

Let me start today with a quote... and then ask you if you agree with it. Are you ready...? Here it is: “*An ounce of example is worth a pound of preaching...*” Do you agree...? ... Some of you might be thinking: “*No I have to disagree. An ounce of example is worth A TON of preaching...*” and I would be inclined to have the same opinion.

This is at the crux of the passage we come to today. Paul is writing to Timothy... who is in the midst of the ministry battle of his life. So Paul points to his life and says, “*If I can endure hunger, cold, loneliness, beating, flogging, stoning, and near death, you can surely endure the challenges of a difficult ministry.*” “*An ounce of example is worth a ton of preaching...*”

When New Testament scholar William Lane taught at Western Kentucky University... one of his students... who happens to be one of Patti’s and my favorite contemporary Christian musicians... was Michael Card. William Lane and Michael Card developed a friendship that led to a discipling relationship. Michael learned how to read Scripture... treat his wife... serve the church... and love God – all by watching Dr. Lane. ... Eventually Michael graduated... Dr. Lane moved to another university... and though they stayed in touch... their lives took separate paths.

Years later... Professor Lane was diagnosed with terminal cancer... and the Lanes decided to move to Franklin, Tennessee... where Michael Card lived with his family. ... As Card tells the story... Professor Lane had a purpose in this. ... He said to Michael on the phone: “*I want to come to Franklin.... I want to show you how a Christian man dies.*” ... The Lanes

made the move... and many months later Card's beloved mentor died. But he left behind a powerful lesson in finishing well.

That's what Paul has done for Timothy. This is Paul's final letter that he wrote. His executioners are coming for him – at any moment... and Paul knows this. ... Now Timothy is told that he must live what he has seen. This was especially important because Timothy was in the midst of some very difficult times and Paul has just told him (in the passage we saw last week) that he should expect things to only get worse.

Last week we looked at the passage in 2nd Timothy 3 which describes (in very graphic terms)... the times of distress which will come repeatedly during this period of "*the last days*" (that is... the 2,000 + year-period between our Lord's first coming... until He returns again.) ... Looking ahead to a verse that we come to this morning... I noted that these seasons would increase and intensify just before the time of Christ's second coming. The list of rather vile behaviors that we looked at last week... (we also saw)... are occurrences perpetuated by the church members toward other church members. (Look with me - at them again...)

2 Tim 3:2-4

When such circumstances arise among believers... it is only natural for us to ask: "*How can a Christian cope? ... What do we do in response to such times of pressure?*" ... As he was writing to Timothy... I think that the Apostle Paul understood that this would be Timothy's question too. ... Paul had left him in the pagan environment of Ephesus to lead the wayward leaders of the church there. ... Timothy undoubtedly was questioning in his own heart what he could do to withstand the pressure of the times. ... How

could he resist being swept along into hard-hearted cynicism... blatant immorality... or blasphemy... bitterness and resentment in his heart against the workings of God? ... (And) How do we stand in such times?

The apostle answers by giving Timothy two simple things to do. Today we will take the first of these. ... (Paul's answer runs from 2nd Timothy 3:10 through the end of the chapter.) ... In the first part... Paul says to Timothy: *"Remember my model. Do what I did. Do what you saw me do when you traveled with me these past 15 or 16 years. Remember my example."* The second thing Paul says to Timothy is: *"Trust the Scriptures to guide you. This Book is given to help us through times of persecution, stress and difficulty. It is the book of reality."*

All that we will study in today's passage leads us to verse 14. ... 2 Tim 3:14 is the key to our passage. ... Look at it... It says...

2 Tim 3:14

What a tremendous impact a good model can make! Timothy had the best training... with the exception of the twelve disciples (who had the Lord Jesus, Himself.) ... But Timothy knew firsthand what it took to combat spiritual error and preserve the truth. This was no time to fail under the pressure of difficulty. It was time to look for a good model.

Often... more than we realize... we are influenced by those who have lived with... worked with... and served with. ... Sometimes the influence is for good... sometimes for bad. ... Sometimes it is conscience and direct... and sometimes it is unconscious and indirect. ... For that reason... it is of inestimable importance that we take great care in choosing those we associate with (especially if they are in positions to influence us spiritually.)

“Do what I did. Follow my example,” Paul says. Insofar as what you and I know about the Apostle Paul... you and I can still do what he tells Timothy to do... and follow what we know about his example.

