

Paul, Timothy and Troubled Times Part 7

Last Sunday in 2 Timothy 3 we heard Paul's warning to Timothy and to us about those who love self and pleasure more than they love God and about false teachers and their influence that deceives and draws others away from the truth of God's word. Beginning in 3:10, Paul points to the contrast between Timothy, between followers of Jesus and the world, those who don't know Christ. **"You however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them."** 2 Timothy 3:10-11 Paul is saying, "There is what the false teachers say and how they live, but you Timothy, you know me, what I say and how I live. You know my teaching, my character and conduct, how I live my life. While others are departing from the faith, departing from the teaching of the gospel and from the church, you Timothy "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know it's the truth, you know those who taught you this truth." That's Paul's counsel to Timothy. That's part of how he is preparing him so he can be sure to get through the troubled times.

You know me and my teaching. It's a lot of "me" and "my". Is he being boastful? No, Paul isn't bragging, he's simply making a valid point, extending an invitation to Timothy to examine Paul's teaching and conduct, his way of life. Think about it. Has the teaching of Paul, has the teaching of the word of God, has it made Paul, Timothy, us, better people? Has the gospel, living according to the word of God, has it made you a better person, a better friend, employee, student, spouse, daughter, son, brother, sister, parent? Contrast your life with the doctrine and conduct of the false teachers that Paul referred to, the ones who are lovers of themselves and are ungrateful, unloving, unkind, unforgiving, brutal, conceited, ungrateful, etc. That's the fruit of their teaching. That's the character and conduct that is produced from their way of life and from their doctrine. Quite a contrast isn't it? Bad fruit versus good fruit.

Paul says you know me, my purpose, my faith, my love, my endurance, my willingness to suffer for the truth, for the cause of Christ, for the church. Do you think any of those false teachers and deceivers, any of the people in that list at the beginning of chapter 3 were willing to suffer for what they believed? Do you think any of them were willing to suffer for others? No! They only loved themselves and pleasure. They weren't going to suffer or sacrifice for others.

Paul is saying Timothy, don't let their foolish arguments even start to move you. Think of what you've learned from me. You know me, my teaching and my way of life. You know about my purpose, my single minded commitment to Christ alone. You know about my genuine faith in God, my fidelity and loyalty to Christ and his church, his people. You know about my patience, my tolerance shown toward aggravating people and frustrating circumstances. You know of my love for all, my endurance and steadfastness, regardless of the circumstances. You know the persecutions I've endured and my refusal to surrender or to quit. Timothy knew the apostle Paul well. Paul was like a father to Timothy and Paul is not only reminding him of what Timothy had observed, but he is telling him, "you'll need to reflect these same virtues as well." "But as for you Timothy, continue in what you have learned..." Remember, Paul is preparing Timothy to stand alone because Paul knows he is about to be executed. "Take what I've shown you and taught you and keep running the race Tim! You'll have to remain faithful, even in persecution and troubled times. Continue to press on just as I've shown you."

Paul mentions persecution he had suffered in three different cities. Antioch (Acts 13:50), Iconium (Acts 14 where he escaped from people planning to stone him) and Lystra (Acts 14:19 where he was dragged outside the city, stoned and left for dead). Timothy was a citizen of Lystra and had possibly been there when Paul was attacked. It may have influenced him to become a follower of Jesus. The point is, Timothy knew the genuineness, the legitimacy of the faith, teaching, life, conduct and character of the Apostle Paul, of the one who had taught him the word of God! He knew his doctrine and he knew his way of life.

Let me say a word about the importance of the local church. I've seen so many people get fired up about some new preacher or teacher or teaching or prophetic word. We did it back in the days of the tv evangelists. "Why don't you preach and pray like... Why don't you prophesy like..." People got all fired up about preachers that in the end didn't have much character, but you can't see that or know that from tv. I can remember asking then, "Do you know those people? Do you know how they live? Do you know their conduct or their life style?" It sounded good on tv, and now it sounds good on Facebook, but do you know them? Do you know their doctrine, beyond that video? I'm not condemning anyone, I'm just saying, here is the value of the local church. You know the people, the teachers, you know your pastor. At least you can know them. It's Paul telling Timothy, "You know me, my teaching and my conduct." I don't know the lifestyle of all those prophets and preachers and they may all live

