

Standing Against Apostasy, Part 1

2 Timothy 3:10-13

55-15

And the privilege is ours today in our on going study of 2 Timothy to come to chapter 3, a new section, the second half of the chapter from verse 10 through 17. This is a great section of Scripture, a rich section of Scripture and one which deserves more than one week's attention and so I'm sure you'll agree with me as we begin, we'll be looking at it for a number of weeks. It's one of those passages that includes a favorite text, the familiar verses of 16 and 17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching and reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be adequate equipped for every good work." Those two verses alone are going to demand a great deal of our attention just so that we will understand the essence of the inspired Scripture and its sufficiency for our lives. But that's for a couple of weeks away.

For this morning we want to take a look at the first part of this section, verses 10 through 13. And then in the weeks ahead we'll look at 14 through 17 as the Lord directs. Let me give you just a little bit of a feeling for what is going on as the Apostle Paul writes to Timothy. Timothy is at Ephesus, as you know if you've been with us, he is assisting in setting that church straight. It had deviated doctrinally and it had deviated in terms of its living patterns into ungodly living. Paul left Timothy there and told him to set things right in the church. He writes back to him two epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy, to assist Timothy in knowing what to do and how to do it and challenging him to stick with the task no matter how difficult it might be.

As he begins chapter 3 the key is really in that first verse where Paul reminds Timothy that in the last days, that is the church age from the first coming of Christ until His Second coming, that's all the last days as we saw, perilous times will come upon the church. Timothy should not be surprised that he's enduring some perilous dangerous difficult times in Ephesus. That is to be expected throughout the whole of the church age. The church always lives in dangerous times. And the reason is given, the reason is because there are wicked men who attack the church who are impostors, who are spiritual frauds who endeavor to deceive and destroy the work of God. The church is always in danger from wicked men who are seducers and frauds and charlatans of religion who come against the work of God.

Now we have been noting the perilous times in which we live even today. Last week I gave you a little bit of a look at church history and we saw some of the things that have been a great danger and continue to be a great danger to the church today. The onslaught against the church is just about endless. We talked about the danger of sacramentalism, that's the religion of ritual...the danger of rationalism, that's the religion that reduces everything to what the human mind can understand and explain...the religion of orthodoxism, the encroachment upon Christianity that has a dead, cold belief in biblical data that never touches life...we talked about the danger of politicism, where the church becomes the center of political activity rather than spiritual activity...we talked about the danger of ecumenism where doctrine is set aside and the crucial truths of God's Word are not the issue getting

together and some kind of superficial unity is...we talked about experientialism where truth is determined by own experience...we talked about subjectivism where the focal point of all of Christian experiences to look inward and see what's going on in your own life and extrapolate out of that what is truth and what is important. We could add to those things cultism, the ever increasing bevy of cults that call themselves Christian that continue to add to their number. You are familiar with things like Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and Christian Science and Unity Cult and things like that but you can hardly keep up with all of the wave of the new ones. I made a little list of new cults that are moving rapidly in our society like The River of Life Ministry, The Body of Christ is another one, Mispa(??) Brethren, The Community Chapel started in Seattle, The Family of Love, The Alamo Christian Church, the Church of Bible Understanding, The Love Family, The Church of Armageddon, Faith Assembly and The Church of the Living Word. And then The Christ Family, which is interesting because everybody changes their last name to Christ and so they're Bill Christ and Joe Christ and Mary Christ and so forth.

The onslaught of these kinds of isms is unending against the church. Now what Paul is saying to Timothy is, "It's true in my time, it's true in your time, it will be true through all the times and the seasons of the church that the church will be in grave danger and peril from the onslaught of those wicked people who come along masquerading as representatives of Christian truth but who deceive people.

Now Paul knows that it takes strong men to stand against that. He was one, he wanted Timothy to be one and certainly this became Scripture so that God might call us to be among those who take strong stands.

There are very few who do, to be honest with you. There are a lot of people who are Christians relatively. There are a lot of pastors and leaders but there seem to be few who want to get involved as stalwart soldiers with an uncompromising resolute commitment to stand against the tide that flows against the truth. There seem to be so few. And if you take strong stands and if you're a non-compromising resolute kind of defender of the faith, the enemies of the faith attack you but some within the faith who are weak can't understand what you're so exercised about. They don't even understand the nature of the spiritual warfare and they treat the real fighters as if they were off-balance fanatics.

Now Paul knew that Timothy was to be a key leader in the church and that it would fall on Timothy to be the general of the army that would defend the faith. Beloved, in every generation God has to have people like that who hold the line who call for the preservation of the truth to get it passed on to the next generation. And there's never been a generation that has more need for that kind of character than this one. We're so far down the path of the last days toward the coming of Christ that evil has escalated and we have accumulated so many aberrations that this is a time and a season for strong men and women to take strong stands for the truth. It's always been vital to the life of the church, never more so than it is now.

