to speak the Lord's name? This message will help you. We are still studying the "unashamed" chapter (1:8, 12, 16) of 2 Timothy. We saw several ways in which Timothy could be strengthened in his boldness for the gospel, and having read of the power of God in the gospel, we now will learn some positive and negative examples of shame and boldness in the gospel (v. 15-18), and conclude with an exhortation (v. 13-14).

I. Ashamed: All in Asia, v. 15

- A. All in Asia turned away from Paul. These people abandoned, rejected, repudiated, and turned away from Paul. This is devastating. Can you imagine it? Those you thought were partners in the work become turncoats. They deny you. This is like (not exactly the same as) the disciples fleeing from Jesus on the night He was betrayed (Matthew 26:56, Mark 14:50). Yes, this was predicted (Matt 26:31, Mark 14:27), but that didn't help Jesus feel less alone. It was like Peter denying the Lord three times (Matt. 26:75, Luke 22:61).
- B. Phygellus and Hermogenes are specific, named examples. We don't know anything else about these men from Scripture. We do see that Paul was willing to name specific names, in the inspired record no less. Sometimes giving specifics is necessary as a warning to others; it is not a sin to do so.
- C. Timothy knew about all these desertions (v. 15a). The beginning of verse 15 says, "This you know." Timothy knew what happens when someone becomes ashamed of the gospel. It leads to disastrous results. At this point let me deal with a question that may be swirling in the minds of some of you. You might be thinking, "Is he saying that these men lost their salvation or were not saved at all?" Please note I said NOTHING of the sort. I didn't say anything using those particular words; I did not mention salvation or loss of salvation. To think that I said that, you would have to commit the error of eisegesis, reading into my words something that I did not say. I don't know either way what these men's relationship was with the Lord. I do know what it was to Paul, and I believe that this breakdown was because of shame about the gospel. I do not know

whether that was their settled opinion all the time and they were just hiding it for awhile, or whether they repented of it (like the disciples who fled from or denied Jesus). But I do know that being ashamed of the gospel of Christ is a disaster waiting to happen. Don't do it.

II. Unashamed: Onesiphorus, v. 16-18

There is a suggestion that Onesiphorus' name means "bringing advantage."

It is similar in its first part to *Onesimus*, the slave of Philemon whose name was used in a play on words regarding his "profitability."

- A. Onesiphorus often ministered to Paul in prior days (v. 18b) at Ephesus. Paul had been in Ephesus briefly (Acts 18:19) and then again for over two years (19:1-12). Paul is writing to Timothy about 64 A.D. and these events had occurred in approximately 55 A.D.
- B. He took pains to find Paul in Rome (v. 17). This probably required some detective work, and then some "paperwork" with the government to get into the prison area through the guards and such.
- C. He helped Paul many times while he was in Rome (v. 16b). After getting through the red tape, Onesiphorus came "often." His help was in the form of providing relief from trouble or giving refreshment. This probably includes personal friendship as well as things needed for the body. Fellowship would be a welcome addition to the dreary days spent alone in jail. Paul was not in a nice rented home now as he had been in Acts 28:16, 30). His situation was more dungeon-like than before.
- D. Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul as prisoner (v. 16b). By implication, this means that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of the gospel. He was not ashamed to be seen or heard asking for Paul or about him; nor of being seen visiting him; nor of being seen by others as "wasting time" visiting a condemned man. We know he would be rewarded according to Matthew 10:42 and Mark 9:41.
- E. Timothy knew very well about what Onesiphorus had done (v. 18b). Apparently Onesiphorus and his family were residents of Ephesus (4:19; see also 1 Timothy 1:3) and Timothy saw their care for his mentor firsthand.
- F. Paul prays for mercy to him and his household (v. 16a, 18a). Paul is asking that God will grant him an extra special mercy in the day of judgment because of his kind service. That "day" is when the judgment seat of Christ occurs (1:12, 18; 4:8). O. is a Christian man, so this mercy is not

"God, give him salvation because he helped me." It is "may God grant him an extra special reward for doing this for me while in jail."

