

**THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD**  
Arlington Presbyterian Church (PCA)

***A Discernible Difference***

2 Timothy 3:10-13 (595)

February 10, 2002

There is nothing like confirmation to spur us on in some endeavor. You may be a struggling student who has studied long and hard in preparation for an examination. Your endurance and hard work are confirmed when you get your exam back and it has a big red “98” on the top with a note from the teacher which says, “Well done.” I am trying to lose a few pounds. The other night one of the brothers commented, “You’re looking thinner.” Whether that is the case or not, I took his observation as a confirmation that I am making some progress. Confirmations like these encourage us and spur us on to continue in a particular endeavor or pursuit. This is especially the case when the going is difficult.

Timothy is in the middle of a very difficult situation in his church. His ministry is being undermined. His congregation is being stirred up. Theological error is taking root. It’s a big mess. Paul is writing to encourage him. And one means he employs is confirmation. He gives renewed assurance to Timothy of the validity and vitality of the work he is doing. He is telling Timothy, “You’re doing the right things. Keep it up.” Look at **3:14**, *You, however, **continue** in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.* There are two specific things Paul has in mind when he confirms Timothy in his work. In **3:14-17** he assures him he is using the right **equipment**

– the Scriptures. But first, in **3:10-13** he tells him that he’s following the right **example**. This first confirmation is the focus of the sermon this morning. Here’s the point: *to the degree that your life and ministry conform to the apostolic model, you may be encouraged.* I must add, *to the degree that you deviate from the apostolic model you are deceived in terms of the vitality of your faith and practice (3:13).* Now what had Timothy learned and from whom did he learn it?

From time to time David and I will take a trip to Best Buy. He enjoys just looking around at the computer stuff, car stereo equipment, sound systems, TVs and all the rest. Pictures on TVs these days are remarkable for their clarity, sharpness, brilliance and accuracy of color. Timothy possesses an accurate, clear, sharp, and full-color picture of what the Christian life and ministry are all about. This picture is in the person of the Apostle Paul – his spiritual father and mentor.

**2 Timothy 3:10-13 ... 10** *But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,* **11** *persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!* **12** *And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* **13** *But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

We begin in verse 10. ***But you followed.*** This word has a double meaning. During an election year we might say, “I’ve been “following” the Presidential race.” After 9/11 most of us found ourselves “following” the events in New York and in Afghanistan. Timothy, likewise, *followed* Paul in the sense that he was present at or at least aware of the *historical* events and flow of Paul’s life ... *You followed my ... persecutions ... such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium*

*and at Lystra*. But the primary sense here is that Timothy actually patterned his own life after that of the apostle. What he saw in Paul he made his own. And Paul lists nine things which characterize his life and ministry as an apostle. Nine things which Timothy observed, accepted as true, and considered worthy of imitation. Nine things which distinguish authentic Christianity from the counterfeit. Paul is saying, “Timothy, this is what authentic, genuine Christian faith and practice looks like. You know this, now stick with it.” Beloved, if you are pursuing these nine things be encouraged. The Spirit of God confirms you in them. And let this confirmation spur you on to more and more **BE** what is outlined here. You see Paul modeled these things for Timothy. Timothy modeled them for others. And now you are a model, a picture of Christian faith and practice for others. I want to frame my exposition in the form of a prayer.

Lord, make me a model for others in ***my teaching***. Above all what a man believes distinguishes him as a Christian. Timothy embraced as his own the content of what Paul taught and preached. Their styles were probably different but the “stuff” of what they taught was the same. In terms of doctrinal views and theological priorities, Paul and Timothy were twins. Ten years earlier than this writing Paul had sent Timothy to Corinth with this recommendation. **1 Cor. 4:16-17**, *I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.* Are you acquainted with the gospel of grace and can you communicate it to others?

Lord, make me a model for others in my **conduct**. Timothy took up ... he imitated Paul's life. Timothy was "a chip off the old block" when it came to his behavior, personal habits, his priorities, his self-discipline, his attitude, his stewardship of time, money, and energy, his conversation, his passions, and so on. Timothy was Timothy. He had his own unique gifts, talents, preferences, strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, however, his manner of life was a reflection of his spiritual father and mentor. Beloved, does you practice line up with your profession?

