



**“...that good thing which was committed to you.”  
- 2 Timothy 1:13-18**

**by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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Matthew 24:4-13 And Jesus answered and said to them: *"Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."*

Some versions of this text say **"...the one who perseveres to the end will be saved."** What exactly does that sentence mean to us?

Jesus, speaking here as part of what is known as the Olivet Discourse, is prophetically warning that as persecution increased, many who considered themselves His followers will reveal their true spiritual state... the truth of who they are, when they eventually turned away from the faith. Such occurrences are not reserved for our immediate time, for according to John 6:66, there already had been those that had followed for a time only to bail out when things got difficult. Jesus knew that such was just the beginning and would escalate until the end. True Christian faith would be tested by deception, false prophets, and the simple increase of wickedness. Not only will there be many who will turn away, but Jesus foretold that even amongst those that remained "the love of most would grow cold." The implication is that those who "stand firm to the end" will be the minority (see Matthew 7:14).

Jesus' statement that he who endures to the end will be saved cannot be taken to mean that our salvation is somehow dependent on our personal ability to remain saved. Rather, it is a promise of perseverance. Those who lovingly...passionately... endure to the end, are the ones who are genuinely saved. Making it to the end doesn't *make* us saved, but it indeed proves who *is* saved. The various trials Jesus speaks of here will reveal our true colors. "Most will grow cold" and fall away from Christ, showing that they are professors only and not truly born again (Matthew 24:12). But those who endure and stand firm in the faith, despite incitements to do otherwise, are showing that they are genuine children of God.

Paul had begun his letter to Pastor Timothy with an encouraging tone, albeit with an honest evaluation of the current state of affairs. He wasn't telling Timothy that there wasn't any *reason* to fear...at least in the flesh, but was calling him to a fearless lifestyle just the same. He was telling Timothy "Despite it all Timothy, don't be moved...hold on...stand fast. Remember what you were taught. Remember always. Remember the things you have seen, and heard in me. Don't buckle, don't give in Timothy!"

His message is more pertinent now than ever. It is critical in our day that we hear the warning of Hebrews 2:1 ...*"we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away."* Sadly Paul's advice is vastly ignored. For so many who began in the faith, and even walked for a time have departed from the family of God. So many have denied the faith or have sought out and embraced a "Jesus lite" edition of the gospel which...as Paul has said...is not the gospel at all. (Gal 1:6-7)

Isaiah 59:14-15 *"Our courts oppose the righteous, and justice is nowhere to be found. Truth stumbles in the streets, and honesty has been outlawed. Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who renounces evil is attacked..."*

Vast segments of the greater church today have moved away from the truth of the Word...if they were ever really there in the first place...and have embraced instead a doctrine based upon public opinion, popular sentiment, and hyper-individualism. Teachings that try to please everyone and attempt to never offend, and to "itch the ears" of mankind in hopes of keeping them in the pews. That effect in America is more than a river, it's a tidal wave, and it takes everything we can muster to keep standing against it.

It used to be that we just had to battle the world, and the enemy was clear and obvious. But now it's a 'two front' war, as we find we also must often battle those within the greater realm of religion too! Both groups will condemn you if you hold to scripture...all of it...and they both will call you a cult if the lives of those who you minister to actually change...especially if they dramatically change!

In these times of intense persecution and great worldly and even religious distractions, ...*with so many people leaving the faith*, ....it is easy to surrender to the dispassionate "middle-of-the-road" position. Such has no power and no truth, and is ultimately...*spectacularly*, unsatisfying. We must commit to being unmovable. Moreover, not only are we not to back off, but we in truth should fight harder...sing louder...and pray more!

There are plenty of those who will come along with some 'new' revelation or a 'new' truth. One that evidently has mysteriously been hidden for 2000 years since Christ! But Solomon...the 'Mr. Wisdom' of the Old Testament once said *"There is nothing new under the sun!"* So often, today's "new truth" turns out to be yesterday's heresy, simply 'repackaged' for another generational pass.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, this issue came up also. He told Timothy to instruct certain individuals under his care to stop teaching "strange doctrines."

