

## Hold on

Has anyone ever told you to “Hold on”? When you hear that, it’s usually a warning that something is about to “go down.”

- Sharp turn in a car?
- Sudden drop off in a roller coaster?
- “Hold on to your turbin’s kids. I am about to make you a star!” (Jeanie in Aladdin right before he uses his powers to make Aladdin a Prince.)
- I’m NOT talking about those times in your younger days, when you said “Hold on to my beer...”

Sometimes in life we know a season of turmoil is upon us. And we look at our spouse and say... HOLD ON.

Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. <sup>15</sup> You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. <sup>17</sup> On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. <sup>18</sup> May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from him on that day. You know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.

2 Timothy 1:13-18 (CSB)

There is turmoil. There is uncertainty in Timothy’s life. In the church. Because persecution is going on big time and Paul, one of the most prolific writers,

Apostles, is about to lose his life. It is quite reasonable for Paul to be writing to his friend and saying... HOLD ON.

It hurts when we are abandoned. When all of our “friends” aren’t around when we need them most.

## Be Faithful.

Faithful: steadfast in affection or allegiance. (Webster)

### Be Faithful to God’s Word. (v.13-14)

*Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. V. 13-14*

- Sound doctrine, the Scriptures, The Bible teach us God’s truth.
- We cannot have a reliable authority, from an unreliable text.
- We can’t have a reliable Savior from an unreliable message.

How does Satan undercut the Lord’s authority on the earth and in our lives?

“From the beginning of human history, Satan has opposed God’s Word. “Did God really say...?” was Satan’s first word to mankind (Gen. 3:1), and he continues to ask that question. Throughout the history of the church, the Word of God has been attacked, often by people *within* the church; yet it still stands today. Why? Because dedicated men and women have (like Paul and Timothy) guarded the deposit and faithfully handed it to a new generation of Christians. When a church or any other Christian organization goes liberal, it usually starts with a weakening of their leaders’ convictions about the Word of God.” (Wiersbe)

*All Scripture is inspired [lit. God Breathed] by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (HCSB)*

- When our faith is not grounded in God's word...we're sunk.

I could preach an entire message on this...

- Spend time in God's word. You must read God's word before you can know what's in it.

**"Sound doctrine leads to holy living, and the absence of it to unholy living."** (MacArthur)

### Be Faithful to God's Word.

#### Be Faithful to God's Servants. (v.15-18)

*May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. v. 16-17*

- The Scenerio. Onesiphorus: Means "Profitable"
  - Millions of people. No telephones/internet. No street address
    - He is going door to door & asking a lot of questions.
  - Paul is a POLITICAL PRISONER so he asking the powers that be about where to find him.... "Why do you want to know?" ....
    - This was no minor task. This took work & that is all the more evident by Paul saying "he diligently searched for me and found me."
  - Not only did he find Paul but he continued to care for him. I am confident in saying that he helped take care of some of the practical needs that Paul had in addition to the need for fellowship.
- Onesiphorus reward?
  - Nothing earthly, that's for sure. (It cost him!)
  - His reward is the Godly legacy that he has left for us.

- Many scholars contend that he even lost his life as a direct result of helping Paul.
- Phygelus and Hermogenes go down in history as traitors.
- Onesiphorus goes down as a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

“If we were to be described in one sentence, what would that one sentence be? Would a one-sentence verdict of our lives be the verdict on a traitor, or the verdict on a disciple who was true?” (Barclay)

Let me side track here for a second... “Be faithful to God’s servants.”

- Do NOT blindly follow a pastor (for example)
- Verify God’s in word with what I’m saying, or any pastor is saying.
- Africa would have these “Prophets” who would come into the town to “preach” and would take money, chickens, even women for themselves....
- What I am saying...
  - When we see a brother or sister in need; then we help! We are faithful in caring for one another!

*By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35*

**Be Faithful to God’s Servants;** set a Godly example for those around you in your care and concern for other brothers & sisters in Christ.

Now what? What do we do with this information?

- We have talked about spending time in God’s word
- We have talked about loving one another...

*Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. V. 14*

- When you know God’s word then you can know when others (Pastors/leaders) are being accurate in what they are sharing.
  - You are “testing & approving” them.

