Follow The Right Example — Delivery Transcript

2 Timothy 3:1–13 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, May 15, 2016 · *Entrusted*

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What'd you want to be when you were little? You remember? Most little kids, when they're growing up, when they think about growing up, they want to be a superhero. When I was a little kid I wanted to be Batman, and I never really grew out of that. Struggle's still real for me. I still kind of wish I had the belt and the cool costume and all that stuff. You get a little bit older and you want to become like your favorite athlete. Usually elementary school kids want to be, you know, like Emm— not Eminem, Emmitt Smith.

Maybe some of 'em want to be Eminem, some of the gangsters among us, but Troy Aikman, somebody like that. Little girls like to stand in front of their mirror and sing, like their favorite musical artists. You know, every little girl wants to be Taylor Swift or whoever, Madonna maybe, when you were younger. You get a little bit older than that, teenagers, they try to emulate pop culture. They do their hair like the latest greatest model or they dress like pop culture tells them to dress. Everyone's following some kind of example.

You want to be like somebody. And it doesn't go away when you get older. At least not with preachers. Preachers are not immune. I remember when I first started preaching, I went back and listened to some of my podcasts this last week, and I sounded just like the guys on my favorite podcast. I mean I would do my vocal inflections like them, I would say certain words like they did and it was always different. It's just depending who I was listening to at the time. I didn't know who I was and I finally figured it out I think.

So, you know, preaching's a maturing process as my mentor once told me. But everyone wants to be like somebody. You have examples that you follow and you think about example as an idea. It's incredibly powerful. The fact that we yearn to be like other people, that idea or that dynamic has helped certain people change the world. The most powerful thing in the world, I would say, when it comes to persuasion would be the spoken word. You take a guy like Hitler, he was able to use words and they came out of his mouth and people heard them

and then over a long period of time he was able to get otherwise normal people to do horrendously evil things because of the power of persuasion with words.

But underneath the power of persuasion with words, I would think, is the power of example. And when you have men or women throughout history, when they have been able to accompany powerful persuasion through words with a lifestyle that matches their teaching, a lifestyle of righteous conduct, of ethical conduct, then those people have been incredibly influential. You take, for example, Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, even if you're not a Christian, he presented a certain message, he taught persuasively and powerfully, and then he matched that with his lifestyle. His lifestyle matched his teaching, his teaching amplified his lifestyle, and as a result he was able to change the world.

Whether you believe Christianity is true or not, you can't deny he was an incredibly influential figure. And you could go on and on. You got Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Buddha. Those are the kind of examples that show you the power of example. That when we have this thing inside of us that yearns to be like other people, we want to imitate that which we love, which is virtuous, then what role does that idea of example play when it comes to entrusting the Christian faith from one generation to another. It does play a role.

And the reason I bring it up is because we've been in this series called Entrusted, where we're thinking about how do you take your genuine biblical Christian faith and how do you pass it on? Not just to your kids, but to the third and the fourth generations. How do you pass it on in such a way that it lives beyond you? Because we don't want to just live and die. We want to have an impact beyond the grave, and we've looked at all these different factors that play into it. The factor of a parent, factor of a child, the factor of the entrusted, the factor of the one who's being entrusted with.

But this morning we're looking at the role of example and both being an example and then following the right example when it comes to entrusting the faith, the Christian faith, to the third and the fourth generation. So if you've got a Bible, take it and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3. That's the book we're going to be in and the chapter we're going to be in, we've been in the series for I don't know how long now, but a while. And so if you're just now joining us, it won't take you too long to catch up.

The book was written by an older gentleman named the Apostle Paul. He wrote it to a younger gentleman named Timothy. They were both Christians. The Apostle Paul was kind of a church planter extraordinaire. Timothy was just a guy like me. He was a young pastor, somewhat insecure, a little bit introverted, and timid in some ways. And the Apostle Paul is writing to him saying, I'm entrusting this mantle, this faith to you and not just the faith, but the responsibility to advance it to the third and fourth generations. And then in chapter three he shows us the role that example plays.

