

In the context of phoneyes

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is from 2 Timothy 3, verse 1-17. That's found on page 1198 of the Church Bibles.

On page 1198, 2 Timothy 3. But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.

For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at knowledge of the truth.

Just as Yans and Yambes opposed Moses, so these men also opposed the truth. Men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

[1 : 25] But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecution and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, which persecutions I endured, yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you have learned it, and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. Shall we pray again? Let's pray. Father, we thank you that the word that we hold in our hands is breathed out by you and profitable, powerful.

[3 : 18] And we ask, our Father, that you would speak deeply to us through it this morning.

Please be at work among us by the power of your word and through your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, our subject today is what to expect of the church.

What to expect in the church while we wait for that day when the Lord Jesus will return. I don't know if you've ever been tempted to give up on the Christian faith.

Because the church seems to be such a mess. And perhaps if you're looking, you wouldn't call yourself a Christian here today.

You're so welcome with us. I was chatting to a lady at the back of St. Bottles in the city the other day, and she was saying, look, it's the hypocrisy in the church that I don't want to look into Christianity.

[4 : 29] Timothy was at a crossroads in his faith and his walk with the Lord Jesus.

We've been saying that all the way through, haven't we? Timothy was at a cross. It was almost as though he was on a knife edge. He'd been a Christian for 15 years. But suddenly, everything changed.

Persecution fell. Well, the apostle Paul was in prison about to die. And he was massively tempted to give up as a Christian.

And that's why Paul writes this letter. One of the things Paul knew that would most impact Timothy if Timothy was not prepared for it was not the external pressures so much.

Of being a Christian and the persecution that would come with it. But the mess within the church. Opposition from within.

[5 : 36] And actually, if you look at this letter from 2 verse 14 through to the end of chapter 3 is all about the mess within the church. And not from without.

And so Paul needs to write to Timothy to set his expectations. And if you look down at verse 14. Verse 14 is the key verse, I think, of this whole section that we've been in last week and this week. Paul says, as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.

In the same old gospel. In other words, Timothy, don't give up believing and following the same old gospel that you know and love. Even though the church around you will be a mess.

And perhaps that is the most difficult thing for Timothy. And this could not be more relevant for us today, could it? If we don't understand this.

[6 : 43] We will most likely lose confidence in the power and the truthfulness of the gospel. Because many who know it and profess it will actually remain unchanged and oppose it.

Two points today. Number one, expect the worst. Verses one to nine. Number two, and continue in the same old gospel.

That you know and love. Timothy is to expect the worst, not outside the church, but within the church.

Look down at verse one with me. Three verse one. Paul says, but understand this. That in the last days there will come times of difficulty. The last days are, what is that?

That's the period between Jesus' death and resurrection and his return. That's what it means when the Bible talks about the last days. The final chapter of history.

[7 : 47] The final chapter of salvation history. Before Jesus returns. And so Paul says, in the last days, Timothy, I want you to understand this. There will come times of difficulty.

Trouble. These last times will be beset with difficulty. And he's not talking here about times of difficulty in the world at large. He's not talking about earthquakes, famines, wars.

Jesus talks about that elsewhere. But here, that's not what's in view. He's talking about times of difficulty for God's people and for the church within the church.

And we can see that from verses two to five. Just look again with me. People will be lovers of self, lovers of money. And look out as I read this for the sting in the tail.

Proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control. Brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

[8 : 56] Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Now, if we didn't have verse five, we would think and assume that Paul is referring to society at large.

To the office, to the city, or wherever we work. It's a pretty good description of some of the things that happen. But verse five brings the massive jaw-dropping sting in the tail.

Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. In other words, these are people who at first glance appear to be Christians. They will claim to be followers of Jesus, says Paul.

They will name the name of the Lord, but are really imposters, as he says in verse 13. Impostors, denying its power.

So the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. In other words, they will look godly on the outside, but they will be utterly unchanged by the gospel. Denying its power.

[9 : 58] Now, I'm going to use a footballing illustration, and I'm really sorry if you're completely fed up with football. And all of the talk about the Euros, and you don't want to hear any more about it.

But I'm going to use this just to help us. So imagine we've got a football match later on, the England match. These guys in the church will be wearing the t-shirt, but will be unqualified to be there.

You see that? Unqualified, disqualified in verse 8. Disqualified regarding the faith. So just imagine later on this afternoon, you've got the England team walks out, and you've got...

