

2 Timothy 3:15-17

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[0 : 00] Let us turn now to the passage you read in the second epistle of Paul to Timothy in chapter 3.

And the last two verses.

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I've been encouraging Timothy in this chapter to persevere, as he has been in the whole letter, to persevere in the faith.

And in the face of all the problems and the difficulties and the trials that he is to be confronted with, he is not to give in.

[1 : 45] And these trials and difficulties, he refers to us taking place in the last days. Perilous time shall come, he says, in these last days.

Now the reference here, of course, is to the days which have been ushered in by the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world.

When the New Testament speaks of the last days, these last days, it is generally speaking of the period from the time of Christ coming into the world, right up to the present, right up to the end of the world.

And in that period, in these last days, there will be times of great distress and great peril and danger for the Christian church.

And in the first section of this chapter, as we saw last Sunday night, he tells us that that is to come about particularly through the teaching of men who assume the mantle of religion, of the mantle of the mantle of godliness, but to deny the power, the life, the energy, the vitality, the spiritual vitality and energy that is at the heart of the faith, that ought to be at the heart of the Christian faith.

[3 : 28] Now he says to him, in the face of all these problems and in the face of all these difficulties, you, he says, persevere in the faith.

You, he says in verse 14, you continue in the things which thou hast heard. That is, as for you, you just keep going in the way in which you have been going.

Now, in this passage, in the context which our text is set, you will notice that Paul brings before Timothy, that if he is prepared to persevere in the faith, that that was bound to lead him into conflict, into difficulties and into persecution and sufferings.

That, he says, has been my experience. You know, he says, full well, my doctrine. You know, he says, what I believe and what I preach. You know how I live.

You know the goal that I have in view. You know what is the object of my faith and you know the nature of my faith. You know how I have conducted myself in long-suffering, in love and in patience.

[4 : 52] And you know what persecutions and afflictions I endured at such place as Antioch and Iconium and Lister. You know, he says, what persecutions I endured.

And you know how the Lord has delivered me out of them. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But you continue in the things which thou hast heard, learned and heard, and hast been assured, knowing of whom thou hast learned.

Now, what he's saying there is this. By being prepared to follow the teaching of the word of God, by being prepared to believe in the face of all the difficulties that you are to face, that you have to contend with, that is going to bring problems into your life.

Yet he says, it brought problems into my life. It brought great distress and great strain and great sufferings to me, he said.

There were times, the reference he makes here to Antioch and Iconium and Lister, as you have in the book of Acts, reminds us that there were times when Paul, because of his adherence to the Christian faith, was faced with death, and indeed at one time was given up for dead.

[6 : 12] These were the persecutions that he had to endure. Well, he says, if you are going to persevere along the same course, you too will have to, you too will have to suffer.

Now, you know full well that, and one doesn't need to look to the testimony of the church, of the branch of the Reformed church which we ourselves belong, you know full well that when you bear testimony, and we'll deal with this later on when we come to it in the passage before us, in the text before us, when you bear testimony to the truth, you will suffer as a result of it.

You will be branded as being perhaps a fundamentalist or a bigot. that you will be accused of not loving other people and forever finding fault with the other people.

Well, these are the penalties that one has to accept for being prepared to make a stand upon the teaching of the Word of God.

Well, he says to Timothy, if you're going to continue, you've got to be prepared to stand alone, even when you are put under pressure.

[7 : 39] But he says, you've got a great advantage. From the time that you were a child, you have known the Holy Scripture.

And having come to faith, you have learned of the teachings of the Scriptures from me.

Thou hast learned and been assured of them. You know whom you heard these things from, referring to Paul's own teaching. But from the time that you were a child, you have known these Holy Scriptures.

Well, now, this was a great advantage that Timothy had. As we read this, we know from the beginning of this letter, he had been brought up in a godly home and the influence of a godly mother and a godly grandmother.

He had had good teaching from the very earliest stage of his life. And that was a great advantage. And then when he came to faith, he was rubbing shoulders with the likes of Paul, the great apostle, the greatest Christian teacher the world has ever known.

