

“Defenders of the Faith”

October 7, 2018

2 Timothy 3:10-13

I. Introduction

When I was a physics/math teacher at Greendale High School, I had a physics student who applied to the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Her grades were more than adequate. She had all the letters of recommendation that she needed. She had passed all the physical requirements to become a midshipman, including strength and agility, except for one thing—she ran with abandon and she wasn’t able to run the mile within the required time limit. So she and I worked on her “running form.” But no matter how much we discussed what needed to change, she just couldn’t get her time down. Actually, it was difficult for her to visualize some of the things that needed to be avoided or changed.

We decided that she needed an example. So every other morning during the summer, I would go to her house and she and I would run a mile or two. I would run in front of her and she would follow my example—good or bad, she learned to run like me. By the end of the summer she was completing a mile run below the time set by Annapolis. She made it into the Naval Academy and became a navy officer. (And before anyone asks me, no, I don’t remember what any of the times were.)

Paul has just finished telling Timothy about the ungodly character and ministry of the false preachers and teachers that would try to hinder Timothy’s ministry in Ephesus. As well as warning Timothy of what to watch out for, in the 2 letters he wrote to Timothy, Paul discussed the duties and qualities of a true defender of the faith—a Christian. But many people learn from observation—watching others, so in today’s Scripture Paul told Timothy, like he did the Corinthians in [1 Corinthians 4:16](#), “I urge you to imitate me.” The writer of Hebrews made a similar point in [Hebrews 12:1](#): “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses (or examples), let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

II. Characteristics of a Defender of the Faith

The NIV translation of [verse 10](#) is a little weak—instead of “You know all about my teaching...” a better translation would be “You, however, have followed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance.” Actually the Greek word means *to follow alongside*. It means to follow a person *physically*, to stick by him through thick and thin. It means to follow a person *mentally*, to be attentive to his teaching and to fully understand the meaning 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 be the kind of person he wishes his follower to be. Basically, this “follower” is a disciple.

Timothy didn't just have Paul's teachings in his letters, Timothy had lived and worked with Paul. He had seen Paul in good times as well as bad times. Paul lived what he preached. Paul listed 9 qualities or characteristics of a defender of the faith—they can be divided into three categories beginning with

A. The Duties

1. Teaching The first duty is *teaching*. In Paul's case this meant teaching the true faith, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul expanded on this in chapter 4—turn to 2 Timothy 4:1-3. Jesus said in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Timothy's duty—every Christian's duty—is to teach the truth of God's Word. No man can teach what he does not know, and therefore before a man can teach Christ to others he must know Him himself—he must be a follower of Jesus Christ.

2. Walk the Talk The duty of every Christian isn't just to teach the truth to others; it is also to help them do it. Paul hadn't just taught the truth, his way of life backed up his messages—this is the second duty: *Walk the Talk*. Unlike some pastors today, Paul didn't preach sacrifice and live in luxury. He gave to others more than he received from them—in Acts 20:35 Paul said, "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Paul stood for the truth even when it meant losing friends, and, in the end, losing his life. He lived what he preached. He walked the talk. How much damage has been done to God's kingdom and to God's name by those who failed to live by the truth they taught?

3. Have the Correct Motive The 3rd duty is to *Have the Correct Motive or attitude*. Micah wrote about the purpose or motive of a follower of God—turn to Micah 6:6-9. In the Great Commission, Jesus gave the purpose of a Christian. In Acts 20:24 Paul put it this way, "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me-- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." Then in verse 27 he added, "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God." Contrary to our culture, such things as creature comforts, self-love, self-fulfillment, self-promotion, and self-preservation should have no place in a Christian's life. The single motive of a Christian's life is to bring glory to God by sharing His Gospel with others through word and deed.

B. The Virtues

1. Faith The second category of qualities of a Christian is the virtues found in his or her life beginning with faith. This is more than saving faith. This is complete belief that God's commands are binding and His promises are true. Living a life of faith means that God is trusted to meet our every need. For example, every Sunday morning we pray the Lord's Prayer together and we say, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Do you really believe that God will answer your prayers?

