

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 4, 2023 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



*“<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. <sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” -2 Timothy 3:10-15 (NKJV)*

For some 2 Timothy may nothing more than a continuation where 1 Timothy leaves off. But as you can see, it is so much more. The book is the Apostle Paul’s “Swan Song,” his warning shot, his encouragement in the face of great opposition and obstacle. It is so practical and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians and the church... a needed word for what we face in our day.

## **Fast Facts 2 Timothy**

- (1) Author: Paul**
- (2) Recipient: Timothy**
- (3) Date: AD 64-67**
- (4) Place: Written from a prison cell in Rome**
- (5) Destination: Ephesus (*Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus*)**
- (6) Incident: Paul’s imprisonment and pending death**
- (7) Purpose: To encourage Timothy in the face of persecution and apostasy**

## **Some Key Characteristics of 2 Timothy:**

- (1) 2 Timothy is Paul’s last will and testimony** – In our study we are referring to it as Paul’s “Swan Song.” The deathbed statement of any individual has an importance which

is not attached to other remarks. This is what lends significance to 2 Timothy. It is the final communication of Paul. It has a note of sadness which is not detected in his other epistles. Nevertheless, there is the overtone of triumph... *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,”* written by Paul as his own epitaph (2 Tim. 4:7). Also, because this was his last letter, Paul was very personal. In these four short chapters, there are approximately twenty–five references to individuals.

- (2) **2 Timothy is Paul’s warning of coming times of apostasy** - In this little book of 2 Timothy an ominous dark cloud is seen on the horizon. It is the coming apostasy. Today apostasy has broken like a storm, like a Texas tornado, on the world and in the church. What do we mean by apostasy? Webster defines apostasy as “total desertion of the principles of faith.” So apostasy is not due to ignorance; it is a heresy. Apostasy is deliberate error. It is intentional departure from the faith. An apostate is one who knows the truths of the gospel and the doctrines of the faith, but has repudiated them.
- (3) **2 Timothy speaks of the ultimate outcome of gospel preaching** - The final fruition will not be the total conversion of mankind, nor will it usher in the Millennium. On the contrary, some will believe and for some there will come about a great turning away, not unlike what we are seeing today... even a watering down, compromise, and total perversion of the gospel. Don’t think that what we see going on today has caught God off guard. God wrote about it and warned us about in 2 Timothy.

### **READ: 2 Timothy 3:10-15**

*“<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. <sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” -2 Timothy 3:10-15 (NKJV)*

Robert Porteous and his wife were missionaries in China who were imprisoned when the communists took over that country. Many times the order to execute them was given, but never carried out. One night, they were marched up a hill after dark. The executioner led the way, with his sword gleaming in the moonlight. When they reached the top, the Chinese prisoners were wailing with fear and writhing on the ground. But Pastor Porteous and his wife started thinking that in just a few minutes, they would enter the presence of their Savior. As the man with the sword came up behind them, they looked up to the starry night and began to sing, “Face to face I shall behold Him, far beyond the starry sky. Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by.” The guards turned to the Chinese prisoners and scolded

them, “The missionaries are not afraid to die.” Then they turned to Pastor Porteous and his wife and asked them to sing for them in Chinese. “All we know are Christian songs,” he replied. So they began to sing in Chinese, “The gate of heaven is open wide for me.” When they finished, the guards didn’t execute them. The man who related this story met Pastor Porteous when he was in his mid-nineties, sporting a white goatee and carrying his zither. He would ride the bus to a retirement home where he would sing to the residents, “to cheer them up.” Most of the residents were younger than he was! He finally went to meet His Lord in 1976. His church dedicated Psalm 34:1 to his memory, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.” (Related by Stan Jeter, in Luis Palau “Briefing,” Fall, 1982.)

All of us that know Christ would say, “I want to be as faithful unto death as Pastor Porteous was! Whether I die a martyr’s death or live to a ripe old age, I want to be faithful to my Lord and Savior, who gave Himself for me.” **But, as we know, spiritual faithfulness is not an automatic process.** When I see Christian leaders fall into terrible sins, bringing disgrace to the name of Christ, I realize that I am not invincible and pray, **“Lord, give me the grace to remain faithful to You, especially when there are strong temptations to compromise, whether in doctrine or morals.”**

### **IN YOUR OWN WORDS**

Answer the following questions “in your own words” or in your own opinion. There are not necessarily any right or wrong answers here but rather reflections of your own observations and thoughts on the matter of “faithfulness” in the life of a Christians.

