

PERSUADED

A VERBAL MICROCOSM OF SALVATION

And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

2 Timothy 1:11-12



T . M . M O O R E

A R E V I S I O N S T U D Y F R O M
T H E F E L L O W S H I P O F A I L B E

Persuaded
A Verbal Microcosm of Salvation
T. M. Moore
Susie Moore, Editor and Finisher

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Persuaded

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Welcome to *Persuaded*

I don't know of any place in Scripture that so concisely outlines the salvation we have in Jesus Christ as 2 Timothy 1.12 and the surrounding texts.

Here Paul shows us that faith entails action. It's not just some form of intellectual assent – nodding agreement to doctrinal truths. Salvation engages us in every aspect of our lives, so that we take up a journey into Christlikeness day by day.

We hope this study will help you in assessing the state of your own salvation, and in encouraging you to press on to know and enjoy more of Jesus every day.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

And if you find this study helpful, please let us know. How have you benefited from this study? Go to our website, www.ailbe.org, and use the Contact Us button to share your story.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 Revealed

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Timothy 1.8-12

A time for clarity

In our day, all who believe in Jesus Christ need to be very clear about what they mean by such a profession.

We need to be clear to the people around us, because misunderstanding about Christianity abounds. Certain figures in the media, academia, pop culture, and the political realm are determined to put Christian faith in an undesirable light. And we keep dishing them up substance for their arguments. The inconsistencies, failings, blunders, hypocrisies, shallowness, and missteps of contemporary Christians are readily seized as fuel to stoke the fires of resentment, hatred, smugness, and intimidation where religion is concerned. If we cannot be clear about our faith to the people we see each day, the messages they receive from our detractors will shape their thinking instead.

We need to be clear to our children, because those who deny the faith, and are committed to eradicating it as a moral force in our society, are aggressively plying our children with ideas about family, friendship, right and wrong, personal identity, and the world as a whole that are contrary to Scripture and detrimental to human wellbeing. Typically, those presentations are more, and more convincing and overwhelming, than what most Christian children receive about the faith. We need to work harder at training our children for faith in Jesus, so we need to be clear, for their sakes, about what it means to believe.

And we need to be clear to ourselves. We may be facing some serious challenges to our faith in the days to come – more serious and closer-to-home than have confronted us hitherto. If we are not clear about what we believe, we may succumb to temptations to accommodate our faith or simply to conceal it when a clear and convincing testimony and witness is in order; or we may abandon it when the pressure becomes too great.

The apostle Paul can help us. The verses cited above outline what might be called a microcosm of the Christian faith. In the studies that follow, we will examine these verses in the light of Paul's experience, to make sure the faith we profess is the same as Paul's.

We begin by looking at seven verbs in this passage which will provide the pegs on which our understanding of the life of faith may be draped. The first of them is *φανερωθεῖσαν*, *phanerotherisan* – “has been revealed” (v. 10).

Revealed knowledge

Christianity is a way of life that comes to us by revelation from God. Men did not think up the Christian faith, as evolutionary thinking insists. According to that view, all religion is nothing more than the exercise of human imagination to explain difficult phenomena, recurring events, and favorable conditions or consequences. Where human reason fails, imagination kicks in, and posits higher beings and deities to account for life's mysteries. Christianity, the evolutionist explains, is merely a more sophisticated form of animism, pantheism, ancestor-worship, and other more primitive religions.

But faith in Christ does not come to us via the human imagination; it is revealed to us by God. It was

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revealed to Paul first in a flash of light and a voice from heaven, then from searching the Scriptures of the Old Testament to explain and better understand what he had come to know (Acts 9.1-19; Gal.1.11-17).

Christian faith is *revealed* knowledge – revealed to us by God, from a mind that is infinitely wiser and more complex and wonderful than all the minds of every human being who ever lived, combined (Is. 55.8, 9). As much of that divine mind as we can understand is revealed to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which were given by inspiration as the Spirit of God *revealed* the will of God to ancient writers (2 Tim. 3.15-17; 1 Pet. 1.19-21). That revelation is surer, more reliable, and more productive of wellbeing than all the schemes and philosophies and false religions of the world.

Our faith in Jesus Christ has come to us by revelation; God has revealed Himself and His will – what we must believe and do if we would have full and abundant life with Him. We do not apologize for the fact that we believe in revelation. We do not seek to skirt the issue, or to make God's revelation palatable to finite and fallen human reasoning. Indeed, we find that, the more we understand of what God has revealed, the more we understand of the world and its people, situations, histories, cultures, and challenges. The revelation of God *confronts* us, as it did Paul, and as it must all who would understand God and the Christian faith.

The unbelieving world scoffs at the idea of revelation. But it will be hard-pressed, upon seeing the hope such revelation produces in us, to explain our faith in any other way (1 Pet. 3.15). We do not call on our unbelieving contemporaries to try seeing things our way; we call on them to hear the Word of the Lord.

The revelation of Christ

We insist, moreover, that what God has principally revealed is Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 1.10), the eternal Word and Son of God, Who was made flesh and walked among us, was crucified, dead, and buried, and Who now sits at the right hand of God, calling people everywhere to repent and believe in Him.

We do not offer the world a new way of thinking about life. We offer them Jesus.

We do not promise to improve their politics, purify their culture, amend their morals, refine their tastes, or satisfy their every want or whim. We promise to show them Jesus, Who has reconciled the world to God and is making all things new.

