

# A Call to Loyalty to the Gospel

by David Roper

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*A call to loyalty to the gospel, emphasizing the importance of genuine faith, proclaiming the gospel, suffering for it, obeying it, and defending it.*

**Duration:** 39:13

**Topics:** "Gospel Loyalty", "Suffering Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of loyalty and commitment in human relationships, particularly in the context of the gospel. He highlights four imperatives as expressions of loyalty: rekindling the gift of God, not being ashamed of suffering for the gospel, following the pattern of sound words, and guarding the truth. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about a girl who questions why God allows starvation in the world, highlighting the need to proclaim the gospel and suffer for it. The sermon emphasizes the power of the gospel and the importance of living a life that reflects the message we believe and proclaim.

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## Transcript

Again, I'm sure you're aware of some of the activities of some of the students at Stanford last year. Right at the height of some of the disorders, there was a sit-in in the AAL building on the campus, and John Walkup and Jim Barnum and Milt Pope and I decided that we'd go into the AAL building to talk to students and discovered when we got into the building that they had made a Red Guard bookstore out of John Walkup's office, which was down in the basement of the lab. When we walked in and sat down, we discovered that there were a number of students in the bookstore.

We had an opportunity to look through some of the literature that they had on the tables and also to talk to some of the students that were there and had an opportunity to share something of the gospel with the students that were in the room. There was a girl sitting right across the room from where I was sitting. She was sitting on a desk and had her feet on the chair.

Whenever she wanted to make a comment, she would stand up on the chair and make a few remarks and then sit down. Right in the middle of a sentence, she stood up and said, Don't you realize that one-third of the world's population is starving today? And I said, Yes, I do realize that, and that grieves me. But what's more important, that grieves the heart of God, that He's concerned.

And she jumped up on her chair and cut loose with a long stream of profanity. At the end of it, she said, If God loves them, why doesn't He feed them? And then she began to cry. And I really didn't know what to say.

I thought of some answers, but I knew that they wouldn't satisfy her. And I was praying, and I wanted to know what God wanted to say. And He brought to mind a verse that we had been studying in our intern studies the week before in John 6, where Jesus said, Do not labor for the bread that perishes, but labor for the bread that endures unto eternal life.

For on this has God the Father set His seal. And I took out my New Testament. They've been quoting out of her little red book all afternoon.

I took out my little New Testament, and I read those words. It always strikes me with what power and authority the words of Jesus come, just when you read them. I read those words to her and pointed out that God's concern was with the total man, that He placed His priority on spiritual needs.

And while He was concerned about the physical, the first order of importance to Him was the inner man. It was His desire to build the whole man. It was on this that God the Father set His seal.

That is, the Father endorsed this principle. And I pointed out that that's His plan. He wants to change people.

He's out to rebuild lives. And I asked her, What's your plan? Do you have a plan to rebuild lives? It became very clear after we talked a while that she really had no plan, that none of the students there had a plan. They were there to destroy, but not to build.

I'm not being critical of these young people because we ought to love them. We ought to be sensitive to their needs. They're sensitive young people.

They're thinking. They're concerned. But it was just very clear to me that they had no plan.

And as the group of us left, we all rejoiced in the fact that we have a plan. It's not our plan. It's God's plan.

It's the gospel of Jesus Christ. And it's the only thing that I know that can change a life. And in the four weeks that we have together, I'd like to talk about that plan.

And I want us to study together a book that affirms the absolute need of declaring and utilizing the plan that God has laid out for us. And it's the book of 2 Timothy. I'd like to have you turn to me, with me to that book, if you will.

I talked through this book last year to a group of students, and it just struck me that this is such a contemporary book. The events that concern the Apostle Paul and the recipient of this letter, Timothy, are the same events, the circumstances that we face today, almost identically. It's a great contemporary book and has a message for us today.

This is a letter, of course, that was penned by the Apostle Paul. It bears his usual signature in the introduction to the book. It was written during his final imprisonment in Rome.

