**October 16, 2022 2 Timothy 3:10-17**

***Persistence***

**Scripture: *2 Timothy 3:10-4:5 NRSV***

*(10)Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, (11)my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. (12)Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (13)But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. (14)But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, (15)and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16)All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17)so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

**Notes:**

1. Paul is sending a word of ***warning*** and ***encouragement***.
   1. Stay ***strong***
   2. Make a ***difference***
2. Have ***nothing*** to do with the sinfulness of this generation.
   1. We need to be ***ready***.
   2. Men will cast off all ***moral*** restrains, and society begins to ***disintegrate***.
3. Take guidance from the ***challenge*** Paul gives us today.
   1. Follow Godly ***leaders***
   2. Godly person has ***nothing*** to hide; ***teaches*** the truth; ***practices*** what they preach; are not ***afraid*** of persecution.
   3. Find people who **follow** after Christ and allow them to ***lead*** you.
4. ***Apply*** what you have learned.
   1. Stay the ***course***.
   2. ***Understand*** what you are going to do before the crisis becomes a crisis.
5. The truth of God will stand the ***test*** of time and the ***test*** of faith.
   1. The Bible is the finished product of God so that we can have ***answers*** to life problems.
   2. In the Bible, we find how to **know** God, how to live ***productive*** lives.
6. Our Bible***teaches*** us everything we need if we will let it;
   1. We ***need*** each other, and we ***need*** God to help us.
   2. ***Build*** your life on God and His Word.

**Script:**

As I look at the things that go on in our world, I am concerned; concerned for my children, concerned for my grandchildren, and even concerned for the generations to follow them. That is what brought me to tears during the Christmas season of 1994, as we awaited Sheldon’s birth. This is what prompts me to be the best person I can be. I tend to think that this world is not improving.

I am sure that you have had similar thoughts and fears. Every generation thinks that the next generation is worse than they were. Our grandparents thought that our parents’ generation was worse; our parents thought that our generation is worse, and whether you believe it or not we believe that our children’s generation is worse.

But as I look at our sermon passage for today, I come to a realization. As long as we allow sin to control our lives, we are condemned to live in this type of world. The world is not any worse off than when Paul is writing to Timothy, in our passage today, 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Stand with me as we share in the reading of this passage

*(10)Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, (11)my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. (12)Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (13)But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. (14)But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, (15)and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (16)All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, (17)so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5 NRSV*

The Apostle Paul is sending a word of *warning* and a word of *encouragement* to his protégé. Paul is trying to encourage him to stay *strong* in the face of some pretty harsh realities, he must continue to stay strong in the face of the things, he will be facing in his life, he is challenging Timothy to make a *difference*. If we read from the beginning of this chapter Paul gives us an idea of what the world is like.

*(1)You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. (2)For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3)inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, (4)treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5)holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! (6)For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, (7)who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 3:1-7 NRSV*

Does this sound familiar? Does this sound like the world we live in? Doesn’t this sound like what I mentioned earlier, regarding the generations opinion of the generation to follow? Note Paul’s tone as he informs Timothy of what he will be up against. You must understand; Mark this down; Pay close attention. There will be terrible times in the last days. Not maybe, there will be…. And, this is why; the current generation are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy; and it just keeps escalating downward, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And get this, “Having a form of godliness but denying its power.” In other words they feel that they are gods themselves, having total control over their lives and what they do.

Paul continues, “Have nothing to do with them!” Wow! Well, that doesn’t seem too Christian like, does it. Have nothing to do with them? Is the apostle Paul really saying that? Yes! Yes, he is! Especially if you take it in the right context of how he said it. This world is heading in the wrong direction. This world is rebelling against God. It is having its own form of godliness. Or should we say Godlessness? No matter, have nothing to do with that! Paul is charging Timothy and he is charging the church, have *nothing* to do with the sinfulness of this generation. Be holy, be who God wants us to be. Here is how the world lives and this is how you should live.

Have you ever heard the saying, “Cheer Up, things could be worse. So I cheered up and sure enough things got worse.”? That may be the message Paul is sending to Timothy. Paul was deeply concerned about what he was seeing as a trend and he did not like it. So he is challenging Timothy to not be like the culture.

Some want to look at these last days and say “anything between Christ first coming and His return are considered last days.” And it’s true. Some want to think of the last days as moments before Christ returns and this is how society will be. It is so very true. *Hard* times and *hard* days are coming. Inflation is at the highest level in decades; the price of everything is going up; and our income is not keeping up with the inflation. If we are not ready, Christ will return as a thief in the night. And I want to let you know today we need to be *ready*; Christ could return at any time!

The Greek word translated into terrible in verse one means fierce, dangerous, frightening. One commentor describes it as savage times, as men cast off all *moral* restrains, and society begins to *disintegrate*. Buckle up Timothy, you are in for a bumpy ride. Buckle up church, we are in for a bumpy ride, things are changing, pay attention, mark this down, understand this and get this. Don’t be taken by surprise when it happens.

