

Date: Wednesday March 17, 2021

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3

Well, as we made our way through 2020, and all the difficulties that arose...challenges. I know it was a tough year for many of us. But we heard this promise in 2020 that things will get better, right? That was the promise that was given to us. In fact, many people said, including myself, I can't wait for 2021. And here we are in 2021. And all of this stuff is still here, and what do they continue to tell us? Things will get better, right? It's the promise they have to continue to reiterate this to us. And people like to hear that message... that things are going to get better, because it gives them a sense of hope.

In our passage here tonight, in 2 Timothy 3, Paul has the total opposite message for Timothy. He gets right to the point, and he doesn't tell Timothy that things are going to get better. In fact, he tells Timothy things are going to get worse. Right?

That's the message that he has for him. Imagine if politicians ran on that motto, right? Things are going to get worse. Probably wouldn't get any votes. But here's Paul, and Paul is a realist, but Paul is also writing exactly what God wants him to write down. Paul wasn't writing a letter to campaign for a political position. He was an apostle who was sent by God to write down exactly what God wanted him to write down. So we're going to see what Paul says in our passage here tonight. We're going to break it up into two points.

1. The first one is **The Warning About False Teachers**. The Warning About False Teachers - found in verses 1 through 9.
2. And then secondly, **The Weapon To Battle False Teachers**. The Weapon To Battle False Teachers - found in verses 10 through 17.

Now, if you remember our study from last week in chapter 2 at the end of the chapter, Paul tells Timothy that false teachers have been ensnared by the devil to do his will. Do you remember that? We talked about that in verse 26.

*"and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."*

And this wasn't just false teachers in Timothy's day, but these are false teachers even in our day today. Realize that, that there are false teachers in the church today who are ensnared, or held captive, by the devil to do his will, there in our churches today. We have to realize that there are men and women who have infiltrated the church today, who are being used by Satan to do Satan's will.

How do we know this? Because what Paul tells us in this chapter, exactly what he tells Timothy. And so let's look at our first point here.

## 1. The Warning About False Teachers

Look at verse 1.

*3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2 Tim 3:1)*

Now when we look at this verse, it sounds like this is just a statement that he gives right? Just understand this Timothy, difficult times are going to come. But the word *realize* there is a present imperative in the Greek, which means it demands a repeated or a habitual action.

What he's saying here to Timothy is, you must continually realize that is you must never lose sight of this, Timothy, throughout your entire ministry. You must understand this is a command for you that you must understand and keep this in mind.

What is he to keep in mind? *That in the last days difficult times will come.* What is Paul saying here? Things aren't going to get better, but in fact they're going to get worse, Timothy. There will be men who will continue to rise up against the truth of God's Word.

And when is that going to happen? He tells us here... *in the last days. In the last days.* Now what does he mean by this phrase here, *in the last days?* What are these *last days* that he's talking about? Are these just the days right before Christ returns? Maybe a month before, maybe a year before Jesus returns? Is that all that he's talking about within the last days?

It's not, it's not what he's talking about. What he means by *the last days* is: the last days, or the period from the time of the resurrection of Christ all the way until Christ returns.

Which means we are currently living in the last days. It's the church age. That's what he's talking about there. When he refers to the last days, it's in that time period. And so what does that mean for us today? We are living in the last days that Paul is talking about here.

In our day, things will continue to get worse, and more people will continue to grow in opposition to the truth of God's Word. And we're seeing that happen right before our very eyes. Things are going to get worse. And here's the thing...what he's telling him here is that this is going to happen within the church.

He's not talking about the world here. He's not talking about society here. He's talking about within the church, within the walls of the church, things are going to get worse. There are going to be false teachers who continue to rise up and do Satan's work within the walls of the church.

That's what Satan is after. That's what he wants to take down, right? He is after God's church. He is after you and I. That's who he wants to take down. He doesn't have to worry about the world, they're already living the life that Satan wants him to live. He wants to take us down.

