

Good morning! Pam and I once heard the late Derek Prince tell about the first time he ever heard the song "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus". It was in a Christian worship service in the basement of the British Embassy in Jerusalem in 1947. Derek, his wife Lydia, and their eight adopted children had fled their home during the night, leaving behind everything except the clothes they were wearing. I remember him saying, "It's a different thing to sing, 'Though none go with me still I will follow,' when no one is going with you." Have you ever had to stand up for Jesus---by yourself? Sometimes we have to do that and when we do, it can be hard. This morning, let's consider what it means to stand up for Jesus when everyone else seems to be sitting down, as we read together from Paul's second letter to Timothy:

Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

**2 Tim. 2:3**

At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. **2 Tim. 4:16**

Many scholars believe that this second letter that Paul wrote to Timothy is the very last letter Paul penned before his death. If we read the letter with that in mind, it has a completely different flavor than if we read it merely as an instructional letter. The relationship between Paul and Timothy was a special relationship. Timothy was with Paul in Corinth during the winter when Paul penned his letter to the Romans. Timothy was with Paul in Macedonia just before Passover; he left the city before Paul, going ahead of him to await Paul in Troas. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, to govern that church and became the first Bishop of Ephesus. In fact, in his eighties, Timothy died in Ephesus at the hands of an angry mob promoting worship of the goddess Diana. In today's letter, Paul was distilling what he wanted to say to his young friend as he neared the end of his life. Paul was at the end but Timothy still had much ministry ahead. When I read this letter, one word stands out: endurance. Paul wanted Timothy to understand that sometimes the Christian life is one of endurance. Paul had endured a lot as he followed Jesus and I may have to endure hardship ----if we are going to follow Jesus we will have to go where He's going. Have you decided to follow Jesus? If so, get ready to endure some things. You may have to go some places you don't like...but you won't be disappointed!