2. Patience The 2nd virtue Paul listed was patience—the KJV calls this *longsuffering*. This particular Greek word usually meant “*patience with people.*” It is the ability not to lose patience when people are foolish, not to grow irritable when they seem unteachable. It is the ability to accept the foolishness, the perversity, the blindness, the ingratitude of men and still to remain gracious, and still to toil on.

3. Love Agape love, sacrificial love is the third virtue of a servant of God. [Ephesians 5:2](#) says that we are to “live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Love in the life of a Christian is so critical that [1 John 4:8](#) says, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

4. Endurance Endurance, the 4th virtue, means to “stick with it when the going gets tough.” Like the examples in Paul’s life, it means more than passively sitting down and bearing things, it is triumphantly facing them so that even out of evil there can come good. It isn’t a spirit that accepts life, but a spirit that masters it. [Hebrews 10:36](#) says, “You need to persevere, i.e., endure, so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.” This leads to the 3rd Category ...

C. The Difficult Experiences

1. Persecutions The Bible has never promised that the life of a Christian will be without problems. In [John 15:20](#) Jesus said, “Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.” Peter wrote in [1 Peter 4:12](#), “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.” Paul wrote in [2 Timothy 3:12](#), “Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” One of the qualities or characteristics of a defender of the faith—of a Christian is *Persecutions*.

2. Sufferings The final characteristic *sufferings* go along with persecutions. Many years before he wrote the 2nd letter to Timothy, Paul wrote of his own sufferings—[turn to 2 Corinthians 11:23-28](#). Suffering didn’t come only from external things, Paul also suffered because of his “concern for all the churches.”

Timothy was with Paul during many, if not all of the sufferings that happened to him “in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.” Those 3 cities were in Timothy’s home province of Galatia. Lystra was Timothy’s hometown, where he must have seen Paul heal the man who had been born crippled and where he witnessed the apostle being stoned and left for dead ([Acts 14:8-10, 19](#)). From that time on, Timothy had seen and experienced the persecutions and sufferings of Paul and had seen his courage and character in the midst of it all. He may have been there when Paul wrote [Romans 8:18](#), “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” Yet, with “all the persecutions I endured,” Paul wrote back in 2 Timothy, I can say that “the Lord rescued me from all of them.”

Paul closed this section by reminding Timothy that “evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” This will continue until the Lord returns. These are the very evil men and impostors Paul described in the first 9 verses of this chapter.

III. Conclusion

Paul has made quite a list for each and every Christian to strive towards. How do you measure up to these goals? Do you share the Gospel message with others? Jesus said in [John 3:18](#), “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Are you telling others so that they can be saved from an eternity in hell? [1 Peter 3:15](#) says, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Are you ready?

How about your life—do you walk the talk, i.e., do your actions prove to others that you are a child of God—a Christian? Or are you no different from the nonChristians in your life? If someone took you to court, could they prove that you are a Christian by your actions? What is your purpose, your motive in life? Do you bring glory to God in your actions, your words, your thoughts?

What about the 4 virtues Paul listed—do you really trust God and His promises? How many nights to you lay awake worrying about things over which you have no control instead of giving them to God who does have control? Are you patient? With your spouse, your kids, those annoying people around you? Would they say you are a gracious person? How about agape love? It’s kind of easy to love those who love you, but what about those obnoxious people that you meet—do you love them with a sacrificial love? When things get tough for you as a Christian do you endure and shine for Christ in the midst of trials? Or are you like Peter in the high priest’s courtyard and you deny even knowing who Jesus is?

If we are truthful to ourselves, we all have fallen short of these nine characteristics. But we are in good company, in [Philippians 3:12](#) Paul wrote, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.” The important thing is that we recognize that we have fallen short and that, like Paul, we continue to strive so that we will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved us for and wants us to be. As an old poster said, “*Be patient, I am a work in progress.*”