

Session 6

GOSPEL DIFFICULTY PART 2

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Memory Verse

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

– 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17, CSB



Gospel Difficulty - Part 2

THEOLOGICAL THEME: God has seen fit to preserve and commit His full revelation to writing for the benefit of the church. The surety of God's written Word is a great gift to all Christians and serves to give them light, comfort them, and protect them from the lies of the devil and the world.

 Have you ever been in a situation where you felt confused and unable to make a sound decision? What happened?

 Why do you think that sometimes the right decision can seem so clear beforehand and in hindsight, but in the heat of the battle everything seems foggy and convoluted? Describe a time when you have experienced something like this.

In the book *The Silver Chair*, C. S. Lewis puts the protagonists in a situation like the one described above. Before they embark on their quest, however, Aslan gives them signs by which they can find their way, even when things become confusing. This is Aslan's counsel:

“[F]irst, remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night. And whatever strange things may happen to you, let nothing turn your mind from following the signs. And secondly, I give you a warning. Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in

Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take great care that it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look, when you meet them there. That is why it is so important to know them by heart, and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.”¹

Aslan’s counsel to Jill and Eustace parallels the very counsel that Christians are given over and over again. Christians are to read, rehearse, remember, and follow the Scriptures. The sacred Word of God plainly lays out “signs” for Christians, but they easily forget to read the signs and cherish them as they should, especially when the going gets tough. In today’s passage, Paul’s words remind us of Aslan’s. Paul told Timothy to continue in the sacred Scriptures that he had received from childhood and to keep his eyes fixed on them. Not only that, but Timothy was also instructed to teach these to others.

Session Summary

Paul’s primary aim in this section of 2 Timothy was to get Timothy to lean heavily upon the foundation of the sacred Scriptures. He knew that this was God’s will for him and the means of grace by which Timothy would persevere and others would be saved and also persevere.

The letter itself was written from a prison cell by Paul, who knew that his earthly sojourn was nearing its end. He utilized what little time he had left to encourage Timothy to stay faithful. He told Timothy to imitate his faith in suffering and to build his ministry only upon those things that meet the test of fitness: the gospel of Jesus Christ and the sacred Scriptures that had been entrusted to him.

We will consider our text today by breaking it into three sections. In the first, Paul praised Timothy’s faithfulness even in suffering. Next, Paul assured Timothy persecution was inevitable and opposition to his ministry would worsen. Finally, Paul exhorted Timothy to remain steadfast and unmoved upon the foundation of their shared faith and ministry, namely the sacred Scriptures.

1. Praise (2 Tim. 3:10-11)

In the previous section, Paul warned Timothy to be on the lookout for empty talkers and deceivers that would be arriving on the scene. Paul knew this because they were already

making inroads among believers and causing trouble. Furthermore, he saw that the problem was only going to get worse. Paul pivoted his focus from those sorts of “teachers” to Timothy’s life, of which he was proud and felt great joy.

? How did Paul describe Timothy’s way of life? How are all Christians to imitate these same traits?

What a resumé! Whatever struggles Timothy may have been going through at that time, Paul gave testimony that the Timothy he knew was a shining beacon of faithful Christian living. Paul said that Timothy had excelled at following his teacher, Paul, who was imitating Christ. Timothy followed Paul’s “teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance.” This isn’t a random list of virtues that Paul threw together hoping to encourage Timothy. Remember, Paul wrote with the specific purpose to encourage Timothy in the work of the ministry. Everything that he wrote to him in this letter directly related to that call. With that in mind, read back over the list. Consider how each one relates to pastoral ministry. Like Paul, Timothy . . .

- taught what was true
- conducted himself in accordance with the standards of an overseer
- pastored with purpose anchored in the sacred Scriptures
- walked by faith, not by sight
- shepherded with godly patience and love
- endured suffering and persecution

? Notice Paul gave extra emphasis to endurance. Why do you think he did that? Why would this be crucial moving forward?

Paul ended his list with endurance along with an elaboration on his and Timothy’s endurance. He actually named specific episodes of suffering (in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra) and then went on to say that “the Lord rescued me from them all.”

The reason Paul emphasized this aspect of Timothy's faithfulness is that Timothy would need to continue to endure. Paul wasn't saying that he had endured and now he could rest. Rather, Timothy was to dig in, grit his teeth, cling to Christ, and endure. The next verse tells us why.

? Application: Paul sought to encourage Timothy as he faced a time of hardship. What are some practical ways you can guide and encourage the person(s) you are discipling?

2. Assurance (2 Tim. 3:12-13)

A primary motif of Paul's second letter to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, is suffering and its counterpart, endurance. In fact, we might say that 2 Timothy is a practical and theological application of Jesus' words, "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world" (John 16:33).

? What promise did Paul make Timothy in verse 12? Why is it important for Christians to recognize this today?

We tend to think of promises as positive. This one isn't. Paul promised Timothy that "all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." But Paul didn't stop there. He told Timothy that the false teachers and empty talkers who had been troubling him up to this point were only going to get worse, more destructive, and cause more pain. Now it becomes clear to us why Paul wanted to underline Timothy's endurance.

? Paul wrote to Timothy about Timothy's specific context and circumstances. How do these words apply to Christians today despite different contexts and circumstances?

No, they can't apply directly to us because Paul wrote those words directly to Timothy. They apply directly to Timothy alone. However, Scripture is applicable to everyone. So, the question we need to ask ourselves is, in what way do Paul's promises apply to us? Let's consider the first promise. There is a clue in verse 12 that is helpful in our consideration. Paul said "all who want to live a godly life." While written to Timothy in a completely different context, Paul's point was that every single person who seeks to follow after Christ will suffer persecution. Do you desire to live a godly life? If so, then you can claim this promise/warning as your own even though Paul didn't have you in mind when he wrote it to Timothy.

