

## **Sailing With Paul**

### **Simple Papers for Young Christians**

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## **Chapter 15**

### **The Testimony of the Lord**

To Paul, the testimony committed by the ascended Lord was dearer than life. Faithfulness to it involved a martyr's death, and that he met with a Christlike resignation and calmness of soul that is blessed to contemplate.

It was his desire that those associated with him in his special ministry should be men of like spirit. Hence his words to Timothy: "**Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God**" (II Timothy 1:8). And again he says, "**that good thing (or, deposit) which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us**" (verse 14).

The testimony of the Lord embraces the corollary of truths connected with CHRIST risen and glorified. Some of these precious themes we have been briefly examining in the foregoing papers, and we are yet to speak of others, if GOD will. But what I would now press upon the conscience of each saint who may read these lines, is individual responsibility to make known this testimony and to hold it oneself, as a sacred deposit, in the power of the HOLY GHOST.

There is all the difference in the world between holding particular "views" of justification, sanctification, acceptance, the one body, the Lord's second coming, and kindred lines of truth, and maintaining the testimony of the Lord.

One may hold the correct view of sanctification and yet not walk in subjection to the Word that

cleanses.

One may subscribe to scriptural prophetic teaching and not "**love his appearing.**"

One may hold the doctrine of the one body and yet remain in human systems that by their very constitution deny it.

One may have the right view of eternal life and yet live as though this world were all.

But no one can maintain the testimony of the Lord who is not personally a self-judged, humble saint, walking in the truth, holding the HEAD, and laying hold on that which is really life. Yet to thus keep the good deposit every believer is called; and there will be eternal loss for all who fail to do so. This cannot be done in the strength of nature. Only as one walks in the SPIRIT will the needed grace be given.

What Paul calls "**the testimony**" in II Timothy, he designates as "**the faith**" in his first letter to the same devoted young servant. Note his solemn words, and remember they are as truly applicable to you, if a child of GOD (excepting, of course, the strictly personal element), as they were to Timothy when first written: "**This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, (literally, *the faith*; i.e., the truth believer, or the system of doctrinal truth) and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck**" (I Timothy 1:18, 19). Now, carefully observe, you can only hold the faith of GOD's elect in a godly way, as you maintain a good conscience. If you ever put away a good conscience - if you allow yourself to go on with any thing of which your conscience does not approve when instructed by the Word of GOD - you will lose the faith and make shipwreck of the testimony.

Many people seem to think of doctrinal error as a comparatively small and unimportant thing; but where people give up a line of truth once enjoyed in the SPIRIT's power, or once controlling heart and life, close investigation will generally prove that moral evil of some character was behind it.

When men get out of touch with holiness, they lose their grip of the truth; or, rather, the truth loses power over them. In the third chapter of I Timothy the deacons are described as "**holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience**" (verse 9). This emphasizes what we have just been noticing; there must be activity of conscience if the testimony of the Lord is to be maintained and the good deposit kept.

Further exhortation, addressed to Timothy, each young believer may profitably take to himself; in chapter 4:6, and in verses 12 to 16: "**If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister (or servant) of Jesus Christ, *nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained . . . Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.***" All this is most salutary instruction and must

not be overlooked.

I sincerely hope that many young men who read these lines may some day be called of GOD to preach the Word and declare the testimony of the Lord publicly. If so, I trust the principle laid down in the passages we have been noticing will never be forgotten. "**Thyself**" first; then "**the doctrine.**" GOD wants holy men to serve in holy things.

It is to be feared that many a young man has been unwisely encouraged to preach, because of a glib tongue and pleasing address, who did not have the necessary godliness behind it that would insure success as a winner of souls and a helper of saints. Gift, divorced from piety, may do untold mischief; but as James Caughey used to say, "A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hands of God." Where this personal fitness is lacking, there may be brilliant service for a time; easy-going Christians may applaud and admire; but the end of it all is likely to be a crash that may bring many others down with the poor fallen preacher, who was all the time "trafficking in unfelt truth" (to use an expression coined, I believe, by C.H.M.), and whose true condition has at last been exposed.

The testimony of the Lord is like the ark of the covenant which was borne through the wilderness on the priest's shoulders. So should the truth of GOD be proclaimed by priestly men, who live in fellowship with Him whose testimony it is.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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