

## TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

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### CHAPTER TWELVE -

#### BUT - WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

II Timothy 3:10-13

10 **But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,**

11 **Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.**

12 **Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**

13 **But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

I ALWAYS think of "**but**" as the corner word of Scripture. As we follow the narrative, we seem to be traversing a certain kind of road until we arrive at this word, and then, for good or ill, we appear to turn a corner. In II Kings 5:1, what a sunlit region we find in that grand description of the splendid Naaman - what a man he was; "**but . . .**": instantly we are round the corner, under an overcast and black sky.

In Ephesians 2:1-3, we discover ourselves in a hopeless and helpless condition; "**but GOD . . .**": we have turned a corner indeed, where the has suddenly blazed forth upon us an outburst of joy and hope and blessing.

In Galatians 5:19-25, we move from the slum to the orchard - "**the works of the flesh**," how dirty and dilapidated, and dangerous, and degraded, they look; "**but . . .**" what a display of "**fruit**", the very next moment, the first step round the corner, rises before our delighted eyes. Well, here in our present study we turn the corner once more.

In the previous passage things have been pretty dreadful - "**covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unholy, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, despisers of . . . good**" - what a lot! "**But . . .**" look now - "**purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience**" - what a difference!

At one point, weeds, ugly, rank, poisonous weeds; and just round the corner, flowers - sweetly-scented, exquisitely-formed flowers.

Isn't that just what one would expect? After all, in the former, it is a company of unbelievers that

is described; while here it is a believer. And we remember that "**The Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel**", Exodus 11:7 - in that old instance, as in our case,

(i) *A difference in fact*. Israel, like ourselves, is under the Blood; and

(ii) *A difference in dealing* - on the ground of the personally applied Blood, Israel is dealt with, not in judgment, but in grace; and

(iii) *A difference in conduct* - what a contrast in behaviour is observable in the different houses: in one, a feast, in the other, a funeral; fearfulness for Egypt, freedom for Israel.

So between the believer and the unbeliever there is, in GOD's reckoning, a fundamental and eternal difference, and that distinction is to be evidenced in daily conduct and personal character. Thus, there is nothing surprising in the change that comes over this narrative at verse 10. But there is something challenging about it: are we different, as different, from the others as we ought to be?

You will recall the Master's story of the Wheat and the Tares both growing together, in Matthew 13:30.

The trouble was that, though "**children of the wicked one**", the Tares were, in outward appearance, and at that stage, so like the Wheat, "**the children of the Kingdom**". I have often met with people who, although not really Christians, are yet so Christian in their behaviour - so kindly, so unselfish, so sweetly-dispositioned, so upright, so true - so like Wheat, but really still Tares, because they have not been born again, they have not the new heart.

There is, alas, another trouble of an opposite sort: that nowadays the Wheat is so often so like the Tares; those who are Christians thinking, speaking, acting, being, just like worldlings: little difference to be seen between them.

It is a strange thing to see the Tares imitating the Wheat; but it is something more than strange to see the Wheat apeing the Tares. Fortunately, there was nothing of this about our beloved Paul. His was the completely different life; and he was able, in all consistency, to offer to his beloved Timothy.

### A COPY FOR PATTERN

It comes as a little of a shock to find that Paul here starts talking about himself, and that, as it would seem, somewhat boastingly; and this in spite of the fact that "**boasters**" were amongst those that he pilloried in verse 2. There are passages in his letters in which the apostle urges upon us the great virtue of proper humility. In Colossians 3:12, he says, "**Put on therefore, as the elect of GOD . . . humbleness of mind**". In Romans 12:3, it is "**I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think . . .**" Yet this very same man now holds himself up for Timothy's pattern: and this is by no means an isolated instance of this queer characteristic.

The late delightful Dr. W. L. Watkinson once published a book, a fascinating book, called *Moral*

*Paradoxes of Paul*, in which he has a chapter which he has entitled, "*In Praise of Boasting*".

It is a searching examination of the very fact we have been speaking of. Perhaps I may be allowed to take out, as summing up what he says, "The tenth and eleventh chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians appear a very paroxysm of boasting"! Well, read the chapters, and see. Or, If you prefer, narrow the enquiry a little; go to the First Epistle, and mark the phrases of the tenth verse of the fifteenth chapter - "**... I am what I am ... I laboured more abundantly than they all**".