In his first imprisonment, he was allowed the comparative luxury of house arrest. But in this second and last imprisonment, he was confined in the Mamertine prison in Rome, from which, as far as we know, he

escaped only by death. In the last chapter, there's a very touching description of the circumstances that Paul found himself in.

In verse 9, he writes to Timothy, Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica to drop out. Perhaps he had a pagan girlfriend in Thessalonica and deserted Paul in Rome. Crescens has gone to Galatia.

Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me in serving me.

Titicus I have sent to Ephesus to take Timothy's place there. When you have come, bring the cloak which I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all, the parchments. It's three requests that indicate something of the need of the Apostle at this time.

He says that I need my cloak. Winter was approaching and he was confined in this cold, damp dungeon. I'm sure that the Apostle was aching, uncomfortable from the beatings that he had endured.

He dreaded another winter without a wrap. He writes to Timothy to bring the cloak from Ephesus when he came. And then the books, the secular reading matter that the Apostle Paul enjoyed so much.

He was bereft of his friends and he had nothing to occupy his time. I'm sure we can identify with him if you love books as I do. When I was a little boy, my parents had a little book plate made up for me that I glued in the front of all my books.

It had a little book worm eating his way through the cover of a book. On the bottom it said, ask for me, give me a book. And that's sort of my philosophy of life as well, so I can understand something of Paul's need.

But most of all, he says, bring the parchments, the scriptures, the Old Testament scrolls, these copies of the scriptures that Paul had carried with him through Asia Minor, through Europe, as he had preached the gospel to Jews and to Greeks in synagogues and before Gentile audiences, perhaps filled with notations and cross-references, these familiar copies of the scriptures that he loved so much, so that he had an acute physical, emotional, and spiritual need, afflicted in body, soul, and spirit. You would think that he would be discouraged. He had invested the greatest part of his life in a ministry in Asia Minor, in Europe.

Now he was experiencing a reversal. Many people were defecting from the faith. The church was under persecution by the Roman government, by the Jewish religious authorities.

It was a grim time for the apostle. It could have been very discouraging. But throughout the book, there's no note of discouragement.

It's one of solid encouragement, enthusiasm, and excitement about the gospel that's been committed to him. The word of confidence to his young associate, Timothy. The letter, of course, was written to Timothy.

It's one of five or six books on the New Testament that were personal letters. Timothy was a young man that Paul had encountered on his first missionary journey, in his travels through Asia Minor. He met him in the city of Lydia, of Lystra.

And then Timothy had accompanied him in his second missionary journey, and then was dispatched by the apostle to Ephesus to be pastor of a church there in that town. Timothy evidently had three problems. They can be seen, if you read between the lines, as you read through these two books.

They're called Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. The first is that he was very young. Paul writes in 1 Timothy, Let no man despise your youth, but be an example of the believer.

He was awed by the responsibility of ministering to a group much older than he. I think that many of us can identify with that one. Secondly, he was prone to sickness.

He must have been very frail, sick. Paul speaks of his frequent ailments. And we all know how discouraging that can be when you're weak in body.

And third, he was very timid. Shy, reluctant, difficult for him to speak out in the face of opposition. And opposition he was experiencing in the city of Ephesus.

It was an enormous responsibility that God had placed into his hands. He was a leader of the only Christian assembly in the city of Ephesus. He was under fire.

He was separated from Paul by hundreds of miles. I'm sure discouraged, not knowing where to turn. And Paul writes these words of encouragement, which are directed to us as well.

Because I sense that we've all felt the same pressures that Timothy has felt. It's always fun to read somebody else's mail. And this will be our experience for the next four weeks.

But Paul gives us this right, because in the last verse of the book, Paul says, The Lord be with your spirit, grace be with you. And that's the only occurrence in the book where this personal pronoun is in a plural form. Indication is that he wanted Timothy to read this letter to the church in Ephesus.