[8 : 54] And that was an added privilege and an added advantage. But he says, you have a greater advantage than that.

You have a greater advantage than early Christian training. You have a greater advantage than apostolic teaching. You have the advantage of an open Bible.

You know the Holy Scripture, which are able to make you wise unto salvation. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

It's good to have good teachers, but it's better to have an open Bible. Because the Bible, we're told, all Scripture, the sacred writings, the holy books, these are, he says, the breath of the inspired, they are inspired by God.

They are God-breathed. Now, this is a very important passage, a very important section. Three of the most important verses in all the Bible.

[10 : 05] And especially today, when we are hearing the authority and the validity of the word of God being questioned.

What are these words telling us? Well, in one word, they are scriptures, as someone has put it, the scriptures' own verdict on themselves.

This, in other words, is what the Bible says about itself. These words are in the Bible. And this is what the Bible is saying about itself.

It is God-breathed. Now, if we don't accept that verdict, Scripture's verdict on itself, how on earth can you accept Scripture as the final word on anything that concerns the conduct and the practice of our Christian faith?

In other words, what I'm getting at this is, if you question Scripture's verdict on itself, you can then question whatever you like in the Bible.

[11 : 38] And that is the line that modern teachers and thinkers have been taking. As you know, you look at a passage in the Bible, you look at a book in the Bible.

And the authority that you bring to bear upon the passage of the book is not what the Bible says about it, but what you think the passage is saying.

Now, this is of vital importance for us today. This is a statement of Scripture's witness to its own origin, to its own character, to its own authority, to its own purpose, and to its own value.

And therefore, it is one of the, if not the, most significant assessment that we have in the Word of God of the character of Scripture itself.

What it says is two things. Scripture is of divine origin, and Scripture is of the highest value concerning what we believe and concerning what we do.

[13:02] Let us then look at these two things. First of all, the origin of Scripture. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

Now, the meaning of the word inspiration, in a sense, it is rather unfortunately translated. The best rendering for this word would be not inspiration, but expiration.

It means quite simply God breathed. all Scripture is God breathed.

Now, by the word Scripture, we mean the sacred writings. When Paul spoke of Scripture, he spoke of the sacred writings that were available to them at that time.

As someone has put it, the body of authoritative books which constituted the Jewish law at the time. Now, to that we know, you see, Paul isn't here telling us how we got our Bible.

[14:21] Peter tells us that. Paul isn't dealing with the question, where did the Bible, how did the Bible come down to us? That's another interesting subject.

What Paul is dealing with here is the question, what is the Bible? That's the question he's dealing with. How we got it is another matter. What it is, is what is before us here tonight.

So that when you open the pages of your Bible and you read it, what you are reading, says Paul, is the word of God.

That is why we say when we, in a service, for example, let us hear God's word and we read it.

When we finish reading it, we say, may God bless to us that reading from his word.

God's God's Bible is the Bible which has been breathed out, if you want to breathe like that, by God himself.

[15:29] So when you and I use the term scriptures, I don't think that we need to spend too much time on this, that for the scriptures, we mean this body of sacred writings which we call the Bible.

No, as I said, how they were compiled, how they were brought together in the course of time, is another matter. That's not the subject before us here tonight. The subject before us here tonight is what is the Bible?

And the Bible is the word of God. It is God breathed. Now, what does that mean?

Well, it means this, that when as Peter tells us, holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, what it means is that what, and this is vitally important, what they wrote was the product of God himself, the word written, was God's outbreathing.

It was God's word, so that when Paul wrote to Timothy, when Luke wrote the gospel, when Jeremiah wrote his prophecy, what they were reading, what they were writing was what God wrote, what God breathed out of them.

[17:12] Now, I know that I'm straying into a field that I said I wasn't going to deal with, namely, how we got our Bible, but let's just for a minute. Holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God.

You see, what happened was this, God revealed himself to men. And then, what was revealed was written.

And the thing that Paul is dealing with here is the written revelation. Professor John, late Professor John Murray, who was reading an article, he wrote on this theme some time ago, and he was dealing, for example, with a question or an objection that some person may raise.

