

“Passing On The Torch”

A Study of 2 Timothy

Sermon # 5

“Survival Techniques for Living in Perilous Times.”

2 Timothy 3:10-17

Several years ago Francis Schaeffer wrote a book entitled “How Should We Then Live?” in which he analyzes the breakdown of Western civilization. The only viable alternative, he says, is living by the Christian ethic, acceptance of God's revelation, and total affirmation of the Bible's values and meaning.

That is the core of what Paul tells Timothy how the Christian was to face the challenges posted by living through “the perilous times” that he told him were coming.

One of the on going problem of our age is that people welcome comfort and convenience over conviction and confession. People go from place to place because they prefer to hear something that makes them feel good, to being confronted with the truth. The problem is not in the content of God’s word but in the complacency of the listeners.

In verses ten through seventeen Paul gives Timothy three survival techniques for living in perilous times that we all need to remember.

THE FIRST SURVIVAL TECHNIQUE IS, DON’T BE MISLED. (vv. 10-13)

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, (11) persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

Paul tells Timothy “you have carefully followed” the details of my life. He says *“follow my model – do as I did.”* It takes real confidence in his life to say this, for if Paul is less than he claims no one is in a better position to know that than Timothy.

Paul’s Transparency. (v. 10)

“doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love...”

First, he says look at my “doctrine” (v. 10) – What he has taught. The reason Paul lived the way he did was because of what he believed.

He also says examine my “manner of life” (v 10) – How he has lived. One of the marks of a godly life is that they have nothing to hide.

He holds forth his “purpose” (v. 10) – What his goals have been. We need to live lives of purpose. One of Charles Schulz’s Peanuts cartoons captures the problem. Snoopy is coming to terms with the fact that his life lacks purpose. Linus had just thrown a stick for Snoopy to retrieve. His first instinct was to do what he was accustomed to doing – chase the stick. But he paused for a few moments and decided against it, thinking, *“I want people to have more to say about me after I’m gone than ‘He was a nice guy... He chased sticks.’”* Paul had great singleness of purpose for his life in Philippians 3:13-14 he stated, “... but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul never lost sight of his goal which was to live in such a way as to please his Lord.

Next Paul hold forth his “faith” (v. 10) the Greek word (*pistis*) is perhaps better rendered “faithfulness” here. Paul does not seem to be holding forth the components of faith here so much as his (and others) faithfulness living out the faith they professed.

Paul also addresses his “longsuffering” (v. 10) which really speaks of his patience especially patience with people. Sometimes it is hard to be patient with people. I have found that not everybody is as lovable, gracious, sweet and easy to get along with as I am!

Paul next list the virtue of “love” (v. 10) (*agape*) the self-giving love that sought first the welfare of others. This kind of “love” is so important that the Apostle John says in 1 John 4: 6-11, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (8) He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (9) In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son ??to be the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Paul then moves from his transparency to his Tenacity. (vv. 10c-11)

“perseverance,(11) persecutions, afflictions”

Paul first speaks of his “perseverance” (v. 10) which speaks of his endurance. Paul has been willing to continue to minister even when discouraged and disheartened. Earlier he spoke of being patient with difficult people here it is enduring difficult circumstances.

Thinking of quitting reminds me of the story I heard about how “One day a farmer’s donkey fell down into a well. The animal cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway, it just wasn’t worth it to retrieve the donkey; So he invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They all grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the

donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer's neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!"

The "perseverance" that Paul demonstrated is not quitting when the pressures get rough, but this is not just a grin and bear it stoicism but rather a confidence that God is still in control.

We might think that a person who lives their life (as Paul did) with the right doctrine, with the right manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering and love would be loved and accepted by everyone – but such is not the case.

Paul tells us in verse eleven that he underwent "persecutions" - notice that it is plural. Paul certainly knew what it was to suffer persecution as he reveals in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, "... in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. (24) From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; (27) in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— (28) besides the other things, what comes upon me daily..."

Paul reminds Timothy in verse thirteen,

"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." It may seem that evil doers are forever prospering there limits to how effective this imposters can be.

THE SECOND SURVIVAL TECHNIQUE IS, DON'T BE DISTRACTED. (vv. 14-15)

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them."

