

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13

I DID NOT QUIT

“You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”¹

Relational preaching is in vogue; forceful preaching that valiantly defends the Faith is much less popular. Strong, effective defenders of the Faith are sufficiently rare as to be notable when they are encountered. It was no different in past eras. Even during the time when Jude wrote his missive, doctrinal preaching that ardently pursued the truth appears to have on the wane. Jude wrote, “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” [JUDE 3, 4].

Timothy faced the same challenges that pastors face today, challenges pastors have always faced. Pressure to tone down his rhetoric, to accommodate “good people” who were deviating from the truth “just a little,” to go along to get along, to affirm his listeners, was just as great for Timothy as it is for any preacher in this day. To this point in the Letter, Paul has focused on the need for Timothy as an elder to serve as a strong defender of the Faith.

Focused as he is on equipping Timothy for effective service, Paul provides two necessary qualifications for Timothy will stand firm and if he will fulfil the ministry he had received from God. Timothy, and all who would serve as elders following in his train, would require strong convictions if he would stand firm; he would need to adhere to Scriptural authority, holding the Word of God as sufficient for faith and practise [see 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17]. This vital aspect of the ministry of an elder will be examined in a message planned for a future date. The present message examines that second aspect—Timothy’s need for a strong example in his spiritual mentor. Therefore, the message focuses on the elder’s need for a spiritual mentor—a need that will continue until the Master’s return.

LIFE AS AN APOSTLE — “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me” [2 TIMOTHY 3:10, 11].

The passage begins with the Greek words “*Sú dé.*” “You however,” and the “you” is in an emphatic position. The point Paul will make is made more emphatic still when he uses the conjunction in the adversative sense. This formula will appear again when Paul wishes to draw a contrast between Timothy and the false teachers. Like Jannes and Jambres [see VERSE 8], the false teachers were denoted as resisting the truth. Timothy, on the other hand, was fully acquainted with Paul’s life and service. The young theologian had chosen to identify with the truth.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Undoubtedly, the Apostle's doctrine was crucial, but he appeals to far more than his doctrine alone as he calls Timothy to remembrance. Paul used nine nouns to speak of the totality of his life with which Timothy was quite familiar. He appealed to "my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings." Note that doctrine was the first matter to which Paul appealed for Timothy to recall. Built upon the Apostle's doctrine were all other aspects of life.

Let me caution the congregation of the Lord that just because a man delivers a stirring sermon does not mean that he is a man of God. I held membership in a congregation that was seeking a pastor on one occasion. A veteran preacher candidated for the position; he was well known, having pastored a number of churches in that particular denomination for many years. He brought his sugar stick (every pastor has at least one) and preached it. The deacons were very eager to see him take the reins of the congregation and pushed for an immediate vote.

I asked for opportunity to speak with this gentleman. Reluctantly, the deacons agreed to permit me to question him in private. However, our privacy was soon interrupted as numerous members of the congregation crowded around; they were interested in what sort of questions I might ask. I requested a synopsis of his doctrine. Since I could neither speak to members of his present congregation nor speak to members of the community where he lived and since the deacons had not chosen to reveal whether they had raised such questions, I wanted to know what his assessment of his reputation in his present community might be and how other pastors in that community would assess his service. I wanted to know why he was leaving his present church. I understand the desire to move to a larger charge, but normally the capacity of handling addition challenge will have become evident before a move is sought. Each question was met with what can only be described as a sullen, even a combative, response. It was painfully obvious that he was looking for a salary and not a place of service. It was equally obvious that the deacons had not understood the responsibility to seek out and present one who had divine appointment.

Later that afternoon, I was confronted by two deacons who were enraged that I would think to question their choice. Did I not know how well connected this man was in the denomination? Who was I to question someone who was so highly recommended by denominational leaders? Why did I want to stir up trouble? I was astounded. I had no intention of causing trouble for anyone. I was genuinely concerned for the church to which I was united. It was the beginning of the end for me at that particular church. I was gone within a fortnight.

Anyone who is even remotely familiar with the life of the Apostle would never accuse him of histrionics, of exaggerating the difficulties faced as an Apostle or of misrepresenting the trials he faced because of the Faith. Paul spoke of the challenges he faced on several occasions, most notably in his letters to the Church of God in Corinth. What is noted is that Paul wasn't in the least hesitant about explaining the cost of service before the Lord. The ministries of an Apostle were not always, indeed, were not often, appreciated by the membership of the churches.