Please note that Paul was willing to do more than simply direct and instruct. He was willing to even step up as an example of what was right and true. That was a rare thing in his day and certainly in ours! So many today are unwilling to actually live out a committed and sold-out disciple life, though they will sit in a pew each week and hear it taught! They may even verbally *teach* that direction! But actually **doing** it is another matter altogether. Paul went so far as to declare... "be like me..."

Because of the success of all this mock Christianity, we are venturing now into the absurd. The acceptable practices of biblically designated overt sin is staggering! We can live like the devil while claiming Christianity and it seems few if anyone will call them on it. One of the ones I run into constantly is those who believe they can have a vertical relationship with God, while trashing and hating everyone on the horizontal plane.

**1 John 4:20** “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

**1Jo 2:4** “He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

**1Jo 1:6** “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”

**Titus 1:16** “Such people claim they know God, but they deny him by the way they live. They are detestable and disobedient, worthless for doing anything good.”

## **1:14**

There is no argument that standing against that tide...the modern worldly wave... can be at times increasingly difficult! Yet we all have probably met an ‘old saint’ that continued to stand strong, continued to grow and learn, and continued to serve and be used by God. Is there a secret to such success? Usually we are fighting the wrong fights. Those who triumph in this matter focused on staying in love and open to the continued indwelling Holy Spirit within them. They embraced the spirit of the church...and unity of believers. That Spirit kept all the other fires burning ...fires of diligence, the desire to serve, and the humility to learn and grow. This is the dunamis, or the “power” that comes through the housing of the Spirit of God inside of us.

Both Paul and Timothy were entrusted with the greatest possession one could ever have. Both personally and in mission, they were committed with the gospel of salvation and the opportunity to share it. To live it, to teach it, to give themselves wholly to it. To these men, this treasure they were given was theirs to enjoy but also theirs to protect. It was something very dear to them both!

“In one of his books, Watchman Nee points out that a person will walk differently when he has a treasure in his pocket. If you’re walking down the street and only have a quarter in your pocket, you aren’t very concerned about losing it. But if you’re given \$10,000 and told to guard it in your pocket as you go from one place to another, you’ll walk a bit differently than if you only have a quarter. You’ll be careful not to go to certain places, where you could get mugged. There are certain things that you just won’t do, for fear of losing that treasure.” (<http://www.preceptaustin.org>)

Indeed, you can tell a lot about how a man thinks and feels about Christ and the gospel by how he walks when he is in possession of it.

There are many today who will sharply criticize those who actively defend the scriptural integrity. Certainly there will be some who do so out of ignorance, yet many will do so with a vindictive and spiteful spirit because they simply don’t like what is being said. Yet we are called to defend the word of God! Not as if it’s very integrity will fail without us personally “standing in the breach.” But we are commanded as believers to guard, watch, and defend the truth ...to faithfully contend for the integrity of the gospel and of all the scripture. And that is not as easy as it sounds...

NOTE: Pastor Steven Cole writes that “The Holy Spirit is the divine interpreter of sound doctrine.” That fact has been proven repeatedly when a baby believer smells rotten doctrine long before he or she intellectually has the ability to discern such!

Not only are we to put our trust in God, we must realize that He also inexplicably puts his trust in us. The idea of God using men as His hands, His feet, and even His voice is never far from New Testament thought. When God wants something done, he so often seeks out a man to do it. He doesn't have to, but the fact is ...and history confirms such, He so often seeks out someone to “step into the gap.” God in fact has invested in us this “precious treasure.” *Do we walk as if we possess it?*

### 1:15

On a couple of levels, this is one of the saddest verses in the New Testament. For me as a pastor, losing people never gets any easier. But in a war, loses are a reality, and the spiritual war that we fight is no different. The casualties will be inevitably high, and the cost is eternity. While we must seek to love as Jesus loved, let us acknowledge that there were plenty of times Jesus walked away or let someone else walk away and did not go after them. Author Gary Thomas writes in his book “When to Walk Away,” that even though Jesus loved like no other man in history, He clearly walked away from people on occasion...or He allowed them to walk away from Him...and as far as we know, they were ultimately lost for eternity. Thomas includes an appendix listing 41 times in the Gospels that Jesus did this for one reason or another. Such a fact makes for a spiritually challenging read for many of us!