In Paul's days you didn't have mediums, like we have today -- to get information out to people. Think about all of the mediums that are used today to get to people. We've got books, podcasts, videos, social media, and all of this stuff is... where? Right in the palm of your hand. Paul wasn't dealing with this back then. Timothy wasn't dealing with this in the church of Ephesus. But today it's right there in the palm of your hand, and Satan loves to use those mediums to get into the church, and to oppose the truth of God's Word. Because that's exactly what he's after.

And Satan uses men to accomplish this. What do these men look like? Well look what he says in verse 2

*For men will be lovers of self... (2 Tim 3:2-5)*

and he goes on and he gives 18 different qualities about these false teachers. 18 qualities here. And he starts off by telling us not just about what they do but about who they are. This is who they are, not just what they do, but who these false teachers are. And he starts off talking about their moral depravity, and then he works his way to show their religious apostasy, that is, that they are apostates. They claim to be religious men, and yet they are not.

He starts off by showing that they will be lovers of self. They will be lovers of self...and these qualities that follow after that flow from this first trait --lovers of self. And because they are lovers of self, they are therefore lovers of money, and they are boastful and arrogant.

Notice it also says that they are disobedient to parents. That's an interesting quality, right? About a false teacher who is standing in a pulpit, teaching false doctrine...disobedient to parents. Why would Paul point this out here in this list, describing and telling us who these false teachers are? Well, because just as children who aren't obedient to parents, show their lack of submission to authority... so it is the same with false teachers. They show a lack of submission to authority.

In fact, if you were to look at most false teachers today, their ministries are named after who? Themselves, right? Because it's all about them. It's their ministry because they don't want to submit to anyone else. They're on the top, and everyone else submits to them. Where did they get that from? Disobedient to parents started when they were young. They were disobedient to parents and it continued throughout their life. And then they begin to have these ministries there, that are named after themselves, and they are the ones then in charge.

They don't want anyone to tell them what to do. If they're disobedient to parents, no wonder they are *ungrateful and unholy, and unloving, and irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited.* (2 Tim 3:3-4)

Look at how he describes these false teachers. And notice how many of these words, that he gives here as he's describing them, are tied to speech. Notice that.

They're boastful. They're boastful. It is they try to impress others by making big claims about themselves. The revilers...that is that they are slanderous, they use slanderous speech towards others. They are irreconcilable. One commentator says: their feud never ends. They love to feud with other people and all of this happens through what? Speech, right? They use their words.

They're also malicious gossips. The Greek word here is *diabolos*, which means accuser, and it's used to refer to Satan himself, right? He is the accuser, malicious gossips. Satan is the accuser.

One commentator says we never look more like the devil than when we gossip. That's exactly what these men do. Malicious gossips. And you can spot a false teacher by listening to the things that they say. Just listen to them. You listen to their words, and you'll be able to spot the false teachers by the things that they spout out. And if they're preaching about themselves all the time, beware. Right? Beware of those men that preach about themselves, because they're not standing in a pulpit to preach God's Word. They're standing in a pulpit to declare to the world themselves. Because that's what it says. That's exactly what Paul tells us they are. Right? Lovers of who? Self. And so who are they going to talk about? Self. Be aware of those men.

Notice that the end of verse 4 and into verse 5, Paul then moves on to talk about the religious life. One commentator says the list of vices in verses 2-4 paints a bleak picture of the fabric of humanity in the last days, perhaps most frightening of all is that it describes not so much society at large, but those within the church. These are men who have infiltrated the church, and it says they are *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;* (2 Tim 3:4-5)

They are not motivated by a love for God. But instead they are motivated by their love for themselves and their own pleasures. That's what they're after. Notice how Paul moves from the love of themselves and then he ends with their total lack of love for God...these two extremes. They are lovers of self, and they do not love God. A total lack of love for God. Although they'll put on display how much they love God. Yet you look at their life, and the things that they do, and the things that they say, and it's going to point out they are actually lovers of self. Sadly, they claim to be lovers of God, but they deny it by their actions.

