

How To Stand In The Last Days

2 Timothy 3:10-17

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Normally, you know, that I read the whole text before I go into my preaching, but the length of the text tonight, I think, warrants that we just introduce the text and get into it. Paul is writing in 2 Timothy 3, we looked at it two weeks ago to just bring you up to speed, about the perilous times. Look at 2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Everything that we read about in this third chapter is in the context of Paul writing to Timothy to encourage him against last-days apostasy, these perilous times. They would be marked by "... men shall be lovers of their own selves," they would love money, they would be without family love (verse 3), and without love for virtue. They would also be (verse 4) "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and in verse 5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Then, in verses 6-9, he goes on to talk about the practice of apostates and even mentions Jannes and Jambres in verse 8 who, "withstood Moses..men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." In the last days we're going to be facing perilous times.

Now, to cut to the chase, we find in our text tonight that Paul is going to tell Timothy there are two things he needs to do to be able to stand in the last days, and that's the two points I want to share with you tonight. What do we need to do to stand against false teachers and heresy and these difficult days, these perilous times that we're going to live in. There are basically two things, and they are what Paul tells Timothy. In verses 10-13, Paul tells Timothy to follow his own example, Paul telling Timothy, "Follow my example." The point I want to make is that we need to follow true and godly servants. We're all followers. Every one of us are followers. We're all mimics. We're all influenced by other people. When we're younger, we want to be like this person or be like that person. Even into adulthood our lives have been impacted, molded, shaped, or influenced by others. We need to be very, very selective about who we make our heroes, who we follow, and who we want to emulate. Paul is going to set forth himself as a true servant of the Lord and encouraged Timothy to follow him.

In verses 14-17, the second thing we need to do to stand in these perilous times, these last days, is to be faithful to the Scriptures. That's really what is going on in this section. Paul is telling Timothy to remember "to continue thou in the things which has thou hast learned...And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," and then makes some important statements about the Scriptures being inspired by God and that it is profitable.

There are two things we need to do, and we're going to look at them. The first is we need to follow the true servant of God, follow with me at verse 10. Paul says, "But thou has fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions," you may be saying, by the way, "Well, I don't have the word "my" in my translation," but in the Greek, there is that personal pronoun there "my." Paul is putting a "my" before every

one of these statements, "...my doctrine, my manner of life, my purpose, my faith, my longsuffering, my love, my patience, my persecutions." "Timothy, you've known me and you're following me, and that's a good thing." He says, "...which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived," those are the evil men that are referred to back in verses 8-9, as we saw, Jannes and Jambres and the false teachers.

Notice in verse 10 Paul says, "But thou," speaking to Timothy. He uses a personal address with emphasis. It's what's called emphatic. It's like looking right at somebody saying, "I want you to do this. I want your attention. I want your focus." It's personal and emphatic. He looks right at Timothy and says, "But thou." There is an intended contrast with this "but" in verse 10. Go back to verse 9. "But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." He just got through talking about these false teachers (verses 8-9) Jannes and Jambres, and it's a sign of the last days. These false teachers were no doubt coming into the church at Ephesus, and we have them today. Here's the contrast, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering," so the truth here is that we are to follow true servants of Jesus Christ. When he says, "But thou hast fully known," the words "fully known" there has the idea of you have followed after. The Greek phrase that is used actually means to follow alongside or to follow closely.

If you'll think about it, and I thought about it today, there are people that have helped to influence our lives, maybe it's your parents. I know for me, when I was young, my dad and mom loved the Lord. They took me to church. They gave me a godly example. To this day, they've both gone to heaven, but I think about the influence that my godly parents have had on my life. They've made an imprint upon my life, so if any way my life is a blessing to you, you owe it to my mom and dad. It certainly points up the importance of the parental responsibility to train our children in the way that they should go so that when they're old they won't depart from that and to train them in the ways of the Lord so that they will be a blessing to others. There have been others who have been a great blessing to me and have influenced my life, and that's what Paul is actually saying, "You've known fully," and he begins to break it down. We're going to look at that, "You've known fully these things that have been true in my life."