1. This verse has been misused to suggest that Onesiphorus was dead and that Paul was "praying mercy for the dead" to spring him out of any leftover purgation that he had to fulfill. Against this view is that there is no indication that O. is dead. He, like Phygellus and Hermogenes, were living, contemporary examples that Paul used to show shame or no shame for the gospel. Also, Paul prayed for O.'s entire household, and we can't realistically make a case that they are all dead too. Finally, purgatory and praying for the dead is an unscriptural teaching because salvation is a matter of conscious personal faith between a person and Christ and God. It does no good to pray for a dead person because they are gone and their "fate" is sealed at that point. No one else's merit or prayer can help them. The time to pray for a person is when they are alive, and that prayer should be that God will save them before they die.
2. Kent (*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 257) makes an excellent point that Paul would be utterly unable to repay the favors he received. He was helpless to do so. Therefore, he had to appeal to God to return a blessing upon Onesiphorus. This is a good picture of where we need to be in our own minds. We are ultimately helpless in the world apart from God, as much as we would like to think otherwise. But being sick or bed-ridden or, as in this case, jailed for Christ, are situations in which God can reinforce to our minds the truth of our dependency.

III. Unashamed: Timothy, v. 13-14

- A. Knowing about the bad examples of Phygellus and Hermogenes, and the great example of Onesiphorus, Timothy was aware that Paul was concerned that Timothy's ministry could go one of two ways—at least humanly speaking. He might walk away from Paul like the others did, or he might remain steadfast and be unashamed like Onesiphorus. Paul expressed his confidence that Timothy had genuine faith and it seems to me that the tenor of the letter is not one of worry, but rather of caution and strengthening for the younger minister.
- B. Paul instructs Timothy to do two things. The first is to "hang onto" the sound words which he heard from Paul.
 1. Paul, as an apostle, was giving the exact word of God. His words regarding the gospel and the revelation of God were the standard of truth. They were "healthy" words in that they were without error.

2. He gave those words to Timothy over years of ministry together.
 3. He exhorted Timothy to hold onto them just as he was given them. If Timothy did, this would protect him from falling into ashamed-type behavior.
 4. Timothy was to do this "in faith and love in Christ Jesus." He did not hold an intellectual-only doctrine. He held a *faith in love* for Christ. That is not entirely different than holding a set of facts as true, but it is markedly different. We need all three—faith, love, and sound doctrine.
 5. Implications? The Christian minister must shun creativity of message, form of words, doctrine, and the like. We are to be replicators, not inventors. We are to be copy-cats instead of avant-garde. We inherit and pass down, not create or suggest a *possible* course for the next generation. From shame or other motivations, some deny the true deity of Jesus; others deny his bodily resurrection; others deny the finished and complete cross-work of Christ; some add works as a requirement to be saved; others deny that holiness of life is a true result of salvation; others deny that repentance regarding sin is a part of the gospel message. These false doctrines are to be repudiated at every opportunity. They are certainly not to be embraced!
- C. The second thing Paul instructs Timothy to do is to guard the "good thing committed to you." That good thing is the gospel of Christ.
1. This is parallel to the above, but adds the additional nuance that you do something to protect the gospel. You teach it, argue for it, prepare the church to reject false teachers, silence the mouths of critics by sound doctrine, teach your children, etc.
 2. We can only do this "by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." He is the enabler, the power, the encourager in this matter of guarding the truth.
 3. This is a never-ending task for the church and its ministers. We cannot let our guard down. It requires contains maintenance, as it were. If you forget to check or change the oil in your car, after a while things break down. Not immediately, but eventually. If you forget to be diligent about the gospel of Christ, the church will break down, and so will your life.

Conclusion

Are you ashamed of the gospel or not? May God help us!

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