Now Paul was that kind of a fighter. In fact, the whole epistle of 2 Timothy is a call for Timothy to be loyal and defend the faith...there in Ephesus and anywhere and everywhere else he might find himself. And Paul reminds him repeatedly in this epistle of his own strong stand of how he stood and suffered and was persecuted and endured for his uncompromising character when it came to the Word of God. He wants Timothy to be strong. He wants Timothy to hold the line. He wants Timothy to guard sound doctrine. He says that to him in the first epistle and again in the second epistle. He

wants Timothy not to be influenced by the encroachment of false teaching. He wants Timothy not to be bought off or intimidated. He wants him to stand as a strong soldier against the attacks that come on the church.

In the first half of 2 Timothy he articulated the fact that taking a stand is going to mean suffering. In the second half, the part we're in right now, he says a great deal of that suffering comes because of the false teachers and the false doctrine in the church. As he moves now toward the end of the epistle in verses 10 to 17, he calls for Timothy to be strong. And then in chapter 4 he says in that strength, go out and preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season.

So as we look at verses 10 to 17, Paul's focus here is on Timothy being strong and loyal as a defender of the faith. And what he does here implicit in this passage is give to Timothy and to us the three necessary ingredients in the character of a strong soldier of the faith. Okay? If a person is to be a strong soldier of the faith, there are three things that are usually true about them. Number one, they have a strong example as a mentor. Strong men tend to be the producers of other strong men. To reverse it, strong men tend to be the product of other strong men. And what Paul wants Timothy to recognize and us as well, is that Timothy has had a pattern of a strong man on which to trace his own life. That is vital to the building of a strong man.

The second thing he says in this text is that the kind of men who stand true in an uncompromising way for the faith not only have a strong example as mentor but secondly, they have strong convictions built into their spiritual foundation. They have convictions built in to their spiritual foundation. Paul will refer not only to his own input into Timothy's life but the input of Timothy's mother and Timothy's grandmother which were all a part of building the strong foundation that gave him strong convictions that really are the reason why men stand strong.

And then thirdly, those who are the strong soldiers who defend the faith have a strong confidence in Scripture. They understand that Scripture is inspired by God and profitable and can make the man of God adequate, fully outfitted for every good work.

Those are the three ingredients to tend to build strong men...a strong pattern to follow, a strong spiritual foundation and a strong confidence in the Word of God. We're going to be looking at those over the next couple of weeks. We'll also digress a bit when we get to verses 16 and 17 and I may prepare a message or two on the inspiration of Scripture so that we can understand fully what it means when it says "All Scripture is inspired by God."

Now what is Paul saying to Timothy? Timothy, you're going to have to be a general in the spiritual army. In other words, you've got to stem the tide, fight the battle, lead the troops. You have what it takes. You have had a strong spiritual example in me. You have had a strong set of convictions developed in your spiritual foundation by your mother, your grandmother and by me. And you understand by personal experience the tremendous sufficiency and authority of God's Word. When those things are part of your life, there is much to commend you to be a general, as it were, in the army that defends the faith. Let me say again, there are a lot of pastors, there are a lot of Christian leaders, there are a lot of good Christian lay people in the church but they're not many warriors for the truth who guard right doctrine, who cry out for uncompromising holiness. They are few and far between, certainly in this generation. And yet the church desperately needs them if we are to pass on a legacy of truth and conviction to the generation to follow.

Now for our time this morning I just want to look at the first point, verses 10 through 13, that tells us that strong defenders of the faith usually are produced by strong examples as their spiritual mentor. Verse 10, "But you followed my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecutions and my sufferings such has happened to me in Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me and indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, but evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Now the key thing that I want you to note there and underline, two words in verse 10, "you followed...you followed." And I want to expand on that as the major concept and thrust in this particular text. Timothy had a tremendous spiritual example, the epitome of patterns to trace your life on was Timothy's pattern, namely the Apostle Paul. And as I said, uncompromising champions of the truth usually have learned that at the feet of a stalwart defender of the faith. That was Timothy's case. Paul himself was the model. You followed...and then Paul lists all those things about himself that Timothy followed. You patterned your life after me. You followed the demonstration of uncompromising loyalty that was true of my life and you set your life in that same pattern. You saw that I suffered and that didn't deter me. You saw that I was persecuted and that didn't deflect my goal. You saw that I made the commitment whatever the price, you have had that pattern for your pattern. And several times in 2 Timothy he says you've got to suffer like I suffered, you've got to endure like I endured, you have to expect persecution like I got it...that's the pattern. You've seen it, you've followed it, you've traced your life on it, you know what it means to have a strong example.