I think of the influence that Pastor Chuck Smith had on my life when as a young Christian I would drive an hour every Sunday night to Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. I would sit and listen to Chuck expound and teach the Word and shepherd God's flock. I absorbed it, and I took it in. I watched his mannerisms. I watched his heart for God's Word. I watched the way he taught the Word. I watched the way he prayed for and ministered to people. I've never been to seminary, never been to Bible college, but that was my training as I watched this man of God, this shepherd, who fed the flock of God as he impacted my life. There have been so many others that I've been able to have the influence through their books and in some cases through their lives. It was my privilege several years ago to spend a few days with Dr. Warren Wiersbe. We had him come to our church and do a conference for us. He's the author of the popular "BE" series, and today I was thinking about how his books have influenced my life. I think of others

who have books that have influenced my life as well, but the impact is there. The point is, you need to make sure that you're following the true—you need to make sure that you're following an individual that's truly a Christian and truly setting a godly example.

I want to break it down for you. Notice what Paul says about his life. He says, first of all, it started with his doctrine or my teaching. "Timothy, you know me well," and this is in contrast to the false teachers, "you know my true doctrine. You know my teaching." That's what the word doctrine actually means. Paul was a teacher of the Word of God. I believe that we need to find good solid Bible teachers. Quite often people will ask me, "Is this person okay? Is that person okay?" or "Should I listen to this or read that book or listen to this person's sermons?" A lot of times I'm concerned about the people that others are listening to. It's not that I'm the only good Bible teacher by any means, but you need to be selective about who you listen to because they're going to have an impact on you. They're going to influence your life. You don't have to agree with everything everyone says, but you need to be discerning about what you listen to. Sometimes people are listening to preachers and teachers whose doctrine is not biblical, scriptural, or sound, and it's a concern. You need to be careful because it can influence you.

Paul says, "The first thing on the top of my list," and the first thing that we should look for, and we're going to note the marks of a true servant, is that they have sound doctrine, they have right teaching, they're orthodox, they're biblically sound in what they believe and what they teach. Flowing out of that, he says, "manner of life." Those two always go together. You cannot separate them. You can't say, "Well, he's a great Bible teacher. He's got sound doctrine, but his life is a mess." That's something I hear sometimes, too. "Well, he's a great preacher. He's a great speaker. He's really dynamic. He's really awesome! He's really funny, and I love his sermons, but morally they're not living a godly life or a holy life." The two go together. It's so very important. Sound doctrine leads to sound living. A good true minister of God is marked by orthodoxy and by living a true godly life. You know my, "manner of life," the way I live my life.

Paul then mentions his purpose. I like that. He doesn't tell us what his purpose is, but if any of you know the Apostle Paul, he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul's purpose in life was to preach Christ, to preach the gospel, to glorify God, to fulfill the calling that God had placed upon his life, and he never wavered from that. He never swerved from that. God has given you a calling. God has given you a purpose, and you must not waver from that. You must be faithful to what God has called you to do, what God has called you to be. So, you must have right doctrine. Secondly, you must have right living, and then you must have a passion, a purpose. This kind of motors a man's ministry. What is his purpose? Is his purpose to be popular? Is his purpose to have power? Is his purpose to get rich? Is his purpose to get a name for himself or is his purpose the glory of God? If you're going to follow someone, follow someone that has sound doctrine, lives a godly life, and has a goal and a purpose to glorify and honor God. That's what it's all about.

Notice Paul then says, "...faith." This is another mark of a true man of God or a true servant of the Lord. Again, he doesn't delineate what kind of faith, but most likely it's his faith in God and his trusting the Lord. He's not talking about his doctrine here, "the faith," he's talking about his

faith—his subjective personal trust and belief in God. This is another element you want when you're picking your heroes, picking people to emulate, and you're picking people to follow. In another place Paul said, "Follow me even as I follow Christ." You want to follow people who trust God, people who believe God, people who live by faith. Amen? The Bible says, "...the just shall live by faith," not by manipulation, not by scheming, not by trickery but by faith and trust in God.

