

## 2 Timothy 3:1-13: Gospel Following

### Pray

**Opening Illustration:** Imitation is the most sincere form of flattery (one sock up, a sticker on my ear)! Michael Jordan shooting the fade away... Rudy in College

- **David and Goliath (Heb. 11)** – Most of the time I really push against using figures in the bible as examples, unless the person writing says follow me as an example – which is what we see in this text!
- **We are called to follow Paul as he follows Christ: *Though the Word is what changes people, we understand that it should be reflected in our lifestyle and so powerful example is a testimony to the changed life of Scriptures, one who is not a hearer only but a doer...***
- **We all are following someone and at some point or another we will all lead** – is our following and our leading consistent with the Gospel? Or is it more consentient with the list in this passage?

**Main Idea:** Avoid those who have an only appearance of godliness and follow gospel-changed examples through the power of the Gospel!

- **Path and People to destruction or to life?**
- **The faith once for all delivered to the saints is at stake** – will we be 2 Timothy 2:2 Christians who pass down faith (life and doctrine) or will succumb to those who creep in and lead astray?
- **Who are you imitating? Following?**

### I. Avoid those who have an appearance of godliness but not the real thing (1-5)

***1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.***

**Explanation:** Begins with “*but understand this*” or in NASB “*realize this*” – **don’t miss this Timothy in the last days there will be people inside the church that trouble the church!**

- Paul wants to be clear, that though he is hopeful some will come to repentance, many wont and there is time of great difficulty coming.
- **“Last Days” – When did last days begin?**
  - o The Scriptures teach the last days began when the Spirit was given in Acts 2:17
  - o ***So a short time after AD 30 when Jesus walked out of a grave in the Middle East we were in the last days***
  - o **It is clear here in this passage that Paul assumes we are in the “last days” because he tells Timothy to have nothing to do with them**, so Timothy will have to deal with these people
    - **D-Day:** We are in the last days when Satan is defeated, yet he is burning the earth!
    - **So don’t be surprised at the turmoil inside the church, rampant immorality, and even suffering** – this will continue until our ferocious King, tatted up comes as a warrior to strike down the nations and make things right!

***2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,***

**What will those who have an appearance of godliness look like?**

- **Paul will give no fewer than 19 traits of those to avoid** – we should note it seems this group is in or around the church at Ephesus.
  - o ***We need to be really careful here, we typically as Christians get more bent out of shape about what is going on in the culture outside of us and not about our own sin***
  - o **Example:** We first and foremost want to talk about homosexuality or other sins that we don’t believe we struggle with and rail against those, and then excuse gossip or the divorce rate among us! **That is backwards, of course the outside culture act like un-regenerates**; they don’t know Christ and don’t submit to him as King!
  - o **Paul is much more worried about people who pretend to be gospel people than the surrounding culture**

**Application:** so this applies to us, it is a warning and challenge to work out our salvation with fear and trembling **AND IT IS warning to those that might profess to be Christians (have an appearance) but not really be changed by the gospel!**

**Love issue:** The main problem with this group is a **“love issue” – they are idolaters**

- They love *self, money, and pleasure* rather than loving God! **Misplaced love!** That is what Idolatry is!
  - o **Romans 1** – They will deify man/idolizing themselves and they will idolize money, consumed by the material (a god) – **one would struggle to find better description of American culture!**

**Illustration:** Love yourself is even seen as a cure in our times. Believe in yourself. (Psychologist fight depression this way)

- **PROSPERITY LITE – Even in the church you can do it – it’s a self-actualization (self-help) gospel that is more about realizing your potential than a life of repentance, faith, and suffering!** In these calls you will rarely find preaching on the Lordship of Christ and radical nature of discipleship (**From Manger to a Palace! What is missing there? The gospel!**)

**We all worship something – we all love something:** Here they love themselves (narcistic), money (materialistic), and later pleasure (hedonistic)

**ILLUSTRATION:** Rick Warren on commercials – **make you a better you (so get this ab cruncher), or work from home and make millions, or drink this beer you’ll get this woman**

