

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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God's word in 2 Timothy Challenged by God's Word, ch.3:16

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New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

The Scripture before us today is found in 2 Timothy chapter 3. [Let's start by reading the chapter together.](#)

“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The title of our talk [from the 3rd chapter of 2 Timothy](#) is “Challenged by God's Word.” The key verse I am sure is one that we all know, but how often do we put it into practice? Verse 16 says,

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

This verse is found at the end of ch.3 of 2 Timothy where the apostle Paul is encouraging his son in the faith, Timothy, to be strong in the fight against evil and false teaching that will pervade the church in the last days. In the second letter to Timothy, Paul is aware that Timothy may be feeling

the pressure and losing the will to fight against the onslaught of evil and those who were teaching false doctrines. He tells him in chapter 1 v.13 to, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me" and in chapter 2 v.15 to, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

In the second chapter of 2 Timothy we get a picture of how far the professing church has fallen short of showing forth the glory of Christ in such a short space of time and the evil that has spread throughout Christendom in the days in which Timothy lived.

When we come to chapter 3 the apostle Paul takes it a step further and warns his friend Timothy of how much further the Christian profession will deteriorate in the last days. Sadly as we read the first 9 verses it fills our hearts with sorrow that what Paul brings before Timothy of the encroachment of the church of false teaching and false doctrine. We can see this all around us in our present day. He is quite emphatic as his first words warn us that there is something very important that he wants us to pay attention to. "But know this," or "continually be knowing this," is written in the present tense and it means that every day we should be taking account of the dangers and violent assaults against the church.

When will these things take place? In the last days. How can we tell when this will be? To find the answer we need to look at the Scriptures. Hebrews 1:1-2,

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

We see here that God spoke in the Old Testament times by the prophets, but that the last days began when God spoke through His Son, Jesus Christ, when He came to this earth. There are many quotations in the Old Testament that refer to the last days as the coming of the Messiah. We find warnings from most of the New Testament writers of perilous times in the last days before the Lord Jesus comes again. This dispensation of the church period is the last times and as the return of the Lord Jesus is coming closer, we can definitely say that we are in the last hours of that last day.

Dangers are come upon the church throughout history and faithful men and women have stood steadfastly against such evil, but we read in verse 13 that things are going to get increasingly worse as time goes on. Well might we pay heed to the warning and if we are to be found faithful brothers and sisters in our day and generation, we ought to be on our guard and have a full understanding of how to fight against these dangers that will come upon the church.

What are the dangers that Paul brings before us that will corrupt Christendom in these last days and will be fully revealed in the professing church in our time? There is a list of 19 things which describe the characteristics of men and women who will infiltrate the church under a form of godliness.

Verse 2, "men will be lovers of themselves." How well does that describe the world we live in and also within the church today? We live in a day where self-esteem, self-image and self-fulfilment are what's important. To make more of yourself, to be a somebody, to be an achiever. We live in the day of the selfie - hey everybody look at me! The Greek word for "lovers of themselves" can be translated as people who kiss themselves. If we are lovers of ourselves then it is easy to be found marked by the following characteristics from the list in verses 2 to 5. The words of 2 Corinthians 5:15 teaches us that,

"He [Christ] died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again."

This would surely lead to us to make much of Christ when we come together in church, rather than on what we ourselves can do.

The list goes on. Lovers of money, which was evident in Ephesus, a rich city where the people were materialistic. It had encroached upon the church in Timothy's day so much that Paul wrote to him stating, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Boasters, being proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than of God and having a form of godliness, but denying its power complete the list in verses 2-5.

This list of things would be bad enough to be found in worldly circles, but this was what Paul warns us will mark false teachers in the so-called church today. How sad that in the letter to the church at Ephesus, the Lord could say to them,

"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works" (Revelation 2:4,5).

It should humble us that in our day these things are openly visible in many of so-called churches, where the truth of Scripture has been disregarded and men and women have been teaching that which is false and evil, not subtly as Paul warns here, but in pulpits and through the media.

In the first part of chapter 3, we have all these negative things - we love self, we love money, we love pleasures rather than God, which can suggest there is no love for God, only for pleasure. Why did Paul warn Timothy about this? So that he would be aware of the evil and to enable him to fight against it. From verse 10 to the end of the chapter we have the answer to how we are able to live as godly men and women and how we can stand against what is contrary to the Scriptures.

Throughout the whole epistle of 2 Timothy, Paul has encouraged Timothy be strong in his faith and to be a good soldier and defend the faith. Timothy had known Paul from a young age and had seen firsthand how Paul had conducted himself. Paul reminds him various times of his own strong stand, of what he had to suffer, and how he was persecuted many times in different places for standing for the truth and for the testimony of our Lord. He wants Timothy to guard sound doctrine, to be strong and not to be influenced by the creeping in of false teachings, and to be a fearless soldier against the attacks that come upon the church. He has warned him in the previous two chapters that there will be suffering for being faithful. This suffering will not come from those outside the church, but from the false teachers and those who follow them. We read about this in the first part of chapter 3.

