

LESSON 8

Faithfulness in History

Scripture Focus

2 Timothy 1:9—2:2

Key Verse

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: 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” (2 Tim. 1:12).

Overview

God showed Himself faithful to His promises; Paul and Onesiphorus were faithful to God, while some of their contemporaries were unfaithful. In light of these things, Timothy and believers today are charged to be faithful.

Topic

Faithful examples

Theme

Examples both of faithfulness and failure motivate us to be faithful.

Desired Learner Response

The learner, understanding the demand for faithfulness and the danger of unfaithfulness, will resolve to be faithful with God’s help.

Outline

- I. God’s Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:9, 10)
 - A. The planning of salvation (1:9)
 - B. The providing of salvation (1:10)
- II. Paul’s Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:11, 12)
 - A. Commission (1:11)
 - B. Opposition (1:12a)
 - C. Persuasion (1:12b)
- III. Unfaithful Ones (2 Tim. 1:15)
- IV. Onesiphorus’ Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:16–18)
 - A. Ministry (1:16, 17)
 - B. Mercy (1:18)
- V. Timothy Charged to Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:13, 14; 2:1, 2)
 - A. In doctrine (1:13, 14)
 - B. In grace (2:1)
 - C. In reproduction (2:2)

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1 and 11
- Lesson 8 case study from resource CD
- 2 Timothy 1:12 verse card from resource CD

Getting Started

The Incredible Bride

Betsy Chalmers of Richmond, Virginia, believes in faithfulness. She says: "I met him when I was 19, married him at 20 and we were separated when I turned 22 because he was arrested for and then convicted of a violent crime. . . . I stayed through weeks of trials, years in jail and decades in prison. . . . I am now 50. He is 55. He is still my husband and my best friend. I see him four hours every weekend and I talk to him on the phone twice a week for 20 minutes. I am not deceived or a martyr. I am not stupid, uneducated or desperate. I am a wife" (www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5619291).

Ask: Give an example of faithfulness in your own life. What motivated you to remain faithful? What challenges did you face in remaining faithful? (Questions 1–3)

Searching the Scriptures

Our previous lesson looked at two faithful servants of God, Paul and Timothy. These same two men dominate this lesson, which demonstrates faithfulness through several examples and then encourages faithfulness in Timothy, and in believers today.

I. God's Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:9, 10)

Faithfulness par excellence resides in God Himself, and so Paul began with a mention of God's faithfulness in salvation. Verses 9 and 10 of 2 Timothy 1 also form a transition from the reference to the gospel (v. 8) to the present section.

A. The planning of salvation (1:9)

God saved us and called us with a holy calling (2 Tim. 2:9). That is, God saved us, and He has called us to be holy. The study of Paul's letter to Titus revealed that Christians are to live godly lives. God saves people, and in saving them, He calls them to holy living.

READ: 2 Timothy 1:9. **ASK:** How does being called to holiness relate to faithfulness? (Question 4)

God's salvation is not according to human works but according to His own purpose and grace (v. 9). The Bible is clear that no one is ever saved on the basis of works, either carried out or foreseen (Eph. 2:8, 9).

The basis of God's saving and calling was His own purpose and grace (2 Tim. 2:9). God's purpose to save was given to the ones chosen in Christ before the world began. "Before the world began" is literally before times of ages, or before eternal times. Before there were any eras or successive ages of time, God in His grace decided to save lost people. God established some

See also Ephesians 1:3–14, 1 Peter 1:18–20, Revelation 13:8, and 17:8.

very ambitious purposes before He even created the world as the stage upon which those purposes would be enacted.

ASK: How does God's choosing you for salvation before time even began help you to see your need to be faithful? (Question 5)

B. The providing of salvation (1:10)

The purpose and grace of God, established before the world began, had been somewhat hidden down through the ages. That is not to say that they were absolutely hidden, for the Old Testament revealed many of God's purposes and much of God's grace.

