

Passing the Torch “Profitable Truths” 2 Timothy 3:10-25

Introduction

Last week we took a look at Paul’s instruction to Timothy concerning the perilous times that would come in the last days. Paul’s instructions certainly fits the times we are facing today. Thankfully, Paul doesn’t leave us in peril with no hope.

In 1976 Frances Schaffer wrote, “How Should We Then Live?” which analyzes the breakdown of Western civilization. His observations are even more relevant today. His solution to the problem begins with a return to belief in God. No society can survive without a deeply held conviction that there is a being greater than humanity to whom we must submit and give an account. For Christians, that being is the Almighty God.

When America was considered a Christian nation, people lived by Judeo-Christian ethics and accepted God’s revelation as absolute, and affirmed the values and instruction of the Bible. But when you fast forward to 2009 during his first overseas tour, you hear President Barack Obama inform America and the rest of the world that the United States is no longer a Christian nation. Sadly, he may be correct.

If America has truly abandoned its faith in God, then we are destined to face even more perilous times. But Paul tells Timothy that even during hard times, Christians must live the Christian life by relying upon the Holy Spirit’s help and guidance.

In verses ten through seventeen, Paul outlines several survival techniques for perilous times.

I. Remain Faithful to God

He writes in verse ten, “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, 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.” (2Ti 3:10-12 NKJV)

Timothy carefully followed the details of Paul’s life. He knew that Paul lived what he preached. In the first nine verses, Paul described the kind of people that will threaten the earth in the last days. During the end times, there is a distinct difference between those ruled by the Spirit of Christ and those ruled by the spirit of Satan. What made Timothy different was that his life had a purpose, faith in God, patience, a sound doctrine, a love for others, and the ability to persevere and overcome afflictions. These weren’t mere academic interests; Timothy learned these lessons through careful examination and personal experience.

Christianity is not so much taught as caught. What we believe determines how we

live. Those who don't accept the Bible as God's truth are free to live any way they want. But life without God will lead you into deeper and deeper darkness.

Timothy saw the heart of God in the way Paul lived. Because of that, he found a positive purpose and sense of direction for his life. He realized that God's promise of Eternal Life far outweighed the causes and lifestyles of this earthly life. Paul had a faith, hope, and love that not everyone had, and Timothy wanted that kind of life. Paul faced many injustices and persecutions, but it never caused him to retaliate or embrace rebellion. Those in leadership beat him, stoned him, imprisoned him without a cause, and finally killed him.

You would think everyone would accept a person with Paul's conviction and values. But they didn't. The followers of the darkness hated Paul because he walked in the light. Paul says that every all those who follow the light of Christ will experience some level of persecution. Christians are being persecuted all over the world – in China, in Hong Kong, in the Muslim world, in Russia, and now even in America.

Why do Christians face persecution? For the same reason, Jesus did! Jesus said, "He who believes in God is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." (John 3:18-19 NKJV)

Paul reminds Timothy of the persecution he endured at Antioch and how he was kicked out of the city for preaching the gospel. At Iconium, they tried to stone him. At Lystra, they actually did stone Paul and left him for dead. Paul faced opposition and persecution everywhere he went, but he said, "out of them all the Lord delivered me." Ironically, Paul contemplates this as he sits in prison awaiting execution. He knew that God could deliver him again, or that He might not, but no matter what, Paul was committed to following Jesus, in life or in death.

Persecution will never stop a true Christian. If you are a Christian, those around you may think you are strange, or out of touch with reality, or bigoted or narrow-minded because you believe in Jesus. Those who choose to follow Jesus in this age must be willing to be considered an outcast.

Jesus was despised and rejected, and he was the Son of God. So don't feel sorry for yourself if some people reject you too!

II. Don't Be Distracted

In verses, 13-15 Paul compares the difference between those who are evil and those who are godly. He says, "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." (2Ti 3:13-15 NKJV)

In the last days, there will be evil people who will openly oppose Jesus and the church. Paul calls them impostors. They are people who give the impression that they are righteous, but in reality, they are enemies of Christ. Evil people and those who are Christian impostors will increase in the end times. Paul says that they will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Satan is such a master at deception and can sway many who are sincere and heartfelt in their responses. 2 Corinthians says, "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

It's difficult to judge a person's motives or intentions. That's why we must evaluate people and their words by the truth of the Word of God. That is the only way to escape the devil's dangerous deceptions. Jesus told the disciples, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." (Joh 15:7 NKJV)

The Apostle John wrote, "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who *try to* deceive you." (1Jn 2:22-26 NKJV) The key to avoiding deception is to learn, abide, and continue in the scriptures.

Believers in the last days will face hardship, ridicule, and persecution as they continue to follow the Lord. Paul urges us to remain committed to the things which we have learned. The assurance of your faith grows out of what you have learned from the scriptures.

Paul tells Timothy to remember who taught him the scriptures. It was Paul who taught Timothy by his words and example. He even laid hands on him, imparting to him a spiritual gift and ordination. Paul was the one who guided and mentored Timothy on how to be an authentic pastor. Spiritual heritage is a tremendous gift! Paul reminds Timothy that from childhood, he has known the Holy Scriptures. Through the influence of his grandmother and mother – Lois and Eunice, Timothy learned the scriptures.

