

‘THE TESTIMONY ABOUT THE LORD’,  
‘BORNE BY THE LORD’, OR BOTH?

AN INSIGHT INTO PAUL AND JESUS IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES  
(2 TIM. 1:8)

Greg A. Couser

**Summary**

*Precisely what is Paul referring to in 2 Timothy 1:8 by τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν? The lexical possibilities for τὸ μαρτύριον and the grammar of the phrase allow at least three possibilities. Three lines of investigation will be pursued: (1) a contextual and paradigmatic investigation to get at the meaning of τὸ μαρτύριον; (2) a more general investigation of the references to Christ in the Pastorals to see if there is any particular stress placed on the actual words and acts of Jesus; and (3) an enquiry into the structure of the immediate context of 2 Timothy 1:8 with a view to its implications for the meaning of the phrase in question. What we will suggest is that the above lines of enquiry at least suggest a plenary sense for the genitive construction. However, in the final analysis, it seems best to see the phrase simply as a reference to the testimony the Lord bore in his word and life to the saving plan of God.*

**1. Introduction**

In 2 Timothy 1:8 Timothy is encouraged by Paul<sup>1</sup> not to be ashamed of the ‘testimony of our Lord’ nor of Paul himself, ‘his (Christ’s)

---

<sup>1</sup> Space will not allow a full presentation of why this author sees the traditional view of Pauline authorship as the most *historically* plausible and convincing explanation for the production, content, and canonical status of these letters. For a thorough defense, as well as a nearly complete bibliography on the issue of the authenticity of these letters, see W. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000): lxxxiii-cxxix. For a concise overview of the issues with penetrating insights, see Porter, ‘Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles’, *BBR* 5 (1995): 105-23 and ‘Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: A Response to R. W. Wall’s Response’, *BBR* 6 (1996): 133-38.

prisoner'.<sup>2</sup> The question before us in this paper is what exactly is Paul referring to by the 'testimony of our Lord' (τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν)? The lexical possibilities for 'testimony' and the grammar of the phrase would suggest at least three possibilities. First, is this essentially equivalent to Paul's declaration in Romans 1:16 that he was 'not ashamed of the gospel', such that τὸ μαρτύριον is essentially a synonym for 'gospel' and the genitive, τοῦ κυρίου, should be understood as objective? This would give the whole phrase the sense of, 'don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord' (i.e. the gospel). This would tend to suggest that Paul had in mind the apostolic summaries of the ministry and work of Christ that formed the content of the gospel.<sup>3</sup> Second, Paul could be understood as asking Timothy not to be ashamed of the 'testimony Christ bore', making τὸ μαρτύριον a direct reference to that which Christ said and/or did and giving τοῦ κυρίου a subjective sense.<sup>4</sup> This rendering would emphasise a more direct connection of the 'testimony' here to the life and words of Christ than to those factors as mediated through the apostolic summaries. Third, adopting a category from D. Wallace's grammar,<sup>5</sup> Paul could be intentionally playing on the ambiguity of the

---

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Reid ('Prison, Prisoner', in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne, et. al. [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993]: 753) suggests that this phrase carries the pregnant sense of a prisoner for the sake of Christ in accordance with his purposes (cf. Phil. 1:29-30).

<sup>3</sup> G. Fee has chronicled the 'rich variety of metaphors and images' that Paul uses throughout his letters to 'express the heart of the gospel, "salvation in Christ"' ('Toward a Theology of 2 Timothy—from a Pauline Perspective', *SBL Seminar Papers*, 1997, 36 [Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1997]: 737; cf. also *God's Empowering Presence: the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994]: 48 n. 39). These apostolic summaries of the gospel contain core concepts concerning God's saving work in Christ. At the same time, the 'form' and 'imagery' used to express that content, according to Fee, is 'predicated almost altogether on either 1) the aspect of the *human predicament* from which God is saving his people, or 2) the *nature of the error* that he perceives his gospel as standing in opposition to' ('Theology of 2 Timothy', 737-38; italics his).

<sup>4</sup> Note here the subjective genitive construction in 2 Cor. 2:12, τὸ μαρτύριον τῆς συνειδήσεως ἡμῶν. P. Barnett renders it, 'our conscience testifies' (*The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]: 92).

<sup>5</sup> Wallace appeals to the recognised presence of double entendre, puns, word-plays, etc. within the NT as grounds for the plausibility of 'intentional ambiguity' on the part of biblical authors (*Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996]: 120 n. 134). He titles this use of the genitive as the 'plenary genitive' with the identifying marks being that: 1) the genitive is used with 'head nouns that involve a verbal idea' (112); 2) both the objective and subjective renderings fit the context (120); and, 3) both renderings 'do not contradict but rather complement one another' (120; italics his). He cites 2 Cor. 5:14 (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνέχει ἡμᾶς), Rev. 1:1 (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), and Rom. 5:5 (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχυται) as possible examples.

phrase to allow for both a direct and indirect association of τὸ μαρτύριον with the life and work of Christ. This would carry a sense of, 'do not be ashamed of the testimony born by Christ and the apostolic testimony (gospel) which testifies to it.'

A brief survey of contemporary approaches finds the objective rendering, accompanied by an understanding of 'testimony' as essentially equivalent to 'gospel', to have a clear majority – though the subjective has a rare defender. Thus, G. Knight, coming alongside the NIV, RSV, and NEB, simply states that the testimony is 'Christian preaching and the gospel generally' and, as such, τοῦ κυρίου should be understood as objective. Paul is referring to the 'testimony ... "about" "our Lord"'.<sup>6</sup> Mounce argues similarly that, although this phrase could mean "'the testimony borne by the Lord", i.e. his death', it is more probable that it is an 'objective genitive: "the testimony concerning our Lord"'.<sup>7</sup> Yet, little is proffered by way of support for this rendering. When support is offered, reference is most frequently made to, what is seen to be, the clearly objective sense of the close parallel in 1 Corinthians 1:6, τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,<sup>8</sup> or, occasionally, to contextual concerns. For example, Mounce suggests that the objective sense is a better fit against the backdrop of 'Paul's imprisonment for the gospel'.<sup>9</sup> Of the few dissenting voices arguing for the subjective sense one might point to R. Collins. In his recent commentary on the Pastorals, although he renders the phrase 'the testimony about our Lord', he seems to allow for at least a plenary sense. He argues that the 'testimony' is 'not synonymous with "the gospel" ... Rather, it should be taken as a reference to the trial and

---

<sup>6</sup> *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992): 372.

<sup>7</sup> *Pastoral*: 479-80. Cf. also G. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBC 13; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988): 228; D. Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (TNTC 14; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957): 127; and, apparently, P. Towner, *The Goal of Our Instruction: The Structure of Theology and Ethics in the Pastoral Epistles* (JSNTSup 34; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988): 124.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988, rep. 1960): 160.