And let me say just in a general sense before we look specifically at the passage, I am absolutely convinced that this is a tremendously important point. We are all copiers, we are all mimics, we are all imitators and who you pattern your life after is going to be who you turn out to be in great measure. You are marked by your models. You are marked by your mentors. You are marked by the patterns you choose to follow...your heroes, your examples mark you. That's why I tell young people all the time, it's so important whose ministry you sit under, what school you go to, particularly what seminary you go to because the people who influence your life will do that. They will mark you. They will mark you with their set of convictions, with their perceptions and perspectives. If Timothy is to be loyal and strong against apostasy, if he is to stand against heresy and all attacks on the church then he is going to be able to do that if he has learned to do that by patterning his life after someone who is like that. That's the challenge.

And Paul is concerned with Timothy's loyalty. And he is concerned that Timothy make the most of his privilege of having been patterned after the Apostle Paul himself.

Now in verses 1 to 9 as you remember, there is a blistering exposure and indictment of the false teachers who teach error and live in ungodly ways and how masquerade as if they belong to the church. But in contrast to that, coming to verse 10, Paul says, "But you," and that's in the emphatic position in the original language, "But you," on the other hand, in contrast to all the deceitful false teachers and wicked men, "You followed," and we'll just put the word "me" in there to sum up everything Paul says in verses 10 and 11. You had a pattern to follow to make you different. "You" is emphatic, pointing out that Timothy has had a very distinct training.

Let me talk a little about the word "followed," it's very important. It's not just a simple word that means to follow in some generic sense. It's a rich word that has some profound insight,

parakolouthen(?) literally is to follow alongside. That's simply its literal meaning. But as you see how it's used in ancient times, it begins to open up in incredible ways. For example, the Stoic philosophers used the word as a technical term for the relationship between a disciple and his master, a student and his teacher, a very close relationship was expressed in this term. You followed not from afar, not at a distance, but you followed in an intimate relationship as a master and a disciple are connected. Some have translated it, for example, like this, "to study at close quarters," or "to carefully note with a view to reproducing," or "to take as an example." So let's take that middle meaning and read it this way, "But you carefully noted my life with a view to reproducing it." That's the essence of the word. You patterned after me. You began to think like I think, talk like I talk, walk like I walk, react like I react. You patterned your life after me.

It was Paul the Apostle and Timothy the disciple, Paul the father and Timothy the child, Paul the leader and Timothy the companion, Paul the head and Timothy the associate, Paul the leader and Timothy the follower, Paul the example and the friend. That's the way it went, Timothy the submissive learner and servant. Timothy was ever at his side, always at his side learning, learning, learning to imbibe the spirit of an uncompromising defender of the faith. There has never lived a greater defender of the faith than Paul. And Timothy had an inestimable privilege that none of us will ever have, to walk alongside that incredible man.

The aorist tense is used here which sums up all of Timothy's experience. You followed from the beginning of our time together to the present time you patterned your life after me. And, beloved, I want you to know that that is part of the necessary ingredients in a person who is a champion of the faith. You look for someone who has had a pattern to follow like that. And this really summarizes the whole of Timothy's experience. So much was Timothy in one sense a clone of the Apostle Paul that in 1 Corinthians 4, Paul...of course...is very upset with the Corinthian church and he says to them, "I exhort you therefore be imitators of me," verse 16. You need to pattern your life after me. Then he says, "For this reason, because I want you to be like me I have sent to you Timothy." Now if Paul wanted them to be like him, why did he send Timothy? He says, "Because he will remind you of my ways." He was a clone of Paul. He was a stalwart, he was strong. He was courageous. He had had that exposure and that opportunity. And yes he had moments when he was weak and when he struggled and when he vacillated and so did Paul. But nonetheless the pattern for that young man's life was this strong resolute uncompromising man of God, the Apostle Paul. And that kind of patterning tends to produce the same kind of person. And if you want to be that kind of person, you need to be with those kinds of people because they will mark you with their life. They'll mark you with their convictions.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the word "my," you have followed my teaching. I read it to you a few moments ago and you probably noted that even though it wasn't in your text I read the word "my," the possessive pronoun my, before everyone of those things in that list. Why? Because that's what the Greek calls for. In each case there is a definite article, the possessive pronoun at the beginning and then the definite article before each one of those qualities indicates that the repetition of the possessive pronoun is called for. And so it should be emphasized this way...my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my perseverance, my persecutions and my sufferings, such has happened to me. And what he's emphasizing is you patterned your life after me, you did what I did in this point, this point, this point, this point, this point.

Now sometimes you hear people say, "Oh man, that guy is just another clone of So-and-so." That's right. There's nothing wrong with that. Paul, as I read a moment again in 1 Corinthians 4:16, said to

the whole Corinthian church, "Be imitators of me," that is to be expected, we will imitate somebody or somebodies, we might as well imitate people worthy to be imitated. It is not wrong to be a reproduction if you are a reproduction of the right person. And that was the case with Timothy. He had followed all those attributes of Paul. He was the pattern.