The Bible is the word of God, is it? Yes. Very well then, it wasn't God who said to Eve in the garden, God said you will die, but I tell you you won't.

Eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That wasn't God who said that, that was the serpent. So, what we have in the book of Genesis chapter 3 that the serpent said is not the word of God, but the word of the serpent.

[18:41] Of course. But, Moses, who wrote the account of the fall in the Garden of Eden recorded for us in chapter 3, wrote what God told him to write.

It was God who told him what the serpent said. It was God who told him how man sinned. It was God who told him how it all came about.

And as he wrote, he was what God was breathing out. If it was his hand that was writing the words, if you think of it in terms of a pen or a biro, on a piece of paper, if it was he who was writing it, what he was writing was what God breathed out.

And that's what gives us our biblical authority. Thus saith the Lord. Now in 1993, I grant you that you as a Christian are confronted with perhaps more problems than Timothy was in abiding and

standing by scriptures statement concerning their own accuracy and their own authority. authority. The word of God, the Bible that you and I read, is the product, as someone has put it, of a specifically divine operation.

[20 : 29] It becomes for us the word of God. And he is saying here nothing less than that scripture is God's own speech.

This is their power, this is their value, this is their authority. When they speak, God is speaking to us, this is his word to us and his word for us.

The written text before you is God's word to man. Now the problem today is this, that that is what is challenged when men deny that, for example, when men deny the physical, literal resurrection of Jesus from the dead, when men deny the fact of Christ's coming again, when men deny that the atonement of Christ is limited to those for whom he died.

When men deny these things, they are denying the authority of the word of God, and they are bringing their own minds as the authority to bear upon the truth.

And I can back to what I said earlier, in 1993, I believe that it is more difficult for Christians and particularly young Christians to take a stand than it was for Timothy, because you are confronted with a 2,000 years of devilish machinations against the authority of the word of God.

[22 : 29] So when you have a cleric or a teacher or someone else who will sneeringly and laughingly say to you, surely you don't believe that.

Behind him is standing the devil. He loves that approach to the scriptures, because he wants to destroy the authority of the word of God.

And we have nothing else to stand on, but the authority of the word of God. So in any matter of doctrine or of life, we take our standpoint, thus saith the Lord, you and I have no other authority than that.

None. that is our final authority on all matters of faith and life. And that is what Paul is saying here. All scripture, the written word, in its entirety, in all its parts, if you are to think of all scripture as meaning this bit, or that bit, or the next bit, or to think of it in its wholeness, it doesn't matter.

[23 : 50] it is God breathed every single word of it. That is the first thing he speaks of, its divine origin, it is the out breathing of the power and the energy of God himself.

Secondly, what does the Bible speak about? Two things, or rather three things here. It speaks about, it tells us here, it is able to make thee wise and to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

It is valuable for what you are to believe regarding your creed and what you are to oppose and reject and then it is valuable for every single situation that confronts you in life.

Salvation creed and conduct. Salvation. it is able to make you wise unto salvation.

Remember what he's saying, its value is derived from its divine origin. And as someone has put it, the Bible is essentially a handbook of salvation. It speaks to us of other things, as I mentioned.

[25 : 13] It speaks to us of the origin of sin in the world. It tells us that sin actually came into heaven itself and the fallen angels were thrown out of heaven. It tells about the story of the creation.

It tells about the destruction of the old world by the flood. It tells us about the history of the children of Israel. It tells about the giving of the moral law and so on.

It tells about the history of the kings of Israel and so on. But essentially it is about the scheme of salvation. It presents to us Christ as Saviour.

I quote earlier on today and I think I quote again on Wednesday night in the prayer meeting what someone said about this I think it was Professor J. A. Alexander of Princeton Theological Seminary from whatever point you set out when you trace the gospel method of salvation if you follow the scriptures you will always come to Christ.