We do not offer them Jesus and whatever else they may choose to embrace as well. We offer them Jesus *only*, Jesus *exclusively*, Jesus *entirely*, Jesus *completely*, Jesus and Jesus alone. He is salvation. He is glory. He is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He is the Treasury of all wisdom and knowledge; He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the power to make all things new.

All that God reveals to us is but further embellishment and enhancement of what He revealed in Jesus, when He came among us for our salvation. While Jesus is not everything, all things consist in Him, and He is determined to fill all things with Himself (Eph. 4.8-10). Nothing in our life makes sense, has any lasting purpose or use, brings us complete satisfaction, or enables us to do anything good apart from Jesus. Jesus is the Beginning and End of all things; all things find their place and purpose, meaning and use, goodness and glory in Jesus alone.

Paul's faith was a revealed faith, focused on Jesus Christ as Son of God, Savior, Christ, Lord, and King. This faith we have, like Paul, by revelation from God. As God worked through divine revelation to bring Paul and us to Himself, so He will work through revelation – “Thus says the LORD” – to accomplish all His holy and righteous and good purposes. Christian faith is *revealed* religion. Never let go of or back down from that.

For reflection

1. What do we mean by saying that Christianity is *revealed*?

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2. Why is it important that Christians *stand* in this revelation, and that they *increase* in it?
3. How are some ways that Christians should *confront* the world with the revelation of God?

Next steps – Preparation: What can you do to improve your grounding in the revelation of God which is in Christ Jesus? Review your current practice of reading God's Word and seeking Jesus there; make improvements as needed.

2 Believed

...for I know whom I have believed... 2 Timothy 1.12

The impossibility of unbelief

Christians tend to think of the world as divided into two camps: those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. In the Christian camp we say, “I believe in Jesus Christ for my salvation.” We refer to those who do not believe in Jesus as *unbelievers*, because they do not share our faith in the Lord.

But referring to such people as unbelievers is inaccurate. They may not believe in Jesus, but this does not mean they don’t believe at all. All people believe in something. They have to. Believing is inescapable, because we can’t prove everything we need to have confidence in before we put our weight down on it.

All people are believers of one sort or another. They all believe in some basic ideas about life, what’s best for them, the future, ethics, goodness, right and wrong, and much more. Ultimately, those who do not believe in God and Jesus Christ believe in themselves, or in others like them. They believe that what they desire in life is best for them, and that how they choose to live is what will enable them to achieve what they believe is best.

No one can prove any of this, anymore than we can prove that Jesus is God and rose from the dead. If we could prove that, we wouldn’t need faith; but Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5.7). We *believe* in Jesus because His Spirit has wrought a work in our souls which allows us to hear the Word of God, receive the gift of salvation, be born again into a new realm of existence, and experience the Presence of Jesus Christ at work within us, willing and doing according to God’s good pleasure (Gal. 4.6; Phil. 2.13).

Those who do not believe in Jesus do not *not* believe. They believe in something, something in the future which remains unseen, except as an exercise of imagination informed by experience and hope. No one can prove the truth of what they believe; rather, people believe *what they choose*, then spend the time of their lives trying to make progress in or toward that which they have chosen to believe. Paul says that such people have turned to idols rather than believe in God (Rom. 1.18-23), whereas Christians turn from the idols of the world to worship and serve the living and true God (1 Thess. 1.9, 10).

Those who profess to believe in Jesus must be continuously on guard, however, for the temptation to believe in things other than the Lord for our happiness and wellbeing is always present with us. We can persuade ourselves that we believe in Jesus, yet a careful examination of our values, priorities, and activities might reveal something more like what we see in our “unbelieving” neighbors.

Paul wrote that he *knew* Whom he believed, and he was persuaded that this faith would see him through the present, to judgment, and on to eternal life. If God has *revealed* Jesus to us, we will only truly know Him to the extent that we *believe* as Paul did, and as the New Testament teaches.

Paul’s faith

What then does it mean to *believe* in Jesus like Paul did?

Paul’s faith in Jesus represented a complete turn of focus and change of life. Prior to Jesus revealing Himself to Paul, who was called Saul, he trusted in his Jewish heritage, learning, and social standing for his sense of purpose, meaning, and happiness. He was a go-getter, an up-and-coming zealot for the Law of God and the traditions of the Jewish people. He treasured his learning, prestige, and status within the community, and sought by every means – even to the point of harassing Christians – to advance his beliefs and status.

But when Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, all that changed. In his own words, the old things he cherished and

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sought passed away; he counted them no longer valuable, but as rubbish (2 Cor. 5.17; Phil. 3.8). Now he had a new objective in life: to “gain Christ and be found in Him” (Phil. 3.9). So suddenly and dramatically did his life change, that whereas he had gone to Damascus to persecute believers there, he ended up preaching Jesus in that same city (Acts 9.20). Those who heard him were “amazed” at the change in him (Acts 9.21), and those he formerly persecuted could scarcely believe it themselves (Acts 9.26-30).

For Paul, *believing* in Jesus meant a radical transformation in values, priorities, hopes, aspirations, and daily life. He did not expect everyone who believed in Jesus to become like him, a preacher, evangelist, and church planter. But he expected them, whatever their station or condition in life, to set their minds on Christ, exalted in glory; to seek Him and His glory in the Word of God; to be increasingly transformed into the likeness of Christ; and to do everything in life to bring glory and honor to God (1 Cor. 7.17-20; Col. 3.1-3; 2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31). In sum, Paul called all believers to imitate him, just as he sought to imitate Jesus (1 Cor. 11.1).