***What does it mean to be “faithful” as a Christian?*** \_\_\_\_\_

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***Why do some struggle with being “faithful” as a Christian?*** \_\_\_\_\_

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***What are some things you believe may cause a Christian to not be “faithful” in their walk and life?*** \_\_\_\_\_

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God is very faithful to all of us, and it is by His faithfulness that we can continue living as His sons and daughters in this world. For our part, we should strive to be as faithful as we can be to Him who loves us. And although it is admittedly hard to do, given our weaknesses and limitations not to mention our hard-headedness and stubbornness at times, our own struggles with sin in our lives and the flesh, we can still be faithful to Him and cultivate a

walk and life that is pleasing. Here are some ways you can show your faithfulness to the Lord.

### **5 Ways to Show Faithfulness to the Lord:**

- (1) **Be unwavering in your faith and belief in Him** – No matter what happens, we must stay strong and immovable in our faith and belief in Him who made us, saved us, and called us His very own. It is best that we establish ourselves in the truth of God's Word and choose to believe who He is and what He has said no matter what trials, deceptions and challenges we might face. Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, “But he who endures to the end shall be saved.” And Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:58 challenge us at this point... Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”
- (2) **Separate yourself from the world’s thought patterns and practices** – Paul says in Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Being a believer/Christian and therefore a citizen of heaven, we must set our mind on things above, on the very things of heaven. Study the Word and find out what pleases the Lord, and do them. As Paul said it we are not be conformed any longer to the pattern of the world but are to separate ourselves for the world’s through patters and practices. Listen to Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18... just listen, “<sup>14</sup>Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? <sup>15</sup>And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ <sup>17</sup>Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.’ <sup>18</sup>‘I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.’”
- (3) **Choose to do what is right all the time** – Even if it hurts, choose to do what is right and God-pleasing all the time. When we are faced with making decisions, choose the one that's not sinful and is pleasing to God, even if it means being ridiculed and made fun of. Remember, the Lord Jesus Himself was persecuted, and this means that we should be prepared and willing to face some too. Listen to Jesus words to you in Matthew 10:22-33, “<sup>22</sup>And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. <sup>23</sup>When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. <sup>24</sup>“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. <sup>25</sup>It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! <sup>26</sup>Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be

revealed, and hidden that will not be known. <sup>27</sup>“Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. <sup>28</sup>And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. <sup>30</sup>But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup>Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. <sup>32</sup>“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>33</sup>But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

- (4) **Obey what God says in His Word** – The Lord Jesus said that if you love Him, then you should do what He says. **John 14:15** says it, *“If you love Me, keep my commandments.”* Loving God with our mouths alone is like saying your wedding vow today then divorcing them the next day – your vows carried no weight... they meant nothing. It is not enough to profess the you are a Christian with your lips if your life and how you live doesn’t back it up. If you have been truly saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, you will love Him and do what he says. . You have to show your love to Jesus by obeying His commands, which according to Him, is light. In **Matthew 11:28-30** Jesus invites us to come to Him and take up the yoke of obedience to His Word, *“<sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*
- (5) **Love your neighbor in obedience to God** - The Lord Jesus said in **Matthew 25:40**, *“And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’”* God is watching over our lives and He sees how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as those who are not of the flock just yet. He sees all our actions, and because He loves everyone in the world (see John 3:16), it matters to Him that we love our neighbours, too.

Those are just some ways we can practice faithfulness spiritually, but the challenge and struggle to life and walk in that day in an day is can be challenging for the best Christians. Given the world we live in and it drag on our lives as believers at time, and given the enemy (the devil) is at constant work seeking to deceive, discourage and drag us away from our faith, and given our own flesh that constantly seeks to have its own way over God’s way staying faithful spiritual can be a daunting task at times.