Oh, my mind's gone blank. Foden, Bellingham, all these guys. Five of them come up, but then also... I don't want to pick on anyone, but...

Benji. I'm sure you're a good player. But some of us walk out onto the pitch wearing the t-shirt.

[10 : 59] Unqualified to be there. What will they be like? Fundamentally, they will be lovers of self, verse 2. Wearing the t-shirt.

Unqualified to be there. Lovers of self. What a list this is. And I'm not aware of a worse description of the human condition in the whole Bible. These will be people in the church.

Brutal. Abusive. Heartless. Not only unchanged by the gospel, but in the deepest, worst grip of sin. In the church. They will work hard to appear godly. They will wear whatever they have to wear. And they will say whatever they have to say.

While quietly being utterly corrupt to the core. Snakes in the grass. They may be leaders holding formal positions.

[12:04] They may not. I think Paul is pretty general. Verse 2. People. And verses 1 to 5. Is general. But in verse 6.

I think he moves from the general to the specific. So in verse 6. He says. Among them. Will be slippery. Influential movers and shakers. Leaders. Who gather themselves a following. Do you see that? Verse 6 and 7. They will. They'll gather themselves a following. They'll creep into families. And capture weak women. Who themselves. Are burdened with sins. And led astray by. By passions. And these leaders. Will capture a following for themselves. And then actually. They will oppose the gospel. That's the point of verse 8.

Just as Janus and Jambres opposed. Moses. So these men will oppose the truth. I don't know if you know who Janus and Jambres were. They were. Pharaoh's magicians.

[13:02] Do you remember all the way back in Exodus. Where Pharaoh gets his magicians. To do some of the same stuff that Moses did. And quite soon they run out of ideas. But they do manage to keep up for a couple of them.

That's Janus and Jambres. You can't get more opposed to God than that. Pharaoh's magicians will be in the church. Paul says. These people will be within the church.

And so to take the football illustration further. They will be wearing the t-shirt. They'll be wearing the England shirt. But they'll be playing for Germany. They'll be wearing the t-shirt. The England shirt. But they'll be playing for Italy. Actually I think the football analogy is too tame. Better the war analogy. This is the picture that Paul is painting.

That within the platoon or the army. There will be people wearing the same uniform. But shooting for the other side. One of the Church of England clergymen that I know.

[14:01] A friend. Was telling me. Of a time. This is a good faithful man. Was telling me. Of a time when he was invited to a drinks reception.

At St. Paul's Cathedral. With a diocese wide meeting of clergy. And at that cathedral. At one point during the time there.

He was surrounded by the cathedral staff. A group of cathedral staff. Ordained clergy. Who'd had a few drinks. And they literally surrounded him.

And started hurling insults at him. Narrow bigot. That kind of thing. Extraordinary. An example from a couple hundred years ago.

I was reading recently. A faithful Bible teaching man. Goes into a church. He's appointed there. And the church wardens. Were so opposed to him.

[15:00] That they locked the pews. They had the keys. They locked the pews. So that nobody could sit down. And then when the. The incoming guy.

I bought some benches. That people could sit on around. The church wardens threw them out. Opposition will come from within.

Paul says of course. They will have. They won't have. Sorry. They will have success. But their success will be temporary. Do you see that in verse. Nine. They will not get very far. For their folly will be plain to all.

As it was of those two men. Who soon discovered. That they were in a fight. That they could not win. With God. And that's true. Isn't it? That's.

Very often. Most of the time. The facade can carry on for some time. Some years perhaps. But it's discovered. Usually within the lifetime.

[15:55] Sometimes just after. The point again. Paul says to Timothy. And to the church. Understand this. The visible church. The visible church. Will be awash with impostors.

The world will invade the church. And importantly. Don't expect them to change. Don't expect them to change. And that's verse 13. Do you see that? Evil people and impostors.

Will go on. From bad. To worse. Deceiving and being deceived. Many of them will be teachers.

They'll be. They'll be deceiving others. And being deceived themselves. They will go from bad. To worse. I remember last week. We were talking about these.

People who'd swerved from the truth. So Hymenaeus and Philetus. And at the end there. Paul says. You know. Maybe they'll repent. Correcting opponents. In the hope that perhaps.

