

October 16, 2011 by Steve Brandon



# Continue in the Things You Have Learned

## 2 Timothy 3:10-15

1. Follow Me (verses 10-13).
2. Follow Your Teachers (verses 14-15a).
3. Follow The Scriptures (verse 15b).

In our exposition of this wonderful book of 2 Timothy, we find ourselves in chapter 3. We will be looking at verses 10-15, ...

### 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 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 rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

These verses come as a contrast to what came before (in verses 1-9--which we looked at last week). Those verses are filled with descriptions of the evil men that will come and attack the church. Those verses describe who they are and how they do their deceiving. In verse 10, we see a change of subject. Rather than talking about the deceivers, Paul turns and talks to Timothy, and he encourages him to walk in the right way.

Here's my first point, ...

1. Follow Me (verses 10-13).

This is what Paul is telling Timothy. You have seen my life, so follow in it. This isn't anything new for Timothy. In fact, Timothy had followed Paul for much of his life.

They met in Lystra, when Paul was on his second missionary journey. Before Paul left town, Timothy had joined him on his quest. And from that point on, Timothy became a life-long disciple of the apostle Paul. And he learned well. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he signaled out Timothy as the one who had a kindred spirit with the apostle Paul, himself (Phil. 2:20). He said that Timothy "served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father" (Phil. 2:22). He had captured Paul's spirit. He had become like Paul's offspring. In many ways, he had become a good replica of the apostle Paul.

And all Paul is doing here in verses 10 and 11 is bringing up what Timothy had already done. He had already followed Paul in much of his life. The call here in these verses is found in verse 14: "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of." Paul encourages him to follow in the path.

Paul puts forth nine aspects of Paul's life that Timothy had followed and ought to continue to follow. These things are in direct contrast to the deceivers of the first part of the chapter. And in all of these areas, he was calling Timothy to follow him.

### 1. Teaching

By this, Paul was referring to the gospel which he preached. Timothy had embraced this gospel. Timothy had come to love this gospel. Timothy was now called to teach and propagate this gospel.

Timothy embraced the glorious truth of Jesus, the Messiah, the fulfillment of the Old Covenant promises, who came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). It transformed Paul. It transformed Timothy. Paul called him to pass it on.

This is one of the main themes of 2 Timothy. Back in chapter 1, verse 13, Paul had already commanded Timothy to, "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." In chapter 2, verse 2, Paul told Timothy, "the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This will be the main thrust of Paul's exhortation in chapter 4: "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction" (4:2). "Timothy, you followed my teaching; continue on."

### 2. Conduct

By this, Paul is simply referring to his life -- his manner of living, the way that he lived, the way that he carried himself. His manner of living was so unlike the false teachers of verses 1-9.

Paul didn't have a love of self, as many of the false teachers had. Instead, he did not consider his life of any account as dear to himself (Acts 20:24). Paul didn't have a love of money, as many of the false teachers had. Instead, he said, "I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need" (Phil. 4:12). He wasn't boastful or arrogant or ungrateful or unholy or unloving (3:2-3). No, he lived a life of integrity. His conduct was in harmony with his teaching. "Timothy, you followed my conduct; continue on."

### **3. Purpose**

By this, Paul is referring to his goal in life. Over the years as Timothy spent time with Paul, it was evident. He wanted to follow Jesus and carry out the mission that Christ gave him "to bear [the name of Christ] before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). He didn't shrink back from anything.

Timothy may well have been there when Paul was addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus, saying, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20-21). "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27).

To this end, he continued to his dying day. That's the point of chapter 4, verse 7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." The call of 2 Timothy is for Timothy to continue on in the same. "Timothy, you followed my purpose; continue on."

### **4. Faith**

By this, Paul is referring to his faith in Christ. Paul made it his ambition to live a life to please Christ in all he did (2 Cor. 5:9), looking to the things that aren't seen, rather than to the things which are seen (2 Cor. 4:18). Unlike the deceivers of the church, who were worldly, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:4), Paul was eminently a lover of God. He longed for the things of God, trusting that Jesus would reward him.

2 Timothy 4:8 says, "In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing." That's where Paul's heart was. Such was an evidence of Paul's faith. "Timothy, you followed my faith; continue on."

### **5. Patience**

By this, Paul is referring to his endurance through the trials that he faced. In 2 Timothy 2:24, he had already told Timothy, "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition." Nowhere is your patience tested more than when you are wronged. And Paul was wronged on many occasions.