- So that by the example of their lives & words you can see if they can be followed.
- Be faithful in obeying God's commands.
- "Not only do we put our trust in God; God also puts His trust in us."  
(Barclay)
  - For some reason God puts His plans, in man's hands.
    - If God wants a child taught, a message is taught, a sermon is preached.
    - Someone hurting? He sends a comforter
    - A person is lost? He has someone find them.
  - So, when Paul needed support & encouragement Onesiphorus was there.
- Has the Lord done a big thing in your life?
  - Thank Him by your obedience.
    - Share the Gospel
    - Pray
    - Study
    - Serve

Be Faithful.

Be Faithful to God's Word

Be Faithful to God's servants

Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us. <sup>15</sup> You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. <sup>17</sup> On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. <sup>18</sup> May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from him on that day. You know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.

2 Timothy 1:13-18 (CSB)

## Spiritual Loyalty (2 Tim. 1:13–18)

Throughout the centuries God's work has been done by men and women who stood steadfast in their hours of trial. It would have been convenient for them to have compromised, but they stood firm. Paul was such a man, and he encouraged Timothy to follow his example in a twofold loyalty.

**Be loyal to God's Word (vv. 13–14).** God had given the deposit of spiritual truth to Paul (1 Tim. 1:11), and he had given it to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:20). It was now Timothy's solemn responsibility to "hold fast" (2 Tim. 1:13) and "guard" (2 Tim. 1:14, *NIV*) the precious deposit of Christian truth, and to pass it along to others (2 Tim. 2:2).

The word *form* (2 Tim. 1:13) means "a pattern, an architect's sketch." There was a definite outline of doctrine in the early church, a standard by which teaching was tested. If Timothy changed this outline or abandoned it, then he would have nothing by which to test other teachers and preachers. We today need to hold fast to what Paul taught for the same reason.

However, note that Timothy's orthodoxy was to be tempered with "faith and love." "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15) is the divine pattern. How easy it is to become pugnacious in our desire to defend the faith, or a witch-hunter who creates problems.

It was the Holy Spirit who committed the truth to Timothy, and He would help him guard it. Apart from the ministry of the Spirit, we are in the dark when it comes to understanding the Word of God. It is He who must teach us (John 16:13) and enable us to guard the truth and share it with others.

From the beginning of human history, Satan has opposed God's Word. "Yea, hath God said?" was Satan's first word to mankind (Gen. 3:1), and he continues to ask that question. Throughout the history of the church, the Word of God has been attacked, often by people *within* the church; yet it still stands today. Why? Because dedicated men and women have (like Paul and Timothy) guarded the deposit and faithfully handed it to a new generation of Christians. When a church or any other Christian organization goes liberal, it usually starts with a weakening of their leaders' convictions about the Word of God.

**Be loyal to God's servant (vv. 15–18).** The province of Asia in that day comprised the Roman districts of Lydia, Mysia, Caria, and Phrygia. Paul was forbidden to minister in this area on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6); but on his third journey, he stayed nearly three years in Ephesus, the capital of Asia, and evangelized the entire area (Acts 19; 20:31). The seven churches of Asia were all in this area (Rev. 1:4, 11).

We do not know who Phygelus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1:15) were. It is likely that they were leaders in the church who opposed Paul and would not come to his defense in Rome. You would

think that the Asian believers would have stood by Paul; but, instead, they were ashamed of him and at the same time (whether they knew it or not) ashamed of Christ (see 2 Tim. 4:16).

It was certainly a dark hour for Paul. Demas had forsaken him (2 Tim. 4:10). His other associates had been sent to distant places of ministry. False doctrines were spreading in the church (2 Tim. 2:17–18). How Paul would have loved to be free to preach the Word and defend the faith—but he was in a Roman prison. It was up to Timothy to get the job done.

But there was one man who dared to leave Ephesus and come to Rome to assist Paul—Onesiphorus. His name means “profit-bearing,” and he certainly was a profitable friend to Paul. It is possible that he was a deacon in the church at Ephesus (“ministered” in 2 Tim. 1:18 comes from the word that gives us “deacon”). During Paul’s ministry at Ephesus, Onesiphorus was a faithful minister, along with his household. Since Timothy had pastored the Ephesian church, he would know this choice saint.

Let me add here that every pastor is thankful for those faithful members who assist him in the work of the Lord. My wife and I have found choice saints in each of the three churches we have served—people whose homes were open to us (and they didn’t tell the whole church we were there!), whose hearts felt our burdens and needs, and whose prayers sustained us in difficult times. These believers minister behind the scenes, but the Lord will reward them openly “in that day” (2 Tim. 1:18).