<sup>9</sup> *Pastoral*: 480.

eventual death of Jesus (see 1 Tim. 2:6; 6:13).<sup>10</sup> By stating it in this way, the line between ‘testimony about’ and ‘borne by’ is decidedly blurred. L. T. Johnson provides a clearer example of a subjective understanding when, against the backdrop of 1 Timothy 2:6 and 6:13, he renders the phrase, ‘the witness given by our Lord’.<sup>11</sup>

In order to test the predominant understanding of both μαρτύριον and its attached genitive, τοῦ κυρίου, three lines of investigation will be pursued. One line will be both a contextually and paradigmatically<sup>12</sup> oriented investigation intended to get at the meaning of τὸ μαρτύριον.<sup>13</sup> Particular emphasis will be placed on those occasions where it, or its cognates/near synonyms, is brought into relationship with the ministry and teaching of Christ (1 Tim. 2:6; 6:12). A second line of investigation will be to look more generally at the letters when they make reference to Christ to see if there is any particular stress placed on the actual words and acts of Jesus (e.g. 1 Tim. 1:15; 5:18; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:12; 2:12; 4:1, 8, 17-18). Finally, a third line of enquiry will focus on the considerations arising from the immediate context of 2 Timothy 1:8. What we will suggest is that the above lines of evidence at least suggest a plenary sense for the genitive construction which, at the same time, plays on the dual sense of μαρτύριον as gospel and as a reference to the historical work of Christ in fulfillment of God’s saving plan. However, in the final analysis, it does seem best to see the phrase simply as a reference to the testimony Christ bore in his word and life to the saving plan of God.

---

<sup>10</sup> *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus* (NTL; Westminster: John Knox, 2002): 198.

<sup>11</sup> *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New York: Doubleday, 2001): 192, 347, 359. Cf. also, N. White, *The First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus* (EGT 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910, 1983 repr.): 156.

<sup>12</sup> A paradigmatic approach to semantics brings the synonyms and/or antonyms of a term in view in order to more precisely define that term by comparison and contrast (see G. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1991]: 84).

<sup>13</sup> Towner, in an attempt to specify the meaning of διδασκαλία in the Pastorals, places εὐαγγέλιον, μαρτύριον and κήρυγμα in a ‘special category.’ Their close association with traditional formulations of the kerygma and the idea of suffering move him to see them as united in denoting ‘the message of God’s grace in Christ, the purpose of which is the dissemination of salvation in the world’ (*Goal*: 124).

## 2. The Meaning of Μαρτύριον

First, we want to look at the other occurrence of μαρτύριον as well as the use of its cognates/near synonyms in the Pastorals to see if there are grounds for seeing a more direct association of the term in 2 Timothy 1:8 with the work and words of Christ. Does it necessarily refer to the apostolic summaries of the gospel (as has been argued in seeing εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα as its near synonyms), or might it be more directly connected to the acts and words of the historical Christ? Could it stand, for example, in a hyponymous relationship<sup>14</sup> with εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα such that μαρτύριον refers more particularly and directly to the words and acts of Christ which stand as the foundational building blocks of the apostolic gospel/kerygma? What is interesting is that this term and its cognates, unlike its suggested near synonyms (εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα), seems to occur in close relation to statements more directly associated with the words or acts of the historical Christ. The most central passage in this respect is the only other passage where μαρτύριον appears in the Pastorals, 1 Timothy 2:6. A second central passage is 1 Timothy 6:13 which speaks of ‘Christ Jesus’ testimony before Pontius Pilate: Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν.

*1 Timothy 2:6:* Central to an understanding of μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6 is the relationship of the phrase of which it is a part to that which precedes. Robertson reflects the difficulty here when he states that this phrase ‘is in the accusative without any immediate connection unless it is in apposition with the preceding clause or is loosely united with δοῦς.’<sup>15</sup> Consequently, scholars are divided over whether it refers

<sup>14</sup> Hyponymy is a type of synonymy where the synonyms are related hierarchically along the spectrum from the general to the specific, e.g. ‘creature–animal–mammal–dog–terrier–“Bozo”’ (Osborne, *Spiral*: 86).

<sup>15</sup> *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934): 490-91; cf. Rom. 8:2, where τὸ ἀδύνατον and its associated modifiers stands in an appositional relationship to the phrase, κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐν τῇ σαρκί (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 [ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975]: 378).

to the whole of the ‘traditional’ statement in verses 5-6a<sup>16</sup> or to the final clause only, ὁ δοὺς ἑαυτὸν ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ πάντων.<sup>17</sup>

Concerning the former, J. Roloff has argued that this phrase refers to the apostolic testimony encapsulated in the liturgical fragment of verses 5-6a with the following καιροῖς ἰδίαις referring to the salvation-historical ground of the apostolic proclamation of that message (cf v. 7).<sup>18</sup> In support, Roloff appeals to the fact that μαρτύριον is a ‘technical term of the apostolic proclamation’ in the deuterio-Paulines (2 Tim. 1:8; 2 Thess. 1:10; cf. Acts 4:33); that the ‘the right time’ in Titus 1:3 refers to the ‘present point in time of the proclamation’; and that verses 5-6a are a pre-formulated tradition inserted in this context by the author.<sup>19</sup>

In response, concerning μαρτύριον, of the three passages cited, only 2 Thessalonians 1:10 could possibly support its designation as a ‘technical term’.<sup>20</sup> However, even there, the fact that the apostolic proclamation is in view is made clear by the appended ἡμῶν, a designation noticeably absent in the present passage. Second, concerning Titus 1:3, since the author’s use of φανηρόω elsewhere (1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:10) refers to the appearances of Christ,<sup>21</sup> a number of scholars understand it as a reference to the appearance of ‘Jesus’ as

<sup>16</sup> J. Roloff, *Die Erste Briefe an Timotheus* (EKKNT 15; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1988): 123; Fee, *Timothy, Titus*: 66; I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999): 433.

<sup>17</sup> E. F. Scott, *Pastoral Epistles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948): 22; Kelly, *Pastoral*: 64; M. Dibelius & H. Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ET; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972): 43; Guthrie, *Pastoral*: 72-73.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (SNTSMS 31; Cambridge: CUP, 1977): 207-08.

<sup>19</sup> *Erste Briefe*: 107, 112, & 123-24.

<sup>20</sup> Here he cites 2 Tim. 1:8, which is, of course, the passage in question. With regard to Acts 4:33, the second passage, the content of the ‘testimony’ is specified by a following objective genitive, τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (cf. Strathmann, ‘μάρτυς’, *TDNT* 4 [1967]: 504). In addition, there is certainly nothing particularly deuterio-pauline or late about such a usage (cf. 1 Cor 1:6; 2:1 [if μαρτύριον is the correct reading here; cf. Metzger, *TCGNT* (London: UBS, 1971): 545, with G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 88 n. 1]).