Yes, I know; but look again - the seeming boasting is more apparent than real. He says these things, not for self-glorying, but only for GOD's glory, only that GOD may be magnified.

He attributes everything about him, if there has been any change, any growth, any energy, not to himself but to Him. It is, as the verse says, "**... grace ... grace ... grace**". It transpires, then, that there are occasions when we may legitimately and properly talk about ourselves, as, for example, when we are drawn to give our testimony to "**what He hath done for my soul**" as Psalm 66:16 puts it.

Only, let us be careful, in that event, that we do so in the right spirit, and from the right motive, and along with the right behaviour.

Paul must, therefore, be acquitted of all desire of vain glory: "If any improvement is to be seen in him, it is only by the grace of GOD. His estimate of his own unaided worth is for ever enshrined in that earlier word to Timothy (1:1, 15), at the end of which verse he writes, "**... sinners, of whom I am chief**"!

So we approach our present passage, "**Thou hast fully known**" - or, as the word implies, "fully followed up, fully traced", as if running over a copy on which to pattern his own life. We know how 1 Peter 2:21 speaks of "**Christ ... leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps**"; that we fully understand, but Paul dares to speak differently, as in I Thessalonians 1:6, "**Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord**". That is, indeed, a remarkable claim to be able to make - that, in following him, they would, *ipso facto* be following CHRIST. Oh, that we, you and I, were so Christ-like that such a thing might be said concerning us, and our influence on other lives.

Mark here, now, the details of that copy which Paul offers to Timothy for his pattern.

First we observe:

(a) Consistency in living - that first pair of qualities suggests that idea: "**my doctrine, manner of life**."

As we have seen earlier in our Studies, here was a man whose practice coincided with his preaching: what he said in his teaching, he carried out in his behaviour. It is not always that such consistency is found amongst us; alas, we are, all too often, not what we teach, nor even what we profess.

In the days long ago a pastry-cook sent his boy out early in the morning to sell his pies in the streets. At eight o'clock he started, ringing his bell and crying his wares: Hot pies! Hot pies! It was not a very successful morning, and at twelve o'clock he was still shouting, Hot pies! Hot pies! I suspect that, in spite of his loud profession, his pies had by then lost a good deal of the early warmth. Even as some of us Christians are still protesting our keenness when our hearts have grown cold.

So, too, are, we sometimes guilty of harbouring things in our lives which we have earlier forsworn.

Before the war, you might have entered the Hall at Olympia at certain times, to be almost deafened by the excited barking of multitudes of dogs, of all sorts, and shapes, and sizes. It was the Kennel Club Show. But, on one such occasion, if you are observant, you would have espied, at the Entrance Doors, a notice, which they had forgotten to take down, and which read, "**No Dogs Admitted**". Yes, that's what it said; but the place was full of them!

One recalls the time when Saul professed he had got rid of all the sheep, and was answered, "**What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears . . . ?**" (1 Samuel 15:14). Pay heed to the apostolic injunction, in Philippians 3:2, "**Beware of dogs**"; and don't profess "No Dogs" if there are dogs.

Or, pursuing our inconsistencies still further, are we careful to live up to the name we bear as Christians, "**that worthy Name by the which ye are called**," as James 2:7 has it?

"I haven't a penny to my name," said a man at Barnet County Court the other day. Believe it or not, his name was Cash! Do you recall the scarifying word to Sardis, in Revelation 3:1, "**Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead**". The simple illustrations will, perhaps, serve to pull us up in our infidelities: let them suffice to hold up before our conscience the inconsistency of a cold heart, a sin-ridden life, an unrealised name.

Let us, with relief, turn back to our apostle, so utterly consistent in the relationship between lip and life that, as in Philippians 4:9, he can venture on the advice, "**those things which ye have . . . heard from me, and seen in me, do**". Yes, lip and life exactly coincided. That is one part of this copy.

Next we have:

(b) Continuance in labouring - which I think I see in the next three features here: "**purpose, faith, long-suffering**".