Onesiphorus traveled from Ephesus to Rome and diligently looked for Paul so he might minister to the prisoner’s needs. It seemed difficult for him to find his former pastor (2 Tim. 1:17). Perhaps some of the Roman Christians were still opposed to Paul as they had been during his first imprisonment (see Phil. 1:12–17). Perhaps the Roman officials were not cooperative and did not want their choice prisoner to receive any help. In his first imprisonment, Paul was in his own house (Acts 28:30); but now he was in a Roman prison under careful guard.

But Onesiphorus persisted! He located Paul and risked his own life to stand with him and assist him. Some students believe that Onesiphorus was also arrested and possibly executed. They base this on the fact that Paul greeted the “household of Onesiphorus” in 2 Timothy 4:19, but not the man himself. Also, Paul asked for *present* mercies for the household, but *future* mercies for Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16, 18).

But the problem is this: If Onesiphorus was dead, then Paul prayed for the dead (2 Tim. 1:18); and we have no authorization in the Bible to pray for the dead.

We have no proof that Onesiphorus was dead when Paul wrote this letter. The fact that Paul asked God to bless the man’s household, but that he did not mention the man, simply means that at the time Onesiphorus was not with his household. “When he *was* in Rome” (2 Tim. 1:17) suggests that, at that writing, Onesiphorus was not in Rome. Therefore, he was somewhere between Rome and Ephesus; so Paul prayed for him and his household. There was no need to greet Onesiphorus, for Paul had just spent much time with him; so Paul only greeted his household.

Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul’s chain. The apostle was manacled to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day. Onesiphorus could have invented many excuses for staying in Ephesus. But instead he made the dangerous journey to Rome and ministered to Paul. “He often refreshed me” was Paul’s description of this man’s ministry. The Greek word means “to cool again.” “Bracing me like fresh air” is the way the *Amplified Bible* translated it. How we thank God for Christians who are “a breath of fresh air” in our hours of trial!

Were it not for Paul's letter, we would never know that Onesiphorus had served Paul and the church. But the Lord knew and will reward him "on that day."

The essentials for a successful ministry have not changed: courageous enthusiasm, shameless suffering, and spiritual loyalty.<sup>1</sup>

### *Our duty to guard the gospel (verses 12b–18)*

Leaving aside for the moment the second part of verse 12, we come to Paul's double exhortation to Timothy in the next two verses: 'Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me' (13); 'Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you' (14). Here Paul refers to the gospel, the apostolic faith, by two expressions. It is both a pattern of sound words (13) and a precious deposit (14).

'Sound' words are 'healthy' words, the Greek expression being used in the Gospels of people whom Jesus healed. Previously they had been maimed or diseased; now they were well or 'whole'. So the Christian faith is 'the sound teaching' (4:3), consisting of 'sound words', because it is not maimed or diseased but 'whole'. It is what Paul had previously called 'the whole counsel of God' (Acts 20:27).

Further, these 'sound words' had been given by Paul to Timothy in a 'pattern'. Here the Greek word is *hypotypōsis*. NEB translates it 'outline', and Dr. Guthrie says it 'means an outline sketch such as an architect might make before getting down to the detailed plans of a building'. In this case Paul is implying that Timothy must amplify, expound and apply the apostle's teaching. The context, especially the parallel with the next verse, seems to me to make this an unlikely explanation. The only other occurrence of *hypotypōsis* in the New Testament is in Paul's first letter to Timothy where he describes himself, the object of Christ's amazing mercy and perfect patience, as 'an *example* to those who were to believe in him' (1:16). Arndt and Gingrich, who give 'model' or 'example' as the usual translation, suggest that it is used 'rather in the sense *prototype*' in 1 Timothy 1:16 and 'rather in the sense *standard*' in 2 Timothy 1:13. In this case Paul is commanding Timothy to keep before him as his standard of sound words, or 'as a model of sound teaching' (NEB mg.) what he had heard from the apostle. This certainly suits the general teaching of the letter and faithfully reflects the emphasis of the sentence on the first word 'model' or 'standard'.

So Paul's teaching is to be Timothy's guide or rule. He is not to depart from it. He is to follow it, better to hold it fast (*eche*). And he must do so 'in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus'. That is, Paul is concerned not just with *what* Timothy is to do, but with *how* he does it. His personal doctrinal convictions and his instruction of others, as he grips hold of Paul's teaching,

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<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [\*The Bible exposition commentary\*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 243–244). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



are to be characterized by faith and love. He is to seek these qualities from Christ, a sincere belief and a tender charity.

