

Blake Gillen
Meatfest
April 30, 2022

Band of Brothers
2 Timothy 3:10-11

Please take your Bible and open to Acts 9. We will eventually get to 2 Timothy 3 but I want to begin in Acts 9. Thank you men for being here tonight. If you are new to Cornerstone or you were invited by someone who goes here we are glad you're here. I realize this is a very unique opportunity. It's rare to have so many born again men in one room at one time like this. It's a great privilege for me to speak to you guys.

When you look back on your Christian life how long did it take you to realize that following Christ is not easy? That Jesus meant what he said in Matthew 7:14, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Following Christ is by far the best way to live life but it's not the easiest way to live life. We are not in the majority. We are in the minority.

Most men today do not deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow Christ but by the grace of God that's what we do. We do something most men do not do. Some of you may be the only person following Christ where you work. You may be the only Christ follower in the neighborhood where you live. You may be the only born again believer in the home you grew up in. It's a sobering reality that there are more men on the broad road that leads to destruction than the narrow road that leads to life.

How do we maintain loyalty to Christ in a world that for the most part rejects Him? How do we keep going when the going gets tough in this world for following Christ? We are all promised some form of persecution for following

Christ. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." **Persecution is not an if, it's a will.**

When I think about persecution I usually think about governmental opposition to the gospel. I think about Peter. Remember in John 21, after the resurrection, Peter had denied the Lord and went back to his fishing business. The risen Christ reveals Himself to Peter the next morning after they stayed up all night fishing and caught nothing. The resurrected Lord stands on the shore of sea of Galilee and calls out to men who had been fishing all night and caught nothing, "Children, have you any fish?" **I bet that questioned warmed Peter's heart.** They say no and Jesus tells them where to cast their net and they catch so many fish they can't haul them all in.

Peter understands the One on the shore is Omniscient. **The Man standing on the shore controls the fish.** Peter realizes it's the risen Christ. He puts on his outer garment and jumps in the water and swims to shore. I'm not sure why he put on his outer garment and then jumped in the sea of Galilee but that's not the point.

When Peter and the other men get to shore Jesus makes breakfast and restored Peter to Himself and to the ministry. Peter denied the Lord three times so Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me, do you love me, do you love me?" Peter reaffirms his love for the Lord. Then Jesus tells Peter that loving Jesus means feeding His sheep. Loving Christ means leading those who belong to Christ.

After Peter is restored Jesus tells Peter how his life is going to end. He tells Peter in John 21:18, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go."

This is how Peter's life on earth will end. He is going to have something done to him at the end of his life that he cannot control. His freedom is going to be lost and he is going to die as a martyr. But Jesus tells him that by his death he will glorify God.

Do you remember what Peter says next? He looks at John sitting there on the beach and he asks Jesus, "What about this man?" I love Peter. Peter should give us all hope. Peter has just been restored by the risen Christ and learned he will die for Christ and he immediately asks about John. Like, "Am I the only one who is going to have to do this? Anyone else, Lord?" Church history tells us that Peter was eventually crucified. When he got to the cross he asked to be crucified upside down because he didn't see himself as worthy of being crucified like his Lord.

Peter represents an extreme form of suffering. Most of us will probably not be killed for our faith but some of us might. We don't know where things are headed. All we know is that some form of persecution is inevitable. But I think it's wrong to think of persecution only in terms of what the government or other evil people can do to us for following Christ.

A pastor named David Hegg, "Paul said it well, in 2 Timothy 3:12: Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. He was not speaking only of governmental opposition, but more about the ongoing warfare of living out the redeemed life, through as of yet, unredeemed flesh, in the midst of an unredeemed creation. To follow Christ closely is to run a grueling race, a marathon that demands we keep running even when fatigue, circumstance, and sadness hit like a hammer."

Persecution is pain and opposition on the narrow road of following Christ. How do we stay on this narrow road that leads to life? **To maintain loyalty to Christ we need to always surround ourselves with the right kind of men.** We need men who imitate Christ that we can learn from and lean on in our struggles.

Jesus is our perfect Savior and merciful High Priest. No one can love us like Jesus loves us. And yet God's Word continually tells us to learn from imperfect examples of men who follow the perfect Savior.

We need men who loves enough to tell us the truth about our sin and how to grow in Christ. Finish this verse, "Faithful are the wounds of a _____ friend." JC Ryle, "He is your best friend who tells you the most truth." Tonight I am preaching out of a special Bible. This Bible was given to me when I was ordained. Kirk came and preached at my ordination. He spent the first 10-15 minutes roasting me. I was barely qualified for ministry when he got done, but after roasting me he reminded me from 1 Thessalonians 2 about what faithfulness in ministry looks like. He wrote a special note to me in the front of my Bible.