- **These misdirected loves play themselves out as a violent opposition to the Great Commandment – They don’t love God or others! They love themselves!**
  - o **Gospel reconciles 2 broken spheres (God and one another) – and this will come not through bearing down and trying harder, but through true heart change brought by the gospel!**

**...proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

**The Traits – when we love self all other kinds of actions follow – MOVE QUICKLY**

- **Selfish and Greedy**
- **Prideful and arrogant** – why is this pride, arrogance, or self-love wrong? Because we don’t estimate ourselves rightly and don’t understand where everything we have comes from! (**Shaq example from Chandler**)
- **Abusive/violent because have to get what they want!**
- **Children are disobedient, why is this so heinous?** It evidences you don’t understand authority and that your parents are a gift given to you...
- **Ungrateful** – again don’t recognize grace... especially children who are disobedient
  - o **When we complain, what is that saying? I deserve, I deserve... we deserve Hell... do we want what we deserve?**
- **Unholy**
- **No heart – unloving** – why? Cause they love themselves!
- **We can’t be pleased** – why? **Because we have turned from the only love that can satisfy** – love of God and Christ who ultimately satisfies
  - o **Even here we evidence that we don’t understand grace if we cannot be pleased**
- **Cut down others** – sharp with our tongues – NASB says “malicious Gossips”
  - o **Most of the time we do this because someone gets in the way of an idol we have** – so we are willing to do whatever it takes to cut them down so we get what we want, whether that’s the corporate ladder or a pleasure! **THIS IS A DANGER IN MOST CHURCHES!**

- **Lacking Self-Control and brutal** – *one commentator pointed out we become so obsessed with our loves (sex, food, drink, power, recognition) that we will become animals to gain them – one would be hard pressed to find a better description of a man at computer addicted to pornography!*
- **Don't love good**
- **Treacherous** – Hughes calls this Judas activity
- **Reckless** – sin makes us stupid – **EVEN MAKE US WALK OUT ON OUR FAMILY!**
- **Swollen with conceit** – vivid picture of arrogance! We are swollen by our arrogance! (GROWING UP I THOUGHT God has to have me and I mistakenly thought that was God speaking to me)

Finally, **Lovers of pleasure** – we are driven by our appetites

- **Controlled by pleasure** – **doesn't this describe us as a people: *I want what I want when I want it whether it is right or wrong!*** We don't love the gifts God gives rightly, and instead we deify them!

**Application: Where in your life is there a tendency to move from Loving God to loving something else more? And what activities follow that?** Recklessness? Slander? Lack of understanding grace?

- **The answer to this issue is to love the Creator more than the Creation** – only by having the right love will the other traits begin to pass away and be crucified (idolatry)!

**5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.**

**Explanation:** You see this group appears to be godly, but their heart has not changed (there is no gospel, no Spirit, no Power)

- **This should ALARM US because it is possible there are some listening to me right now that this is true of!**
- **Matthew 23/5 – Pharisees appear godly:** Jesus is not concerned with your external conformity to a moral code (appearance) – He is instead interested in your heart. **WHERE ARE YOUR LOVES directed?**

**Illustration: What kind of basketball player would Jesus be? AWANA/Me at Murray**

**We are called to avoid these people** – Paul had said previously some of them might be granted repentance – but he is clear that some will remain in their sin! And if they do, **AVOID** them!

- **Of course this does not mean we avoid sinners, we avoid those who claim the name of Christ but continue in this life that shows there is no power in their claims** – **ESPECIALLY IN MIND HERE IS THE TEACHERS**
  - o **This has in mind church discipline**, where one is a repetitive course of this kind of life without repentance, and after a time of speaking the truth to them and calling for repentance at some point we disfellowship with them – because they are not following Christ but dead religion

**Illustration: Holy Ostracism** – We need to be keen observers, over time their lack of gospel change will become evident.

- **Though, there is a clear difference between true believers falling into sin and this group, we should also realize we can be seen in this list as well** and this is a call for us to walk in step with the truth of the gospel (**Galatians 2**).