What then is required for Timothy and for us today to be able to have the character of a strong soldier, one who can stand firm and be faithful to our Lord? We need to have a good mentor, one who sets us a true example and lays down a pattern of life that we can follow. We not only need a strong mentor, but we need to have a sure spiritual foundation which Timothy had, not only from Paul but from his mother Eunice and from his grandmother Lois. He was taught the Scriptures from a young age, and he followed closely in the footsteps of the apostle throughout his ministry. But most importantly, that those who defend the faith need to have a strong confidence in the Scriptures. We must fully understand that the whole of Scripture is the inspired word of God and that we have to be obedient to what it teaches us so that we will be profitable in our work for the Lord.

If we look at the first point which we see in verses 10 to 13, we see the encouragement from Paul to Timothy when he says, "You followed." Timothy had a great mentor, one who lived as a tremendous example of someone who walked worthy of his calling, the apostle Paul. Timothy had

followed Paul's beliefs, imitated his characteristics and had been a witness of his suffering in the cities of Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. The words "to follow" conjures up in our mind a picture of us following behind a person or if in the car we might say that we followed "so and so" to our destination. The word here for 'follow' means more than that. It has the action of following alongside or close to another. It was used in relation to a master and a disciple to give the idea of one who studied at close quarters, to pay attention not only to the words of the master but to take an in-depth view allowing the disciple to be able to reproduce the ways of the master. So Timothy, Paul's son in the faith, carefully noted Paul's life in all its aspects and characteristics so that he imitated him and indeed reproduced them in himself. In our lives today there may not be anyone who is perfect for us to follow, but there are still those believers who would be an example for us to imitate as much as possible in regard to their spiritual life. However not only do we have these believers, we also have the example in the Gospels of how the Lord Jesus walked on this earth making Him the perfect One for Christians to follow.

Two things in verses 11 and 12 are given as an encouragement for Timothy. In verse 11, Timothy saw in Paul's life how he had suffered and been persecuted but that the Lord had delivered him. As we journey through life, we have the assurance that the Lord is with us every step of the way. In verse 12, again there is that encouragement that we are not the only ones suffering, but that all who live godly lives will have to endure hardship. The path of a Christian is not promised to be an easy life, and we know that if we stand up for what is true then we will encounter opposition, ridicule and for some, physical suffering.

In verse 13 we are told,

"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

The evil men and impostors are the ones that are described in the previous verses of chapter 3 and while their number will increase over time and their evil ways may become more subtle, there is that assurance from the words in verse 9 that God sets a limit on what they can do, and their evil work will not destroy what He is building. But let us be warned that these are dangerous times and as we draw nearer to the time of the Lord's return, those deceivers and their influence will become stronger. What is needed in these times are brothers and sisters who have the character of true men and women of God, who are willing to stand with those who set a good example.

What we have in verses 14 and 15 is the sure foundation of a godly life that is built upon the holy Scriptures. Timothy had the privilege of a godly mother and grandmother who when he was a child passed on the truth about the love of God to him. As he sat by them listening to the Old Testament stories and learned the Old Testament Scriptures, it produced a foundation that Timothy built upon in his years of following the apostle Paul. This made him a fruitful servant of the Lord.

In the closing verses of chapter 3 we come to what is the most important thing for Timothy and for every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to know. What is it you may ask? It is the importance of Scripture as the only foundation on which to build our lives upon and for us to be able to stand against what is false. There are many passages in the Old Testament which highlight the importance of God's words one of which is Psalm 19. [Psalm 19 :7-11 says:](#)

["The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and](#)

the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.”

Psalm 119 also shows us the absolute sufficiency of Scripture to provide for every circumstance in our spiritual lives. It is important to note that it says in 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture.” There are many different cults that say the Bible is not enough and they add what they think is needed. There are others, especially in the mainstream of Christendom, who do not hold to the whole of the Scriptures and take out portions to suit themselves, denying the authenticity of Scripture. This is why Paul has urged Timothy in ch.1:8, “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” Verse 13 of the same chapter says to “hold fast the pattern of sound words” and in ch.2:15 to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

We have to understand that the Bible is the inspired word of God, that is, it is God breathed. It is not the word of man. We know from Hebrews chapter 1 that God spoke through prophets, and for us now through His Son. John chapter 1:1 tells us that “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God” and in verse 14 that “the word became flesh and dwelt among us.” We can’t pick and choose certain parts of the Bible and say this is what I believe, and disregard other parts. We need to take account of all Scripture so that we can fully understand what God is saying to us. Do we have an appreciation for the Bible? Is it the one book we go to for help and guidance and do we fully commit to what it says? This is a challenge for all believers no matter where we are on our spiritual journey.

