

### Call to be Faithful to the Sound Doctrine of the Word of God

#### 2 Timothy 1:13-18

2 Timothy 1:13-18: *“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup> That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. <sup>15</sup> This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup> The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; <sup>17</sup> but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. <sup>18</sup> The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.”*

#### Background Notes

In verse 16, Paul speaks of his “chain”: *“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain.”* Remember, when Paul wrote this letter he was imprisoned in a dungeon in Rome. This was his “second Roman imprisonment.”

His first Roman imprisonment is recorded at the end of the book of Acts. At that time he was under house arrest, chained to a Roman guard, awaiting his trial before Caesar (Acts 28:30-31). From house arrest he wrote the Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. 2 Timothy was written during Paul’s second Roman imprisonment. Paul again was in chains, but this time he was held in a dungeon.

In verse 15 Paul said, *“All those in Asia have turned away from me.”* The Asia mentioned here is not the Asia of today, which includes Russia and the Far East. The Asia Paul mentioned here was the province of Asia under the Roman Empire. It was located in present-day western Turkey. Ephesus was in the province of Asia.

When Paul said that *“all who are in Asia have turned away from me,”* he was likely referring to the Christians of that area who could have come to his legal defense, or maybe even helped with his physical comfort. Most likely they had turned away because of fear, because the Roman persecutions of Christians had begun. To identify with the apostle Paul was to risk your life.

What would you have done? Would you have turned away from the apostle Paul? Those who turned away from him were rebuked here. I’m sure many of the Christians had all kinds of good reasons why they stopped associating with Paul. In any case, soon after Paul wrote this second letter to Timothy, he was beheaded for the sake of Christ.

Paul realized the end of his life and his ministry on earth was near. In 2 Timothy 4:6 he wrote, *“For I’m already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand.”* In view of his departure, Paul was very concerned that Timothy carry on as a faithful and courageous Christian. In 2 Timothy 1:13-18 he exhorted Timothy to **hold fast** and **guard the sound doctrine** of the Christian faith.

Remember, this was not just a 1<sup>st</sup> century letter from the apostle Paul to Timothy. This is God’s Word to us. We, too, are exhorted to hold fast and guard the sound doctrine of the Christian faith.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Every Christian is commanded to stick to the standard of sound doctrine.

Verse 13: *“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”* The word “form” or “pattern” here means “standard” – or a “drawing” like a blueprint. Just as a builder must stick to the blueprint of a building so that the structure is sound and strong, so a Christian must stick to the “biblical blueprint” or standard of sound doctrine.

I was once in a house where there was a step of about four inches in the upstairs hallway. The builders had not followed the blueprint, and the step had to be added because one end of the second floor was about four inches lower than the other half! That’s not good. It’s very important for a builder to carefully follow the blueprint! In the same way, we as faithful Christians must stick to the standard or blueprint of sound doctrine. God’s Word is our blueprint for sound doctrine.

“Sound” means healthy. The doctrines of Scripture are for our spiritual health - even the unpleasant doctrines like church discipline. The Christians in Galatia did not stick to the standards of sound doctrine. In Galatians 1:6-7 Paul says, *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who... want to pervert the gospel of Christ.”*

*“Hold fast to the pattern of sound words...” (v13).* It’s significant that the phrase is literally sound **words** - not “sound thoughts” or “sound concepts.” I believe this Scripture supports the doctrine of verbal inspiration of the Bible. God gave His doctrines in **sound words** - not just thoughts or concepts. Words are more precise than general thoughts or concepts.

Let’s stick to the sound words of Scripture. It’s a command! And as we see in verse 13, it’s important that we stick to the sound words of Scripture in the context of **faith and love** that are in Christ Jesus. Every Christian is commanded to stick to the standard of sound doctrine.

## 2. Every Christian is commanded to guard the deposit of sound doctrine.

Verse 14: *“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”* What is that “good thing” or “good deposit” or “treasure?” That “good thing” is the gospel and the sound doctrine of Scripture. We are to keep and guard the gospel and sound teaching. The same idea is found in 1 Timothy 6:20, *“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust.”*

Against what are we to guard sound doctrine? Remember these three “Ds.”

We should guard against:

- a. *Distortion* – against mixture, when false concepts distort the teachings of Scripture.
- b. *Dilution* – against additions, that dilute the pure teaching of Scripture.
- c. *Deletion* – against loss, when some teachings of Scripture are omitted or even deleted.

Why is so much sin and moral corruption tolerated within the church today? It’s because the sound doctrine of sin has not been guarded. The Bible clearly teaches what sin is, and how to deal with it. But many church leaders have not guarded the sound doctrine of God’s Word about sin. The doctrine of sin has been distorted, diluted - and even deleted!

Why are some Christians today accepting the idea that there are errors in the Bible? It is because the sound doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture has not been guarded. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy has been diluted - and even dismissed – to gain “scholarly esteem” or “political correctness”!

The encouraging word here is found in verse 14: *“That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”* We have the Holy Spirit! He dwells in us to enable us to do what God has commanded us to do. He helps us to discern false teaching, and enables us to maintain sound teaching. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling within, and every Christian is commanded to guard the deposit of sound doctrine.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Let’s not follow Phygellus and Hermogenes into God’s “Hall of Shame.”

Verse 15: *“...all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.”* Phygellus and Hermogenes were Christians, but they turned away from Paul. They may have turned away because they feared persecution, but they may have turned away because of Paul’s sound doctrine as well. The way Paul puts it here seems to indicate that he was surprised and very disappointed that these particular believers had turned away from him. As a result, they are listed in God’s “Hall of Shame” in Scripture.

Several years ago I was part of a lunchtime Bible study at the company where I was employed. There were several Christians in this company, but some of them were afraid to let it be known that they were Christians. They wouldn't come to the Bible study.

Would you like your name to be engraved forever in Scripture as an example of unfaithfulness? Are you afraid to be identified as a Christian, maybe because you fear persecution? Let's not follow Phygellus and Hermogenes into God's "Hall of Shame."

## 2. Let's follow Onesiphorus into God's Hall of Fame!

Verses 16-18: *"The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus."*

Onesiphorus will forever be known as the Christian who was willing to risk his own life to help the apostle Paul. On "that Day," when the Lord returns, Onesiphorus will be rewarded. Onesiphorus made it into God's Hall of Fame! (By the way, Onesiphorus is not the same man as Onesimus of the book of Philemon.)

The name "Onesiphorus" means "help-bringer" - and he lived up to his name! As far as we can tell, he was not an upfront teacher or preacher. He was a faithful and courageous believer, and he helped the apostle Paul when he needed it most.

Onesiphorus was a Christian from Ephesus. When Paul was in Ephesus, Onesiphorus had ministered to Paul in many ways - before he became a prisoner. Then when Paul was arrested, Onesiphorus came to Rome with the specific purpose of finding him. He searched diligently for Paul - maybe all over Rome - until he found him! He didn't give up! And apparently his household supported him in his dangerous mission of going to Rome to find Paul.

This faithful Christian brother ministered to Paul in Ephesus, and then he ministered to Paul when he was a prisoner in Rome. At the risk of his life, he brought "refreshment" to the apostle. He probably brought food and clothing and encouragement to Paul's dungeon cell. Everyone else had turned away - but not Onesiphorus!

Do you know any fellow believers who are undergoing some particular test or trial, but other Christians are failing to support them? They're turning away, for one reason or another. Let's not forget our brothers and sisters who are in need of encouragement. Let's follow Onesiphorus into God's Hall of Fame!