Then, Paul says, "...longsuffering," this word actually has the idea of endurance with people, that they're patient with people. That's another thing you want in a leader. It's difficult, but this is one of the characteristics of God's agape love, so he was patient and loving with people. He wasn't rude to people. Notice as well my "...charity," or love. My King James translation has "charity" but it's the Greek word agape, agape love, and because he had love for God and for people and even for his enemies, he was longsuffering toward others. Then, notice he says, "...patience." How does patience differ from longsuffering? Longsuffering is patience with people, and the word patience there is used for being enduring in circumstances. He's able to put up with people and with circumstances, and that's something you should look for in a leader.

Verse 11, "Persecutions, afflictions," not many spiritual leaders today can point to their persecutions and their afflictions like Paul did. Do you know what Paul did to prove that he was a true minister of Jesus Christ? He'd take his shirt off—not to flex his muscles—to show his whippings and his scars and his beatings. Paul would take his shirt off, and he'd been whipped and beaten and scarred for the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wouldn't take out his clergy card and command people to follow him, he would take his shirt off and show the whippings and the scars and the beatings. Read 2 Corinthians 11 and into chapter 12, Paul's thorn in the flesh. You talk about persecutions and afflictions, and by the way, the word "persecutions" has the idea of to follow after and pursue. We got it on Sunday morning in that eighth Beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The idea meant is to pursue after, to follow after. Everywhere Paul went, his steps were dogged by people who were following, trying to persecute, and hassle him. Almost everywhere Paul went there was either a revival or a riot; and if you traveled with Paul, you had to be ready to get arrested, to get beaten, and thrown into prison. Those are the marks of a true minister. He's willing to suffer for the name of Christ.

The "afflictions" indicates the physical sufferings and limitations that he had to endure. I would put alongside that 2 Corinthians 12 where Paul says, "...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." There are nine characteristics here of a true servant—they're orthodox, their doctrine, their teaching, their manner of living. Their purpose is to glorify and honor God and fulfill the ministry that God has called them to. They will not allow themselves to be distracted from that. They live by faith. They trust in the Lord, not in man. They are patient with people and patient with circumstances. They are loving, and they are willing to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Notice Paul gets specific in verse 11. He says, "Timothy, you know the afflictions and the persecutions that I had to go through in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra." If you read Acts 13 and

14 (and we went through the book of Acts on Wednesday night), you'll read about the persecutions in these places that Paul endured, but this was an area where Timothy was from. The city of Lystra is actually the hometown of Timothy. He's probably mentioning them because they were the early persecutions of Paul and were in an area that was localized where Timothy was from and knew about.

Now, in Lystra, that's where Paul was stoned for preaching the gospel and was drug out of the city. The disciples gathered around his body and thought he was dead (it's possible he was dead). They were praying for him, and he stood back up, dusted himself off, and said, "Let's go back to this city and preach again." I believe standing in that crowd looking at Paul's mangled body on the ground was a young boy by the name of Timothy. Maybe he was holding his mother's hand and his grandmother was there—his grandmother Lois and Eunice his mother. Maybe he was looking at the Apostle Paul. This is where I believe that God gripped his heart about Paul's purpose, about Paul's life, and there's no one in the Bible that was closer and dearer to the heart of Paul than Timothy. Paul says in Philippians, "For I have no man likeminded," concerning Timothy "who will naturally care for your state." That word means of a kindred spirit. He's like-souled. "We're of a kindred spirit; we're of a kindred heart." He says, "You remember what I went through in these places." In Lystra he was stoned and no doubt Timothy saw that take place.

Notice what Paul says at the end of verse 11. He says, "...what persecutions I endured: but," and literally in the Greek it's "and," "out of them all the Lord delivered me." You say, "Wow, that's some deliverance, stoned and drug out of the city as dead? Some deliverance, he was whipped, beaten, and thrown into prison. His feet and hands were in stocks. Some deliverance, he was shipwrecked and bit by a snake and all the things he endured. He was stoned, he was whipped, he was beaten." Notice Paul says, "but out of them all the Lord delivered me." He didn't deliver Paul from them all, but He delivered him through them all. What God does is He doesn't deliver us from them—He doesn't protect us from having any problems, difficulties, or hardships—but He delivers us through them.