There will be no denial that Paul's one great overMastering purpose in life was the all-out, and all-in, service of GOD. Listen to him on the storm-tossed vessel in Acts 27:23, "**God, Whose I am, and whom I serve**".

We may, next, take the "**faith**" in the sense of fidelity - utter faithfulness to the service which he had undertaken; and the "**long-suffering**" will indicate something of the price demanded by his fidelity to that purpose to serve. We shall deal a little more explicitly with this cost later in this

Study. We shall only stay at the point just now to emphasise the contrast between Paul's consuming loyalty and our own all too-frequently feeble allegiance to GOD's service.

Not a few of us sit far too loosely to our obligations in this sphere. If our Christian work makes us a bit tired, we are all-too-prone to throw it up; if anyone dares to criticise our work, we are quick to resent it (whether they are right or wrong), and as likely as not we resign, and "leave the church".

All this is no exaggeration, as my readers will very well know. Oh, for more of the purpose, faithfulness, and readiness for cost, that characterised Paul's life!

This is a second part of his copy.

And the third is:

(c) Constancy in loving - "**charity, patience**" are the two last qualities that he mentions here: that is, a love that keeps on loving; putting up with so much, but loving just the same.

In an earlier war, an officer and his batman, crossing the scene of a recent battle, came upon a badly wounded enemy. Noticing his distress, the officer bade his man give him a drink from his water-bottle. At that, the sick man feebly managed to get out his revolver, and, too weak to take proper aim, fired at his stooping would-be helper. The shot fortunately went astray; and the man asked, "What shall I do now, sir?" His officer said quietly, "Give him the water just the same." Who could blame those two soldiers if, so greatly provoked, they had left the wounded man to his fate? Yet we remember that, according to Romans 5:6-10, it was "**when we were without strength,**" "**while we were yet sinners,**" "**when we yet enemies,**" that GOD, in CHRIST, dealt so lovingly with us, proffering us "**living water,**" even though we were so regardless of His grace.

Paul had learnt that lesson, had imbibed that spirit; he would have his Timothy display the same undeviating love, even to those who, as the Epistle forewarns him, shall presently treat him so badly. "**Love never faileth,**" he had taught his Corinthian friends (I Corinthians 13:8); to Timothy, not in words only, but in practical example, he would teach this thing; and we, too, please GOD, shall pick up the same lesson.

So, in these three particulars, this Spiritual Father has set before his Son in the Faith this copy of a life good and true, upon which, by the HOLY SPIRIT, the younger man shall model and fashion his own character.

Truly, it is a pattern so well worthwhile spending all possible pains on. And now comes:

### A CAUSE FOR PRAISE

Paul continues to talk about himself; but, let us stress again, not that it shall appear how good and great he is, but how strong and faithful his Saviour is.

He touches first upon:

(a) His own experience - "**what persecutions I endured**". We soft-living Christians should, I think, read and ponder such a passage as II Corinthians 11:23-28, "**In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.**"

What a catalogue of costs accruing to his allegiance; no wonder he said, in Galatians 6:17, "**I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus**". How little, by comparison, seem our own inconveniences, and oppositions, and sufferings, and pains for His sake.

I notice that Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra are mentioned as the places of suffering; because it was the happenings in this particular district that Timothy would be familiar with - stories from the first two cities would reach his own native Lystra; and what took place there, the stoning and so on, would quite likely have transpired under his very own eyes. Thus was he able to "**fully trace**," as it were with his own finger, the copy of utmost fidelity that, as we have seen, Paul gave him for his pattern. But, in referring to this bunch of cities, why is Derbe left out?

A glance at the narrative in Acts 14 reveals the reason that he was not persecuted in that place. Just one of the multitude of incidental and undesigned coincidences which indicate the extreme accuracy of the Scriptures. It would have been so natural, and so easy, to slip in Derbe into the list; but then it would have been inaccurate.

Then Paul turns to:

(b) The common Christian experience - "**yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution**". Here we see:

(i) *The intention of godly living* - the "**will**" is to be stressed, as the indication of a deliberate purpose. Have we made it a specific decision that, as GOD's children, we will live godly?