<sup>21</sup> The referent point of the term elsewhere in the NT is also frequently the appearance of Christ (cf. D. Lührmann, *Das Offenbarungsverständnis bei Paulus und in paulinischen Gemeinden* [WMANT 16; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1965]: 160; R. Bultmann & D. Lührmann, ‘φάινω’, *TDNT* 9 [1974]: 4-5). In this connection, it is worth recalling that ἐπιφάνεια refers exclusively to the appearances of Christ (1 Tim 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13) and ἐπιφάινω refers to the manner of God’s dealing with men (χάρις, Titus 2:11; ἡ χρηστότης καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία, Titus 3:4) brought to light by the ἐπιφάνεια of Christ.

that event which brings to light the pre-historic promise of eternal life. As the 'grace of God appeared' in terms of Christ's first advent (Tit. 2:11), so here the promise of God, the referent of τὸν λόγον, was brought to light in the Christ-event (cf. 2 Tim. 2:10).<sup>22</sup> It is that event, and not the apostolic proclamation, which occurred at the καιροῖς ἰδίους. Ἐν κηρύγματι serves to extend the time of fulfilment in terms of the mediation to the present of what God accomplished in the past Christ-event.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, in light of the previous observations, it is of little significance for the issue at hand whether the whole of verses 5-6 comprise a pre-formed fragment taken up by the author<sup>24</sup> or (more likely) not.<sup>25</sup> When these points are brought together, the need to explore other options suggests itself.

A more satisfactory approach can be found in that which connects this phrase with the immediately preceding ὁ δὸς . . . ὑπὲρ πάντων of the μεσίτης.<sup>26</sup> First, such a rendering is not without conceptual parallels in the Pauline corpus. This rendering parallels the thought of Paul in Romans 3:24-26 where the redemptive death of Jesus is set forth (προτίθημι) *by God* as the 'demonstration' of his 'righteousness', an event which gains 'public character' in the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>27</sup> But more importantly, that this latter

<sup>22</sup> The structure of vv. 2-3 points to τὸν λόγον as a restatement of or alternate expression for the promised ζωῆς αἰωνίου (cf. Kelly, *Pastoral*: 228; H. von Lips, *Glaube-Gemeinde-Amt* [FRLANT 122; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979]: 43).

<sup>23</sup> P. Towner, *Goal*: 109, 127-28. Cf. G. Delling, 'καίρος', *TDNT* 3 (1965): 461; Guthrie, *Pastoral*: 182; W. Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924): 126.

<sup>24</sup> H. Merkel, 'Christologische Traditionen in den Pastoralbriefen' (paper presented at the SNTS conference, Canterbury, England, 1983); E. Ellis, 'Traditions in the Pastoral Epistles', in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (ed. C. Evans and W. Stinespring; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987): 246-47.

<sup>25</sup> K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (StNT 7; Gutersloh: Mohn, 1972): 72; A. T. Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (NCBC; London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1982): 68-67; Towner, *Goal*: 82. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the passage reflects concepts (cf. the 'universal' emphasis in 1 Tim. 2:2,4; 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:17; Titus 2:11 and the development of 6b in Titus 2:14) and vocabulary (beside the μαρτύριον of 2 Tim. 1:8, cf. μαρτυρία, 1 Tim. 3:7; Titus 1:13; μαρτυρέω 1 Tim. 5:13; 6:13; and, καιροῖς ἰδίους, 1 Tim. 6:15; Titus 1:3) which are those of Paul in these letters. At the least, this argues strongly that the passage, is a reflection of Paul's own theology and that he may be responsible for the bringing together of traditional elements in order to sustain his line of argument.

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Dibelius, *Pastoral*: 43; N. Brox, *Die Pastoralbriefe* (RNT; Regensburg: Verlag Freidrich Pustet, 1969): 129; Hanson, *Pastoral*: 69; Kelly, *Pastoral*: 64.

<sup>27</sup> M. Theobald, 'Das Gottesbild des Paulus nach Röm 3,21-31', *SNTSU* 6/7 (1981-82): 143-44.

phrase would warrant such a pointed characterization lies in the fact that it is undoubtedly dependent, although in a more Hellenised form,<sup>28</sup> on Mark 10:45 – a passage which, on tradition-historical grounds, probably reflects the earliest known NT form of the concept of redemption.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, as Marshall states, ‘there is good reason to argue’ that Mark 10:45 ‘is an authentic saying of Jesus’.<sup>30</sup> So also, R. Watts sees Mark 10:45 as an attempt by Mark to faithfully relay a ‘new exegesis of Isaiah 53’ whose genesis ‘lay with Jesus’ because it was ‘recognized as crucial to his (Christ’s) self-understanding.’<sup>31</sup> The likelihood of a close connection with the sayings of Jesus receives further support from P. Wolfe’s comments regarding the role of Jesus’ words in the Pastoral Epistles generally. He holds that the ‘PE (Pastoral Epistles) uphold the words, or teaching of Jesus as possessing an inherent authority and representing a standard, that is, a canon, akin to that of γραφή.’<sup>32</sup> Thus this concept could have stood within the community as a principal element of their faith,<sup>33</sup> an element whose form of expression speaks of a more direct connection to the life and teaching of Christ himself (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18; 6:3).<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, the thought that God is here setting forth the work and words of Jesus as a μαρτύριον to his salvation plan, is paralleled in the LXX usage of the term for David in Isaiah 55:4. There, David is put forward (δέδωκα) by Yahweh, in virtue of all that he has granted to him and allowed him to accomplish, as a μαρτύριον ἐν ἔθνεσιν, ‘a

---

<sup>28</sup> J. Jeremias, ‘Das Lösegeld für Viele (Mark 10:45)’ in *Abba* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966): 216-29; H. Merkel, ‘Christologische Traditionen’.

<sup>29</sup> I. H. Marshall, ‘The Development of the Concept of Redemption in the New Testament’ in *Jesus the Saviour: Studies in New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990): 249-51; J. Jeremias, ‘Die älteste Schicht der Menschensohn-Logien’, *ZNTW* 58 (1967): 159-72, esp. 166-67; E. Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühntod Jesu Christ* (FRLANT 64; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1963): 117.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Redemption’: 250.

<sup>31</sup> ‘Jesus’ Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45’, in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (ed. W. Bellinger and W. Farmer; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998): 150-51. Likewise, R. T. France understands the Marcan saying to be an authentic saying of Jesus about ‘the purpose for which he came ...’; *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002): 421.

<sup>32</sup> P. Wolfe, ‘Scripture in the Pastoral Epistles: Premarcion Marcionism?’, *PRS* 16/1 (1989): 14.