They have a form of godliness that looks godly. They might fill auditoriums on a Sunday morning. They might sing some songs that mention God. They might even use a Bible verse or two. Their form on the outside looks like they're godly men, but on the inside they are not.

Now Paul talks a lot about godliness in 1 Timothy, right? As we studied through 1 Timothy, it talks a lot about godliness there, both men and women that both men and women are to be godly. But whenever Paul speaks about godliness, he always addresses the inward heart of men and women, not the outward appearance. If you want to grow in godliness, it starts with the heart. That's where godliness happens. Genuine godliness. Where does it come from? It comes from genuine faith in Christ and if these false teachers had a genuine faith in Christ, it would show -- it would reflect in their heart and then by the outward things that they do.

But all they do is they put on a front, while their heart is far from God. These false teachers have denied the power, because they've denied the faith, and they've denied the power of the gospel to save. These people have rejected God and they refused His salvation. Yet they want to be counted within the membership of the church. They want to be counted among God's people. But they've denied the power of the gospel to save.

And so what is Timothy commanded to do with these men? What does Paul say there? He tells him to  
*Avoid such men as these. (2 Tim 3:5)*

That is, don't associate with these men. Get away from them. Avoid them altogether. Which means Timothy must practice discernment as these men are in the church claiming to be Christians. He needs to have discernment. And when men come into the church and they want to take on some kind of role, a teaching role within the church, Timothy, you, along with the elders, are to practice discernment.

Who are you putting into positions, and the teaching positions within the church. You must practice discernment because his job is to guard his life first of all. And second of all, to guard the sheep. It's his job as a pastor. You must guard the sheep and make sure that these false teachers don't go after the sheep. You gotta guard and protect them, Timothy. Because that's what they want to do.

In fact, Paul goes on to describe the tactics of these false teachers in verse 6. What do they do? What does he say there?

*"For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins," (2 Tim 3:6)*

What did they do? They go after weak women. That's what false teachers do. They come into churches and they go after weak women. That is, women who are idle or morally weak. They're weak in their

understanding of the truth and therefore are vulnerable to these false teachers. That's what they do. They enter right into their homes, Paul says. They'll get right into their homes...that is their secret. They're sneaky guys. And they get into their homes, and they captivate these women. And then they go after these women, because as Peter tells us, women are the weaker vessel. Right?

Peter tells us in 1 Peter chapter 3 in verse 7 that women are the weaker vessel. That's why he says there to husbands:

*"... live with your wives in an understanding way..." (1 Peter 3:7)*

Well, the woman is the weaker vessel. And that's what false teachers do. They go in after the weaker vessels. They go in to target these women. What makes these women susceptible to false teachers?

1. Well, first they are weighed down with sins. That is, she is never dealt with her sin, and so she continually ponders them. And then she will accept anyone who comes and says that he knows how to fix her problem. Well, you got a problem with your sin. Well I've got the answer for you. Oh you do? Well. Let me follow you. And they do. They follow right after these false teachers.
2. Secondly, these women are led on by various impulses (2 Tim 3:6). That is, they never get control of themselves. They are under the control of their desires and they continually want to be satisfied.
3. Third, he says they're *always learning* - that is there always seeking new information. (2 Tim 3:7) And this is usually because their desires are not satisfied and they haven't dealt with their sins.
4. And then forth, he says they were never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim 3:7) They seek, and they seek, and they cannot come to the knowledge of the truth. Literally they are unable to do so. Although they have been raised in the church, and learn the Scriptures, their sinful behavior, and their lack of discernment, make them susceptible to false teachers.

Paul knows this and he says that's what the false teachers are after. They're going after the women. Although they have been raised in the church, they don't know the truth. And this is usually true of women because they want to think the best about a man, especially a man who's claiming to be a spokesman for God, right? They want to think the best of them. Then they're led astray. And they follow after these men. But they never come to know the truth because they continue to follow after these false teachers who don't teach them the gospel.