Paul was the bearer of good news! Instead of receiving the red carpet treatment, he was despised and rejected and persecuted. They ridiculed him. They beat him. They stoned him. They slandered him. They imprisoned him. Yet, through it all, he calmly trusted the Lord. And here he is in prison, calmly awaiting his unjust execution. "Timothy, you followed my patience; continue on."

### **6. Love**

By this, Paul is referring to his love for the brethren. Paul was a loving man. First of all, you can see his love for Timothy. Throughout this entire epistle, you can hear Paul's love for Timothy come through loud and clear.

In chapter 1, verse 2, Paul calls Timothy, "my beloved son." That is, my much loved son in the faith. In chapter 2, verse 1, again, we see Paul addressing Timothy as "my son." This is a term of endearment. Again in chapter 1, Paul speaks of how he was "longing to see you." That's an expression of love. "We are apart right now, and it's tearing up my heart. I really want to see you."

Twice in chapter 4, Paul pleads with Timothy that he would come soon to see him (4:9, 21). And the mere fact that Paul would write such a letter to help his dear disciple in the ministry is a demonstration of love.

But, Paul's reference to his love went far beyond his love for Timothy only. He had a love for all believers which was very evident if you knew him. When he left the elders of the church at Ephesus on the beach at Miletus, tears were flowing freely between the men, because they knew that they would not see each other again (Acts 20:36-38). "Timothy, you followed my love; continue on!"

### **7. Perseverance**

By this, Paul is referring to Paul's endurance in ministry. Over and over and over again, Timothy either saw or heard of Paul's perseverance, even when things were difficult. When rejected by the Jews, Paul continued right on preaching to the Gentiles instead (Acts 13:44-47). When stoned and left for dead, he got up and continued his ministry (Acts 14:19-20). In a prison in Philippi, he was singing praises to God (Acts 16:25). When arrested in Jerusalem, he continued to preach to the angry mob (Acts 22). When in Rome as a prisoner, he was still preaching and teaching (He believed that God had called him to carry His name to the Gentiles. And when things got rough, Paul kept going.

At one time writing, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created things shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39). And that which Paul wrote, he lived. "Timothy, you followed my perseverance; continue on!"

I want to take the last two together, because they are difficult to distinguish. And, Paul elaborates on them in verse 11.

## 8. Persecutions and 9. Sufferings

By this, Paul is referring to the hardships that he endured at the hands of evil men, who opposed the gospel. Continuing on in verse 11, Paul gave an example of the sorts of persecutions and sufferings that he endured, ...

2 Timothy 3:11

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 rescued me!

In God's providence, we know about these sufferings. They are recorded in the book of Acts. You can read of the account in Acts 13 and 14.

His persecution in Antioch is recorded in Acts 13. At the beginning of Acts 13, we see the leaders of the church praying. They were seeking the leading of the Lord regarding what they should do. The Holy Spirit said to them, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

And so off they sailed. The first place that they came to was "Antioch," that is, Psidian Antioch--the Antioch that is in Psidia. When they came there, they entered the synagogue on the Sabbath. Paul was a visiting Rabbi, and so was invited to speak. He preached Jesus to the congregation (Acts 13:16-41). The Jews were delighted to hear what Paul said. And they "kept begging that those things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath" (Acts 13:42).

But, when Paul came back the next Sabbath and the whole city (including the Gentiles) were at the synagogue to hear what Paul wanted to say, the Jews were filled with jealousy and began to contradict Paul and blaspheme (Acts 13:44). Eventually, the Jews "instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district" (Acts 13:50). Now, we don't know exactly what that means, but I'm sure that it was under physical threat that they left the city. That was Antioch.

The next place that Paul and Barnabas went to was Iconium. Again, they entered the synagogue and preached Jesus. Some believed in their Messiah, but others didn't (Acts 14:2). Again, some hostility against Paul and Barnabas arose. And "an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone them" (Acts 14:5). When they heard about this, they fled for their lives. That was Iconium.

Then, they fled to Lystra. In Lystra, they again had a measure of success. But, the Jews heard about it and came from Antioch and Iconium, "and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead" (Acts 14:19). By God's grace, he didn't die. Instead, he was rejuvenated and got up, while the disciples stood around him (Acts 14:19). They returned to Lystra and spent the evening before moving on the next day to Derbe.

These were the **8. Persecutions** and **9. Sufferings** that Paul referred to in verse 11. They aren't pleasant. And Timothy knew full well about them. And Timothy was experiencing some of them.

Again Paul was up front and honest with Timothy. These sorts of things will come upon all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 12, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

When Paul returned home from his first missionary journey, he returned back the way he came. He returned through Lystra and Iconium and Antioch. As he did, he was "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22). It sounds much like the promise of verse 12, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." This is the sort of promise that none of us want to see .

