

2 Timothy 3:10-17

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[0 : 00] It will be in chapter 3, starting in verse 10. But I'm going to start and read verse 1 so we can get it in context. But our text is verses 10 through 17.

2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 10 through 17. If you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me? We stand together and we read the word of God. Let's read verse 1. And then we'll jump over to verse 10 and finish up the chapter from there.

Paul, writing to Timothy, this final letter of Paul, written from the prison cell of the Roman Empire, awaiting his imminent execution, writes this.

But realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come. Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings.

Such as happened to me at Iconium and at Lystra. What persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord rescued me.

[1 : 08] Indeed, all who desire to live in Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

You, however, continue... From childhood, you have known the sacred writings, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day. And with much thanksgiving, we come before you that we've had the opportunity to worship together in song. We've had the opportunity to fellowship with one another and be encouraged.

We've had the opportunity to show our love through our giving. We come now... That you would speak to our hearts and minds through the truth of your scripture.

[2 : 22] And Lord, as you speak to us, that you'd give us willing hearts, willing lives to live it out for the glory and the sake of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

May you have your way inside each and every one of us. And may it be to your praise. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated. As Paul is writing to Timothy, last week we looked at the first half of this chapter and we saw the reality of the difficult days.

We saw the reality that times are progressively getting worse. We have seen that in the context of scripture, when it says these last days, it is not necessarily referring to things that are going to happen in...

Rather, things that are already happening in the midst of current times during the time of Paul and will continue to happen throughout till the end of time. Because the last days are bracketed in the New Testament scripture from the first appearing of Christ until the second appearing of Christ.

So any time in between, in which we would refer to as the church age, is the last days. So church was designed and we were birthed to live in the last days.

[3 : 41] To be the billboard to a watching world of what it looks like to be followers of Jesus. To be what the nation of Israel was in the Old Testament. A testimony to the world of what it looks like to live in wholehearted devotion to the Lord God Almighty.

And that the faithfulness of God would testify to the obedience of His people to a watching world. And the church has taken on that role that we would, we have not replaced them, we have been united with them, it says in the book of Romans.

We have been granted in so that we may be that testimony in these last days. But these last days are not easy days.

If you remember, when we looked at this, we corresponded it to the book of Judges. That when we get to the book of Judges, we see that things get progressively worse.

That it is a digression, not a progression in Scripture, we say. That there is a downward spiral. That by the time we are introduced, we're going okay, but by the end of the book of Judges, things are completely out of control.

[4 : 52] Just a minute. Hey, let's swap over to this one, brother. It's okay. Speaking of out of control, I don't know what goes on with my mic. I don't know if you hear it, but I do. And since I hear it, it makes us kind of like a squirrel for me. So, hey. In my last days, I'm become a lot more, see, I don't know if you've noticed that or not, complete side note, I lost my train of thought.

I'm a lot more stationary of a pastor than I used to be. It's okay. You can say amen about that. I used to move around a lot more. So this whole deal about microphones has really helped me kind of stay still.

So thank you, brother, for taking care of me. And let's see, we didn't really interrupt ourselves too much. Some of you, I'll have to bring you right back in just a minute. So let's do that, okay? So we have seen that things are not going to get better.

Even with the quote-unquote progress of man and the advancement of man, society itself is going to continue to spiral downward until we get to the degradation of society in which Christ introduces, again, and the kingdom of God that we find in the book of Revelations.

But yet, we are told in this portion of Scripture that we need to realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come.

[6 : 06] Paul is encouraging Timothy to the reality that he lives in and the reality in which we live in. And then he takes from verses 2 to verses 9 describing these difficult times.

And in describing these difficult times, he is really giving us a description of the people who cause these difficult times. Because the difficulty is not in creation, the difficulty is in man's misuse of creation.

And it says, and difficult times will come because men will become. It is what we become that makes the days difficult. We are lovers of self rather than lovers of God.

And my friend, I don't have to tell you to look very far around the world and see that people love self a lot more than they love God. As a matter of fact, the farthest that you'll ever have to look into the world is to go stand in front of the mirror.

And you say, Pastor, that is really hard to hear. And that really offends me. Well, it offends me every time I look at myself as well that too often I do things because I love self rather than I love the Lord God Almighty.

[7 : 13] And it is the testimony of the difficulty of the days that most of my difficulties arise from the reality that I love myself rather than loving the Lord my God with all of my heart, with all of my soul, and with all of my strength.

Because if I love the Lord my God with all of my heart, with all of my soul, with all of my strength, and with all of my being, then there would be no thought of self. What of tomorrow that's in the Lord's hands?