If we take these promises that Paul made to Timothy as a whole and try to find the universal principle, then we may distill it into something like this: All those who follow Christ will face opposition. If it is truly a universal principle, then it will be in accordance with the rest of Scripture, and we will be able to see evidence of it throughout the experience and teaching of Christian history. In this instance, the principle passes the test (see John 15:18; 1 Peter 4:12-14; and Luke 6:22, among others).

 **Application: Have you experienced opposition for your devotion and obedience to Christ and His Word? What happened? How did you respond? Spending time with God daily in His Word is one of the most profound ways to combat opposition to your Christian character and practices. Check out the daily devotionals that relate to this study (<https://brentwoodbaptist.com/category/daily-devotional/>).**

3. Reminder (2 Tim. 3:14-17)

Imagine Timothy reading this letter for the first time and how he must have felt reading verses 12-13. You have probably experienced a moment that was like a punch to the gut when things were already going poorly and more bad news rolled in. What could Paul possibly say to follow up his words of warning/promise? Did Timothy have any solace at all? Was there a port of comfort in the midst of that ever-worsening storm?



What is the command that Paul gave Timothy in verse 14? Why is this important for all Christians?

Paul told Timothy to “continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.” In essence, Paul told Timothy to stay the course. Paul did not give him a new command. Timothy did not need to make any adjustments. Paul did not explain some new ministry program to him. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy was to simply stand firm.

Paul told Timothy to “continue in” something specific. The reason that Paul didn’t need to correct Timothy was that Timothy was already walking along the ancient paths. He was doing right. This letter wasn’t one of correction (like Paul’s Letter to the Galatians), but a letter of encouragement to help Timothy keep going. Timothy was on the right path because his ministry was based upon and centered on the sacred Scriptures.



Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in what he had learned and believed from infancy. What guidance or encouragement does this give as you disciple others toward life-long faithfulness to Christ?

Paul wrote that “from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ.” We shouldn’t rush past this. Timothy was taught the Scriptures from when he was an infant. There is no doubt that this happened because those who were taking care of him took responsibility not only for his physical and intellectual well-being, but also his spiritual well-being (see 2 Tim. 1:5). What would be the impact on our children and grandchildren if we were as attentive to their souls as we were their bodies and minds?

? Paul expressed the idea of the “sufficiency of Scripture” in verses 16 and 17. What does it mean to say that the Scriptures are sufficient?

We have much to be thankful for knowing that God’s Word has been preserved for us in written form. We have a trustworthy record of redemptive revelation, meaning that the good news of the gospel is safeguarded for the church now and until Christ returns. But what about other Christian books and devotionals? What about our favorite Christian conference speakers? Aren’t those God’s word too? Can’t God use things besides the Bible to teach us and grow us?

This is an important question for Christians across the world today. We have access to more Christian books, music, conferences, websites, preachers, and other sorts of messages than ever in the history of the church. With so many voices competing for our attention, it’s more critical than ever to have a proper view on the place of Scripture in the Christian life.

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture is sufficient to meet every need for the human soul. Scripture contains everything necessary for one’s spiritual life. Scripture is comprehensive in that it fully addresses all our spiritual needs. This means that if we had no other Christian book, if we never attended a Christian conference, if we were cut off from all Christian music, and if we had no access to our favorite online Christian content but we had access to the Scripture, then we would have all that we needed to live a fully obedient, joyful, and vibrant Christian life.

Sufficiency of Scripture doesn’t imply that all other messages are to be eschewed. Rather it means that they shouldn’t be given the same place of authority in our spiritual lives. They are not in the same category as Scripture. It also means that all other messages must be held to the standard of Scripture.

? Application: What evidence does your life give or not for the amount that you hold to the sufficiency of Scripture? What needs to change?

Conclusion

Paul's second letter to Timothy wasn't corrective. Rather, it was a firm exhortation to Timothy to continue on the ancient paths of the Scripture and be faithful to the task to which he had been called. This exhortation was good and necessary because Timothy faced serious opposition, and things were only going to get worse for him. Paul praised Timothy for his faithfulness, warned him of harder times to come, and reminded him of the firm foundation upon which he should stay anchored, namely the Scriptures.

? Paul saw signs of the grace of God in Timothy's life (vv. 10-11). What signs of grace have people seen in your life? What work has the Spirit wrought in your own thinking, behavior, and faithfulness to the Lord?

? Paul urged Timothy to stay faithful to God's Word. The Scriptures were to be his port of comfort and strength in the terrible gales of persecution. Where do you find your comfort and strength day by day? Do you cherish the sacred Scriptures? A way to stay active in the scriptures is through daily devotionals (<https://brentwoodbaptist.com/category/daily-devotional/>).

CHRIST CONNECTION: Christ is the central figure of the sacred Scriptures. The sacred Scriptures are able to make one wise unto salvation. That salvation is accomplished in the life of a sinner through the power of the gospel message, which is the true account of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: The mission of God is the glory of God among the nations. God's glory shines brightly when dead sinners are made alive and walk in grateful, joyful obedience to their Creator. These miracles are accomplished through the preaching and teaching of the sacred Scriptures.



FOR NEXT WEEK

Gospel Ministry

Main Passages

- 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Session Outline

1. The Charge (2 Timothy 4:1-2)
2. Trouble on the Way (2 Timothy 4:3-4)
3. Some Helps (2 Timothy 4:5)

Memorize

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- Tuesday - James 1:12
- Wednesday - Hebrews 12:1-3
- Thursday - John 16:33
- Friday - 1 Peter 4:12
- Saturday - Matthew 5:10

References

¹Lewis, C. S., and Pauline Baynes. *The Silver Chair*. London: HarperCollins Children's Books, 2014.