Christian publishers know the sorts of books that sell. I have a book on my shelf entitled, "Bible Prayers and Promises." It's filled with all sorts of Bible promises that can help you in many situations in life. For instance, in the table of contents, I read the following promises, ...

God's Promise of Love

God's Promise of Forgiveness

God's Promise of Salvation

God's Promise to Guide You

God's Promise to Protect you

God's Promise When You Are Impatient

God's Promise When You Are Confused

God's Promise When You are Tempted.

I searched in vain for 2 Timothy 3:12, "God's Promise That You Will Be Persecuted". There were some sections that talked about persecution. God's Promise When You Are Persecuted. God's Promise When You Suffer, ... But, those promises all talk about God's promises in the midst of suffering. This little booklet is all about God's good promises when (and if) you suffer. They don't contain the promise, "God's Promise That You Will Be Persecuted."

And yet, here it is in verse 12, front and center. We will be persecuted. Expect it. Don't be surprised when it comes. Peter said, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you" (1 Peter 4:12). "Timothy, you followed my persecutions and sufferings; continue on!" "Fight the fight. Finish the course. Press on."

"Timothy, you may think that you have had it bad, but it may well get worse." Verse 13 says, "But evil men and impostors will proceed from

bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." As bad as you have experienced it, it may well get worse! So, don't find your comfort in the fact that better things are yet to come. Because, in fact, that may not be true.

You can find comfort in the phrase that we skipped. Did you realize we skipped a phrase? Look back at verse 11, ...

2 Timothy 3:11

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 rescued me!

God will rescue you from your trials and tribulations. "There is no temptation that has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13). That's what Paul says, "out of them all the Lord rescued me."

Over in chapter 4, Paul makes the same point. We see it in verses 16-18, ...

2 Timothy 4:16

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.

This was his trial. The world was against him, and nobody was there to help him. Nobody, that is, except the Lord.

2 Timothy 4:17

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

The Lord rescued him. The Lord will rescue him. Verse 18, ...

2 Timothy 4:18

The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Here's the promise we have: God will rescue you. So, there is a promise to the persecutions and sufferings that are coming. It very well could be in the book of "Bible Prayers and Promises."

"So, Timothy, Follow Me" (verses 10-13).

Let's move on to our second point, ...

2. Follow Your Teachers (verses 14-15a).

We see this in verses 14 and 15, ...

2 Timothy 3:14-15

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

At this point, Paul brings Timothy back to the time that he was a little child. And there, his convictions began. He learned the "sacred writings" -- that's a word for the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Ancient Jewish culture, the Scriptures were front and center in the educational process. The Jews took seriously God's words in Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ...

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The ancient Jews took the Scriptures and placed them upon their hearts (Deut. 6:6). They placed them in their house (Deut. 6:9). They placed them on their hands and heads to remind them of their significance (Deut. 6:8). And as an overflow of their love for the Lord their God (Deut. 6:5), they taught their children the truth of the word of God (Deut. 6:7).

And notice, they didn't teach them through a curriculum. They taught them in everyday life -- when they sat in their house, when they walked by the way, when they went to bed, when they arose in the morning. In other words, all the time. Twenty-four-seven.

Now, that's not to say they didn't use curriculums. The Rabbis certainly did. But, their learning was to be much more comprehensive than that. They were to learn from their parents, as their parents lived and modeled a godly life before them. The heart of Old Testament education was parents who loved the Lord, passing on this love to their children, and using the Scriptures in the process. It wasn't merely getting them to know the facts. It was getting them to know the heart of God, using the Scriptures as a guide.

The application here is flowing right out of this text. Parents, are you teaching your children? Parents, are you teaching your children as an overflow of your own love for the Lord?

From everything that we know from Timothy, this education probably came from his mother and his grandmother. In chapter 1, when Paul brings Timothy back to where he learned the faith, Paul brought him back to the women in his life: Lois, his mother and Eunice, his grandmother. He says in 2 Timothy 1:5, "I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."

How did the faith get to Timothy? His mother and grandmother taught him the ways of faith, as they lived lives of faith before Him. From all that we know, Timothy's father had little to do with this training. We know (from Acts 16:1), that his father was a Greek. Furthermore, we know that Timothy wasn't circumcised (Acts 16:3) which is probably a reference to his father's lack of faith. For, if he had been a believer, he would have probably followed the customs of the Jewish people.

So, single moms, be encouraged. Parents, be exhorted. You play a crucial role in the training of your children.