Yet it was only in Christ's actual arrival and His death on the cross that the saving purposes of God and His grace were so fully made known, or manifest (2 Tim. 1:10). Paul spoke about the mystery that had been hidden from ages and from generations but in his day was made manifest to God's saints (Col. 1:26). And John informed the first century Christians that the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). The appearing of the Savior in His first advent made the purposes and grace of God more fully manifest.

When Christ came, He abolished death (2 Tim. 1:10). Obviously He did not cause death to become extinct nor did He annihilate it, for it still painfully exists. The idea of the word "abolished" is that He rendered it powerless, broke its control or loosened the hold that it had. Just as sin has been rendered powerless and no longer dominates the Christian (Rom. 6:6), and as Satan has been rendered powerless and no longer dominates the Christian (Heb. 2:14), so also death has been rendered powerless. Death has been reduced to the place where Christians who are dead can be referred to as merely sleeping (1 Thess. 4:13ff.). It has been so changed that it can be referred to as gain, for to die is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better (Phil. 1:21, 23). It is very significant that these bold words about Christ having abolished death were written by Paul while he faced imminent death!

God made great plans before the foundation of the world. And then He carried them out in the work of Christ. God demonstrated His attribute of faithfulness by carrying through on His ancient purposes. God is faithful.

READ: Matthew 5:18. **ASK:** How does this verse relate to the faithfulness of God and His Word? **READ:** Malachi 3:6. **ASK:** How does this truth about God relate to His faithfulness? (Questions 6, 7)

ASK: Which of God's promises about the future as revealed in His Word are you looking forward to seeing fulfilled the most? (Question 8)

II. Paul's Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:11, 12)

The man through whom God said that stewards must be faithful set an example of faithfulness for all other stewards of the grace of God (1 Cor. 4:2).

A. Commission (1:11)

Paul had been appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:11). As a preacher, he heralded forth the gospel. As an apostle, he testified of the resurrection and founded churches upon the Christ of the gospel. As a teacher, he instructed people in the details and applications of the gospel.

READ: 2 Timothy 1:11. **ASK:** Who ultimately appointed Paul to the ministries listed in this verse?

DISCUSS: What are possible dangers in serving as if a person or group of people ultimately appointed you to ministry? (Questions 9, 10)

There are no apostles today. Apostles were in the foundation, or beginning level, of the church (Eph. 2:20). The foundation of a building does not fit on the twenty-first floor, nor do apostles fit in God's program for the twenty-first century. Another reason apostles do not exist today is that they were people who had seen the risen Christ, as was clearly required by the eleven when seeking a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:22). Paul specifically pointed out that he met that particular requirement (1 Cor. 9:1).

B. Opposition (1:12a)

The honored position of preacher, apostle, and teacher of the gospel earned Paul opposition. He said that because he faithfully proclaimed the gospel as God's preacher, apostle, and teacher, he also suffered "these things," meaning imprisonment and impending death.

C. Persuasion (1:12b)

In spite of the suffering, Paul gave Timothy a word of encouragement. Paul revealed the source of the boldness that kept him going on for God. He knew Whom he had believed (2 Tim. 1:12). Paul knew his Savior, his Lord, his God.

READ: Philippians 3:10. **ASK:** What had been Paul's great desire? **EVALUATE:** A person can be saved for forty years and still not know God very well. (Questions 11, 12)

The experiential knowledge of God gained by a daily walk with Christ created firm convictions. Those convictions were that He is really God, that the gospel is really true, and that it is worth continuing on God's side even though the heat gets intense. Paul knew Whom he had believed.

Since Paul knew God experientially, he was persuaded that God could guard, keep, preserve, or protect that which he had committed to Him. The phrase "that which I have committed unto him" literally says "the deposit of me."

Most likely, the deposit that Paul is talking about is himself; that is, he had deposited himself or committed himself to God. This is in harmony with the idea of 1 Peter 4:19 that those who suffer should commit the keeping of their souls to Him as unto a faithful Creator.

The keeping is naturally done by the one who receives the deposit rather than by the one who gives or makes the deposit; the one who receives the deposit then holds it and can keep it. God clearly is the One doing the keeping, and so He most likely is the One Who received the deposit. That would mean the deposit was made by Paul. So Paul committed himself to God, as Peter instructed all believers to do. God is keeping Paul's deposit of himself.