Though Paul was the founding pastor of the congregation, the Corinthian Christians had forgotten his teaching concerning what it meant to be Christian. They were even treating Paul with disdain as if they were capable of judging his labours. Paul was pleading with them to cease being judgemental and critical of him, especially as they compared him to other, less noble individuals purporting to be servants of God. Thus, in his First Letter to the saints in Corinth, Paul wrote, "I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?"

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

“I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children” [1 CORINTHIANS 4:6-14].

In his Second Letter to the Church of God in Corinth, the Apostle again reminded these believers of the cost of being an Apostle when he wrote of the challenges faced in his labours as an Apostle of Christ the Lord. “As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything” [2 CORINTHIANS 6:4-10].

The Corinthians held an exalted view of their spiritual perspicuity. However, they had been duped by charlatans masquerading as “super Christians.” Paul met that distortion of the Faith head-on when he challenged the Corinthians to think. They needed to step back and consider the willingness of the super-apostles to when compared to the ministry of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Thus, Paul wrote, “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they offspring of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

“If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:22-31].

These wannabe apostles had never sacrificed in order to serve; and they were not likely to sacrifice since they saw service as the means to a cushy life. Their supposed service cost them nothing; and even had a cost been exacted, they would have refused to pay it. They were looking for glory rather than opportunity to serve; they sought a job and not an appointment. I’ve witnessed multiple young preachers who were eager to fill a pulpit. Yet, when I offered to assist them in initiating a ministry where the Word was not then preached, almost without exception they have declined, stating that they are looking for a steady paycheck. The plea is couched in delicate language that begs for understanding; but it is a refusal to sacrifice nonetheless.

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Apparently, Paul made an impression on the early churches. A book known as the Didache gives us insight into the early life of the churches. The earliest references to the Didache go back to at least 70 AD. Though the book is not canonical, nor should anyone imagine it can claim apostolic authorship or approval, it does give insight into the general practises of the early churches. At one point, the book reads as follows. “Now, turning to apostles and prophets you must treat them according to the rule of the gospel.

“Every apostle who arrives among you is to be welcomed as if he were the Lord.

“But normally he must not stay with you for more than one day, but he may stay a second day if this is necessary. However, if he stays a third day, then he is a false prophet!

“When he leaves you, an apostle must receive nothing except enough food to sustain him until the next night’s lodgings. However, if he asks for money, then he is a false prophet!”²

One who itinerated in that early day did so out of love for the Master who appointed him to service. He did not seek an easy life; he knew that he would serve at his own expense and that he would not be honoured in many instances. Settled pastors were the first to be singled out when pagans attacked the faithful. One cannot read the account of Paul’s service recorded in the Book of Acts without coming to the realisation that he paid a high price to serve the Master. It has been noted by many that unlike this day, the Apostles would go to a town and check in at the local gaol. “Hold a cell for me, boys; I’ll be checking in before long.”

One example of what I am saying is provided by referring to the arrival of the missionaries in Thessalonica. “When [the apostolic band] had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.’ And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus’” [ACTS 17:1-7].

Life with the apostolic band was never dull! Paul managed to keep things jumping. And he did this, not by being confrontational, but with love and gentleness as he firmly presented the claim of the Living God through the message of life. Paul did not seek to be provocative; he endeavoured to be truthful, seeking the benefit of all through the preaching of the Word.

LIFE AS AN ELDER — “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” [2 TIMOTHY 3:12, 13].

Here is a truth that must always be remembered: *Suffering with Christ is inevitable for the individual living in union with Him*. Since the Apostle had been reminding Timothy of the cost of his own service, he now extrapolates to all who even desire to live a godly life in Christ. You can be a church member and never experience opposition. You cannot live a godly life and avoid opposition; you cannot even have the longing to be godly in Christ without opposition.