And, beloved, again I say this is what makes for strong spiritual leaders. They have to have strong spiritual leaders as patterns and models. That's been our goal in the church, that's our goal at the college, our goal at the seminary is to provide that kind of strong leadership so that we produce not just nice Christian people but defenders of the faith, defenders of the truth who are willing to live in dangerous times and at any cost hold up the banner of God's divine revelation.

Now we could divide this list, Paul loves lists and every time you come across a list of Paul it's helpful if you can kind of divide it up and get the flow of this thought, and there are really three areas in this list that Paul covers. And he says you have followed me in all these three areas. The first one is ministry duty...ministry duty. And that's the first place where you learn how to pattern your life after someone. How do they carry on their ministry? He divides his ministry duty into two things...teaching and conduct. You have followed my teaching, my conduct. Teaching, didaskalia simply means what it says, doctrine, teaching, divine truth, the basis of everything. He says, "Timothy, you followed my teaching of truth, you followed my instruction, God's revelation. You followed apostolic doctrine, you followed my doctrine. In chapter 2 verse 2, "The things you heard from me in the presence of many witnesses you are to pass on to someone else." You learned from me, someone else needs to learn from you. The passing on of the apostolic doctrine was vital.

So Paul had learned and imitated...rather Timothy had learned and imitated Paul, first of all, in the area of ministry duty with regard to teaching. He had learned and followed Paul's doctrine. When he taught, he taught what Paul had taught him. That's what he was to do. The things you heard from me, teach faithful men and so they'll teach others also and will keep passing down the unmitigated, unaltered truth. That was absolutely vital.

In chapter 4 he says to him in verse 2, "Preach the Word...preach the Word. The time is coming...verse 3...when they won't endure sound doctrine but you preach it. Pass it on just as you have received it." That was vital.

It's so important to have the right mentor because at the bottom line of that teaching process is the content. I say this so often to people, be careful who you listen to, be careful what you read, be careful who you learn from because that all goes in to the foundation of what you assume to be truth. You must be very cautious with what you expose your mind to. And what a privilege to have had the Apostle Paul whose teaching was not only true but it was inspired teaching. Timothy had a tremendous privilege...so important to have the right teacher. It does no one good service to sit under people teaching error, to listen to people teaching lies, to be exposed to things that aren't true, rather to follow that which is true, the Word of God. So Timothy then followed Paul in the area of his ministerial duties by teaching the very things that Paul had taught him, he followed that pattern.

Secondly, he followed Paul not only in teaching but in conduct. That word agoge means manner of life, pattern of behavior, life style. It's a simple word used only here in the New Testament, but it has to do with your daily living. Now what was wonderful about Paul, and this is a good good thought to keep in mind, what was wonderful about Paul was that his doctrine was in perfect harmony with his living. And that has such tremendous integrity that it has an overwhelming impact on someone.

When you live what you teach, you have a powerful influence. And here was a man who taught truth and lived truth consistently. That is great integrity. Timothy followed the pattern of ministry.

Now ministry in its simplest way can be described in these two things...your ministry is what you teach and how you live. Those are the duties of ministry...to teach truth and live truth, to teach what is right and live what is right. And Timothy followed Paul. He knew the pattern of how to teach truth and how to live truth. Those basic duties of ministry Timothy followed. And those things are essential in the patterning process. What any of us in leadership communicate to people first and foremost is what we teach and the way we live. And if there is disparity and inconsistency, there is tremendous confusion and chaos, loss of integrity is tragic.

So the bottom-line ministerial duty, the bottom-line duty in spiritual mentoring, if we can use that term, is to make sure your teaching and your living are consistent. Paul did that in front of Timothy, Timothy was doing that in front of others. He learned to follow the pattern of Paul with regard to consistency and integrity in his doctrine and in his duty.

Secondly, a second category that Paul deals with here in his list, not only did Timothy follow the pattern of ministry duty but of personal quality, secondly, personal qualities. Look again at verse 10, he says, "You also followed my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love," those four things. You followed in my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, those are personal character qualities. You patterned your life after me.

Now let me show you what he means by this. Purpose, that's the first quality to start with...motive. What's in your heart? What's the purpose? Boy, I'm telling you, this is what dictates a man's life...what is the driving passion of his heart. The word purpose means that. The inner motive, the driving passion, the consuming desire of his heart...what was it for Paul? I'll tell you what it was, 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verses 16 to 18, "Woe is unto me if I...what?...preach not the gospel." Acts chapter 20, "I do not count my life dear unto myself, I want to finish the ministry Christ gave to me," he says in Acts chapter 20. "I have not failed to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." "My hands...as it were...are clean from any blood, I have discharged my responsibility to proclaim Christ, teach God's Word."

