

Ready! Set! Go!
Not So Obvious Keys to Perseverance
2 Timothy 1:13-2:2

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Text Introduction: We are going through this wonderful book called 2 Timothy which is actually a letter from Paul to Timothy. Paul writes from prison. He is preparing Timothy to take the mantle of leadership. His general theme is a call to perseverance. I am calling this series: Ready, Set, Go.

Text: ¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard, through the Holy Spirit who lives in us, that good thing entrusted to you. ¹⁵ This you know: All those in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶ May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. ¹⁷ On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. ¹⁸ May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from Him on that day. And you know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.

2 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Introduction: I was speaking earlier this week with a friend whose son is a Medical doctor. I don't remember how the subject came up, but my friend was relaying the experience of his son who did residency in a large urban trauma center oriented hospital. My friend said that his son, tongue-in-cheek, often says, "Residency taught me the three most important things to do to avoid a traumatic emergency. First, wear your seatbelt. Second, if you must ride a motorcycle, wear a helmet. Third, never under any circumstances buy your wife a handgun." I guess there are some rather obvious things to consider if you want to persevere.

But, my concern today is to talk about the not so obvious keys to perseverance. We have already established that 2 Timothy is a book about perseverance. In fact, we started this series a couple of weeks ago with a message titled "The Foundation for Perseverance." We said in that message that the foundation for perseverance is found in these three things: to know what you believe, to build on what you believe, and to guard what you believe.

That message of perseverance continues in verse 13 and following. Remember Paul is in prison. He acknowledges that there are false teachers all around him and the churches. He and other believers are enduring persecution. He has reached the end of his life. All of these things shape the message of perseverance that he is delivering to Timothy. The biggest factor that shapes Paul's message to Timothy and our message today is verse 15—those who have turned away from Paul. Let's consider what he says under the heading of three "not so obvious" keys to perseverance.

Listen to Reliable Teachers.

Reliable teachers, along with the Word of God, serve as the authorities in your life. You need authority. I need authority. In fact, if we reach the point that we no longer are listening to the authorities that God Himself gives us, we are at the place of greatest vulnerability to not persevere.

You will recognize them by their ...

- Commitment to Truth—You don't have to nor should you listen to people whose lives and teachings do not square with the Bible. However, there should be people that we allow into our lives who will be in places of spiritual authority.
- Character of Faith—We see this in verse 13.
- Christ-like Love—To the church in Ephesus, Paul said "speak the truth in love." That's the idea here.

Lean on those who Refresh you.

In verse 16, we are introduced to one named Onesiphorus. He is only mentioned here and at the end of the letter in 4:19. We don't know anything else about him, but I sure love what I read about him here. Paul said, "he often refreshed" him. A man by the name of James Moffatt who did a translation of the Bible back in the 1920's suggested this translation: "He braced me up."

Along with those who are our authorities, we also need others to encourage us.

Here in this verse, we are reminded of several things actually.

1. We need people in our lives who will refresh us.
2. We need to seek to be people who refresh others.
3. Being a "refresher" is hard work—work we must be diligent about if we will succeed.

One of my favorite stories comes from the life of Abraham Lincoln. Among other things found on his person on the evening of his assassination, there were nine newspaper clippings mostly concerned with the great deeds of Lincoln. One of the clippings was a reporter's account of a speech made by British statesmen, John Bright, in which Bright called Lincoln, "one of the greatest men of all times." The world acknowledges that now, but in 1865 many Americans shared a different opinion about Lincoln. Perhaps it is that the President carried these clippings around to encourage him in some of his most discouraging times.¹

Are you a "refresher" or do you drain the life out of people?

In verses 15 and 16, we have the one sentence biographies of 3 people. For Phygelus and Hermogenes, the biography is that they "turned away from Paul." For Onesiphorus, the biography reads that he "often refreshed Paul." Which of those two biographies do you want to be your biography?

¹ Chuck Swindoll, *The Quest for Character*, p. 61-63.

Learn to reproduce in others what you have learned.

We find this principle in 2:1-2. We persevere by teaching others. I think the idea is pretty simple. Investing in the lives of others builds in us a measure of accountability. Quickly, notice that Paul advises to find faithful ones who will be able to teach others.

If we are going to finish well, we have to have a plan for living well. Here is the plan.