I won't read the whole thing but the last part says, "Pursue Christ with every ounce of energy you have. Stay true to Him and all your duties - or I'll hunt you down. Love you buddy, Kirk"

What's that? That's a friend. That's a brother. That's someone who cares about the glory of Christ and cares about me glorifying Christ. I'm sure in a room with this many men you all have men that have been used by God in your life to hold your feet to the standard of Scripture. Men filled with grace and truth.

This is what we see in the life of the apostle Paul. From Acts 9 when he is converted until the end of his life, Paul served Christ but he always did it with other like minded men. *When Christ connected Paul to Himself Christ immediately connected Paul to other like minded Christians.* For a few minutes I want to trace Paul's life from conversion to the end of his life. This won't take long. I want you to see how Paul served Christ in close fellowship with other like minded men as a pattern for us to follow.

Acts 9, as you know, is Luke's record of Paul's conversion. If you are in Acts 9 this is a very important chapter. Acts 9 shows us how someone who hated Christ and hated Christians became someone who loved Christ and loved Christians.

Acts 9 shows us the miracle of the new birth.

What I want you to see in Paul's conversion is how immediately after Jesus revealed Himself to Paul He immediately connected Paul to other Christians.

Acts 9:1-20

- 9:1 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest
2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.
3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.
4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
6 But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."
7 The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.
8 Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.
9 And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."
11 And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying,
12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."
13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem.
14 And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."

- 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.
- 16 For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."
- 17 So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
- 18 And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized;
- 19 and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

Paul's conversion, just like every other conversion, was entirely the work of Christ. Christ chose to save Saul and turn him into Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. But I want you to see something else in this section. These verses also show us how from the very beginning of Paul's Christian life he was connected to other Christians. **Christ connected Paul to himself and to other Christians from the very beginning.**

Did Paul follow Christ individually? Yes. Did Paul follow Christ alone? No. He did it in close fellowship with other Christians. Christ immediately connected Paul with another believer named Ananias and then the end of verse 19 says that for some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. Paul followed Christ in close fellowship with other Christians.

This is how Paul started the Christian life and this is how he lived the next 30 or so years of his life before he was killed for his faith. Paul served Christ but he never did it alone. The first letter that Paul wrote that we have recorded in Scripture is Galatians. Between Paul's conversion recorded for us in Acts 9 and his letter to the Galatians some years had passed. As an apostle Paul spent time alone with Christ receiving direct revelation.

Look over at Galatians 1. I want you to see again that Paul followed Christ alone but he never did it alone. Paul always served Christ with a band of brothers who

were all committed to knowing Christ and making Him known. Look at Galatians 1:15-18. Paul is writing about his conversion and call to preach Christ along the Gentiles.

Galatians 1:15-18

- 15** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,
16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;
17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.
18 **Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.**

At first when Christ revealed Himself to Paul he says he didn't consult with anyone. But eventually he did. After three years where did Paul go and who did Paul spend time with? He went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days. Who is that? Cephas is Peter. Paul stayed with Peter 15 days. God chose Peter to be an apostle to the Jews and Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

What do you think they spent time talking about those 15 days? Where to find the restaurant in Jerusalem with the best falafels? I don't think so. I think they talked a lot about Christ. ***They made sure they were on the same page about salvation and how sinners are saved.*** Here you have Peter the apostle to the Jews and Paul the apostle to the Gentiles gathering in Jerusalem as the gospel is starting to go out to the world meeting together to make sure they are both preaching the same gospel.

Did Paul serve Christ? Yes. Did he serve Christ alone? No. He always served Christ alongside a band of brothers. **Paul's ministry was never a me ministry - It was always a we ministry.** Paul served Christ but he always served Christ surrounded by a band of brothers.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1. As Paul begins this letter listen to how he starts the letter. Listen for the words **we, our and us** in the first 10 verses in 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

1 Th 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

2 **We** give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,

3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

4 For **we** know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,

5 because **our** gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men **we** proved to be among you for your sake.

6 And you became imitators of **us** and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.

8 For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

9 For they themselves report concerning **us** the kind of reception **we** had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Did you hear and see all of the we and our and us. *Paul's ministry was always a we and not a me ministry.* Paul was the apostle. He was the one uniquely qualified to serve Christ. He saw and spent time with the risen Christ receiving direct revelation. But Paul served Christ in close fellowship with two other men - Silvanus and Timothy.

