

THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH

II Timothy 1:8-12

Step Number Two - Conviction: Getting It All Together

You Know You're Getting "Marvelously Mature" When . . .

- * You and your teeth don't sleep together.
- * It takes two tries to get up from the couch.
- * When your idea of a night out is sitting on the patio.
- * Your idea of weight lifting is standing up.
- * It takes longer to rest than it did to get tired.
- * Your memory is shorter and your complaining lasts longer.
- * Getting "lucky" means you found your car in the parking lot.
- * It takes twice as long—to look half as good.
- * You give up all your bad habits and still don't feel good.
- * You have more patience, but it is actually that you just don't care anymore.

I received this e-mail on a redneck trying to understand the brand new computer terminology. For instance, to a redneck:

- * **BAR CODE**—means them fight’n rules down at the local tavern.
- * **A DISKETTE**—is a female disco dancer.
- * **A HACKER**—is Uncle Leroy after 32 years of smoking.
- * **INTERNET**—is where cafeteria workers put their hair.
- * **MEGAHERTZ**—this is how your head feels after 17 beers.
- * **MOUSE PAD**—that is where Mickey and Minnie live.
- * **ROM**—that is where the Pope lives.
- * **SERIAL PORT**—a red wine you drink after breakfast.
- * **SUPERCONDUCTOR**—is AMTRACK’s employee of the year.

We are talking about II Timothy and in this book Paul is writing his last letter.

If you can get the idea of a guy who is incarcerated in a holding cell, waiting for the day of his execution, and he is writing his last letter to his young understudy, Timothy, then you have it.

This is a horrible condition to be in.

There has been a great deal of adversity in Paul’s personal life but there is also a great deal of adversity right now as he puts together this final letter and his thoughts, which are part of his legacy.

We call this series 12 Steps To A Fantastic Finish.

Every step builds on another.

Last week we talked about Integrity – Getting It All Together.
Listen to Psalm 78:72,

“And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands, he led them!”

We said last week it is never too late to make a decision about integrity and to walk daily in that integrity, growing more Christ like every day because you are spending consistent time in the book. David qualified. He got his act together and he shepherded the flock of Israel.

During his years of leadership, the legacy he left, was with integrity of heart.

I would like to share some verses from Proverbs.

- * Prov. 10:9 – *“The man of integrity walks securely but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.”*
- * Prov. 11:3 – *“The integrity of the upright guides them but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”*
- * Prov. 13:6 – *“Righteousness guards the man of integrity but wickedness overthrows the sinner.”*

And so all of these verses are verifications that the solid foundation upon which you make a fantastic finish starts with integrity.

We said last week that all of us have a passionate desire to hear,

“Well done, good and faithful servant” when we meet Christ.

We must personally implement and adjust our lives in order to be characterized as that kind of person. There are things that must be followed in order to achieve the goal.

Today, Step number 2 – Conviction: Here I Stand, God Help Me.

If you visit RushLimbaugh.com you will see this statement that I really like. “In today’s culture, if you dare have an opinion and express it, you are called divisive.”

It really made me start to do some thinking about what has happened in our country and why our country is in the mess that it is in.

Don Shula, former head coach for the Miami Dolphins said, “The problem with most leaders today is that they don’t stand for anything. Leadership implies movement toward something, and convictions provide that direction. If you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.”

And Herbert Samuel said, “It’s easy to be tolerant of the principles of other people, if you have none of your own.”

When you hear the word “conviction” you might think about what happens in your heart when somebody starts teaching God’s word. The Spirit of God starts convicting and that is good, that is why we have Bible studies to let the word do that to us.

But that is not the definition of conviction that I am using today.

“Conviction”, according to the dictionary is a “firmly held belief.” And then it almost turns it around and says, “a belief or opinion that is held firmly.”

It means that there are certain things that you believe in and you are passionate about; that there is no negotiation about it.

You stand on those things.

We do not have any of those today in America. Do you realize that?

Society has been successful in the United States of America to produce a group of people in the 21st century who say that in the name of compassion you do not believe anything because you would not want to offend somebody.

And in the name of compassion, you certainly would not want to impose your personal convictions on somebody else.

So we truly are living in the days of the book of Judges.

“Everybody does that which is right in their own eyes.”

The call of today is broadmindedness.

That is why the Eastern religions have come in and have been so successful. That is why New Age has come in and been so successful.

Because after all if you are going to be a Christian in the 21st century you must be broadminded and bring everybody in and do not say anything to offend anybody because you do not want to run them off.