I recently finished reading the life story of John Newton, the man who wrote the song "Amazing Grace." We know that John Newton was a slave trader and a captain of a ship. The things that he went through were amazing—the hardships and the difficulties and the storms at sea. There were several times when he thought he would die at sea and the trials that he went through. I was reminded of that phrase in that song "Amazing Grace," Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home. Isn't that great to know? He doesn't deliver us from trials and snares, He delivers us in them. He never says that things aren't going to be difficult, but He says that I will be with you and I will walk through the fire with you, so Paul says, "...but out of them all the Lord delivered me," and then he said, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

That statement, "all that will live godly," literally is all that desire to live a godly life. All that desire to live for God and are devoted to God—this is one of the most neglected verses in the Bible—"shall suffer persecution." How many of you like to claim that promise? How many of

you have that as your life verse? I don't think so. I like stuff like, you know, "Yea, I am with you," and "I have a perfect plan for you," and "I want to bless you," stuff like that. You know, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Again, we studied it in the Beatitude. If you live a holy and godly life, you are going to come into opposition with the world, right? And the world is going to hate you. Jesus said, "...ye know that it hated me before it hated you," if they hated Me, they're going to hate you. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." You're going to be tried and tested. It might be family members, your enemies, or it may be those of your own household. The question is if you're not being persecuted in any way, any shape, any form, at any time doesn't mean you're always going to be persecuted to the strongest degree and constantly. It's kind of ebb and flow. Persecution is going to take different forms but in some shape, some fashion, some way, if you're living godly, you're going to suffer persecution. You have to say, "Well, if I'm not being persecuted for anything, at any time, any way for my faith in Jesus Christ, then maybe I'm not living a godly life."

The story is told of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, that he was riding his horse one day and was concerned because he hadn't had anything thrown at him or anybody shoot at or yell at him. He hadn't had any persecution for a while, and he was on his horse riding. He got off his horse and knelt down in the English countryside to pray. Some ruffian on the other side of a hedge saw Wesley praying and knew it was the preacher. He picked up a big brick and threw it over the hedge and just missed Wesley by inches landing on the ground right next to him. When Wesley saw that brick just miss him by inches, landing on the ground, he said, "Oh, thank God it is still well with my soul!" He was concerned that, "Nobody's thrown a brick at me for a while, what's going on? Maybe I'm not living a godly life?" It is the mark of a godly life that you will suffer persecution.

The reason that we suffer persecution is in verse 13. The "But" there is actually more of a reason to verse 12, "But evil men and seducers," the word is imposters. We actually get our word sorcerers from that, "shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." That takes us back again to the earlier verses (verses 2-9) where he's talking about the perilous times, the false teachers, Jannes and Jambres and those who turn away from the faith. One of the reasons why, as time goes on in these last days that we're going to face great persecution, great opposition, is that evil men will "wax worse and worse." The idea is that they'll progress farther in their hostility toward God and in their animosity toward Christians and their persecution of people who live for Christ.

As we look at these first few verses (verses 10-13), let me just kind of recap some of the marks of the true servant that we should follow. They teach true doctrine. Make sure you know what they believe. Sometimes I'll have people ask me about somebody and I'll say, "Do you understand what they teach?" "No. I don't really know." Well, you better know. Do you know that we actually...it's been on the website now for a long time, our website here at Revival, we have a very, very detailed doctrinal statement about what we believe. Now, we're not saying you have to hold all those same doctrines, but I believe that they're biblical. I believe that's orthodox. You should look at and read it and say, "This is what we believe. This is what we believe about God and Jesus, the Bible and the Holy Spirit, about the work of the Spirit today,

and about what's going on in the church." You know, you come to church and hear the Word, but do you really know what we believe and why? So, follow those that are true teachers of the Word.

Secondly, they practice what they preach (again, in verse 10), you know my manner of living. So, you know my doctrine and you know my manner of living. Thirdly, their purpose (again, we saw that in verse 10) is to glorify God. Do you want to follow somebody? Do you want to make them your heroes? And you can make your hero somebody in a book. Read great Christian biographies. Read about men and women that were used mightily by God and let it kind of influence your life and your thinking, but they lived for the glory of God. Fourthly, they were willing to suffer for the sake of Christ (verses 11-12), so be careful who you follow and be careful who you listen to.

