



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

NINE DISTINCTIVE MARKS OF A BELIEVER: PART 2 - 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-11

COLORADO

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Paul was patient because his greatest concern was for the souls of all mankind. Having a genuine faith in God with a willing love for all, combined with patience and long suffering towards even the most difficult people together with an endurance to the end...this was the showcase of Paul's life.¹ Just as Paul laid out these qualities to stir Timothy with renewed determination to face the difficulties of life, so we too must be encouraged to the same resolute and devoted spirit.

I. NINE MARKS OF A BELIEVER: Part 2- 2 TIMOTHY 3:10-11

"(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; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!" 2 Timothy 3:10-11

Timothy had saturated his life 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.² These marks were a result of the Lord's transforming work. As we continue this study in 2 Timothy 3:11, it is with the focus on persecution and suffering as virtues resulting from a committed relationship to Jesus Christ. These aren't marks we would seek, but will follow devoted believers.

Before Paul became a Christian, he persecuted the church of Jesus Christ. (Acts 9:1-2, Acts 22:4) But one day, as he was traveling to Damascus to imprison believers, he met Jesus Christ and his life was changed forever. (Acts 9:3-19) Because of Paul's incredible testimony and the crowds that listened and believed, the Jews were incensed to the point of desiring to kill him. (Acts 9:23) Yet Paul refused to stop proclaiming the gospel in spite of the persecution that resulted from his faithfulness to Christ. Nor would he compromise this message of truth in any way in order to make his life more comfortable. In fact, persecution became almost a constant companion in Paul's life. These sufferings stand in stark contrast to the pleasure seeking false teachers whom Paul has instructed Timothy about.

A. "YOU FOLLOWED MY PERSECUTIONS"- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Persecution refers to those distressing experiences where opposition was so great that it forced Paul to flee. The word for "persecutions" in the Greek actually means to put to flight. These difficulties tested and demanded Paul's obedience to Christ and revealed a true and genuine faith. As a result of persecution for his faith in Christ, Paul was forced to flee from Damascus, (Acts 9:23-25), he was forced to flee Antioch (Acts 13:50), he fled from Iconium (Acts 14:6), from Thessalonica (Acts 17:10), and Berea (Acts 17:14). But each time Paul fled to another city, it became another opportunity to proclaim

the gospel. Paul always saw his circumstances in light of the progress of the gospel as he wrote in Philippians 1:12, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel."

It is important to keep in mind that persecution is the lot for all believers. A real follower of Christ cannot escape persecution and believers must understand this reality. Jesus said it in John 16:33. Acts 14:22 and 1 John 3:13 reinforces that fact.

B. "YOU FOLLOWED MY SUFFERINGS"- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Writing to believers in Philippi, Paul said, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but as to suffer for His sake." Sufferings refers to those severe, difficult, physical hardships that we as Christians will face. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 list some of those Paul endured, "beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine 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, in cold and exposure." But here in 2 Timothy 3, Paul refers to specific incidents in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra; towns located in Timothy's native region where he had obviously heard or saw for himself, what Paul suffered.

C. "AT ANTIOCH"- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

The events which took place in Antioch can be found in Acts 13:14-52. Paul preached the gospel in the synagogue and the people wanted to hear more. Many followed Paul and Barnabas and nearly the whole city assembled to hear the Word of God at the next Sabbath. However, Acts 13:45 says, "But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul..." But Paul and Barnabas spoke the Word of God even more boldly and the gospel spread. So the Jews aroused the prominent women in that town together with the leading men of the city and they instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. (Acts 13:50)

D. "AT ICONIUM..."- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Acts 14:1-7 gives the description of what happened here in Iconium. Once again, Paul went to the local synagogue and preached the gospel. There a multitude believed, both Jews and Gentiles. But again, the Jews stirred up the minds of the Gentiles and embittered

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them against Paul and Barnabas. Still, Paul remained speaking boldly and contending for the gospel. They plotted to mistreat and stone Paul and Barnabas but they became aware of this plot and narrowly escaped with their lives. They walked on to the next cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding areas. And Acts 14:7 says, *“and there they continued to preach the gospel.”* They would not be deterred from their purpose or mission no matter the cost.