When he believed in Jesus, Paul received a new focus in life, a new foundation for all his activities, a new fount of life to well up in and flow from him, and new fruitfulness in living every moment of his life for Jesus. And all this was because he believed in Jesus Christ.

True belief

True faith is thus much more than merely confessing belief in Jesus. It’s even more than professing faith and adding “Christian” activities to one’s life. Indeed, Jesus envisioned that, at the judgment, many would appear before Him calling Him “Lord”, as they certainly must have done throughout their earthly experience. But He will turn them away where the *evidence* of true faith is missing (Matt. 7.21-23).

The writer of Hebrews wrote that “faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things not seen” (Heb. 11.1, my translation). True faith has an inward, soul-transforming dynamic. Christ becomes the focal point of the conscience, so that all our values revolve around what matters to Him. He inflames the heart with desire and delight. And He leads us to think, plan, assess, and understand our world with His own mind, His own outlook and worldview (1 Cor. 2.16). As Christ thus fills more of values, affections, and thoughts, we are *assured* of Him Whom we hope for above all else.

Such assurance leads to a changed life – not all at once, but gradually and increasingly – so that the *evidence* of true faith becomes visible in us. All our words and deeds take on the priorities and character of Christ. The good works that accompany salvation (Heb. 6.9) become increasingly evident in us. In everything we do, we strive to be made new in Christ, to increase in Him, to gain more of Him, and to shine with His glory in all aspects of our lives (Phil. 3.12-16; Matt. 5.13-16).

We must not allow mixed beliefs to deprive us of the pleasure, power, and promise of knowing and believing in Jesus like Paul did. If we seek in things, circumstances, people, or any created thing that which God intends to give us through Jesus alone, we will compromise true faith in the Lord; and having compromised, we may find ourselves unable to stand for Jesus against the taunts, threats, and intimidations of an increasingly hostile world.

Look to Jesus. Look to Paul. Let your life become more like his who said, “For me to live is Christ...” (Phil. 1.21). True faith will flourish in you when you *commit* everything in your life to the service and glory of Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. How might you know when “mixed beliefs” were depriving you of the benefits of true faith?
2. Why does inward *assurance* lead to outward *evidence* of true belief?

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3. How can believers help one another to have faith like Paul's?

Next steps – Preparation: Review in prayer the ways God has changed you since you began to believe in Jesus. Ask Him to show you other areas of your life where you need to grow in Him.

3 Committed

I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Timothy 1.12

Two questions

“Commitment” is an idea which is regarded with a certain wariness in our day. People hesitate to make commitments that obligate them too deeply or for too long a period of time. A reluctance to make commitments explains why fewer people are choosing to marry or to stay married for life. People will commit to something – a job, a relationship, a sports team, or a church – as long as it seems to be in their best interest. Which is just another way of saying that the commitments we make are generally for the purpose of aggrandizing our own wellbeing.

And that’s not entirely bad. The problem arises when concern for self is the *only* or even the *primary* reason for making a commitment. A commitment is just that – “co-”, that is “together”, “two-ways”, or even “mutually advantageous.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* uses synonyms such as “pledge”, “dedicate”, “long-term relationship”, and “consign” to explain its definition of “commit.”

In other words, a commitment could be defined as an action that changes our direction, status, relationships, intentions, promises, and hopes in a way that, generally, should not be easily altered. When the apostle Paul *believed* in Jesus, Whom God had *revealed* to him on the Damascus road, he made a *commitment* to Jesus which, as we have seen, changed the course of his life.

The Greek word for “commit” is *παραιθεμαι*, *paratitheimai*, and it means “to entrust oneself to the care of someone” (Louw and Nida). From this verb we get the word Paul uses in our text, *παράθεκη*, *paratheke*, which refers to that which has been committed or entrusted to the care of another. Jesus used this word in Luke 23.46 to commit His Spirit to His heavenly Father. Luke used this same word to describe Paul’s action of entrusting to the elders of churches those believers who were gathered as their congregation.

We ought not make commitments willy-nilly: “don’t make promises you can’t keep.” But we *ought* to make commitments when they are required, and *according to* what they require. If, for example, you commit to a bank for a loan, you are dedicating a certain amount of money to be transferred to that bank at a certain time and in a timely manner. You made a commitment of that money; it’s no longer yours.

Or if you make a commitment before God saying that, for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, in sickness or in health, you will cherish and hold and protect and love this person to whom you are making this commitment, you must make it your daily business to give all that commitment requires to fulfill what you have promised before your spouse and God.

Commitments are essential. We can’t get along without them. We want our employer to pay what he has committed to us. We want our military and police to carry out their commitments to serve and protect. And thus we should be prepared to make commitments and carry them out as well, especially those which God requires for believing in Him.

Paul’s commitment

Paul indicated that he had committed something to Jesus. When the Lord revealed Himself to Paul in a saving way, and Paul believed in Him for forgiveness and salvation, then Paul made a commitment to Jesus, which, he was convinced, Jesus would keep until the day Paul stood before Him in glory.

Just what did Paul commit to Jesus? We can gain some insight to this by looking at a few other passages from Paul's epistles.