The next section here is verses 14-17. Let's read it. The thing to do now is we need to be faithful to the Scriptures. We need to follow faithful servants and be faithful to the Word of God. Our allegiance ultimately is to God and His Word. Paul says, (verses 14-17), "But continue thou," now here's the second personal emphatic statement Paul makes. He makes the first in verse 10, "But thou," and then he comes to verse 14, "But continue thou," again, it's emphatic and it's personal, "in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God," and that statement, "man of God" there is a general statement about Christians. It's not just talking about a minister, even though it's a pastoral epistle, he's talking about the person of God, the individual that is a believer following God, "That the man of God may be perfect," or complete, "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The second thing we need to do in these last days—and this is so very, very important—the only way we can combat the devil's lies in these last days is with God's Word. Amen? If you're going to combat Satan's lies, you have to have God's truth. So, he says, you know what you have learned, "...the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of." So, two things, you learn them and you're sure of them. There's a difference. One is knowledge, the other is absolute assurance or conviction. I've noticed over the years as I continue to study the Bible that it goes from knowledge to conviction. It goes from head knowledge, information...When I was young and just starting to preach and study the Bible, I would kind of learn something brand new that week and it would go from my head to the people; but it's taken years of life's experience for me to say, "This is something that is now a conviction of mine." That's why sometimes I get real animated about certain things because I believe that not only does the Bible teach that but I've learned by experience that it's true in my own life and have come to have deep convictions about certain subjects and things.

Paul tells Timothy, "You learned these things and you've been assured of knowing them," "of whom thou hast learned them." We can't be sure about who the "whom" is there that he'd

learned, but obviously he learned them from his mom and from his grandmother. Remember in the first epistle to Timothy, "...which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice," he had a godly mother and a godly grandmother. Now, he tells him that he's learned the Scriptures from the time he was a child in verse 15. In context, I believe it involves three individuals. It involves his grandmother and mother—God bless you Christian grandmothers and mothers. The impact that you can have on the Kingdom of God, think about that. You have the ability to raise children to serve God, to lead others to Christ, to raise men and women that will live for God, become missionaries, pastors, church workers, servants, and whatever God calls them to be.

When Timothy was young and growing up, his grandmother and his mother read him Bible stories. Again, it's so important that if you're a parent, you start early reading, teaching, and training your children. Don't wait for them to get older and go to Sunday school and to learn from other sources. Get a good book for young children. Get Kenneth Taylor's, *The New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* (and we're going to have that in our little store here), but there are other good books for toddlers and Bible stories. Start very young instilling the Word of God in their hearts. That's what happened to Timothy. The reason why Timothy was such an amazing man of God was because his mother and grandmother molded and shaped him and had a great influence on his life.

The third person in verse 14, "...knowing of whom thou hast learned them," is Paul the Apostle. Thank God for men of God who teach the Word of God so that we can grow and mature and be built up and be edified. I thank God for the men in my life who have taught me God's Word. I thank God for the men that have influenced me and the books that I read and the individuals that have influenced me in God's Word and sound doctrine. You need to have that same influence in your life. He says continue in it. That's what we do in these last days because perilous times shall be upon us, because false teachers will come, we need to continue in God's Word.

Next Wednesday night we're going to look at what I consider to be my life verse, 2 Timothy 4, where Paul says, "Preach the word." So, we're to continue in the Word, we're to preach the Word, and we're to follow leaders that are teaching and preaching the Word and living it in their lives as well. So, you've learned it from your grandmother, from your mother, from me, Paul, and you've learned it from the time (verse 15) you were a child. That word "child" there actually could be translated baby. Yes, you were an infant. It's never too early to start talking to them about Jesus, praying for them, and teaching them. From the time you were a little child, you've known...note this. I can't tarry on this. I'll maybe go back over it next week as it moves us into chapter 4, but what have you known? The holy Scriptures, and those holy Scriptures are able to do something, "...make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

First, the Scriptures are holy. The word "holy" means set apart. It means they're sanctified. Again, there's a lot that can be said and I have to resist the temptation, but the Bible is unique. There is no other book in the same category, on the same par, at the same level, of the same nature, as the B-I-B-L-E, the Bible. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the