In our passage... after describing the false teachers who hold to a form of religion, but deny its power (3:1-9), in our text Paul again exhorts Timothy to remain faithful, even though tough times are ahead and persecution threatens. He reminds Timothy of his own example, which Timothy has observed for many years now. Paul was not boasting in himself, but rather was saying, *“Timothy, my life is open to you. You know my life and my teaching. You’ve seen me under persecution of the worst sort, including being stoned and left for dead in your home town of Lystra. You’ve seen me go through imprisonment, beatings,*



shipwreck, and other hardships. You know that my life backs up my message, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. So after I'm gone, remember my example and continue in it yourself." His message in 3:10-15 may be summed up:

*Spiritual faithfulness is not automatic, but requires recognizing and following godly examples who follow the Scriptures.*

## **2 Requirements to Recognize for Spiritual Faithfulness in Your Christian Life:**

- (1) **Spiritual faithfulness in the past is not an automatic guarantee of faithfulness in the future**
- (2) **Spiritual faithfulness in the future requires recognizing and following godly examples who follow the Scriptures**

Let's look at each of these more deeply in Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10-15...

## **SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS IN THE PAST IS NOT AN AUTOMATIC GUARANTEE OF FAITHFULNESS IN THE FUTURE**

These verses fall into two sections, marked out in the Greek text by two identical phrases (3:10, 14) that should be translated identically, "But you," or, "You, however...."

### **2 Identical Phrases in 2 Timothy 3:10-15:**

- (1) **2 Timothy 3:10 =** *"<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance."* - In 3:10, Paul draws a contrast between the character of the evil men in 3:1-9 and Timothy's faithfulness up to this point.
- (2) **2 Timothy 3:14 =** *"<sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them."* - In 3:14, the contrast is between the evil men and impostors in 3:13 and Timothy's needed faithfulness in the future.

Even though Timothy had followed Paul's teaching and example thus far, Paul felt it necessary to exhort him to continue doing so in the future, especially when he encountered persecution, as he surely would (3:12). In other words, past faithfulness does not automatically guarantee future faithfulness. The lives of these evil men that Paul has been describing (3:1-9, 13) serve as a warning.

### **Remember these characteristics of these men from our last study:**

- (1) **They were not atheists, pagan, or outwardly opposed to religion -**
- (2) **They were likely professing Christians who had made a profession of faith in their life -**
- (3) **They had probably been leaders in the church in some ways -**
- (4) **They held to a form of godliness, but now their lives denied its power -**
- (5) **They were impostors, or charlatans -**

Verse 13 of our passage says, *“<sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors (that is these mean we are talking about that are mentioned in the first 9 verses of chapter 3) will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”* The word “grow” in verse 13 means “to proceed” or “to make progress.” So Paul is sarcastically saying, “They will make progress all right, from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Whenever the Bible warns about deception, be careful, because deception is always tricky. It picks your pocket when you think everything is okay. In the context here, the warning is, just because you have been a faithful church member for years or you have served faithfully for years, or you’ve been faithful in your marriage for years, none of these things guarantee future faithfulness.

As Paul said it in 1 Corinthians 10:12, *“<sup>12</sup> Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”*

The phrase *“him who thinks he stands take heed”* is from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible, specifically 1 Corinthians 10:12. The verse is a warning to those who are confident in their own abilities to be cautious, as they may be at risk of falling. It is a reminder that no one is immune to temptation and that God will provide a way to overcome it.

Remember, long term spiritual faithfulness does not happen by accident. You must be deliberate about it.

So, recognizing the danger, how can we remain faithful to the Lord in the face of temptation and trials?

## **SPIRITUAL FAITHFULNESS IN THE FUTURE REQUIRES RECOGNIZING AND FOLLOWING GODLY EXAMPLES WHO FOLLOW THE SCRIPTURES**

*“<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. <sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” -2 Timothy 3:10-15 (NKJV)*

We all need examples to follow, which is why the Bible gives us the stories of so many faithful witnesses. Although we see many that fall into sin, thankfully there are many others, such as Paul and Timothy, who finish well. Our text shows us both how to recognize and follow godly examples.