**What both groups need (appearance and us) is continual heart change:** This group needs to turn in full repentance and faith toward Christ, they need to lay down their self-idolization and fall on the mercy of Christ! He is the only one who can both kill our legalism or deliver us out of wild living as He calls us to follow Him as Lord!

- **A Hindu asked E Stanley Jones, what does Christianity offer that I don't have already have – which produced outward morality?** And he answered, “Jesus” that's all we have to offer for ourselves and for those trapped in this life! **But in that name there is power**

## II. (6-9) Especially from this group, Avoid the teachers who lead astray

**6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions,**

**Explanation:** Why do you avoid them? Because they seek to lead astray

- **HCSB says they worm their way in to win converts – Weak women (not all women, but certain group) – due to past sins (burdened with) they can be led towards false piety – Their lusts have led them to false piety ... gives picture of earning salvation by moral living!**
- **They carry the weight of past sin – and in essence call God a liar. This is a works based mentality of salvation! They don't believe forgiveness... no condemnation... I HAVE TO EARN IT!**
- **They have it backwards – we don't clean up to be accepted, we are accepted and then out of love and a changed heart we become more like Christ!**

**Their pattern is old – just like Satan coming to Eve in the Garden – with craftiness**

- *Cults have followed this example... Stott adds that this method of preying on women is a timeless tactic of false teachers. He says: Choosing a time when the menfolk were out (presumably at work), they would concentrate their attention on "weak women." This expedient, comments Bishop Ellicott, was "as old as the fall of man," for the serpent first deceived Eve. It was also employed by the Gnostics, and has been the regular ploy of religious commercial travelers right up to and including the Jehovah's Witnesses of our own day (Stott, 89).*

**Be Bereans: All of us need to flee/avoid this kind of man!**

- **I could point out some examples – Joel Osteen – but I hope you will know your Scriptures so well and be so discerning that when you hear a message that bears anything contrary your ears perk up!**
  - o **Be wary of any that preach prosperity, self-actualization apart from repentance and suffering – Many of these teachers twist the Scriptures, they don't give the whole counsel, they give some!**
  - o **Be wary of preaching that exalts the preacher and not the Christ! Or any false gospels!**
- **Itching ears – Paul will say later on that there is always a tendency for us to stock pile for ourselves teachers that please our ears and our passions of self-love, best life, prosperity and they will gain a hearing (ROB BELL and no hell!)**

**7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.**

**Explanation:** These men (I think it is these men because compared directly to Jannes and Jambres) who lead astray never come to full knowledge of the truth, instead they love the pursuit of learning.

- **There are always people who love to "trace out" all the mysteries of Scripture – but they really just like controversy and arguing. They convince themselves they are DEEP in the faith, and so want to argue all the controversial passages. They continue to "learn" but never come to a knowledge of the truth**
  - o **Prophecy charts – one example since this text mentions "last days" is prophecy charting – men secret code in the bible about the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming! These men are far more concerned with secret knowledge than the gospel, AVOID THEM!**

**8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.**

**Explanation:** These leaders who lead people astray. They don't only miss the truth, they oppose it.

- **Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned in Exodus (for those of you that memorized the book ;) – but they were mentioned in extra-biblical writings as the magicians who opposed Moses, God and His truth!**

- These men in Timothy's day are false leaders just like those magicians in Egypt:
  - o **And we notice here, that this opposition to the truth isn't just in the last days** – in fact this all out assault on God's Word and truth began in the garden itself, "*Has God said?*" – False teachers have always been around
- **Men Corrupted in mind... sin does this to us make us thinking stupid – Pastors that have affairs don't just do it one day, slow compromises...**
- **Disqualified regarding the faith** – they do not have saving faith; they have not been born again, since they oppose the gospel both in doctrine and life!
- **Paul is telling Timothy there will be and is an assault (opposition) to the truth** – so the theme of passing down the faith continues. And we hope to raise an army of men and women here **who guard, know and pass on the faith!**