Mormons, put their writings many times not only on an equal par but on a position above the Bible—The Pearl of Great Price, The Doctrine of the Covenant, their own writings. The Jehovah's Witnesses have their Awake! magazines and the writings of their leaders, and you can't know the Bible unless you read their books. We're not afraid to just give you a Bible. You don't even have to listen to me preach. You can just take a Bible home and read it. Guess what it will do? It'll make you wise to salvation. You can come to know the Savior in the Bible. Amen? That's why when I stay in a hotel I look in the drawer. Do they have a Gideon's Bible? If they don't, I complain to the manager. "Get Gideon Bibles in your hotel or I won't stay in your hotel anymore." I say it nicely. If there's a Gideon Bible in the hotel, I thank the manager of the hotel. I tell them, "Thank you for having that Bible in that room." What will it do? It will lead you to the Savior.

Let me mention something. The Bible alone, and just getting a knowledge of the Bible won't save you. You can read the Bible, to use a figure of speech—till you're blue in the face—and it won't save you. Unless you read the Bible and it brings you to faith in the Savior and you trust Jesus Christ, you cannot be saved. The purpose of the Bible—listen to me carefully—is not just to give you knowledge. It's to bring you to a Savior. It's to bring you to faith and trust in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. Someone once said that the study of God's Word is not to just give us an enlightened intellect, it's to give us a transformed character; so if you're reading the Bible and you're just getting a big head and you've got a lot of Bible information, that's fine, but if it doesn't bring you to the Savior, to trust in Him and be saved, it doesn't do you any good. From Genesis to Revelation, all of Scripture, is given for one grand purpose and design—to bring men and women to faith in Jesus Christ. So, he says, "...thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise," they give you wisdom, but it's a wisdom that leads you to salvation because you have faith in Christ Jesus. Notice the faith is in Christ Jesus. It's not in man. It's not in a church. Your faith is not in the Bible, though we do believe the Bible to be God's Word. Our faith is in the God of the Bible, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Notice in verse 16 it says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," what is he telling us here? He's telling us that all Scripture is given by God's very breath. I can tell right now I'm not going to be able to really finish these verses and do them justice, but I will come back to them next week. When it says, "All scripture," people are sometimes quick to point out and say, "Well, you know, that was the Old Testament." Yes, but even at this time some of the New Testament was already penned. Let me give you some verses. In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul quotes Luke 10 and refers to it as Scripture or the Word of God. Evidently, Paul considered Luke's gospel and the statement made there as part of Scripture. Here's the classic, 2 Peter 3:16. In 2 Peter 3:16, Peter mentions the writing of Paul, and do you know what he calls them? Scripture. The Apostle Peter recognized that Paul's writings were Scripture, so when Paul says to Timothy, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," he's talking about all of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament. He's talking about the whole Bible. The Old Testament and the New Testament are given by inspiration of God. Amen? We don't say, "Well, the Old is inspired, the New isn't," or "the New is inspired and the Old is not."

What does "inspiration of God," mean? We believe the Bible is given by inspiration. Well, it's

not inspiration like Shakespeare or like someone who can write a song or paint a picture or write a poem, you know, “I was inspired to do this work of art.” It’s not the kind of inspiration we’re talking about. It’s not dictation, it’s inspiration. Let me give you my definition of what it means that the Scripture is given by inspiration. First of all, the word “inspiration” literally means breathed. It’s talking about the breath of God, and literally it means to breathe out. It’s given by God’s breath. It’s God breathing out. God breathed out the Scriptures. I believe that inspiration is God superintending the human authors so that the very words they wrote were the words of God. God used their own personality, God used sometimes their own style. They were human authors. Some people say, “Well, how can you believe the Bible is the Word of God when it was written by men?” Because human authors were superintended by God.