### **HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND FOLLOW GODLY EXAMPLES:**

**(1) TO BE SPIRITUALLY FAITHFUL, LEARN HOW TO RECOGNIZE GODLY EXAMPLES -** Timothy had Paul as his example, but not as his only example. Verse 14 of our passage says, *“<sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”* The word *“whom”* is a plural (in the best manuscripts). Beyond Paul were Timothy’s mother and grandmother, who taught him the Scriptures from infancy (1:5; 3:15). It is not clear whether they led Timothy to salvation, or whether their teaching him the Scriptures prepared him to respond to the gospel when he first heard Paul preach (Paul calls him, “my true child in the faith,” 1 Tim. 1:2; also, 2 Tim. 1:2). There were also probably many other godly examples in Timothy’s life. There is an important lesson here, namely, that we all need to be exposed to a number of godly examples.

Also, we should pray that our children would come under the influence of many godly examples. I have known parents that have tried to keep their children exclusively under parental influence, not allowing church youth leaders or anyone else to get close to their children. Their motive, no doubt, is to protect their children from harmful influence, which is always a risk. But it seems to me that it is to our children’s advantage to be exposed to a number of godly Christian adults besides that of us as parents. We needed all the help that we could get in rearing our children, and if another godly adult could have an impact in their lives, I thanked God for it.

The same is true of pastors. Some pastors are afraid of having their people listen to other pastors, perhaps out of fear that the other pastor will say something that undermines what the local pastor is saying. But I don’t have a corner on God’s truth! I encourage you to benefit from other godly pastors and teacher who are faithful to Scripture. I personally benefit from the ministries of men like John Piper, John MacArthur, R. C. Sproul, and others. But, how do you discern whether or not a man is a godly example? Let’s face it, there are a lot of religious charlatans out there! Paul gives us three solid guidelines... notice these in our passage in 2 Timothy 3:10-15

**3 Guidelines for Discerning Godly Examples:** *(as opposed to those who are imposters/charlatans)*

**1. A godly example is known for his teaching** - Paul writes in verse 10 of our passage, *“But you have carefully followed my doctrine (or teaching)...”* One chapter later in 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul will give Timothy a strong charge to preach the Word... he said, *“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort,*



*with all longsuffering and teaching.*” Paul put a premium on sound doctrine, which is a frequent theme in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:3-5, 10; 3:3, 15; 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3, 20-21; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2, 15; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 10).

So what I am saying... listen to what a man teaches. It won't take you long to discern whether he is teaching the Bible or whether he is merely using the Bible as an inspirational springboard to launch off into his own ideas. Some preachers use the Bible like the Reader's Digest... it has some good quotes that support or illustrate their points, but they don't teach it as God's authoritative Word that we must understand and submit to.

When you listen to a sermon, ask yourself, “Did he explain and apply the text of Scripture so that I come away understanding what it means and how it applies to my life?”

Also, a godly Bible teacher does not skip the difficult sections and doctrines. He teaches the whole purpose of God. Note also in verse 15 of our passage that a godly teacher uses the Scriptures to lead people. Verse 15 says, *“<sup>15</sup> And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* Did you see it? *“...for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* Timothy's mother and grandmother had taught him the “sacred writings” (a Jewish term for the Old Testament) from infancy (the literal Greek word). God's Word is able to give even a child the wisdom that leads to salvation, which means, salvation from God's righteous judgment on our sins. That salvation does not come by keeping the moral precepts of the Bible, or even by believing the Bible. *Rather, salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus alone.* As parents, pray for your children's salvation and use the Bible to explain to them their need for the Savior and how to trust in Him to forgive their sins. The popular idea of having your child “ask Jesus to come into his heart” is probably not the clearest way to present the gospel. A child needs to come under conviction for his sins, so that he sees that he is guilty and deserves God's judgment. He also needs to know that on the cross Jesus paid the penalty that he deserves, if he will trust in Christ. There should be evident signs of new life if a child truly has been born of God. Whether with children or adults, use the Bible as the main tool in leading people to salvation.