2 Tim 3:10-11

When we ask ourselves *“What did Paul do when his world threatened to come apart...how did he react in that first generation of Christians...when the whole Roman world was about to explode in warfare...when pagan pressure and superstition abounded on every side and the civilized world seemed to be given over to widespread sexual immorality ?”* We must notice the first thing Paul says: *“Timothy, you followed my teaching.”*

What did Paul do when the world was in trouble? ... He taught the truth! He reminded himself and his hearers of what is real about life. ... He exposed the illusions and the delusions of his day... to the revelation of Scripture... so that people could get their heads on straight and think truly and realistically about life. ... The world around us is swimming in confusion. (Now) we can discuss politics (what our leaders should and should not do) – but it would be so much better if we focused on learning and teaching God’s Word. (LISTEN!) the only way we are going to keep our heads above water... is by focusing on God’s truth today.

Every so often a movie or a book comes along and captures our attention (and especially our emotions.) The story gives us compelling reasons for WHY we should be nervous about some very present and real danger... like a nuclear holocaust. Perhaps our alarm is raised about terrorist nations building a nuclear bombs. – So the average citizen wonders: *How long will life on planet Earth continue to exist as we know it...?* Even we (as

believers)... can get very worked – up and concerned. ... But are we to fear the virtual elimination of life from the face of the earth?

There is no question that nuclear holocaust would mean virtual destruction of the human race — nevertheless... in our considerations... very often... there is a missing element. ... We need to turn to the Word of God and lean heavily on the truth of His sovereignty over human events... that God (not man)... is in charge of this world! ... We need fresh insight that man purposes but God disposes... (in other words: that there are limits to man's ability to carry out his evil purposes.) ... (And) we needed to see again... that God puts in the hands of Christians spiritual weapons... by which to influence the times in which we live.

Scripture is to guide us in times of despair... of pressure... and of stress. It is the first thing Paul mentions. He lists it before he points to himself as an example. In perilous times... we need to see again that God is in charge of life. Keep your head above water and proclaim God's truth to a fear-filled society.

Then (not only) was Paul's teaching involved... but... (as he puts it) so was his conduct. "*You followed my conduct,*" he says. ... Paul practiced what he preached. ... In times of stress... Paul controlled his temper... subdued his lusts... mastered his passions... conquered his fears... and forgave his enemies. ... He did what God told him to do.

If we want to follow Paul's example in our present stressful times... let us teach! Let us open men's eyes and hearts to what God is doing in this world.

There is a conspiracy of silence against that today. That is why people are scared to death. They live in downright abject fear... because of what the future holds for them. How wonderful for Christians to be able to unfold the realities of life to people and to manifest those realities in their own conduct! ... That is the greatest thing we can do to steady the world in this time of danger.

Not only did Paul model his actions for Timothy... but he also modeled his attitudes. He says, *“Remember my aim in life... Remember too... my faith...and my patience...my love...and my steadfastness (or perseverance.)”* Those are great qualities which the apostle had set as an example before this young man.

What was Paul’s aim in life? ... He (himself) tells us in many places... most notably is 2nd Corinthians 5:9. Look at it with me...

2 Corinthians 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Everything Paul did in life was done with the understanding that it would either please the Lord Jesus... or it would result in grief of heart to him. That was Paul’s guiding light.

Paul’s special aim in everything he did was to please the Lord Jesus. What a simple thing that is... and yet how profoundly it would affect us if we would ask ourselves a dozen times a day: *“Is what I am saying, what I am doing, what I am thinking, pleasing to my Lord?”*

With this the apostle links his faith... because that is what made his aim possible.

- Faith is the confidence that there exists certain invisible realities which are extremely important to us, and the acting in the light of those realities.
- Faith is believing that God is at work in running human affairs, and that he will give us power to love and to speak with gentleness and graciousness when we are being mistreated or abused.
- Faith is the consciousness of invisible realities.

Paul tells Timothy that that is the key to his behavior.

Then there was the apostle's patience. The word Paul used here always means with regard to people. Two words later Paul writes another word that is often translated as "*patience*" but that one means "*patience over circumstances.*" ... Here (however) the idea is with people. ... It means a resolute and persistent spirit which never gives up... and never gives in... on people - regardless the cost!

Sometimes it is hard to be patient with people. I have found that not everybody is as lovely or gracious, sweet and easy to get along with as I am, so there are times when I am tempted to be impatient with those stubborn people who cannot be much MORE like me! ... ***They*** ... (of course)... are thinking the same thing about me. So... one of the characteristics of a true Christian life... is that we **MUST** learn to develop patience.

With that Paul links love. This is the word (above all other) that ought to describe the Christian approach. ... Love means an acceptance of everyone as being valuable. You and I are not regard anyone with contempt or disdain. We are not put anyone down. ... We must understand that "hurt people – hurt people."

