

THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH

II Timothy 1:13-18

Step Number Three-Courage: I Am Willing To Pay The Price

You know as we get older each year,
You can tell if you're over the hill:

- * When you put tenderizer in your oatmeal.
- * When you get more get-well cards than junk mail.
- * When your favorite exercise is a good brisk sit.
- * When you begin using words like spry, plasma, salt-free, and fast temporary relief.
- * When it takes a half-hour to wake up your leg.
- * When you attend seminars on death planning, nutrition education, and grief therapy.
- * (I love this one.) When you believe that regularity is more important than popularity.

One couple was bragging over the fact that they lived together for 60 years and never had an argument.

Their secret? They both used the same hearing aid!

There is a book out now called *Disorder in the Court*. The author has studied the cases of lawyers quizzing witnesses in actual court cases and the title of the book is *Disorder in the Court* and here are some excerpts from that book:

Q: What is your date of birth?

A: July fifteenth.

Q: What year?

A: Every year.

Q: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

A: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

Q: What was the first thing your husband said to you when he woke up that morning?

A: He said, "Where am I, Cathy?"

Q: And why did that upset you?

A: My name is Susan.

Q: Sir, what is your IQ?

A: Well, I can see pretty well, I think.

Q: Were you present when your picture was taken?

Q: She had three children, right?

A: Yes.

Q: How many were boys?

A: None.

Q: Were there any girls?

Q: You say the stairs went down to the basement?

A: Yes.

Q: And these stairs, did they go up also?

Q: All your responses must be oral, OK? What school did you go to?

A: Oral.

(And I saved the best for last.)

Q: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

A: No.

Q: Did you check for blood pressure?

A: No.

Q: Did you check for breathing?

A: No.

Q: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

A: No.

Q: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

A: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

Q: But could the patient have still been alive nevertheless?

A: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law somewhere.

We are studying how to make a fantastic finish and the Apostle Paul is sitting in a semi-darkened dungeon with no windows and just a hole at the top to get down into the thing.

He has already had his court case and he is up for execution and it is just a question of when.

He is very urgent in writing to his young understudy Timothy. Timothy is a little bit shy by nature.

He has been trusted with the responsibility for pastoring the church in Ephesus and he is basically going to take over for Paul.

So this is a very urgent, personal letter.

Our series is called 12 Steps to a Fantastic Finish.

There is no one sitting in this room who does not look forward to being acknowledged as doing well as a servant of Jesus Christ when you die and meet him face-to-face.

Those things do not just happen by wishing it.

They do not just happen by thinking about it or being challenged about it.

There have to be steps that you take in order to assure that you are going to experience this fantastic finish and those are the 12 steps.

Let's review the past 2 weeks.

Step number one is Integrity: Getting It All Together. That is the foundation of any fantastic finish.

You must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Integrity is to be built as you order your life in accordance with Biblical truth.

So once you come to know him, you have a daily diet with the word of God that builds integrity or Christ-likeness in your life.

That is the desire of the Lord once you become a Christian.

That led us to step number two last week,

Conviction: Here I Stand, God Help Me.

This is firmly held belief against a culture or a society or others who would think differently.

You would not buy into the system that would say broadminded is the safest place and most compassionate place to be.

You have firmly held convictions and you will stand for it in the time of crisis.

That leads us to the third study.

Courage: I Am Willing to Pay the Price.

Courage is an outgrowth of strong conviction and is an evidence of good character.

Why is it that there is so little courage or courageous acts that we witness in our daily lives?

It is as if people are afraid to be courageous because they are afraid of what it is going to cost them to be so. And they do not want to go through the trouble, the misunderstanding, and the strained relationship to be truthful about what they believe in.

And Paul is so concerned that when he dies that Timothy may actually deny the Lord or be insecure or back off from his commitment and so Paul is challenging him in a powerful way in the study today.

Here are just a few statements that have been made by some great men of the past of how important courage is with regard to making a fantastic finish.

For instance, Confucius said, "To see what is right and not to do it, is a real want of courage."

Winston Churchill said, "If you will not fight for right when you can easily win without bloodshed, if you will not fight when your victory will be sure and not too costly, you may come to the moment when you may have to fight with all the odds against you and only a precarious chance of survival."

Will Durant said, “No great nation has ever been overcome until it has destroyed itself.”

You know when you stop and think about it, you and I sit here as the inheritors of the blood of millions and millions of young men and women who cared enough about our country to be free that they gave their lives and shed their blood.

Listen to this letter from the 60’s when this young, First Class Private who was in Vietnam and had a hunch that he was going to die before he could get home.