These guys aren't after gospel proclamation. They're not after seeking godliness in the lives of the people. Remember, they are lovers of self and they're all about themselves. And they know that they can talk women into following after them, and so that's what they do. That's why men -- we must guard and protect the women. We must guard and protect our women. Because that's what these false teachers do...they come into churches looking for the women...they're like wolves looking to devour the sheep. We have to guard and protect.

In fact, these men never even come to the knowledge of the truth either. Not only do these women not come to the knowledge of the truth, but these men never come to the knowledge of the truth. Look what it says in verse 8 there.

*"Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith." (2 Tim 3:8)*

Tradition tells us that Jannes and Jambres were the magicians in Exodus 7 who were opposed to Moses as Moses declared the truth of God to Pharaoh. Remember that? When Moses comes in he begins to tell Pharaoh this is what God is going to do. And there's magicians that Pharaoh calls in. Tradition tells us that this was Jannes and Jambres. We don't have their names anywhere else in Scripture. And just as these men, these false teachers never come to the knowledge of the truth. Neither do, neither did Jannes or Jambres. These guys were opposed to the truth.

And why are these false teachers opposed to the truth? Because there are men of depraved mind. Their thinking is captivated by depravity, and that's why they're seeking after weak women in order to captivate them. They're depraved in their mind. And therefore they are rejected in regard to the faith. That is, they are counterfeits. These men are counterfeits and are shown not to be true believers, and therefore they are rejected by God. That's what he's saying there. Rejected in regard to the faith, he's saying God has rejected these men.

But there's good news regarding them. I love what this says. I love how Paul draws this to a conclusion here in verse 9 and gives him some good news. Look what he says,

*But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. (2 Tim 3:9)*

Although these men will infiltrate the churches and lead many unbelievers away from ever being saved. They will not make progress in the true church of God. You see that there? They will not make progress in the true church of God. It may look like they are progressing and making success in the church, but it's not real success. How do we know? Because Jesus tells us in Matthew 16:18

*"I will build my" what? "Church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."*

Which means not even these false teachers will overpower my church, the true church. Think about Timothy as Timothy is experiencing these false teachers in the church of Ephesus. Does this encourage him? Of course it does. He's battling this. Lots of false teachers there. This is an encouragement that he needs. This is good for Timothy to know, that these false teachers will not succeed in taking the true church away. Because God guards and protects His children. These guys will not succeed in taking the true church away.

Why? Because their folly will be obvious to all. Who is the all here? God's children. That's who he's talking about there, the people in the church in Ephesus, the true believers in the church of Ephesus. They will realize and recognize the foolishness of these false teachers, and will not follow after them. But in order for their folly to be made obvious, we must know what? The truth, right? We must know the truth. And how do we come to know the truth? Through God's Word. Which leads to our second point,

## #2. The Weapon to Battle These False Teachers.

Not only do we see this warning here about these false teachers coming in, but secondly, we see this weapon to battle the false teachers. Although the times continue to get worse, God has given us something that enables us to stand firm. God has given us His Word, which is what He says in verse 10.

*10 Now you followed my teaching, (2 Tim 3:10)*

Timothy is an example of one who has followed after Paul's teaching, and what was it specifically that Timothy followed? Well, Paul tells us back in 1 Timothy 4:6. It is

*“the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following”*

The words of the faith...of true faith, and of sound doctrine, you have been following those Timothy. Timothy followed after the Scriptures, as Paul declared them to him because that's what Paul's job was right? To declare the Scriptures and to write the Scriptures.

As an apostle of God and Timothy followed after him in that. And then Timothy saw the work of God's Word in Paul's life. He saw his conduct, his purpose, his faith, his love, his perseverance, and then the outworking of that perseverance. (2 Tim 3:10-11) As Paul went through persecutions and sufferings. That was the work of God's Word in Paul's life. And why did Paul endure all of this? Why did Paul go through go through all of the suffering and persecution that he went through?

