



2 Timothy 1:13-18 The Value of Friendship

Summary: When difficult times come the truth of the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of friends carry us through.

Would you like to know how to hold on to the things you know are good, right, and true, to avoid moral compromise, collapse, or even just cutting corners when life's hard? I bet for most of us, the answer is, yes. The question is: how, how do you do it?

Well, we're looking at 2 Timothy, the last letter written by the Apostle Paul. He's in jail in Rome and he writes this note to encourage a pastor named Timothy who feels discouraged, empty and frustrated - he's in danger of compromising, collapsing, or cutting corners.

Which is a common experience, isn't it? When you face a hard situation for a long time it wears you out. You come to the point where giving in makes sense. You may even talk yourself into it. Because doing the right thing can be really, really, hard. And to do it over and over again, to hold the line, to hold the standard, to keep your promises and vows, to not violate your principles or values, can be exhausting.

But God has given us, in the church, three unique and important gifts to carry us through. We have truth to guide us, the Holy Spirit to empower us, and friends to encourage us. Again, truth to guide us, the Holy Spirit to empower us, and friends to encourage us. Read with me

2 Timothy 1:13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Now, did you notice, Paul doesn't tell Timothy - you're doing it all wrong. If you would just do it like this Timothy, things would be much better, much easier. You just need to follow Pastor Paul online - click, subscribe, and comment below - you'll learn some great spiritual life hacks and everything will be great.

No, Paul says **hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me**. Keep them, follow them, take what you received and learned about Jesus and the gospel seriously. Even now. Even in this. Even when life is hard. Don't let go. Don't ease up. Don't pull back or drift. **Hold** on to the truth you have learned. Which is our first point:

We have: truth to guide us

It's so important, Paul says it another way. He says,

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Church, Timothy needed to be reminded, and so do we, of the value of the **good thing** that was committed you. The NIV and ESV call it a **good deposit**. The New American Standard Bible translates it as **the treasure which has been entrusted to you**.

The point is: when all these pressures and forces and people pull and tug on you – when you're tempted to compromise, conform, or drift away from what you know is good, right, and true - remember the **good thing** that was entrusted to you and hold onto it.

How many of you were given something important as a child – maybe some money to run an errand for your parents or a ticket or a key and you were told, 'put this deep inside your pocket. Don't lose it.' If you've traveled overseas, how do you treat your passport? You **keep** it, you value it, you prioritize it. If you're the best man at the wedding one of the things people freak out about or joke about is, '*where's the ring?*' Why? Because it's something important, something precious, something valuable; something that needs to be kept. A good deposit. A treasure.

Paul says, that's what the gospel's like. It has value.

But does it? Is that true?

Well, think about it - the gospel changes lives. It completes, transforms, and reverses the course of human lives. Has anyone in here known someone who was completely delivered from an addiction to alcohol, drugs, or some other harmful behavior *instantly* because they received the gospel? Anyone whose personality was suddenly and permanently transformed by their salvation? They went from being always angry and agitated or always depressed and anxious, to peaceful and calm and enjoyable to be around, almost overnight. It doesn't always happen that way – but sometimes it does. The gospel really, truly changes people.

The gospel also sustains people who endure crises. Have you ever seen a victim of a horrendous crime forgive their perpetrator? Have you ever watched a man or woman or a couple or family go through a crisis and endure it with peace because they have the hope of the gospel? They're not emotionally paralyzed, they still feel things emotionally, but somehow, somehow, it's something even they can't fully explain, but spiritually, the gospel carries them through.

And then there's extraordinary, ordinary power of the gospel – that it roots us and grounds us, it answers our questions and gives us purpose and meaning. I know why I'm here. I know why I'm alive. I know who I am and what I am. I belong, body and soul, in life and death to my faithful, savior, Jesus Christ. He has given me an identity that I did not have to discover and construct for myself.

My life may take many forms and move in many directions, but there's a single plotline running through it all – I'm growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. Wherever I go, whatever I do, the real purpose of my life is to experience and express as much of heaven as possible, here and now by progressively uniting with and conforming to Christ as I hold on to the gospel, this good thing that I have received, this truth that guides me.

So, I'm to **keep** this **good thing that was committed to me**. But notice, Timothy is not just to hold on, he's to hold on in a very particular way - Paul says (vs 13), **Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus**. That's important - it's not just *what* you do, it's also *how* you do it.