Do I need to worry about that? What of the needs that I have? Do not the sparrows need food and yet the Lord provides for them? Why be anxious for the next day for today has enough concern of its own.

And you can say amen there. Today always has enough concern of its own. One of my favorite lines in all movies comes from the movie Christopher Robin. And some of you say, I've never seen it. We need to see it.

It's the blend of the real life movies and the animation of Winnie the Pooh. Yes, Winnie the Pooh gave this great line where at the end of that movie, Winnie the Pooh looks at Christopher Robin and says, What day is it today?

[8 : 23] And Christopher Robin says, Well, silly bear, it is today. He said, Good, because yesterday, when it was tomorrow, it was too much day. Think about that for just a minute. When yesterday is tomorrow, it's too much day.

When we're always worried about the next day and the next day and the next day and the next day. It's too much day. But we do that because we love ourselves. And these are the difficult days.

So we understand the description of the difficult days. But then in verse 10, there is a great transition. The literal reading of it would be, But realize this.

And then in verse 10, it says, But you. And then a little bit later, it says, But you. There is the same introduction of, The days will be difficult, but this is how you, as the follower of Jesus Christ, ought to respond.

So I want you to see this morning how the believer in Jesus Christ faces the difficult days. Facing the difficult days. How are we to do it?

[9 : 29] The very first thing that we notice, my friend, listen to me, it is the examples we have before us. But realize this, that in the last days, difficult times will come.

And since you know they will come, since you know they already are, and since you know that they're not going to get easier, you're not going to wait it out, and maybe if I endure it long enough, things will get better.

It's not going to happen. If you understand the truthfulness of Scripture, then look at this. Now you, or literally, but you, look at what he says, followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, and persecutions, and sufferings.

He says, Timothy, the days are difficult, but you've seen me. You've seen how I lived. You've seen not only what I taught, but you saw the effect of what I taught.

You know that I taught the truth, and I proclaim the truth, and it is not a mistake, my friend, that teaching is followed by conduct, because teaching should determine conduct, and purpose, and faith, and patience, and love, and perseverance, and we would be happy if the list stopped there, but what about persecutions, and sufferings?

[10 : 43] He said, you've seen my life. You've seen how I've lived, but he goes on, and he says, such as happened to me at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. Now, Lystra is Timothy's hometown.

So he said, Timothy, even in your own hometown, you saw the persecutions, and the sufferings which I endured. You watched me. You learned from me. You observed me.

I was the example before you. Friend, listen, if we know the days are difficult, and if we know they're not getting any easier, then it is very becoming of us to pay attention to what examples, we place before us.

Who are you watching? Or who are you observing? Who are you studying? Who do you have as an example? This is why it tells us in the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 11, the heroes of the faith, right?

It sets them before us, all those ones that we love, but the author of Hebrews said, all these died without hope, but we know Jesus Christ, right? And it is all these people who accomplished so much that slain the giants, were called out, but then it says, but then there were those who were stoned, sawn in two, those that were cast under, those that wondered about in rags, and those that the world was not worthy of.

[12 : 02] It is not just those who did great deeds. It is also those who died. And then it introduces us into chapter 12. It says, and these great cloud of witnesses we have before us. And it tells us to run with endurance, the race that is set before us.

Why? Because of the chapter that went right before it, because of the examples before us, we ought to run with endurance. Too often, the examples we put before us are people who say they have no problems.

We say, oh, I want to base my world upon people who've made it. I want my world to be based upon the successful, and the privileged, and the easy life. Paul says, you've seen me.

I taught it. I lived it, and I suffered because of it. And unless you have a real life example of faithfulness and endurance, then how are you going to know the rest of it?

And Paul says, and out of them all, the Lord delivered me. You say, oh, but Paul is in the Roman prison cell. He's about to die. Oh, you've missed the point, right?

[13 : 00] What does Paul say? To die is gain. What does Paul say? Someone once said, I remember hearing one of my professors say at one time, said you couldn't do anything with Paul.

If you beat him, he said, I bear in my body the brand marks of Jesus Christ. If you killed him, he says, to die is gain. If you let him live, you said, to live is Christ.

I'll preach Christ. What could you do? You couldn't beat him. He suffered for Christ. You couldn't kill him. He would go to Christ. You couldn't let him live and let him alone because he would serve Christ. It was all of Christ. See, friend, it matters the examples we have before us.

the examples of those who have lived authentically, accurately, biblically, and faithfully. And maybe it hasn't always went easy for them.

Maybe it hasn't always been roses and buttercups. Maybe there's been times of trials and times of seasons and times of despair. And by the way, my friend, that's also why it is absolutely essential that each one of us are honest about our walk.