Paul served Christ surrounded by a band of brothers. *Paul was part of the three amigo's who took the gospel to Thessalonica and modeled faithful living.* **Paul was the the Lucky Day of the group but he still needed Ned Nederlander**

and Dusty Bottoms. If you haven't seen the three amigos God still loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.

I want you to see a brief sketch of Paul's life and how Paul always served the Lord in close fellowship with other like minded men. In the last words of his last letter he writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:19-22, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. **Do your best to come before winter.** Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

Paul ends his last letter before he dies including ministry partners. People who helped him get the gospel to the world. Paul served Christ but he never served Christ alone. In his last letter Paul includes other partners in ministry and he wants Timothy to come and see him in prison before winter. **He is about to finish his race, but he doesn't want to cross the finish line alone.**

Men, all of that to ask an obvious question - if Paul always served Christ surrounded by a band of brothers what do we need? **We need to surround ourselves with the right kinds of men who have the right convictions.** Now please turn to 2 Timothy 3. 2 Timothy 3 is divided into two parts. The first part in verses 1-9 shows us who not to follow in the church. 2 Timothy 3:1-9 is a vivid descriptions of men who are in ministry for the wrong reasons. There are bad examples in the church that Paul warns Timothy to stay away from.

Then in verses 10-17 Paul reminds Timothy of examples. Faithful people that God placed in Timothy's life to help him live for Christ. Paul starts with himself in verses 10-13 and then he moved to Paul's mother and grandmother as authentic examples of faithfulness. There are lots of motivations in the Bible to keep living for Christ. In 2 Timothy 3:10-17 Paul provides people who poured into Timothy's life as a model to learn from to keep going when the going gets tough.

2 Timothy 3 is a reminder that who we allow to shepherd our souls is a really really big deal. It's okay to make a bad decision when you order at a restaurant. I do it all the time. I am a terrible food orderer. But that's ok. Its not okay to choose a bad pastor or group of elders to shepherd your soul. Who you choose to follow in your desire to follow Christ will inevitably affect who you become.

There are bad examples in the church to stay away from and there are good examples in the church to learn from. In 2 Timothy 3:10-11 Paul reminds Timothy what a life of faithfulness looks like. These are the two verses we want to consider with the rest of our time. 2 Timothy 3:10-11 are two verses worth memorizing. Why?

2 Timothy 3:10-11 shows us 9 descriptions of loyalty to Christ. What loyalty looked like in Paul's life. I chose these two verses because this is what we can use in our own lives and in our relationships with other men. These are things we can discuss with one another during lunch or coffee or whenever we get together with other men. At any point we can talk about any of these 9 things and how we are doing in these areas.

2 Timothy 3:10-11 shows us what to shoot for as a band of brothers:

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

2 simple points from these two verses.

To maintain loyalty to Christ you must:

1. **Follow Faithful Examples - 2 Timothy 3:10-11a**
2. **Find Refuge in the Faithfulness of Christ - 2 Timothy 3:11b**

The first thing Paul does in verses 10 and 11 is that he reminds Timothy of his own personal example. I do not think Paul got to this point in his last letter to Timothy and chose this list randomly. Hey, let's see what I can remind Timothy about from my life that can help him. No. I think there is a definite order to this list.

It all starts with what Paul lists first:

a. My Teaching

Everything in the Christian life flows from thinking right about salvation. We can't get salvation wrong and live right. My teaching refers to more than just the act of teaching. This isn't Paul telling Timothy he needs to include an outline in every sermon. No.

My teaching has more to do with what is taught. **The substance of the message.** That's why some translations translate this word as doctrine. This word is used 19 times in 1-2 Timothy and Titus as Paul helps young pastors serve Christ faithfully. Paul helped younger men by teaching them the truths of the gospel and then reminding them over and over again about who Jesus Christ is and why He came.

Look back real quick to 2 Timothy 2:8, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel." Did Timothy already know these things? Yes. He knew Christ rose again demonstrating the fact that He is God. He knew Jesus qualified to be the Messiah since he was the offspring of David. Timothy knew these truths. If Timothy already knew these things about Christ why does Paul keep reminding him about what he already knows?