He was even willing to be judged by God. In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 he says in verse 3, "To me it's a very small thing that I would be examined by you or by any human court, in fact I don't even examine myself, the one who examines me is the Lord." In other words, I will let God judge my motive in the day when the secret things of the heart are revealed, he says in verse 5. This man was a driven man. He had a deep-seated pre-meditated motive to spend his entire life proclaiming God's truth without compromise, without deflection. He was resolute, he was unwavering. He was single minded in his commitment.

Now this is the thing that I want you to understand. That is the driving force from within that creates a life of truth and duty. When you look at a person and you see great spiritual integrity, you see a person who teaches truth and lives truth, you can know they're driven by a great internal purpose, to be to the glory of God, the honor of God, to do the thing that God has gifted, called, commissioned them to do. And it didn't matter to Paul about creature comforts, "For to me to live is Christ, to die is...what?...gain," Philippians 1. "Far better to depart and be with Christ." With Paul he didn't care what happened to him. They kept telling him, as I mentioned a moment ago in Acts 20, they kept telling him he was going to get in trouble when he went to Jerusalem. He said, "None of these things

move me because I do not consider my life dear to myself." I'm not in this deal for self-preservation, I'm not in it for self-promotion, I'm not in it for self-comfort. I have this compelling duty to fulfill. That's my purpose.

He says, "Timothy, you followed my purpose. You patterned your life after me." Timothy must have been a driven man, a consumed man, a passionate man, a man who was bent on accomplishing the purposes of God. Tremendous character quality that he learned from Paul.

Now what kind of people does it take to be defenders of the faith? Those who have that driving purpose for sure. And they've caught it from someone they've been patterning their life after.

The second thing he mentions in verse 10 is faith...my faith. It could be that he means here faith in God, that would certainly be a fair translation of pistis, it could mean that. It also could mean faithfulness or trustworthiness. The same term would be translated that way and usually in lists that Paul makes like Galatians 5, the list there, 1 Timothy 2:15, 1 Timothy 4:12, in the list it seems best to translate it faithfulness. So he may be saying you have followed my consummate faith and trust in God or you have followed my faithfulness, loyalty, trustworthiness with regard to the truth. In either case what he is saying is I never compromised, I never wavered in my trust toward God and I never wavered in my loyalty to His Word and His calling. You followed my faith, you followed my faithfulness. That's a tremendous thought. Faith begets faithfulness, if you really trust God you'll be faithful to His Word and His will.

He stayed true to the purpose. So he says you followed my purpose and that meant you followed my faith and faithfulness, you stayed true to it because you were driven by that purpose. And even when things don't go right, he says, you followed my patience, makrothumia. What is that? That is the spirit that endures persecution from people. The steadfast spirit that never gives up and never gives in. It means patience with people even persecuting people.

So he says, "Timothy, you followed my purpose, that resolute uncompromising devotion to do the duty God had given you, to preach Christ, exalt His name, extend His Kingdom with no thought for comfort, no thought for personal success, you did it, you were committed to doing it. Your faith never wavered, your faithfulness and loyalty was exemplary and even when persecution came you endured that, you took it, you were patient with people, even to people who persecuted you. Then he adds a fourth characteristic, my love you followed. You loved, you loved God in it all, you never lost your love for Him. You loved the church that's why you were willing to do it and you loved the lost and you loved even your enemies who persecuted you. We can take love and stretch it at the most magnanimous point here, the agapevolitional love of Paul was evident in every dimension. He loved God unwaveringly. He loved the world so much that his heart broke when he saw a city given to idolatry. He loved the church so much that he gave his life on their behalf. And he loved even his enemies, even his enemies to the point where his desire for those who persecuted him was salvation. He had love in its widest broadest sense.

Now do you see the flow of qualities? When a man has a driving purpose to fulfill God's will he will be faithful to that purpose. Faithful to that purpose even though he is persecuted and hated by those around him. And even though being persecuted and hated, never moves away from loving God, loving the church, loving the lost and loving even the persecutors. Virtue upon virtue marks out the greatness of the heart of Paul. And Timothy followed that. He patterned his life after that. Timothy had all the ingredients here to be a strong defender of the faith because of the pattern he was

following. He learned to have a great purpose. He learned to be faithful to that purpose. He learned to be patient even with those who tested his patience. And he learned to love even his persecutors.