It is the scriptures that make us wise about salvation through the faith we have in Christ Jesus. The greatest source of wisdom in the world is the Bible. You could achieve all the knowledge in the world, but it will mean nothing if you are not wise for salvation. Acquiring biblical truth is one thing; holding on to it is another - It is a truth each generation must learn for itself. However, it is not the words of the Bible that save you; it is Jesus who saves you! The Bible opens your eyes to see Jesus. Don't be distracted by the promises and pleasures of this world.

There are a couple of things that helped Timothy accept the truth of the scriptures. First of all, Timothy learned what he knew about the Bible from people he loved and trusted. Secondly, Timothy had the advantage of taking the scriptures to heart at a young age.

A current study conducted by the Barna Research Group found that nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 and that two out of three Christians committed to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight Christians made a commitment to Christ between the ages of 18-21. And only one in four chose Christ after the age of 21.

The authority of the Bible rests upon the fact of verse 16. "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." (2Ti 3:16-17 NKJV)

The word translated "inspired" is a compound word meaning "God-breathed." The Biblical writers wrote down the very words of God. The Apostle Peter agrees. He writes, "know this, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." (2Pe 1:20-21 NKJV)

God will never force you to see things his way. But only His way will lead you to the truth and guarantee you Eternal Life. So don't let the world distract you from following Jesus.

III. Don't Give Up

Paul encourages Timothy to have confidence in the Scriptures. The closer we come to the end-times, the greater the pressure will be applied to abandoned your faith and give up on God. The scriptures are 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. (2Ti 3:16-17 NKJV)

When your world is falling apart, only the scriptures can straighten you out! It holds the doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in right living that helps us get back on track. It is what we call discipleship. Discipleship is what equips you for every good work. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would speak to the apostles and lead them into all truth.

You can't educate a person to become a Christian. Authentic Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul exhorts Timothy, "Continue in these things because the Bible is a God-inspired book, breathed out from God Himself." There is no equal to the Bible, and there never will be. "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isa 40:8 NKJV)

Peter saw Jesus miraculously transfigured before his own eyes, and he heard a voice from heaven say, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Yet,

Peter says we even have something more certain than a voice from heaven. He says we also have the prophetic word, which we do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place. (2 Peter 1:19).

God's ability to precisely predict future events in the Bible is His own way of proving the Bible is true. In the Old Testament, there are over 300 distinct messianic predictions that Jesus fulfilled perfectly. Professor Peter Stoner calculated that the probability of any one man fulfilling even eight of these prophecies is one in quadrillion or 10 to the 17th power. And if you consider 48 of the prophecies, the odds become one in 10 to the 157th power. So when someone tries to tell you the Bible is irrelevant or outdated, remember the wisdom of God backs up the Bible.

Don't try to impose your own meaning to the text; let it speak for itself. Don't inject your own interpretation or opinions upon the Bible. Honor God by letting Him speak for Himself to you through the scriptures. Paul says the Bible is profitable and challenges Timothy to stick with it and not give up on it.

It is the Bible that tells us what is true about God and man and the world we live in and the world to come. The Bible is the authority that rebukes and corrects us when we fall away and start following other voices. The Bible tells us the best way to live in the world that God made.

Sadly, our culture is saturated with unbelievers. And many who say they do believe in God don't follow His teachings. I often think of Noah and how, for a hundred and twenty years, he preached righteousness while he built the ark. Jesus said, "**But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.**" (Mat 24:37-39 NKJV)

If ever there was a time when we should take the teachings of the Bible to heart, it is now. Paul knew that hard times were going to challenge Timothy, and he wanted to make sure he wouldn't quit.

Conclusion

Paul reminded Timothy that the Bible makes you complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. You are complete because the Bible leads you to everything you need. If you trust it, the Bible will change you and transform you until you become the person God created you to be.

In Romans 12:1, Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2 NKJV)

It is the Bible that assures us of Eternal Life! (1 Peter 1:23)
It is the Bible that cleanses us. (Ephesians 5:26)
It is the Bible that gives us power over demonic spirits. (Eph. 6:17)
It is the Bible that brings healing to our life. (Matthew 8:16)
It is the Bible that builds faith in us. (Romans 10:17)

The amazing thing is you don't have to understand it all to have it effectively work in your life. Don't get discouraged if you feel you don't get much out of reading the Bible. Don't give up on it; ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to you.

A critic once wrote a letter to a magazine saying, "Over the years, I suppose I've gone to church more than 1,000 times, and I can't remember the specific content of those sermons. What good was it to go to church 1,000 times?" The next week, someone wrote back: "Over the past many years, I have eaten more than 1,000 meals prepared by my wife, and I cannot remember the specific menu of those meals. But they nourished and sustained me for which I am very grateful.

I am confident the Bible will do its spiritual work in you if you will let it. Paul tells us to remain strong in faith and rely upon the Word of God.