This is what happens when a *nation*, when a world, turns it back against God. We have seen in the Bible the many times that the nation of Israel do it repeatedly. They reject God, get unruly, follow other gods, even making idols to them; lovers of pleasure, moral collapse! All that once was good is now abandoned, and all that was once rejected is now embraced. Things like abortion, homosexuality, same sex marriage, marital strife. These are just the one’s that are pushed into our faces and left there to dull our senses; to desensitize us to their immorality. We see the breakdown of society and all we have known to be right, “Every man does what is right in his own eyes.”

We need to *watch* out. Watch out for those that have an appearance of godliness. Watch out for moral breakdowns. Watch out for postmodern religions, that take you away from God’s fundamental truth. Watch out for religious organizations going through the motions, that will be appealing to some because they have endorsed something that does not line up with God’s Word. Be careful Timothy! Be careful Church! There will be *false* teachers. In an attempt to be politically correct, some are theologically wrong! Let me say it again, “In an attempt to be politically correct, some are theologically wrong.” We embrace and work with many churches and denominations. We do not think that we are the only ones that speak the truth. There are some however, that we cannot embrace because they are wrong Biblically.

Okay, we get it, we live in a society far from God. We have many who have turned their back on God. But there are many people, many churches that hold to God’s truths and we can take some encouragement and guidance from the *challenge* Paul gives Timothy and us today. Follow Godly *leaders.* Hear Paul’s message today, identify the times, but don’t let culture change you, you change the culture. This may be the way others are acting, but you know my ways, my purpose, my faith, and you have seen me persecuted for what I believe. In fact, I’m in prison as I write this challenge to you.

What are the marks of a godly person? They have *nothing* to hide; (10)“you know all my teachings.” They *teach* the truth; “you know my doctrine (comes out of this Bible).” They *practice* what they preach; Paul says “you know my faith, and my patience.” They are not *afraid* of persecution; “you know my sufferings.” Truth is, we become like who we hang around. We become what we are taught and apply to our lives. Good or bad. Paul’s point is, find godly people who follow after Christ and allow them to *lead* you.

“(12)Everyone that wants to live a godly life In Jesus will be persecuted.” Some did not like what Jesus did or represented and some will not like what you stand for either. What is happening in other countries and parts of the world will one day happen here. American Christians are not above persecution. No one gets a get out of jail free card when it comes to persecution. Persecution is a part of a serious Christian’s life; remember the words of Jesus, “No servant is greater than his master, if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” John 15:20

The greatest leader to follow is Jesus Christ, so then follow those that model Jesus Christ. Continue and *apply* what you have learned. Stay the *course*; apply what you have learned. Don’t get distracted by clever talkers. Paul tells Timothy and it applies to us; do what you have learned because you know that it works. *Understand* what you are going to do before the crisis becomes a crisis. Some have deformed faith, what I mean by that is their teachings and belief’s never stand up to the test. It always collapses, because it hinges on personal beliefs rather than the truth of God; “Having a form of godliness, but denying its power.” The truth of God will stand the *test* of time and the *test* of faith. If there is no power, it is not a truth of God. The word of God applied will sustain you because there is power in the Word of God.

God’s word is useful; *(16)“All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* Everything we need to get to heaven is written and found in this Bible. What it takes to live a productive life for Christ is in here! The Bible is the finished product of God so that we can have *answers* to life problems. Does it have every answer for every problem? Probably not. Some answers are common sense; if you know God’s will for certain things, you can apply that knowledge to know how He would like/dislike something else. In the Bible, we find how to know God, how to live *productive* lives. We will find where our strength comes from; how to be transformed, and how to get to heaven.

This book we hold so precious in our faith, this book we hold so precious in our homes, the Bible; the book that flames rarely burn; we never outgrow it. It is timeless. *Our Bible teaches us everything we need if we will let it*; live it, believe it, digest it, obey it, and follow it; then teach others to do the same! You want to have the upper hand of the terrible times ahead? Read the Word. Know the Word. Obey the Word; let it be your directional guide to life. It tells us what is right; it tells us what is wrong; and, it tells us how to get right and to stay right!

This world, and our society is getting worse. The things of God are being *challenged* every day at every level. That does not mean we have to go there. We do not have to reject God, we do not have to fall away from our faith, we must be constantly learning, doing what we can to grasp the truths of God. If we look at this passage correctly, we will understand. The world may get worse, don’t be surprised. Tough times are coming- don’t be discouraged. We *need* each other, and we *need* God to help us. We may be persecuted someday, but we will not be defeated.

To live is Christ, to die is gain. We belong to Christ. Ministry in the last days will be tough, that is why we need God more each and every day. Only the strong in Christ will make it. *Build* your life on God and His Word and you will not only survive hard times, you will make an impact in those hard times. We may be living in hard times, but we are not living in defeated times, we can make an *impact* with those we are around.