

# THE CONTRASTING MARKS OF GODLY BELIEVERS

## 2 TIMOTHY 03:10–13

### *Introduction*

This passage is a contrast with the former passage which dealt with the godless marks of the last days. Here we have the contrasting marks of godly believers.

- I. Mark 1: following a godly example (v. 10).
- II. Mark 2: enduring persecution (v. 11-12).
- III. Mark 3: guarding against evil men (v. 13).

### **I. Timothy 03:10 Testimony of Godliness**

A godly person follows a godly example. This is a sharp contrast from the godless marks of false teachers (v. 1-9). Timothy had known (parakoloutheo) and had closely observed and followed the godly example of Paul. Kenneth Wuest points out that the Greek word means to follow a person so closely that one is always by the person's side, conforming his life to the person (*The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 148). It means to join oneself to the person, to become his disciple and to follow his example. Paul had lived a godly life, and Timothy had followed in his footsteps. Paul mentions seven things about his life that stand out as a dynamic example, eight things that a person must focus upon and follow if he wishes to live a godly life.

1. There is *teaching*. What was the source of Paul's teaching? What was it that Paul had taught? The Scriptures, the very Word of Christ and of God. Paul declared this time and again.

**Rom. 1:1-4** *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Rom. 1:16** *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.*

**1 Cor. 15:1-4** *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

---

**1 Th. 2:13** *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

**2 Tim.3:16** *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

**Tit. 1:9** *He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

**Tit. 2:1** *You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.*

The point is this: the godly person must follow the teaching of godly teachers. He must have nothing to do with the teaching of false teachers (v. 1-9).

⇒ A person cannot live godly unless he knows godliness.

⇒ A person cannot teach godliness unless he follows after godliness.

A godly person closely observes and follows after those who live godly lives. He is a disciple of godly examples. He follows the godly teaching of godly people.

2. There is *godly behaviour* and conduct. Paul practiced what he preached. He lived what he taught. He professed to be a follower of Christ; therefore, he followed Christ.

⇒ He did not live in sin; he lived in righteousness.

⇒ He did not profess one thing and do another.

Timothy was to do the same, and so are all other believers. A godly person is to behave himself — to conduct his life like he should. He is to live what he professes. He is not to pull down what he teaches by what he does. The believer is to teach godliness, *but first* he is to live godly.

**Acts 20:35** *“In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

**1 Cor. 4:16** *Therefore I urge you to imitate me.*

**1 Cor.11:1** *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*

**Phil. 3:17** *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*

**Phil. 4:9** *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

**2 Th. 3:7** *For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you.*

**2 Tim. 1:13** *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

3. There is *purpose* or what Donald Guthrie calls a person's "chief aim in life" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries," p. 160). The chief aim of believers is to be one thing and one thing only: Christ and His great mission — the mission of saving people from sin, death, and judgment and of ministering to people. Eternal life — the glorious privilege of never dying and of living forever — is now possible. Christ made it possible. That was His every purpose for coming to earth — to die for man and to set man free from the terrible sufferings and evils of this corruptible world. Just imagine! Every person on the face of the earth can now be delivered from suffering and evil and live forever. But they have to know how. This was the mission of Christ: to tell them how. And it is to be the mission of the believer: to tell people how to conquer evil and to live forever. The believer's very purpose for living — his chief aim in life — is to proclaim the glorious news of salvation: there is deliverance from death and evil; man can now live and live forever.

**Thought 1.** William Barclay has some very practical questions to ask:

*"As individuals, we should sometimes pause and ask ourselves: what is our aim in life? Have we got one at all? As teachers we should sometimes ask ourselves: what am I trying to do with these people whom I teach? Once Agesilaus, the Sparta king, was asked, 'What shall we teach our boys?' His answer was: 'That which will be most useful to them when they are men.' Is it knowledge, or is it life, that we are trying to transmit? As members of the Church, we should sometimes ask ourselves: what are we trying to do in the Church? It is not enough to be satisfied when a Church is humming like a dynamo, and when every night in the week has its own crowded organisation. Sometimes we should be asking: what, if anything, is the unifying purpose which binds all this activity together?"* (*The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 225f).

As Christian believers, the unifying purpose of our lives is set: it is Christ and His great mission of life, life now and life eternal (Jn. 10:10; Jn. 3:16).

**Mt. 20:28** *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Mt. 28:19-20** *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

**Mk. 16:15** *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

**Lk. 19:10** *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."*

**Jn. 3:16** *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

**Jn. 10:10** “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

**Jn. 20:21** Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

4. There is *faith* (see notes, 1 Tim. 6:11).
5. There is *patience* or *long-suffering* (makrothumiai), which means bearing and suffering a long time, persevering, being constant, steadfast and enduring. Patience or long-suffering never gives in; it is never broken no matter what attacks it.
  - => Pressure and hard work may fall upon us, but the Spirit of God helps us suffer long under it all.
  - => Disease or accident or old age may afflict us, but the Spirit of God helps us to suffer long under it.
  - => Discouragement and disappointment may attack us, but the Spirit of God helps us to suffer long under it.
  - => Men may do us wrong, abuse, slander and injure us; but the Spirit of God helps us to suffer long under it all.

Two significant things need to be noted about patience or long-suffering. Patience or long-suffering never strikes back. Common sense tells us that a person who is attacked by others could strike back and retaliate. But the Christian believer is given the power of patience — the power to suffer the situation or person for a long, long time.

The point is this: a godly person closely observes and follows after those who are patient. A godly person is a disciple; he follows after those who know how to plough through the trials and problems of life. He learns from the long-suffering of others.