First, Paul committed *all his time* to the Lord. He was determined to make the most of every moment, to invest all the time of his life to living wisely, and not like one who did not believe in the Lord (Eph. 5.15-17). He filled his time with those disciplines that readied and enabled him to be a disciple of the Lord and an ambassador of His Kingdom – prayer, reading and meditating in Scripture, boasting in the Lord, loving others as Christ loved him, improving in excellence, and doing all things in the time of his life for the glory of God.

Second, Paul committed *his entire life* to the Lord. As we have seen, he put aside everything that *used* to be important to him – status, prestige, certain exercises of authority and power, friendships, traditions and heritage – in order to make room in his life for learning new ways, acquiring new skills, developing new abilities and ways of thinking, building new relationships, and taking up new efforts for the Lord. Paul seems to have regarded himself as a kind of living sacrifice, giving himself body and soul to the Lord every day for whatever the Lord wanted to do (Rom. 12.1, 2).

Paul committed *all his trust and hope* to the Lord. He trusted Jesus to meet his needs, direct his steps, bring fruit to his labors, and use his words for His Kingdom and glory. His great confidence and hope were that Jesus lived in Him and that the life he was living in the flesh was at all times enabled and empowered by the Son of God, Who loved him (Gal. 2.20).

Finally, Paul committed *everything he was and had* to the Lord. He knew he had been bought with the price of Jesus' blood and righteousness; he was not his own. He belonged to the Lord, in whole and part. He had given every aspect, facet, detail, development, and disposition of his life to being a dwelling place of God, and he claimed no right of personal use for anything that he was or had (1 Cor. 6.19, 20).

All this Paul entrusted to Jesus, committed to Jesus, and handed over to Jesus. He never took it back, and he never failed to carry out all that commitment required of him, as he wrote to Timothy near the end of his life: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4.7, 8).

The commitment faith requires

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Jesus" (1 Cor. 11.1). Apparently being a follower of Jesus, like the apostle Paul, requires the kind of commitment Paul made, following Jesus. That doesn't mean we all must become itinerating missionaries or preachers. But whatever we are, and however we go about in this world, the commitment Paul entrusted to Jesus – of time, life, hope, trust, and all things – is incumbent on us as well.

After all, we confess that Jesus has saved us. Does not gratitude for such a great salvation dictate the commitment to Him of all we are and have? Jesus moreover is Lord and King. Should we not be joyful and eager to give ourselves entirely to His service? Partial, wishy-washy, self-serving commitments will not cut it with Jesus. Jesus is coming again, and when He does, we will see Him as He is. And at that time, if we long to hear Him assess our commitment in those happy words "Well done, good and faithful servant", then we need to be making and carrying out that commitment now, each day, in every aspect of our lives.

For this is what it means to believe in Jesus Christ.

For reflection

1. How can you review and renew your commitment to Christ each day? Why should you?

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2. What does it mean to make the most of the time of your life for Christ and His Kingdom?
3. Are there any areas of your life which you have been holding back and have not committed to Jesus?

Next steps – Transformation: Review your day in prayer, and commit yourself in every aspect of your day for serving Jesus.

4 Know

... *for I know whom I have believed...* 2 Timothy 1.12

The more you know

Some words, crucial for a proper understanding of Scripture and the life of faith, have become so overused or wrongly or glibly used that they have been emptied of their true Biblical meaning. One such word is “know.”

Think of the many ways this word is used in our day. In conversation we punctuate our offerings with, “You know?” We’re asking either “Do you understand?” or “Do you agree?” It’s a purely mental thing; we nod when someone says it, so that they’ll understand we’re still following along.

Or we might ask a friend about something in an effort to acquire more information: “Do you know how to get to this town?” “What do you know about this auto service shop?” “Do you know that guy over there?” Again, we’re just looking for more information, to be able to make a decision about something or someone.

Or, when talking about a matter, we might ask, “How do you know that?” In other words, what is the source of our friend’s information?

“Know” in our experience is typically related to “knowledge,” that is, to having information about a matter. Certainly, this is a valid use of “know.” But it doesn’t quite reach the thrust, scope, or quality which the Scriptures intend when this word is used. Indeed, the merely intellectual or cognitive aspect of “know” which we use today can fall very far short of what Paul intends in our text.

For example, in Matthew 22.29 Jesus said of the religious leaders of the day that they did not *know* the Scriptures. They brought up a question *based* on the Scriptures. They were the most Biblically knowledgeable people of their day! Yet Jesus said they did not *know* the Word of God. How could they know it but *not* know it at the same time?

Similarly, the apostle James indicated that the demons know God – know Him well enough to tremble before Him in fear (Jms. 2.19). Their *knowledge* about God leads them to a certain response in line with that knowledge, but it seems clear they don’t *know* God in the way Paul is using this term.

In Paul’s day, there were even some people who seemed to know everything about the Bible and Christian doctrine. But they only knew such matters intellectually; they were miles from the *truth* such knowing should produce (2 Tim. 3.6, 7).

So when Paul says, “I know whom I have believed”, is he merely saying, “Jesus? Yeah, sure. Know all about Him. Know how He lived. That He died and rose again. Know that He’s the Savior. Yep. I know Him”? Is Paul testifying *merely* to have certain valid *information* about Jesus? Or does to “know” Jesus mean more than that?