So chapter 3, verse 1, this is coming right on the tails of Paul telling Timothy how to pastor. In fact, he had just told him a little bit earlier that you've got to confront error in the church. Sometimes people are going to do stuff in your church that's going to poison it, it's going to try to contaminate it and destroy it. So you need to confront that. But when you confront it, I want you to do so gently. Don't destroy those people. Remember who the real enemy is. It's not people.

People aren't the problem. The real problem is the enemy. It's people being used by the great enemy, the devil, to thwart the gospel and to hurt the church. And so don't destroy them, just destroy the false teaching, don't destroy the false teachers. But then in chapter three he shifts almost to say, that's true, Timothy, a lot of the time, but sometimes it's not. Sometimes you got to take a harder role. Sometimes you've really got to destroy or avoid or remove certain people from your church. So here's what he says in verse 1, chapter 3.

Understand this. In other words, mark it down. Put this in your thick head. In the last days there will come times of difficulty. And the word difficulty, it means like incredible stress. Difficulty like you couldn't imagine. You think it's difficult what you're facing right now in your church with a little bit of disruption, it's way, way worse than that. And it's coming in the last days. And when you think of the words last days, you probably think of future, future, but biblically the last days are not just future, future, as in when Jesus comes back, you know, the end times, tribulation.

You may be thinking Tim LaHaye, Left Behind series, stuff like that. That's fine, but it's not just that, it's also right now. The last days, some people call it the church age, began when Jesus was raised from the dead, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and he gave the church the Great Commission. He told us to make disciples of all nations, go all over the world and preach the gospel. And when that happened, that started the last days. And Paul tells Timothy that these days are future, these days are now, and these days will be difficult.

So remember it. Mark it down. And the reason he's telling Timothy this is because Timothy, as a timid, introverted kind of guy would have been tempted to think, if I will just lay low and let this kind of play out, then it'll all just go away. And that's what most non-confrontational people like to think. That's why they never confront people. They think if we'll just be quiet long enough, then they'll just get over it and it'll just go away. And what Paul's telling Timothy is, no it won't. Because you're in the last days.

And the last days are future, future, the last days are now, which means it's not going to get any better until Jesus comes back. So you're going to have to do something about these people in your church. And sometimes it's going to require more than just a gentle rebuke. The last days are characterized not by, you know, apocalyptic meteorites coming down on the earth like Apocalypse Now. The last days are characterized by an overt hostility towards Christians. And if you think about history, I know the American experiment has provided

Christianity with some degree of safety and some degree of influence and power, but you got to admit those days are quickly fading away.

The influence of Christianity today is not near what it was fifty, sixty years ago. And that's the norm. The norm has always been that Christianity has been in the minority and there has been overt hostility towards the gospel and the Christian message. And all Paul is telling Timothy is that is not a passing fad. It is not something that you can just avoid and it's going to go away later. You're going to have to do something about it. So what makes the last days so bad? Look at verse 2. It's the people.

There's evil people in the last days who are going to create difficult times for you. He describes those people in verses 2 to 9. And so what I want to do is to unpack this. This is the negative example we ought to avoid. This text gives you two extremes, the negative example and the positive example. The first thing he does is he describes the negative example and he talks about their character, he tells us about their motives, and then he tells us lastly that their religion is a show. They're hypocrites.

They say one thing and do another. So let's start in chapter three, verse two. I just kind of want to bookend this before we actually read all of the text. The way that he characterizes their bad character is by showing that they have a misdirected love. That their affections, instead of being centered on the Lord, instead of loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, that's the great commandment, instead of doing that, they love other things, secondary things, lesser things, more than the best thing. That's the definition of idolatry, and that is the heart of their bad character.

Look at what they love, verse 2. They are lovers of self, lovers of money, the Benjamins. Into verse 3, chapter 3, verse 3, they're not loving the good. Skip over to chapter 3, verse 4. It says that they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. So take those three things, you boil them down. They love themselves more than they love God. That's the essence of it. And in loving themselves, it manifests itself three different ways. They're lovers of self, they're lovers of money, and they're lovers of pleasure. You might think of it just to put it in contemporary terms, they're narcissistic, they're materialistic and they're hedonistic.