The apostolic faith is not only 'a standard of sound words'; it is also 'the good deposit' (*hē kalē parathēkē*). These are the words which the AV renders 'that good thing which was committed unto thee', the RSV 'the truth that has been entrusted to you', and the NEB 'the treasure put into your charge'. For the gospel is a treasure—a good, noble and precious treasure—deposited for safe keeping with the church. Christ had entrusted it to Paul, and Paul now entrusts it to Timothy.

Timothy is to 'guard' it. Paul has addressed precisely the same appeal to him at the end of his first letter (6:20), except that now he calls it the 'good', literally the 'beautiful', deposit. The verb (*phylassō*) means to guard something 'so that it is not lost or damaged' (AG). It is used of guarding a palace against marauders and possessions against thieves (Lk. 11:21; Acts 22:20). There were heretics abroad, bent on corrupting the gospel and so robbing the church of the priceless treasure which had been entrusted to it. Timothy must be on the watch.

And he must guard the gospel all the more tenaciously because of what had happened in and around Ephesus (the capital of the Roman province of Asia) where Timothy was (15). The aorist tense of the verb 'turned away from me' seems to refer to some particular event. The most likely allusion is to the moment of the apostle's re-arrest. The churches of Asia, where he had laboured for several years, had depended heavily upon him. Perhaps his arrest seemed to them to indicate that the Christian cause was now lost. Perhaps they reacted by repudiating and disowning him. We know nothing of Phygelus and Hermogenes, but their mention suggests they were the ringleaders. In any case Paul saw the turning away of the Asian churches as more than a personal desertion; it was a disavowal of his apostolic authority. It must have seemed particularly tragic, because a few years previously, during Paul's two and a half years' residence in Ephesus, Luke says that 'all the residents of Asia' heard the word of the Lord and many believed (Acts 19:10). Now 'all in Asia' had turned away from him. The great awakening had been followed by a great defection. 'To every eye but that of faith it must have appeared just then as if the gospel were on the eve of extinction.'

The one bright exception appears to have been a man called Onesiphorus, who had often entertained Paul in his home (literally 'refreshed' him, verse 16), and had rendered him other, unspecified service in Ephesus (18). He had thus been true to the meaning of his name, 'a bringer of profit'. In addition, he had not been ashamed of Paul's chains (16), which seems to mean both that he did not repudiate him at the time of his arrest and that he then followed him, even accompanied him, to Rome, and then searched diligently for him until he found him in his dungeon. Paul had good reason to be grateful for this faithful and courageous friend. It is not surprising, therefore, that he twice utters a prayer (16, 18), first for his household ('may the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus') and then for Onesiphorus himself ('may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day').

Various commentators, especially Roman Catholics, have argued from the references to the household of Onesiphorus (mentioned again in 4:19) and to 'that Day' that Onesiphorus himself was now dead, and that we have therefore in verse 18 a petition for the departed. This is an entirely gratuitous assumption, however. The fact that Paul keeps distinct his allusions to Onesiphorus on the one hand and to his household on the other could equally well mean that they were separated from each other by distance as by death, Onesiphorus being still in Rome, while his family were at home in Ephesus. 'I take it to be a prayer for them separately, the man

and his family,' writes Bishop Handley Moule, 'because they were for the time separated from one another by lands and seas ... There is no need at all to assume that Onesiphorus had died. Separation from his family by a journey quite satisfies the language of the passage.'

At all events, everybody in Asia, as Timothy was keenly aware, had turned away from the apostle, with the exception of loyal Onesiphorus and his family. It was in such a situation of almost universal apostasy that Timothy was to 'guard the good deposit', to 'hold firm the standard of sound words', that is to say, to preserve the gospel unsullied and unalloyed. It would have been a heavy responsibility for any man, let alone a man of Timothy's temperament. How then could he stand firm?