Paul has this crazy idea that we can do more than simply hang in there. We can do more than simply *survive*, we can *thrive* in difficulty. It's possible to resist. When you're faced with temptation, when you're tired, when you're ready to give up and give in and go along, it's possible to endure, and it's possible to do it **in faith and love which are in Christ**.

So, how's that going to happen? Well, this is more than just a locker room pep talk at halftime. It's more than just a little rah-rah speech telling you girl, wash your face, or boy, show some grit and determination. It's not about just hanging in there through self-determination and strength, it's going to happen, notice vs 14, by **the Holy Spirit who dwells in us**. Which brings us to our second point this morning:

We have: The Holy Spirit to empower us

Some of you already know that **faith** and **love** are both fruit of the Spirit – they're virtues that God produces in us as we're in relationship with Him. And Jesus said in John 15, that if we abide in Him we will **bear much fruit**.

It's kind of like that sermon from a month or so ago when we looked at two ways to live from Jeremiah – you can be a shrub in the wilderness or a tree planted by the rivers spiritually speaking. It all depends on where you plant your roots. If we are planted in Jesus, abiding in Jesus, anchored in Jesus, He's going to produce the **love** and **faith** that will help us endure hard times and temptation. He's going to keep us from going astray, going along, or giving in to the pressures of peers, circumstances, or friends.

You see, when we are saved, when we are born again, when we are adopted into the family of God, something very real happens – the Spirit of God takes up residence in us. We suddenly have access to something – or better, Someone, we did not previously have. There is a significant and definite change in the spiritual reality of our lives. And this change is meant to be a source of strength to us – the Holy Spirit comes into our lives.

There's this mysterious reality that on the one hand we are told to abide in Christ and on the other we're told that He abides in us. Which is it? The answer is, yes. Think of a sponge. If I put a sponge in the water, it's in the water. But, very quickly it also absorbs water and

now the water is in it. That's not a perfect illustration of a complex theological truth, but it helps.

What's important is that you know, and remember: the Holy Spirit is in you. You are not alone. You're not abandoned. It's not all on you. When hard times come, if you are truly born again, there is a different spiritual reality inside of you than that which is inside other people. The Holy Spirit is not *in* all people. But if you are in Christ, He is in you – strengthening you, empowering you, dwelling in you. You have a resource that other people simply do not have, and *this is how* you're going to be able to endure the things God calls us to endure.

So, remember the value of the gospel and receive the help of the Holy Spirit [who dwells in us](#). But then, did you notice anything special there? Did you notice that Paul says the Holy Spirit [who dwells in us](#). It's a bridge to the next point we want to make this morning.

Paul is communicating something important here: Timothy, the same Spirit of God who dwells in me, dwells in you. We share this thing as Christians and the fact that we both have God as our Father, Christ as our Brother, and the Holy Spirit dwelling [in us](#), gives us a special kind of kinship and friendship. So, point number three:

We have: friends to encourage us

Now, to make this point, Paul first has to share something discouraging – it's going to be a kind of compare and contrast exercise. So, before he talks about the friends who encourage us, he talks about the reality of people who disappoint us. Paul writes

[15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.](#)

We know nothing else about who these people are or what they have done, or why they turned away from Paul. We just know that they did. And that's good to know – because, of course, it still happens today – betrayal, abandonment, ghosting, is a thing. You are going to be hurt and disappointed in this life, by people, not just by situations and circumstances.

You're going to be disappointed by what your boss did, or your company. You're going to be devastated by the behaviors of your spouse or the choices of your children. You're going to be left bewildered when the friends you thought 'everything was good with' suddenly take offense at something and turn cold on you. That's real life. That's real life for non-Christians and it's real life for Christians too.

Friends, don't miss this – Paul was exactly where he was supposed to be, doing exactly what he was supposed to be doing, he was in ministry, pouring his entire life out for Jesus, and other people *who seemed to be Christians*, other people *who had once been part of the ministry with him* turned away from him at the most difficult part of his life.

That's real. It's disappointing. We wish it wasn't true. But it is. It's real. And some of you have similar stories. You've been hurt by people who said they were Christians. You've been disappointed by people at church – well, again, so was Paul *and so was Jesus*.

But the other side is also true. Yes, there are some disappointments, but there are some delightful people too. Read with me:

16 The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; 17 but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*.