Paul’s knowledge of Jesus

For Paul, to “know” meant to identify, engage, partake of, commune with, and increase in a relationship of mutual selfless love. The word in our text is in a form that could be elaborated something like “I have come to know, and knowing is a permanent and pervasive condition in me.” It is the word typically used in Scripture to describe intimate relations between men and women, as in a husband knowing his wife sexually.

This sense of “know” goes far beyond just information. It engages the heart emotionally and at a depth of self-giving that mere head knowledge can not stir. This sense of “know” sinks a footing in the conscience,

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and makes a priority of securing and increasing in the intimacy and mutual giving such knowing requires.

Paul knew Jesus with such intensity, delight, conviction, experience, certainty, and spiritual vitality that he took as his mission in life to increase in knowing Jesus above anything and everything else (Phil. 3.7-11). Knowing Jesus this way was for Paul an exciting and sustaining experience of the glory of God (2 Cor. 4.6, 16-18). Knowing Jesus caused Paul to become more like Jesus (2 Cor. 3.12-28). It emboldened him to bear witness to Jesus and to encourage all believers to grow in learning Jesus in this way (Eph. 4.17-24). Knowing Jesus was so exciting, so satisfying and delightful, so joyful and exhilarating and world-surpassing, that Paul could say it was better for him to die and to be in the very Presence of Jesus than to continue in this life – except for the mission God had given him of helping other believers know Jesus in this way (Phil. 1.21-26).

Nothing could move Paul from the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not hostile opposition, stoning, beatings and whippings, or the prospect of execution. So firm was Paul in knowing Jesus, that he was *persuaded* nothing could ever separate him from Jesus' love (Rom. 9.38, 39).

To know Jesus

To know Jesus like Paul is to enjoy a continuous, increasing, transforming, and renewing relationship with the living Christ. Such knowing begins in believing the Good News about Jesus and having Him send His Spirit to take up residence in us (Gal. 4.6). Knowing Jesus grows in the soul, where with the mind we see Jesus exalted in glory (Col. 3.1-3); with the heart we delight in and desire Jesus more than anything else (Phil. 3.7-17); and in our conscience Jesus becomes the promise, standard, and power for everything we do.

To know Jesus in this way is not merely to go through certain motions of Christianity – going to church, reading your Bible, being in a group, being a good person, and so forth. Those can help, to be sure; but they can also become ends in themselves, and they can never satisfy us in the way that knowing Jesus can.

Knowing Jesus as Paul did is to know yourself filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3.19), to experience Jesus increasing in and through you day by day (Jn. 3.30); it is to live in such a way that the hope of seeing Jesus informs all you do and say (1 Jn. 3.1-3; 1 Pet. 3.15), so that you sing of, boast about, obediently follow, and urge others to consider Jesus, that they might come to know him as you do.

“I know” – have engaged, become one with, am growing and increasing in, experience Him dwelling in and through me, delight and rejoice in, and can hardly wait to tell others about – “Whom I have believed.” Is this the way you *know* Jesus?

It can be.

For reflection

1. Why is mere head knowledge about Jesus not enough to really *know* Him?
2. How would you describe your own experience of *knowing* Jesus?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3.18)?

Next steps – Today, tell someone you know about Jesus, about what you're learning about Him, what He's doing in you, what you're hoping for from Him.

5 Persuaded

[1] *am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.* 2 Timothy 1.12

Persuaded?

How do people convince us to do something other than what we're currently doing? Let's examine this a bit.

Let's assume you're *not* doing what someone thinks you ought to do. Could be anything: You're not eating the foods you should; you have a habit of arriving late to work; you don't watch enough sports on TV; you wear out-of-style clothing; you don't spend enough time reading; whatever.

Why do you do these things others would prefer you should *not* do? You might have many reasons which you consider good enough. You like the foods you eat. You don't like having to fight rush hour traffic. You prefer to work in the yard rather than watch sports. Your clothes haven't worn out yet. Reading's too hard. To you, your habits and ways of living make sense. They work just fine.

But it may be that you *could* eat better; coming to work on time might benefit the whole company; you might find sports refreshing or inspiring; a new suit might suit you; reading could change your life.

But you are what you are and who you are, and you do what you do because of many years of built-up practice. If you're going to change your *ways*, you'll first have to change your *mind* – how you think about your life – and your *desires* – your longings, hopes, and aspirations. Advertisers know this. So do people who love you enough to encourage you to consider your ways (Hag. 1.7).

The discipline others employ to change your mind and heart is *persuasion*. Those who would persuade us aren't just looking for agreement. They want to see change: Eat better; be prompt; read a book; and so on. They don't want to see you do something perfunctorily, or merely for a season. They want you to *change*, and change permanently for the good, at least as they see it. They want to change your thinking and your desiring, so that the change that comes into your life will last.

Persuasion works from the inside-out to achieve lasting change in our lives. Paul said that believing in Jesus, committing himself entirely to him, and increasing in the knowledge of Jesus *persuaded* him that Jesus would keep, guard, and treasure all that he had committed, even through to the day of judgment and beyond.

What effect did being thus persuaded have on Paul?

Paul persuaded

Let's ask first, How did Paul come to be persuaded about Jesus? The short answer is, Scripture and experience, but not in that order.

Why did Saul (soon to be Paul) change his mind about why he was going to Damascus? What persuaded him not to go and drag Christians off to jail, but to become one of them, and to preach Jesus to the people of Damascus? First, it was his experience of Jesus on that Damascus road. Saul was so hardened in his heart against Jesus that it took a convincing encounter to get his attention – a blinding blast of light so powerful that it knocked him to the ground did the trick. This experience of the power of Jesus was accompanied by the Word of Jesus: “Why are you persecuting Me?”, and the other instructions Jesus gave him.