<sup>33</sup> See P. Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe* (BBET 8; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1978): 198.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. P. M. Casey, ‘General, Generic and Indefinite: The Use of the Term ‘Son of Man’ in Aramaic Sources and in the Teaching of Jesus’, *JSNT* 29 (1987): 42-43.

factual proof<sup>35</sup> to the gentiles of his power to nurture his people and accomplish his purposes in the world. David's historical accomplishments 'bear witness' to theological realities. Notice also here how the twelve's act of shaking the dust off of their feet bears witness, is a μαρτύριον, to God's repudiation of those who reject their message (Luke 9:5). These uses of μαρτύριον allow for an understanding of the term that embraces both acts and words; the whole of a life or an event can stand as a testimony (cf. Mark 13:9).<sup>36</sup>

Lastly, the phrase immediately following μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6, καιροῖς ἰδίαις, is consistently used within the Pastorals to connect the past and yet future epiphanies of Christ to the saving plan of God. In 1 Timothy 6:15 καιροῖς ἰδίαις identifies the future epiphany of Jesus as an event occurring at God's determined time. Likewise, in Titus 1:3, as argued above, it is the first advent of Christ which occurred καιροῖς ἰδίαις, i.e. at the time appointed by God. In the end, καιροῖς ἰδίαις seems to designate the event to which it refers as divinely determined and, more particularly, as proceeding from God's salvation plan.<sup>37</sup> As a matter of fact, this phrase brings out explicitly what is prevalent in these letters – the close connection of the work of Christ to the saving plan of God (cf. also 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Titus 2:11, 14; 3:4, 6). For one implicit example integral to our understanding of 1 Timothy 2:6, in 1 Timothy 1:15 the past epiphany (Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἦλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἁμαρτωλοὺς σῶσαι; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10) is depicted as the central element<sup>38</sup> of 'the gospel' (1:11) of the 'King over the ages' (1:17) which, as such, emphasises that the first advent of Christ occurred under the auspices of God's sovereign redemptive plan. The deliberate, though implicit, framing of the first advent of Christ such that it is firmly rooted in the divine redemptive

<sup>35</sup> H. Strathmann, 'μάρτυς', *TDNT* 4 (1967): 485.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall (*Pastoral*: 432) states that μαρτύριον is 'either the act of bearing witness or the content, a piece of evidence, thus "the Christian message".'

<sup>37</sup> See Roloff, *Erste Briefe*: 23-124; Fee, *Timothy, Titus*: 66; Kelly, *Pastoral*: 64; Scott, *Pastoral*: 22; Dibelius & Conzelman, *Pastoral*: 43, 131; O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (trans. F. V. Filson; London: SCM, 1951): 39-43; A. J. Malherbe, "'In Season and Out of Season": 2 Timothy 4:2', *JBL* 103 (1984): 243; G. Dellling, 'καιρός' *TDNT* 3: 460-61.

<sup>38</sup> A. Lau (*Manifest in the Flesh: The Epiphany Christology of the Pastoral Epistles* [WUNT 2:86; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1996]) has convincingly argued 1) that 1:15 falls within the OT theophanic framework that lies behind the epiphany conception prevalent in these letters and, thus, is essentially a synonym for epiphany (66, 179-225), and 2) that 1:15 serves as the 'linchpin' of the entire section, 1:12-17 (71).

plan is confirmed by an analysis of the structure of the immediate context (1:11-17) and the book as a whole.<sup>39</sup> This regular explicit and implicit emphasis throughout the Pastorals on the past and future Christ-events being firmly attached to the redemptive plan of God would argue strongly for the close association of the whole phrase with the ὁ δούς of Jesus, the price of the ἀντίλυτρον.<sup>40</sup> In this light, τὸ μαρτύριον of verse 6b, whose referent is the self-giving death of Jesus, serves as 'the' testimony κατ' ἐξοχήν to God's plan for the salvation of mankind.<sup>41</sup> The universal saving character of the 'One God' was borne out on the plane of history in the mediator's redemptive death, an understanding of that event anchored in Christ's own words. Furthermore, this event so understood, by virtue of the fact it is located within the καιροῖς ἰδίους, is inextricably linked to God and his saving provision.<sup>42</sup>

At this point we are ready to see if our understanding of 1 Timothy 2:6 can help us determine the nature of the semantic relationship between μαρτύριον, εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα. As mentioned earlier, all three terms are closely tied together. To add one more linkage between them not already mentioned, all three sustain some type of relationship to that which Paul has been 'entrusted with' by God (1 Tim. 1:11; 2:7; Tit. 1:3). However, to look at κήρυγμα first, this term is used in Titus 1:3 with reference to God's promise of life made manifest in Christ; the coordination of the promise with the appearance of Christ is secured by referring to the latter as an event

---

<sup>39</sup> For an analysis of the structure of this section and of the letter as a whole, see G. Couser, 'God and Christian Existence in the Pastoral Epistles: Toward *Theological Method and Meaning*', *NovT* 42:3 (2000): 262-83, esp. 280-81.

<sup>40</sup> On the meaning of ἀντίλυτρον, see L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (London: Tyndale, 1960): 9-49, esp. 35, 48-49; E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (ET; London: SCM, 1963): 147; Marshall, 'Redemption': 239-57.

<sup>41</sup> Kelly, *Pastoral*: 64; Towner, *Goal*: 83; E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles* (MNTC; London: Harper, 1936): 22.

<sup>42</sup> As an aside, it is important to note that the author's use of this traditional thought, one which emphasises so strongly the individual initiative of 'Christ Jesus' (G. Dellling, 'Partizipiale Gottesprädikationen in den Briefen des Neuen Testaments', *ST* 17 [1963]: 37), as well as his full development of the Christological thought in relation to it, forcefully repels attempts to swallow up Christology in Theo-logy (contra V. Hasler, 'Epiphanie und Christologie in den Pastoralbriefen', *TZ* 33 [1977]: 202). For the author, Christology decisively (τὸ μαρτύριον) reinforces Theo-logy (εἰς θεός), the result being a united theological front in regard to the nature and scope of the divine saving provision in the present time (cf. Marshall, 'Redemption': 256 n. 70, whose position is adopted by Fee, *Timothy, Titus*: 65, 68).

occurring at καιροῖς ἰδίοις.<sup>43</sup> The κήρυγμα is the means whereby the promise is mediated to the present (and beyond) so as to merge the past advent of Christ and its present proclamation into one seamless extended process.<sup>44</sup> Thus, as a reference to God's premundane promise of life realised in Christ, it would appear that κήρυγμα has a broader set of referents than the μαρτύριον of 1 Timothy 2:6. Similarly, the association of εὐαγγέλιον with God in 1 Timothy 1:11 (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ) and the explication of it in verses 12-17, a passage which draws a connection between a saying closely associated with Jesus's self-understanding of his mission<sup>45</sup> and the sovereign governance of the 'King over the ages', would suggest a broader set of referents than implied by the usage of μαρτύριον in 2:6. This impression may receive further confirmation by a look at the three other appearances of the εὐαγγέλιον in the Pastorals, 2 Timothy 1:8, 10 and 2:8. To take the latter first, a synonym for the gospel here is ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 9).<sup>46</sup> This may suggest what is implied in the appending of κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου to the core elements that Timothy is being asked to recall, i.e. 'Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David' (v. 8). Here the core elements are in 'accord with' Paul's gospel. This suggests that the gospel includes, but is most likely broader in content than, these affirmations alone.<sup>47</sup> As in 1 Timothy 1:12-17, the gospel is not to be simply equated with these select, core understandings of Christ. Lastly, in 2 Timothy 1:8 and 10 the two occurrences of εὐαγγέλιον form a nice inclusio framework around its elucidation in verses 9-10 (see figure 1, below). Once again, unlike μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6, εὐαγγέλιον appears to be more comprehensively used such that it includes the thought of the plan of God from before the 'beginning of time' to give believers a death-nullifying, life-giving grace in the Christ-event. One final note on this passage, as with ἐν κηρύγματι in Titus 1:3, the second appearance of εὐαγγέλιον in this passage (διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, v. 10) serves to seamlessly tie together within the plan of God the past realization of

<sup>43</sup> Towner, *Goal*: 127-28. The other occurrence of κήρυγμα in 2 Tim. 4:17 would seem to concur with this assessment since it is that which Paul wishes 'all the gentiles' to hear.