[14 : 07] When we give our testimony, let us give God the glory and the praise, but God gets the glory and the praise. Quite often, as brother Ivan said, what? In the difficult days. Let me tell you about my Savior.

Let me tell you about the impact he made on my life. Not that it's always been easy, but he's always been faithful. We need examples before us.

Why? Because it's not going to get any easier. And if we as the church don't set examples before us of authenticity, of true devotion to the Lord God Almighty, and the faithful testimony of what Christ has done in their lives, then we won't be prepared.

We don't need the testimony of those who have never walked through it. I remember reading a book. I believe it was by a man named Nick Ripken.

It was called The Insanity of Obedience. And he was speaking to a group of pastors that were in a foreign country. And these pastors had suffered greatly for the faith.

[15 : 20] These people were in a closed country, and they were daily exposed to persecution, to ridicule, to mockery, imprisonment. And Nick sat down with them and said, How can I pray for you?

I want to pray that the Lord will deliver you. He said, You don't understand. These pastors said, We don't want you to pray for deliverance, because we're praying that America will begin to experience some of what we do. Because if you pray for our deliverance and these persecutions stop, then when do we know who's the true believer and who's the make-believer?

So pray that God would help us to be faithful in these things, not free from these things. Oh, there needs to be examples before us.

Why? Because they understood the reality that they did not want it to get easier. As a matter of fact, there are pastors that can testify around the world, internationally, of countries that have become open to the gospel, and they're praying that the government would close it again.

They want the true faith to come back. You say, Well, that seems insane. Maybe. But don't we need to know the examples that we have before us?

[16 : 32] He says, Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecution, and suffering. And out of them all, the Lord rescued me.

And then he says, Indeed, all, by the way, all means all, right? Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Why? But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. We may not suffer physical persecutions, but we ought to expect persecution nonetheless.

The day and time may come where the physical persecutions are introduced in our own land. But maybe it's something just as simple as being a social outcast, being misunderstood, being mocked for our rigid set of beliefs, being people who don't fit in.

And that's okay. I don't want to fit in those who are progressively getting worse. Number two, not only the example before us. Secondly, look at the encouragement behind us.

[17 : 42] Verse 14 says, you, literal translation, verse 10 says, but you, verse 14 says, but you, just like it tells us in verse one, but realize. So verse 14, the encouragement behind us.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of. Here is the primary encouragement. Keep doing what you know is right.

Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of. Paul is not encouraging Timothy, nor is he encouraging us. Just do what you think is right.

Just do what you think might be right. He says, no, continue in the things you've become convinced of. These are matters that were settled in Timothy's mind.

These are matters that were settled in Timothy's heart. These were things, these were truths that became convictions and convictions that took a hold of him. Remember that there's a difference between opinions and convictions.

[18 : 42] You can change your opinion about things, but you cannot change your conviction without changing who you are. If you have an opinion about the truth, then your opinion about that truth may change someday because you'll come upon something that's more appealing.

But when you have a conviction about a reality, that conviction takes you to the very core of your being. And conviction determines what you do. It determines who you are. It determines how you live. It determines every decision you make.

Because like it or not, my friend, you live based upon your convictions. You say, well, I don't even know what my convictions are. Well, then look at what your life is. Your life will testify to your convictions.

And you live according to those convictions because your convictions are what drive the very core of your being. And without changing the core of who you are, you cannot change your convictions. And you ought to be convinced of these realities.

I have certain things that I believe are true about Scripture. We call them small rocks, right? I have certain things that I believe theologically are accurate. Things that I say, well, I could be wrong or I might be wrong, but this is how I interpret Scripture.

[19 : 42] And they are my interpretation. Things in which I can fellowship with other brothers and sisters in Christ if they differ in their interpretation of that. But then there are these matters which I refer to as big rocks.

There are these matters which are convictions. Convictions which I cannot change. And if someone does not line up with my conviction, then I say, you and I, my friend, we are not on the same page. We are not brothers and sisters in Christ because these are the very core of who I am.

There's a big difference there. And what Paul is telling Timothy, stay true to your convictions. Every now and then you need someone to remind you of what your convictions are. Why?

You need to know this. This is the encouragement. This is why you need to have fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. This is why we need to do life together as a church. Why? Because you settle these convictions.

You have them established in your heart and mind. You know them to be true. And the moment you know them to be true, the enemy of your soul tries to convince you over and over and over and over and over and over that they are not so.

[20 : 45] So my encouragement to you would be to share your convictions with those around you. Get into the word of God. Study the word of God. Write it down. Share it with someone.