holier lives than all of us, but I knew the pastors of this local Assembly. I knew F.C.Cornell and H.D.Pieratt and J.L.McQueen (I need better initials). I knew their teaching, their way of life, the purpose they lived for. I knew them and the integrity of their heart and life and ministry. Give me a local church and a local pastor and people whose lives I can know and trust! We aren't perfect, we are flawed but forgiven, but you know who it is that is teaching you. You know the lives of those in the local church and that we are in this together. We are counting on each other in troubled times.

Paul is thankful the Lord rescued him out of every evil plot but he warns Timothy that whoever lives a godly life can expect to suffer persecution. Paul says it like a guarantee. You will be persecuted so don't be surprised. **“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” 2 Timothy 3:12-15**

The evil men, the false teachers (Paul calls them impostors or charlatans) will go from bad to worse. They not only are deceiving others but they will themselves be deceived. But you Timothy, you saints of God at Carbondale, continue in what you've learned and been convinced of. Continue in the Holy Scripture because you know it is reliable and true. It's inspired, God breathed he calls it. **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17** Continue to hold onto the word of God. It's vital! The apostle John tells us, **“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.” 1 John 2:24** and **“Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” 2 John 9.**

Stay in the word because you know this is truth. Stay in the word because persecution is coming and the Word will keep you in troubled times. Stay in the word because you know from whom you learned it. You knew their character, their way of life, their purpose, their love and calling, their patience and endurance, their integrity and faithfulness. I know who imparted this

truth to me. Like Timothy, from infancy, my parents and elders imparted the Scripture to me and introduced me to God's saving grace.

The first Sunday back in the Sanctuary after the remodel, we showed some pictures, reminding us we were surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. (Video). Some of you will recognize family, teachers, pastors, people that imparted the faith to you. If you grew up somewhere else, but in a church, you can visualize your own cloud of witnesses that influenced you and your life. The point is, we know who taught us and modeled for us a godly life. Someone taught you to depend on the grace of the Lord Jesus. Someone taught you to live in obedience to God's word because it is truth. Don't stop now. Don't stop because the days are evil. Don't stop because it's inconvenient. It's still the truth! Remember what you learned and what you became convinced of and remember who taught you and their testimony and then keep going! Paul said Continue! Continue in the truth! **“Continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of because you know those from whom you learned it...”** Continue! The church, this local church, is a means of communicating truth, of transferring that truth from one generation to the next. It's important. You need the church. We need the church to continue.

Sarah wrote something and posted it on Facebook this week. “Get you a church. Not just any church. A church full of people of multiple generations, with people who know you – like really know you. For my entire life I have looked over my shoulder and seen one or all of my grandparents worshipping Jesus behind me. This year has been tough because of covid my grandma and so many other saints haven't been able to attend in person. I've missed them. I've missed seeing them smile and sit in their assigned by God seats, I've missed hearing them say amen and seeing them worship. I've missed a lot of things. But last Sunday my grandma was behind me and so many others are making their way back to sit in the pews their hearts never left during these long months. My heart is feeling a little lighter...Sometimes in the middle of life's journey we can get sidetracked on what's most important about church and priorities and decisions that have to be made. This is why you need to be in a generational church because sometimes you just need to watch another generation worship and remind yourself that when all is said and done and the days left in the journey are fewer than the ones you've already walked, the promise that Jesus loves you and will never leave you is all that you need. I am thankful for my church for it's the House that built me, raised me, taught me and loved me then and now.” Continue in this because we know whom we've learned this from. It's the right stuff!

Will you continue? Will you remain steadfast and strong? Will you carry this truth on? Will you pass it to the next generation? Youth and college, young adults and young families, single and married, will you continue? Will you remain steadfast and committed to the faith and to the church and to the purpose to which God has called you? Will you stay committed to his word so you will be thoroughly equipped for every good work? Troubled times are upon us, living a godly life will get you persecuted, but we must stay committed to Jesus and continue in the truth that has been imparted to us!

May the Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.