

## PAUL'S SWAN SONG

### Straight Talk to the Timid and Reluctant

2 Timothy 1:8–12

SEARCHING  
THE  
SCRIPTURES

STUDY



#### LET'S BEGIN HERE

Second Timothy is a letter of encouragement from a seasoned pastor to his younger apprentice. Paul knew he would soon be executed, and perhaps he sensed that Timothy might feel fearful and unsure of his abilities. Paul wanted to embolden Timothy to press on without him.

In this section of the letter, Paul bolstered Timothy with a message that can be boiled down to three words: *stiffen your resolve*. He urged Timothy to press on because his source of strength was God and not himself.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). What amazing gifts we have! God’s *power* enables us to do more than we are able on our own. God’s *love* enables us to serve with the heart of Christ. And God’s *self-discipline* enables us to keep going when we feel like giving up.

Like Timothy, you may be naturally timid about using your gifts in a ministry. If so, keep in mind that Paul didn’t try to change Timothy. He simply reminded the young pastor that the ministry wasn’t about him but about *the work of the Spirit through him*, and to move forward in courage and dependence on God.



#### YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

With this foundational principle in mind, begin your study by reading 2 Timothy 1:8–12 and making some initial observations.

#### Observing the Text: What Does It Say?

What do you see in 2 Timothy 1:8–12? Are there any repeated words? Did Paul use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing? Use the space provided on the next page for your observations and discoveries as you look closely at the text. Look for repeated words, commands, questions, emphatic statements, images, or figures of speech. Your notes can be specific and detailed as you examine the passage.

#### Quotable

*God’s message through Paul to Timothy and through Timothy to all of us is the same. Hang in there. Tighten your belt. Stiffen your resolve.*



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Observations and Notes:

Now let's set the table for *interpretation*.

#### Interpreting the Text: What Does It Mean?

One helpful tool is the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* and the *New American Commentary*. I would highly recommend using the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains* by Doctors Louw and Nida. Also, a handy study aid is a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*.

From our observations of 2 Timothy 1:8–12, I have outlined *five action steps to stiffen our resolve*. These steps help us move forward in courage and depend on God to work through us. Let's examine what these steps are and what they mean.

#### **Action step one: do not be ashamed of the name of Christ (2 Timothy 1:8).**

Paul urges Timothy, "Never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord" (1:8). The Greek word translated "ashamed" is *epaischynomai*. And the Greek word translated "tell others" in the New Living Translation (or "testimony" in the New American Standard Bible) is *martyrion*. Open up a Bible dictionary and read several entries for this word for 'ashamed' - *epaischynomai*. Once you have exhausted your understanding of the word, write down what you discover.

In a nutshell, Paul was telling Timothy to keep talking about Christ even when the message of His death and resurrection seems foolish to the world. *Don't be put to shame by the testimony of Jesus, but resolve to keep declaring it!*



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**Correlating the Text: How Does It Compare?**

*Correlation.* Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–24. What do you learn by comparing this passage with 2 Timothy 1:8? (What other passages can you correlate?)

**Action step two: do not be ashamed of the people of God (2 Timothy 1:8).**

Paul adds, “And don’t be ashamed of me, either, even though I’m in prison for him” (1:8). Not only does Paul warn Timothy about the public disgrace of telling others about Christ but also the “shame” of associating with him—a prisoner of Christ.

Recall in the first study, “Urgent Words from a Dungeon,” what we learned about Nero’s persecution of Christians. What potential dangers awaited Timothy for aligning himself with Paul?

“I’m in prison for him,” translates literally from the Greek “I’m his prisoner,” referring not to Nero the king but to Jesus the King of Kings. Paul isn’t in prison as a disgraced criminal of the state; rather, he’s a captive of Christ, which he considers a badge of honor! How might this perspective toward Paul’s imprisonment encourage Timothy?



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**Action step three: be willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).**

“With the strength God gives you,” Paul wrote, “be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News” (1:8). Later in 2 Timothy, Paul wrote that persecution was part and parcel of following Jesus:

Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (3:12)

The word is *will* suffer persecution, not *may*. A sobering statement of fact. What is it about the gospel that guarantees persecution?

**Action step four: anchor your life in the Lord's sovereign grace (2 Timothy 1:9–11).**

Paul anchors Timothy to the rock-solid truth of God's grace that “broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality” (1:10).

How does Paul describe God's sovereignty in 2 Timothy 1:9?

By referring to his own calling, what does Paul imply about Timothy's calling (1:11)?

**Action step five: be convinced that God will vindicate your life (2 Timothy 1:12).**

Paul ends this section with a resolution:

That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return. (1:12)



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In this statement, Paul rings a bell of freedom from within his prison cell. Listen to his confident declaration: “I am not ashamed,” “I know,” “I am sure,” and “I have entrusted.”

How did these statements strengthen Timothy’s resolve, and how do they strengthen yours?

#### Applying the Text: What It Means to Me

Paul says in so many words, “Timothy, don’t let shame shift your focus from the person and work of Christ to yourself. Keep your eyes on Him. He died that you might live, and remembering that will make you determined to keep telling people about Him.”

In what way is Paul speaking to you through his message to Timothy?

How will you put this message into practice?

#### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your Spirit that works through me to accomplish Your will in the world. You are the hand, and I am the glove. Do Your work through me. Reach out through me. Speak through me. Stand strong through me. Guard me from fears and worry. Give me the courage to depend on You as I declare the message of Christ unashamed. Amen.*



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