All for the sake of who? Christ. All for the sake of Christ. And it's all because Paul held fast to the Word of God. He stood upon the Word of God. But God rescued Paul. That's what Paul says here. God rescued him out of all of his persecutions. Everything that he endured. And that would have given Timothy encouragement to stand against these false teachers that are coming to attack the church. Don't worry, God will get you through it. It's going to be hard, Timothy. But God is going to get you through it. God is going to deliver you out of those difficult times.

Just as God delivered Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego out of the fiery furnace, right? (Daniel 3:12-26) And what did they do? Stood on the Word of God. They stood firm on the Word of God. And as they stood firm on the Word of God, God delivered them. And God will deliver us as well as we stand firm on His Word.

Oh, but you should also know this, Timothy. If you stand firm on the Word of God, persecution is going to come. It's coming. This is the promise to all of those who desire to live godly. Look at verse 12.

*Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Tim 3:12)*

Will be. It's going to happen. If you take a stand upon God's Word, while it is our weapon that we use in our warfare, it does not stop us from going through persecution. In fact God's Word promises persecution if you desire to live a godly life. Because as believers, we live in union with Christ, we desire to become more like Christ, and therefore we will share in the sufferings of Christ. If Christ came as the Word of God in flesh, and He suffered, do we think we're better? As we desire to identify with Christ, we're going to go through sufferings as well, and we're going to share in the sufferings of Christ.

It's exactly what Jesus said in John 15:20. *“If they persecuted me, they will also persecute”* (who?) *“You”* They'll persecute you. How do we know persecution is coming? Look at verse 13.

*But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.(2 Tim 3:13)*

It's going to get worse the closer we get to the return of Christ, the worse it's going to get. But who are these evil men and impostors? Well, these are the false teachers described back up in verses 1-9 that Paul is warning Timothy about. That's who these men are, and they're going to get worse with their deception, especially as they begin to spout errors within the church that look no different from the world.

They're going to go about deceiving sinners and then they will be deceived by the sin of these sinners. We see this today in the "woke" movement. That's the woke movement within the church. Deceivers, who are being deceived, and they come in and they spout it to the church.

We've got to stand upon the Word of God. In fact, that's what Paul tells Timothy to do as he turns to address Timothy specifically. As to what he is to do as he encounters these evil men within the church, what is Timothy supposed to do? Look at verse 14.

*You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of. (2 Tim 3:14)*

Continue in these things, abide in them, remain, continue, stay put. Continue in what? The things that you've learned. What are the things that Timothy has learned? The gospel, the Scriptures, sound doctrine, continue in those things, Timothy. Not that you have only learned, but also the things that you've been convinced of. Things that you have been convinced of. It's not just enough to gain knowledge about the Scriptures, but we must be convinced of them.

Are you convinced by the Word of God? Are you convicted in your heart that this is the truth? Then our lives should reflect that. That's what he's saying to Timothy. Knowledge is not enough. You must also be committed to what you have been taught. Committed to it. Convinced of it, convicted of it, and therefore it should move us to action.

What is Timothy convinced of? The truth of the Scriptures. And who did he learn this from? He learned it from his grandmother Lois and from his mother Eunice. We see this back in chapter 1 and verse 5. But he also learned the Scriptures from Paul as well as he spent time with Paul, and Paul tells him continue in this doctrine. Don't be led astray by the false teachers, but stand strong upon the Word of God. That's what you're to do, Timothy. Why? Because of the power of God's Word. There's power in this book. There's power in God's Word.

What are the Scriptures able to do? Look at verse 15,

*"...the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 3:15)*

That's why it's so important to teach the Scriptures to our children, right? We see how they were working in young Timothy's life until Paul comes along and preaches the gospel to Timothy and he gets saved. And Paul gives praise to his grandmother and his mother, who has been teaching him the Scriptures. Even in Old Testament times, children were taught the Scriptures which gave them the wisdom to salvation. It was just pointing forward to the Messiah. Now we point back, right?

That's what we teach our children that Christ came, the Messiah came. The Savior has come. Put your faith in Him. It's important for us to teach our children these truths. That's why Children's ministry is so important in our church as well. So important for us to teach our young ones the truth of God's Word.