(ii) *The secret of godly living* - will then concern us. It is only "**in Christ Jesus**" that we can accomplish it. Even as a plant can only live its proper life "in the earth," so we are able to do so only as we abide in Him. Such is His own teaching in John 15:4 ff.

(iii) *The cost of godly living* - must, however, be faced. A godly life will always attract the devil's attention; for it is so powerful an influence that he dare not leave it undisturbed. The persecution may not, as in Paul's case, take, with us, the form of physical onslaught; but there will be opposition of some sort - ridicule, ostracism, continual nagging, obstruction, or what not.

Even as I prepared this lecture, a letter came to me from a young army officer, in the course of which he wrote, "Do please pray for me. I am having a difficult time just now, from opposition". Yes, whether in the forces, or in the office, or in the workshop, or in the home - If we decide to

live a godly life, we shall court persecution.

In the light of the apostle's statement, is it going too far to suggest that if our Christian life is too easy, perhaps it is not too godly? That may not be wholly, or universally, true, but it behooves us all to examine ourselves, lest it happen to be true of us.

And now at last we come to the cause of praise, with which this section of our study was to be concerned.

(c) A glad experience for us all - "**out of them all the Lord delivered me**". Not "from," you notice - as if we are told we shall not have unpleasant things. The Christian is not necessarily granted immunity from the sufferings of the common human lot: here and there, with one or another, that may be in GOD's plan for him; but normally he will be subject to the buffetings and batterings of life.

Yes, they may hurt him, but they will not harm him, for "**out of them all**" he shall be delivered. I love to recall this same truth in Daniel 3:17- "**Our God . . . is able to deliver us from . . . and He will deliver us out of . . .**"

He is perfectly well able to prevent them being thrown into the burning fiery furnace, if that be His plan; but they cannot rely on that, must not expect it. Their business is to go loyally on, fully assured that He most certainly will deliver them "**out of**" even if not "from". How we may praise GOD for His wonderful "**out of**" deliverances: that, by His infinite grace, we shall be brought through life, if not unscarred, at least unsullied.

The late learned Professor A. T. Robertson, of Louisville, in his book, *The Minister and his Greek New Testament*, has a chapter on "*Pictures in Prepositions*" which, I think justifies me in my careful distinction here between "from" and "**out of**". And now, in conclusion, see here:

### **A CALL FOR PITY**

In our verse 13 there appears, at first sight, to be no such call; but ponder awhile. First:

(a) The enemies' progress - "**evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse**". Of course they will. It is a perverted progress. We are familiar with *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as Bunyan portrayed it: that is the right sort. But there is "*The Rake's Progress*," as Hogarth painted it: that is the wrong sort. That is what we have here. There is no standing still in sin; be it never forgotten that always sinning is sinking. There may sometimes seem to be an outward improvement but there will always be an inward deterioration. Herein lies part of the reason for the persecution here prophesied. Then:

(b) The enemies' practice- "**deceiving**". Here we are, back again with those counterfeiters of the previous section of this chapter. Deception is their stock-in-trade; that is their *modus operandi*.

- A counterfeit gospel - the "**other gospel**" of works, against which Paul thunders in Galatians 1:6 ff.

- A counterfeit power - "**having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh**": thus, in Galatians 3:3, he warns us against deriving our power from the energy of the flesh.  
- A counterfeit goodness - for "**Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light**", II Corinthians 11:14.

Yes, it is deceit upon deceit - "**seducers**" here means magicians, or conjurers, like the gentlemen mentioned in verse 8. But note this:

(c) The enemies' position - "**being deceived**." That is where the call for pity arises: these people, in all their wickedness, are themselves the wretched dupes of the devil. What is to be our attitude towards them who oppose us, and even persecute us? Shall we be annoyed with them - wrathfully indignant at their behaviour?

Well, it depends upon what level of life we are living. If, to adopt the phraseology of I Corinthians 3:1, we are "**carnal**" - that is, Christians living on the world's level - that will inevitably our reaction; but if we are "**spiritual**" - Christians living at the Spirit'S level - we shall rather have a great pity for them.

Listen: "**I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.**"

Infinite pity:

let us finish on that note.

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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