Now, the Bible has a supernatural aspect, but it also has a human aspect. Do you know that Jesus Christ was both God and man? He was fully God and fully man in one Person. Do you know the Bible has a dual nature? It’s the word of man and it’s the Word of God. It was written by men and it was written by God, but the men were writing only as they were inspired by God. They were under the influence of God. They were superintended by God, so the very words they wrote were the words of God.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was writing a thank-you letter to them, but God was making sure that every word that he wrote were the very words that He wanted written down. I also believe that the words themselves—not just the concepts, not just the ideas—were inspired by God and that they are profitable, they are without error, the Bible is inerrant, the Bible is clear, the Bible (as we are going to see) is sufficient, and the Bible is the final authority. All of that taken right out of this marvelous text. This is one of the great texts of Scripture about itself, so the Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

It’s important to understand that the Bible is coming from God and that God is a God of truth—God cannot lie—so the Bible has no errors in it. Whatever it speaks on, it speaks without error—on geography, on history, on names and individuals. There have been critics of the Bible that say, “This person didn’t live, that city didn’t exist,” and all we needed was the archeologist to unearth a portion of earth and there they found that the city existed or a name on a coin. Over the years, as we continue in our archeological digs, it has confirmed the Bible, never disproved the Bible. It is only made clearer that God’s Word is true. Archeology has never disproved the Bible but is continuing to confirm the veracity, the historicity, the reliability, and the dependableness of the Bible, the Word of God.

I personally believe that there’s nothing more important for you and me as an individual than to have a right view of Scripture. If your view of this book we call the Bible is askew or wrong, it’s going to ruin your whole life. It will affect your whole life and maybe your eternity. It’s so important for you to be firmly convinced in the knowledge that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. Every word is given by inspiration of God.

Notice what it’s good for (verse 16), “profitable,” it’s valuable, it’s a good book for, “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God,” or the person

that is following the Lord, “may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Not only is the Bible given by inspiration of God, it’ll lead you to salvation, but it’s profitable for doctrine, that is, what is right. Do you want to know what’s right? It’s found in the Bible. It’s good for reproof. Do you want to know what’s wrong? You’ll find it in the Bible. You want to know how to get right, correction? It’s in the Bible. You want to know how to stay right and live right? Instruction in righteousness. The Bible is good for what is right, what is wrong, how to get right, and how to stay right. It’s good for all that. It’s, “...a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”

Then, it’s necessary and sufficient to equip us for ministry. Notice verse 17, “That the man of God,” or the individual believer, “may be perfect,” now that doesn’t mean that you will be sinlessly perfect, it means that you will be complete. It carries the idea of mature, having no deficiencies, and that you will be equipped to do good works. I don’t believe that you can adequately grow or mature as a Christian apart from God’s Word, nor can you be equipped and ready to serve the Lord and to be used by God unless you are equipped and knowledgeable of God’s Word. If you want God to use you, you want your life to be a blessing, then you better get your nose in this Book (that’s an expression my Dad used to use, by the way). He used to say, “John, keep your nose in the Bible.” You better get in God’s Word—know God’s Word, live by God’s Word—and then you’ll be mature, you’ll be complete, and you’ll be thoroughly equipped and ready to do God’s work.

In Ephesians 2:10, it tells us there that we’re saved by grace, but we’re saved unto good works “which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” How can we be equipped for those good works? By God’s Word, amen? Studying, feeding on, growing in a knowledge of God’s Word. I have to admit that I’m never ceased to be amazed at how many Christians lack a knowledge of this Book. I’m not here to chide or to scold you, but if you come to this church, you should be a man or a woman of this Book.

This Book should be central to your life. You should have a Bible and you should bring a Bible. If you come to this church, if you’re a part of this church, please come with a Bible, okay? Get a Bible, have a Bible. If you don’t have a Bible, we’ll give you a Bible. You don’t have to buy a Bible, we’ll give you a Bible. Put your name in it. Read it every day. Study it every day. Come to church with your Bible. When I say, “Open your Bible to Timothy or Matthew 5,” open your Bible. Follow me in your Bible. You say, “Well, I have it on my phone.” Well, that’s fine, but, you know, you can’t smell your phone (big sniff sound), “Ahh.” If any of you would like to, you can smell my Bible after church tonight. It’s awesome! (Big sniff sound), “Ahh.” You can feel the pages, highlight, underline, and make notes. It should just be glued to your hand. It should be a part of your life. Do you know why? Because perilous times have come. We live in a world of men who love themselves, they love money, and they love pleasure more than they love God. The only way for us to stand against that is follow true leaders and get grounded and growing in God’s Word. Amen?