Don Anderson said, “A person with firmly held beliefs in our culture is called a narrow bigot.” He is a person who is weird or an extremist.

And the people who are extremists are these Bible-pounding, Bible-believing people who believe their way is the only.

Listen to Romans 8:31, “*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?*”

Is it careless conformity or do I stand for what I believe?

In the name of compassion, you do not want to offend anybody and with that kind of philosophy, what do we have?

We have people who are confused. We have people running around all over the place who are doubting everything and believing nothing.

You ask them, “What are your convictions? What are you passionate about?” “Oh, I did not know I was supposed to be. You know, it is just that I am trying to be good and do whatever I can do.”

William Barclay said, “Loyalty to the gospel will bring trouble.”

Expect it.

If you are really walking with God you are going to have trouble.

Kent Hughes has written a commentary on II Timothy and the title of this section was, “Stand Tall! Suffer! And Keep the Faith!”

What a great, great thing to do.

A little kid was asked in Sunday school,

“What is your favorite parable that Jesus taught?”

He said, “Oh, I love that one where everybody loafs and fishes.”

Well, there is a lot of that going on.

There are only 5 verses to today’s study and if you think you are getting out early forget it!

Let’s begin with verse 8. The first verse is the key verse.

“Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony borne by our Lord nor of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”

We have always said when you have a “*therefore*,” you find out what it is there for. And the “*therefore*” points back to verse 7. Last week he told Timothy, *God has not given us a spirit of cowardice or fear but of power, love, and a sound mind.* Those three things provided by God can cause you to be victorious in standing for your convictions and addressing the culture even in suffering.

You can be victorious.

And part of making a fantastic finish is being a person who truly stands by what he believes.

Everybody talks about leaving a legacy.

It doesn’t just happen. They must be planned and programmed if you are going to do it.

Now here is Paul writing to young Timothy.

He says because you have everything you need to be a man of integrity, “*the Spirit of God has provided it, stir up the flame of the gift of God*”, that’s verse 6 from last week.

The key words “*ashamed*” and “*suffer*,” you are going to have them twice. You are going to have them here in verse 8 and in our last verse 12. *Therefore, please, Timothy, when I am gone do not be ashamed of two things.* And look at the two things he underscores

1. *The testimony borne by our Lord.*
2. *Nor of me, his prisoner.*

Do not be “*ashamed*” of these two things.

Can you imagine, just the thought as a Christian, to be ashamed of, “*the testimony borne by our Lord?*”

Now let us put ourselves in Timothy’s shoes for a minute.

What has Timothy gone through as a believer just in his lifetime with regard to his heroes?

What happened to Jesus for standing for his convictions?

He was crucified for his trouble.

What is getting ready to happen to his number one hero and his father image?

His head is going to be rolling in the streets in the next few months.

What happened to Stephen when he was standing up preaching his heart out before the religious establishment of the day?

Railed out of the meeting room and stoned to death outside in the streets. You see, Timothy is starting to think, you know, this Christian thing is not all that easy.

And in fact it is kind of dangerous because people are losing their lives because they are standing for the Lord.

This is still happening in the 21st century!

There is a great verse that really fits this verse.

It is Mark 8:38 and Jesus is talking. *“Therefore, whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also shall the son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy angels.”*

The Lord says if you are ashamed of me, when the time comes for reward in heaven, I am going to be ashamed of you.

When Paul talked to the Romans in Romans 1:16 he said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* So his testimony is quite clear. He stood and he is not ashamed.

When it comes to this whole matter of conviction, we need to stop for just a minute and look at some people who are illustrations of what I am trying to say.

First of all is Moses. Moses had to make an incredible decision at a critical time.

You remember Pharaoh's daughter snatched him out of the little basket in the Nile River where he was put by his mom.

And she adopted him and raised him and had plans for him that he was going to be the next Pharaoh of the land and she saw to it that he received the finest education in the world.

But the time came when a decision had to be made and Heb. 11:24-26 tells us the decision. *“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”*

He made a right choice.

It was painful but it was right and he stood.

Daniel is the next one.

Remember Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

The four of them were kind of adopted by the king of Babylon as choice young men and potentials for his administration.

The king had all these guys have a special diet.

The only problem was Daniel had conviction about the food that was on the menu and he basically told the guy that he could not eat it.

He said give us vegetables and see if it does not turn out better and, of course, it did. But Daniel 1:8 summarizes it,

“Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king’s meat.”