So that it would be an encouragement to them, and they in turn might be an encouragement to Timothy. And so we have the right to read this letter, because it's written to us as well. Let's look first at the introduction, verses 1 and 2. Paul begins with his customary introduction.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus. Paul never once repudiated his authority as an apostle. There are many believers, particularly the Jewish believers, who never accepted his authority.

It was a bit irregular. It wasn't one of the original twelve. So he was constantly under suspicion, under fire from many of the believers.

But Paul knew that he spoke as a divine spokesman. He had that authority. When he wrote his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, he said, we thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work among you believers.

So he said, when you read this letter, it's coming not just out of the opinions of an apostle. It's not a recommendation. It's a divine revelation to which we must give heed.

We can't treat this word lightly. The recipient of the letter, Timothy, in verse 2, to Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. It's a wonderful term of endearment, my beloved child, who is not of course his son in the flesh, but his spiritual son.

These are words coming from a rugged old veteran who bore in his own body the marks of his conflict, a conflict from which Timothy was inclined to shrink. But yet Paul doesn't rebuke him. He gives him words of

encouragement.

Father would encourage his son. He's heeding his own words really in this epistle because he points out later to Timothy that the servant of God must not strive, but be gentle with all men, patient in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves. So he follows this line in his ministry to Timothy through this book.

Closes his introduction with this familiar triad, grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Grace is for the worthless. Mercy is for the helpless.

Peace is for the restless. Now the first chapter of this book is the first section of the letter. And I've entitled it A Call to Loyalty to the Gospel.

The first aspect of that loyalty is found in verses three through five. Belief in the gospel. That's where we begin.

We cannot be loyal to the gospel until we believe it. As Timothy did. Paul writes, I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience as did my father's.

When I remember you constantly in my prayers as I remember your tears, I long night and day to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith. A faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and the word translated dwelt means literally to dwell down deep inside.

A faith that dwelt deep inside first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now I am sure dwells deep down in you. Paul observed in Timothy a sincere faith. An unfaked faith.

It was real. It was honest. He wasn't playing a role.

He uses a word that literally means he is not one who speaks out from under a mask. A word taken from the field of the theater where the actors would pick up a mask and would play the role associated with that mask and they were called hypocrites because they spoke out from under a mask. It's a word from which we get our word hypocrite.

Paul says when I saw you Timothy I saw that your faith was real. That you were not playing a role. You were honest, straightforward.

And this kind of genuine faith constitutes the foundation of loyalty. It makes possible a continuation of loyalty. I think sometimes our proneness to wander away from the gospel grows out of the fact that we really do not believe it.

We really not wholeheartedly and unreservedly committed ourselves to it. We have strings attached. We have reservations.

And therefore it's easy to drift away from it. Jesus speaks of some whom he says went out from us. That is the band of disciples because they were not of us.

They were never really committed to the truth. They didn't endure because they couldn't endure. They had never allowed the Lord Jesus to firmly grasp them.

I think we can illustrate this from a human love affair. When you men first asked your wives to marry you. You would have been a bit shocked if they said alright.

I love you and I'd like to marry you but I reserve the right to go out with Charlie on Friday nights. You wouldn't like that. Because you can't build any kind of relationship on that basis.

You see the foundation of continuance and loyalty to one another in human relationships grows out of this wholehearted commitment to one another without reservation. Now Paul says that's what I see in you Timothy. That's the mark of one who can continue in the gospel because the foundation is laid firmly.

There's a faith that dwells deep down. That's the foundation of loyalty, a genuine faith. Now word about the expression of that loyalty found in the verses from 6 through 14.

Four ideas based on four imperatives found in the section. The first in verse 6, rekindle the gift. The second in verse 8, do not be ashamed but take your share of suffering.

The third, follow the pattern of sound words down in verse 13. And the fourth, guard the truth that's been entrusted to you. And these are four expressions of loyalty.

Rekindle the gift, that is proclaim the gospel. Take your share of suffering. Suffer for the gospel.

Follow the pattern. Obey the gospel. Guard the truth.

Defend the gospel. And these Paul says are four expressions of that loyalty. Now the first one, proclaim the gospel.

