

2 Timothy 3:10-17

"Combating Corruption In The Last Days"

"Perilous times and ungodly people" will characterize the planet in the last days. That's the teaching of the Word of God. Of course what the bible describes as "the last days" we consider to be *present times*. Paul tells Timothy that men will be "lovers of themselves" & from that root springs forth the fruit of all kinds of ungodliness. **People will be lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful (a sense of entitlement abounds) unholy, unloving, unforgiving (refusing to let go of a grudge), slanderers, w/out self-control, brutal, despisers of good (considering good evil & evil good), traitors, headstrong, haughty (arrogant), lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God... Or as I mentioned, pop culture in modern day USA & beyond, it's a global epidemic.**

Paul points these things out, not because he desires to discourage us, but rather it's his aim to *equip* us that we might stand strong in a downward spiraling society. That we might learn to combat corruption in the last days; that we might remain pure rather than becoming polluted by the pop culture around us...

As he closes what we've come to call Ch 3 he gives us some "survival strategy" on how to stand strong & combat the corruption of these last days to which we've been called. In short, we're to be careful to continue in Christ. It's the *Word* of God that will equip the *man* of God to do the *work* of God. Jesus said that in our abiding in Him, His *word* was to abide in us.

Here's another part of the survival strategy; have a mature mentor in the Lord. A strong spiritual leader can be critical in helping us to deepen our dedication, our consecration and our separation to Christ. It's so important (in the difficult days in which we live) that we follow the right spiritual leaders (proper godly examples). In Vs 10-11 Paul begins to touch on the type of leaders we're to be looking for in these last days, notice.

Vs 10-11

The proverbs say it, occasionally we will quote it, **"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray."**¹ In the NT vernacular we read it like this, **"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.'"**² We will begin to emulate those w/whom we associate. If we're hangin w/ungodly people it will begin to yield ungodly results in our lives.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Pr 12:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Co 15:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Having said that, the opposite of that can be applicable as well. If we choose to surround ourselves w/godly people, people who love the Lord, serve the Lord & have a passion to glorify the Lord, than we will begin to absorb & emulate those qualities as well. If those whom we associate with want to be like Jesus, than we'll begin to be like Jesus to...

Here Paul is speaking of how his life is in stark contrast to the ungodly attributes he listed earlier & in essence he says, "Now you imitate me, as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor 11:1).

This is what it means to have a mature mentor, a strong spiritual leader in the body of Christ. These are the earmarks of the godly people we should follow, the fingerprints that mark their lives.

#1 They teach the truth, "You know my doctrine". #2 They have nothing to hide, their lives are an open book for all to see. Paul says, "You know my manner of life". #3 They don't just say it, they show it, they practice what they preach, "You know my faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance." & #4 They aren't afraid of how people will respond to the message even if it involves their persecution, "You know my persecutions and afflictions." They're willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel. They're not seeking to be celebrities but rather servants of J.C. Paul the apostle did not seek to become a celebrity, he was a servant of J.C.

He says, "You have *carefully followed* my doctrine". You guys, this is the wellhead from which all these other things flow. What I believe dictates how I behave & if I truly believe the truth of the word of God it will change my life (or as Paul puts it here, my *manner of life*).

But what I want you to see here isn't simply that Paul portrayed it, but also that Timothy *carefully followed* it. It speaks of an investigation, Timothy was meticulous in his pursuit of proper discipleship. He wanted to lead a life set apart to J.C. so he was meticulous in watching (for the purpose of imitating) his mentor's life. "You have carefully followed my doctrine" (the truth of J.C.). This is the dividing line between Timothy (or you & me) & those ruled by the spirit of the last days. One will be a lover of self, the other carefully follows the truth of J.C.

He also carefully followed Paul's "way of life". You see, Christianity wasn't something that Timothy was simply taught, it was also something that he *caught* seeing it lived out in Paul's life in real time. Same for you and me, it's great to be taught, but it needs to be caught, we need those mature mentors in our lives demonstrating Christ to us in real-time situations.

It's one more great reason to get involved in men's studies, small groups, women's studies or whatever; so that you can cultivate relationships that will help you out in your course of life.

Timothy carefully followed Paul's teaching, his manner of life, his purpose. Why it was that he did what he did. Why did he live like he lived? -- That Christ might be magnified/glorified in his life. It's all about glorifying God, he wanted to lay hold of that for which God laid hold of him, he was determined that the grace of God would not be in vain toward his life. He said, "...according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."³ Be it by my life or by my death, it doesn't matter as long as Christ is magnified, as long as Christ is glorified!

That is so my heart for us for this coming year, doesn't matter what takes place as long as Christ is magnified/glorified. When Jesus was praying in John 17 as He was preparing to depart from this world He said, "I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them."⁴ Is Christ glorified in you? I so want Christ to be glorified in me... That was Paul's purpose, to glorify/magnify Christ in his life.