And hedonistic just means you love pleasure. You're driven by your appetites. If you've ever been addicted to anything, that's kind of a hedonistic addiction. You just have to have the pleasure. The dopamine has to register. That is basically what these people, these bad examples to avoid, that is what they were characterized by. Narcissism, materialism, and hedonism. And it's not just them, okay, it's not just evil people out there. If you think about those three things, those are the three great temptations that every single one of us face on a regular basis.

And it's not just today. You look through the scripture, these were the three things that were in the garden, Adam and Eve. The temptation of Jesus in Matthew chapter 4, these three things were present. You skip over to the book of 1 John, 1 John chapter 2, he says, do not love the world or the things that are in the world, for all that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and pride in possessions, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Those are the three things. It's narcissism, materialism, and hedonism. The one way to think about it, helpfully, is Rick Warren once characterized it as the desire to have, the desire to be, and the desire to feel. The desire to feel is that hedonism, it's that I've got to satisfy my passions and my appetites, the desire to have, that's materialism, I've got to have the new house, I've got to have the new car, I've got to have the bigger and the better. That's materialism. And then the desire to be. You know, if I don't get this raise, then I'm not worth anything.

If I don't get this kind of person in my life, I'm not worth anything. That's narcissistic. All you think about is yourself and your desire to be better than everybody else. And I know it's hard to see these kinds of things in the mirror, but these are the three great temptations you face. In fact, I would be so bold as to say that every bad decision you've ever made, every moral failing you have ever seen in anyone else's life that you love would fall under one of those three umbrellas. Every commercial you've ever watched is targeting one of those three areas in your life: the desire to have, the desire to feel, and the desire to be.

And those misdirected loves, all they were doing is that they were loving those things, those passions more than they were loving the Lord, and it resulted in all kinds of ungodly behavior. So the question we ought to ask ourselves is, what is my greatest love? It's not just that these are examples to be avoided. These are temptations each and every one of us face. If you find yourself facing these temptations and losing, here's what I would recommend. The desire to have. What is that? That's materialism. Do you know the way to break the power of materialism in your life?

You just write a check to Wes Terry for $100, and that "I got to have it, I got to have it"—listen, generosity breaks the power of materialism. The desire to be, narcissism. Do you know how to break the power of narcissism in your life? Humble yourself. One of the best ways to humble yourself is to just serve somebody who you think doesn't deserve it. Do some menial task that you think is below you. And it will neutralize narcissism in your life. The desire to feel. I got to have it, the passions, the appetites.

That's the hardest one to overcome. Jesus put it this way, take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow me. It requires discipline. And maybe for the first time it's really, really difficult, but if you'll just make the right decision at the next decision, over time the next decision will be a little bit easier and the decision after that will be a little bit easier. It's always easier the

next time. So anytime you're driven by the passion to feel, discipline yourself and take up your cross and follow Jesus. Do the right thing.

Anytime you're driven by the passion to have, write a check. Maybe not to me, but be generous, do something. And then when you're driven by the desire to be, humble yourself, do something for someone else. Ask yourself right now, what is my greatest love? If you find yourself sinning, your behavior is wicked. You find things in yourself. You look in the mirror and say, I hate this about myself. I guarantee you the engine of that sin, the motivation of your heart is rooted in one of those three things. And so you break the power of greed, you break the power of materialism, break the power of hedonism or narcissism, by taking your misplaced affection and putting it back where it belongs, to love the Lord with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength.

And as your communion with the Lord increases, these sinful behaviors and motivations are decreased. So they had a misplaced affection. Let's actually read the full text. It's just really wicked. Chapter three, verse two. Here's what you need to know about these people, Timothy. They are lovers of self. Lovers of money, they're proud, they're arrogant, they're abusive, they're disobedient to their parents. They're ungrateful, unholy, they're heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control—that's why they're addicted to everything—brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God.

Pretty serious list, huh? And all he's saying is avoid it, avoid those people. Not just confront them gently, but run away from them. And especially people who profess to be Christians who are living this way. If you find them in the church, you find them in your small group, disassociate. You don't want to let those things infect the good thing that God is doing in your church. You might think those kind of people are easy to spot, but they're not. He says a little bit later they have the appearance of godliness, but they deny its power.