In verses 6 and 7. Paul says, hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control. Timothy is said to have received a divine endowment, a gift.

A gift from God that was received through the apostolic hands. Scriptures don't tell us specifically what this gift is. And therefore we can't really dogmatize.

According to 1 Timothy 4, it was a gift that was granted to Timothy at the time of his ordination when he was set apart to the Christian ministry. And some of the apostles, leaders of the church had gathered around Timothy and had appointed him to a specific ministry that of a pastor teacher in a church. Some therefore think that the gift is the ministry itself that he had in Ephesus.

And that's possible. I'm inclined to think that this gift is what elsewhere is referred to as a spiritual gift. The capacity to minister in a specific situation.

The particular kind of ministry that God has given to us, in this case with Timothy, and again we're just guessing. I think it was the gift of teaching, that of a pastor teacher. He had the responsibility of instructing the body of believers in Ephesus.

Now Paul says, rekindle that gift. Whereas J.B. Phillips says, keep stirring up that fire that is within you. We can understand something of Timothy's feelings.

There was a wholesale defection from the faith. The champion of faith, the apostle Paul, was in prison for declaring that faith. There was intense persecution.

And I'm sure that Timothy, being the timid soul that he was, was inclined to shrink from proclaiming the gospel. Paul says, don't shrink. Keep fanning the fire that's within you.

The fire that God built. Keep it aglow. Keep it alive.

Now the reason for that command is given in verse 7. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love and self-control. You see, it would be futile to say to a man like Timothy, now Timothy, be strong. Just give it everything you have.

Stand up before those people and teach, because Timothy would shrink from that. He was timid. The thing that made it work was a realization that the spirit, the Holy Spirit that God had granted to him and who indwelt him, was not a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love and of a disciplined mind.

It would never do to admonish Timothy without the assurance of the power of the indwelling spirit. His strength lay in another life, a life resident within him, the life of a mighty Lord. That spirit, he says, is not a spirit of fear, but of power.

That is, it has the capacity to influence others. Timothy would say, but I'm weak in personality. I'm not strong.

I'm not a leader. Paul would say, that's all right. It's not your power that will influence others.

It's the power of the Holy Spirit and of love. That is, he was not to be asserting himself, but to be serving the needs of others and of a disciplined mind or self-control, a life that does not give way under panic, pressure, or passion. Have you noticed the verb tenses in this verse? Paul says, he did not give you.

That's a past tense. That's a present possession that Paul advised Timothy he had. The Holy Spirit was indwelling him, available to him, ready to move out through him to face whatever demand he had to face.

And therefore, a spirit of fear was absolutely forbidden to him. He had a spirit of power and love and a sound mind in the indwelling spirit of Christ. Now, that's the first expression of loyalty.

Proclaim it. And secondly, to suffer for it, in verses 8 through 12. Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner.

But take your share of suffering for the gospel and the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

Paul says, don't be ashamed of our Lord to whom you belong, and don't be ashamed of me, because you belong to me too. The apostle was in prison, he'd been abandoned by his friends, because he was a constant embarrassment to them. He stubbornly refused to be quiet, even in the face of a Roman imperial edict.

He was always sounding off in public. He always embarrassed his friends who were trying to get along with the Roman authorities. They were trying to make the church a bit more respectful.

And here was this scruffy, unwashed jailbird who refused to shut his mouth. And they were ashamed of him. What a poignant plea.

Don't be ashamed of me, Timothy. I couldn't help but think of our own associations with Christians whom we are often ashamed of, because they're not like us. They don't have the same background, same culture, same education, same style of life.

They're different. It's all right, they're a part of us. We belong to them.

We cannot shut ourselves off from them. We can't be ashamed of them. Don't be ashamed of me.

Paul says, don't be ashamed of the Lord or me, but take your share of suffering for the gospel. Suffering seems to be the normal consequence of believing and proclaiming the gospel. It was the experience of the apostle Paul, as he tells us in verse 11, and it will be our experience.