<sup>44</sup> Towner, *Goal*: 127-28.

<sup>45</sup> Knight, *Pastoral*: 101-2.

<sup>46</sup> Guthrie, *Pastoral*: 144; T. Lea & H. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (NAC; Nashville: Holman, 1992): 207.

<sup>47</sup> Kelly, *Pastoral*: 177.

God's plan in Christ encapsulated in the gospel with its present realization through the proclamation of that gospel.<sup>48</sup>

In conclusion, a contextual and paradigmatic investigation of the only other occurrence of μαρτύριον within the Pastoral Epistles suggests that the use of the term refers to a saying which very likely goes back to Christ's own understanding of his death. This, of course, opens the possibility of seeing its use in 2 Timothy 1:8 as a reference to that testimony which 'our Lord' bore. Also, paradigmatically speaking, it suggests that this term, at least in this case, can have a narrower set of referents than either εὐαγγέλιον or κήρυγμα. It is possible that μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6 stands in a hyponymous relationship with εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα such that it refers to a specific word/act of Christ that stands at the core of the more comprehensive εὐαγγέλιον/κήρυγμα. Before we leave this passage behind, we want to take a brief pause to address one possible link between these terms that seems to militate against the semantic ordering we have suggested. Earlier we mentioned that all three sustain some type of relationship to that which Paul has been 'entrusted with' by God (1 Tim. 1:11; 2:7; Titus 1:3). Would this not suggest that μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:7 is not related to the others in a hyponymous fashion? In response, that which Paul was entrusted with by God for its advancement (εἰς ὃ ἐτέθη ἐγὼ; , v. 7a), given the relationship of this 'entrusting' motif also to εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα and given their consistently broader set of referents, should most likely be understood to refer to the whole of verses 5-6a.<sup>49</sup> For it is these statements together which best represent Paul's message to the gentiles (v. 7b). It is a message which places the work of Christ within the framework of God's saving purpose, something not clear in verse 6b alone.

*1 Timothy 6:13:* Turning to our second key passage, we find a close relationship between a verbal cognate of μαρτύριον, μαρτυρέω (as well as some of its near synonyms, ὁμολογία and ὁμολογέω) and the words/acts of the historical Christ. In 1 Timothy 6:13 Timothy is exhorted by Paul to 'confess the good confession' to which 'Christ Jesus bore witness before Pontius Pilate' (Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν). This is a notoriously enigmatic passage when it comes to specifying just what it is that Christ confessed and, thus, what it is that Timothy is to confess so as to correspond to Christ in some way. To begin to unravel

<sup>48</sup> Towner, *Goal*: 99, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Mounce notes the possibility of taking the relative pronoun either to refer to martuvrion or to the whole of vv. 5-6a (*Pastoral*: 92).

this tangle of seemingly unqualified general terms/phrase, we will attempt to delineate the relationship of the various phrases to one another within verses 12-13.

In 6:12a, ἀγωνίζου τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα τῆς πίστεως, appears to be shorthand for the more detailed instructions in 6:11 concerning Timothy's response to the issues at Ephesus.<sup>50</sup> As such it is very similar to the role of the parallel phrase in 1 Timothy 1:18, 19a, ἵνα στρατεύῃ ἐν αὐταῖς τὴν καλὴν στρατείαν ἔχων πίστιν καὶ ἀγαθὴν συνείδησιν. In its context, this phrase entails Timothy's particular charge at Ephesus which is itself set within, and is an outworking of, God's saving work (1:4), a work that focuses on belief in Christ unto eternal life (1:16).<sup>51</sup> Against this backdrop, 6:12b, ἐπιλαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, becomes a restatement and clarification of 6:12a and the climax which calls forth the elaboration of 12c and the strong adjuration of 6:13-16.<sup>52</sup> Further, this suggests that 'the commandment' (τὴν ἐντολήν, v. 14) might best be understood to refer back to ἐπιλαβοῦ τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, the nearest and, given its emphasis here, most probable sense antecedent of 'commandment' in the context.<sup>53</sup> The centrality of the command to 'lay hold of life' is further confirmed by the condemnation of the temporal perspective of the antagonists (6:7, 17), a condemnation which sandwiches the whole of 6:11-16, and by the fact that the prescribed remedy for this temporal mindset is a lifestyle driven by the pursuit of 'real life', ἵνα ἐπιλάβωνται τῆς ὄντως ζωῆς (6:19).<sup>54</sup>

In understanding verse 12c as an elaboration of τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, specifying that it was this life unto which Timothy was called and unto

<sup>50</sup> For the detailed structural, conceptual and lexical connections between chapters one and six of 1 Tim, see G. Couser, 'Christian Existence': 272-75; P. Bush, 'A Note on the Structure of 1 Timothy', *NTS* 36 (1996): 152-56; J. Thuren, 'Die Struktur der Schussparänese 1 Tim. 6, 3-21', *TZ* 26 (1970): 242-44; and Towner, *Goal*: 30-31.

<sup>51</sup> For the structure of 1 Tim. 1 and the consequent interrelation of concepts, see Couser, 'Christian Existence': 273, 278.

<sup>52</sup> For similar adjuration formulas in these letters, see 1 Tim. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:14; & 4:1. On this form generally, see G. Stählin, 'Zum Gebrauch von Beteuerungsformeln im Neuen Testament', *NovT* 5/6 (1962/63): 115-43, esp. 125 n. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. B. S. Easton, *Pastoral Epistles* (London: SCM, 1948): 166; Guthrie, *Pastoral*: 127-28.