So he followed Paul in his ministry duties and he followed Paul in his personal qualities. Thirdly, he followed Paul in his difficult experiences. He was even made stronger because he went through some of the same difficult things that Paul went through. You followed not only these things, but look at the end of verse 10, you followed my perseverance, persecutions and sufferings. The ones that happened to me like those at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, what persecutions I endured and out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Now Paul went through some very difficult experiences and Timothy understood that. He saw that. He learned from that. He benefited from that. The word "perseverance," hupomoneme means patience with circumstances, not patience with people like the other word, makrothumi but patience with circumstances. Paul had some circumstances with which he showed his true spiritual character, times in jail, a thorn in the flesh given to him by Satan but God wanted him to have it because it made him humble and in his humility God gave him strength. There were circumstances in his life, not just people, but circumstances that he had to demonstrate patience with. He had to remain under, which is what the word means, without compromising. He never compromised when he was having to be patient with people and he never compromised when he was having to be patient with circumstances. He had that virtue, that indomitable spirit never gives up, never gives in. People can't take it away, circumstances can't take it away, it's resolute, persevering, enduring. Timothy caught that virtue. He patterned his life after that. He learned that ability to endure negative circumstances, to live under it no matter how difficult. And he learned it from Paul.

And then he says you also followed my persecutions. That word, diogmos from dioko, to pursue, means persecution is defined here as pursuit, people who wanted his life, plots. He says in Acts 20 the Jews were always lying in wait to kill him, plotting against him, plot after plot after plot to take the life of the Apostle Paul. It was a way of life, absolutely constant persecution. He writes about it in 1 Timothy, he writes about it in 2 Timothy, the hardships that he had to endure, the suffering, the persecution. Timothy saw that. Timothy patterned his life after that. By the way, Timothy was even there during some of those times, even going through it with the Apostle Paul such as in Acts 17, he saw what was going on in that situation. Acts 17, two verses 13 and 14, "But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the Word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, there came there likewise agitating...they came there likewise agitating and stirring up the crowds and then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea and Silas and Timothy remained there." Timothy was there when the persecution was hot on many occasions such as that one.

So he says you were there during my difficult experiences. You've learned from me ministry duty. You've learned from me personal quality. You've learned from me difficult circumstances and how to face them. And then he adds the word "my sufferings." Sometimes the persecution actually became suffering. That was routine for Paul. The word used here has in it the root of the idea of pathos, suffering, sorrow. Sometimes Paul really got it. It wasn't just persecution coming at him, it hit him...it hit him and it hit him hard. He suffered in his own body, "I bear in my body the marks of Christ," he said. It happened not just once but a myriad of times. In 2 Corinthians you look at chapter 11 verse 23 and Paul says, "I have been in far more labors and far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers

from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren. I have been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights in hunger and thirst, often without food and cold and exposure."

I mean, this is a chronicle of his life...routine stuff, sufferings that dear Apostle went through for the sake of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. He says in 2 Corinthians 1:6, "If we're afflicted it's for your comfort and salvation. If we're comforted, it's for your comfort which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer." We suffer for you. We suffer for the gospel. We suffer to get the message out.

So Paul reminds Timothy of sufferings and says, "Timothy, you know, you've been there, you've endured them, you've learned how to handle them with me." So he says you have followed in verse 11, all of these ending up with persecutions and sufferings such has happened to me. And then he reaches back at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. Why? Let me tell you something. Why does he go back there? Because those three cities were in the province of Galatia and that was Timothy's home province. Lystra was Timothy's home town. Now that is also the first place where there was recorded hostility against Paul. So he's simply going back to the beginning. And he says, "Such has happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra." And that's where the persecution began on his first missionary journey, that's the first record of persecutions coming against the Apostle Paul.

In Acts 13, look at it for just a moment, we'll see a little bit of insight, tremendous insight into what happened. It says in verse 14 that they arrived at Antioch and on the Sabbath day went to the synagogue, sat down after the reading of the law and the prophets, the synagogue official sent to them saying, Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it. So here is Paul, he's a guest in the synagogue. He's obviously a teacher from the Jews. So they read the Scripture and they say...All right, we've got a guest rabbi, you stand up, you have something to say, say it. So he stands up and says what he has to say and what he has to say is about the Messiah Jesus. And so here he is in a Jewish synagogue preaching the gospel. And what happens as a result, verse 42, "Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. And when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Jews and the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas who speaking to them were urging them to continue in the grace of God. And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the Word of God but when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy, began contradicting the things spoken by Paul and they were blaspheming."

Drop down to verse 50, "The Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district." Now this was the beginning. This was in Galatia, the province where Timothy's home town existed. So Timothy knew about this. This is way back to the early days, to the very spiritual roots of Timothy in terms of his experience with Paul.

Then Paul went to Iconium, chapter 14 says, they came into Iconium, they entered the synagogue of the Jews together, spoke in such a manner that a great multitude believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered them against the brethren. And again you have this tremendous hostility. Verse 5, an attempt was made by the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers to mistreat and stone them. So they couldn't stay in Antioch and now they can't stay in Iconium, so they head to Lystra. They come to Lystra in verse 8. Paul heals a man there, a miraculous healing of a cripple. The people don't like that. The response to

that is that they stone Paul, verse 19, drag him out of the city supposing that he is dead, they throw him on the dump heap in Lystra.