And not only do they have misdirected loves, look at their relationships. I don't know if you saw this in the list. It says things like they're abusive, they're disobedient to their parents, they're ungrateful. The thing is, when you have an improper affection for the Lord, it's not just a sin between you and God. It actually affects your horizontal relationships. A misplaced love vertically affects your love horizontally. You become abusive, slanderous, brutal, treacherous, unappeasable. So they weren't just misplaced in their affections for God, they were insincere in their love for other people.

And you think, the Great Commandment is part of our mission statement as a church. Jesus said, somebody asked Jesus, what's the greatest commandment? And he said the greatest commandment is you should love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love God supremely. And a second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. To sum it up, all the law and the prophets depend on or they hang on these two commands. So love God

supremely, love other people sincerely. And do whatever you want with your life. That's Wes Terry's ethic, that's Jesus' ethic.

Love God supremely, love other people sincerely, and then do whatever you want. Because all the law and the prophets depend on those two things. But those were the two things, mind you, that these negatives, these people we ought to avoid. Those were the two things they couldn't do. Maybe their doctrine was right. Maybe they taught the right stuff. Maybe they went to church. Maybe they gave. Maybe they had perfect attendance from the outside looking in. You couldn't tell. But when you get to the heart, when you get inside the home and listen to the way that they treat their spouse or they talk to their children, love was absent.

So you want to think about what am I looking for so that I can avoid the negatives? You're looking for the presence of love. And if love is absent, who cares how smart they are, who cares how impressive they are? Maybe their talent is irrelevant avoid them. Don't bring them in. Don't bring them close. And avoid these temptations in yourself. Because if you don't have love, you don't have anything. He says in verse 5 their religion is a show. Look at what he says in verse 5. He says that they are "having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power."

This is kind of scary to me. Their religion is basically a show. What do you do with those people? "Avoid such people." Stay away. They're a poison. This is why you practice discernment in who it is that you associate with. When you're teaching your kids, training your kids what friends they're going to pick, don't just pick the most talented. Don't just pick the most impressive person or the one you like their personality. Look for the person who's full of love. Love for God. Love for other people. Because there is an ability for people to put something out there outwardly that makes them look more holy than what they actually are.

If you don't have love, you don't have the power that can change your life. So avoid the negatives. They're totally self-centered. Their religion is a show. And then look at their motives in verses six to nine. Their motives are evil. He says, for among them are those who creep into households kind of like a worm. Secretive, creep, you know, like a creep, like a jerk creep. They're creeping into households, like Satan himself, full of deceit and lies. They capture weak women. Now, women, that is not a blanket statement about all women.

Obviously, you haven't met my wife. She's not a weak woman. This is a particular description of a particular group of women in the Ephesian church. So you had these false teachers who were creeping their way into these households and capturing weak women, meaning not that they captured them and put them in a cave, but that they domineered their thinking and their mind. The word weak means gullible, weak willed women, silly. They just kind of— if you say the right things and do the right stuff, then they're just butter in your hands, those kind of women.

And the reason that they're weak women, look at what he says, is because they are burdened with sins and led astray by various passions. That word burdened is talking about a past action that has continuing abiding effects. And so maybe they in the past were prostitutes or something like that. Maybe they were drug addicts. And that kind of stuff just doesn't go away overnight. If you live a life of prostitution, then those sexual cravings may follow you. You live a life of drug addiction, those cravings follow you. So there was a past action that had continuing abiding effects.

And Paul says as a result, they are continually being led astray by various kinds of passion. And so these are women who are weak emotionally, they're weak morally, they're weak intellectually. He says at the end there that they are always learning but they're never coming to a knowledge of the truth, is what it says in verse 7. So intellectually they're weak, morally, emotionally, these are women who are easy to victimize. And these men creep into their homes and dominate them, spinning some kind of pseudo-truth that makes them look smart and sound good and they say just the right things and cause these women to be slaves to their heresy.