² Thomas O’Loughlin, **The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians** (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; Baker Academic, London, Grand Rapids, MI 2010), 115

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Of this twelfth verse, Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, has written, “One cannot be in combat and live luxuriously, one cannot be wrestling and feasting. Let none therefore of those who are contending seek for ease or joyous living. Again, the present state is contest, warfare, tribulation, straits, and trials, and the very scene of conflicts. The season for rest is not now, this is the time for toil and labor. No one who has just stripped and anointed himself thinks of ease. If thou thinkest of ease, why didst thou strip, or prepare to fight?”³

The text reminds us that there is a cost to eldership—it is not all praise and glory when a man accepts the divine appointment to oversee Christ’s work in a congregation. It is inevitable that some within the assembly will take umbrage at decisions that must be made. There seem always to be some who pushing themselves forward or arguing for rapidly seizing the day will be angered when the elder urges caution. Still others will want to be cautious when the elder is urging the congregation to move forward in the cause of Christ. The biblical elder will spend hours in prayer and thoughtful contemplation seeking to know the will of the Master, always seeking the welfare of the assembly. Because the church is composed of individuals, it is inevitable that there will be friction; and tragically, that friction will sometimes result in heated exchanges and even open warfare despite the fact that those warring are brothers.

All this says nothing of the opposition that the elder will experience from earth-dwellers because he valiantly presents the message of life. Standing firm in the Faith invites opposition from those who want the elder to be reasonable as they define being reasonable. The world cannot understand why he cannot accommodate just a little bit of sin. They wonder why the biblical elder must be such a stickler, insisting on righteousness.

In the early days of my service before the Lord, I conducted a ministry in a prison farm about fifty miles from Dallas. I would attend church services in the morning, climb astride my Suzuki 500 immediately after the service concluded and ride to the Kaufman Prison Farm where I would preach to the men and the occasional woman incarcerated there. The prisoners worked six days each week, cutting wood, patching roads, chopping cotton or whatever physical jobs the work farm found for them, and they attended the services at 2:30 each Sunday.

As some of the inmates came to faith, we would baptise them in the prison stock tank, or as western Canadians know it, a dugout. When my parishioners would be released, Lynda and I would take them into our home, giving them a place to stay as we assisted them to integrate again into society. We would help them find work and a place to stay, doing all we could to ensure that they had food and clothing as they began life on the outside. Working with ex-cons was hard and demanding; but we were confident that God had given us that opportunity to serve and we were willing to do whatever was necessary to encourage these men to get their act together and to avoid returning to the work farm.

After a year or more, the administration of the prison opted to become more “inclusive.” They invited a minister from a nearby communion to share in these services. That gentleman didn’t have time for working with the prisoners, but he was willing to come each fifth Sunday and sing songs with the prisoners. After a few times of missing an opportunity to declare the Word of God, I chose to make the trek to the prison farm on one particular fifth Sunday. These were my people, and I wanted to know what they were receiving in my absence.

³ John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to Timothy,” in **Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon**, Philip Schaff (ed.), James Tweed and Philip Schaff (trans.), **vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series** (Christian Literature Company, New York, NY 1889) 506

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

It was a bitterly cold November day, but I was determined to meet the man who was providing service when I was absent. I rode my Suzuki through sleet mixed with rain, arriving at my usual time. I found a place with my parishioners shortly before Roland came into the hall. He was carrying a guitar and not much else. After retrieving the guitar from the case, he played some songs and sang, encouraging the men to join in from time-to-time. Other than my own voice, I don't recall hearing any others singing along with Roland.

After a while, Roland put the guitar in the case and spoke quite briefly to the prisoners. The substance of his remarks was, "You're really good men. If you try harder, you can stay out of jail and be productive in society. You're really good men." Other than myself, I didn't notice anyone listening to Roland. The warden, seated behind him, leaned back in his chair, a Winchester Model 94 .30-30 across his lap and an old hog leg .44-40 strapped to his side, his eyelids narrowed to a squint beneath the brim of his hat that was pulled low on his forehead. All the men I could see were slumped down in their seats, many with their eyes closed and their heads nodding.

After the service, brief as it was, the prisoners were returned to the stone house and their cells. I stood outside in the rain and talked with Roland; he was seated in his car with the heater on and I stood outside. I asked him about what he had said, wondering why he hadn't cited any Scripture references. He informed me that the Bible was a good book, but no better than any other book he might happen to quote. This caused me to ask some additional questions. What did he think of Jesus Christ? Roland allowed that He was a good man, but certainly not God. What about salvation? In Roland's estimate, everyone was going to heaven. What of divine judgement, I asked? In his view, heaven or hell was what one made of this present life.

I had never met anyone who denied these truths. "Roland, once you knelt before a bishop and took vows. When that bishop asked, "Do you believe in the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour," you affirmed, "I do so believe and confess."

Again, before a bishop of your communion, you were asked, "Are you persuaded that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and are the unique and authoritative standard for the church's faith and life?" At that time, you responded, "I am so persuaded by God's grace."