Why is it that whenever we proclaim the gospel, people invariably persecute us? It's because there's something inherent in the gospel itself. Its message makes them mad. The message is that God saves men by grace and not by merit.

That man is inescapably indebted to God. He cannot get away from that obligation. He can't make it on his own.

And man simply cannot stomach his own helplessness. We sing the hymn, Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. And that makes people mad.

Because they want to bring something, anything. But the gospel says you can bring nothing. Jesus Christ has done it all.

The scriptures say that if we proclaim man's merit or some form of humanism, we'll escape persecution. But if you believe the gospel, and you proclaim the fact that man is a sinner, you'll suffer for it. It's inevitable.

You'll be ostracized. You'll be excluded from the best circles. You'll be hated and opposed.

That's the name of the game. Jesus said that would be your lot. That's what he experienced.

And how can we expect to experience anything less than that? Peter says in his epistle, Don't be surprised that the fiery trial that's to try you is though some strange thing has happened unto you. You can expect it. Therefore we must not succumb to the temptation to mute the gospel, no matter what the pressures may be.

It's the only thing that has the power ultimately to heal men. We're going to have to proclaim it in the face of hatred and hostility. Now, verses 9 through 12 are something of a parenthetical section, which give us something of the reason why we should not be ashamed of the gospel.

It's the same argument that Paul uses in Romans 1 when he points out that he's not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God and the salvation to those who believe it. It's his argument here that the gospel is the power of God, and therefore I'm not ashamed. It's a power in the sense that it's the only thing that has the capacity to heal lives, and therefore we should not be ashamed of it.

It falls basically under three headings, the character of the gospel, the origin of the gospel, and the basis of the gospel. The character of the gospel, or what it is, it's a gospel that has saved us and called us with a holy calling. It's more than forgiveness.

I hope we're clear on that. It's a calling to holiness. It involves the total program of God by which he has determined to justify, that is, declare you righteous, sanctify you, set you apart to your intended purpose, so you can be what God intends you to be, and to glorify you, that is, conform you to the image of Jesus Christ himself.

That's his character. A total program of God by which he rebuilds a life, and makes it again what man was intended to be. Its origin, Paul says, literally is before eternal times, or before time began.

In the last part of verse 9, the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages before. He gave us something before time began. Salvation, therefore, is not based on our works.

It was accomplished before we ever had an opportunity to do any work. It was given before we were born. It was given before time began.

We ought to engender humility in us. We have no claim upon God. We have no right to come before him.

We have, as John R. W. Stott says, no innate eligibility. We stand before God stripped of any merit. We are there only by the grace of God.

The final word is the basis of the gospel. It rests in the historical work of Christ. That's the unique thing about the Christian faith, is that it's rooted in time.

It occurred. It happened. It was planned in eternity, but it was manifested in time.

And what did he do? He abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. There's something very striking about that statement, he abolished death, because I could see the apostle Paul sitting in his cell, awaiting death, and to the apostle it was only a trivial episode in his life. He was going from one degree of relationship with Christ to another.

The cross had drawn the sting of death. Paul was not concerned because Jesus had abolished death in the cross. I think we may also say that Jesus has abolished the living death in which the world finds itself today.

Francis Schaeffer in his book, *Death in the City*, refers to the fact that people have given up the ghost in the city. They have nothing to live for, no purpose. God is not at home in the world, as he says.

Nothing to live for. Life is meaningless and absurd. But Jesus Christ has abolished that death.

Now that's our salvation, what Hebrews calls a great salvation. It's purpose, man's transformation into the image of God. It's basis, it's origin, God's eternal plan.

It's basis, Jesus' historical appearance to abolish death. And that's why Paul says the gospel is so powerful. And that's why we must not be ashamed of it or apologize for it.

We're to proclaim it and, if necessary, to suffer for it. And then we're to obey it. In verse 13, Paul says, follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me in the faith and love which are in

Christ Jesus.

