



To be Sure (2 Tim 1:1-12)

Recap the story of Blondin. One of the interesting things about trusting Jesus is that we usually understand and receive the blessings after we have trusted. The blessings that Jesus outlined after the I am the way statement were all consequent on faith. You have faith, you trust and as a result see the blessing. Then it gives you confidence to do things again.

I remember a few years ago that we went to Ingoldmells and there they have an enormous big dipper. It looks a daunting piece of machinery. Many people just won't go on it. I'm mad and wanted to go. But it's the feeling of trepidation you have when getting on. What if ... comes to your mind. But you trust yourself to the machine and after 2 minutes of twisting and turning I wanted to go on it again and again. I trusted and got the confidence and that was that.

Actions are based on confidence – confidence based on experience. We might be taught something, give it our mental assent – but it's only when we trusted and have lived in the reality of it do we commit ourselves to it.

This was Paul's experience. Here he was a prisoner – in a potentially demoralizing situation but he wasn't demoralized - *God has appointed me as an apostle and teacher to proclaim the Good News, 12 and it is for this reason that I suffer these things. But I am still full of confidence, because I know whom I have trusted, and I am sure that he is able to keep safe until that Day what he has entrusted to me.* After all those years, Paul was still confident that God would keep him until the end. But he was suffering? What kept him so confident in his sufferings? In fact, what kept him so confident that he encouraged Timothy to do likewise. What was the source of his confidence? I'd suggest three things

➔ Through knowledge

8 (C) Do not be ashamed, then, of witnessing for our Lord; neither be ashamed of me, a prisoner for Christ's sake. Instead, take your part in suffering for the Good News, as God gives you the strength for it. 9 (C) He saved us and called us to be his own people, not because of what we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. He gave us this grace by means of Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 (C) but now it has been revealed to us through the coming of our Saviour, Christ Jesus. He has ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life.

Paul bases his confidence on God's revealed word. How does he know any of what we have just read – because it's been revealed through God's word and confirmed through Jesus. And no-one was more consummate in his understanding of scripture than Paul as we found out last week. And that gave him confidence in the power of God and in the power of the gospel. We don't stand on whims, but on the promises of God. But it wasn't just that head knowledge I talked about this morning – he'd lived it and proved it too.

➔ Through God working in others

5 (C) I remember the sincere faith you have, the kind of faith that your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice also had. I am sure that you have it also. 6 (C) For this reason I remind you to keep alive the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you. 7 (C) For the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control.

Paul encourages Timothy not to be afraid and not to give up because his calling and gift has been affirmed by others. And Paul had that confidence because he had seen the power of God working through three generations of Timothy's family. And he could remind Timothy of that too to encourage him. And we see how God changes people *or the Spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control*. And Paul had seen that change in Timothy and in his family and in people's lives. God who sent His Son and as Paul says *has ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life* is acting in the lives of people now – changing them, healing them, empowering them – and we see that evidence as we look around our own fellowship.

➔ Through experience

But not least, Paul had confidence because of what God had done through him. *11 God has appointed me as an apostle and teacher to proclaim the Good News, 12 and it is for this reason that I suffer these things*. Why did Paul take the risks, suffer many things and get martyred eventually - because he had followed the call of God. Paul wasn't just head knowledge – but he had based his life on it – and followed what God had called him to do. It was rather like Blondin. Paul didn't just trust Jesus in his head, but he placed his life in His hands. And we know just a little of what he was about from the Acts and letters.

As we come around the table this evening, we come from a lot of different perspectives. For some of us, we maybe just feel full of God's Spirit and our own spirit within us just resonates with Paul's - "I know whom I've believed". Maybe we feel in a different place. Perhaps we feel insecure, lacking confidence as a Christian. Maybe a little cold; a bit de-motivated. Perhaps we've been through difficulties and find it difficult to cope. This passage reminds us that God isn't in a book, but we see His power in the world today – changing people, bringing new life. But most of all we look back at our lives as Paul did – and see the call and power of God. And as we come around the table – we come to affirm whom we have believed – not from a book, but a living Lord who's Spirit is One who does *not make us timid; instead, fills us with power, love, and self-control*.

So let's pray that He will again affirm in us who we are in Christ – not head knowledge but heart knowledge – that we will be confident not fearful and His Spirit will fill us afresh with power, love and self control (and a sound mind!). Let's pray for that confidence, so that like Paul, we will really put our lives in His hands – and witness for ourselves, the amazing things Jesus does with people who do just that!