So he wrote a letter to his parents the day before he died, he was trying to rescue a wounded buddy, and listen to what this young man says:

“I am writing this letter as my last one. You probably already received word that I am dead and that the government wishes to express its deepest regret. Believe me, I didn’t want to die, but I know it was part of my job.

“I want my country to live for billions and billions of years to come.

“I remember a story from Mr. William’s English classes when I was a Freshman in high school that said, ‘The cowards die a thousand times, the brave die but once’.

“Don’t mourn me, mother, for I am happy. I died fighting my country’s enemies and I will live forever in people’s minds. I’ve done what I’ve always dreamed of. Don’t mourn me, for I died a soldier of the United States of America. God bless you all and take care.

I’ll be seeing you in heaven.

Your loving son and brother,

Butch”

Where is that kind of courage when it comes to our own personal Christian commitment?

It is almost like we have become so self-absorbed we are so afraid of what everybody else is going to think about us if we truly speak out our convictions and with courage let people know where we stand.

I went back to the dictionary and this is what I discovered as the definition of the word “courage.”

It is the quality of being brave.

The ability to face danger, difficulty, uncertainty, or pain without being overcome by fear or being deflected from a chosen course.

Paul “Bear” Bryant, a football legend of bygone days from Alabama said, “There’s no substitute for guts.”

Joe Paterno said, “You’ve got to believe deep inside yourself that you’re destined to do great things.”

If you are going to make a fantastic finish:
first of all *integrity*, secondly *conviction*,
and third *courage*.

That I am a person who is willing to pay whatever price the Lord deems necessary for me to be a faithful witness for him.

And whatever he wants is what is going to be best.

Our key verse is our first verse 13.

Verse 13 *“Be holding fast the standard of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”*

Now Paul did not have any problem about the courage. He said I do not consider my life as of any value to myself because I want to finish the course and the ministry that God has given me.

And you know, I started looking at the Bible and there are all kinds of places where the Lord tells his people to be courageous.

First of all, when Moses is getting ready to die, he has preached 31 chapters in the book of Deuteronomy. And in 31 he is finishing his message and in 32 they sing the song and then by 34 he is out of here.

But in Deut. 31:8 it says, *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

You are going into the land and God is going before you and it is going to be all right so be strong and courageous. I looked at that and then I flipped over and who is the guy who takes over for Moses? Joshua.

Across the river. And the Lord just makes a personal visit before they go to their first campaign in Jericho and what does the Lord say to him?

(Josh. 1:9) *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will go with you wherever you go.”*

And then the same thing happened. David is on his deathbed.

Solomon is going to build the temple. David says to him (1 Chron. 28:20), *“Be strong and courageous, and do the work.”*

Ranger McNelly said, “Courage is a man that just keeps comin’ on.”

And a person who does not give up but stands in there.

And that is the feeling I get as soon as I see the first words in our text.

Verse 13a *“Be holding fast the standard of sound words.”*
What do you think of when you think of *holding fast*?

I think of a hurricane or a tornado.

I mean, you batten down the hatches and the storm is coming and you resist that storm by the fact that you have made preparations to be courageous and to ride it out.

That is life.

It is amazing how you go through the cycles of life so fast.

These cycles just come one right after the other and before you know it you are attending the funerals of your friends and pretty soon you are going to be the star of the show.

Everybody else is going to be coming to yours.

We do not like to talk about it but it happens so quickly. You have to *hold fast* and stay *faithful* on a daily basis.

Now you are *“holding fast the standard of sound words”* – that word *“sound”* means healthy or life giving.

You *hold fast* to this *pattern of sound words*.

Paul has taught Timothy a lot in the years they have traveled on the missionary journeys.
He has taken him in discipleship and walked through the gospel with him over and over again.

I think he had been with Paul so much that he literally could speak for Paul.
Timothy has sat under Paul's ministry of intense communication of the gospel and this *pattern of sound words* is his.
And Paul says, "*what you have heard from me, I want you to hold fast to it in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*"

Listen to 1 Cor. 15:58, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, . . .*"

And then 1 Cor. 16:13, "*Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*"

Be faithful, hold fast against the culture.

I wrote this down, "Don't waiver, don't whimper, and don't walk away. Ride it out.
Stay in there and be faithful."

Now notice Verse 13b says the "*faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.*"

How does Paul say that Timothy is going to be effective in communicating his convictions?
It is by, "*faith and love.*"
The *faith* he has in Christ has changed his life.

When you come to know Christ by faith the first manifestation of your faith is your love for everybody.