2. *A godly example is known for his character* - Notice **verse 10** of our passage again, *“<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance.”* He practices what he preaches. His life backs up his teaching. Paul mentions six areas of character:

## **6 Important Character Qualities from Paul: (mentioned in 2 Tim. 3:10ff)**

[1] **Manner of life (conduct/behavior)** — The word (used only here) means, “way of life.” You should be able to look at a person’s way of life and tell whether he or she is a godly example worth following. This would include how he spends his time, how he manages money and possessions, what kind of entertainment he enjoys, and how he relates to his family, friends, fellow workers, and even to strangers. Is he rude or sensitive? Is he oblivious to the needs of others or kind and caring? Christianity is a way of life that affects all of life. A godly example lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

[2] **Purpose**— Paul was a man of purpose. His purpose was to help bring about God’s purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). He did everything for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). He related every aspect of his life to the supreme purpose of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord (Phil. 3:8-10) and making Him known to others (1 Cor. 9:23; 10:33). He disciplined himself for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). He made it his ambition to be pleasing to Christ (2 Cor. 5:9). He told the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:24), *“I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.”* Godly examples will always be men and women who live daily in light of God’s purpose.

[3] **Faith**— The word may mean “faithfulness,” which is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul was certainly a faithful man (1 Cor. 4:1). But it also may refer to trusting God to do what is humanly impossible, so that He gets the glory. Referring to how God delivered him from the brink of death, Paul said (2 Cor. 1:9), *“indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”* A man or woman of faith lives in light of eternity, trusting that God will keep His promises beyond the grave (2 Tim. 4:8). Look for examples that live by faith.

[4] **Longsuffering/Patience**—This also is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It comes from two Greek words that literally mean to be long before passion or anger. The patient man doesn’t have a short fuse. He can bear with difficult people without exploding in anger. He doesn’t snap at his wife or children with angry words. The supreme test of patience had not been invented when Paul wrote, but a truly patient man is patient when he drives!

[5] **Love**— This leads the list of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Love, above all other virtues, should mark believers in Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 13). My definition is, “biblical love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment that shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved.” Sometimes the highest good requires confronting someone in sin and holding him accountable. The aim is to bring him under the lordship of Jesus Christ, so that his life brings glory to God. Such love should govern everything that we do.

[6] **Perseverance**— This word has the nuance of enduring difficult circumstances over the long haul. It means trusting God when things aren’t the way you want them

to be and there is no immediate solution in sight. Many Christians either imply or directly tell you that if you have enough faith, God will instantly deliver you from your problems, whether it is a serious health problem or a difficult relational situation or whatever. “Just name it and claim it by faith,” they say. It takes His mighty power to give us joy in the midst of unanswered prayers and ongoing trials. That leads to the third mark of a godly example.

A godly example is known for his teaching and his character.

3. ***A godly example is known for his godly demeanor under trials*** - Look at verses 11-12 of our passage, *“<sup>11</sup> Persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

- How does a man respond when trials hit?
- Does he rail at God or submit to God?
- Does he drift into the world or draw near to the Lord?
- A godly example trusts God and grows through trials.

Paul mentions the trials that he encountered at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (Timothy’s city), three cities in the Galatian region of Asia Minor.

- During the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas were driven from Antioch because of intense persecution (Acts 13:50).
- At their next stop in Iconium, they had to flee to avoid being stoned (Acts 14:5-6).
- In Lystra, Paul actually was stoned, dragged out of the city and left for dead. He was probably unconscious, but God miraculously raised him up (Acts 14:19-20).

Rather than let such awful persecution deter him, Paul went right on preaching the gospel in that region (Acts 14:21-22). Timothy had witnessed Paul’s courage and joy in the face of these terrible trials.

When Paul says that the Lord rescued him out of them, he means that God brought him through them. God did not always keep Paul from trials, although at times He did (Acts 18:9-10).

Don’t miss verse 12—it’s a promise for you to claim! *“<sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* While the type and intensity of the persecution will vary from ridicule or rejection to physical violence or even death, every true Christian who lives a godly life in this evil world will experience persecution.

- If you are honest at work, your honesty will convict those who cheat, and they will try to get you.
- If you speak out about injustice or evil, you will be ridiculed and attacked.
- **John Calvin** (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], on 2 Tim. 3:12, p. 244) put it plainly, "They who wish to be exempt from persecutions must necessarily renounce Christ."

Thus spiritual faithfulness requires recognizing and following godly examples who follow the Scriptures. You can recognize them by their teaching, their character, and their godly demeanor under trials. But, once you recognize them, you need to follow them.