<sup>54</sup> On the structure of 1 Tim. 6 see R. Kidd, *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles* (SBLDS 122; Atlanta: Scholars, 1990): 94-96.

which he confessed ‘the good confession before many witnesses’, provides the necessary backdrop to understand Christ’s ‘good confession’. One could say that the correspondence between the two need not be pressed beyond the fact of faithfulness/perseverance in one’s mission in the face of opposition.<sup>55</sup> However, while that certainly seems to be part of the emphasis, three lines of evidence argue for a slightly fuller conception of the relationship. First, there is the constant association of Christ’s work in these letters with bringing God’s promise of life/salvation to fruition (1 Tim. 1:16; 2:4-6;<sup>56</sup> 2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:2-3). Second, the letters make much of Paul’s and Timothy’s ministry being in service of this same divine promise of life (1 Tim. 1:16; 4:8; 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:1, 10-11; 2:10). This is structurally emphasised in 1 Timothy as well in that each of the sections where Paul addressed Timothy personally either locate Paul’s life in service of God’s promise of life or refer to Timothy’s service as that which is focused on life.<sup>57</sup> Third, 1 Timothy 2:6 summarises Christ’s ‘testimony’ in terms of that which he did on the cross that, as the testimony that occurred ‘at God’s own time’ (καίροϊς ἰδίοις), is inextricably linked to God’s comprehensive saving plan (v. 4a). Christ’s self-understanding of his mission which has now, at this point in the life of the church, been embodied in his death on the cross is set forward by Paul as that which bears witness to God’s comprehensive saving purposes. This is a salvation plan that has already been developed in 1:11-17 under the title: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς δόξης τοῦ μακαρίου θεοῦ. There the content of the gospel is the ‘glory’ of the ‘blessed God’, ‘the King of the Ages’ (v. 17), a glory which consists of the historical work of Christ who ‘came into the world to save sinners’ (v. 15), which embraces and appoints messengers for its proclamation (vv. 12, 14, 16), and which issues forth into ‘eternal life’ for all who embrace it by faith (v. 16). In other words, to say that Christ bore witness in his death to God’s comprehensive saving plan is also to say that he bore witness to his promise of life (cf. 1 Tim. 4:8-10 where the ‘promise of life’ is linked to the hope in the ‘living God, the savior of all men ...’).<sup>58</sup>

What this suggests for our understanding of the testimony Christ bore in 1 Timothy 6:13 is that the confessions of Timothy and Christ

---

<sup>55</sup> So apparently Mounce, *Pastoral*: 357-58.

<sup>56</sup> For the close connection of 1 Tim. 1:11-17 with 2:4-6 so as to be able to see God’s promise of life at issue in both, see Couser, ‘Christian Existence’: 278-79.

<sup>57</sup> Couser, ‘Christian Existence’: 276.

<sup>58</sup> Couser, ‘Christian Existence’: 276.

are tied together by more than just the ideas of perseverance and faithfulness to God's mission. From the centrality of the motif of God's saving plan, understood as his promise of life brought to fruition in the Christ-event and proclaimed by appointed messengers, the witnessing of Christ refers most likely to the whole of his finished work in fulfillment of God's saving plan. Consequently, this was a testimony that he bore during the time of Pontius Pilate as opposed to a direct reference to the specific words uttered by Christ in the presence of Pilate (cf. Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-37).<sup>59</sup> Not only is Timothy to identify with Christ in his perseverance and faithfulness, but he is to identify with him in maintaining his firm 'hold of', in life and word, God's saving message of life.

*Conclusions:* The study of μαρτύριον and its near cognates in 1 Timothy has suggested that there are good grounds for seeing them as references to the historical work of Christ undertaken in order to enact God's saving plan which consequently stands as a witness to that plan. Μαρτύριον in particular has a narrower set of referents than εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα, specifying a core statement concerning Christ that stands at the core of the more comprehensive 'gospel/kerygma'. The latter terms consistently combine, or intimate a combination of (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:8), the elements of Christ's testimony with the broader plan of God.

### **3. The General Emphasis on the Words and Acts of Christ**

Our second brief line of investigation will be to look more generally at the letters when they make reference to Christ to see if there is any particular stress placed on the actual words and acts of Jesus. The purpose of this section is to show that there is a particular emphasis on the relevance of Christ's historical acts and words as well as on his present (and future) direct involvement in the ministries of Paul and Timothy. When this personal emphasis on Christ is coupled with the relationship of μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6 to just that, the words and acts of Christ, this adds yet another line of evidence which suggest the

---

<sup>59</sup> So Kelly, *Pastoral*: 143-44; contra Knight, *Pastoral*: 265-66.

plausibility of considering a plenary or, more probably, a subjective rendering for τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν in 2 Timothy 1:8.

This evidence can be broken out along a number of lines. First, we want to look at those passages which present Christ as the actor in reference to Paul and Timothy's ministry. Three passages are important in this regard in 1 Timothy 1:12-16; 4:6; 6:12-13. In the first passage, Paul gives thanks to the one who empowered him, to Christ Jesus, an empowering for the message/task which had been entrusted to him, the proclamation of the gospel whose content is the glory of the blessed God (v. 11). Paul goes on to marvel at Christ's consideration of him as worthy of his, Christ's, trust, such that he placed Paul into his service, διακονίαν.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Paul's ministry is but an aspect of the salvation plan of God<sup>61</sup> embodied in the *raison d'être* of 'Christ Jesus'. In the divine plan Paul's unsuitability (v. 13, 15c) served as a platform, since he was a 'pattern' (ὑποτύπωσις, v. 16b), from which 'Christ Jesus' could demonstrate his long-suffering grace for the benefit of future believers (v. 16). Christ's direct and immediate involvement in Paul's διακονία is clearly emphasised here.

As we move on to 1 Timothy 4:6 there is one important additional note we need to make about the present passage. What is also interesting about this passage is that Paul's reminiscence, which emphasises his unworthiness in order to point to the sufficiency of Christ's enablement for ministry, functions in the broader context of chapter one to encourage Timothy to complete the task that he has been given by God at Ephesus. This is a task mentioned initially in verses 3-4 and then recalled in verse 18 where,<sup>62</sup> at the same time, it is reinforced positively by locating Timothy's task in the prophetic direction of the Spirit (v. 18b) as well as negatively by the sober recollection of two who have been disciplined because of their opposition to God's purposes (vv. 19b-20). The importance of this broader setting for Paul's reminiscence is that it implies Timothy's

---

<sup>60</sup> Fee, *Timothy, Titus*: 51; Knight, *Pastoral*: 94. It is very likely that the backdrop of this whole episode is Paul's Damascus Road experience (Mounce, *Pastoral*: 50).

<sup>61</sup> This plan is implicit in the passive verbs (ἠλεήθην, vv. 13,16) and in the inclusio framework which sets this paragraph off as an explication of 'the gospel of the blessed God' (v. 11) and concludes it with a doxology (v. 17) to that God in a manner emphasizing the sovereignty implicit in 'blessed' (μακαρίου; cf. Couser, 'Christian Existence': 279-80).