If you have been around any young Christians lately you know they are huggers, they just love everybody, and they are so refreshing and so excited and so passionate about sharing the gospel with others.

Paul said a lot of strong things to Timothy.

Stir up the flame of the gift of God, do not be ashamed of me, suffer, bear your hardship, but now hold fast to the standard of sound words.

Courage: I Am Willing to Pay the Price. Are you? Courage of one's convictions.

Look at Acts 4:31. *“And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”*

When you commit yourself to the Spirit of God on a daily basis and you move out in the culture to be a witness for Christ, the boldness is going to come because you are fortified with fortitude because the Spirit of God is the one who lives within to provide this ability to be courageous.

Are there any places in the Bible where you have evidences of individuals who were courageous to their convictions that led to a conflict?

You can see them all over the place.

First of all, Nehemiah. Nehemiah, chapter 6.

I mean Sanballat and Tobiah have tried to stop the building of the walls.

They have done everything possible and finally in Neh. 6:10-11 when the walls are over half done, this is what we read, this guy comes into it and he says to him *“Let us meet in the house of God, inside the temple, and let us close the temple doors, because men are coming to kill you—by night they are coming to kill you.”* But I said, *“Should a man like me run away?”*

Or should one like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!”

He grabbed his sword and went back up on the wall with his trowel and they continued to complete the wall in 52 days and he courageously stood against this guy who was trying to divert him from the task, his God-given task.

Now there is nobody like Esther when it comes to courage. You remember Esther was a Jewess and she was married to the heathen king and Haman works out an edict whereby the Jewish race is going to be wiped out. Mordecai, kind of her step-dad, sent a note to her and said to her (Esther 4:14), *“is it possible that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”*

Listen to what Esther says? You talk about courage (Esther 4:16), *“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”*

Fortune is always with the bold. She walks in, the king accepts her, and the rest of it is history.

Listen to this concept. Character and convictions are the bedfellows of courage.

Courage always tells you that the other two are there. For to be courageous you must have conviction and to be courageous about God you also have character; Christ-like character that has made a difference in your personal life and made you passionate.

Walter Anderson wrote a book called *Courage Is a Three Letter Word*. Just say yes, go, be, do, whatever is necessary.

Benjamin Franklin said,
“A man without courage is a knife without an edge.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “And having thus chosen our course, let us renew our trust in God and go forward without fear and with manly hearts.”

Robert Schuller said, “It takes guts to leave the ruts.”

Noah was a brave man to sail in a wooden boat with two termites.

And Andrew Jackson said, “One man with courage makes a majority.”

Listen to Fenelon a 16th century writer.
“Learn to be lenient with the less important matters, but maintain your firmness over that which is essential. Remember that true firmness is gentle, humble, and calm. A sharp tongue, a proud heart, and an iron hand have no place in God’s work.”

Let’s go to Verse 14.

Verse 14, *“Guard the precious deposit which has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us.”*

What was command number one?

“Hold fast to the standard of sound words.”

What is command number two?

“Guard the precious deposit.” What is the difference?

I think they are both the same.

The *standard of sound words* is *the precious deposit*.

The *precious deposit* is the gospel!

“Be sure you hold fast to it but you guard it, it is precious, and it has to be passed on to the next generation as we are going to learn in next week’s study.

“Which has been entrusted to you” and do this *“through the Holy Spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit is the one who guides into truth.

The Holy Spirit is the one *“who is dwelling in us.”*

The Holy Spirit is there to provide the grace and the dignity to pay the price whatever is necessary in any given situation or circumstance.

Let’s have a quick review of the verses we have studied and what Paul has said. I have five things Paul said:

1. Stir up the gift.
2. Do not be ashamed.
3. Suffer with me.
4. Keep the *standard of sound words*.

5. And now, guard the deposit.

Paul is saying, Timothy, time has run out on the clock for me, the ball is in your court, and I am trusting you to be faithful and to hang in there.

Let me share the motto of the French Foreign Legion. “If I falter, push me on. If I stumble, pick me up. If I retreat, shoot me.”
That is getting serious.

What Paul is going to do now is give you flesh and blood. He is going to give you two illustrations; some people who did not and one person who did.

How does Timothy know this by the way?
You see, he is the pastor in Ephesus and all that Paul is getting ready to talk about happened in Ephesus so Timothy knows it.

Verse 15, “*You are knowing this, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.*”

Let me describe Asia for you.
It is not the Asia that we have on our map.
This is really the western segment of modern Turkey and Ephesus was the capitol at this time.
So he is saying, geographically, in the area where you are Timothy, everybody has deserted or turned away from me.