The apostle gives Timothy the reassurance he needs. He cannot hope to guard the gospel-treasure by himself; he can do it only 'by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us' (14b). The same truth is taught in the second part of verse 12, which so far we have not considered. Most Christians are familiar with the AV rendering 'for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'. These words are true, for many biblical passages confirm them, and linguistically speaking, they are accurately translated. But the context makes another interpretation more probable. The AV words 'that which I have committed unto him' are a rendering of 'my deposit' (*tēn parathēkēn mou*). Indeed, both the verb ('guard') and the noun ('deposit') are precisely the same in verse 12 as in verse 14 and in 1 Timothy 6:20. The presumption is therefore that 'my deposit' is not what I have committed to him (my soul or myself, as in 1 Pet. 4:19) but what he has committed to me (the gospel).

The sense, then, is this. The deposit is 'mine', Paul could say, because Christ had committed it to him. Yet Paul was persuaded that Christ would himself keep it safe 'until that Day' when he would have to give an account of his stewardship. What was the ground of his confidence? Just this: 'I know him.' Paul knew Christ in whom he had put his trust and was convinced of his ability to keep the deposit safe: 'I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me' (12). He has entrusted it to me, it is true; but he will take care of it himself. And now that Paul is entrusting it to Timothy, Timothy can be sustained by the same assurance.

There is great encouragement here. Ultimately, it is God himself who is the guarantor of the gospel. It is his responsibility to preserve it. 'On no other ground would the work of preaching be for a moment endurable.' We may see the evangelical faith, the faith of the gospel, everywhere spoken against, and the apostolic message of the New Testament ridiculed. We may have to watch an increasing apostasy in the church, as our generation abandons the faith of its fathers. **Do not be afraid! God will never allow the light of the gospel to be finally extinguished.** True, he has committed it to us, frail and fallible creatures. He has placed his treasure in brittle, earthenware vessels. And we must play our part in guarding and defending the truth. Nevertheless, in entrusting the deposit to our hands, he has not taken his own hands off it. He is himself its final guardian, and *he* will preserve the truth which he has committed to the church. We know this because we know him in whom we have trusted and continue to trust.

We have seen that the gospel is good news of salvation, promised from eternity, secured by Christ in time, offered to faith.

Our first duty is to *communicate* this gospel, to use old ways and seek fresh ways of making it known throughout the whole world.

If we do so, we shall undoubtedly *suffer* for it, for the authentic gospel has never been popular. It humbles the sinner too much.

And when we are called to suffer for the gospel, we are tempted to trim it, to eliminate those elements which give offence and cause opposition, to mute the notes which jar on sensitive modern ears.

But we must resist the temptation. For, above all, we are called to *guard* the gospel, keeping it pure whatever the cost, and preserving it against every corruption.

Guard it faithfully. Spread it actively. Suffer for it bravely. This is our threefold duty vis-à-vis the gospel of God as expounded in this first chapter.<sup>2</sup>

## AFFIRM YOUR DOCTRINE

**Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. (1:13–14)**

A seventh guard against being ashamed of Christ is affirming and holding onto right doctrine. Although our ultimate confidence is in Christ Himself, His truth is also of great importance. It is, in fact, absolutely required for faithful living as well as for certainty of our security. If we belong to Christ, we *will be* secure, but if we neglect His truth, our confidence in that security will wane. Many Christians, perhaps most, do not have the courage of their convictions simply because they have no clear convictions. Before you put your life on the line for what you believe, you must believe it.

During a radio interview some years ago, I said, “What is particularly tragic about the many scandals that plague evangelicalism today is the fact that so many churches, and so many individuals who call themselves Christian, have little concern for biblical truth and biblical standards of living. In the name of love, understanding, and peace within the church and with society, almost any theology is accepted, or at least not challenged, no matter how much it may contradict Scripture.”

Much of the professing church is atheological, that is, without any significant theological convictions. Like the world around them, many people who go by the name of Christ believe that to hold and teach absolute doctrines is to be unloving, antagonistic, and even “unchristian.” They fit Paul’s description of those in the last days who “will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in

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<sup>2</sup> Stott, J. R. W. (1973). [\*Guard the Gospel the message of 2 Timothy\*](#) (pp. 43–47). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3–4). When you examine those today who deride doctrine, you discover they are also like those in the last days who Paul says “will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.... [They are] always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:2–5, 7). **Sound doctrine leads to holy living, and the absence of it to unholy living.**

**Standard** translates *hupotupōsis*, which was used of a writer’s outline or an artist’s rough sketch, which set the guidelines and standards for the finished work. The Christian’s **standard** is God’s Word, which encompasses the **sound words which you have heard from me [Paul]**, an apostle of Jesus Christ. In Scripture we have God’s own truth and standards, all we need or should want to have. It is the only divinely inspired, divinely revealed, absolute, unique, perfect, and sufficient truth. In it is found everything necessary for salvation and for living out the saved life. Later in this letter Paul commends Timothy, saying, “From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15–17).

