



What a privilege it is to praise God together. Today's sermon text provides fuel for praise as it points us to our all-sufficient Savior and his all-sufficient Word. Please open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3:10-17 (p. 936). The title of today's sermon is:

***THE MAN OF GOD:
Fully Equipped for Every Good Work
2 Timothy 3:10-17***

While this text and theme is applicable to all people at all times, it's especially appropriate today as we celebrate the gift of fatherhood and, more broadly, the father-like influence men can have on others as we aspire to be men of God. Paul's words to Timothy are God's words to us. So, let's hear what the Holy Spirit says to us in 2 Timothy 3:10-17:

¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,¹¹ my persecutions 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. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Thus ends this reading of God's holy, perfect, and profitable word. May the Spirit of God implant his truth into our hearts.

In the opening verses of chapter 3, Paul employs eighteen descriptive words and phrases to depict "lovers of self." Last week I said that by the time I was done going through this list in my own personal study, I felt like I had been in a sewer, breathing in its noxious fumes.

After the service, someone told me it reminded him of that climactic scene in the movie *The Shawshank Redemption*, in which Andy Dufresne escapes the prison through its sewer system and you hear the narrator, Morgan Freeman, say, "Andy crawled to freedom through five hundred yards of sh**-smelling foulness I can't even imagine ... and came out clean on the other side." In that moment, there's a beautiful shot of Andy standing in the rain with his head lifted high and his hands outstretched toward the heavens as the cleansing rain washes over him.

This scene illustrates not only the concept of salvation, that Christ has cleansed his church “by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:26), but also the transition in 2 Timothy 3 where Paul shifts from the “lovers of self” to the “man of God.” In verses 10-11 we see:

**The *Pattern* of a Godly Life
(vv. 10-11)**

Paul begins verse 10 by saying, “You, however....” These words are emphatic. Paul is contrasting Timothy with the men Paul has described in the preceding verses – men who “oppose the truth,” are “corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith” (v. 8). But to Timothy Paul says, “You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness...” (v. 10).

The word “follow” in the original text has a prefix attached to it (*pará*) that means “from close beside.” So, it means “to follow closely.” Luke employs this word at the beginning of his Gospel to introduce his record of Jesus’ life, saying, “Having investigated [followed closely] everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account...” (Luke 1:3 NLT). In the same way, Timothy had closely followed the pattern of Paul’s life. Paul says, “You ... have carefully followed ...

“my teaching”: Timothy traveled extensively with Paul and heard his teaching wherever they went. Six of Paul’s NT letters list Timothy as a co-author or sender.¹ Timothy knew Paul’s teaching like the back of his hand.

“my conduct”: Timothy not only heard what Paul said and read what Paul wrote, but Timothy also saw how Paul lived. He saw that Paul practiced what he preached. He was the real deal, the genuine article, a true “man of God.”

“my aim in life”: In one of the letters Timothy wrote with Paul, he said, “we make it our aim to please him [the Lord]” (2 Cor. 5:9). This was Paul’s goal, and it became Timothy’s goal. He heard Paul testify to the elders of the church at Ephesus, “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Paul’s aim in life was to please the Lord and to proclaim the gospel of his grace. Timothy saw this first-hand. He closely followed Paul’s way of life.

“my faith”: This speaks of Paul’s personal trust in Christ – one that Timothy shared. Paul addressed his previous letter “to Timothy, my true son in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2).

“my patience”: In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul speaks of God’s “perfect patience.” This trait characterizes God the Father (Rom. 2:4) and God the Son (1 Tim. 1:16). It is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:21). So Christians filled with the Spirit are patient.

“my love”: Love, too, is a trait of the Trinity and a fruit of the Holy Spirit. The word for love Paul uses here is *agape*. It appears in every one of Paul’s letters and is mentioned a total of seventy-one times. In one of his letters co-written by Timothy,

¹ 1 -2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.

Paul wrote, “the love of Christ controls us” (2 Cor. 5:14). Paul exhorted believers, “Do everything in love” (1 Cor. 16:14), and he offered them his own, saying, “my love to all of you in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 16:24).²

“**my steadfastness**”: The Greek term (*hupomoné*) literally means “to remain under.” This trait has to do with enduring or persevering through the trials of life, including the kind that Paul refers to in the next verse (2 Tim. 3:11).