He says, "You've carefully followed my faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions & afflictions." We spoke of this a # of weeks ago, you'd think that a man who shared the truth of J.C., lived a life of purity & integrity, sought to glorify God, was patient w/people & loved on people would win a Nobel peace prize. The truth is that they will be hated by the world... Why? For the same reason Jesus was crucified. Because men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil...

We seem to gravitate toward the mindset that if we seek to lead our lives in a manner that pleases God, that our lives should get better & be easier. The truth however is that many times just the opposite is true, preaching get's you persecuted. Paul here speaks of a few occasions in his own life, one whereby he was kicked out of a city for preaching the gospel, another where he was almost executed & that little incident in Lystra where he actually was executed & left for dead.

He says, "But out of them all the Lord delivered me." Even as Paul was writing these words he was on death row awaiting his sentence to be carried out.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Php 1:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 17:9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He seemed to be at complete peace knowing that God could deliver him if He so chose, or not if He so chose. Either way he was going to serve the Lord to the very end (remember his aim was to magnify/glorify Christ, be it by his life or by his death).

Vs 12

Probably one of the least quoted promises in all the bible 😊. For you it may not be physical persecution, it may be social persecution. But if you have it in your heart to lead a life set apart to J.C. ... If you're to be the light of the world, just remember that men love darkness, not light; because their deeds are evil. Persecution is part & parcel w/the Christian life.

Vs 13

You see, the bible doesn't teach that things will get better as the time of Christ's return for His church approaches, things will grow worse. Evil men (obvious opponents of Christ) & imposters (charlatans, wolves in sheep's clothing) will grow worse & worse deceiving & being deceived.

Now this gives us a little insight into how some people are so convincing in their deception of others, it's because they are deceived themselves!

This is where we realize that though motive is important it doesn't count for everything. Simply being sincere is not enough. People must be measured not only by motives, but by the truth.

I think of how sincere the J.W. is, or the Mormon is, they're out proselytizing, persuading people in their deceptions being deceived themselves, their intent may be to help yet in reality they're spreading much harm. So it's not only motive in others that becomes the measure of acceptance, but we must place everything in the balance of the truth of God's word as well. The motive & the message are critical.

Vs 14-15

The 1st part of Vs 14 is the key point in this section of scripture around which the rest of it revolves. Regardless of what's going on in the world around you, "You must continue in the things which you have learned & been assured of..." It's not an option, it's not up for debate, it's not a strong suggestion, it's a command. "You must." – Continue in the things which you have learned. John said that like this, "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning."⁵ The only antidote against a world of apostasy is the Word of God, it's your only recourse, it's your only resource.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). (1 Jn 2:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Let it flow into & out through you making you the man or woman that God has called you to be.

Paul reminds Timothy that from childhood he's known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Now when Paul mentions the scriptures here he's referencing what we call the OT. The NT hadn't been canonized; he's saying that it's all there. If you study the OT you'll come to realize the sinful state of man, our need for a Savior, the necessity of a perfect sacrifice for sin... You'll see that God would send a Savior, born of a virgin who would be crucified for the sin of the world. The OT (& obviously the NT) all points to J.C. (In the volume of the book...)

A study of the OT will logically lead you to Jesus. Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life."*⁶

What does that mean? It means that simply knowing the bible doesn't save anybody. It's not until you & I submit to God's Word (which leads us to faith in Christ) that we are saved. Jesus is the exclusive means to the forgiveness of sin & everlasting life.

It's interesting how people want to say that's too narrow minded but they wouldn't say that about any other critical dilemma. If a scientist discovered a way to completely eradicate the HIV virus people would stand in line for however long it took to be vaccinated. They wouldn't say, "What do you mean there's only 1 cure! That's a bit narrow don't ya think? I want the cure to come through meditating in the mountains, or drinking tomato juice & eating holistic foods!" They'd be stoked that there was a cure, even if it were the only one. Well, something worse than HIV has infected all of humanity & it's called sin, but there's a cure, however there's only 1; it's found through faith in Christ Jesus.

God has given us the means to this cure in His Word. Paul reminds Timothy that he's been taught God's Word since he was a child. This is a good place to remind you parents (we parents) of our role & responsibility to teach our children the ways & the word of God. It's not CCJ's job to teach your kids about Christ (though we will do our very best to do so), it's your job as the child's parent or guardian.

Now check this out, Paul recognizes that Timothy has known the Word for most of his life, yet he doesn't take for granted that he's safe simply due to that fact. We've got to be intentional/diligent in continuing in these things.

⁶ The New King James Version. (1982). (Jn 5:39-40). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God help us that we not go on “autopilot” now that we’ve known the Lord for 5-10 yrs, 20 yrs, 30 yrs... “You must *continue* in the things which you have learned & been assured of...” Don’t coast; continue in the word of God & let the word of God continue it’s work in you...