**9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.**

**Explanation: Do not despair, they will not succeed, they will be EXPOSED... we know the church and the gospel will prevail**

- **These false men though at first may seem powerful will be shown as Frauds** – Ultimately all those who oppose the Gospel will be shown for who they are (whether they are a cult leader or a Megachurch pastor) – NASB says "*they will not make further progress*"
  - o *They don't have the power of the gospel and it will become evident, just like the power of the fakes were apparent when Aaron's snake swallowed theirs*

**This shows us the key in Christian life is perseverance** – true faith will last to the end. **Even here, the test for the true teacher and the false teacher is over time does the message stand up?**

**Application: Avoid these men – ask yourself, who am I am following? Who am I listening to? Who shapes my worldview? Even outside the church? Hollywood? Friends? Or godly bible teachers? Pastors?**

### **III. (10-13) Follow Gospel-Changed Examples by living in and out the power of the gospel**

**10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,**

**Explanation:** Now in contrast to these leaders, you have followed and observed me so keep following me in my life and Doctrine! Follow me as I have followed Christ!

**Timothy is encouraged to follow several things about his mentors life and to continue to remember God's Word (next week) – We are called to remember godly examples (Heb 11) as long as we see who they ultimately point us to, the Author and Finisher of our faith!** So as long as we understand that following their conduct doesn't save us and that they are an example only because Gospel has changed their life then follow them as they imitate Christ

- **We should all seek to say to those we disciple (are you disciplining anyone) follow me as I follow Christ** – 2 Timothy 2:2

**He tells timothy to remember – Paul is confident that he is a model in several areas:**

- **His teaching/Doctrine** (2 Tim. 2) – passing on the good deposit
- **His life** – we have said throughout this is focused on life and doctrine, healthy for both...
- **His Aim in life** (HCSB says PURPOSE) – this is daunting.

**Question: If someone could see your heart, what would they see is your Aim in Life? Would you want someone to follow you in that?**

- **We should all follow this purpose or aim in life of making disciples to the ends of the Earth**

- **Paul's purpose was as Tony says:** *far grater than pleasure, money, or fame, in fact he said in Acts 20 "But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:24). Paul's great aim in life was to finish his ministry of testifying to the gospel for the glory of Christ."*
  - o **So what is your purpose in life? Would you want anyone to emulate that? Who influences you and what is their purpose?**

**His Virtues:** *His faith, patience, love, and steadfastness (persistent and persevering)...*

- **These four qualities are at the heart of the Christian life – fruits of the Spirit** produced in the life of a gospel-changed man! The Gospel has changed his heart and now lives out a life of devotion to that King who rescued him.
- **Is the Spirit producing this in you? Is the gospel changing you? Making you more loving? Patient?**

**Application/Question:** **Who are you leading, who can you say this to?** Follow my life and doctrine? The church needs today men who can say to others... remember my... remember my... follow me as I follow Christ.

**11 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. 12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,**

**Explanation:** Now Paul says not only remember my life and doctrine, **but also remember how radical I am about this message!**

**Paul points him to his sufferings – He is saying you want to know I believe this message that I am radical about it? LOOK AT MY BACK!**

2 Corinthians 6: *but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, 5 in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, 6 in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 7 in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, 8 by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; 9 as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, 10 as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.*

**Our suffering demonstrates the radical change of our heart...** instead of loving self, we love Christ so much that we would be honored to share in His sufferings (*The apostles left the council rejoicing because they had been considered worthy to suffer for the name!*)

- Piper says this suffering puts the beauty and suffering of Christ on display – so Timothy be encouraged
  - o **Contrasting Prosperity and Suffering:** Piper points out that suffering not prosperity (false teachers) will show the all-satisfying nature of Christ!
- **Paul is clear that from them all, the Lord rescued him – Will we always be rescued from trials, sufferings – in one sense yes... gloriously yes!**
  - o **We don't seek suffering, but we are ready for it and He will rescue one way or the other... either here or in the next life**

**Will be persecuted:** This verse shakes me up.... **Why have I not really faced persecution, do I desire to live a godly life in Christ?**

- **I don't know if I have all the answers to this today...** it is possible because religious liberty rules the day here for now that we don't face suffering as much, or it might be that we aren't bold enough!