Now that is not the only time in the scripture when Daniel’s convictions jump right out at you.

Everybody was so jealous of Daniel.

They wanted to find something out about him so they could condemn him. And he was squeaky clean. He passed all of their tests.

The only thing they could get at was his religion.

So they chose to pick on his religion.

They went to the king and said, oh king, we think it would really be cool to just show some appreciation to you to shut out everybody’s religious observance and just pray to you for a month.

Knowing full well that they were going to get Daniel between a rock and a hard place and sure enough they did.

What did Daniel do as soon as the edict was signed? Daniel 6:10

“Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened (he did not even close his windows) toward Jerusalem.

Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

He realized that if he was going to be a man of God he needed to be in audience with the King three times every day, morning, noon, and night – or Dr. Pepper would say 10, 2, and 4. And he just kept on doing it.

Of course, he was thrown into the lion’s den and God took care of all that.

And the other three guys are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Those three guys are incredible.

Have you ever just read the account of their confrontation with the king?

I want you to listen to this, this is so cool!

Daniel 3:16-18, *“Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But*

(I love this) even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

It is all in the sovereign hand of God.

If he wants us to burn up in a furnace and go home to glory, we are not worshipping your God.

And if we come out of this thing, we are not worshipping your God either because it is against our personal convictions.

That delights your heart to see them stand so strongly for that which is right.

Now, there are just scores of other illustrations.

You can take Stephen.

Convinced that the scripture was right and Christ was alive and he was the Messiah.

And so he stood and gave his life.

You can see Joseph doing the same thing.

What a powerful temptation to be in Egypt to do what the Egyptians do when you are away from home.

Mrs. Potiphar wants to have an affair. How does he answer?

(Gen. 39:9) “*How can I sin and do this great wickedness against God?*” And as a result, he stands.

Then there are guys who say they are going to stand and they do not stand.

Remember Peter on the way down to the Garden of Gethsemane?

Luke 22:33, “*Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.*”

And what happens?

About two hours later it is, “*Jesus who?*”

three times and punctuated with profanity.

When the pressure is on, when life and death are in the balance and it is time to pay the price,

that is the time of greatest vulnerability.

Paul is not talking today about something he is not experiencing.

For if there was ever a time in his life that he would be tempted to be ashamed or to deny,

it is the fact that he is under death sentence.

And so he is just asking his young understudy to please do not be ashamed of our Lord or of me his prisoner.

Now, when it comes to this business of suffering,

I must caution you that some people think that becoming a Christian gives you a blank check to have everything going your way and if it is not going your way there is sin in your life.

That is exactly what Job's friends said to him in those circumstances. Listen, that is not the truth.

Just go read your Bibles my friends.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:11),

“Blessed are you when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.”

Paul spent most of his letters saturating them with words of suffering.

To the Philippians (Phil. 1:29), *“For unto you it is given on behalf of Christ, not only believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”*

And over and over again his epistles are saturated with the fact that this is part of standing for your convictions and being willing to be identified with the person of Christ, publicly.

Peter, of all the individuals, says more about suffering than anybody else.

Just study those five chapters and you will understand it.

1 Peter 5:10 as he is ending the letter he says,

“And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”

You can expect it.

Back to verse 8. You have a *“therefore”* that starts it and then you have a *“but”* in the middle.

Why is the *“but”* in the middle?

It is a contrast from this: the negative is Timothy,

“Do not be ashamed of the testimony borne by our Lord, nor me his prisoner.”

That is the negative side – do not be ashamed.

Switch it over to the positive now: *“But join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”*

See that phrase *“join with me in suffering.”*

That is a brand new Greek word that only occurs here in the whole New Testament.

A lot of commentators think that Paul wanted so badly for Timothy to understand this he could not find a Greek word to communicate it.

So he came up with a word that literally helped Timothy understand that there is a “Koinania,” a fellowship of suffering.

And he says please, one of the greatest gifts you can give me, Timothy, as a young minister, an understudy, is to, *“join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”*

Now, suffering for the gospel means that Timothy must stand and put his life in risk, in jeopardy.

And evidently he does, because in the book of Hebrews, as it ends, he talks about Timothy being in prison.

We do not know how his life wrapped up but obviously Timothy must have been faithful in the future.

What is provided when we face adversity?

The power of God. Phil. 4:13, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

2 Cor. 12:9, *“And God said unto me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in your weakness.’”*

So there is a negative and a positive in our key verse 8.

