



# A Study of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy

## Preach the Word 2 Timothy 3:1-2 Timothy 4:2

I am reading from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-4:2. If you're using a pew Bible, the passage is located on page 995. That's 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-4:2.

This is what God's Word says.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:16**...All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. <sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 4:1**...I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

This is the Word of God.

Father, we come to you this morning confessing to you our great need. Father we need and we desire that your Spirit will come now and take the things of Christ and make them real to our hearts. Therefore we ask you to send your blessed Holy Spirit to come and take the written word and as its true author and

therefore its infallible teacher to instruct us in the truth of your Son. Open the book we pray to see what you have accomplished on our behalf, in Christ, in whose name, we pray, Amen.

**Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God's Word.<sup>1</sup>**

The four verses I read to you from 2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4 are quite familiar to every ruling and teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America...that's PCA not PCUSA. I cannot tell you how many times I have heard those four verses quoted during my twenty-three years in our denomination.

I was, for a number of years, the secretary of the Theological Examination Committee of the North Texas Presbytery which meant I was actively engaged in the theological examination of any man seeking either licensure or ordination in our presbytery. I can't tell you how many times during a candidate's examination over theology that I've heard someone on the examination committee ask a candidate, **"And how would you explain the biblical doctrine of inspiration?"**

The candidate would almost always say something like this, **"Inspiration refers to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of Scripture so that what they wound up writing turned out to be exactly what God intended. As a result, the words of Scripture are the very words of God, trustworthy and fully authoritative. That is they are to be understood as "God-breathed" with their true origin both in the mind and mouth of God himself."**

And then almost invariably one of the committee members would ask, **“And where do you find that idea in the Bible?”** And the candidate, if he was worth his salt at all, would answer **“2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17.”**

And then someone on the committee would ask, **“And what does 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17 say?”**

And then the candidate would take a deep breath and respond by quoting 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”**

Now if I have heard that scene play out once, I have heard it play out a hundred times. And that’s a good thing, I think, because of the important role such young men will play in our denomination in an uncertain future. You see, **“Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God’s Word.”**

In the same way, I cannot tell you how many times I have seen men being ordained to gospel ministry and witnessed some brother pastor fulfill the requirement of our Book of Church Order by standing and facing the man being ordained and issuing him a solemn charge to faithfully fulfill his vows. And most of the time the brother giving the charge will quote the last two verses of the passage from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy that I read earlier which says, **“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and**

**teaching.”** And that too is a good thing because of what such men will face in their future ministries. You see, **“Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God’s Word.”**

Now my purpose or goal this morning is not to specifically expound the four verses I read to you at the start of this lesson. Rather what I really want to do is to simply place those four verses along with the six verses in front of them in their proper context and setting so you can see how Paul uses them in his letter to Timothy. But to do that I need to back up for a minute to 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1 and I need you to go with me. So, if you don’t mind, I would like to ask you to have your Bible in front of you and to purposely note how I am dividing up the passage.

The first nine verses, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:1-9, make up the first of three connected paragraphs; it contains an explicit warning from Paul to Timothy that as he looks forward to a life of ministry he should know that terrible times lay ahead. If you have a pencil you might like to write the words **“terrible times”** in the margin of your Bible.

The next eight verses, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:10-17, make up the second of the three connected paragraphs; it contains a reminder to Timothy in the midst of those terrible times to look back and to remember what he has learned from Paul’s example of faithfulness in the midst of dreadful opposition and suffering. But even more importantly it contains a reminder to remember what he has learned from God’s Word. If you have a pencil, you might like to write these words in the margin, **“Remember Paul’s life and the Word of God you’ve been taught.”**

And then finally, in the last of the three paragraphs, 2 Timothy 4:1-2, Paul charges Timothy concerning what he must do as to faithfully discharge his responsibility as a minister of the gospel during the midst of those terrible times. If you have a pencil, you might write these words in the column of your Bible, **"As a result, preach the Word."**

If you tie those three ideas together, they say something like this: **"Timothy, look ahead; pay attention; keep a sharp look out for there will be terrible times in the last days. And when they come, look back on my example and to the truth you've been taught from God's Word, and then straight ahead, stand toe to toe against those terrible times and preach the Word."**

You see Paul's point, his real point, seems to be, **"Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God's Word."**