Lord, make me a model for others in my **purpose**. This word speaks of intention, resolution, aim. It is something set up as an objective or end to be attained. Paul has in mind that great goal of his life; that to which all else is geared. This needs to be fleshed out a bit. To what was Paul's life geared? What was his grand aim? What concern dominated all he did?

We are fast learning what many of you already know. We are into this wedding thing all of one week. That's right. Katheryn and Skip got engaged on February 1. It is amazing how a single event can dominate the ebb and flow of life. My financial outlook changed suddenly. All of our summer vacation plans have been suspended. Matters relative to the wedding dominate our conversation. We're having a big time but you get the point. It seems that life is geared around September 7. Paul's entire life was geared around one great purpose.

**Philippians 1:21.** *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Paul's aim was Christ. Paul's personal life was geared around the **pursuit** of Christ. **Phil. 3:7, 14,** *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ ... I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* Paul's life in the world was geared around the **proclamation** of Christ. **Phil. 1:18,** *whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.* Paul's relationship to the saints was dominated by his desire for their **progress** in Christ. **Phil. 1:25,** *And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith.* If the apostle knew you like he did Timothy, could he confirm you in your pursuit of Christ?

Lord, make me a model for others in my **faith**. Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But the child of God also lives by faith from day to day; walking the path God has for you in hearty reliance upon the promises of God. For example, Paul relied on the promise of God when it came to his physical needs. **Phil. 4:19,** *And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* Timothy embraced this life of faith.

Lord, make me a model for others in my **patience**. Patience is not a passive resignation but an active, deliberate willingness to wait on the Lord. A patient man forgives repeatedly. A patient man endures offenses (**4:14,16**). A patient

man exercises prolonged restraint of anger or agitation. How are we to account for the patience seen in Paul? **1 Timothy 1:16**. *And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His **perfect patience**, as an example for those who would believe in Him fore eternal life.* Paul manifested forbearance with men because God had demonstrated such great mercy upon him, the very chief of sinners. Beloved, your patience (or lack of it) is more closely related to your apprehension of the gospel than it is to your own personality.

Lord, make me a model for others in my **love**. Christian love is self-giving for the welfare of others borne out of obedience to God. **Philippians 2:19-21**, *But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of our condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.* Here is something of a litmus test you might apply to your life right now. If you do not have a productive and enduring ministry it is probably because you are more concerned about and preoccupied with your own interests than those of the saints. That's pretty simple isn't it? Timothy's was a genuine concern for the saints. He served them not for show or out of obligation. His was a love which manifested itself in a willingness *to spend and be expended* for the temporal and eternal welfare of the saints (**2 Cor. 12:15**).

Lord, make me a model for others in my **perseverance**. This is patience in trials which accompany your service in the gospel. These trials come your way as a direct result of your verbal testimony for Christ. Most of us are unfamiliar with trials not because we live in America but because we are silent. There is safety in silence. In **John 15:22** Jesus said, *“If I had not come and **spoken to them**, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.* Jesus exposed the sin and wicked motives of men and they hated Him for it. Speaking to men about their sin and the way of salvation, even with gentleness, invigorates their hostility and opposition and that means suffering. (That was certainly the case for Paul in Antioch (**Acts 13:16,23,46,50**), in Iconium (**Acts 14:1,3,7**), in Lystra (**Acts 14:9a**), in Derbe (**Acts 14:21**), and in every other city in which the apostle ministered.) Not only did Timothy see these virtues manifested in Paul’s life. He recognized their beauty and his redeemed soul was attracted by them. In the power of God’s Spirit Timothy more and more cultivated these graces in his own life.

Lord, make me a model for others in **persecutions and sufferings**. Persecution is the “hostility of the natural man against God [**Rom. 8:7a NASB**] and so against the man led by God’s Spirit [**Heb. 12:3a NASB**] ... Persecution is caused by the world’s hatred of God and his revelation in Christ” (Knight, p.806). And so persecution is an intentional act of hostility aimed at the one who openly identifies with Jesus of Nazareth. Suffering, on the other hand, is hardship. It is incidental (an accompanying occurrence or condition) to one’s Christian calling.