## (2) TO BE SPIRITUALLY FAITHFUL, LEARN HOW TO FOLLOW GODLY EXAMPLES –

*"<sup>10</sup> But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. <sup>12</sup> Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. <sup>13</sup> But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, <sup>15</sup> and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." -2 Timothy 3:10-15 (NKJV)*

Three things are involved here:

### **3 Things Involved in Following Godly Examples:**

- 1. Follow closely in order to understand and embrace** - That's the meaning of the Greek word, "followed" in verse 10 (NASB, 3:10; NIV, "know all about"). It means to follow closely in somebody's footsteps. Luke (1:3) uses the word when he tells Theophilus that he has investigated everything carefully. He means that he has traced out the history and carefully checked his sources

In our text, Paul means that Timothy was thoroughly familiar with Paul's teaching and his life because he had spent so much time with him, watching how he lived. The implication is that we need examples whose lives are open and transparent. They are not afraid to let us see how they relate to their families and to share areas where they struggle. It implies getting to know someone well enough that you can tell whether he walks with Christ or is faking it. If he's the real deal, then follow his example.

2. **Follow by learning in order to develop strong convictions** - Paul says in verse 14 that Timothy has learned these things and become convinced of them, “<sup>14</sup> *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.*” Christianity involves learning certain doctrinal truths and developing convictions about them. Some doctrines are not essential to the faith, and godly men may differ on them. We need to hold our views on these matters with tolerance towards those who differ. But on core matters, we should not compromise at all. It requires maturity to discern where you should draw these lines.
3. **Follow by continuing in your convictions, even when under fire** - Timothy had learned these things and was convinced of them, but Paul tells him to *continue* in them. The context makes it clear that he must continue in them even if it means persecution. With Martin Luther, we must say, even under intense pressure to yield, “Here I stand!” Besides reading about Luther and Calvin, who risked their lives to stand for the gospel against Rome, read the lives of others who stood for the truth under fire.

Iain Murray’s, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* [Banner of Truth], tells about some of the difficult controversies that Spurgeon endured, especially the painful “Downgrade Controversy.” I read it in 1990, and wrote in the flyleaf, “This is a provocative study that motivates me to go deeper theologically and to hold unswervingly to the Word even if I am the only voice. Spurgeon stood strong and true, even when others were accommodating.” I could say the same thing about many others whose examples have encouraged me to stand firm.

## CONCLUSION

During times of social and cultural upheaval, it’s especially good to remember the foundations of our faith. God has not left us to fend for ourselves on the shifting sand of moral relativity, with new threats coming all the time against the church and Christians, and even the hint of persecution on the horizon in some cases. He (God) has provided time tested and true keys to enable us to overcome every challenge. These keys are not new, but are things that every believer should be reminded to practice regularly, in order to mature spiritually and maintain a solid biblical worldview. *We may be in the world, but we are not of it!* So here are five quick keys to help you stay faithful in a world that has lost its way.

### **5 Time-Tested & True Ways to Stay Faithful:**

(1) **Start your day in prayer** - “*Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed*” (Mark 1:35). Over the last few years, our world has been overwhelmed with untold new challenges; people everywhere have been struggling emotionally, not just physically. At the barber shop recently, I picked up an issue of Cosmopolitan Magazine and noticed an article entitled, *How to Get into a Better Headspace, Because a Global Crisis Can Take*



a Toll. Even *Cosmo* can see the emotional toll all this craziness is having on our mental health. The article offered several tips to help people feel normal, like book a massage or facial, none of which can solve the root of the problem, which is sin. God has other advice: *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:6-7). Prayer anchors your soul to God even while living in a society that is drifting far from Him. It opens our hearts to receive His peace, hope and reassurance, and sweeps clean the debris of sin that we’ve picked up in our daily lives. In short, prayer helps us to hold onto our faith when everything around us is nuts.