I have a young couple who are newlyweds... and who just got out of the US Army... in my public speaking class that I teach at the community college. The other day... before I started class... I overheard Brett lean over to Letticia and say that very quietly. (“Hurt people – hurt people.”) I hoped he was not talking about something that I did... but I interjected “*Hey that is what I say! It is one of my sayings! ... It’s so true!*”

(But you know)... My wife has to constantly remind me of this. The crabby store clerk who unnecessarily bit my head off... and I want to bite back... or the person who crowded in front of me in line... may be struggling with something in their life. Nevertheless... they are to be loved. ... (LISTEN!) You may not LIKE someone...but you must love them! (One of the associate pastors at my former church – Pastor Brad – would sarcastically tell me all the time: “*I may not like you right now... but I have to love you.*” ... You may not feel warm and fuzzy to be around someone who is in your life... but you must always do what is best for them.

Finally... there is the quality of perseverance. That means endurance with difficult circumstance... not quitting when the pressures get rough... hanging in there... not merely in a grin-and-bear-it attitude... but rather with a confidence that God is working things out.

Someone told the story of the man at a church prayer meeting who said: “*My favorite Scripture is the verse that says, ‘And it came to pass,’ because when something happens to me I remind myself that it didn’t come to stay, it came to pass.*” If you wait - it will pass.

Not only did Paul model his actions and his attitudes... but he specifically reviews for Timothy certain persecutions and sufferings that he underwent.

He says, *“You have observed my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured.”*

Paul had been driven by persecution from Antioch (Acts 13:50)... he had to flee from Iconium when a plot to lynch him was uncovered (Acts 14:5, 6)... and Timothy was in Lystra when Paul was stoned.

Rocks crashed against Paul’s skull... and he fell blood-spattered and broken beneath the rubble. *“He is dead”* they all thought... and his murderers departed... leaving his body to his followers.

The believers must have been sickened as they mourned such a loss. Timothy was among them – wondering what would they do without him? ... Suddenly Paul popped one eye open... then the other. ... *“It’s all right, brothers! No funeral today! Let’s get out of here!”* And “he got up and went back into the city” (Acts 14:20). What a memory for Timothy! He undoubtedly bandaged Paul’s wounds. (And) just imagine how that must have played and replayed in the young man’s heart. ... Remembrance of these things... is what Paul used to steel Timothy for faithful continuance.

Timothy witnessed the high personal cost of ministry. ... The apostle concluded his brief review of the past by acknowledging the hardships and praising God for delivering him through them all. ... *“Timothy, we’ve come this far together and you’ve seen the best and worst of it. And we’re still alive, still engaged in the work of the gospel. ... Suffering for the faith is normal – but so is the Lord’s rescue!”*

You may be like me and are a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. In a biography of his life... Elton Trueblood traces the years of Lincoln’s

presidency (a time when he was growing by leaps and bounds in Christian stature as a mature believer in Christ.)

The key to his growth... this biographer points out... was the personal anguish he suffered. ... He faced the terrible pressure of the war between the States —taking very personally and feeling very keenly the awful bloodbath that the nation was passing through... as thousands of boys from both North and South were dying on the fields of battle. And adding to all this... Lincoln's favorite son (his beloved 12-year-old Willie) died suddenly. ... Then there were also the daily scathing attacks of the press upon him. ... He was lampooned... ridiculed... mocked... and insulted in most of the papers. ... There was widespread opposition against him.

Rather than crushing him... rather than making him react with anger... bitterness... and slanderous insults in return... all of this humbled Lincoln. As he himself put it, *"I was often driven to my knees with the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."*

Through all the agony... the pressure and the anguish that he underwent... Lincoln came to understand and to see more clearly the sovereignty of God in national affairs... (how the hand of God was governing the conduct of the war and bringing about judgment on a people that would result in righteousness... justice... and truth in the land again.)

Here Paul shows no bitterness to Timothy, *"You were with me during many of those times of persecution. Yet Paul adds these words, "And out of them all the Lord delivered me."* And I am positive that Paul knew that his death was V E R Y imminent. His greatest rescue (his final rescue) was about to come... and he would go to his eternal home.

The fourth factor that Paul reveals here, and which he modeled for Timothy, is undoubtedly the most important of all. It is found in these words:

2 Timothy 3:11b-13

The bottom line of how to stand in times of pressure is right here. Paul knew the secret of the Divine Presence: the Lord was with him, working in all the events of his life. In everything Paul did, Jesus Christ walked with him and was beside him to strengthen and help him.

You cannot read Paul's letters without seeing that every one of them focuses upon the amazing truth that in all the difficult times and all the blessed times of his life, his Lord stood with him. We need to rediscover this secret today. Paul saw Jesus as Lord in charge of all events, "*the One who opens and no man shuts, the One who shuts and no man opens*" {cf, *Rev 3:7b*}...the One who lays a restraining hand upon the violent people of earth so that they can go only so far and no further... the One who restrains mobs and opens a door of escape in times of distress...the One who prepares men and women to be ready to respond when the Word is preached.

