

2 Timothy: 3:10-17 Why the Bible is more than just a book

Did you ever think of the Bible as a recording of God's voice? Essentially, this is what God says it is. He says that the Bible is what He breathed-out. Everything you find there is what He says. And since the Bible covers everything under the sun, it's the ultimate book of answers. It can save you from everything and prepare you for anything. This is what Paul is telling Timothy in 3:10-17: as the wicked men around him are using and abusing God's Word, Paul wants him to cherish it, to cling to it, and to follow it. If he does, it will equip him for everything.

3:10-11, in contrast to the wicked teachers described in 3:1-9, who are thoroughly wicked and use God to take advantage of people, Timothy has carefully followed Paul's Bible teaching. But how do you carefully follow Bible teaching? The ultimate goal of God's Word is to transform our lives; the Bible contains instructions that are to be lived out, which is why Jesus commands us all to make disciples of everyone by teaching them to "observe" everything He commanded (Matthew 28:20). And this is what Timothy has done; he's carefully followed Paul's manner of life, i.e., he's lived the way Paul has, which is precisely the goal of a Rabbi's student, to emulate his master in thought, word, deed and action in every manner of life. This is what Jesus did with His disciples; He taught them to live life the way He did. And when He left, He told them to do the same with all the nations and they did (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts).

Timothy has also carefully followed Paul's purpose. What was Paul's purpose; what was Paul born to do? From his mother's womb, God declared that Paul would be His apostle, His messenger to the Gentiles (Galatians 1:15-16). God wanted to reveal His Son Jesus Christ in Paul; He wanted Paul to make Christ known among the Gentiles, not simply by preaching about Jesus, but by living like Jesus. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are known as the pastoral letters because they're written to young pastors Titus and Timothy. And Timothy wanted to be like Paul. How does 2 Timothy begin? It begins by proclaiming that Paul was Jesus' messenger according to God's will to bring Jesus' promise of life to everyone. God appointed him to reveal the great news that Jesus has abolished death and made eternal life available to all, 1:1, 10. Timothy wanted to follow this purpose in life.

Timothy also carefully followed Paul's faith. Faith could refer to the principles of the Christian faith. But since Paul's already mentioned Bible teaching, he likely means that Timothy carefully followed Paul's trust in God or his faithfulness to God. Next, Paul notes that Timothy carefully followed Paul's longsuffering, which Paul had a lot of (2 Corinthians 11:22-27 gives a long list of Paul's suffering). And the word for "longsuffering" can mean the "state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome." What was Paul waiting for in that Roman dungeon? His execution and yet notice composure as he's on death row. Instead of panicking, he's encouraging his young protégé. Timothy also followed Paul's love. What kind of love did Paul have for people? The kind that seeks to save those trying to kill you (Acts 21:27-22:23). Though his own Jewish brethren sought his death, Paul had a love for them as God did; he wanted them to be saved (Romans 10). Timothy also emulated Paul's perseverance which was incredible; he kept serving God even though it meant his imprisonment or death (Philippians 1:12-21).

Timothy carefully followed Paul's persecutions and afflictions which happened to him at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. From Acts 16 on, Timothy traveled with Paul so he likely was not only with Paul when he was persecuted but he himself suffered the same. An example of Paul's afflictions is in Acts 13:44-52 and 14:19-23 where they kill Paul but God brings him back to life and he returns to the cities where they brutalized him! And how does Paul end 2 Timothy 3:11 which mention his persecutions? "And out of them all the Lord delivered me." This is crucial because of the things Timothy is facing and his temptation to back away from God, 1:6-7.

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3:12, next, Paul states the reality facing every Christian: those who decide to “live godly in Christ Jesus,” who dedicate their lives to living life the way God prescribes will come under attack. What happens to Christians who oppose gay marriage or abortion? What does it mean to live “godly in Christ Jesus”? It means you interpret life all around you according to what Jesus thinks of it, not society. You follow what Jesus says about homosexuality, marriage, money, race, politics, etc., etc. And when you do, you will face opposition.

3:13, in contrast, evil men and “impostors” (those who swindle and deceive you) who go along with society’s evils will get worse and worse as they deceive people and are they themselves deceived by Satan’s lies.

3:14-15, Timothy on the other hand must continue in the things that he’s learned and been assured of, knowing the reliability of the ones who taught him. Those who taught Timothy include his mother and grandmother, 1:5, who from a very young age taught him God’s Holy Scriptures. Timothy knows that God’s Word holds the key to wisdom; it enables you to see life crystal clearly. God’s Word reveals where salvation is found and how you get it: through simple faith in Christ Jesus. The instant you believe in Jesus Christ, you are saved and not just from the Lake of Fire, but all of life now, e.g., 3:11.

3:16, in fact, all of Scripture is God-breathed. He breathed it out which is why is it “profitable,” i.e., beneficial for a myriad of things:

“Doctrine,” i.e., teaching/instruction. You need to know the *what* in life and God knows exactly what we need to think or do in every situation.

“Reproof,” i.e., expressing strong disapproval/correction. God’s Word will let you know when you’ve done something wrong; it will let you know His disapproval of any thought, word, or action that is contrary to God’s holiness.

“Correction,” i.e., improvement: to correct someone’s faults in order to improve them. God’s desire is to remove everything that isn’t righteous, holy, and godly. He wants to make you perfectly ready to tackle everything this life brings.

“Instruction in righteousness,” i.e., training someone how to live properly. Like a father with a son or daughter, God wants to show you how to live life the way it should be lived, the way it was always meant to be lived, righteously and godly.

3:17, why does God want to do all these things with His Word? So that we can be “complete thoroughly equipped for every good work.” That is, He wants us to be absolutely fitted for the task of life, well-qualified and ready to do His work.

What is the Bible to you? Is it a book with stories about God? Or is it much more than that? Do you see it as the instrument that will change your life for the better? As the one book which contains every answer to every problem you will ever face? If you let it, God’s Word can transform your life. It can give you confidence to face anything, but not the confidence of a mere human.