<sup>62</sup> The two are lexically held together by the παραγγελίης of v. 3 and the τὴν παραγγελίαν of v. 18 (cf. C. Spicq, 'παραγγελία', *TLNT* 3 [1994]: 9-11).

task is similarly at Christ's behest (explicit in, e.g., 2 Tim. 2:1, 3) and makes it understandable why Paul would characterise Timothy as a δίακονος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in 4:6. Moreover, what was implied in chapter one is more concretely intimated here in that Timothy as 'a servant of Christ Jesus' is also, as Paul, one who has been appointed by God (v. 14) to be a 'pattern' (τύπος, v. 12) in life and word, a 'pattern' that will be in service of God's promise of eternal life, 'life now and to come' (v. 8). This is not to suggest that there is no distinction to be drawn between their callings, Timothy's after all was no Damascus Road experience. It is only that both callings are seen to be connected directly to the work of Christ.

Lastly, to return to 1 Timothy 6:12-13, we need only to be reminded of our earlier investigations where the work of the historical Christ was seen to be in view and it is that which Timothy is to substantially imitate in his own calling. His life, as Christ's, is to be given to the promotion of God's promise of life. Moreover, the adjuration formula of verse 14 emphasises just how close the ties are between Timothy's ministry and that of Christ's as well as the ongoing interest by Christ (and God) in Timothy's ministry.<sup>63</sup> Paul admonishes Timothy 'in the presence of' Christ. The One who set the standard for bearing witness to the saving plan of God is the very one who will assess Timothy in the end. He will be both judge and the standard of judgement.

The role of Christ as judge will provide us with a convenient jumping-off point to consider passages in 2 Timothy where Christ is portrayed as intimately involved in the ministry of Paul and Timothy now and at the end of the age. There is a decided emphasis in 2 Timothy on Christ as the soon-to-appear judge (4:1) who will bestow rewards from God (παρὰ κυρίου, 1:18)<sup>64</sup> on the faithful (6:8) or punishment (4:14; cf. 4:16; 2:12b<sup>65</sup>) on those who desert God's promise of life for what the present age has to offer (4:10). Paul

---

<sup>63</sup> By the incorporation in ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in 5:21 and ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ . . . καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in 6:13, a more immediate involvement of God is envisioned in that this form implies God's presence at the delivery of the declaration as well as, respectively, his ongoing monitoring and enabling role in relation to the believer's response to that which is declared. The 'witness-factor' yields a greater emphasis to the conduct so enjoined and possibly suggests the prophetic character of the declaration (Couser, 'God and Christian Existence in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus' [Ph.D. diss., Kings College, Aberdeen, 1992]: 74.)

<sup>64</sup> Kelly, *Pastoral*: 170; Mounce, *Pastoral*: 496.

<sup>65</sup> On 2:12b see Towner, *Goal*: 106.

encourages Timothy to approach ministry with the real awareness of the fact that Christ observes and will hold one accountable for ministry. Undoubtedly this emphasis finds its genesis in the occasion of the letter itself – that of Paul’s impending death (4:6, 16-18).

However, the ‘Lord’ is also very much involved in the present beyond the implied observation of Paul and Timothy’s ministry. He is available to bestow mercy on those in need (1:16). He alone is present with Paul in his imprisonment empowering him to complete what he has called Paul to do (4:17). Furthermore, Paul is confident that Christ will deliver him from every evil work and ultimately consummate his salvation (4:17-18). Finally, we note that the Lord bestows understanding upon his servant Timothy to illumine him with regard to gaining a grasp on his own calling (2:7).

Our second and last set of passages are those which refer to the traditions about Christ. They are made up of two types. One group has strong ties to his own representation of his self-understanding as portrayed in Gospels. The other group draws from his teaching, also as represented in the Gospels. Of the former, we simply make mention of 1 Timothy 1:15 (Luke 19:10, along with possible Johannine influence) and 2:6 (Mark 10:45), passages which very likely represent synoptic material and both relate to presentations of Christ’s self-understanding.<sup>66</sup> Drawing from his teaching, 1 Timothy 5:18’s statement that ‘the workman is worthy of his hire’ most nearly resembles Luke 10:7 (cf. Matt. 10:10). Finally, 2 Timothy 2:12b, εἰ ἀρνησόμεθα, κάκεινος ἀρνήσεται ἡμᾶς, is reminiscent of Matt. 10:33, ὅστις δ’ ἂν ἀρνήσῃταί με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι καὶ γὼ αὐτὸν ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. These observations suggest that Knight has good grounds for paraphrasing 1 Timothy 6:3, λόγοις τοῖς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, as ‘the words that have come from our source of authority, “our Lord Jesus Christ”.’<sup>67</sup>

In conclusion there does seem to be a detectable emphasis in 1 and 2 Timothy on the words and acts (past, present, and future) of Christ. His words are regarded with canonical authority (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18) and,

---

<sup>66</sup> Marshall, ‘The Christology of the Pastoral Epistles’, *SNTU-A* 13 (1988): 164-65; Knight, *Pastoral*: 102, 121.

<sup>67</sup> *Pastoral*: 250; Roloff, *Erste Briefe*: 331. Marshall (*Pastoral*: 639) opts against the view taken here but offers something very similar, i.e. ‘teaching coming from Christ where he is seen as the authority behind it.’

as we saw earlier with 1 Timothy 2:6, serve as the central witness to God's saving work. Christ is active in Paul and Timothy's ministry both in the present and the future, the latter involvement informed by the former. These last two factors in particular give grounds for considering 2 Timothy 1:8 as a call for Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony borne by his Lord so as to emphasise that commitment to the gospel, the broader plan of God in Christ, is a personal commitment to his Lord.

#### 4.2 Timothy 1:8

Finally, we come to the passage in question. What remains for us here is to see if the context of the passage itself supports such a rendering. Can we provide contextual reasons for seeing μαρτύριον as a reference to the testimony Christ bore to stress that, just as a commitment to the gospel is a commitment to identify with Paul, the prisoner, so a commitment to the gospel is fundamentally a commitment to identify with the witness borne by Christ, his words and acts?

First, it is important to note that, not only do the Pastorals emphasise the acts and words of Christ and their importance for the genesis, prosecution, and fulfillment of Paul and Timothy's 'service', but the genitive modifier of τὸ μαρτύριον, τοῦ κυρίου, sustains a very personal, intimate character for most of its uses in 2 Timothy (1:8; 16, 18a; 2:7; 3:11; 4:8, 14, 17-18, 22). This fact alone renders the technical status of this phrase suspect and suggests that the person of the Lord may be more in view than those accounts about him. Further, the combination of μαρτύριον with ἐπαισχυνθῆς is noteworthy.<sup>68</sup> We have already noted Paul's penchant in these letters for drawing from the traditions about Christ found in the synoptic material (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 2:6; 5:18; 2 Tim. 2:12b), illustrating particularly what is referred to generally in 1 Timothy 6:3, i.e. the authority and importance in these letters of 'the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ'. This raises the not unlikely possibility of Paul using this particular combination of ἐπαισχυνθῆς and τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν to draw Timothy's mind once again to the Jesus tradition, along the lines, conceptually, of what he certainly does in 2 Timothy 2:12b (Matt. 10:33; cf. Lk. 12:9).<sup>69</sup> Paul's phrasing here could be viewed as a

<sup>68</sup> Johnson (*Timothy*: 347), pointing to the second object of ἐπαισχυνθῆς ἐμε, contends that the consequent stress on commitment to a person should weight our understanding of τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν toward the subjective.