[16:53] They will repent. Hope. Hope for the best. In other words. At the end of chapter 2. Chapter 3. Expect the worst. Hope for the best. Expect the worst.

Will the Church of England. Bishops. Change direction. Well perhaps. One or two of them will. Let's pray. Hope for the best. Expect the worst. They will go from bad. To worse.

And so. Timothy is to avoid them. That's the action point. For Timothy. Verse 5. Avoid. Such. People. He is not to plough time into them. He's not to try to persuade them.

He's to avoid them. Not to be distracted. And to leave them to God. I just want to pause on one thing at this point. Have you noticed this?

That Paul says to Timothy. Understand this. There will be hypocrisy. Within the Church. In these last days. Gross.

[17:52] Gross. Gross. Rank. Abusive. Hypocrisy. Expect the worst. I was reading of a woman. In an evangelical church.

In the States. Who. It was difficult to read. She had to sit next to her husband in church. Covered in bruises. From the night before.

When he was beating her. And then she had to watch him get up to preach. We should be appalled. At what.

Happens in the Church. But one thing we can't be. Is surprised. In the evangelical wing of the Church.

We have seen this play out. In recent years. With many. Well loved. And respected leaders. Being shown. In the end. To have been. Frauds.

[18:49] We can be appalled. One thing we can't be. Is surprised. Now. I just want to speak for a moment. To anyone here. For whom hypocrisy in the Church.

Is something that you have experienced. Personally. And that keeps you away from Jesus. You just think. How can Jesus be good.

And kind. And powerful. And true. If his church is like this. Well I hope you can see. From these verses. That the state of the Church.

Is not a good indication. Of the truth about Jesus. Jesus is good. Jesus is kind. Jesus is powerful. Jesus is in.

Is in charge. It raises the question. Why. Why does he allow this. Well the devil is at work. In these last days.

[19:44] And he hates the Church. Expect the worst. People in the Church. Will make life difficult. Awful.

But remember. But remember. That God's. God's. God's. Firm foundation. Stands. And he knows. Who are his. And this is not doom and gloom.

It's just realism. Paul says. I want you to understand this. And then secondly. I want you to continue. In the gospel. The same old gospel.

That you know is true. Now I love this in verse 14. Have you seen this? As for you. Continue in. What you have learned. But also.

What you firmly believed. Timothy. You know this gospel. And you know it's true. You know it's true. Continue in it. And this is a.

[20:38] I think. A really moving moment. In the letter. These verses. 10 to. 10 to 17. Because Paul is dying. He knows he's dying. He knows he's not got long.

And he's saying to Timothy. Expect the worst. But I'm leaving you two things. I'm going. But I'm leaving you two things. I'm leaving you with my example.

And I'm leaving you with the scriptures. Just look down at verse 10 again. You however. Have followed my teaching. My conduct. My aim in life. My faith. My patience.

My love. My steadfastness. My persecutions. And sufferings that happened. To me at Antioch. Paul says. In this trouble. In this difficult time. You can't change the mess.

Timothy. Don't try and change it. But in the midst of this mess. I've left you with my example. Paul has left a blazing. Bright.

[21:36] Clear. Example. It's like. Imagine in the darkness. That the runway at night. Lit up. With. With lights. And a straight path.

It's like Paul is saying. In the times of difficulty. Follow my example. And this example is for Timothy. It's for Christian leaders. And it's for all Christians.

Verse 12. Indeed. All who desire to live a godly life. In Christ Jesus. Paul is the example. Of the godly life. In Christ Jesus. Look again at verse 10.

This list. My teaching. Paul says. Carry on in that. Don't shift. From Paul's gospel. His conduct. His aim in life.

What was Paul's aim in life? To live is Christ. And to die is gain. His faith. What faith.

[22 : 33] To die in prison. Believing the promises of God. For the future glory. What faith. Following Paul's faith.

His patience. To keep going. Year in. Year out. No matter what. His love. His love for people.

Despite the cost to him. His steadfastness. Through persecutions and sufferings. And the persecutions and sufferings. He's talking about. In Lister and Iconium.

Are the ones where he was nearly stoned. And then he was actually stoned. Timothy. You saw that happen to me. And how I kept going. Follow my example. And so in the midst of a messy church.

Fix your eyes on the example of Paul. We have a hero. The great hero. The Lord Jesus. Of course. Following the Lord Jesus' example. But second to him.