Now last week, we spent our time together thinking through Paul's warning to Timothy that terrible times lay ahead. I won't go back and replay all that looked at together but let me say this, **"Paul's point to Timothy was that terrible times lay ahead, and because they lay ahead it was necessary for Timothy to be prepared. Now he wasn't simply talking about Timothy's time alone. He was talking about the whole period between Christ's ascension and his final return. And because he was we need to pay close attention to what he says to timothy because it applies to us as well."**

You see Paul didn't want Timothy to be naïve about what he was going to face in his ministry. He didn't want him to think it was going to be easy. But in the same

way, he didn't want Timothy to despair. What Paul tells Timothy and us is that, **"Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God's Word."**

Now in the second paragraph of the section, the one starting in verse ten, Paul tells Timothy to remember what he has learned. Now the paragraph itself is divided into two parts. In the first part of the paragraph, Paul tells Timothy to remember what he has learned from watching and being with Paul as he ministered and suffered extraordinary persecution. In the second part of the paragraph, Paul tells Timothy to remember what he has learned in his study of Scripture. Do you get that? First, remember how Paul responded, and then secondly remember what Scripture says. Alright then let's look first at the need to remember how Paul responded to persecution he faced. Look at verse ten.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:10**...You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it...

Paul focuses on two things for Timothy, his doctrine and his conduct. And what he says is this, **"You've learned from me. You possess the content of my teaching. You have the truth. You have the genuine knowledge of the gospel burned into your soul. And you've been witness to how my teaching has demonstrated itself in my conduct and action. You've seen how it has worked itself out in my life. It's true you've witnessed what I've suffered, and yet**

**you've seen me endure. You've seen the way I've been persecuted and yet you've seen my patience, my love, my endurance. And here's the thing Timothy. Persecution will happen to you as well, because all those that live godly lives will suffer persecution. And yet...you've seen the Lord deliver me time and time again. So here's the thing, press on in what you have learned from me."**

Timothy had seen Paul's life and ministry played out first-hand. He had seen Paul beaten and abused and he had seen Paul stand up to persecution and opposition. Paul isn't simply bragging here about his great endurance. He isn't saying, **"Timothy you saw what I went through. You were there. You will have to do the same."** He is saying at least that, but he is saying more than that. He is saying, **"You saw what I went through...what I suffered. You dressed my wounds. You bound up my broken bones. You saw my chains. You saw the hatefulness and the bitterness of those who opposed both me. You saw me have to stand almost completely alone against those that wanted to destroy the gospel. But you also saw just how the Lord rescued me, time and again. And it will be the same for you.**

**It will be the same for anyone who stands against unrighteousness.**

**Timothy, what you saw happen to me...will happen to you. It will happen. You know in your heart that that is true. How many times have I explained over and over that all those who desire to live a godly life will suffer persecution? If they persecuted our blessed Lord Jesus, why would you ever think they will fail to persecute us?"**

Paul's point is not that persecution may come. His argument is not centered on the potentiality of persecution. His argument is based rather on the inevitability of persecution. Paul is not saying, **"If persecution comes...remember."** Rather he is saying, **"When persecution comes...remember."** It is not an **"if"**; it is rather a **"when."**

I wonder sometimes whether we really believe that. That is, I wonder if we really believe desiring to live a godly life will lead to persecution. I'm not sure we do. I think perhaps we reason that since we have not endured any sort of persecution, Paul's point must be false or at least somewhat proverbial. You know what I mean. It must mean that if we desire to live a godly life, then we may occasionally have to suffer the disapproval of others. But that is not what Paul says. What Paul says is not, **"If you seek to live a godly life, you may suffer."** No, what **"All those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."**

I wonder whether we might do better to think about what Paul says from the other direction. That is, I wonder whether we might be better served by wondering whether the general lack of persecution that we suffer may indeed mean that we are no longer striving to live a godly life.

Friday before I left the campus of the Christian school where I teach, I had a young lady approach me to ask my advice on how to handle the unkind things one of our boys was saying about her. I asked what kind of things he was saying. She told me that he liked to mock her. He told her he didn't like because she was always trying to act so godly. He didn't like her because she was always wanting to hang out the kids that were trying to be godly. He didn't like her because she



was always trying to model her behavior after one of our female coaches or one of senior girls known for her commitment to godliness. He didn't like her because it was always Jesus this, or Jesus that with her.