This is how cults work. Okay, I've seen a lot of cults grow this way. This is also how churches get destroyed. These are the kind of men who in this church, if they showed up, as your pastor, I would want to lose my Christianity for just a little bit take them around back to Roby, where the law is in your own hands. And just talk to them in a way. You know those kind of guys. Those are the kind of guys you hope your daughter never meets. Listen, these kind of guys are around.

These kind of guys may be in our church. You avoid them. They're evil. Their motivation is evil. So watch out for them. He compares them to these Egyptian magicians from back in the day, Exodus chapter 7. He says in verse 8, "just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men." Now I don't know if you remember the movie with Charlton Heston, Let My People Go.[1] You remember when Moses threw down the stick?

And then the Egyptian magicians threw down the stick and both of them turned to snakes. So these men are like those men in that they have an appearance of godliness. Maybe they have a few tricks up their sleeve. They have a few things that they can use to impress weak-willed women and maybe dominate them in that way. Timothy, at the end of the day, you don't really need to worry about it. Don't be destroyed. Just because these men are present doesn't mean that it's going to undermine what God's doing with the gospel in your church and through your church.

Their folly will be exposed. This is a truth war, Timothy, so keep preaching the truth, keep living the truth, keep doing what's right, and eventually these men will be shown for what

they really are. And ladies, if you've ever been captured by that kind of guy, you know eventually the facade comes off and you really get to understand who they are. And hopefully you don't marry them before that, and so you can get away from it. But they will be exposed. They'll be exposed in this church if they stick around because the truth always comes to the top.

So avoid the negative examples. They're self-centered, they're hypocritical, their religion is a show. They have an appearance of godliness, but it's empty. They don't have any of the godliness, they don't have any power, they don't have love. They're like men who have evil motives, who go to capture women, those kind of people. Whether men or women, when they get into your church, they're only going to destroy it. And so instead of rebuking them gently, rebuke them harshly. Instead of trying to lead them to repentance and welcome them back into the fold, they are like a wolf that needs to be shot.

Don't murder them, but get them out of your church. Sorry. A little West Texas came out. Okay, that's the negative. Now what about the positive? Avoid the negative. Even in your own life, avoid the temptations, but now pattern your life after the positive. And the positive example that he gives is Paul gives his own life as a positive example. Look at what he says in chapter 3, verse 10. "You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life"—talking about his life purpose—"my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings."

And then he goes on and explains it. Just stop real quick. Some people think that Paul's being pretty arrogant here. I don't think that's true. As Christians, there's nothing wrong with you saying to another person in the faith, You want to know what it looks like to live the Christian life? You want to know how to love your wife well? You want to know how to parent your children well? You want to know what it looks like to grow in godliness? And just watch me. There's nothing wrong with that. Paul said to the Corinthians, imitate me insofar as I imitate Christ.

I may not be a perfect example of Jesus Christ, but I am a living example, and so watch me. Have you ever been able to invite somebody into that process to say to them, I don't have all my ducks in a row, but I'm doing pretty well here. You know, I've got my financial house in order. My marriage is healthy and sound. My kids still love the Lord and don't hate my guts. And so, you know, watch me. Listen to me. Don't just hear what I have to say, but watch my life.

That's all Paul is saying. These are things you want to emulate in me, Timothy. And just for advice's sake, when you think about someone you want to follow, maybe a mentor you want to bring into your life, someone who's doing it well in marriage or parenting and those kinds of things, don't just follow the people who you like their personality or who are, you know, some other kind of thing, you want to ask very specific questions about them. The kinds of

questions that Paul brings up. You need to ask the questions like, what do they actually teach?

Does their teaching match their lifestyle? Do they practice what they preach? Do they just talk the talk or do they walk the walk? What is their life purpose? What motivates them? Are they driven by money? Are they driven by the desire to be, you know, materialism, narcissism, hedonism, are they driven by those things or are they driven by a love for the Lord? What's their purpose in life? What's their faith? Do they believe God keeps his promises, or do they have a self-faith, a faith in themselves, more than a faith in God?