“**my persecutions and sufferings** that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra – which persecutions I endured”: Here Paul refers to the hardships that he endured on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) as “he and Barnabas brought the gospel message to the region of Timothy’s upbringing.”³ In Lystra Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19-20) and experienced much opposition during this time. One commentator writes, “Such harsh events and memories might tempt a writer to self-glorifying or self-pitying reminiscence. Instead, Paul extols Christ for what he ‘endured,’”⁴ saying, “yet from them all the Lord rescued me” (2 Tim. 3:11). Just as the Lord upheld Paul, so the Lord also can strengthen Timothy amid his difficulties.⁵

As you consider the pattern of Paul’s life, take a look at your own life. Does it reveal a pattern of godliness?

- Are you grounded in and governed by God’s word? Do you teach it to others?
- Is your walk consistent with your talk?
- What do your goals and ambitions reveal about your mission and priorities in life?
- Are you a loving person? A patient person? One who remains steadfast in the midst of difficulties and perseveres in the face of opposition?

Such is the pattern of a godly life, the marks of a man of God. Which of these traits is most absent in your life? Perhaps you should ask those who most closely follow you – your spouse, your children, your closest companions. Are you willing to face the truth and do what it takes, with the Lord’s help, to become a man of God?

The *Price* of a Godly Life (v. 12-13)

“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (v. 12). This Scripture debunks the prosperity gospel, which teaches that God would never want his children to suffer. The prosperity gospel teaches that suffering is due to sin or a lack of faith because a Christian full of faith will experience physical health and wholeness.⁶

² Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary, gen. ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 420.

³ *Ibid.*, 421.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Sean DeMars, *Does the Gospel Promise Health and Prosperity?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 23.

“The problem with this way of thinking is that God promises his people that they will suffer in this world.”⁷ Jesus said in John 15:20, “Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” That’s because a godly life exposes the wickedness of others. But instead of repenting and turning to Christ for salvation, they seek to destroy those who want to please God.⁸

Today is the final round of the U.S. Open. It’s amazing to watch how good these golfers are. When I was teenager, I got to caddy for my dad in a Pro-Am tournament. I got to go in the roped off areas and watch the pros up close. Every part of their game was remarkable.

I once read a story about Fuzzy Zoeller playing in a Pro-Am tournament. He was having a bad day, but the three amateurs in his foursome were still impressed. One of them kept saying, “Man, I wish I could play like you!” It must have been getting on Fuzzy’s nerves, because at one point he replied, “No, you don’t! Every morning I get up at dawn and hit 500 balls. By the time I’m done, my hands are blistered and bleeding. I bandage them up and hit another 500 golf balls.” When you’re willing to get up early and do that every day, then come back and tell me you wish that you could play golf like me.

Fuzzy had a point, didn’t he? The strength of a man’s desire is tested by the price he’s willing to pay to achieve that desire. Paul doesn’t sugarcoat the cost of following Christ. In verse 13 he says that “evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” They will “become more subtle in their methods and more bold in their attacks”⁹ as they increasingly believe their own lies.

Paul issues this warning so that Christians can be prepared to pay the price for desiring to live a godly life. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The Perseverance of a Godly Life (vv. 14-15)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you 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” (vv. 14-15). In issuing this command, Paul once again distinguishes Timothy as a man of God.

“Continue” is the key command. It implies that Timothy has already been following a certain pattern – the pattern of godliness that he learned from Paul. Timothy had not only “learned” Paul’s teachings from Scripture but had become fully convinced of them. Now Paul says, “Continue.” “Keep going with and keep growing in the sacred writings.”¹⁰

These refer to what we call the Old Testament Scriptures, because the New Testament was still being written during Timothy’s lifetime. Timothy had been “acquainted” with the OT Scriptures since “childhood.” How so? Through the loving influence and instruction

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, edited by Art Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 2122.

⁹ Ibid., 2123.

¹⁰ Kevin DeYoung, *Taking God At His Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 113.

of his mother and grandmother. Near the beginning of this same letter Paul wrote, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well" (2 Tim. 1:5).

From the time that he was a little boy, Timothy's mother and grandmother taught him the word of God. At the very beginning of the Bible, on page 1 of the Old Testament, God reveals himself as the eternal Creator who brought everything else into existence. God made everything "very good" for his glory. The climax of God's creation was man, whom God created in his likeness so that man could relate to God, reflect his character, and rule creation as God's representative. But Adam disobeyed God, thereby bringing sin and death into the world. But God promised to send a Savior to rescue humanity from our hopeless condition. The prophecies and promises of God pertaining to this Savior indicated that he would be both human and divine, that he would die for the sins of his people and rise victoriously from the dead. All these promises and prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. That's why Paul refers to him as "Christ Jesus." Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew title Messiah. All the Scriptures point to him. The Bible is a HIM book! The Scriptures are "able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

To be clear, the Scriptures can't save you. Only Jesus can save you. Jesus condemned the Jewish leaders of his day, saying, "You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life!" (John 5:39 NLT). Oh, friend, is this the case with you? You may or may not have grown up in a Christian home. But at some point you were taught the Holy Scriptures. You know stories from the Bible. You can recite verses from the Bible. You can even explain the way of salvation from the Bible. But are you trusting in Christ to save *you*?