ASK: How should knowing that we are deposited with God and cannot be "withdrawn" for any reason affect our lives? How should it not affect our lives? (Questions 13, 14)

Paul said confidently that God will keep that deposit against that day, or unto that day. Paul deposited himself in the bank of Heaven. God, the Banker and Guard, would keep the deposit safe and sound until that day of judgment. Then the deposit, Paul himself, would be called for, and God would produce it and give it to Jesus Christ, the Judge. If Paul were to be protected from fatal tampering by Satan, if he were to be held safe in the Father's hands until the Judgment Seat of Christ, then he had nothing to fear from persecution. Even though the enemies of the gospel might take his life, his soul would remain unscathed. This assurance from God prevented Paul from being ashamed of his commission or his situation.

III. Unfaithful Ones (2 Tim. 1:15)

Not everyone is faithful. God is faithful in the absolute sense. Paul had been faithful, but others had not. Timothy knew by personal experience that all they "who are in Asia" had turned away from Paul. How are Paul's words here to be understood? Obviously there were, at the very time Paul wrote, believers in Asia who had not turned away from him. Specifically, there were believers in Ephesus who had not turned away from Paul, and Timothy himself was one of them.

Second Timothy 4:16 gives some insight into what Paul meant. There he said that at his first hearing or trial before Caesar no man stood with him but all men forsook him. So in chapter 1 Paul may have been referring to people from Asia who had been with him in Rome at the time of his first trial. These people apparently were ashamed of Paul, Christ's prisoner. They forsook him. Since the time of his trial they had returned to Asia; as Paul wrote to Timothy, they were back in Asia, and Paul could say that all who were in Asia turned against him.

Unfaithfulness is a very real and present danger. We dare not relax in this area of Christian relationships or be critical of others while we make excuses for ourselves.

READ: Hebrews 11:32–39. **ASK:** Both the first group, whom God delivered out of their difficulties, and the second group, whom He allowed to suffer, remained faithful and so “obtained a good report” from God. How did they do it? (Question 15)

IV. Onesiphorus’ Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:16–18)

Paul proceeded to give an example of another faithful person, Onesiphorus. Onesiphorus had been faithful to Paul, the Lord’s servant, both at Ephesus and at Rome.

A. Ministry (1:16, 17)

Onesiphorus often “refreshed” Paul; that is, he cooled him or soothed him. We can only speculate as to whether this was physical, emotional, spiritual, or all three. Furthermore, he was not ashamed of Paul’s chains.

Onesiphorus had ministered to Paul in some unspecified way when Paul was at Ephesus. Timothy knew very well what forms that ministry took, for he had been present in Ephesus when Onesiphorus performed it. Remember, Timothy was in Ephesus as Paul wrote this letter of 2 Timothy to him, and so the reference to unspecified ministries by Onesiphorus would have had special significance.

Onesiphorus’ ministry to Paul at Rome was really an extension of his ministry earlier at Ephesus. When Onesiphorus came to Rome, he was not ashamed of Paul’s chains. He sought Paul very diligently. Perhaps it had been easy to find Paul during his *first* imprisonment when he was in his own place, receiving all who came to him (Acts 28:16, 30, 31). But this *second* time Paul was locked away in a damp dungeon, and it was difficult for anyone to locate him. Onesiphorus had to cut through government red tape to get the word from the Roman authorities as to where Paul was sequestered. But he sought Paul with such great diligence that he found him. Certainly Paul was refreshed when this man arrived.

READ: 2 Timothy 1:17. **ASK:** What are two words that we might use to describe Onesiphorus? (Question 16)

B. Mercy (1:18)

Paul desired that the Lord would give mercy to Onesiphorus’ household and to Onesiphorus himself because of his faithful service. Just as Paul had committed himself to the safekeeping of God until the day of judgment, so he committed Onesiphorus to the mercy of God until that same climactic event.