Say, these are the things that I know to be true. So that when the enemy isolates you, he puts you by yourself. And he's whispering in your mind, well, I don't know. And that little seed of doubt is planted.

Let someone come beside you. Say, oh, no, my friend. Remember when you were in the word of God. Remember when you read it and you said that it says this. And it gets you back to your convictions. Because the greatest encouragement you can ever have are the things that you know to be true.

And you will live your life. Because when the days get hard, we need someone to remind us of what we have declared in the past.

People that say, yes, I know this is so. Yes, I know the reality of this. If you've never shared your convictions with anyone, let me encourage you to do so. You need to share it with your spouse.

[21 : 53] Men, you need to share it with other men. Ladies, you need to share it with other ladies. Because sometimes you and your spouse will be going through the same difficult situation. You'll be walking through the same mess.

And the enemy will be attacking both of you at one time. Why? Because the two have become one. And if he's attacking one of you, he's attacking both of you. And you need to have someone outside of that situation saying, but wait a minute.

People come to me for counseling. They don't always come unless it's pre-marriage counseling. They don't come on pleasant terms. And the enemy is always working in both situations.

And what do I do? I remind them of what they told me that they believed in the past. I don't tell them anything new. You don't come for counseling for me to give you some new truth.

You come so that I can remind you of a truth you've already proclaimed. Because the enemy tries to cover it up. To hide it. To do it away with.

[22 : 55] Here is the encouragement. Continue in the things you have become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them. Paul not only reminds him of his convictions, he also reminds him that he did not learn these convictions from some shady characters.

He says, remember who taught them to you. And he goes all the way back to the very early stages of Timothy's life. What does he say? And that from childhood you have known the sacred writings.

So he goes all the way back to his mother and his grandmother. And he reminds him that he was learning these things from a very young age. Convictions, by the way, my friend, are not formed in a moment.

You don't form convictions in a moment. I have just a small set of things that I say this I know. If you ever find any man or woman who says that their list of convictions can go into a book, then I would encourage you to flee from them.

Because they are claiming a greater knowledge than is, I think, humanly possible for any one individual. Your list of convictions will not be extremely large. Because, to quote Adrian Rogers, no person knows that much.

[24 : 08] Now, your list of interpretations will be very long. But your list of convictions ought to be small. It is a core.

Right? My list of convictions is only about ten things. And it took me six months to work out those ten things. Every day in a pastor's office. You don't have that opportunity.

It takes time to work them out. But you need to learn them. And you will learn them from someone else. So that later on you can be reminded who you learned them from. Who taught you? Who guided you as you searched the scriptures?

This is why it's so important to have trusted individuals around us. Sitting under the word of God with other people to encourage us. It is the encouragement behind us.

And he goes on a little bit further. He says, From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[25 : 13] In these latter days difficult times will come. But he says, But you came to Christ through the word of God. You know the word of God gives wisdom unto salvation.

The wording there in the original language means to have action towards something. So the word of God is doing something. You don't read the word of God and say, Oh, I'm getting a lot of information. No. The word of God is active and living it says.

Right? And it's a two-edged sword. But it's doing something. It's moving. And the word of God leads us to salvation. The word of God is not our salvation. But it leads us to the Savior.

Right? It leads us to have faith in Christ Jesus. Now if you've accepted Christ because of an experience then we may need to talk. But if you came to Christ through the word of God then you are standing on a firm foundation.

This is how you need to know and be convinced of your salvation. We call that an assurance of salvation. If you were saved because some goosebumps came up on you and there was a multitude of individuals going.

[26 : 19] You say, well I want to be involved in that too. And you didn't really know what you were doing or why you were doing it. Then I can understand that at times the enemy can get on your shoulder and he can speak false and half truths into you.

And I experienced that in my own life and he is there. But when you know that, hey, I was in the word of God and from the word of God I saw the son of God. And when I saw the son of God I fell before him and called him my Lord and Savior.

Then all of a sudden now you have salvation that's based upon conviction. Not experience but on the word of God. You say, well, pastor.

I've had people tell me, just a moment of transparency. People say, you know, you don't do an altar call very much. And I say, au contraire. I maybe don't do a public altar call but I never preach a message without telling you to get into the word of God.

And if you're in the word of God, it leads you to faith in Christ. Every time I encourage you to open up the pages of your Bible to read the word of God, that's an altar call.

[27 : 19] Because it's there you find the Savior. It's there you meet him. Oh, today, I don't know if you know it, today's date is 316. There is this big movement nationally that this needs to be Baptism Sunday.

