

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Straight Talk to the Timid and Reluctant

2 Timothy 1:8–12



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Following Christ ought to come with a warning label: *Christianity is a battleground, not a playground*. For thirty years, Paul had “fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7), suffering for the cause of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). Paul’s heroics are writ large over our faith, making it easy to conclude that every believer ought to be or have been just like him—charging the gates of hell with a bucket of ice water. Not so. Some of God’s choicest saints were reluctant (like Moses), rebellious (like Jonah), and fearful (like Timothy). Despite his timidity, Timothy was called to follow God onto the battleground. To do so, the young man needed courage to stand for Christ, even if it meant suffering.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. An Important Clarification

The message of 2 Timothy 1:8–12 is stark in its simplicity: *Stiffen your resolve!* That’s what Paul was telling Timothy to do—*Stand strong! Be brave! Buck up!* And in a society that’s becoming spiritually soft and passive, it’s a message we’d be wise to heed, too . . . with one important caveat: we can’t do it apart from God.



Quotable

The apostle Paul clearly determined to die well. He fought the fight and kept the faith. Let's do the same.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. A Call to Courage (2 Timothy 1:8–12)

We've already said that Christianity isn't for cowards. God has given us the Spirit of power (2 Timothy 1:7); therefore, we shouldn't live our lives slinking in the shadows but rather standing boldly in the sunlight. Yet Timothy was afraid. Paul was in prison, and Christians in Rome were being persecuted. To Timothy, his choices were either shame or suffering. Paul told Timothy to pick suffering and gave him five action steps to stiffen his resolve.

Step Number 1: Do not be ashamed of the name of Christ (2 Timothy 1:8).



GETTING TO THE ROOT

The Shame of Being Ashamed

Paul didn't say Timothy was already acting shamefully. Had that been the case, Paul would have used the present imperative tense of *epaischynomai*, which when used with the negative, forbids the continuation of an act already begun. Rather, Paul used the aorist subjunctive tense of the Greek term and paired it with the negative to forbid an act not yet begun. In this sense, Paul's command — “do not be ashamed” — is a warning.

Paul used *epaischynomai* in this way four times in 2 Timothy (1:8, 12, 16; 2:15), suggesting that Timothy and the Ephesian Christians were tempted either to actively turn away from the gospel or passively fail to stand up for the gospel. We can learn more by looking at the root of the word, which doesn't convey the *feeling* of *embarrassment* as much as the *idea* of *being disgraced* in public. In other words, the pressure for Timothy and the rest of the Ephesian church to become clandestine Christians came from public opinion.

Step Number 2: Do not be ashamed of the people of God (2 Timothy 1:8).



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Step Number 3: Be willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).

Step Number 4: Be sure your life is anchored in sovereign grace (1:9–11).

Step Number 5: Be convinced that God will vindicate your life (1:12).



LET'S LIVE IT

Stiffen your resolve! Paul gave us five steps to do just that. All that's left is for you to answer one question—a question only you can answer: *Are you willing to give God your very best?* God gave His best—His Son, His grace, His gospel. What about you? Is God worth your best?

If you're willing to start giving or continue giving God your very best, read the following passages and write in your own words the “resolutions” in each. Begin this week resolving to live by these new goals.

Proverbs 6:16–19



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Micah 6:8

Philippians 4:4–8

2 Peter 1:5–8

Passage of your choosing



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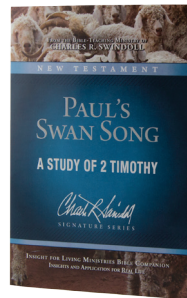
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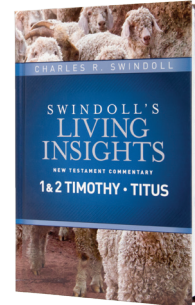
Tools for Digging Deeper



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