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2 TIMOTHY 3:1-17

There's something very sad about the third and fourth chapters of **2 Timothy**. It's as though we're listening in on a deathbed conversation. It's as though we hear a father tell his son,

"Look, I'll be leaving you soon. I won't be around much longer to watch out for you...so here are some things I want you to be careful of and here are some things I want you to do.

So, as we look at Paul's last words to Timothy, let's expect our Heavenly Father to speak to us through them...

Verses 1-5...

"last days" – here and many places where this phrase is used in Scripture it means the period between the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and His second coming.

If Paul and Timothy lived in the last days, how much more do we!

It truly is later than it's ever been before. And if the instructions and warnings which we see in **2 Timothy** were relevant in that day, how much more relevant are they to us in our day?

We live in a day when God's Word by and large

is not honored
is not believed
is not trusted
is not taught...

These folks mentioned here are not outsiders, they are folks who **profess** to be Christians but who are actually **tools of Satan**.

They claim to be God's men...

They claim to be His **pastors and teachers**, but they are **apostates**.

This means they have not just "fallen by the wayside"...but they have deliberately and willfully rejected the truth of the Word of God!

And, Paul listed **18 characteristics** which prove their apostate condition:

(We won't go into each of these in great detail, but let's look at just a few...)

"lovers of self" – The Old Testament had given the Jews the Shema

*"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your mind."*

And Jesus said, **"This is the foremost commandment."** But He added this, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

These apostates, however, had made self-love the first and greatest commandment. And I believe you and I live in a day when we see more self-love than at any other time.

More **books** are written about self-esteem.

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More **seminars** are held about self-esteem.

More **magazine articles** are focused on self-esteem.

And there's nothing wrong with **self-confidence**...but there's a very real danger in becoming **self-absorbed** and **self-seeking**. Jesus called His disciples (and you and me) to deny self and take up our cross and follow Him!

God wants His children to have balance in their lives. We're to put self in its proper perspective. We're to offer ourselves up to God and let Him give us His direction.

Remember, we've been bought with a price. **We** don't own ourselves, **He** owns us!

"lovers of money" – we've already seen that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil.

"boastful" – Paul said our boasting should be "in the Lord." That's why God has chosen to use the weak and the base and the foolish...so that no man can boast and say, "I did this all by myself!"

Paul mentions arrogance and he goes on and on mentioning one bad trait after another and finally ends with the fact that **they love pleasure more than they love God!** They have no place in their heart for God!

Verse 5...

"They have a **form** (an appearance) of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

They're like the scribes and Pharisees...they're concerned with the outward form. What did Jesus say about these types of folks? He said, **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence."**

And Jesus went on to tell them they must clean the **inside** if they want the **outside** to be clean!

See, it's this "form of godliness" that makes these people so very dangerous! If they had no form of godliness whatsoever, then folks wouldn't be so easily deceived by them, would they?

These folks may **look** like the real thing, but they are fakes, they are counterfeit.

These folks may **look** like genuine believers, but they are really masquerading as Christians.

But, because they look so real, they lead immature and ungrounded believers astray!

Satan always has his counterfeits! But, God has given us ways by which we can discern the genuine from the false! Remember, these men and women aren't going to come up to you and shake your hand and say,

"Hi, my name is John, and I'm a false teacher and I've come to lead you astray."

Let's look at three guidelines by which we can judge whether a teacher or a preacher is from God!

Look at and listen for
His Creed...

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This means look at his specific beliefs and ideas.

Look at whether this teacher or preacher holds to the whole counsel of God! Or, does he use certain Bible passages selectively to support unbiblical ideas? And does he make little of doctrine?

If his creed doesn't measure up to Scripture...the whole of Scripture and if he belittles the importance of biblical doctrine, then nothing else about him matters! And you should not listen to him.

Don't be taken in by a slick performance. There are plenty of those on television. Slick men and slick women...well dressed and well coiffed, but not at all grounded in the Word of God!

Another thing...look at
His Character...

Even if the teacher's creed is biblical and his doctrine is orthodox, check out his character. **Does he practice what he preaches?**

We've seen it happen time and time again, haven't we? A man stands in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday and expounds the Word of God...and **looks** good and **sounds** good...**but he's really not living up to the truth he's telling others to live by.**

Godly beliefs should produce godly living!

Also when you're attempting to see if a preacher or a teacher is from God look at

His Converts...

If his followers are **weak** and **shallow** and **confused** and **unconcerned** about doctrine, and if their lifestyle doesn't reflect the standards of God's Word, then you can pretty well know they are patterning their walk after the teacher or preacher who taught them.

Watch their converts! **Christ-honoring, Scripture-loving preachers will produce Christ-honoring, Scripture-loving converts.** Religious charlatans, on the other hand, will produce converts in their own image.

Verses 6-7...