Now that, no doubt, was Timothy's first meeting with Paul. He sees him heal this man. He hears him preach. He sees him stoned and thrown on the dump. Tremendously powerful impressions on young Timothy. This is his first understanding of Paul. Now even though these events happened before Paul takes Timothy with him, before chapter 16 where Paul links up with Timothy, certainly Timothy was aware of these events...if for no other reason Paul no doubt filled him in on all the details. So Timothy's first impression of Paul was as a man of tremendous courage, a man of tremendous resolution, uncompromising character who would give his life in the proclamation of the gospel. That was Timothy's first impression of Paul. What a tremendous legacy...what a tremendous legacy.

He experienced Paul's first sufferings vicariously and must have thought, "What a man...what an incredible man...what a strong man...what a courageous man!" And it's Paul's way of saying, "Timothy, you remember when in Lystra I was stoned. You can recall the kind of suffering I experienced from the start of your Christian life. You know what it's been like all along and you've learned how to respond to that. You followed that kind of pattern. You know what it is to be courageous."

Some Bible commentators have wondered why does Paul go back and rehearse these things that happened even before Timothy began. He does it because those are Timothy's roots and those would have been the first persecutions of Paul that Timothy would have known about. And from then it was one long long list of which he sums them up in the statement, "What persecutions I endured!" Affirming I've been through all of them imaginable, severe, bitter, difficult, life-threatening sufferings. And Timothy was there in some of them and vicariously there in all of them. So Paul reminds him of that.

And then I love the way he closes, verse 11, "And out of them all the Lord delivered me." Out of them all the Lord delivered me. You know that too, Timothy. You know the Lord preserved me out of them all. And he quotes really from Psalm 34:19, that's again his Old Testament background leaking through. Psalm 34:19, "But many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers him out of them all." He almost quotes it verbatim. The Lord delivered him out of all of his trials, but isn't that what God promised to do? In 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 3, he says, "We have been destined for affliction, for indeed when we were with you we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction and so it came to pass, as you know." It was a part of his life. It was a way of life. Timothy was there, he saw it, he learned it. But he also learned that out of all of them the Lord delivered him. That word delivered means to drag or rescue. God provided the rescue.

So what is Paul saying? He's saying, "Timothy, you have had a pattern to follow. You have a strong mentor relationship. You know the quality of life it takes. You know the ministry duties required. You know the inevitability of spiritual persecution and difficulty. You have had the ingredients to be a strong strong defender of the faith.

Then in verse 12 he adds that Timothy shouldn't be surprised by any of the persecution. Indeed, he says, it's a fact, it's really true that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. And the reason is because evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Timothy, it's never going to end. Timothy, it's not going to end for me until I'm gone. It's not going to end for you until you're gone. It's not going to end for the church until the church is gone. It's

just the way it is.

All believers should anticipate this difficulty. You've learned how to deal with it. You've patterned your life after one who endured more than most will ever know. And you know how to handle it. And you know how to endure it, with patience and also you know that God delivers you out of it. You've had tremendous training by virtue of the pattern of my own life, Paul says. And don't be surprised, he says, for the future because all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. There's no other way. That's how it has to be.

Now let me take that statement apart for just a moment. All will be persecuted. All Christians? No, not all Christians, all who desire to live godly. If you're a disobedient, weak, uninvolved, unconcerned, apathetic, inconsequential Christian, you may never be persecuted. You're not a problem. Satan's not going to waste his time with you, you're not doing anything.

But if you desire to live godly, the "who desire" there is literally a participle, the willing ones, the ones willing to live godly, not that you're going to be perfect but that's your cry, that's your desire. If you desire to live godly, you're going to get persecuted. But there's another qualifier here. Not even all those who desire to live godly will be persecuted but all those who desire to live godly in...whom?...Christ Jesus.

You know something? There are all kinds of religions people are trying to live up to. They want to be religious. They want to be reverent. They want to be godly as they understand that. But they can't be. They're not going to be able to be godly genuinely apart from Christ. And by the way, if all you want is to be godly and you're not concerned about Jesus Christ, you may never get persecuted either because you're no threat to the system, you're in the system. Yours is paganism. And paganism doesn't persecute paganism usually, although sometimes the demons get a bit confused about that.

But the point is, "all" qualifies itself, "who desires to live godly," qualifies itself, "in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Because when you desire to live godly by virtue of your union with Christ Jesus, then you are a threat to the system and you are a threat to the kingdom of darkness and you will be persecuted. That's a future passive, you will be persecuted. That's a guarantee, that's a promise.