Paul's experience of Jesus persuaded him to hear His Word. Obeying His Word led to a further and confirming experience, that of being cared for and baptized by Ananias, who, in turn, brought a further Word from Jesus for Saul.

Persuaded

Experience and Scripture: This is how the Lord persuades us. Think of Peter, with that net full of fish in Luke 5. Or Nathanael, marveling at Jesus' Word to him in John 1. Or Thomas. Or the people of Samaria, the Ethiopian eunuch, the governor of Cyprus – even your own experience of coming to Jesus. He came to you in the power of His Spirit (Gal. 4.6); perhaps you felt your heart strangely warmed as He took up residence in you and began to lead you into His Word (Lk. 24.32).

The more Paul searched the Scriptures from his new vantage point of believing, committing to, and knowing Jesus, the more he knew Jesus as a living Presence in Him, willing and doing of God's good pleasure. Reading and meditating on Scripture deepened his experience of Jesus, which, in turn, drove him to dig even more deeply into the Scriptures for more of Jesus.

This left him *persuaded* – persuaded that his belief was sure, his commitment was firm, his knowledge was true, and that Jesus would strengthen his faith, keep firm his commitment, and increase and sharpen his knowledge regardless of what may have been happening in his life. Thus, Paul was able to continue believing, enlarge his commitment, and expand his knowledge in the confidence that doing so would help him fulfill the Lord's calling in his life. He could run his race, fight his fight, and fulfill his calling without fear that any of this, no matter what it might have cost him, would have been in vain.

Seek to be persuaded

For Paul, being persuaded did not lead to some smug and lifeless conviction that he was going to heaven when he died. Persuaded that *nothing* could wrest from the guardianship and care of Jesus either his faith, his whole-life commitment, or his increasing knowledge of the Lord, Paul continued to invest these day by day in his calling as an apostle, making the most of every opportunity to glorify God in everything he did.

How persuaded are you about Jesus and His calling? Is your mind set on seeking His Kingdom and righteousness? Is your heart devoted to knowing Him and obeying His Word? Do you daily commit yourself to the good works that accompany salvation, and to growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord? Are you persuaded that nothing can separate you from the love of Jesus? Nothing can prevent you from living as His witness? Nothing is better than that you should devote all that you are and have and do to serving the Lord for His glory?

Is your mind fully engaged in your faith in Jesus? Does your heart long only to know more of His Presence, promise, and power? For if you are not persuaded of these things, not convinced that Jesus is keeping and improving these in you, then your mind and heart will become prey to other persuading voices, and your time, talent, treasure, and opportunities may be squandered rather than invested for eternal glory.

Want to be persuaded like Paul was? Pray your experience of Jesus back to Him daily. Open your eyes to see His goodness all around you, and give Him thanks. Read and meditate on His Word until you hear His voice, see His glory, and discern precisely what He has prepared for you to do. Jesus is able to persuade you that giving Him your all is well worthwhile.

For reflection

1. What has persuaded you to follow Jesus? Do you find that you become more persuaded day by day? Explain.
2. Why must our minds and hearts change before we will be persuaded to change our ways?
3. How does God use us in persuading others to follow Jesus?

Next steps – Preparation: Pray your experience of Jesus back to Him, giving Him thanks and praise, and seeking His will for this day.

6 Suffering Unashamed

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed... 2 Timothy 1.12

The verbs of true faith

In this brief study we're looking at the verbs Paul used to describe his experience with the Lord. Because he calls his readers to imitate him (1 Cor. 11.1), we can use these verbs as a way of assessing and improving our own walk with and work for the Lord.

We've seen that Paul's experience with Jesus – which was abundantly fruitful and filled his life with purpose and joy – depended on what Jesus *revealed* to him. True faith is grounded in divine revelation. The more we, following Paul, immerse ourselves in the Word of God, the more we will see Jesus there. Seeing Jesus fills us with wonder, joy, love, and hope. The Spirit uses the revelation of Jesus to transform us, little by little and increasingly, into His likeness.

But we must *believe* what we see of Jesus – believe it is real, and that Jesus is “the prize of the upward call” that God has set for each of our lives (Phil. 3.14). Believing this to be true, we will, like Paul, *commit* every aspect of our lives to be daily given as a sacrifice for the glory of the Lord (Rom. 12.1, 2; 1 Cor. 10.31). We hold nothing back from Him; what He can't use for His glory, we discard (Phil. 3.7, 8), so that we can devote ourselves entirely to knowing, loving, and serving Jesus.

Believing Jesus to be our prize, and committing ourselves entirely to Him, we grow to *know* Him better. The more we know of Jesus, the more we love and desire Him; and we experience more of His love surrounding, filling, upholding, assuring, transforming, and empowering us day by day. Knowing Jesus more intimately and truly, we become *persuaded* that He is with us always, He will supply all our needs, He will never fail us nor forsake us, and He is making all things new in and through us. Thus persuaded, we live in joyful obedience to the Lord.