Courage in Christian ministry, as well as in Christian living in general, is not possible apart from strong biblical convictions. But Paul gives necessary balance to his counsel. Strong convictions are to be held and taught **in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus**. When we defend God’s Word in a self-righteous, unloving spirit, the resulting controversy and opposition are not caused wholly by the offense of the truth itself but also by the offensive and unspiritual way in which we proclaim it. We are to defend God’s Word **in the faith**, that is, with the right attitude of confidence toward God; and we are to defend it in love, with the right attitude of kindness and compassion toward unbelievers and toward poorly taught and immature believers. “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). **Although we must not have a doubting or a dead orthodoxy, neither should we have a loveless, cold, and insensitive orthodoxy.**

The Holy Spirit’s indwelling all believers is a cardinal New Testament doctrine. Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus promised the disciples, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16–17). Immediately before His ascension He promised again, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you,” Paul declared in his Roman letter. “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him” (Rom. 8:9). He rhetorically asked Corinthian believers, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16; cf. 6:19).

Therefore, just as God has power to guard what we have entrusted to Him (v. 12), He also gives *us* power to **guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which He has entrusted to us**. Theologians would say this depicts both sides of our security, the keeping

power of God and the Spirit-energized perseverance of the saints. At the close of the previous letter, Paul gave a similar command: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you,” specifically warning him to avoid “worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called ‘knowledge’ ” (1 Tim. 6:20).

The deposit of our lives with God is secure. The question is, How secure is His deposit of truth with us? Christian colleges, seminaries, pastors, and other church leaders who deviate from Scripture, defecting to “a different gospel” and wanting “to distort the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6–7), will face a dreadful day of reckoning before God. **The most solemn responsibility that any believer has, especially those the Lord has called to be preachers and teachers, is to uphold and defend the integrity of His Word.**

## CHOOSE YOUR ASSOCIATES

**You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me, and found me—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. (1:15–18)**

An eighth means for guarding against being ashamed of Christ is that of carefully choosing one’s associates, a means which Paul here implies. In these four verses he contrasts fellow workers who were ashamed of the gospel with those who were not.

“Do not be deceived,” he warned the church at Corinth; “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33). **If we associate with spiritually courageous Christians, our own courage will be strengthened. On the other hand, if we associate with those who are ashamed of Christ and His gospel, we will soon be tainted by that shame.**

The first group Paul mentions included **all who are in Asia [who] turned away from** him. They were ashamed of Paul because they were ashamed of the gospel he preached and defended, and they became even more ashamed and fearful when he was imprisoned for the faith (cf. v. 18). Timothy **was aware of [that] fact**, because he had been pastoring for some years in Ephesus, a city in the Roman province of **Asia**. Once Paul was imprisoned, many of the men who had been with him, including **all who [were] in Asia**, were afraid of being found guilty by association. Because their first priority was self-preservation, they had nothing more to do with the apostle, who not only had ministered with them but to them.

To be rejected by the world is not pleasant, but to be deserted by fellow workers in the service of Christ is particularly painful. To have those you have spent your life spiritually nurturing turn away from you, and sometimes even against you, is heartbreaking in the extreme.

Paul had given himself without reservation to those men from Asia. Like the Galatian believers, they were Paul’s spiritual children, with whom he would be in “labor until Christ [was] formed in” them (Gal. 4:19). It was no wonder that he expressed at the beginning of this second epistle his deep longing to see Timothy, one of the few who had not deserted him (2 Tim. 1:4).

**Among** the deserters were **Phygelus and Hermogenes**, about whom we know nothing but their cowardice. Because Paul says nothing more to identify them, we can assume they were known to Timothy. And because he bothers to name them specifically out of the many others, it seems likely that they were well known in Asia, that they were close to Paul, and that they were leaders who had shown promise. They probably would have been the last ones to be suspected of cowardice, ingratitude, and being ashamed of Christ and of Paul.

Although Paul no doubt continued to love those men who proved they did not love Him, his love would not allow him to hide their defection. “Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Heb. 12:6). Likewise, the Lord’s people are to discipline those among them who are immoral and unfaithful. Even elders who “continue to sin” are to be rebuked “in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning” (1 Tim. 5:20).

