

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).⁷⁵ 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.

⁷⁵ 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 [*ICorinthians* {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.