Most folks who go off on these tangents are women. I believe this tells us why it's important for the husband to be the spiritual leader of the family!

Who was Satan's target in the Garden of Eden? It was **Eve!** Satan didn't come along and try to beguile and deceive **Adam!**

I've told you before about the little church in Monroe that we've been close to for years.

Well, about six or seven years ago when the "Pensacola Revival" was in its full swing, the pastor of that little church, who by the way was already showing signs of going out into "left field" theologically, sent a group of women from his church down to the church in Pensacola.

He didn't send the **men**...he sent the **women**. And the women he sent down there got swept up in that mess and the church split and now it's a full-fledged "out in left-field" church caught up in being slain in the spirit and all that!

Verses 8-9...

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Jannes and Jambres are thought to have been magicians in Pharaoh's court. One day, all the false teachers, all the religious charlatans, will be exposed for who they really are...foolish men whose minds are depraved and who reject the truth will be rejected by God!

Verses 10-12...

Look at the number of times "*suffering*," "*persecuted*," "*persecution*" are mentioned in these three verses.

Have you ever considered the sufferings of Paul?

Do you believe Paul's ministry would have been nearly as effective as it was had he not suffered for the gospel of Jesus Christ?

2 Corinthians 11:22-28...

I read this many years ago in a Charles Swindoll book:

“When God wants to drill a man,
and thrill a man,
and skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart to create so great and bold a man
That all the world will be amazed,
watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
and with might blows converts him,
into shapes of clay which only God understands;

How He bends but never breaks
when His good He undertakes;
How God uses whom He chooses
and with every purpose fuses him

And by every act induces him to try His splendor out...

God knows what He's about!

What do you think Paul thought of during the times he suffered for Jesus' sake?

I believe he remembered back when, right after he was converted on the road to Damascus to persecute some of God's children.

I believe he remembered when God sent Ananais to him and Ananais didn't want to go. God said, ***“Go, for He is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.”***

Paul must have thought, as he was threatened and beaten and imprisoned and stoned and left for dead...

“This is how Jesus said it would be. I'm not surprised,
nor am I dismayed.

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I've learned that **in whatever circumstances I find myself,
I can be content.**

I've learned that **I can rejoice in the Lord always!**
I've learned that **God's grace is sufficient!**
I've learned that **He will supply all my needs according
to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

I've learned that **I can do all things through Christ who
strengthens me.**
I've learned that **the suffering of this present world is
not to be compared to the glory that God has
prepared for us**

**And I've learned that absolutely nothing can separate me
from the love of Christ Jesus!"**

Verse 11b... "out of them all the Lord delivered me..."

And I honestly and truly believe God can do and will do the same for us!

When we suffer for the sake of the gospel...not if, but when...we can learn the same things.

But, do we? When we suffer, we don't really like it, do we? And let's face it, Paul faced extreme persecution. Have you? Have I? Have we faced this sort of suffering? Of course not!

But, when we are called on to suffer, do we feel hurt and singled out? Or, do we say:

"Well, this is exactly how God's Word said it would be!
Praise You, Father, that You trust me with suffering.
Praise You, Father, that You see my desire to live godly
in Christ Jesus!"

My prayer is that we can learn that! We don't know what we will have to face down the road. This old world isn't taking too kindly to truly committed Christians, is it?

Verses 13-17...

Think about it... The first verse of this chapter warns against difficult and perilous times...and you would think if this chapter began **pessimistically**, it would more than likely end that way.

But, it doesn't. It ends on a very **positive** note. Paul doesn't say, "Well, Timothy, because difficult and perilous times will, you're just going to have to do the best you can, just limping along, barely hanging on and trying with the last ounce of strength that's in him to do anything for God.

No, Paul told Timothy,

"Hey, Timothy, it's just gonna get worse, but you
don't have to let it affect you.

Even in a time when
the world is at its very worst, in the very midst of
that kind of situation, the child of God is unimpaired
and untouched by everything the world and the flesh
and the devil can throw against him.

He can be totally

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equipped to do every good work that God has called him to do.”

And isn't this word of encouragement and optimism needed among Christians today? I mean, isn't there a tendency to believe that as the world worsens that it's going to become much more difficult for the believer to be all that he ought to be?

What did Timothy have that would guard him from the evil impostors? Timothy had the Holy Spirit...and Timothy **knew the Word of God!**

What Paul is telling Timothy to cling to in these perilous times is no **new thing**. It's no **new divine revelation**. It's no **new idea** or **innovation**. No! Paul points Timothy to same thing Timothy learned as a child.

Where did he learn these things? Of course, Timothy learned these things from his mother and his grandmother, but I believe Paul is also telling Timothy to remember that he had learned these things from him.

On every hand these days we hear that the old ways are not for today. 0

We hear that the **teachings we learned yesterday aren't good for today**.
We hear that Bible doctrine and teaching **aren't relevant for our day**.
We're told that we're just going to have to be **much more up to date if we're going to survive in this society in which we live today**.