The second group Paul mentions stands in stark contrast to the group from Asia. Paul ended his rebuke of those men by naming names, and he begins this commendation also by naming a name. He prays, **The Lord grant mercy to [those in] the house of Onesiphorus**, who, like Phygelus and Hermogenes, were known to Timothy. Because Paul asks Timothy to greet them (4:19), this family obviously lived in or near Ephesus.

**Onesiphorus** had befriended Paul while he was in prison. **He often refreshed Paul and was not afraid of his chains**, that is, of his being a prisoner. He regularly visited the aging apostle and ministered to his needs, without fear and without shame. When this friend first came to **Rome**, perhaps on business, **he eagerly searched for Paul** until he **found** him, suggesting that the search involved considerable time, effort, and possibly danger.

In deep gratitude, Paul again prays that **the Lord [would] grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day**, the same day of believers’ judgment for works he mentioned in verse 12 and refers to again in 4:8. Onesiphorus’s devotion to Paul had begun many years earlier. He had proved his courage and faithfulness by the **services he rendered at Ephesus**, when the apostle ministered there.

Like Onesiphorus, Martin Luther, the leading instrument of God in the Reformation, possessed such godly courage in great abundance. One biographer, Roland Bainton, writes of him: “Luther had set his face to go up to Jerusalem and would not be turned aside. He would enter Worms though there were as many devils as tiles on the roofs.... He disregarded all human considerations and threw himself utterly upon God” (*Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* [New York: Abingdon, 1950], 181).<sup>3</sup>

*The example of Paul (1:6–14).* **Throughout the letter Paul presented himself as a model for Timothy.** Paul had been Timothy’s mentor from the very start. He reminded Timothy of his own personal role in kindling the gift of God through his laying hands on him. This is usually seen as a reference to Timothy’s ordination, the same occasion as when the elders laid their hands on Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14). But in the Book of Acts the laying on of hands is also connected with

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<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *2 Timothy* (pp. 28–32). Chicago: Moody Press.

conversion and the receipt of the Spirit at that time (cp. Acts 9:17; 19:6). Paul may have been reminding Timothy of the time when he first believed and received the gift of the Spirit. In that light, verse 7 may not be referring to Timothy's human spirit but to God's Holy Spirit. Paul would have been calling Timothy to yield himself to God and to the power of his Spirit. Verses 6–7 thus form an *inclusio* with verse 14, where the Spirit is explicitly mentioned.

Verses 13 and 14 apply the lesson to Timothy, calling upon him to follow Paul's example. Once again Paul talked of the sacred trust. This time he meant the true gospel which he had shared with Timothy. He called on Timothy to guard it against falsehood and to teach it faithfully and in love. God's Spirit would empower him to discharge his ministry faithfully (v. 14; cp. v. 6).

*The good and the bad examples of the Asians (1:15–18).* Evidently not everyone had been unashamed of Paul or of his gospel. Perhaps, having heard of his imprisonment some had deserted Paul. It must have involved a great number of persons, since Paul spoke of "everyone" abandoning him (v. 15). He specifically mentioned two, who must have once been loyal to Paul. We know nothing more of Phygelus and Hermogenes. They may have joined the false teachers. They may simply have denied all acquaintance with the imprisoned apostle, perhaps out of concern for their own safety. In any event, they were negative examples for Timothy, those who proved to be "ashamed" of the gospel.

In contrast was the positive example of Onesiphorus (vv. 16–18). Onesiphorus was an Ephesian who had evidently come to Rome to see Paul. Paul must have been in an unusual place of imprisonment, because Onesiphorus had considerable difficulty finding him. When he finally did so, he ministered to Paul, probably "refreshing" him with physical as well as spiritual provision. He was "not ashamed" of Paul's chains (v. 16). One must bear in mind that Paul was now a political prisoner, probably charged with crimes against the state. To visit Paul under such circumstances would have likely been at considerable personal risk. Paul expressed his gratitude toward Onesiphorus by wishing that he would experience God's mercy on the last day (v. 18) and by wishing God's mercy on his household (v. 16). Both wishes may indicate that Onesiphorus was dead when Paul wrote 2 Timothy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Polhill, J. B. (1999). [\*Paul and his letters\*](#) (pp. 430–433). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.