Paul knew that Christians never graduate from the gospel. We never move on from the school of salvation. John Piper says, "You never outgrow your need for the gospel. You never graduate to a course where the gospel should not be the

center of the curriculum. There's no post-gospel graduate school in the Christian life. The center of every ongoing growth in knowledge has Christ crucified, risen, received by faith alone like a little child at the center of the curriculum."

The cross is one event with many applications. This is what Paul modeled for Timothy and he wants him to continue in when he goes to be with Christ. To follow Paul's example of teaching means making Christ's person and work central. Who Jesus is and why we need Him to save us and what Jesus has done to save us and what He is doing right now and what He will do when He returns. This is what Paul kept hammering into Timothy. Never move on from the gospel. Keep my teaching about Christ central.

What flows from my teaching is:

b. My conduct

Sound doctrine is always meant to transform how we live. **We learn about Christ in order to live for Christ.** Truth is for transformation. This is another thing Paul modeled for Timothy. **Paul always started with the gospel and then he connected it to every area of life.** Read Ephesians this week. Notice the connection in Ephesians between doctrine and devotion. The first three chapters are doctrine. There is only one command in Ephesians 1-3 and it is to remember how far off you were from the Lord when Christ brought you near. There is 1 command in Ephesians 1-3 and then there are lots of commands in Ephesians 4-6.

Paul was a good example of Spirit empowered grace motivated obedience. Paul was not just a preacher of the Word, he was a doer of the word. This is what we need. Men who strive to live out what they preach. Authentic examples. Integrity. Men connecting their position in Christ and their practice.

This is what we can talk about when we get together. How are you connecting the gospel to your daily life? How are you connecting who you are in Christ with

becoming more like Christ? Where do you see progress? Where do you wish you saw more progress? Help each other make the connection between union with Christ and living for Christ and keep reminding each other that you have everything you need for life and godliness. We have God's promise that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it.

God never starts a project He doesn't finish.

Next is:

c. My aim in life

This is Paul's purpose. Where did Paul get his purpose in life? Paul got his purpose in life from knowing God's purpose for this world. Read Paul's letters and he talks about God's purpose and God's plan a lot. He knew what God is doing in this world for His glory. He already reminded Timothy of this back in **2 Timothy 1:9, "(God) who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."**

It's hard to serve the Lord if you don't know His plan. If you still are wondering what God's plan is read Ephesians once a day for a month. I mean it. Read it or listen to it for a month and you will know God's plan for His glory in the church.

Before we moved here my daughters played on the same middle school basketball team. When we moved here they watched some of the games from their former team on livestream. One night we were watching a game and players started getting hurt. It was close to the end of the game and we saw the coach motion to one of the girls and she walked down to him and they talked and then she went back to her chair and sat down. After the game my daughter texted her friend about what was going on. Evidently, the coach wanted to put her in at the end of the game in crunch time but she told the coach, "I have no idea what I am doing. I don't want to go in."

She passed on the opportunity to play because she didn't know the plan. She didn't know where to go on the court and she didn't want to look stupid out there so she made her way back to the pine. I realize this is one of my first illustrations at meatfest and I just talked about junior high girls basketball. Please forgive me.

Men, we can't act like we don't know God's plan. We can't go around acting like we don't know who made the world and we don't know what His plan is. This is what comforts us in life and in death. We know God's eternal plan. **His eternal plan is to glorify Himself in the salvation of a multitude of people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.**

Timothy saw in Paul a man whose purpose in life aligned with God's purposes. Does your purpose in life align with God's purposes? Do you invest in what God is doing in this time in redemptive history? Do you invest time and energy and money into the local church because you know it is where God is putting His glory on display? Men, if you're going to make your life count know God's plan and align your will with His will to make Christ known through the local church.

Next is:

d. My Faith

Paul isn't just talking about the faith as the body of truth embraced by the Apostles. Paul is reminding Timothy of his active trust in the God of truth. From his shared life with Paul, Timothy could rehearse all the times he saw Paul live by faith. Timothy saw Paul's faith lived out. Paul went where the Spirit led him to make Christ known. He had no personal agenda. He walked by faith and not by sight. His only concern in life was standing before Jesus at the end of his life and hearing, "Well done good and faithful servant."

When I got married I told my wife that I wanted to be a pastor and that meant I didn't know where we would go to serve Christ. I had no idea God would call us

to Kentucky for 6 years and then Kansas for 10 years and now here. All I know is that Steven Curtis Chapman got it right in the song my redeemer is faithful and true.

As I look back on the road I've travelled,
I see so many times He carried me through;
And if there's one thing that I've learned in my life,
My Redeemer is faithful and true.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.
Everything He has said He will do,
And every morning His mercies are new.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.