Remember, Paul is being held in jail – and this may be why others have abandoned him – they didn't want to risk guilt by association. If Paul was going to get in trouble with the authorities for being bold and zealous, that was his own thing – *Phygellus and Hermongenes* were not interested in getting mixed up with it. That's one possibility.

But then there was Onesiphorus who took his own life in his hands as he sought Paul out *zealously*. No, check that – (vs 17) he sought Paul out *very zealously*.

What might that have meant for Onesiphorus? Think about it – how do you track down a prisoner of the Roman government? Obviously, you draw attention to yourself by asking where someone like that can be found. And you risk becoming his cellmate if the guard is in a bad mood. One visit to his cell would be dangerous, to come again and again, was still more dangerous. And yet, that's what Onesiphorus did.

He wasn't *ashamed* of Paul's circumstances – he found him and refreshed him. And this was nothing new.

18 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.

In other words, Onesiphorus had been a blessing to Paul for a long time – when he was back down in Ephesus – which is where Timothy is now – in the region of modern Turkey, and then later in Rome. Obviously, this is a rare kind of friend – the kind who is generous and helpful and willing to travel long distances to show up and help out however he can.

Quite probably Onesiphorus ministered to Paul and refreshed him by bringing some food or whatever else Paul needed physically at the time, but another part of the refreshment he brought was a result of just being there.

This is why we drop everything and drive or fly across states or countries to be with people in difficult times. How much travel has been done by people in this room over the past six months *so that* you could be there for someone you know and love – to try, in some measure, to bring a bit of refreshment, encouragement, or to help – just to be there at the

bedside or in the home of someone in need? It could be said that you sought them [zealously](#). No check that, you sought them [very zealously](#).

Or maybe you have been on the receiving end. Maybe people have been coming to you – bringing refreshment, encouragement, or a meal. Maybe they’ve shown up physically, or maybe it was virtually – sending texts, emails, making phone calls – checking to make sure you’re doing alright, all things considered. These are the things Christians do and these are the things Christians experience, because the truth is guiding us and the Holy Spirit is empowering us – we reach out to one another.

Jesus said, [John 13:35](#) they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another.

We’re in a mental health crisis in America today. I heard recently that we’re 200k counselors short of the ability to meet current needs. The average wait to see a therapist is six weeks. Meanwhile church attendance is down and loneliness is up – many adults say they have no friends. I believe all of these statistics are inter-related.

The reason we need so many counselors, coaches, and therapists is that we aren’t receiving the kind of ministry, encouragement, and refreshing that we need from others in the community, the church, and the home in our increasingly individualized and isolated lives. Some people need the help of a trained, experienced, compassionate therapist or counselor. A lot of us though, most of us though, would do just fine receiving help, support, wisdom, guidance, and counsel from friends and family if only we were better connected.

Counseling, on average, lasts 50-55 minutes per session and occurs once a week. It costs an average of \$100-200 an hour. Worship lasts, on average, 75-80 minutes also occurs once a week, and it’s free, because others choose to give. You get a group session on Sunday morning. Small group sessions are available throughout the week and you can even find one on one or couples opportunities if you just stick around, meet people or sign up to serve.

There are people in this room looking for friends and people in this room who want to be friendly, because of the impact Jesus has had on their lives. He’s giving us His heart for people. He’s teaching us to see people. Hear people. Notice people – and their needs. And then to encourage each other, help each other. Minister to each other. Refresh each other.

Now, it doesn’t always work out beautifully – sometimes you meet [Phygellus and Hermogenes](#) and things are great for a while, but then they go sour. That happens. Even in church. But sometimes, you’re Paul and you meet [Onesiphorus](#) and you start a friendship and fellowship that stretches over time and distance and seasons of life. You care about each other and you carry each other through. I think of some of our home groups that have been together for years, a constant, durable, dependable source of strength for each other over the long haul, through thick and thin.

And then, sometimes you're Paul and you meet Timothy – someone you almost adopt – you take a strong interest in. You care for and about them. You invest into them. You're the one giving the ministry and refreshment and encouragement. We see that happening in this church too – I think of the way I've seen families and singles adopt each other – especially from the older down to the younger – people opening up their lives and homes and encouraging others to come in. Becoming surrogate parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters – establishing bonds and forming relationships. Because, we're guided by the same truth and empowered by the same Spirit.