Do not be ashamed of me and of the Lord.

But instead join with me in the suffering.

Now that is our key verse.

One sports writer said athletes have discovered that

“sweat is the cologne of accomplishment.”

Let's change that so that is says,

“For the Christian, sweat and suffering are the cologne of accomplishment and fruitfulness.”

This is what God wants from us more than anything else:

1. He wants us to come to know him. That is his purpose.
2. He wants to produce fruit through us in the lives of others and that comes by having solid convictions that you stand by even if it means you are standing against the culture.

Now Jim Hightower was a politician that said a lot of things that got your attention. This is what he said,

“The only things in the middle of the road are yellow stripes and dead armadillos.”

You do not want to be in the middle of the road.

You want to be standing on the side of the kingdom of God.

Ray Charles said, *“There’s nothing written in the Bible . . . that says that if you believe in me, you ain’t going to have no troubles.”*

So I have some questions for you to consider:

- * Is it conformity or conviction that is going to characterize your legacy?
- * Is it the thermostat or the thermometer that describes your life? A thermostat controls the climate. A thermometer only registers it.
- * Are you going to be a crocodile or a chameleon? Nobody argues with a crocodile but a chameleon always takes his color from the last environment he crawled across.

And the choice is really ours.

Are some of you old enough to remember the creepy crawlers. That was quite a toy.

On Christmas day you opened the box and found several bottles of liquid stuff and they were yellow and red and green and black and brown. And then you had these little molds, little metal molds and you were instructed to pour some of the liquid into the little mold and then we put the mold into this little kind of electric kennel and it would heat it up for about, 10 - 15 minutes.

And then you take a pin and you just pop the little plastic that had become hardened but flexible out of it and what you would have is a creepy crawler. You would have a worm, a spider, a snake, or stuff that would end up in your bed and under your plate and all those fun things!

In Romans 12:2 (this is J.B. Phillips paraphrase) he says, *“Don’t allow the world around you to squeeze you into its own mold but let God remold your minds from within.”*

Realize that just like this little plastic stuff is made into something ugly, so the world is in the business of making creepy crawlers, out of people.

When you conform to the culture that is what happens. It is not very pretty and it does not turn out well at all. But God is in the business of making people beautiful and making them fruitful, when they stand for him.

Now Timothy, join with me.

Be proud. Stand with conviction for what you believe.

Now what is it that he believes that is so life changing?

Verses 9 and 10, there it is.

“The one who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”

God saved us for the purpose of making us holy.

That is 1 Peter 1:15-16. *“Be holy for I am holy says the Lord.”*

And then the next phrase is negative.

He, *“saved us and called us”*, that is positive,

but *“not according to our works”*,

but, positively, *“according to his own purpose and grace.”* God had a purpose to save people.

He had a purpose to take those saved people, make them holy, and make them fruitful.

That is his purpose.

And so graciously, he did not have to do it.

Graciously he chose to provide this.

And being gracious to provide it involved the death of His son.

That is how great his love for you is.

God planned all this before you and I ever showed up.

We cannot have anything to do with it because he already had it planned and worked out before we ever arrived here. So how

foolish for us to think for a moment that we can be the ones who are involved in our salvation.

Charles Hadden Spurgeon said,

“If you are to be saved, it must be an act of sovereign grace.” That

is the only hope that you and I have.

You cannot live by the conviction

that you can be good enough,

that you can work your way,

that you can give your money,

and you can do all these things. No, no, no!

Salvation is not something that we can attain by good works.

Warren Wiersbe says “A holy life isn’t the automatic consequence of reading the right books, listening to the right tapes, or attending the right meetings.

It’s the result of a living, loving union with Jesus Christ

and a life marked by godly discipline.”

Let’s go to verse 10,

“But now has been made known through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who on the one hand broke the power of death

and on the other brought to light, life and immortality through the gospel.”

Here are the two things that comfort Paul’s heart
in these final days of his life.

Jesus Christ came down to earth.

And Christ lived the perfect life and made the perfect sacrifice and
he broke the bars of death
and is alive and available.

Paul knows that, so getting out of here is no big deal.
He is looking forward to being home with the Lord.

On to verse 11 quickly,
“*For which* (that is, this wonderful gospel I have just described for
you in verses 9 and 10)
I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.” There is
Paul’s reason for living.
There are the three goals for his life.

He was first of all a preacher.

He was a *herald*. He was *announcing*.

The Greek word is *announcing the messages of the King*.