<sup>69</sup> Marshall, *Pastoral*: 741; Mounce, *Pastoral*: 517; Brox, *Pastoral*: 244.

concise expression of the dual emphasis on faithfulness to Christ's person and message found in Mark 8:38: 'If anyone is ashamed of me and my words (ἐπαισχυνθῆ με καὶ τοὺς ἑμοὺς λόγους) in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.'<sup>70</sup>

As one last contributing factor to a possible subjective rendering permit me to return to an earlier observation about the structure of 2 Timothy 1:6-10. Our earlier observations pointed to the inclusio effect of two references to the εὐαγγέλιον on either side of the gospel summary (vv. 8b & 10c, see Figure 1, below). On further examination of the larger section of which verses 8-10 are a part, that appears to be just one small part of a much larger chiasmic structure (Figure 1). The importance of this observation is in the relation of B and B'. Both sections repeat the need to not be ashamed. However, only B provides that which one is not to be ashamed of, i.e. the testimony borne by the Lord and Paul, his prisoner. Given the chiasmic structure, should the same twofold object be understood for the shame in B'? In other words, could Paul be affirming in verse 12b that he is not ashamed of his imprisonment nor of the testimony borne by the Lord and thus presenting himself 'as an example of the attitude which he commended to Timothy' in verse 8?<sup>71</sup>

If this be the case, it would suggest that Christ is the antecedent of the  $\tilde{\omega}$ <sup>72</sup> of verse 12b so that, although the freedom from shame at his (Paul's) suffering for the gospel is certainly in view, the thrust of the repetition in B' is on the reason why the testimony borne by the Lord is trustworthy. Paul's confidence that he will not be shamed arises from his convinced knowledge of the one in whom he has placed his trust. He is convinced that Christ will keep what he 'has entrusted to him' (Christ),<sup>73</sup> that is his very life, up until the realization of his final salvation.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Note also that the eschatological backdrop evident in Mark 8 is evident in 2 Tim 1:12 (εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν ἡμέραν), the structural counterpart of 1:8 (see figure 1 below). This verse was helpfully brought to my attention by Peter Head.

<sup>71</sup> Marshall, *Pastoral*: 709.

<sup>72</sup> Marshall (*Pastoral*: 710) suggests that the referent could be either God or Christ. However the structure would argue strongly for the latter (contra Mounce, *Pastoral*: 487 and Knight, *Pastoral*: 379).

<sup>73</sup> For this subjective rendering of μου in v. 12, see Fee, *Timothy, Titus*: 232; Mounce, *Pastoral*: 488; Knight, *Pastoral*: 380; Lau, *Manifest*: 31-35.

<sup>74</sup> Note how this also accords with the structure and the thought of 2 Tim. 4:18, where Christ's ability to effect Paul's final salvation is in view.

Figure 1:

**A. Draw on the God-given Enabling of the Spirit**

**6** For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. **7** For God did not give us a Spirit (πνεῦμα) of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

**B. Not Ashamed**

**8** So do not be ashamed (ἐπαισχυνθῆς) of the testimony borne by our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner.

**C. Suffer for the Gospel**

But join with me in suffering for the gospel (συγκακοπάθησον τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ), by the power of God,

**D. The Gospel**

**9** who has saved us and called us to a holy life-- not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light

**C'. Suffer for the Gospel**

through the gospel(τοῦ εὐαγγελίου). **11** And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. **12** That is why I am suffering (πάσχω) as I am.

**B'. Not Ashamed**

**12** Yet I am not ashamed (ἐπαισχύνομαι), 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.

**A'. Draw on the God-given Enabling of the Spirit**

**13** What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. **14** Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you-- guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit (πνεύματος ἁγίου) who lives in us.

Thus, when 1:8 is read over against its structural counterpart in verse 12, the very personal reference to his Lord in verse 12 gives further grounds for seeing a more directly personal reference in (and thus for a subjective rendering of) τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν.

## 5. Conclusion

Although this may seem like we have built a big porch for a small house, to adapt an old homiletical metaphor, the preliminary work was necessary to establish the possibility, even warrant, for over-turning (or significantly adjusting) the current consensus on 2 Timothy 1:8. Moreover, it is a consensus that probably does have a precedent in

Paul's usage elsewhere (1 Cor. 1:6).<sup>75</sup> However, a subjective (or, less specific, plenary) rendering is very plausible against the backdrop of our understanding of μαρτύριον in 1 Timothy 2:6; of our paradigmatic analysis of its suggested synonyms (εὐαγγέλιον and κήρυγμα) made possible by that investigation; of our further confirmation of the probable thrust of μαρτύριον in 1 Tim 2:6 through the investigation of the use of its near synonyms in 6:13, a passage which also highlighted the importance of the life and words of Christ to Paul in these letters; and, finally, of our attention to the importance of the words and acts of Christ (past, present and future) throughout the two letters generally. Moreover, our limited attention to the immediate context of 2 Timothy 1:8, its wording, concepts, and structure, provide additional reasons for supporting a subjective rendering for τοῦ κυρίου there. In sum, it seems likely that τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν is a reference to the testimony the Lord bore, in his words and life, to the saving plan of God.

---

<sup>75</sup> It should be noted here that though many take τοῦ Χριστοῦ of 1 Cor. 1:6 as self-evidently objective (e.g. Fee, *First Corinthians*: 40) and then take this passage as nearly decisive for understanding the phrase in question in 2 Tim. 1:8, such a conclusion is not necessary to protect or maintain a consistency within Paul nor is it based on a necessarily sound lexical procedure. The relative rarity (5x; cf. 1 Cor. 1:6; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 2:6; & 2 Tim. 1:8) and diversity (cf. the uses in 1 & 2 Cor.) of the use of μαρτύριον by Paul coupled with his preference for εὐαγγέλιον (1:8, 10; 2:8; 4:5) and other related synonyms (2:9; 2:15; 4:3) both in 2 Tim. and elsewhere (see P. O'Brien, 'Thanksgiving and the Gospel in Paul', *NTS* 21 [1975]: 149) when referring to the apostolic proclamation, make it hard to argue for this term as a technical term (as we have also argued above). Moreover, a brief reflection on Paul's use of νόμος reminds us of the importance of context and of Paul's lexical sophistication. After all, what is being argued here, should this passage differ from 1 Cor. 1:6 (though W. Orr & J. Arthur allow for both the subjective and objective senses there [*1 Corinthians* {ABC; New York: Doubleday, 1976}: 145]), is a contextual, situationally driven limitation of the referents of μαρτύριον to bring into sharp relief a subset of those lying behind its use in 1 Cor. 1:6 and to make more explicit the activity of Christ in them.