Paul saw Jesus as his own personal Savior Who forgave him his sins, Who picked him up when he was discouraged....Who stood by him in times of pressure. He saw Jesus as his Companion, as his dearest Friend Who never left him.

That is the secret of standing today. Christianity was never intended to be merely a creed that you believe, or certain doctrines that you subscribe to. Christianity is a Person whom you know, whom you live with, rely upon and walk with day-by-day.

But even more: Paul not only understood the secret of the Divine Presence, but also that his very trials were part of a designed course. In fact, he says, *“All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived.”*

We will pass through many troubles as we live out the gospel. Paul also told the Philippians, *“It has been given to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him”* (Phil 1:29).

And - Jesus (Himself) said: *“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:20). John would later echoes these words of Jesus by writing: *“Do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you”* (1 John 3:13). This are difficult words for us to hear... but they are all through the New Testament... aren’t they...? ... God doesn’t want you and I to be taken by surprise.

Race car drivers should expect some crashes... football players are not surprised by injuries... baseball players know the ball will hit them sometimes... and soldiers expect to be shot at. (LISTEN!)... Christians should expect some degree of persecution. ... Instead of being surprised by the world’s opposition... we should be surprised when we do not face any!

If we are not facing any opposition in our ministry... chances are we are not living out our calling to the hilt. ... Of course... we do not look for opposition. (We are not seeking enemies. I’m not!) ... But we must understand that opposition is inevitable for all who live godly lives. Some will experience physical oppression. Others will feel it in their hearts as they

grieve over other's lives. ... Many will be ignored... mocked... and rejected.

This sobering reality actually helps us. We know the world is not spinning out of control. No. This is what will happen in the last days. False teachers, like these mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, "will become worse, deceiving and being deceived" (3:13). Timothy is to remember this reality and to remember Paul's example as he continued following Jesus.

The Christian must decide to want to live this way for Christ. Because God's intervention (in willing lives)... produces dramatic visible change (godliness)... and a new set of values and priorities... And that is why God's enemies respond with persecution.

True Christianity is always a counter-culture movement. ... It is always against the grain. ... You will not always be popular when you stand and speak as a Christian. ... Sometimes you will; sometimes your words will be welcomed and reckoned as cold water on a hot day. ... On other occasions... what you say will be sneered at... ridiculed... and laughed at; you will be put down and rejected. All that is part of being a Christian. That is what it means to "*stand*" in these days.

There is a phony "*folk Christianity*" around today that will enable you to apparently escape all these persecutions. ... In every church there are people who are trying to put on a Christian front. Paul spoke about them in the passage we looked at two weeks ago... describing them as, "*holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power,*" (2 Timothy 3:5) They act like Christians... they read the Book... and sing the hymns... but they have no reality of Christ in their lives. ... That kind of Christianity does

escape a lot of persecution... because it never stands for anything. ...
But... in the end... it perishes along with the world. ... Many people (don't
be one of them) come to church and reflect the attitude that says:

*I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode
my soul, or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm
milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make
me love a smelly homeless man, or to pick beets with a migrant. I
want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not
new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like
to buy just \$3.00 worth of God, no more.*

That kind of Christianity is worthless. ... It does nothing to stem the tide of
corruption and disaster toward which the human race is headed. If we want
to be men and women of God... we are to follow the models that are held
before us.

As this age draws to a close... evil will increase - the apostle says. Men
and women who believe their own lies will speak with intense conviction so
that many will follow in their evil ways... victims of the great deceiver... the
god of this world... the devil. ... But if you want to stand against the
stream... if you want to make your life count in these days... then do what
Paul tells Timothy to do. ... **[P A U S E]** ...

In applying this text to our lives... we ought to consider two questions. ...
First... *do I have someone in whose footsteps I can follow?*

Abraham Heschel wrote, "*What we need more than anything else is not
text-books but text-people. It is the personality of the teacher which is the
text that the pupils read; the text they will never forget.*"

We all need those examples in our lives... so keep your eyes open. ... It
may be a parent or grandparent... a leader in the church... someone in

your small group or even someone whose life you've read about in church history. ... Don't put these people on a pedestal... but if they're truly following Christ... we can learn by following them.

The second question we ought to consider is this: *am I someone in whose footsteps others should follow?*

We are called to live in such a way that we can say "follow my example as I follow the example of Christ". Can you say to others: drive as I drive... spend money as I spend money... watch TV as I watch TV... love your spouse as I love my spouse... serve as I serve... speak as I speak... think as I think... walk as I walk?

If you want stand in the last days... choose wise examples. If you want those around you to stand in the last days... be a wise example.

*"An ounce of example is worth A **TON** of preaching..."*

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Are you in need of an example in your life ? ... Are you in need to BE a better example to someone else. ... Please be bold and stand up. Let me pray for you.