There are churches that put people in the pews so that when they give the invitation, they will have people planted. It's actually in their program. It tells in their handbooks to their staff and personnel that certain people ought to start moving at certain places, in the most visible places in the sanctuary, during the altar call so that other people will respond, so that we can have a large baptism.

You say, oh, pastor, that's not going on. Yes, it is. We'll create a movement. And people will respond to a movement. Well, I want a movement, too.

And that movement would be you opening up the pages of Scripture in the confines of your own home and you meeting the Lord through the word of God. That the spirit of God could tell you things that this man of God never could.

So that you would fall before him and you would say, he is my Lord and Savior. And I promise you, when you do that, then you'll come find me and you'll tell me about it. You will not have to wait on anybody's feet to be moving.

[28 : 30] You won't have to wait on the crowd to be stirring. As a matter of fact, I've had some as young as five call me and say, I was reading Scripture or we were doing devotional. And I need Jesus as my Savior. You know, those are the kids I've baptized.

See, there's conviction. Those, by the way, just in case you missed it, that's one of my convictions. Why? Because I know my salvation story.

I know where I came from. This is an encouragement behind you. Stay in the word. Number three, and finally, the equipping that is available to you.

How can you be equipped to face these difficult days? Surprise, surprise. Look at what it says. All Scripture. Oh, it's important, right?

Verse 16. All Scripture is inspired by God. That's one word. Inspired by God is one word. In Greek, it literally means to be God-breathed. God, breathe out the word of God.

[29 : 34] I believe in the inspiration of Scripture. All Scripture. Every bit and piece of it. Even the difficult passages in the Old Testament.

Why? I committed to the reality that I'm going to preach through the Old Testament. And I'm in some difficult pages, I know. Sunday nights and Wednesday nights, we're preaching through the Old Testament. It's not always easy preparing for it.

And I have to remind myself quite often, all Scripture. Is God-breathed. Even those names, I don't know how to say. He said them. Even those places, I don't know where they at. He said them.

Even the customs and the manners, I don't understand. He knew. He has a purpose for them there. Why? Because look at what it says. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable.

Now, by the way, some of you are going to remove yourself from this passage because you're going to say, Oh, yes, this is for the pastors. This is for them preacher boys. This is for the pastors. This is for the people who are to stand up and to do this.

[30 : 31] But stay with me. Look at this. It is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

True, one application is there. Pastor, you can preach anywhere in Scripture and it's profitable. But, you know, Paul is not writing to Timothy telling him how to prepare a sermon. Paul is writing to an individual telling him how to prepare his life.

And that's a big difference. That individual happens to be a pastor. But he's writing to this individual telling him how he ought to be prepared to face the difficult days.

And it is the same thing that is given to us because look at what it says. All Scripture is inspired by God and it is profitable for teaching. That means the very first thing Scripture does is it teaches us.

It teaches us a truth. Everywhere we open up the Word of God, we say, Lord, what are you teaching me from this portion of Scripture? And for reproof, that is, everywhere open up Scripture is going to teach me something that is true and it's going to try to teach me something that I probably should correct.

[31 : 42] For reproof and for correction. It's going to highlight a problem that I have in my own life. And then it says, And for training in righteousness.

Aren't you thankful? This Scripture doesn't tell you what you do wrong. But it tells you what you do wrong so that it can tell you how to do it right. There's a big difference there.

It is there for reproof and correction. Correction, the literal word, has the meaning to set a broken bone back in place. It can be painful. It can be difficult.

But it says that the Word of God is there to teach us, to reprove us, that is, to tell us what we've done wrong, to set the broken bone, and to train us to do righteousness. It does it for one purpose.

So that the man of God may be adequate. That is, to be fully equipped. The man or the woman of God is to be adequate or fully equipped for every good work.

[32 : 46] Not just so that the man would know how to preach. But so that the man would know how to live. You say, well, how am I going to face these difficult days?

Well, then be equipped. Get into the Word of the God. Let it teach you. Let it reprove you. Let it correct you. Let it train you in righteousness so that you will be fully equipped to do every good work.

He has prepared for you. This is how we face difficult days. We know the examples before us, the encouragement behind us, and the equipping that is available to us.

The only question is, how are we doing at obeying the mandate? Let's pray. Father, I thank you so much for this day.

I praise you for this opportunity. And pray that you would draw us closer to you. May we be men and women of God.

[33 : 53] Who long to be fully equipped by you to face the days that you called us to live in. And Father, as we face them, we pray that you would be glorified through our actions.

Through our obedience. Through our obedience. And through the good works you have prepared for us to walk in. Lord, we realize some days are very difficult.

But we have an anchor that is set deep in Christ Jesus. May we draw close to you. It's in your name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.