As we place our complete trust in Christ and follow His will we learn that Jesus is always faithful. **Even when we're unfaithful He remains faithful.** Why are we here tonight? Surely you know at least one man who looked saved for a while who no longer follows Christ. Someone who sadly dropped out of the race of faith. Why are we still running when others stop running?

Because our Redeemer is faithful and true. Men, keep living by faith. Get your eyes off of yourself and keep them upward and outward on the risen Christ. Get rid of everything that distracts you or sin that destroys you and run the race with your eyes fixed on Christ.

Next on the list:

e. My Patience

Timothy witnessed Paul's patience. He reminded Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:16 that his salvation was a result of God's patience with him as a model to follow. Paul knew what a wicked man he was and how patient God was with Paul as a model for others to trust in Christ. Paul genuinely believed that if God could save him

He could save anyone. No one was beyond the reach of the gospel. God's patience with Paul helped Paul be patient with other people.

Patience, we know is not the result of trying harder to be patient as if this is up to us. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. If we are walking in the Spirit we will be patient with other people. Patient for God to work. We will also be patient with other people who make living for Christ challenging. Patience has the sense of endlessly bearing up under ill-treatment at the hands of others.

I'm going to pick up the pace gentlemen. I know we are about out of time. Let me summarize verse 10 and the first part of verse 11. I think there's an order to this list. *My teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith all refer to Paul's relationship with the Lord vertically. My patience, my love, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and my sufferings all refer to what Paul endured horizontally.* Paul modeled a relationship with the Lord that changed how he related to people inside and outside the church.

Paul's vertical relationship with the Lord affected his horizontal relationships inside and outside the church. What does this mean for us? If we are having a hard time with our relationships with people inside and outside the church we need to step back and work on our relationship with the Lord first. If we are having a hard time getting along with people we need to make sure we are walking in the Spirit. When I am walking in the Spirit I am fairly easy to get along with. When love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control are flowing from my life I am usually ok to be around.

Follow Paul's example in the first four areas - teaching, conduct, aim in life and faith and that will transform how you relate to people.

To maintain loyalty to Christ you must:

1. Follow Faithful Examples - 2 Timothy 3:10-11a
2. Find Refuge in the Faithfulness of Christ - 2 Timothy 3:11b

Notice at the end of verse 11 writes about the persecutions he endured and who delivered him. The end of 2 Timothy 3:11, "which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me." In 2 Corinthians 6, right after Paul reminds the church that he is an ambassador for Christ, he writes about what he went through to represent Christ the right way.

Paul went through a lot.

2 Corinthians 6:3-10

- 3 We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry,
- 4 but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities,
- 5 beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;
- 6 by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love;
- 7 by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;
- 8 through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true;
- 9 as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed;
- 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Paul encountered more suffering in one week than most of us will face over an entire lifetime. How did a man bear up under all that? How did Paul stay loyal through so much suffering? Notice the end of verse 11 in 2 Timothy 3 again, "yet from them all the Lord rescued me." **Paul endured because the Lord kept rescuing him.** Over and over again the Lord was with Paul and kept rescuing Paul. Paul may intentionally be echoing Psalm 34:19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all."

Even as Paul was in prison in Rome awaiting execution he knew the Lord was about to perform the ultimate rescue mission. The moment Paul died for his faith Jesus would bring him safely home. Death does not end our relationship with

Christ, men. It enhances it. Nothing can separate a believer from God's love through Christ.

Men, the Lord who was with Paul and enabled him to make his life count is the Lord who is with us to make our life count. Paul passed on an authentic example of what God can do in a man who is entirely submitted to the lordship of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul never took credit for his work in the gospel. His model was the result of God's work in his life. He knew where His strength came from and he that the same grace that saves empowers godly living.

A couple of things in conclusion:

1. Make sure you are born again - we are not saved by emulating Christian examples. We are saved by repenting from our sin and trusting in Christ alone to save us. We need the Spirit of Christ to live for Christ.
2. Make sure you are learning from faithful examples. Notice I didn't saw flawless examples. Only Jesus is perfect. He is our chief shepherd. But Christ has provided the local church with men who are qualified to lead us in love. Men who love us and model a life of grace and truth. Choose leaders wisely.
3. Make sure you are seeking ultimate shelter in the refuge of Christ. Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivers them all. No matter what we face in this life the Lord will deliver us. He will never leave us or forsake us from here all the way to heaven.