Vs 16-17

If these Vs aren’t underlined in your bible they should be. “*All* scripture is given by inspiration of God...” Or is “God breathed”, when you speak you “breathe out” your words. The word of God is “God breathed”, it’s not the word of man, its the Word of God.

Now we don’t have the time to get too deep into this but think it through. 66 books in your bible, written over a period of 1,500 yrs. Written by the likes of kings, philosophers, poets, military men, farmers, prophets, priests, doctors, fishermen & scholars. *You would think that w/that much variety of penmanship over a millennium and a ½ that you would get a mixed bag of ideology & inconsistency. Instead what you get is a beautiful unity from Genesis to Revelation as it unfolds the singular theme of God’s plan of redemption through the Person of J.C.*

Think about that, if you grabbed as many as 10 people and placed a highly controversial subject in the center of them you’d probably get 10 different opinions. Yet when it comes to the most important message of salvation... 40 human authors, 1500 yrs, 3 languages & 3 continent... 1 message (Salvation by grace through faith in the Person of J.C.)

But even beyond those kind of stats the bible proves it’s veracity, it’s integrity by (what Peter calls) the more sure word of prophecy. Do you realize that there are approximately 2,000 prophecies given in your bible? Some of which are told years, some of which are told centuries in advance... Do you know how many of them have ever missed or been wrong? Not one... We read in the book of Isaiah, *“For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done,”*⁷

Give me another book that contains over 1,000 prophecies of which not one has failed & I’ll believe it to, but there’s not one. – “*All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

Every generation believes that they’ll finally put the nail in the coffin that destroys the authenticity of the bible, but it’s still here (& they’re not)...

⁷ The New King James Version. (1982). [Is 46:9-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

And to the critic who says that anyone can write a book & claim it's inspired of God we invite you...please do! As David Guzik said in his comments on this passage, "Write your book, give it every claim of inspiration, and let's see how it compares to the Bible in any way you want to compare. We invite the smarter critics of the Bible to give us another Bible, something more inspired, something with more life-changing power. The great critic or professor or skeptic is surely smarter than a Galilean fisherman 2,000 years ago, having all the qualifications, all the culture, all the brainpower necessary. It should be easy for them to write something greater than the Bible."

But of course it'll never happen because there is no equal to the Bible & there never will be. What is the chaff to the wheat? The rock to the hammer that breaks it in pieces?

*"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."*⁸

"...and is profitable". Anyone here into profit? Like to profit from things? Listen, the Word of God is profitable for you. It's profitable for doctrine (that is, what's right), for reproof (what's not right), for correction (how to get right), & for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right).

It will expose sin in your life, error in your ways, but it doesn't only show you what's wrong, cut you open & leave you bleeding, it has a corrective capability as well, it will lift you up & set you straight. It was Charles Spurgeon who said, "The scriptures were not given for our *information*, but for our *transformation*!" Write it down, look it up later Rom 12:1-2.

The bible contains in it all things that pertain to life & godliness, if you & I will read it, hear it & do it we will be complete as a Christian, thoroughly equipped for every good work. We're not here to build "sermon appreciation societies" we're here to equip you saints for the *work* of the ministry.

It's the *Word* of God that equips the *man* (or woman) of God, for the Work of God. Do you want God to use your life? Than equip yourself through God's Word. How many of you have tried to do a job & you've fought it and fought it and fought it because you didn't have the right tool/equipment? But eventually when you get it, the job goes so much smoother, so much better, its so much more effective because this particular tool was crafted for the task at hand.

⁸ The New King James Version. (1982). [Is 40:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Listen, God has a work, He wants to use your life, He crafts us/molds us shapes us for the task through His Word, it transforms us, matures us, equips us for His work. **So give God's Word, God's way in your life, continue in the things you've learned & you'll be effective in combating the corruption of these last days to which we've been called. Amen? Amen.**

Prayer Points:

God we want to be complete, we want to be thoroughly equipped for whatever plan, whatever purpose, whatever work you have purposed for us. We love You, we love Your Word & we thank You for the corrective capability, the life changing power contained therein... Lead us in the way that we should go. Strengthen us to continue in the things which we have learned & been assured us, not coasting but continuing to abide in You & have Your Word abide in us.

God has a work that He has planed *for* you, but 1st He wants to do a work *in* you. He wants to forgive you of your sin & give you new life in Him. But there's only one way & that's through faith in J.C. There are none that are righteous, we've all gone astray & turned after our own way. There's a reason you feel guilty when you survey your life & that's because you are guilty. You've sinned against God, but if you'll turn from your sin He'll take your guilt & shame, He'll wash you & make you new, turn from your sin & trust in Jesus who died for you that you might receive life in Him.