E. “AND AT LYSTRA...”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Lystra was Timothy’s home town. (Acts 16:1) Here Paul healed a man who was born crippled. The crowd responds by wanting to worship Paul and Barnabas for this miracle to which Paul tore his clothes and implored them to turn from their idols to a living God. Then Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won over the multitude. They then stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. He was broken beneath the rubble cast against him. He was thought dead by his murderers and they departed, leaving his body to his followers. The believers must have been mourning and wondering what they would do without him. Yet, suddenly, Paul gets up. There would be no funeral today.³

And what does Paul do after he gets up? Not what you would think. Acts 14:20-21 says, *“But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium and to Antioch.”* Then we read in Acts 15:36 that Paul went back through every city where they proclaimed the gospel, encouraging them in the faith and strengthening churches. That’s a true purpose driven life dedicated to sharing the gospel with all people. It required an unconditional love and a perseverance to endure through the harshest of sufferings, yet with a resolve to press on for the sake of proclaiming the gospel to those who are lost.

F. “WHAT PERSECUTIONS I ENDURED...”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Paul recounts these very harsh experiences as he writes from the Mamortine prison, waiting to be executed. Throughout many years, Timothy had the privilege to live by and work with Paul; a man of courage, character, purpose, love, faith, perseverance and resolution. He never quit.⁴ He could write in Romans 8:18, *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* He lived what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:10, *“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake...”* He accepted what God allowed to come his way and endured for the sake of the gospel. Paul was given the grace to bravely endure and not give way under a heavy load of hardship and trials.

G. “OUT OF THEM ALL THE LORD DELIVERED ME.”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:11

Paul could claim with David, *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”* (Psalm 34:19) He could say with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, *“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will deliver us.”* (Daniel 3:17) Paul’s hope remained in Christ. His confidence and absolute trust in God for divine deliverance remained unshaken. We must take heart, for the Lord ever rescues His people, frequently from death and sometimes by means of death. Paul knew for certain and was assured that in spite of the persecution and suffering that came his way, he was not separated from the love of God or the absence of God’s love. He wrote confidently in Romans 8:38-39, *“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*⁵

Paul was assured of two things: first that hardship will come to all believers, and second; God will rescue those who put their faith in Him. He saw deliverance as preventing eternal harm done by wicked men. Paul knew in the long run that it was better to suffer with God and the good, than to prosper with the world and the wrong. Certain of the temporary persecution, he is equally certain of his ultimate glory.⁶

God promises to preserve His faithful servants. He doesn’t promise to keep them from suffering, rather through suffering. We must remember these things as we live out our calling. God never promised life will be easy, but promises He will be with us and deliver us and rescue us in this life or by bringing us to glory. In fact, as Paul wrote 2 Timothy 4:7-8, he was awaiting the ultimate rescue.

Timothy was called to endure by the strength God supplies, trusting in God’s great faithfulness to His people. Paul isn’t just giving Timothy an example to follow, but is pointing him to the source of power by which to live.⁷ Paul points us there as well!

¹Hughes, R. Kent and Chapell, Bryan, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus; To Guard the Deposit*. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 2000. Pg. 232.

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

³Hughes, R. Kent and Chapell, Bryan, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus; To Guard the Deposit*. Crossway Books: Wheaton, Illinois, 2000. Pg. 232.

⁴MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.132.

⁵Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of The Pastoral Epistles*. Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI, 1957. Pg. 292.

⁶Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.223.

⁷Platt, David; Akin, Daniel L.; Merida, Tony, *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*. B&H Publishing Group: Nashville, Tennessee, 2013. Pg.192.