

Paul calls Timothy back from discouragement and fear which would understandably beset any believer who sees all that he stood for under attack and indeed falling to the attackers. But all rests safely in Christ Jesus not our puny human efforts. How can we be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. But there is more. We are not to be ashamed of Paul who speaks of himself as Christ's prisoner. Later he confides that "all in Asia had forsaken him."

Paul is a prisoner for the gospel, the gospel of salvation by grace through faith, not of works. The Jews hated the gospel for it excluded the works of their law which they boasted in. They moved the Romans to imprison Paul. But he simply sought to use this as an opportunity to witness to the highest Roman authorities who otherwise would have remained inaccessible to him. What faith! What zeal! So he urges Timothy, and us, to be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel. According to the power (energy) of God. This God who has saved us, energizes us. This God who called us, called us with a holy calling. Again not according to any works we have done or any efforts we have put forth. He called us according to His own purpose. His own grace. A purpose that was established before we were saved. Before we were even born.. Before man was created. Before the earth was even created. His purpose and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Was Christ there then? Was Jesus? The purpose was established before the world began, before Jesus became a man but not before Christ existed for He is eternal. But all these afore time preparations were made known when Jesus appeared on earth. First He was miraculously born of a virgin, grew up as a boy then a young man, largely indistinguishable from other godly young men. But He was different, He was God the Son. He was different, He did not sin, He could not sin. He did always the will of God His Father. What Paul focuses our attention on here is not His birth, his life, His ministry, His death, but His resurrection. This Man not only conquered death, He abolished (annulled) death through His resurrection and He has brought to light life and immortality through the gospel. What? Man can know and have life (eternal life) and immortality? Yes! And that through the gospel, neither by doing good works nor by avoiding evil works. Paul was appointed a **preacher** to convey this marvelous truth to all mankind. Not just to the Jews but actually specifically, especially to the Gentiles. He was God's appointed **apostle**, an official authoritative messenger, representing Christ Himself. And not only a preacher and apostle but a **teacher** of those who believed. For there is much, much more in store for those who trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior than simply an eternal life in heaven. But this marvelous ministry and message attracted enemies. Jesus Christ is now in heaven, out of reach of Satan who views Him as his rival for the worship of men and domination of the world. But here was a man, Paul, on earth representing the hated Christ. As such Paul

drew all of the weapons of opposition the devil could muster. So he suffered much and was immobilized in prison, but neither his prayers nor his pen were silenced. Paul had persecuted the church and was consenting to the stoning of Stephen before he was himself seized by the Lord on the road to Damascus. The Lord told Ananias then "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Acts 9:16. And indeed he had suffered often and much for the Lord since then.

But he is confidently upbeat, not ashamed. There are two causes to be ashamed. Personal pride or fear can prevent us from witnessing publicly. The other is to have a faulty message not worthy of belief. After years of believing and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ he was still not ashamed for any reason. It is not simply the message but the living Person of the Christ he knows. Not only believes, trusts in, but **knows**. He is able to keep all that Paul has committed to him against that day. What all? Against what day? The day of the Lord, when the Lord Jesus Christ appears with his angels and human saints to destroy His enemies and establishes His kingdom on the earth. Then He will give public recognition and rewards to all His saints for what we may have done for Him here. Now in this time of His patience we bear His reproach. Paul gave up present glory and ease, his very life, **his all**, for Christ, and a future reward and destiny in His Kingdom.

Timothy is exhorted to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard from Paul. We too are exhorted to hold fast the form of sound words which we have heard of Paul the apostle. The Lord has left us all these inspired epistles of sound words. Timothy was here charged with their preservation, safe keeping and ultimate worldwide distribution. These, along with the rest of the scriptures, are being brought into question today just as they were in Timothy's day and have been repeatedly since. There are always new generations gullible and available and to listen to and promote Satan's lies. He seems to have become especially active lately with books openly denying Christ's deity, humanity and sinlessness. A false gospel of Thomas has resurfaced. A newly discovered "gospel of Judas," of all things, appeared this year, and the fabricated tale of the "DaVinci Code" received new attention due to release of a "blockbuster" movie. These perhaps foreshadow the great delusion that the man of sin will foist upon the world in his day. But we are not told to combat the evil, **but to keep the good thing, the truth, that has been committed to us**. Keep it in love, not hate or force. Keep it by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us. He gave the truth. He will keep it. But He delights to use earthen vessels to keep it and to disperse it. Let Him use you to hold it, live it and spread it!

By Ron Canner, June 14, 2006