Number five, how do they deal with difficult people and how do they deal with difficult situations. You don't want to follow a guy who's just pretty talented in his or her field. If that guy can't treat his wife well when the going gets tough or maybe when that guy experiences a little bit of hostility or pushback, if he just quits, if he just gives up, if he just calls names, those are people you don't want to follow. You want to follow people who persevere in suffering, who walk the walk and talk the talk, even when the going gets tough.

That's what the Apostle Paul is saying. So ask questions like: Does their life match their words? Do they demonstrate a faith in God, a love for others, a hope in difficult times? Does this person love God supremely? And do they love other people sincerely? Do they persevere in suffering? Those are the questions you want to ask. And listen, the reason you want to look at those things is because those are the kinds of things that will show you whether or not a person really believes what he says. When you're looking for someone to follow, follow someone who has demonstrated consistency and authenticity.

You want to know if I'm authentic as a pastor, do I really believe in what I'm preaching? Then you need to look at my life. You need to listen to how I talk to my wife. You need to watch how I treat my children. You need to look at my lifestyle. Is it characterized by immorality and a lack of discipline? When the going gets tough, do I just give up and call names and have a pity party or do I persevere? Am I authentic and am I consistent? Those are the things you want to look for.

And that's why Paul's saying, look at this, Timothy, look at my life. I'm in prison. I'm about to die, but I'm not giving up. I believe God keeps his promises. I want you to follow this example in me. And not just ask the question, am I following those kinds of people? But you might want to ask yourself this morning, am I that kind of person? Am I a person worth following? Am I who I'm looking for? And if you're not, then how do you go about it? How do you get that?

That's the question, isn't it? Look at what Paul says. Here's his motivation for why he was able to be the kind of person that he was. This is the empowerment for being a good example. Look at the end of verse 11. He talks about his persecutions and his sufferings that

happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. Remember, that was his first missionary journey when he left, in Acts chapter 13, when he left Antioch and he went all over the known world at that time. It was at that time that Timothy and his grandma and his mom became Christians, and he's saying, Timothy, you watched it.

You saw how I was beat up, you saw how they took me to the edge of the city, and they threw rocks at me and tried to kill me. But you know what, Timothy, in every single one of those examples, "I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me." So there's the reason Paul lived the way that he did, because his heart was gripped by the truth of the gospel. He believed firmly that God keeps his promises. We looked at this last week. The reason that Paul was able to endure in suffering and be bold and courageous and preach the gospel is because he believed if God was faithful then, then he'll be faithful now.

If God raised Jesus from the dead, then he can take care of my financial problem or this problem at work. If Jesus Christ is descended from David, that means that all of those Old Testament promises that God made, even though it may not feel like it, even though it may not be on my timetable, I believe without a shadow of a doubt that God will keep his promise, that he will deliver me. If he was faithful then, he'll be faithful now. So Timothy, Paul would say let your heart be gripped by the gospel.

That is a truth that you have to internalize. And then the other truth you need to know, verse 12, you need to know that "indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus"—I'd circle that word, "in Christ Jesus"—"will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." In other words, suffering is an inescapable reality for people who want to live a Christ-like life and who want to be a Christ-like example. Kind of like Buddha said, you can't get away from suffering.

I guess he was right on that. And the suffering is unique to people who want to live a Christ-like life and live a Christ-like example. Take American culture. Are the beliefs of Christians and Muslims any different when it comes to their vision for sexuality? If anything, Islam is a little more strict. But who gets the most persecution? Who gets the most suffering culturally speaking in our age? It's Christianity. All those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, even in America or in the Middle East or in Germany or wherever you find yourself, all those who desire to live a Christ-like life and set a Christ-like example will be persecuted.

So don't be surprised. This is why Paul's telling Timothy, don't be led astray by these false teachers who are telling you that if you'll just have faith, your life will be a bed of roses. Don't listen to the TV preachers who say if you'll just sow a seed into my ministry, then God's going to give you your favorite big house. That is not Christianity. Christianity is that we die with him now so that we live with him later, we endure suffering now so that we'll reign with him later, that your faith matters, that perseverance matters, and so trust in the promises of God.