Follow the pattern of healthy words, of whole words. Be a whole man. Let your life be a model of the gospel you believe and proclaim.

This is an inherent part of our message. People will look at us. They want to see the truth incarnate in our lives.

This is where our authority lies. As Jesus said to a group of men who are opposing him, if I do not the things that I tell you, then don't believe me. A part of our proclamation is the truth embodied in our life.

People are justifiably resentful of being told that we have the answer to life when we're not applying it. And we'll issue, as Paul says, in faith and in love the kind of love which is in Christ Jesus. The kind of love that transcends human love.

The kind of love that characterizes our Lord himself who always had time for people, who was never in a hurry, who was always sensitive to the needs of others, who poured out his life in ministry to them. And if we're going to be loyal to the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must issue an obedience, personal obedience in our life. Finally, in verse 14, we must guard the gospel.

Guard the truth, Paul says, that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. This is a military term. The word guard means to place a garrison about, to defend stoutly against loss or damage.

We can see something of the circumstances, I think, behind this statement. Paul is nearing the end of his life. The twelve apostles at this time are either dead or scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

The infant church is surrounded by evil forces, wolves on the outside, Paul tells the Ephesian elders. Evil on the inside. People are defecting from the faith.

Paul could have been worried about the condition of the church after his hand was removed. And it's in this setting that Paul appeals to Timothy to guard the truth. Defend the body of doctrine that was delivered by the apostles.

Of course, the application today is so obvious to us with all of the theological confusion and the growth of sects, cults, attacks on the scripture, the desire on the part of men in high places to lay aside the word of God and depend upon the mind of men. How important it is to defend the truth, defend it in love, to defend it aware that this is a person that we're opposing and not a thing, but yet to defend it, to hold on to it, because this is the foundation, the basis upon which we build. Now, just a final word, this last paragraph, verses 15 through 18, are a touching illustration of loyalty, as much as we can learn from the life of Onesiphorus.

You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, he was not ashamed of my chains. But when he arrived in Rome, he searched for me eagerly and found me.

May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus. Touching tribute to this faithful man.

There's every indication here in this paragraph that Onesiphorus lost his life in Rome, serving Paul. He was willing to lay aside his own life, his own ambitions, his own program, to minister to the needs of this apostle. It seems apparent that this is what occurred.

I wish we had more time to look at Onesiphorus, because he is an illustration of all that Paul has been talking about, of what loyalty is. Now, this is a very difficult assignment. This is Paul's call to loyalty.

Foundation, to believe it. Expression, to proclaim it, to suffer for it, to obey it, and to defend it. I suspect that's more than we can handle.

I know that it's more than I can handle. I left out one verse, and I'm sure you noticed that makes it all possible. It's found in verse 12.

It's perhaps the key verse of this whole section. And therefore, Paul says, I suffer as I do, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. I memorized this verse out of the King James translation, and it goes something like this.

I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Now, this passage refers to what God has committed to Paul, and would refer to the gospel. The King James translation would have it, my deposit, that is what my life has been deposited in Christ's hands.

The problem is, the Greek is very ambiguous. It just literally says, my deposit. And it's difficult to know whether it's something that God has deposited with Paul, which is now his possession, or whether it's Paul's life deposited in the Lord's hands.

I'm inclined to think that it's both. But this is a deliberate ambiguity. The point being, that it's God's responsibility to guard the deposit.

He is able, Paul says, to keep that deposit. He is able to live through us, to inspire in us the faith that is the foundation of loyalty, and to speak through us as we proclaim the gospel, and to suffer with us as we suffer, and to be our strength as we exercise our wills to obey it, and to defend it. He will never, never allow the light of the gospel to go out.

God alone is the final guarantor. Shall we pray? Father, what strength there is in this passage, and what an overwhelming responsibility. We thank you for your faithfulness, that you are able.

We know of our inability, but we thank you that you are the one who is able to do exceeding, abundantly, above all that we could ever ask or think. That's our confidence. We rest in that fact.

We rest in the name of our loving Lord. Amen.

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