Notice here in verse 15, how Paul describes Timothy's convictions: "From childhood you have known the sacred writings." I do believe that it's important for you, children, to gain their convictions about God when you are young.

The great evangelist D. L. Moody once preached at an evening service. He was asked, "How many converts did you have last night." He answered, "Two and one-half." "You mean two adults and a child?" "No," he replied, "Two children and one adult." He went on to explain that a child converted is an entire life converted. But, an adult converted is only half a life converted.

Children, there are lots of you! Some visitors last week said, "We have never seen so many children at a church before!" They claimed that their infant son fit in better than they fit in. Children, I love that you are in the service with us. I love the brightness that you bring to our church. I love your eagerness to learn. I love your happiness here at church. Children, you have an opportunity to gain your convictions now, that you will never lose.

Notice how Paul describe Timothy's upbringing in verse 14, "You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of." Are you becoming convinced of the matters of Scripture? I know, as I interact with many of you, you are loving Jesus.

My message this morning is entitled, "Continue in the things you have learned" That's my hope and prayer for all of you. "Continue in the things you have learned"

But know this: as you get older, temptations will come upon your life. You may come to think that some of the restrictions that your parents place upon you is unreasonable. You may become interested in other things, rather than Christ. You may be tempted to be popular, rather than godly. Remember verse 12? The promise of persecutions and sufferings?

J. C. Ryle would like to have a word with you. He wrote, ...

I ask the children of religious parents to mark well what I am saying. It is the highest privilege to be the child of a godly father and mother, and to be brought up in the midst of many prayers. It is a blessed thing indeed to be taught the gospel from our earliest in-fancy, and to hear of sin, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and holiness, and heaven, from the first moment we can remember anything. But, O, take heed that you do not remain barren and unfruitful in the sunshine of all these privileges: beware lest your hearts remain hard, impenitent, and worldly, notwithstanding the many advantages you enjoy. You cannot enter the kingdom of God on the credit of your parents' religion. You must eat the bread of life for yourself, and have the witness of the Spirit in your own heart. You must have repentance of your own, faith of your own, and sanctification of your own. [\[1\]](#)

Be convinced of these things, and Follow Your Teachers (verses 14-15a).

First and foremost, your parents are your teachers. But, there may be others. I'm sure that Timothy was educated by some Rabbis. I'm sure that there were some other men in his life that were influential. We know that Paul was one of his teachers. So, think now, who are your teachers? Parents, Sunday school, those who have disciplined you. Continue in that path.

Finally, ... let's turn to my third and final point. I know that we won't do this one justice.

"Timothy, ...

3. Follow The Scriptures (verse 15b).

2 Timothy 3:15

... the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Notice that the Scripture is mentioned as "the sacred writings." The term, "the sacred writings" is a clear reference to the Old Testament -- beginning with Genesis, continuing through the Kings and Chronicles, including the Psalms and Proverbs, and all of the Prophets.

When Paul wrote these words, the whole of the New Testament wasn't yet written (for instance, the gospel of John and Revelation weren't written until after Paul died). We don't know how much of the New Testament Timothy had even read. We do know from 1 Timothy 5:18 that the gospel of Luke was available to Timothy and regarded as "Scripture" at the time. We also know that Timothy knew much what Paul wrote, which was being acknowledged as Scripture by Peter (2 Peter 3:16).

At any rate, the focus here is upon the reality that the Scriptures are a worthy guide for your soul. In verse 15, we see the helpfulness of the Old Testament. It is "able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." It's very interesting how Paul writes this. He's fully aware of the purposes of the Old Testament. They anticipate the coming of Jesus. They lead you to Christ.

In Galatians 3:24, Paul wrote how "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ." That's what Paul was saying. The Old Testament Scriptures tell you of the holiness of God. They tell you of your sinfulness. They tell you of the Savior to come. They call you to turn to the Lord. But, the full details of the salvation that Jesus brought wasn't fully known until He came. "Timothy, the Scriptures are a worthy guide; follow them."

We will look closely at verses 16 and 17 next week. I want to focus on them, as they are some of the most precious and awesome verses in all the bible. But, for today, learn from Paul to remember the Scriptures.

There are many resources we can find in the world -- in the library or on the internet. Those can be unreliable. But this book -- the Bible -- is always reliable. Turn to the Scriptures. Let them be your guide. We can follow Paul's instruction to Timothy: Follow Me (verses 10-13); Follow Your Teachers (verses 14-15a); and Follow the Scriptures (verse 15b).

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 16, 2011 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] J.C. Ryle, "Holiness", p. 199