The Bible is essentially a handbook of salvation. Without this knowledge from the scriptures you and I tonight would be darkness and despair and what gives missionary outreach its impetus is that people want to go to those who are in ignorance they want to go with the message of salvation to them they go with the Bible they go and tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ and this is what the Bible is all about from all eternity we read in the Bible God purpose to save the world when man sinned as we're told in the garden of Eden God introduced to him this scheme of salvation the seed of the woman shall come and bruise the head of the serpent and all the

[27 : 18] Old Testament history is an unfolding of this scheme of redemption moving towards the climax of the appearance in this world of the saviour provided by God for the sin of the world and

the gospels record for us the history of this saviour in the world what he did what he said what he suffered his death his resurrection and his ascension and then the epistles of the new testament unfold for us the great doctrines of salvation and the doctrines of grace how we are to be saved as we are told he it tells that men are saved by the power of the spirit coming into their lives gives an account of how this happened in times of revival and individual cases like Philip and Timothy and Onesimus and the Ethiopian Enoch and it tells us that salvation purchased by

Christ in his death enjoyed by men and women boys and girls in this life when they are converted to Christ will be completed in heaven above when they leave this world to enter into the glory and the presence of the risen and the living saviour this is the light with which the bible comes into our darkness and into our despair it tells us that there is no other saviour no other name mentioned under heaven amongst men and it's tragic absolutely tragic and I know that there are men in the national church who will say this tonight from our own pulpits it is tragic that the national church would fail to proclaim that fact without reservation at its last general assembly it is tragic that men are prepared to formulate truths in such a way that they will not offend anybody as my friend the gospel offends man's nature because it tells him that he can never save himself he must be saved through faith in another and it bids them go out with himself for salvation as he says here it is wise you have been made wise unto salvation by the scriptures because it tells you two things a that Christ is a saviour and be to be saved it is by faith in him now my friend I ask you this I know there are many things in the Bible that you find difficult so do I I know there are many things in the Bible that you would want to raise with me and say to me look here what does this mean how can you explain this is this a contradiction is this inconsistent and so on of course there are but I know that if you know full well it brings before you one saviour and it tells you there is only one way in which you can receive him it's by believing by committing your way to him renouncing your own self righteousness your own goodness and your own efforts to save yourself and come in all your naked sinnership to the only saviour the world has ever heard of it is wise you are made wise unto salvation through faith by the teaching of the word of

God is that not the case of course it is and this world will never ever hear of any other way of a God given scheme of salvation and that's where it challenges you tonight it comes to you with a saviour presents his claims to you and it bit you receive him and if you reject him the responsibility for rejection is yours that's their value and then their value is this that they are profitable for doctrine for correction for reproof correction and for instruction in righteousness there are four terms there and I'm really finished doctrine reproof correction and instruction in righteousness now this is the scriptures are vitally important if we are to have a creed to believe

I think that you could sum up what Paul is saying here is this it teaches you what to accept and it teaches you what to reject that's what he say doctrine the formulating of Christian doctrine Christian teaching communicating them inculcating them so that people come to understand them that is doctrine what the bible says about the origin of the world about the origin of man about the fall of man the sin of man about redemption about justification how can a man be right with God about eternity about heaven and hell well scripture is invaluable for our doctrine of things that we believe it is also invaluable it says for reproof that is for the exposure of error and similarly for correction straightening out what is wrong call for example sent a polis so that his thinking on Christian doctrine would be straightened out for him by Priscilla and Aquila would be straightened out and you and I you know there are times when you know that this is the

[34 : 16] Bible molds our thinking this is what Paul is saying you bring yourself and the things you believe to the authority of the scriptures and you let the scriptures formulate your views not bring your views to bear upon the scriptures that's putting yourself in authority over the scriptures let the scriptures tell you what is right and what is wrong and you know that in this context you know that he was speaking earlier on about these men he says these evil men they come they believe anything and then they go off and they tap on people's doors and they display their words peddlers of heresy and lies and sin and as someone put it waves of unbelief and anti-Christian thought and godless teaching are breaking upon our shores and they will only be countered with the authority of the word of