The disturbing truth is that there always has been, and will be, many who abandon the faith after a time. Only the Lord knows whether they are truly saved. Like the parable of the sower, some seeds will never find root. 1 Jn 2:19 tells us clearly that “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”

Like Jesus and Paul, a minister quickly comes to understand that his true friends are few and far between. Both Paul and Jesus experienced the pain of rejection...even from those who were close to them. One learns early, that the only true rock we can count on, is the rock of our salvation.

As you move forward in God's calling for you...as you grow in him and in discipleship, there will be those who will walk away from you, no matter what level of ministry you participate in. The pain that goes with such is a reality of the faith. The cost of answering God's call upon you can be...**will be**...expensive in the realm of friends.

Many servants of the Lord have suffered through this pain. David in Psalms 55:12-14: “*It is not an enemy who taunts me — I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me — I could have hidden from them. Instead, it is you — my equal, my companion and close friend. What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God.*”

Jesus in Luke 22:48: “*Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’*”

The term for “turned away” herein is expanded in scripture elsewhere in its use. The fuller meaning describes those who “turn away their ears from the truth.” Thus we are speaking concerning those who recognize the truth but do not want it. For “truth received” transforms the hearer. Rejection of such is rebellion and eventually destruction.

MacArthur adds *"To be rejected by the world is not pleasant, but to be deserted by fellow workers in the service of Christ is particularly painful. To have those you have spent your life spiritually nurturing turn away from you, and sometimes even against you, is heartbreaking in the extreme."*

Barnes adds that *"It is a sad thing when the only record made of a man - the only evidence which we have that he ever lived at all - is, that he turned away from a friend, or forsook the paths of true religion. And yet there are many men of whom the only thing to be remembered of them is, that they lived to do wrong."*

Barclay draws a sobering application from this section noting that *"Again and again the Bible brings us face to face with a question which is real for every one of us. Again and again it introduces and dismisses a man from the stage of history with a single sentence. Hermogenes and Phygellus—we know nothing whatever of them beyond their names and the fact that they were traitors to Paul. Onesiphorus—we know nothing of him except that in his loyalty to Paul he risked—and perhaps lost—his life. Hermogenes and Phygellus go down to history branded as deserters; Onesiphorus goes down to history as the friend who stuck closer than a brother. If we were to be described in one sentence, what would it be? Would it be the verdict on a traitor, or the verdict on a disciple who was true? "*

### **1:16-18**

Paul prays for this individual “Onesiphorus” and his family. Onesiphorus is here recorded throughout history as one who blessed and assisted Paul, even when things were difficult. Many so-called friends will abandon you when things get tough, as it is human nature to avoid conflict and difficulty. It is when we are “in chains” that we find who our true friends are.

Paul sought the Lord’s mercy for Onesiphorus. What exactly is mercy anyway? Mercy is more than a Christian ‘catch-phrase.’ It involves a reality of action. Mercy is “I see the need” ...“I am moved by the need”...and “I move to meet the need.” Mercy says "I have the feeling of sorrow over another person's difficult situation and I make the choice to seek to do something about their need."

Spurgeon comments on the phrase “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” in Psalm 23:6: *“This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly verily, or "surely" is set as a seal upon it. This sentence may be read, "only goodness and mercy," for there shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. Goodness and mercy follow him always -- all the days of his life -- the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins.”*

Unlike the two infamous fellas in verse 15, Onesiphorus will go down in history as a true friend and a faithful servant. Paul himself sought deeply to “finish well,” which he saw firsthand so many fail to do. According to the info we have, Phygellus and Hermogenes did not, but Onesiphorus did.

Proverbs 17:17 tells us that “A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.” There have been such faithful men as Onesiphorus in my life. Or at least I believe them to be. Jesus ministered beside Judas for three years, and then Judas betrayed him. So time will tell for all of us.