Friends, you need to know: sometimes, it's really hard to do the right thing. Temptation is real and powerful. Compromise is attractive and understandable. The emotional and social pressure to go along and not stand out is something we feel. That's nothing new or unique to our current moment in history. It's why Paul keeps telling Timothy throughout this letter:

- stir up the gift that was given to you (1:6),
- hold fast the pattern of sound words (1:13),
- keep the good thing which was committed to you (1:14),
- be strong in grace (2:1),
- endure hardship (2:3)
- be diligent (2:15)
- flee youthful lusts (2:22)
- continue in the things you have learned (3:14)
- be watchful, endure affliction (4:5)

From front to back this letter is filled with encouragement to *just keep going*. Life is hard, circumstances are challenging, other people are quitting. *Don't let that be you*. You have truth to guide you, the Spirit to empower you and friends to encourage you.

So, fast forward two-thousand years – let's ask the question: what kind of things might make it hard for you to keep going in your walk with Jesus today?

The answer is: lots of things. First of all, in this area – busyness. We've got calendars, to-do lists, Slack channels and email accounts that are overflowing with opportunities and demands – at work and at home. You feel pulled in a million directions at once, because you are. And yet, a million years from now... almost none of it will matter. But in order to get it all done, we often neglect our relationship with God and our relationships with others. The very things that are meant to carry us through.

Of course, sometimes it's other people that make it hard for you to be who and what you want to be spiritually. Other people may be tempting you to join them in doing things you know you shouldn't do. Or, they're making your life living hell. Or abandoning you when you need them most, like [Phygellus and Hermogenes](#).

And then, sometimes, it's just the pressures of life – things changing or going wrong in your life or the life of someone you love – illnesses or changes of fortune or circumstance, or bad choices and their consequences. Lots of things get in the way, lots of things make life hard.

Whatever your challenge is today – whatever is making your life more difficult than you want – you can resist. You can overcome. Remember:

1. We have truth to guide us – are you holding tightly to the things you have received that are always true? Do you still believe in the power of the gospel to change and sustain lives?

2. We have the Holy Spirit to empower us – are you inviting God into every corner and crevice of your life and calendar? Are you increasingly available to Him? Are you allowing Him to stretch you and grow you and depending on Him to empower you for the things you face? Are you asking for Spiritual gifts and Spiritual fruit to be manifest in your life?

3. We have friends to encourage us – are you dealing properly with the disappointment of [Phygellus and Hermogenes](#) abandoning you? Are you receiving and appreciating the encouragement and ministry of [Onesiphorus](#)? And are you reaching out to be encouraging to [Timothy](#)? Who might you need to thank God for today? And who might you need to invite over, call, or text, or plan a way to get together?

Christian, you have all three of these gifts from God today – which one do you need most?

Life is hard, but God is good. He has given us these things to help us make it through – so receive them, and be them – by God's grace and for His glory.

Let's pray.

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Saturday, March 23rd 9am-1pm lunch provided.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

2 Timothy 1:13-18 The Value of Friendship

Summary: When difficult times come the truth of the gospel, the power of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of friends carry us through.

- Who or what tries to pull you away from the pattern of sound words that you have heard? Who or what makes your walk with Jesus more difficult to pursue or maintain?
- How do you stand fast? What practical steps do you take? What, specifically, do you try to hold on to?
- Whose pattern do you follow? Who or what influences your Christian walk?
- If someone asked you why the gospel is a “good thing” (vs 14) what would you say – answer in personal terms, not abstract theology.
- How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life make a difference as you endure trials and temptations? Do you remember a time before you were saved? How was life different without the Spirit in you?
- Read Heb 3:13. What is the role of friends? What does this/has this/might this look like in your life?
- When have you been let down by people you thought were with you? What might Jesus say to Paul as the apostle experienced people turning away from him?
- Who has been an Onesiphorus to you? What has been encouraging about them? How do you try to be the encouraging voice to someone else?
- How do you respond to the sudden rise in mental health issues and loneliness in America? What role does the church play in creating community for you? In what ways can the church fill the ‘counseling’ gap? In what areas might focused, professional care still be needed?
- Those who have a copy of Spurgeon’s Morning and Evening should go back and review the entry for 5 March in light of the encouragement we receive through friendship.