- (2) **Study the Bible daily** - After we’ve established a successful rhythm of daily devotions, we need to do more than simply read the Bible. We need to study it and make it a part of our thinking and our speech. We need to decide that knowing the Word of God is more important than knowing the daily news. We must realize that the Word of God is where we find our guide to right and wrong (*not political correctness*), our guide to life and purpose (*not New Age affirmations*), our guide to health and wholeness (*not man’s suppositions*), to be lights of the Lord. *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”* (Psalm 119:105). It is imperative that the Word of God be implanted in us, so it can be our guiding light that leads us down every path and in every decision we make
- (3) **Repent of sin quickly** - *“Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death”* (James 1:15). **Translation: sin has “babies,” and those babies grow up and take on a destructive life of their own.** Sin is not something to play with. It will always take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you are willing to pay. It also desensitizes you to right and wrong, and makes you vulnerable to the seducing spirits at work in the world. Sin is sneaky. Its goal is to trip you, trap you, and take you out. If you ignore it or try to hide it, you’ll lose every time. So be proactive! Confess it to God, receive His forgiveness, and forsake it. *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13). Jesus was faithful on the cross to pay the price for our sin 2,000 years ago, and He remains faithful to forgive us of our sin today. We still need forgiveness ourselves, and since we receive it from God, we must also pass it on to others. *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32).
- (4) **Get spiritually dressed** - *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:10-12). Wiles of the devil are simply mind games or delusions. Sometimes it’s difficult to remember in the

moment, but people are not our problem – principalities and seducing spirits are. Stop hating on people and start praying for them instead. Suit up in your spiritual armor and take a stand against the real enemy. *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:13-18). Get covered with the armor of God from head to toe! The belt of truth – the truth that comes from the Word of God, not society or politics. The breastplate of righteousness – knowing we are right with God, not because of our goodness, but because of God’s grace. The gospel of peace – knowing we are at peace with God, and have an eternal home in the heavens not built with the hands of man. Knowing we can walk in a quiet rest that passes all understanding. The shield of faith – an absolute assurance that God’s word is true and will come to pass in our lives. The helmet of salvation – we have soundness of mind because of a secure faith in the principles of the Word of God and so great a salvation bought for us by our Savior. The sword of the Spirit – an unwavering revelation of God’s word that empowers us to respond to every attack of the enemy and causes him to flee. And of course, our battle position is in prayer – always. It’s not just what we do when we don’t know what to do, it is what we must do at all times, for this is how we fight our battles in this world that has lost its way.

- (5) **Go to Church!** - *“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). Sometimes we forget, but we really *need* to be in God’s house, where we are fed the Word of God in fellowship with others of like faith. It’s where our errant theology and politics gets challenged and changed to line up with the God’s truth. It’s where we experience the power and healing of worshipping in God’s presence. It’s where iron sharpens iron, and we experience the love of the brethren. Thank God for church online when gathering together is truly impossible; but at all other times, we must not forsake this valuable key to remaining strong in faith.

Finally, it’s important to remember that much of the chaos today has been blamed on politics, power plays, social injustice, etc. But the truth is the world’s gone mental because of sin. And the devastation caused by sin cannot be controlled by any president, agenda, or master plan. No matter how hard we try, we just can’t control sin. That’s why more than anything else, we need the Savior in a world that’s lost its way.

I conclude by asking you two questions.

**2 Questions to Ponder:**

(1) ***Who are the examples that you follow?*** - To be spiritually faithful, you need godly models who follow the Scriptures. As I said, if you can't know them personally, read about their lives in the Bible and in Christian biographies. I have been strengthened greatly by reading the lives of the godly men who went before me. Although I do not know them personally, contemporaries like John MacArthur, John Piper, and others who stand for God's truth encourage me to do the same.

**HINT: Read Christian biographies of great men and women of faith (Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet by Eric Metaxas; Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World, by Eric Metaxas; Becoming Elizabeth Elliot, by Ellen Vaughn; The Simple Faith of Mister Rogers, by Amy Hollingsworth; All is Grace: A ragamuffin Memoir, By Brennan Manning; Steal Away Home: Charles Spurgeon and Thomas Johnson, Unlikely Friends on the Passage to Freedom, Matt Carter)**

(2) ***To whom are you an example?*** - If you are growing in Christ as you should be, then you should pray that God will use your teaching, your conduct, and your godly demeanor under trials to impact the lives of younger believers. While none of us may ever be well-known or as strong an example as Paul was, we all should be faithful enough that our lives are worth imitating.