What a rich, full, fruitful life Paul knew! We will know that life of purpose, power, joy, resilience, strength, blessing, and fruitfulness as these verbs increasingly define our own relationship with the Lord – as we look to Him to *reveal* Himself more and more; as we *believe* what we are seeing of Him and *commit* everything in our lives to Him; and as we increase in *knowing* the Lord and are *persuaded* to live only and entirely for Him.

Paul calls us to *share* in this lifestyle with him (2 Tim. 1.8), to imitate him, hold fast to his teaching (v. 13), and devote ourselves as living sacrifices of faith and love in all we do (v. 13).

Living this way is fullness of life in Jesus. But that doesn't mean our lives will be easy or free of trouble.

The gift of suffering

Paul, after all, experienced considerable *suffering* because of his faith. He suffered want because he shared freely and liberally with others. He suffered deprivation because he had no permanent home or income. He suffered hardship because he was always on the move, taking the Good News to new people. He suffered disappointment because many of the people he served seemed to fall away from his teaching. He suffered abandonment by people he trusted.

Beyond those everyday sufferings, Paul was frequently arrested, beaten, slandered, and opposed. People made fun of him behind his back. They said that his teaching was not reliable. They took advantage of him, abused and mocked him, and spoke hatefully about him to others.

Just like Jesus said they would (Jn. 15.18-25).

Persuaded

Paul did not try to avoid suffering. Because Jesus suffered, and had *revealed* to him that he, too, must suffer many things (Acts 9.16), he embraced suffering of all kinds as a gift from the Lord and a proof of his apostleship. Paul *believed* Jesus' Word about suffering, and he *committed* himself to endure it, come what may. In the midst of his suffering, he *knew* Jesus to be with him (Acts 18.5-11). He was *persuaded* that, no matter what he had to suffer for the Name of Jesus Christ, the weight of glory he would know in that suffering, and that awaited him beyond this life, would be far more valuable than any difficulty he might have to endure here and now (2 Cor. 4.16-18).

Paul was not ashamed to suffer for Jesus. He rejoiced in his various sufferings, because rejoicing in them led to increased patience, perseverance, character, hope, and love (Rom. 5.3-5).

Preparing to suffer

Paul said that all who have received the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ have also received the gift of suffering, just as he himself had (Phil. 1.29, 30). This doesn't mean we should all expect to suffer in the same ways, or to the same extremes. Suffering takes a variety of forms. I suspect that for most of us, suffering for Jesus will entail foregoing some blessings of time or treasure or convenience so that we might devote ourselves more specifically to the work of making disciples and seeking the Kingdom.

However, we must be prepared for whatever suffering the Lord may be pleased to bring our way. Thus, it's a good idea to know about the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in Christ, both in times past as well as in the present, and to share in those sufferings through weeping, prayer, and giving as we are able. Doing so will keep their suffering on our minds and in our hearts, and can serve to prepare us for such suffering, should it please the Lord to allow it to come upon us.

What are the keys to receiving suffering as a gift, and to being always ready to suffer unashamed? First, remember that you are not your own; you were bought with the precious blood of Jesus (1 Cor. 6.19, 20). If we *believe* this and *commit* ourselves daily to it, then everything we have will be entrusted to the Lord to do whatever He thinks best for His glory and our good.

Second, give yourself every day as a living sacrifice for the glory of the Lord (Rom. 12.1, 2). *Commit* everything about the day ahead to the Lord – your relationships, work, wealth, time, possessions, everything. Keep nothing for yourself; be ready to relinquish everything for the Name of Jesus.

Third, consider the people you see each day as more in need of whatever you have than you are; be ready in every situation to spend and be spent for the souls and wellbeing of others (Phil. 1.4; Rom. 12.17; 2 Cor. 12.15). This is just another way of saying that, like Jesus, you must be prepared to empty yourself of any valued possession if by doing so you can bring the grace of the Lord to others (Phil. 2.5-11). The more you empty yourself of yourself and your stuff, the more the Spirit of God can stretch out in you and make you more like Jesus.

Finally, whenever you have to suffer – whether inconvenience, loss, bodily pain, or worse – “count it all joy” (Jms. 1.2-4). Sing praise to Jesus. Thank Him for how much He suffered for you, and for the privilege of “filling up His sufferings” in some small way (Col. 1.24). Rejoice in the gift of suffering like you would rejoice in any precious gift, and you will know the Presence of Jesus with you in your suffering, sustaining and keeping what you have committed to Him.

For reflection

1. How do you expect to suffer for Jesus today? Are you prepared?
2. How should you prepare each day to suffer for the Name of Jesus?

Persuaded

3. How does growing in your knowledge of Jesus, and being persuaded of His Presence with you always, help during times of suffering?

Next steps – Preparation: Prepare today to suffer for Jesus. And when you suffer, remember the suffering of Jesus, and rejoice and give thanks.

7 Keep

...for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Timothy 1.12

Faith in action

As we've seen from Paul's testimony, believing in Jesus is not a passive matter. There's an awful lot of *action* that goes into believing Christ and knowing His salvation.

Like Paul, one who would be saved must submit to what God *reveals* about Jesus in His Word (cf. Eph. 3.1-3). That means time in the Word, hearing the Good News of Jesus, thinking it through, and acting on it in faith, *believing* in Jesus and expressing that belief with words of repentance and submission to God (cf. Acts 2.38; Rom. 10.9).