I asked her if it was true.

She thought I was asking whether or not the boy had actually said those kinds of to her. She said, **"Well Mr. Browning of course he said them. I wouldn't have brought it up if he hadn't said them. I would never exaggerate about that sort of thing."**

I looked her in the eye and said, **"No that's not what I am asking. What I am asking is, 'Is what he said true? Are you really and truly desiring to live a godly life? Are you really and truly trying to live a godly life? Are you modeling your life after Coach Sierra or after someone like Hannah Baker? Is that part true?'"**

And this poor young lady looked at me and then looked down and then looked up and with tears in her eyes said, **"I guess so. Yes, that's what I really want. That's what I am trying to do."**

To which I said, **"Then for heaven's sake why are you so shocked that someone wants to give you are hard time? Surely you must know what Paul told Timothy when he said, 'All those you desire to give godly live will suffer persecution.' And even if you don't know that passage you ought to know the memory verse we learned last year when we memorized the Sermon on the Mount. You do remember that passage where Jesus said, 'Blessed are those**

**who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.<sup>27</sup> You do remember that don't you."**

And then this poor girl looked up me, looked up at me the one she had hoped was going to give her a different kind of consolation and said, **"Yes, I know that's what the Bible says, I just didn't know that's what the Bible meant. I didn't think it persecution would feel quite like this."**

And you know the funny thing is she felt better afterwards. She felt better, but I didn't. I didn't because I thought for a moment that perhaps I ought to be having a bit more persecution in my own life. But then I remembered that persecution is very much like the terrible times we talked about last week. It is not perpetual and unending. It doesn't start and go on without ever letting up or even stopping for awhile. No, it comes and goes. It starts up and goes hard and fast for awhile, and then takes a vacation and then comes back in a different form later. That encouraged me. That encouraged me, because I have had plenty opposition in my own life. I have been passed over or pushed back or ignored and not just because I am arrogant or abrasive or a bit anti-social. No, I have experienced opposition over the gospel, and Paul wants Timothy to know he will feel that too. I suspect that Timothy was feeling it already. And what Paul wants Timothy to do is to think back and remember his example...to remember how he managed, how he carried on in the face of such opposition.

Of course, that's not all Paul wants Timothy to remember. He wants him to remember his example but he wants him even more to remember what he has learned from Holy Scripture. Paul moves in his argument from the lesser thing to the greater thing. The lesser being his personal example and ministry to Timothy and the greater being the Word of God.

Look again starting in verse 14.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:14**...But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Now I hope you can see how 2 Timothy 3:16 is used. It is not some sort of dry, bloodless proof text for the doctrine of inspiration. No, it is rather a living breathing source of life and endurance. What Paul is saying is that the thing that will keep Timothy going in the midst of terrible times, the thing that will shield him from the terror of the age, is the truth and beauty of the gospel he has learned through the Word of God, the word that has come from the very mouth of God himself.

What Paul is saying to Timothy is to remember the Word of God...to remember that it is spoken from the heart of God and that it is sufficient to provide someone like Timothy all that they need. It will teach them; it will correct them; it will keep them on the right path; it will train them in both what righteousness looks like and how righteousness is to be lived out.

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16 was not written by Paul through the Holy Spirit to give Timothy a proof text to argue about the authority of Scripture. Rather, it was written by Paul to Timothy to provide Timothy with the greater of the two great life lines that we have to both remind us and to enable us to stand firm against opposition to the gospel. Those two life lines are the faithful testimony of those who have gone before us and the whole of the Word of God which tells me I think that if I am not reading the biographies or some of the great Christians that have gone before me, if I am not modeling some heroic Christian leader or some faithfully committed Christian in my life, or if I am not reading or listening to the Scripture on a regular basis that I am quite detached from the two great tethers that Paul is encouraging Timothy to rely on to get him through the opposition he is facing in his ministry.