Let the gospel grip your heart and remember you're in the last days. Suffering will take place. Grow up, be a man, and don't be destroyed by difficult times. And how do you find the power to do that? Well, you think about the Lord Jesus Christ. If you just put the example of Jesus Christ up against this text. Okay, pretend you're not a Christian for a second. Maybe you're not a Christian today. Just think about Jesus, his morality, his lifestyle. He perfectly embodied in his own life everything these false teachers didn't.

He was pure in his motives. He didn't come to capture weak-willed women. His character was flawless. He was not dominated by a love of self. He wasn't dominated by money. He didn't even have a lot of money. He wasn't dominated by the desire to be. He could have been kinged, he could have been crowned and ushered in as the messianic king, but instead he laid down his life and was executed on a Roman cross. His morals, his lifestyle perfectly embodied everything that should be followed after in a human being. The virtues that we crave, the superheroes that we follow.

He's like Batman, Superman, the Green Arrow all in one. He's like the best hero. He is myth become fact. He is everything our hearts have yearned for. If you want to follow an example, follow Jesus, but here's the problem. When Jesus says to us, be perfect like your heavenly father is perfect, in other words, imitate me in everything that I do, none of us can live up to it. None of us are able to do it. So here's what he did instead. Since you and I would never be able in our own power to live the life that we're called to live, what he did was he was executed on a Roman cross to pay the penalty for our sin, my sin, your sin.

He absorbed our sin debt, and then when God raised him from the dead and he ascended into heaven, Jesus sent his Holy Spirit so that anyone who would call on the name of the Lord, put your faith in him, repent of sin, put your faith in him, that he would give you his Holy Spirit. That the power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead is alive in you and in me if you are in Christ. That's why I said all those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, those are the people who are persecuted.

The only way to live a godly life is in Christ Jesus, that you are united with him in faith, and that what was alive in him is now alive in you. The inheritance that was given to him is now given to you. And so if you are united with Jesus, he has given you everything that you need. He's given you the power that you need to not be dominated by a love of self, not be dominated by a love of money, not be dominated by a desire to be, and to have in you the resources necessary to treat others better than they deserve, to give love even to the unlovely, to reject sin, to deny yourself, and to follow Jesus.

Another way to think about it is that the demands of the gospel, you're actually able to achieve them because of what is true about you because of the gospel. What God requires from you, what he demands from you, he empowers you for through his spirit. And so if you're here this morning and you're struggling and you're falling down and you're sinning,

sinning, sinning, then the way to do that is not to just pull yourself up by your spiritual bootstraps and say I'll do better. The way to do that is to love Jesus more deeply.

Because as your intimacy with Jesus increases and your communion with him goes higher and higher, what you'll find to be true of you is that the power to live a godly life begins to increase. And so this morning, what we're going to do when the band comes and leads us through a song, I don't want you to get from this message I'm doing bad, I need to do better. I want you to get from this message, we've all done horribly bad, and Jesus and the power that is alive in us because of Jesus is the only way we can do better.

And to come back to the cross and at the cross be reminded of your sin, but also be reminded of God's love for you and his commitment to you to give you what you need to love him well. And so I'm going to ask the band to come and to let this just be a time of worship where we say to the Lord, I'm inadequate, but your grace is sufficient. I may be weak, but your power is made perfect in my weakness. And so just worship the Lord in that way.

And then real practically speaking, some of us this morning, we just need to avoid some people in our life who we're toying with. There may be some women here, if you think about the man in your life, he's everything that Jesus just told you to avoid, and you need to run. You can say, Pastor Wes told me to dump you. I'm sorry, take it up with him. I'll talk to him. But do not toy with it. Do not be captured by those kind of people. And then others of us, you may just want to pray for your church, pray for your pastor, that we follow the right examples, avoid the negative, and find the power we need in Christ.

Let's stand and pray.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "the movie with Charleston Heston, Let My People Go"; the Charlton Heston film in which Aaron's staff and the Egyptian magicians' staffs become snakes is Cecil B. DeMille's The Ten Commandments (1956). Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica, "The Ten Commandments" (film, 1956); Exodus 7:8–13. ↩