[23 : 36] Paul. Our human hero. Follow in his steps. He exemplifies what it looks like. To live a godly life in Christ Jesus.

We've all had our role models growing up. One of mine was Phil Tufnell. Who very few of you have probably heard of. He was a chain smoking. Lethargic. But very talented.

Left arm spinner. When you get a bit older. You realize that perhaps. Your role models weren't the best. But at the time they seemed great. We've all had our role models in younger days. And even today.

If we're Christian. We have a new role model. The Apostle Paul. Follow in his footsteps. Brother. Sister. Let's pray for our leaders.

To be like him. Let's pray for ourselves. And secondly. Continue in the same old gospel.

[24 : 33] Equipped with the scriptures. Or better I would say. Powered by the scriptures. Verse 15. From childhood. You have been acquainted with the sacred writings. That's the scriptures.

Which are able to make you wise for salvation. Through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is breathed out. By God. And profitable for teaching. For reproof. For correction. And for training in righteousness.

That the man of God. May be complete. Equipped for every good work. Timothy. If you have the scriptures. You have everything you need. I may be going.

I'm gone. But you've got the scriptures. And that's all you need. They're enough. Yes. The church will be a mess. Yes. Expect the worst. But as for you. Keep believing the same old gospel.

And look to the scriptures. To power you. Through life. To the very end. What will the bible do? In verse 15. What will the bible do? You see that?

[25 : 29] It will make us wise for salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ. That's what the bible will do. While others deviate from the gospel.

While there's all kinds of swerving to something else. While imposters go on deceiving and being deceived. The bible will make the true people of God. Wise for salvation.

Through faith in Jesus Christ. Some of us talk about purpose statements. In our growth groups. What's the purpose statement of this passage? The purpose statement of this book?

Well here we have the purpose statement of the whole bible. What is the purpose statement of the bible? To make you wise for salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ. It will make us wise about the one and the only one who can save us.

Jesus. It will make us wise about the way we are saved. Only through faith. Not through our works. It will make us wise about the greatness of his salvation.

[26 : 31] And it will make us wise about what it means to live the life of faith in him. And you see that?

Why will it do that? Verse 16. Why will it make us wise for salvation? All scripture is breathed out by God. That is that this book.

The bible. Is both true and powerful. It is breathed out by God. Every word of it is true. And every word of it is powerful.

It is breathed out by God. And so the bible. Is everything. Timothy needs. It's everything. We need. There have been many times in my life.

Where I've noticed. That. I'm flagging in faith. Don't know if you. Well everyone knows that's true. If you've been a Christian for any length of time.

[27 : 28] Every single time. It's the bible. It's the word of God. That picks me up. And keeps me going. Every single time. It is no ordinary book.

They are the words of God. Our creator. They penetrate the heart. And we experience that when we read it. This is why we need our leaders.

To be bible men. Timothy needed the bible. For his own sake. Do you see that? Able to make you wise. For his own sake.

He needed the bible. As well as. For his ministry. For others. This is why we must seek out churches. That will be teaching us the bible. If you move on from grace church.

We must seek out churches. That will be teaching us the bible. So that we will be soaking in the scriptures. That is how we will be powered. To keep going in the Christian life.

[28 : 28] It's why if we're Christian here. Which most of us are. We should be organising our lives. Around the priority of getting the bible. Into us. That we might live.

Eat. And breathe the bible. In the context of a church. A wash with mess. As for you. Timothy. Church leader. Christian. Soak yourself in the bible. May I just ask. What's our summer looking like?

Summer plans? Little question. Where's the bible in that? Is it there? So as we close. Expect the worst. But continue in the same old gospel.

That you know is true. Inspired by Paul's example. Powered. By the scriptures. Let's pray. Let's pray. Our father.

[29 : 34] We just want to thank you again. For. Salvation. Through faith. In Christ Jesus. We thank you. That every bible book. Every word.

Of the scriptures. Makes us wise. For salvation. Through faith. In Jesus Christ. We thank you for his death. On the cross. We thank you for his resurrection.

We thank you that he's coming again. And father. We long that we would. Soak ourselves. In the scriptures. We long that we too. Would continue.

Even despite. Mess. Within the church. Continue in the gospel. That is true. That we know is true. And that you would strengthen us. By your holy spirit.

Who dwells within us. And we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.