What Paul is telling Timothy and us by extension is to stand firm, to be resolute. He is telling him to remember what he has seen in Paul's example and in what he has learned in and through the Holy Scripture. And the reason he is telling him to do that is because **"Terrible times require steadfast obedience and an unwavering, relentless, commitment to the faithful preaching of God's Word."**

What we saw in the early part of chapter three was Paul saying, **"Timothy, terrible times are ahead. Men will possess a perverted sense of love, and they will lack any sort of genuine knowledge of God. What we see in this section and especially in verse thirteen is that it is not going to get any better. In fact, such wickedness and such wicked men are only going to go from bad to worse."**

**As a result, Paul says to Timothy, “Remember what you learned from me and more importantly what you’ve learned through the Holy Scripture and when you remember that...then here’s what I want you to do.”**

And the thing Paul wants Timothy to do is found in the first two verses of chapter four. Notice how solemn Paul’s words are, how serious.

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 4:1**...I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

You see what Paul is saying to us is that terrible times are ahead. There will be battles to be fought, and there will be sorrow and grief along the way. The thing, the only thing, that will help Timothy or us navigate our way will be the preaching of God’s Word. Notice Paul is not saying he recommends the preaching of God’s Word. He is saying rather that he is charging Timothy before God Almighty to preach the Word. He is commanding him to do so and to do so faithfully preaching the whole counsel of the Word of God. So here’s my application for you no matter who you are. Encourage those engaged in the ministry of the Word here at Grace, and I am talking about all those from pre-K up to Pastor Kyle himself. Speak words of comfort to them when they do well, and speak words of encouragement to them when they struggle. Brother elders and deacons, try to find ways to bolster the ministry of the Word here at Grace. Encourage your flocks to ask questions. Encourage them in reading their Bibles. Talk to them about the messages they hear. Provide time and resources for Kyle and Davis to study and to develop their gift. Moms and dads teach your kids at home, set apart time for your family to engage in the Great Conversation.

Because in the end, the thing that will sustain us here at Grace won't be our buildings or our programs or even or even our winsome ways. The thing that will sustain us and keep us going in the midst of terrible times is the power of the Word of God.

I want to develop this idea even further next week, but we've come to the end of our time so let me close with this.

When R.G. Lee was an old man and retired from his pulpit at Bellview Baptist church in Memphis, he had many occasions to preach. He was often asked to preach his most famous sermon, probably the most famous sermon of the twentieth century, a little gem he entitled Payday Someday. Dr. Lee had already preached Payday Someday somewhere over a thousand times when he was asked to preach it again at Lavon Drive Baptist church in Garland.

But the night before he was to speak, something terrible happened. Dr. Lee who was already in his eighties, was mugged and beaten outside his motel room in Garland. A bunch of young hoodlums pummeled the frail old saint's face. They broke one of his arms. Dr. Lee should have stayed in the hospital but the next night he showed up to speak all bruised, battered and bandaged.

Dr. Lee began his sermon, which was the story of the struggle between Elijah, the man of God, and the infamous duo Ahab and Jezebel. I can still remember one of the opening lines of the sermon, **"I introduce to you Ahab, the vile human toad who squatted upon the throne of his nation."**

Anyway, about halfway through his sermon, standing at the edge of an elevated platform, Dr. Lee began to sway back and forth. He turned pale and as he passed out the old saint fell down the seven or eight steps of the platform landing unconscious and bloodied at the base of the platform.

Men from the church rushed to his care and swathed his face with cool damp clothes. Finally, he came to.

**"Dr. Lee lay still. We are calling an ambulance. It will take you to the hospital."**

But the frail old man would have none of that. He winced as he slowly got up off the carpet.

**"My brothers,"** he said as they helped him up. **"If you do not mind I believe, I believe I would have one more shot at that old heifer, Jezebel."**

Now brothers and sisters, how can you not love a man like that. It was the last sermon Dr. Lee ever preached. In a month, he was dead. But that story endears him to me more than the fact that he preached one sermon over a thousand times. There is something lovely about a man like that, something worth studying, something that reaffirms all that we know about the Bible and about the beauty of God's Word. It is the same message the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy and to us through the Spirit of God and the message is just as important today as it was back then, **"Terrible times require steadfast obedience and a relentless, unwavering commitment to the faithful preaching of the Word of God."**

Let's pray.

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<sup>1</sup> I want to acknowledge the influence of Dr. Jeff Bingham's a DTS chapel talk on my sermon. He helped me to see rightly see the connection between the three paragraphs in 2 Timothy 3:1-4:3. While my sermon focuses on the latter two paragraphs considerably more than Dr. Bingham's message, there is no denying that his exposition has impacted my thinking deeply.

2