Those to whom God reveals Jesus, so that they *believe* in Him, are just beginning to work out the salvation they have graciously received (Phil. 2.12). Working out our salvation – not *for* it – entails more action on our part, indeed, the kind of action which demonstrates “holding fast” in faith and love to Jesus (2 Tim. 1.13). Thus, *believing* in Jesus entails *committing* to Him all that we are and have. We are not our own; we have been bought with a price, and everything we have is now offered to God for His Kingdom and glory (1 Cor. 6.19, 20; 1 Cor. 10.31; 1 Thess. 2.12). Such committing of ourselves to Jesus, Who saved us, is a daily and ongoing activity, and those who have truly come to believe in Him take it up gladly.

Such commitment draws us closer to Jesus, and makes room for Him to grow and stretch out within us, so we come to *know* Him better and more intimately and truly. Increasing the knowledge of Jesus deepens faith and commitment, so that we become more firmly *persuaded* of our salvation and all the promises and obligations it entails (cf. Eph. 2.8-10). The more we are *persuaded* of Jesus and our salvation, the more His Spirit brings forth fruit, gifts, and power for witness in us (Gal. 5.22, 23; 1 Cor. 12.7-11; Acts 1.8). As our faith becomes more public, the life of Christ within us overflows to touch others with His grace (Jn. 7.37-39). But this is not always a welcome touch, so we need to be prepared to *suffer unashamed* and to rejoice in our sufferings, be they ever so slight or severe.

Paul assumes that those who read him will follow his example in the life of faith (1 Cor. 11.1). They will understand that the revelation of Jesus that leads us to believe in Him will continue to work in us that we may lay aside our old life and learn Jesus and His ways for everything we do (Eph. 4.17-24). Saving faith leads to the works of salvation. Works do not save us; grace alone can do that. But the grace that brings salvation leads to good works in those who truly believe, good works that issue from *believing* in Jesus unto greater *commitment* to Him, increased *knowledge* of Him, more resolute *persuasion* about Him, and a life of following Him even through such *sufferings* as may come.

On guard for your salvation

The verbs Paul used to describe his experience of Christ and salvation are active verbs; they imply that all to whom God has revealed Jesus for salvation will devote themselves in particular ways to gaining more of that salvation, more of the prize of Jesus, as they apply themselves to seeking and serving Him day by day. Elsewhere Paul likened his faith to fighting a fight, running a race, managing a farm, building a temple, and being poured out like water as a sacrifice to the Lord.

Should we expect our experience of Christ and His salvation to be anything less than this?

But how can we keep this up? It sounds so constant, so unremitting and all-engrossing, and therefore so exhausting. How can we keep at believing, committing, knowing, being persuaded, and suffering, day-in and

day-out.

Well, we don't have to worry about *how* that happens. Because Jesus will *keep* our commitment, keep it safe and strong and vibrant and growing until He comes again to take us to Himself. The One Whose action *begins* our salvation – God *reveals* Jesus – is the One Whose action *keeps* our salvation until He brings us at last unto Himself in glory.

The Greek word here is a *guard*. Jesus *guards* our salvation; and that's a bit stronger than merely *keeping* it. All kinds of forces and powers want to deprive us of the joy of our great salvation – even, if it were possible, to cause us to abandon our salvation and seek happiness and fulfillment elsewhere.

But for those who have truly believed and committed themselves to Jesus, who are growing in the knowledge of Christ and of full persuasion concerning Him, Jesus guards their commitment, so that, like a deposit in a bank, it bears interest continuously for Christ, His glory, and His Kingdom.

Keep at it

Paul ended this section of his second letter to Timothy with these words: “That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” (2 Tim. 1.14). Jesus keeps and guards what we have deposited with Him. Our duty is to keep and guard “that good thing” which Jesus has committed to us. That “good thing” is the gift of eternal life and the calling to God's Kingdom and glory that gift entails (Jn. 17.3; 1 Thess. 2.12). We are to guard the treasure of the Gospel and the calling to God's Kingdom and glory so that it bears interest and fruit in our lives day by day.

But we must rely on the Holy Spirit for this – to lead us into all truth, remind us of all that Jesus has taught us, convict us of sin and righteousness and judgment, transform us into the likeness of Jesus, empower us for Kingdom-living witness, and keep us focused on the unseen things of Christ. Paul calls us to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5.18-21), to walk in the Spirit in all we do (Gal. 5.16-23), to avoid quenching the Spirit's power through unbelief and disobedience (1 Thess. 5.19), and to take up the *actions* incumbent upon us each day to work with the Spirit in working out our salvation in fear and trembling (Phil. 2.12, 13).

Jesus keeps what we have committed to Him. Our duty is to keep what He has committed to us. If we will, His salvation will blossom and flourish in and through us, and we will realize more of His Presence, promise, and power in us at all times, in everything we do.

For reflection or discussion

1. Review the verbs considered in this series which Paul used to describe his experience of salvation. Which of these needs firming-up in your walk with and work for the Lord?
2. Why does salvation necessarily lead to *action*, and not just to passivity?
3. Meditate on Hebrews 10.24. How can you encourage your fellow believers to take up the actions that are essential to growing in salvation?

Next steps – Preparation: Pray through all the verbs we considered in this brief study. Recommit yourself to the Lord with each one of these.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why should we expect faith as entailing certain actions?
2. What should we commit to the Lord? How often should we commit this to Him?
3. How can you tell when you are growing in the knowledge of the Lord?
4. How can you prepare each day for whatever suffering the Lord may be pleased to bring your way?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this brief study of our salvation?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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