



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

“BUT YOU FOLLOWED...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10

WYOMING MARCH 2, 2016

Dan File, P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO 81235-1088/303-345-8830 / filefamily@centurytel.net

We live in dangerous times. From 2 Timothy 3:1-9, Paul calls on all believers to avoid self-centered deceivers and their practices with their misdirected loves and an empty religion devoid of Christ's power and truth. We must understand that the church is in spiritual warfare that will intensify till Christ returns. We must be doctrinally discerning, testing each message against God's Word as the Bereans did in Acts 17:11. We must be pure and holy vessels set apart for the Lord's use. (2 Timothy 2:21) We must be patient in difficult times, persevere and earnestly contend for the faith for the sake of the lost.¹ (Jude 3) We must remain faithful, courageously teach God's truth in spite of opposition and have as our ambition to please God for He alone must be the true north of our lives! (2 Corinthians 5:9)

I. “BUT YOU FOLLOWED...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10

“(10) But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, (11) persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; and out of them all the Lord delivered me!” 2 Timothy 3:10-11

Paul has been a strong and loyal defender of the truth in spite of severe opposition even within the walls of the church. Now he will remind Timothy of the example he followed, and encourage him to maintain those strong convictions based in God's Word which form the spiritual foundation for his life and keep a strong devotion to Scriptural authority and sufficiency.

A. “BUT...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10A

The conjunction, “But”, marks a distinct change between what Paul has written about beforehand. In stark contrast to the contemporary decline of false teachers and their empty religious show; (2 Timothy 3:1-9) Timothy stands out as noticeably different. Paul had just finished strongly denouncing the false teachers and their foolish lifestyle consumed with a self-love. But then he turns to Timothy and he tells his son in the faith, “But you followed my teaching, my conduct, my purpose...” In contrast to these imposters and hypocrite peddlers of the faith, Paul commends Timothy for following a life opposite of them. Timothy followed Paul's accurate teaching, godly conduct, sincere purpose, genuine faith and more.

B. “BUT YOU...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10A

The text places great emphasis on this pronoun, “you”. This is an emphatic and very personal address. Timothy was not an ignorant raw recruit to the faith. Paul had imparted his very life to him. You Timothy, you who spent several decades under Paul's teaching. You who traveled many a mile on missionary journeys with Paul to share the gospel and establish churches. It is as if Paul is saying to Timothy

that many have given into the temptation to conform but you stand in stark contrast, different from these. You are standing firm in the faith in spite of all the false and foolish. You are different Timothy. And in view of Paul's impending death, he encourages Timothy by placing special emphasis on this very personal address to him.

C. “BUT YOU FOLLOWED...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10A

Timothy did not just give verbal assent to Jesus Christ. No! From Timothy's childhood he had been faithfully taught and instructed and he possessed a faith that was real and genuine. 2 Timothy 1:5 reminds us that, “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.” Paul imparted his life to Timothy over the twenty plus years they walked together until Paul left him in Ephesus to lead the young church there. And the text says. “But you followed...” What does that mean?

“followed” Greek “**parakoloutheo**” means to accompany, to observe, adhere to, copied, investigated and watched. To follow alongside, to follow closely, step by step, a very close relationship. Greek philosophers used this to describe the unique relationship between teacher and student. It meant to study with close quarters, take as an example to follow.

Barclay writes this, “It means to follow a person physically, to stick by him through thick and thin, to be by his side in fair weather and in foul. It mean to follow a person mentally, to attend diligently to his teaching and to fully understand the meaning and the significance of what he says. It means to follow a person spiritually, not only to understand what he says, but also to carry out his ideas and to be the kind of person he wishes to be with.”² It includes the unwavering loyalty of a true comrade, a true scholar combined with complete obedience of the dedicated pupil. It means to pattern your beliefs, your thinking and your lifestyle around the one you follow. That's comprehensive. That's what “followed” means here.

Paul says that Timothy followed alongside him...for decades! Timothy observed Paul with close and careful interest over many years of association. The knowledge Timothy gained was not theoretical but practical as he saw Paul live out what he believed. Think about it. Timothy saw Paul happy, sad, worried, and angry. He watched him handle difficult people and difficult situations. He observed Paul study and handle carefully the Word of God. He heard Paul pray. He saw Paul's passion, purpose and mission. He travelled with him on tireless missionary journeys where Paul's devotion to Christ was tested and proved genuine. He saw that Paul never took his calling

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lightly. He learned from his sermons and studied under his teaching. In fact, Timothy may well have come to Christ while listening to one of those sermons in Asia Minor while Paul was on his first missionary journey. Timothy saw Paul endure great hardship for the gospel and was reminded that he too would have to persevere through trials of all kinds for the sake of proclaiming the gospel to those who desperately needed to hear. And Timothy saw how Paul's life matched his doctrine, his beliefs.

Because Paul's faith was real and genuine, he could write in 1 Corinthians 4:16, *“I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me.”* He commended the Thessalonian believers in 1 Thessalonians 1:6, *“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulations with the joy of the Holy Spirit.”* To the Philippians he could write, *“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”*

By using this word, *“followed”*, Paul is saying that Timothy has not just fully known or just observed Paul's life, doctrine and conduct, but that he has saturated his life as well, not just as a casual observer, but as a dedicated disciple of Paul. Timothy made Paul's teaching his own. Timothy believed it, absorbed it, and lived by it. Yes, he watched Paul's life, but went on to imitate it.³ That's true discipleship.

The false teachers in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 followed their own desires, but Timothy followed a totally different standard...he followed the teachings of Paul which were the teachings of Jesus Christ.

D. “BUT YOU FOLLOWED MY...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10A

Paul goes on to describe exactly what Timothy followed. He does so by using the definite article *“my”*. This definite article would precede each of the nouns in the Greek writing. By using this possessive pronoun, Paul gives an important, repeated emphasis to the nine descriptive marks of leadership that follow, which relate to ministry, personal virtue and life. This is what should result from godly discipleship; reproducing those who are solid in doctrine and lifestyle, courageous and committed to the truth, able and willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ through any circumstance and at any cost. What must result is a steadfast and unwavering commitment to Christ.⁴

Timothy took to heart, he soaked in, all that Paul taught and lived before him. He took Paul as his example and he listened to him with keen interest as he related experiences in which Timothy was a part of. And here was Paul, about to die. He looked at his whole life of service to Christ, from the first missionary journey to that very moment where he sat in a Roman dungeon, and penned these words of encouragement to both, *“But you followed my teaching...”* Indeed

Timothy became Paul's follower when he changed from the Jewish faith to the Christian faith. And thus Paul, by the commendation that he gives here, grounds his call for Timothy to continue in the faith based on his living example and based in God's living, enduring and unfailing Word. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

We must remember that we are influenced by those we live and work with whether good or bad. We must take great care as to who we associate with or allow to influence our life, especially if they are in a position to influence our life.⁵

Are you one who is worthy to be followed? Can you say as Paul from 1 Corinthians 11:1, *“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”* This is real leadership. Leadership is about following Jesus and inviting others to come alongside.

Does your life match what you believe? Paul was single minded about the most important things...the gospel and the glory of Christ. Would your life reflect what you believe and give testimony to Christ?

Are you investing your life for Jesus Christ in anyone else?

Has someone invested faithfully in your life as Paul did for Timothy? If so, thank them this week in some way!

May what Paul said of Timothy in 1 Corinthians 4:17 be said of us as well, *“For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”*

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.122.

²Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.220.

³Stott, John R.W., *The Message of 2 Timothy*. Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1973. Pg. 94.

⁴MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.128.

⁵MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.127.