God and it doesn't matter what it is or who says it unless this is in accordance with the truth we are to refute it we are to correct it and we are to expose it it is also necessary he said and valuable for instruction in righteousness that is so that we are shown how to live our right life what to do when to do it where we are to go what we are to be it is our infallible guide not only for right teaching but for

right living and he is dealing as someone has put it with the most important triad the world will ever come across namely truth right and error we believe what is true from the word of God we do what is right in accordance with the word of God and we refute error in the light of the word of God and I say again that if each one of us had that high view of scripture the world would be root of error root of godlessness and ungodliness would be root of wrong teaching and the reason why you have wrong teaching in the world today as you have always had it it's quite simply because people do not accept the authority of the word of God and if you question it you're on a slippery road to destruction and finally it is invaluable he says that the man of God may be perfect throughly furnished unto all good works the Bible will bring you to maturity it will equip you for every good work who do the man of God I heard someone preaching sometime ago using a term that I don't think it's used very often nowadays it was a term he was speaking to a congregation and he was using the term child of God speaking to the child of God and I wondered how many people who were listening to him including myself would really appreciate the meaning of the term child of God here is something similar to it that the man of God may be well equipped for everything that is going to face him in life the man of God who is the man of God put another way God's man God's man the man who has been laid hold of by God the man who has been dedicated to God and committed to God the man who serves God and the man who is consecrated to the service of God he's not his own man he is God's man separated by God for himself the man who lives for God that's what it is that the man of God under the instruction of the direction of the word of God may be fully prepared and fully equipped for all that meets him in life what's the problem with man today he's his own man how often have you heard that term oh he's his own man far better my friend for you and for me to be known as God's man has God laid his hand on you has God claimed you for himself has God really set you apart for himself well if he has you remember that your guideline is what God says to you in his word and the word if you apply it to yourself will make you complete for every good work as he comes here or as someone else has put it it will make you become a balanced Christian because all of life is to be brought under the authority of the word of God and we are to submit ourselves to the authority of the truth this as someone has said is nothing less than the great truth of the perfection of scripture because it embraces all of life so there is no situation which you and I are placed no demand that arises for which the scriptures are not adequate and sufficient they will equip us for every service and for every situation now then that is Paul's assessment and that is scripture's assessment of themselves their authority is that they are God's word for us though God used men he breathed out through them his own word which we have as the Americans tend to put inscripturated the written word the holy writings the scripture the bible which you have opened before you hear tonight that is God's word to you and you and I belong to a church that believes that God's word is final its authority is final he will not speak to you any more than what he speaks in the word no more will God speak to you and to me than what you have written here tonight no word if you're looking for a word in the heavens or a word in the skies or a word in the dark when you go to sleep at night you've had it you won't get it it's here if you hear someone from the Pentecostal persuasion or any other persuasion saying to you ah yes but the prophets today are saying something yes to you you say to them nonsense the only word is the written word that is [43 : 15] God's word breathed out this is it you will never know anything else but what the Bible says but salvation and about how to be saved you will never know what else to believe but what the Bible says you will never know how to refute and what to refute error but what the Bible says you will never know how to live a better life than the Bible presents to you hence the importance the unsurpassing importance of this great text now then looking back over the whole chapter what does Paul say to Timothy well he says you live in times of stress and things are going to things are very distressing and they're distressing for us as well today someone said once someone wonders if the whole world and the church has gone absolutely mad do you wonder about that today if things are just falling apart well says Paul quoting someone else as for you stand firm never mind the pressure to conform are very strong never mind if you are timid and young and inexperienced and weak and alone in your witness never mind these things you have followed he says my teaching so far now continue in what you have come to believe you know the biblical credentials of your faith scripture is God breathe and profitable it and it alone can equip you for your work let the word of God make you a man of God remain loyal to it and it will lead you on into Christian maturity but notice the emphasis let the word of God not your views or the views of someone else let the world of God

guide you and let the world of God equip you let us pray have mercy upon us bless us oh Lord in our worship in ourselves oh forgive us we pray for not being what we ought to be and enable us to give in our lives more and more place to the authority of thy truth for thy name's sake Amen amount 50 and be for life ultimately about one time for will depend on who