The theme of the whole section is found in verse fourteen when Paul tells Timothy "But as for you continue in the things you have learned." He emphatically states "but as for you" the central imperative is "continue." Perhaps Paul remembered the words of Jesus in John 8:31 Jesus says, "... If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed." He says, "*Timothy you must not allow yourself to be distracted.*" Timothy must continue in the things he has learned and be assured that they are trustworthy because of whom he has learned them from.

There are a couple of factors that aided Timothy acceptance of the facts of the Gospel. First, Timothy received the Scripture through certain loved and trusted people, "...knowing from whom you have learned them." Belief is easier if the facts of the Gospel are transmitted to us through people we trust. In Timothy's case it was his mother Eunice and his grandmother, Lois, (2 Tim 1:5) who were the early channels by which he was taught the Word of God. Paul recognized there is powerful link between remembrance and continuance. Timothy is encouraged to continue as he remember those who have been instrumental in his coming to faith. If there have been those who have been instrumental in our coming to faith or growing and maturing in faith, taking the time to remember their investment in our lives is an incentive to not give up or give in.

Secondly, Timothy had the advantage of receiving the Scripture at a very young age. In verse fifteen Paul reminds Timothy,

"and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures..." We don't need to miss the truth presented here that childhood is a wonderful time to get the truth of the Scripture into a young person's heart. That is the whole reason we start the Awana program with 4 year olds.

"The current study by George Barna indicates that nearly half of all Americans who accept Jesus Christ as their savior do so before reaching the age of 13 (43%), and that two out of three born again Christians (64%) made that commitment to Christ before their 18th birthday. One out of eight born again people (13%) made their profession of faith while 18 to 21 years old. Less than one out of every four born again Christians (23%) embraced Christ after their twenty-first birthday." [www.barna.org. – BarnaUpdate – "Evangelism Is Most Effective Among Kids." - October 11, 2004]

The training in Scripture that Timothy had received was crucial because (v. 15b) the Scriptures alone, "... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The authority and trustworthiness of Scripture rests in the fact that (v. 16) "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...."

We speak of a lot of things being "inspired." For example we may say, the writings of William Shakespeare were inspired. And there is little doubt that Shakespeare wrote wonderful plays. But the Biblical writers were not inspired in the same way as Shakespeare. The word translated "inspired" (v. 16) literally a compound word meaning "God-breathed." Shakespeare and others may have written wonderful works but the Biblical writers, wrote down the very words of God.

This leads us to the question, "*Then what role did the human writers of the Bible play in their transmission of God's message?*" Although the Bible does not tell exactly how God inspired its writers, it was certainly not in a mechanical way. They were not totally passive, as those whose hands move automatically in an unconscious state. Their distinctive ways of

writing stand out, as in the writer of each of the four Gospels makes account distinct. What we do know for certain that the Scriptures originated with God and that the writers were “moved” or carried along by the Holy Spirit as they recorded God’s message. As Peter declares in 2 Peter 1:20-21 says, “knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, (21) for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

When it comes to Scripture there are several views of inspiration. There are those hold to Partial Inspiration. That is the Bible is not all inspired but it does contain the word of God. A very crucial problem with this view is that someone is left to determine what is, and what is not the Word of God.

Conservative Bible believing scholars hold to Plenary Inspiration that is that the inspiration of scripture is full or complete.

THE THIRD SURVIVAL TECHNIQUE IS, DON'T STOP SHORT (vv. 15-16)

Verse sixteen (v. 16b) continues by telling us that the Word of God “... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

When it says that the word of God is “profitable,” it means that it is literally useful or beneficial. It’s usefulness is outlined in four areas:

(1) Doctrine – What is right.

(2) Reproof – What is wrong. (conviction and confrontation)

(3) Correction – What we need to do to get right. The New Living Translation of this portion of the verse is *“It straightens us out.”* The theme is Restoration.

(4) Instruction in Righteousness – What to do to stay right. The word translated here as “instruction” (*epanorthosin*) is translated in Ephesians 6:4 as “training” and in the KJV as “discipline.” The concept of discipleship is about teaching the believer what it means to be a child of God, and how to live accordingly.

The end result of fourfold use of the scripture is given in verse seventeen, “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The aim of Scripture is to equip the man or woman of God for useful service to God.