I then asked, "Did those vows mean nothing to you?" His response has never been forgotten in the ensuing decades, "I took those vows with mental reservations."

I was aghast; I exploded in exasperation. "Then, why did you go into the ministry?" Again, his answer fits with the view of far too many modern churchmen. Roland admitted, "Because it is an easy life. It pays well, doesn't demand much and gives me stature in the community."

I responded in astonishment, "Well, it ain't true for a Baptist preacher. We serve at God's appointment whether those to whom we are sent accept it or not." Since those days as a callow youth in the Lord's service, I fear that even too many Baptists have entered into the service of the Master because they see the ministry as an easy life.

Look at the text. The first word of **VERSE TWELVE** is "indeed," indicating that Paul is not an exception in being the target for those who persecute God's people. Timothy has witnessed Paul's suffering and has himself been on the receiving end of persecution. Nor should anyone imagine that persecution of the servants of God was something restricted to the early years of the Faith. Jesus repeatedly spoke of opposition from the world and the persecutions that His people would experience.

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Perhaps you recall the Master's words that have been recorded in **MATTHEW 10:16-25**. "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household."

Individuals who imagine that as the Prince of Peace, Jesus guarantees an absence of conflict are apparently unaware of His teaching recorded soon after He had spoken these words. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" [**MATTHEW 10:34-39**].

I know that I frequently refer to Jesus' words delivered as He prepared His disciples for His exodus, but His Words must be kept in the forefront of the mind of each servant of Christ. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also" [**JOHN 15:18-23**].

These warnings are especially vital for those men who serve in the capacity of a spokesman for the Master. A herald of Heaven must declare the truth of Heaven; and those divine declarations, regardless of how lovingly and graciously they may be delivered, will always confront the darkened heart of the lost. Confronted with their lost condition, the denizens of this fallen world react with choler and with hostility out of their fallen nature. Since they cannot strike at the One who sends the Word, they lash out at the one bringing the message.

Recall another teaching concerning opposition that Jesus delivered to His disciples. Jesus warned the disciples that they would shortly be scattered and that He would appear as though He was deserted. However, He told them that He would not, in fact, be deserted since the Father would be with Him. Then, Jesus instructed the disciples (and all disciples to this day), "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" [**JOHN 16:33**].

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

When Paul was completing the first missionary tour, he retraced his steps, moving again through the communities where he had presented the message of life and established congregations. Doctor Luke informs us that his intent was “strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” [ACTS 14:22]. What a marvellous encouragement he delivered! “Through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God!” Imagine a preacher today delivering a message such as this and calling it encouragement. If we focus on the moment, we are sure to be discouraged and disappointed. If, however, our focus is entering the Kingdom of God, these momentary trials will be seen for what they are—momentary, transient!

In what is arguably his earliest letter to have been entered into the canon of Scripture, Paul spoke of the trials Christians face. “We sent Timothy, our brother and God’s coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know” [1 THESSALONIANS 3:2-4]. This is Apostolic preaching!

What I can tell you as a certainty drawn from the text for today is that “evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” When their wickedness is exposed through the teaching of the Word, they will react with anger, striking out in their rage at the one whom they see as thwarting their designs on deceiving the people of God. The servant of God can anticipate a strong reaction when he faithfully declares the truths of God.

Peter also warned of these people when he wrote, “False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words” [2 PETER 2:1-3]. In our text, Paul warns of assault against the Faith, adding that the pernicious efforts of false teachers to deceive will intensify as the age moves toward its cataclysmic conclusion.

What is at once disheartening and encouraging is what happens when false teachers insinuate their wicked teaching into the life of the faithful. The disheartening aspect is that “many will follow their sensuality.” As many follow their sensuality—their emphasis on the material aspects of life, “the way of truth will be blasphemed.” Surely this what is witnessed in this day by the number of followers that mindlessly follow popular televangelists promising material blessing through adherence to them and to the precepts they present rather than insisting on commitment to the Son of God. Though these false teachers are often lionised in popular media, they are in fact the reason for much of the ridicule that is a caricature of the Faith. Their distorted presentations are thought by many to be Christianity; their teachings are, in fact, a perversion of the Faith.

The heartening aspect of what Paul has written is that the Lord will rescue from every evil planned against His servant. When the three Hebrew men were haled before the king to answer for their refusal to bow down before his idol, their answer spoke for all who look to the Living God for vindication. “We do not need to give you a reply concerning this. If our God whom we are serving exists, he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O king, from your power as well. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we don’t serve your gods, and we will not pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected” [DANIEL 3:16-18, NET BIBLE].