Now I want to ask you a question.
Did everybody turn away from him in Asia?

Sometimes when you get depressed,

when you get discouraged, Satan distorts reality.
And we come out with statements like this.
We know some people in Asia who have not left him.

But to Paul sitting in prison, this stinking smell-hole and trying to write this letter, he is just saying the biggest hurt is the people who have deserted him, who have left him, who have not hung in there and been faithful with him.

So he says *all of them deserted him*.
That is a true statement of depression.
You may face it in your marriage too.
When you get into a conflict what do you say in your depressed and angry state?
You “always” and you “never.”
Nobody “always” and nobody “never” but we use those overriding statements of frustration that are magnanimous.
Not everybody deserted him but he thought so.

Remember the story of Elijah.
He was on Mount Carmel confronting the prophets of Baal with that super bowl?
And he calls fire out of heaven and 450 prophets of Baal are slain.
And he runs back into Jezreel ahead of the chariot of Ahab and he has a telegram on his desk or nightstand when he gets there, she says,
I am going to do to you tomorrow what you have done to my prophets or may the gods do it to me.
He gets so scarred.
He leaves and he makes a long run to Beersheba,

leaves his servant there, goes out into the wilderness, throws himself under a juniper tree, and says
I am ready to die.

The Lord feeds him, remember, and then goes with being fed and rested over to Mount Horeb.

What is the first statement the Lord says?

Why are you here, Elijah?

What does Elijah say? He does not answer the question. He is in a total depressed state.

He said, Lord, you will not believe it, they have killed all the prophets and I am the only one left. And afterwards the Lord deals with him – the Lord says, oh, by the way, there are still 7,000 who have not bowed their knees to Baal.

But you and I are like that. We get into difficult times, stressful circumstances, and Satan knows how to move in and affect and infect all of our orientations at every level.

Because we are depressed that depression just sweeps over all of our relationships and we are down in this black hole thinking that God is not alive and everybody that we were counting on have failed us. Been there?

If you have lived very long, you have been there.

Phygellus and Hermogenes, why are they mentioned?

I think they were elders in the Ephesian church.

And if there were two guys that he thought he could really count on, these were two of those guys, and he was so shocked when he found out that they would not have anything to do with him.

I am of the persuasion that there are two things that have caused this desertion.

First of all these people are deeply interested in the fact that Paul is a prisoner and they do not want to have guilt by association.

I mean, if they are killing Christians and he is in prison, they do not want to have anybody think that they are intimately involved with a criminal who is getting ready to die lest they also pay the price.

And secondly, they are living by that principal that everybody lives by: the number one concern is self-preservation. And so they have deserted him.

They have created a distance simply because if this happens to Paul, what could happen to us.

Phygellus and Hermogenes; how would you like to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and be characterized as a deserter?

Ugly men with ugly name aren't they?

The other person is my favorite. Are you ready?

I get to introduce you to him now.

What a treasure these guys are when you understand what they went through.

In verses 16, 17, and 18 we pay tribute to

Onesiphorus and this is a prayer wish.

You see it in verse 16 and in verse 18.

He is wishing these things for Onesiphorus because of what he did. Let's read Verse 16

Verse 16 "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain."

You see, Onesiphorus has gone, evidently, from Ephesus to Rome with the purpose of trying to bring comfort and demonstrate to Paul that he is not alone.

He might have been in Rome on business, we do not know. But it is obvious that he has been part of the Ephesian church because Timothy knows him well.

Now, put some things together on this.

What is it that Paul says in verse 16b about this man that means a lot to him?

“He often refreshed me” and secondly, *“he was not ashamed of my chains.”*

That helps us understand why maybe the other guys deserted because they were ashamed because of the chains and the association.

Prov. 17:17, *“A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity.”*

“He often refreshed me”, that was his action.

“He was not ashamed of me”, that was his attitude.

He is a person who is consistent in his friendship with the Apostle Paul.

Anytime Onesiphorus came around, he did what needed to be done to take care of the situation.

He was characterized by that.

Jonathan was like that.

Saul is looking for David all over thunder and Jonathan, divinely led, goes to the forest of Horesh and it says he strengthened David in the Lord his God.

He got with him and met his need.

Who would have thought that a visit to a prison to see a prisoner would make the book and would be a message that would be part of his legacy?!

Now verse 17.

Verse 17 *“but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and he found me.”*

Now have you ever done that?

You are going on a journey and you know you are going through a city where there is somebody you want to see and you call them on the phone and you get a busy signal and so you hang up and say well they were not there.