So if you look at your life and you're not having a lot of persecution, maybe you haven't got a compassion for being godly. Maybe you're not desiring to be godly or maybe you're not in Christ Jesus. Now it doesn't mean you're going to be persecuted all the time at the maximum level, there will be varying times and seasons and varying degrees of persecution, but anyone who seeks to confront an ungodly society with a godly life in Christ Jesus is going to get some negative reaction. There will be hostility. Jesus said in John 15, "If they hated Me they'll hate you. In this world you shall have tribulation. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The Sermon on the Mount, all the way back when Jesus was first articulating the principles of salvation, "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, persecute you, say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of me, rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Count it a joy to be persecuted. They put you in good company. And the world will react to a godly life, they have to.

The persecution is going to come, Timothy...he says...you ought to be ready for it, you've had a pattern to follow, you know how to handle it. It's going to come on you and it's going to come on

everybody who seeks to live godly in Christ Jesus during these last days. Why? Verse 13, "Because evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."

By the way, the evil men and impostors are the group described in verses 1 to 8. Verses 2 to 4 describes their evil. Verses 5 to 8 describes their impostoring. They are evil. That's poneros, it's used of Satan in Matthew 13:19, they're as malicious and wicked as he is. And then the second word translated here as "impostors" is translated many ways in Greek writing...diviners, wizards, magicians, sorcerers, swindlers, cheaters. It refers to the crafty tricky deceitful people like Jannes and Jambres in verse 8 who tried to deceive the people with their tricks into believing that what Moses was doing was not of God. These are the oppressors of the church. And because there will always be the wicked and the fakes and the frauds and the charlatans and the phonies and the swindlers, there's always going to be the persecution. And it says, please note this, they proceed from bad to worse. They advance toward the worse. Verse 9 says their work doesn't advance, it's limited. It won't progress where they'd like it to, God puts a boundary on their work. They'll not destroy His work. But internally they get worse and worse and their influence gets worse and worse.

Now Bible scholars debate over this idea of proceeding from bad to worse. Does this mean the evil men and the impostors internally get worse and worse or does it mean that cumulatively their effect gets worse and worse? And I take it that the answer is yes to both of those. The future tense means that in the future they are going to degenerate internally and they're going to have a degenerating deteriorating impact externally. Evil men get worse and worse and worse internally. Why? Because as they continue to live evil lives, the evil accumulating adds a degenerating element to their existence. You know what I'm saying? A 20-year-old wicked seducer isn't nearly as vile as a 70-year-old wicked seducer. Why? Because the constant compounding of that wickedness degenerates his own heart down down and down. But on the outside it is also true that the more wicked the men are, the more wicked the influence they have is. So there is an internal and an external accumulating vileness expressed here. And because men are getting more and more wicked, they're getting more and more hostile. And because the environment is more and more influenced by their wickedness, the environment gets more and more hostile. So the longer we go toward the Second Coming of Christ, the more the mystery of iniquity unfolds and the worse it gets. The godly are suffering through this church age and their suffering will escalate even until the terrible suffering that comes toward the end because evil men are getting worse internally and collectively their impact is worse externally.

And then he says of them they are deceiving, that's what they're trying to do, impostors misleading, deluding, leading people astray. And at the same time being deceived because their own sin, their own wretchedness blinds their own minds. Their own increasing evil makes them self-deceived and deceivers of others.

These are dangerous times...dangerous times. The closer we come to the time of our Lord's return, the worse men get. And the worse their influence gets and the accumulation of all the lies and false teaching mounts and escalates and we're in dangerous times. And dangerous times call for strong people.

What kind of people is it going to take to stem the tide, to stand against it? Great champions for the truth. And what are the ingredients that make people strong? First ingredient, they have strong mentors to follow as their spiritual models. And so what I can say to you as we draw this to a conclusion, beloved, is make sure that you're patterning your life after spiritually strong people who with uncompromising resolution stand as defenders of God's truth. And some people will criticize

you. In fact, they may criticize you somewhat relentlessly not only outside the church but even inside the church, but you know that the call of God is on the church to defend the faith, to guard the faith, to hold the treasure to pass it on to the next generation. And we live in a day when the church is sloppy in its self-defense, sloppy in its ability to stand against the tide of false teaching. It is not discerning. In some cases it doesn't even care to be discerning. It just opens its mind to every kind of thing and the church has a soft belly in which Satan can plunge the knife and bring about a severe wound. We need strong men, strong women who defend the faith who are discerning and resolute and uncompromising. And Paul says, "Timothy, you've got it going for you because you patterned your life after me." What a tremendous privilege. Well let's bow in prayer.

Father, much more to say and much more to learn in this great passage. Help us to grasp what it is Your Spirit has said to us this morning about the need for spiritual strength. We pray for the Savior's sake. Amen.

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