But, that was not the advice of the Apostle Paul...he told Timothy, **“In these last days the only stabilizing resource you have is the old truth of the Word of God!”** That's his advice to Timothy and that's his advice to you and me.

Let's look at what Scripture has to say about Scripture in these verses:

1) The Scriptures are holy (“sacred writings” v. 15...set apart).

The Bible is different from every other book, and I believe one of the proofs of its distinctiveness, it's “set apartness” is its “limitlessness”...its boundless depths of knowledge. We can never plumb the depths of it!

2) The Scriptures lead us to salvation.

We're not saved by knowing the Bible. We're saved by trusting the Christ who is revealed in the Bible. Many folks know God's Word in their **head** but have never let it penetrate their **heart!**

God's Word does lead us to salvation if we trust in Christ. But, Timothy was already saved and Paul is telling him the Word of God will lead him to salvation. And I believe the salvation here is deliverance in the midst of the difficult times that would surely come upon him.

3) The Scriptures are true and dependable.

The New Testament saints had only part of the Holy Scriptures, but we have it all! And all of it is inspired...it is **“God-breathed”!**

“inspired” – theopneustos

theos – God pneustos – “to breathe”

We mustn't think of “inspiration” the way the word is used by our world today.

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Shakespeare was certainly an “inspired” writer...but when God breathed out the scriptures, He breathed out His truth even when the writer didn’t understand all of what he was writing.

Do you think **Daniel** really understood the 70 weeks of which he wrote?

Or **Ezekiel** the valley of dry bones?
Or **John** all that he saw on Patmos?

This book doesn’t merely contain the word of God. It is the very Word of God. We can’t get through it and say, “Well, this is the word of God, and this isn’t the word of God.” It is **all** the Word of God!

And it’s the Word of God whether we acknowledge it or not!

There’s a little saying: **“God said it. I believe it. That settles it.”**

That sounds good...but I want to tell you God said it and that settles it whether you and I believe it or not. There are plenty of folks who don’t believe it...but that doesn’t mean He didn’t say it. He breathed it out!

Peter said that holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God! The Holy Spirit of God came upon men and moved them to write the word of God!

And thank God that in a day when the world would tell us that what is right yesterday is wrong today that you and I have a changeless word from God.

4) The Scriptures are profitable...

...for doctrine (teaching) ... **“what is right...”**
...for reproof ... **“what is not right...”**
...for correction ... **“how to get right...”**
...for training in righteousness ... **“how to stay right...”**

Finally...

5) The Scriptures equip us for service...

Why should we flounder for **lack of direction**?
Why should we worry for **lack of assurance**?
Why should we stumble for **lack of strength**?
Why should we sin for **lack of power**?

Well, we shouldn’t! The end result of Scripture is to bring us to **spiritual maturity** and to bring us to **sincere service** and to bring us through **difficult times**.

Look back at **verse 14** again. I said a few minutes ago that I believe Paul was referring to Lois and Eunice, Timothy’s mother and grandmother, but I believe **Paul is also talking about himself**.

I believe Paul is saying, “Timothy, remember who taught you these things. If you’ll stop and remember where you heard these things, that will convince you to cling

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to them!"

Why? Why would that be a convincing proof to Timothy? Go back to

Verse 10...

"you have fully known..." (KJV)...means "to follow alongside step by step"...it indicates a **close investigation**. And Paul is telling Timothy,

"Now, Timothy, you know everything about me. You know
my teaching, my conduct, my purpose, my faith, my
patience, my love and my perseverance."

Timothy knew all the persecutions we read about earlier...and Paul is telling Timothy,
"Remember, Timothy, God delivered me out of them all!"

And that's why we must look at our teachers and preachers and examine their lives and see if their lives back up their message! Does their walk match their talk?

Paul's did and he knew it did. And Paul is telling Timothy that difficult times will come, "but you can remember me and know that if God delivered me He will surely deliver you." Paul is telling Timothy that if God empowered him to teach Timothy, then God will empower Timothy to teach others.

I believe Paul is telling Timothy that when he finds himself in the midst of trials and tribulations, remember that his teacher had been there before him. It's one thing to be taught by someone who's not "been there." It's quite another to be taught by someone who has...

The Word of God equips us **to do the work at hand.**

The Word of God teaches us **how and what and when to do it.**

The Word of God **equipped Paul and it equipped Timothy and it equips you and me.**

We are equipped for every good work! The purpose of Bible study is not just to understand facts or to understand doctrine...though both of these are important! But, the primary purpose...the primary desired result of Bible study is to equip us!

If you aren't equipped, you can be! Jesus died, was buried and was raised and sent His Holy Spirit and gave us His word that we might be adequate, equipped for every good work!