READ: 1 Peter 1:7. **ASK:** How does Christ’s future appearing help us be faithful now? (Question 17)

V. Timothy Charged to Faithfulness (2 Tim. 1:13, 14; 2:1, 2)

The examples of both faithfulness and unfaithfulness form the setting in which Paul charged Timothy to be faithful.

A. In doctrine (1:13, 14)

Timothy should hold fast “the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). “Form” means a model, standard, or pattern. “Sound words” refers to sound teaching or doctrine. Such teaching is healthful, for that is what the word “sound” means. Timothy received sound words from the apostle Paul. Those words were healthful themselves and produced health in those who received them.

Spiritual health depends on healthy doctrine. Paul had given Timothy the Word of God, and he urged Timothy to hold fast, or cling to, or faithfully stick with orthodoxy. How important sound doctrine is in God’s sight!

EVALUATE: Our church doesn’t emphasize doctrine because it ends up dividing us and hurting our overall ministry. **TRANSPARENCY:** Display transparency 11. **ASK:** What are some practical ways a church can guard its doctrine? (Questions 18, 19)

While holding fast to sound doctrine is vitally important, Paul went on to say that the manner in which one holds faithfully to sound doctrine is also important. The correct manner for holding fast sound words is “in faith and love.” Cold, dead orthodoxy falls short of God’s desire. Our orthodoxy must be alive with a living faith and with a heartwarming love.

We ourselves must believe Biblical doctrine and then show that we believe it in our everyday lives. We are to hold sound doctrine with love or caring concern, not with indifference that would allow the world to go to Hell and would allow Christians to live in sin while we march on unconcerned.

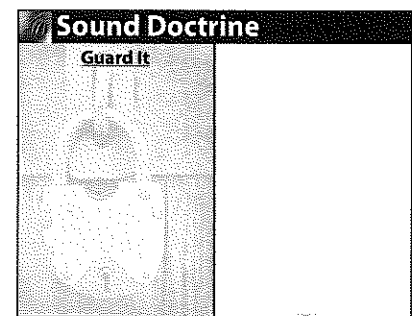
A “good thing” was committed to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:14). That good thing was the form of sound doctrine. Timothy was to keep or guard it. He was to do that by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Verse 13 speaks of the manner of maintaining orthodoxy, and verse 14 speaks of the method. Timothy was to be faithful in doctrine. The Holy Spirit teaches what sound doctrine is, and He enables a believer to guard and keep it.

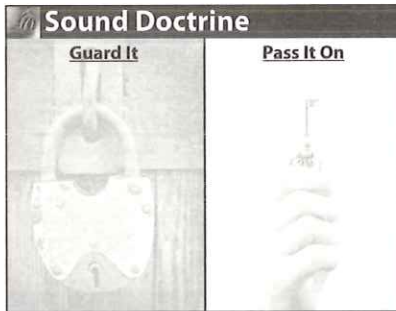
B. In grace (2:1)

Timothy should be strong in grace (2 Tim. 2:1). “Be strong” is a present tense command, meaning to do a deed immediately and continually. “Grace” in Scripture often speaks of the attribute of God that provides undeserved blessings. It is also used to speak of the blessings of God that His attribute supplies. His gifts of grace are sometimes simply called His grace. Paul instructed Timothy to remain faithful by being strong in the blessings of God’s grace—the power, the love, the sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

C. In reproduction (2:2)

The sound doctrine that Paul had taught Timothy had been affirmed by





TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 11. **DISCUSS:** What are some strategies for passing on sound doctrine to faithful people? (Question 20)

The examples of faithfulness and the danger of unfaithfulness face us today. They both make the command to be faithful an urgent exhortation to us.

Making It Personal

Safe in His Arms

Contemplating how God in Heaven will hold you safe in His arms until the Judgment Seat of Christ, commit yourself through prayer to faithfully obeying His Word until that day.

Case Study

Distribute the case study for lesson 8 to the learners. Have a learner read the case study. Use the questions on the case study to lead a discussion.

Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the Mark of the Faithful for this lesson: Guards and teaches sound doctrine.

Memory Verse

Distribute copies of the 2 Timothy 1:8 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verses.



NEXT LESSON

Encourage your learners to complete lesson 9 before the next class.