Just a quick plug in children's ministry...if you're here and you want to get plugged into children's ministry, come and talk to me. I'd love for you to get plugged in, especially men. We need more men in our children's ministry. Men who will stand up and proclaim the truth of God's Word to our children. They need to hear it from men. So I'd encourage you men to consider that.

Paul then gives us the most comprehensive description on the nature of God's Word found in verses 16 and 17. He says:

*"All Scripture is inspired by God..." (2 Tim 3:16)*

Why is God's Word so powerful? Because it's inspired by God. That is, it is breathed out by God. It's breathed out by God. The Scriptures that we have in our hand today, are directly from God Himself. Do you realize that? That this book that you hold in your hand doesn't come from some author living in another state. It doesn't come from some publishing company, they thought it would be a good idea to write a book. It comes from God Himself. That's what we have in our hands. The words of God. It's inspired. Notice what is inspired... the Scriptures are inspired, not the men--not the prophets who wrote it, not the apostles who wrote it. They are not inspired. The words of God, the words that they wrote down, that is what is inspired.

It is breathed out, it comes forth from God and it's profitable. That is, it is helpful, beneficial, useful...for us. In what ways is it profitable? Four ways:

1. First for teaching. This is the act of teaching that leads to teaching sound doctrine. When the Scriptures are taught, the truth is taught. The Bible is our supreme source of knowledge. We stand upon the Word of God, the B-I-B-L-E, right? We all learned that. The Bible is our supreme source for knowledge and we stand upon it, and that is how, or what, we use to combat false teaching. We use the Word of God. And that's why it's so important to sit under the teaching of God's Word so that we might know it, and know how to you use it.
2. Second, he says it's beneficial for reproof. This means that it exposes that which is false. It exposes that which is false. It convicts us of our sin. If you are in sin, and you begin to read the Word of God, you will be convicted of your sin. It tells us which way not to go, and it exposes the false teaching of these false teachers.
3. Third, it's beneficial for correction. It tells us which way to go. Not only don't go that way, but it tells us go that way, right? That's what God's Word tells us. It corrects us.
4. Fourth, it's beneficial for training in righteousness. And not only point us to the right path, but it keeps us on that path. It trains us so that we will continue down that path.

That's what God's Word does. It trains us in God's ways. It shows us how to live righteously. To live the way of a believer. And when we don't walk in righteousness, what does God do to us? He disciplines us, right? Because He disciplines those whom He loves. Why? Because He wants to get us back on the right path. Get us into His Word so that we might be trained to continue down that path.

Why is all of this so important? Verse 17

*"...so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim 3:17)*

so that we would be able to live life in a manner which God has called us to live. We need to be ready to do every good work. Of course we understand Paul is not saying that we're saved by our good works, but we are saved to do good works. That's what we've been saved for. 1 Corinthians 10:31

*"Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."*

Right? That's why we have been saved. To do all for the glory of God. And this happens as we continually heed God's Word.

We need to listen to God's Word. We need to be people of God's Word. And this is what Timothy was commanded to preach and to teach, because this is the only weapon that we have to combat false teachers... right here, the Word of God. That's what we need to use, and that's what Paul is telling Timothy.

And so Paul warns Timothy about these false teachers here in chapter 3. And then Paul gives him the weapon to use to combat these false teachers, and we must be people of The Word so that we are not easily led astray. That's what we must be focused on... God's Word. And take a stand up on it.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for this amazing chapter, chapter 3 and all that is packed in here. There is so much, so much more that I could say...wow, it is so rich. Your Word is amazing. It is truth and I pray that You would help us to stand upon the truth and to never ever be led astray. God, I pray that You would help us to practice discernment so that we might know when false teaching comes. Give us wisdom. Thank You for Your Word that gives us wisdom, and help us to be fixed upon it. Lord, as we stand for the truth, as we stand for You. We're so grateful for the work that You have done in our lives, in which You have called us to do, that we would go out and to live, and to do good works, to bring glory to Your name and to Your name alone. We pray all of this in the name of Christ our Savior, Amen.