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Our God is able to deliver us from every evil. If He chooses to allow us to suffer, it will be to His glory. With the Psalmist, we say with confidence,

“I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, ‘You are my God.’
My times are in your hand!”

[PSALM 31:14, 15]

Is it not humbling to ponder the impact of the Apostle’s words to the saints in Philippi? “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” [PHILIPPIANS 1:29]. No Christian suffers without God’s glory being revealed. The suffering may be painful, but suffering surrendered to Him results in glory for Him and for us.

This letter to Timothy demonstrates the confidence and the courage that marked the life of the Apostle. This attitude must mark the life of the servant of God even to this day. God had rescued Paul from the evil others intended for him [see VERSE ELEVEN]. Later, he would write, “The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed for all the Gentiles to hear. And so I was delivered from the lion’s mouth! The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever! Amen” [2 TIMOTHY 4:17, 18 NET BIBLE]. Amen, indeed!

MY EXAMPLES — Indulge me as I recall the mentors with whom I have been blessed. No preacher can claim to be independent of others. Whatever of eternal worth is accomplished in the ministry of any preacher, it will be because that man stood on the shoulders of giants. Early in my service before the Lord, I acquainted myself with the sermons of great men. I consumed their sermons, buying cassette tapes and books of their sermons, studying how they handled the Word and how they handled the ministry to which God had assigned them.

Among the preachers who influenced me greatly are Baptist luminaries such as Charles Spurgeon, John Broadus and J. Frank Norris. I read everything I could find from the pen of Jonathan Edwards, A. W. Tozer, James Montgomery Boice, Chuck Swindoll and John MacArthur. I would travel great distances to hear expositions delivered by such notable preachers as John R. Rice, Vance Havner, Adrian Rogers, Lee Roberson and R. G. Lee. My library included hundreds of well-thumbed books of sermons delivered throughout the ages.

Even now on my computer, the records reveal that I continue to consume the insight provided by men such as these. For years the only book I have read more than books of sermons and commentaries is the Word itself. I have read through the Bible at least fifty times, and the New Testament perhaps seventy times. It is still my goal to read through the Bible continually, saturating my mind with the Word of God.

In a message delivered in 1882, the British Baptist, Charles Spurgeon, wrote of John Bunyan, one of his favourite authors, “He cannot give us his ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, ‘Why, this man is a living Bible!’ Prick him anywhere; his blood is Bibling, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God.”⁴ Similar things could readily have been said, and in fact were said, of Spurgeon himself. Those gifted men under whom I served were similarly Bibling in every respect as I devoured their messages.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, “The Last Words of Christ on the Cross,” in **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons, vol. 45** (Passmore & Alabaster, London 1899) 495

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-13
I DID NOT QUIT

Two men in particular served as my immediate mentors; I was privileged to observe them closely in their ministries. Dr. James L. Higgs was a powerful expositor of the Word. It was under his ministry that I came to faith and received my earliest training. Dr. Higgs provided multiple opportunities for me to serve the people of God, encouraging me and daring to take risks while allowing me maximum freedom in my service. I readily confess that I have modelled my ministry on what I observed in him during those formative years of my own service.

The other pastor that influenced my life and my service so greatly was W. A. Criswell. I saw what powerful saints were created through the expository method of declaring the Word of God. I saw that a man relying on the power of the Spirit would accomplish things far beyond the realm of mere mortal power.

Timothy had the finest model for service imaginable. Therefore, the Apostle could write, “As for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it” [2 TIMOTHY 3:14]. I do not claim to have lived a perfect life; but I have endeavoured to live a godly life before you. I do not claim to be the best pastor you could ever have; but I have laboured to demonstrate the love of Christ to you. I do not claim to be the finest preacher within the ken of those who hear; but I have made it my ambition to speak with authority as I deliver the Word of God. I have made every effort to ensure that you have received the full message of life. Before God and by His grace, with the Apostle I can attest that “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying ... of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” [ACTS 20:20, 21].

Have you committed your life to Christ the Master? Are you now engaged in this great struggle to advance His Kingdom? Are you standing firm in His grace? I would be remiss if I failed to call you to repentance and faith in the Risen Lord of Glory. God now calls all who will receive the offer, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” [ROMANS 10:9-13]. Receive Him and the life He offers. Do it now. Amen.