**My Brother says of suffering:** *I think the point of suffering is that when you are joined to Christ by faith as your savior/master through the gospel then you re-live his life, and his life was one of suffering for*

righteousness sake. I think clearly the point of the Stephen narrative is that Stephen attains conformity to the image of Christ when he suffers & forgives his enemies. The point of Stephen's sermon (and Jesus teaching in many places like the parable of the vineyard where no servant is greater than His master and if they persecuted me they will persecute you, etc) is that the forerunners to Jesus suffered, and then Jesus suffered, and then Stephen joins in the story line. Jesus promises that for his followers. We are, according to Acts 4, the anointed Son of Psalm 2 whom the nations rage against since we are in Christ.

**So if we are joined to Christ and live radically for His light to go out into the dark places, we will face suffering:**

- **And this goes beyond example here, because Paul says the power is only for those "In Christ"** – The power to face this comes from Christ not just following His example but by being united to Him!
- ***We don't suffer because we are best-disguised pilgrims ever*** – We don't live as though this isn't our home, instead we are comfortable here! We are indistinguishable from our surroundings. We don't live as fighting for holiness

**Even as We consider our Country this week, we must be careful that this is not our home** – we are pilgrims headed toward another country. LONGING FOR THE day when there is no longer a USA, but a universe ruled by a man with **scars on His hand**. **The idolatry of America runs deep**, we should love our country and be thankful for religious freedom, but we should never misplace that love or our hope in America

**Illustration – Muslim Context:** Lets radically press on together, lets do something daring for Christ and Trust that even if we are in a context where we hear Arabic voices that say, "*there is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his final prophet...*" we will say in the face of that **"Jesus is Lord"** because we believe the Lord will rescue us and we believe that even if we are beheaded on the last day **the voice of the Galilean** is able to put heads back on!

- **We go like Zinzendorf – who hoped only that he might be counted worthy, *May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of His suffering***

**Application/Question:** *So, how will we know that we are a faithful church and our next generation is faithful? One question, do we suffer?* Are people both drawn to our message and others enraged by it?

***13 while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.***

**Explanation:** These teachers will progress both in deceiving and themselves being deceived – these teachers will get worse than Paul gets if they never come to a knowledge of the truth, **they get worse than persecution, they get hell** as they blind others and blind themselves!

**Conclusion**

**I am sure in light of the teaching today we all have areas where we need to repent – all of us are drawn whether we are false believers (picture here) or struggling believers to the love of self.**

**And what is the answer for those in this room who know they are not believers, those in this room they may be deceived that they are believers, and those in this room that are believers and need to repent?**

- **Jesus Christ** – again that is all we have to offer and He is the only one that can change hearts and bring true peace! That is why we should be weary of examples, because He is the only man who will never fail us!
- **And This is where idea of example falls short** – we need more than example we need the power to live this out
- **And that only comes through Christ who lived the life we couldn't live and died the death we should have died** – you need deliverance from self-love, idolatry, slander, malice, arrogance, children your disobedience, our abuse, etc.
- **How does it come?** Christ bore in His body all of our self love, debauchery, etc

- **And why was He an acceptable substitute?** Because He only truly lived the life of godliness never denying its power. He alone is the true sufferer for righteousness sake and *He alone could stand in that judgment for all of our wickedness and malice and come out safely on the other side!*
- **What is the answer in this room?** Look to Him the author and finisher of our faith, fall on Him for mercy and turn from your idolatry
- **And how can you persevere in the faith, even through persecution?** Not in remember a prayer you prayed, but in right now and every moment for the rest of your life Trusting in Christ as our King who alone deserves our highest love and adoration... *because we were rebels and slaves, and He went through the pit and brought us to the other side!*

**So imitation is the best form of flattery, but ultimately only Christ can say follow my way of life and actually give you the power and changed heart to do it even if that leads us to persecution and crucifixion!**