If not, I urge you to do so right now. Repent and believe the gospel.

If you have believed the gospel, "remember who told you the gospel. Remember who first taught you the Bible."¹¹ For me, that was my parents. They were aided by Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, pastors, and others who taught me the word of God. But my parents were my primary teachers. When I was 12 years old, my great-grandparents gave me a Bible that I used throughout high school and college. I keep it in my bedstand as a reminder of their faith in the Lord. The most natural way that Christian commitment is spread is through the family. This has always been God's design.

None of those who taught me God's word, including my parents, were perfect. But they truly loved the Lord and loved me and had my best interests at heart. What marvelous privilege it is to be acquainted with Scripture from childhood. Don't discard such a gift. *Embrace God's truth.* Kevin DeYoung reminds us,

The purpose of Holy Scripture is not ultimately to make you smart, or make you relevant, or make you rich, or get you a job, or get you married, or take all your problems away, or tell you where to live. The aim is that you might be wise enough to put your faith in Christ and be saved.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 114.

¹² Ibid., 116.

Then, once you do that, “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.” “Keep going in the gospel, and keep growing in the Scriptures.”¹³ Charles Spurgeon quipped, “Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the Book widens and deepens with our years.”

In the final two verses of chapter 3, Paul tells us *why* Scripture is so powerful.

The Provisions for a Godly Life (vv. 16-17)

“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” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The Bible is like no other book. It is “God-breathed.” Peter states that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private opinion. It wasn’t concocted in the human heart. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). When Scripture speaks, God speaks. I’ve read other books, but this Book reads me. It tells me who I am, where I came from, and where I am going. No other book can look beyond the grave and tell me where I’m headed. No other book gives me an accurate diagnosis of my spiritual condition and how to be right with God. I read other books and yawn. I read this book and something amazing, miraculous, happens. Martin Luther said, “This book is alive: it speaks to me. It has feet: it runs after me. It has hands: it lays hold of me.”¹⁴

John Wesley said, “At any price, give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book!” Likewise, Charles Spurgeon said, “Visit many good books, but live in the Bible.” These men understood the value and benefit of God’s Word – that the man who delights in it and meditates on it day and night is like a tree planted by a river, bearing fruit in every season. He prospers in all that he does. Even losses become wins. Setbacks become advances. Obstacles become opportunities. Failure leads to success.

God’s word tells us the way to go, reprimands us when we’re out of line, corrects our course of action, and trains us to live God’s way.

Why? So “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (v. 17). Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha were called men of God. This designation emphasizes the dignity of belonging to God, being loved by God, and living for God. God in his word provides everything we need to become men of God and be equipped as men of God.

Paul uses two forms of the Greek word for “equipped,” thereby indicating that the man of God is “super-equipped” for every good work.¹⁵ Brothers, there is no limit as to how the Lord can use you if you will make it your aim to be a “man of God.”

¹³ Ibid., 117.

¹⁴ Adapted from Steve Lawson’s message, “*Is the Bible Just Another Book?*” Ligonier Ministries [online]. Retrieved on 15 June 2024 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvqK0KGFL2c>.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1-2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit*. Preaching the Word, edited by R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 261.

Conclusion

In one of Charles Shulz's *Peanuts* cartoons, Linus threw a stick for Snoopy to fetch. His first instinct was to do what he was accustomed to doing – go retrieve it. But he paused to mull it over and then decided against it, thinking to himself, "I want people to have more to say about me after I'm gone than 'He was a nice guy ... He chased sticks.'"¹⁶ Most men spend their lives doing little more than chasing sticks. More than a century ago, William Merrill wrote, "Rise up, O men of God! Have done with lesser things. Give heart and mind and soul and strength to serve the King of kings."

Only the Word of God can make us into men of God who stand out from the crowd and make an eternal impact for Christ.

***Embrace God's truth,
and you'll be super-equipped for life.***

A couple of weeks ago I posted on Facebook the introduction that is posted in every Bible published by the Gideons. It reminds us of just how precious and powerful God's Word is, and why we should *embrace it*. I'll close by reading these solemn words to you:

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you.

It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed.

Christ is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end.

It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

¹⁶ Ibid., 251.