What then can the inspired word of God bring to our lives? We read in 2 Timothy 3 verse 15 that it can make us wise unto salvation and in verse 16 that it is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and for instruction in righteousness. The first thing that the word produces is salvation. The testimony of Jesus in John’s Gospel bears witness to this. In John 5:24 Jesus says,

“Most assuredly, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

The words of the Lord Jesus are indeed the words of life. Jesus could say that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His words tell us that by trusting in His finished work on Calvary and repenting of our sins, we will gain salvation. We not only have our sins forgiven, but the Scriptures gives us that which we need for our daily salvation by the daily washing or cleansing by the word. The Lord Jesus in John 13 washed the disciples’ feet. We too need to be cleansed from the defilement of everyday life that can hinder our spiritual progress by the Holy Spirit convicting our souls with the washing of water by the word. As we go out to reach those who are still in their sins it is only by presenting the truth of the Gospel and all Scripture, that men and women will come to the knowledge of salvation and repent of their sins.

The next thing that is said in 2 Timothy 3 verse 16 is that the word is profitable for doctrine or teaching. The Scripture tells us that the natural man does not understand spiritual things, however as believers we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, and we have the mind of Christ, therefore we are able to comprehend these spiritual things. The Word is not helping us to become better teachers, but it is the truths of the Scriptures that are unfolded to us to define our actions and our thoughts. We are encouraged, like Timothy, to guard the deposit that is entrusted to us. As we study more of God’s word, we build up more of the truth contained in it which then is shown out in our conduct and in our speech. The word of the Lord to His Father in John 17:17, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” should make us have more desire to understand it but also to preserve it in its purest form. God wants to bring His word into our lives, so that the word of Christ will dwell in us abundantly, that we will be saturated by it, and that we may think and act according to His truth.

In 2 Timothy 3 verse 16, reproof is the third thing that the Scriptures are useful for. The word ‘reproof’ means ‘to rebuke’ which means ‘to check or restrain or to reprove sternly.’ We have seen

that the word of God is something that builds us up in our faith, but here it is used to bring conviction to ourselves and others. The Bible tells us that “the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). It tells us that what we read in the Bible can sometimes cut us open and reveal some sin in our lives going right to our thoughts and intentions. Sometimes as we read it there is that revealing of what is not right in our lives and we should welcome this as it should bring about confession to the Lord so that our communion with Him can be restored. From what we have in this letter to Timothy, we find also that the Scriptures will help us to check and restrain false teaching and error. Timothy knew the Scriptures would enable him to recognise error and that he would be equipped to deal with it or to remove himself from its presence. The Bereans were described in Acts 17 as being more noble than anyone else, because they searched the Scriptures. Was this only when it suited them? No, they searched it daily to understand if what they had heard was correct. Like them we must know what is true and what we are being taught is true. Don't accept the words of man but believe the word of God.

If we find what is wrong in our lives, or what we are surrounded with is wrong, then the next thing that the Scriptures teach us is how to correct it. David said, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). The correcting process of the word helps to build our lives and makes us grow spiritually day by day. Sometimes we hear of those who have lost their first love for the Lord and are slipping back into this world and can't find their way back. Let us be able to draw near to them and encourage from the words of Scripture so that they may be fully restored.

The last point in 2 Timothy 3 verse 16 is training in righteousness. If we have the doctrine or the truth available to us, then we are able to be trained. The word for trained here has the thought of training up a child. Sometimes as children we need to be disciplined and there are many Scriptures where we read that this is necessary. Hebrews 12:5,6 says,

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens.”

As fathers and mothers we want our children to grow up in a right way and to achieve this we have to administer discipline. The training of a soldier is hard work pushing them to their limits before they qualify as a soldier and so too in sport the training can be hard, if you want to be successful. To be trained unto holiness is the work of the Word, which is our food. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). Naturally we start as babies feeding on milk, and as new Christians we also start with what is easy to understand in Scripture but are told that we have to move on to strong meat if we want to grow spiritually. Sadly many Christians are happy to know that they are saved and do not try to learn the deeper things of God which can enrich our lives and bring about a greater love for the Lord Jesus and for God our Father.

As we draw to a close in our talk today let us be encouraged that even though we are living in these last days and things are definitely getting worse, we have all the resources that we need to enable us to be true men and women of God. 2 Timothy chapter 3 started out with men in the professing church teaching false doctrine, but it ends with men and women of God who are equipped for every good work. Beloved saints, let us endeavour to keep going on in obedience to the Scriptures as we wait for the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to take us home to be with Himself forever.

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk on God's Word in 2 Timothy, Challenged by God's word, talk number T1391.

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