

# Wings

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*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”  
Isaiah 40:31*



September 1, 2013

## Do Not Be Ashamed

As beneficiaries of the greatest gift God has given mankind, we should be proud of what we have. But in a world that denigrates that gift, it's far too easy to be ashamed of it.

“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” (2 Tim. 1:8).

“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 Tim. 1:12).

“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and *was not ashamed* of my chain” (2 Tim. 1:16).

The epistle of Second Timothy was the last letter Paul wrote, shortly before his execution. Written to his young colleague Timothy, it is full of pathos and emotion. Paul knew that he might not see Timothy again, so he poured his soul into this letter, urging the young preacher to pick up the torch from Paul's hand and carry on the good fight.

With that background, these three verses in the first chapter should jump out at us. Notice the presence of the word “ashamed” in all three. Paul first

urged Timothy “do not be ashamed” of the message (v. 8), then offered both himself (v. 12) and Onesiphorus (v. 16) as examples of servants who modeled courage in the face of severe pressure. We could add to this list (although the word is not used) Paul's reference to Timothy's mother and grandmother, whose courageous example played a significant role in establishing the young man's direction in life (v. 5).

Paul's repeated use of this theme throughout the chapter was clearly intended to send a message to Timothy: Whatever pressure the world brings to bear upon you, do not be ashamed of your faith! Don't back down! Stand strong in your work! Timothy was another link in a long chain of believers who had an opportunity to display God before an unbelieving world, and Paul expected him to take on that challenge with steadfast courage.

This is a lesson that is sorely needed among God's people today. When our faith is under assault from every direction and it seems that the tide of battle is swinging sharply in favor of godless-

ness, it's hard to remain strong. The easy path is to just keep quiet. Don't draw attention to yourself (or your faith). Blend into the background.

But if we take that route, we're doing the very thing Paul warned Timothy not to do: We're demonstrating that we're ashamed of the gospel. Sure, we believe it in our hearts, but we have no confidence in its power to impact the society around us. We're terrified of the ridicule—or worse—that might descend upon us if others knew our convictions. We fear God, but we fear men more. What benefit do we bring to the cause of Christ with such a posture?

In a few weeks, we will have a special Visitors Sunday, an opportunity for outsiders to join us in worship. The success of this event will depend almost entirely on the efforts of our members. In order for this to work as planned, all of us must have the courage to reach out and invite our acquaintances to come.

Timothy needed Paul's encouragement to carry on his work, and now it's our turn to hear the same message: “Do not be ashamed!”

— David King