Secondly, he was an apostle. That word means, *sent one*.

Thirdly, he is a teacher. He is a person who is *communicating God's life-changing message to others*.

They interviewed Dwight L. Moody in his eighties.

They said, "Why in the world are you still preaching the gospel and carrying on like you have all of your life and you are getting old and frail?"

He said, "God showed me a long time ago that this old world is a sinking ship and I am here to get as many people off of the ship as I can before I am out of here. I am going to do it."

Franklin Graham is taking Billy Graham's place.

Franklin Graham said this.

"It has been said that opportunities multiply as they are seized; they die when they are neglected."

And for the fantastic finish we get the best verse of all. Verse 12,

"For this reason,

(now Paul is giving his own testimony)

because of all this, *I am also suffering these things*.

But I am not ashamed,

(for I know what I have believed.) What does your text says? For I know “*whom*.”

You see, there is the gospel right there in one word.

As Paul gets ready to die, it is not *what* he believes, it is “*whom*” he believes.

He is in living, in vital union with Jesus Christ and because of “*whom*” he believes, he is convinced that the one “*whom*” he believes “*is able to guard that which has been entrusted to him until that day.*”

And the next phrase, “*and I have been convinced*”, is a perfect tense.

That means I made a decision in the past and I was convinced then, I am convinced right now, and I am going to be convinced in the future. Nothing is going to change it.

“*That he is able.*” He is always able.

He is the Lord God who can do great and mighty things which we do not even know about.

Therefore, *“I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed.”* I am proud to be a servant of the Lord, it is truly an honor to serve him Paul says.

In *Rachel’s Tears* we read these statements:

“Rachel Scott had two dreams:

(number one) she wanted to make an impact for God

(number two) she wanted to live in His presence all the time.”

It is amazing that God answered both of those dreams at Columbine High School that morning when she laid down her life. She has made an incredible impact with her diary and her journaling and it still goes on as part of her legacy and she is living with the Lord all the time.

A year before Rachel died she wrote a letter to a friend that said, *“Eternity is not just looking to the future and our place with God in heaven, but it is looking at our Eternity as if it were only moments away.”*

A few lines later, Rachel added, *“People are not aware that tomorrow is not a promise, but a chance.”*

**Max Lucado said, “The conclusion is unavoidable:
self-salvation simply does not work.**

Man has no way to save himself. . . .

Please note: Salvation is God-given,

God-driven,

God-empowered,

and God-originated.

The gift is not from man to God.

It is from God to man.”

There are 13 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: Do you consider yourself to be a person of strong convictions?

**LESSON #2: When the culture questions your convictions, can you with
Martin Luther say: “Here I stand, God help me”?**

**LESSON #3: Are you able to boldly proclaim Christ when the opportunity
presents itself for witness?**

LESSON #4: When is the last time you shared your faith with someone?

LESSON #5: Suffering is a part of the divine curriculum to make us more Christlike.

LESSON #6: When we are suffering, we can trust his sovereignty and His strength to be made perfect in our weakness.

LESSON #7: Lord, help me to maintain a continual contentedness under Your sovereign hand.

LESSON #8: Are you making progress in a life of holiness?

LESSON #9: “If you are to be saved, it must be an act of sovereign grace” (Spurgeon).

LESSON #10: Can you face death with confidence?

LESSON #11: Can you say “I know whom I have believed” (verse 12)?

LESSON #12: Are you investing faithfully in light of the judgment seat of Christ?

STUDIES IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

“THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH”

Key verse 2:15 — *“Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.”*

STEP NUMBER TWO –Conviction: Getting It All Together –
2 Timothy 1:8-12

Key verse 1:8

Notes

v. 8 Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony borne by our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God;

v. 9 The one who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

v. 10 But now has been made known through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who on the one hand broke the power of death and on the other brought to light, life and immortality through the gospel.

v. 11 For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.

v. 12 For this reason, I am also suffering these things, But I am not ashamed, for I am knowing whom I have believed and I have been convinced that He is able to guard that which has been entrusted to Him until that day.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:8-12 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. What two things does Paul ask Timothy not to be ashamed of in verse 8?
3. What else does he ask him to do in verse 8?
4. What two things has God done for us in verse 9?

5. What has Christ done for us in verse 10?
6. Can you describe Paul's work in verse 11?
7. Is Paul ashamed of the fact that he is suffering? If not, why not?
8. What day do you think Paul is referring to in verse 12?
9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?
10. What lesson have you learned from this study?