6. There is *love* (see *Love*, 1 Th. 3:12).
7. There is *endurance* (hupomone). Endurance means fortitude, steadfastness, constancy, perseverance. The word is not passive; it is active. It is not the spirit that just sits back and puts up with the trials of life, taking whatever may come. Rather it is the spirit that stands up and faces life’s trials, that actively goes about conquering and overcoming them. When trials confront a man who is truly justified, he is stirred to arise and face the trials head on. He immediately sets out to conquer and overcome them. He knows that God is allowing the trials in order to teach him more and more endurance.

The godly person follows the example of those who persevere, who endure by walking through the trials of life, conquering all for Christ.

- => He learns to endure with people no matter what they do.
- => He learns to endure in trials no matter how severe they are.

**Lk. 21:19** “By standing firm you will gain life.”

**Rom. 12:12** *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

**Heb. 10:36** *You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.*

**Jas. 1:2-4** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**Jas. 5:7** *Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.*

## II. **Timothy 03:11–12** *Enduring Persecution*

A godly person endures persecution. Note two points.

1. Paul suffered severe persecution and affliction. He mentions three experiences that Timothy knew about.
  - => In Antioch the civil leaders of the city had risen up against Paul and expelled him from their city (Acts 13:50).
  - => In Iconium a large mob with the city officials set out to arrest and to stone Paul. He had to flee for his life (Acts 14:4-6).
  - => In Lystra a rioting mob stoned Paul and dragged his limp body out of the city thinking that he was dead. Apparently God worked a miracle and raised him up (Acts 14:19-20).

Paul was constantly persecuted, attacked time and again. But the Lord delivered him. Paul never failed to witness for Christ; therefore, Christ never failed to deliver Paul. But note: deliverance does not mean *deliverance from persecution, but deliverance through persecution*. God strengthens and carries the believer through persecution, not out of persecution. This is what Paul is declaring.

2. The believer will suffer persecution; he cannot escape it, not if he is a genuine believer. (See 2 Tim. 1:8; 1:8-10.) Believers suffer persecution because they are not like the world; they do not live like the world lives. Therefore, the world persecutes them. Scripture gives four specific reasons why believers will suffer persecution.
  - a. Believers will suffer persecution because they are not of this world. They are *called out* of the world. They are in the world, but they are not of the world. They are separated from the behaviour of the world. Therefore, the world reacts against them by ridicule and mockery, by verbal and physical abuse, and by discrimination.

**Jn. 15:19** “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.”

- b. They will suffer persecution because believers strip away the world's excuse for sin. They live and demonstrate a life of righteousness and they do not compromise with the world and its sinful behaviour. They live pure and godly lives, having nothing to do with the sinful pleasures of a corruptible world. Such living exposes the sins of people, and this exposure stirs them to react against believers.

*Jn. 15:18, 22* "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first...If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin."

*2 Tim. 3:12* In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

- c. They will suffer persecution because the world does not know God nor Christ. The ungodly of the world want no God other than themselves and their own imaginations. They want to do just what they want — to fulfil their own desires, not what God wishes and demands. However, the godly believer dedicates his life to God, to His worship and service. The ungodly wants no part of God; therefore, they oppose those who talk about God and man's duty to honour and worship God.

*Jn. 15:21* "They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me."

*Jn. 16:3* "They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me."

- d. They will suffer persecution because the world is deceived in its concept and belief of God. The world conceives God to be the One who fulfils their earthly desires and lusts (Jn. 16:2-3). Man's idea of God is that of a *Supreme Grandfather*. They think that God protects, provides and gives no matter what a person's behaviour is, just so the behaviour is not too far out. They think God will accept them and work all things out in the final analysis. However, the true believer teaches against this. God is love, but He is also just and demands righteousness. The world rebels against this concept of God.

*Jn. 16:2-3* "They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me."

*Jn. 15:20* "Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

*Jn. 16:1-4* "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you."

*1 Th. 3:3* So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.

*Phil. 1:29* For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

*2 Tim. 3:12* In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

*1 Jn. 3:13* Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.

*1 Pet. 4:12-14* Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

### III. Timothy 03:13 Guarding against the Ungodly

A godly person guards against evil men and imposters.

- => Evil men refers to those who actively oppose righteousness and morality; those who live immoral and ungodly lives — who curse, lie, steal, cheat, injure and live in carnal pleasures and immorality.
- => Imposters refers to imposters and deceivers; those who live hypocritical lives - who call themselves Christians and join the church for what they can get out of it. They join the church seeking acceptability, a good image, friends, fellowship, popularity, business clientele, self-image, a following and a host of other benefits.

The point is that both evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse. Men will become more and more evil, more and more...

- ungodly      • addicted to drugs      • lawless      • party-minded
- selfish      • pleasure-minded      • recreational-minded      • foul-minded
- immoral      • murderous      • unclean      • violent

Men will also become more and more of an imposter religiously. They will be religious, professing belief in God, but they will deny the power of godliness. (See Tim. 3:5.) Note: they will deceive themselves and deceive others. They will think that they are acceptable to God, and others will even think they are acceptable to God. But both they and their friends are deceived; they are not acceptable to God.

*1 Jn. 3:23* And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

The only way to be acceptable to God is by believing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing means to follow Christ — to live soberly, righteously and godly in this

present world and to love others even as Christ loved them — to love them to such a point that we give all that we are and have to minister to their desperate needs. But note the point: men will become more and more religious, but as imposters — as men who use religion for their own selfish purposes and for a livelihood and profession.

**Mk. 13:22** *For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect — if that were possible.*

**Acts 20:30** *Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.*

**Rom. 16:17-18** *I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.*

**2 Cor. 11:13-15** *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.*

**Eph. 4:14** *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*

**1 Tim. 4:1** *The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

**2 Tim. 3:13** *While evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

**1 Jn. 2:26** *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.*

**2 Jn. 7** *Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. ■*