Paul was intimately acquainted with both. He can cite specific, historical examples in his life. ***Which happened to me.*** And he goes as far back as his first missionary journey for his stories. Initially, Paul's ministry, for the most part, was synagogue-based (**Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1**). He would arrive in a city and would first speak to the Jews gathered in the local synagogue. As a result, ***in Antioch*** he was driven out of the city (**Acts 13:14, 45, 50**). ***In Iconium*** he was vigorously opposed and barely escaped being stoned (**Acts 14:1-7, 19**). ***In Lystra*** he was stoned, dragged out of the city, and left for dead (**Acts 14:8-20**). So typical was this type of thing over so many years that Paul concluded that ...

***Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*** It would be incorrect to interpret the word "desire" as some sort of wishful thinking. There is the spirit of resolution or determination attached to this word. I think of the old hymn, "I am resolved no longer to linger charmed by the world's delight." In view are those who, in a living relationship with Christ through faith, are determined to live reverently and obediently before the face of God. James Boice paraphrases the Beatitude in Matthew 5:10 this way: "Blessed are they who are persecuted because, by God's grace, they are determined to live as I live"(p. 58). D. A. Carson echoes this when he says, "The believers described in this passage are those determined to live as Jesus lived" (p. 27). Matthew Henry says, "All who will show their religion in their conversation, who will not only be godly, but live godly, let them expect persecution, especially when they are resolute in it" (p.846).

This is contrasted with those who are merely *holding to a form of godliness (3:5)*; those ***evil men and impostors*** [who] ***proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived***. Our family enjoys going to the OMNI Theater in Fort Worth. In the lobby near the museum store there is a plastic cone in which you can roll a coin and watch it spiral round and round, down and down, faster and faster ... until it spins out of the neck of the cone. In view in verse 13 is the moral degeneration or downward spiral of evil men. Their character increasingly corrupt and “their tactics and procedures will get worse and worse” (Knight, p.442). But Timothy is imitating the godly life he has seen in Paul and the Spirit of God confirms him in it.

Now in the way of application let me say three things. First this passage **rebukes** us. I cannot stress too much the value of intentional, personal discipleship. True teaching is much more than the dissemination of information. It is the investment of an entire life into that of another. Do you see how Paul’s life was, in a sense, replicated in Timothy’s. Most of you have never been the beneficiary of such an investment by another believer. I suggest that our neglect of such spiritual mentoring is one of the reasons for the current doctrinal and moral weakness in the church. We are simply unwilling and unprepared to pay the high price of spiritual mentoring. Caught up by individualism; sluggish in our own pursuit of spiritual maturity; preoccupied with our own affairs and interests ... we have little zeal and less vision when it comes to pouring our lives into the life of another believer to disciple them in the faith.

Second, Paul's ministry to Timothy **challenges** us. If your children wanted to know what a genuine Christian life and ministry look like could find out from observing you? Could they watch your life for 18 years and come away with an accurate picture of Christian faith and practice? Would they have understood the one grand purpose of life? Would they have constructed in their minds a theological grid through which to filter all of life's issues and questions? Would they have seen a lifestyle and character which are products of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life? Would they understand what it means to be a witness and what that witness might cost? Would they understand that one's home is to be used as a center for ministry? Would they understand that sin is ugly and ministry in a fallen world is often very hard and demanding? In other words, if you were the only example they had, would their picture of the Christian life be clear, sharp, full of color and compelling?

Third, this passage **encourages** us. Even with all the elevated talk by the preacher, the life set before you this morning is still a "meat and potatoes" kind of thing. It is a life of doctrinal integrity, of righteous conduct, of purpose, of love, patience, faith, and endurance ... all lived out in the context of real life. Dear friends, plodding in these things is commended by the Spirit of God. If these things mark your life, the Spirit confirms you in them. By the grace of God, stay the course. Keep at it. Continue in these things.