At least we can tell them we gave them a try and on we go.

You know, we did our thing, we tried, and we could not make a contact.

Onesiphorus never read that book.

Can you just imagine for a minute, what he went through to find Paul?

Rome is a war zone.

The city has been burnt.

Many of the stores and the business parts of the city have been burnt because Nero had it set on fire.

And then on top of that, what is happening?

Onesiphorus is coming into Rome and the Christians are leaving in droves because Nero is lighting up Christians as torches in the gardens and they are being thrown to the lions and Christians are getting out of Dodge.

I mean there is a mass exodus and here comes this lonely figure into town and he starts knocking on doors.

He goes to street after street after street and then there are over 600 miles of catacombs where Christians hid out and he is looking and looking and looking and prison to prison to prison. We do not know how long this took.

All we read in the text is, "*he eagerly searched for me and he found me.*"

And so his prayer wish in his last verse that we study today, is in verse 18

Verse 18 "*May the Lord grant to him the fine mercy from the Lord on that day* (that is the day of Christ when we are going to be there together and the Christian works are examined). *And what services he rendered in Ephesus, you also are knowing very well.*"

Timothy, do you remember when we were in Ephesus what he did for us there.

How he was characterized by this passionate desire to be a faithful servant who was ministering to the needs of others.

When I summarize those three verses I come up with five things that Onesiphorus did for Paul:

1. He often refreshed me.
2. He was not ashamed of my chains.
3. He eagerly searched for me.
4. He found me.
5. And he rendered tremendous service in the city of Ephesus as you know very well.

I know I have bored you with Rachel Scott, the little martyr from Columbine High School, but these words were in that book that is so special.

“Several days passed, and I forgot about my conversation with Frank. Then I got a call from the sheriff’s department letting me know that they were ready to release Rachel’s backpack that she had on when she was murdered. There was a bullet hole through her backpack, and they had held it for evidence to determine whose gun the bullet had come from. We suspected that Rachel’s final diary was still in the backpack, but there were two of them.

One of them had a bullet hole entering at a place on the back cover where she had written the words, **“I WON’T BE LABELED AS AVERAGE.”**

I wept uncontrollably as I read what she had written on the front cover:

“I write, not for the sake of glory, not for the sake of fame, not for the sake of success, but for the sake of my soul—Rachel Joy.”

James Pettigru, on his tombstone, the community wrote these words:

Unawed by opinion
Unseduced by flattery
Undismayed by disaster
He confronted life with courage
and death with Christian hope.

As we finish this study. I want to leave you with two verses from 2 Chronicles.

2 Chron. 16:9, *“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”*

And then 2 Chron. 15:7, *“But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.”*

There are 10 lessons that come out of this study.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: Are your convictions strong enough that you will manifest the courage that it takes to stand against a contemporary culture?

LESSON #2: Have you built your Christian profession upon the solid rock so that when the storms assail it, you will be seen as holding fast?

LESSON #3: Can you say with the apostle: “according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” (Phil. 1:20)?

LESSON #4: Are you guarding the “precious deposit [of the gospel] which has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit” (verse 14)?

LESSON #5: Is the Holy Spirit carrying out His function in your life in guiding you into all truth?

LESSON #6: Have you lost your courage to stand for the Lord in the arena of conflict?

LESSON #7: It is good to remember that quitters will never be able to say: “I fought, I finished, and I kept the faith.”

LESSON #8: Is your witness for Christ like that of Phygellus and Hermogenes or that of Onesiphorus?

LESSON #9: Would other believers in the body of Christ characterize you as a compassionate, caring person who is constructively involved in serving them and meeting their needs?

LESSON #10: It is good to remember that little acts of unselfish service do not go unnoticed by the Lord.

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 THREE –Courage: I Am Willing To Pay The Price

2 Timothy 1:13-18

Key verse 1:8

Notes

v. 13 Be holding fast the standard of sound words which you heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

v. 14 Guard the precious deposit which has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us.

v. 15 You are knowing this, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

v. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain.

v. 17 But when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me.

v. 18 May the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And what services he rendered in Ephesus you are knowing very

well.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:13-18 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.
2. What is Timothy asked to do in verse 13?
3. Who is going to help Timothy in verse 14?
4. What did the people in Asia do to Paul in verse 15?
5. What did Onesiphorus do in verse 16?
6. What did Onesiphorus do in verse 17?
7. What is Paul's wish for Onesiphorus in verse 18?
8. In what other city did Onesiphorus minister?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?