

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED

2Timothy 3:1-17

Key Verses 3:16,17

¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

First, "Have nothing to do with them" (1-9). In verses 1 through 5, Paul writes to Timothy about the last days, saying, "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,..." The expression, "People will be..." indicates that this will be the trend among the people of the last days. We can characterize the trend in the last days into four points. First of all, they will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. These are what they value and thereby, pursue: themselves - their desires and plans, their hopes and dreams, and their own style; money - it is about career, security, convenience, and luxury; and pleasure. In this way, the trend in the last days is self-seeking. The next characteristic is "abusive, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful." Obeying their parents or showing respect and honor to their parents is the most basic duty for humans, and it is the most fundamental ligament that sustains the society. But in the last days, this parent-children relationship suffers, because they are disobedient to their parents. This is just an example. If they do not obey even their parents, whom can they really obey? No one! Basically, in the last days, they have a serious relationship problem; people refuse to show basic respect and honor to those who deserve them such as their parents, seniors, professors, and authorities - simply, they are ungrateful; when they are asked to obey those people, they say, "Why should I?" But strangely, when they come to have any authority, they are abusive. They do not know how to associate themselves with others in a sound and proper way. These relationships are what hold up the society, but in the last days, these relationships crumble down. Then, soon the society crumbles down, and then, its end comes. Indeed, it is the last days. The next characteristic is "unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited." These words suggest how corrupt their personality is. People become like senseless animals. In the last days human personality deteriorates so much that living together with these people itself will be like an endless nightmare. No wonder that modern day, which is the last days, the divorce rate is so high. The next characteristic is "having a form of godliness but denying its power." Having a form of godliness means that outwardly they look godly because they have a certain form of godliness such as going to church on Sundays, or having some Bible knowledge. But despite their form of godliness, they deny the power of godliness, meaning that they do not let their godliness change their life; simply, it means that despite their form of godliness, there is no real change in

their life - they remain the same, still worldly, loving themselves, money and pleasure rather than being lovers of God. They look like Christians, and they do not look like Christians. What are they? I don't know, but God's knows. Then, inwardly, all kinds of terrible things grow in them that they become wicked. These people become the majority even in the church during the last days.

Until this point, we thought that Paul was talking about the people in the world in the last days. But when we come to this, we are shocked to notice that Paul is actually not only talking about the people outside the church, but also inside the church. And it is also shocking that in the last days, the trend among the church going people is that they just have a form of godliness - going to church, reading the Bible, and praying before the meals, but do not let it change their real life - how they really live and what they really live for. It is also shocking that this is the very trend in modern day Christianity. As a servant of God said, in America everyone looks like a Christian, but no one looks like a Christian. Indeed, we are living in the last days.

Conclusively, Paul gives an instruction to Timothy, saying, "Have nothing to do with them." We thought that Paul was talking about how people would be in the last days - they would be really wicked. But even in Timothy's time, in the Ephesian church, there were such people who just had a form of godliness but denied its power. As we see in chapter 2, verses 23 through 25, there were some people who were argumentative and even those who opposed Timothy. Timothy, as a young pastor, must have had hard time. But he must not be discouraged by such people; instead, he must understand that such disobedient and obstinate people were always there both inside and outside the church, and the situation would go worse that in the last days, eventually, these people would be in the main stream in the Christian community. What happens when these people become the majority in the church? Such churches come up with many wicked doctrines and strange theology and lifestyles that confuse people. Now is the last days. Paul gives us a clear direction, "Have nothing to do with them."

Look at verses 6 and 7. Let's read these verses together:

6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, **7** always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

Here, Paul further talks about them, describing them as players who "worm" their way in approaching women, never exposing their true intention, but trying to gain their trust little by little in a very subtle way. When we think about the word, "worm," we can see how much Paul disliked these people. They look godly, but in the true sense, their hearts are not turned toward God. As a result, they are loaded down with sins. The burden of sin is there in their hearts all the time, then, whenever a temptation comes in regard to money, in regard to

marriage, in regard to success, they are blown away. They are swayed away by all kinds of evil desires. Paul describes them, saying, "always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth." The phrase, "always learning," shows that they study the Bible and hear the messages all the time, maybe, for years. How come they "always learn?" It seems that they enjoy it, saying, "Today's message was good. I like it." But strangely, they never acknowledge the truth. How come they "never acknowledge the truth?" Once they acknowledge the truth - who their God is, what God wants them to do, and what they must do and how they must live their life, they have to change; they have to turn away from their own way of life to the life of living for God - this is not what they want to do. So, despite always learning, they do not acknowledge the truth; they never take any word of God personally; instead, they just enjoy knowledge or Christian things. So, there is no real change in their life, despite always learning.

What happens to them? Can they live that way forever, ever attending Bible study or ever hearing the messages, but never acknowledging the truth? No. Eventually, there comes the time when they have to choose one - either they would really turn to God and live for God, or they would choose their own things. At that time, those who do not have a real heart's desire for God choose what they truly value; these people oppose the truth, saying, "I don't think that's the only way for us to live." When they are challenged to repent of their secret pursuit of money or their own secret desires, they say, "This church is too exclusive." "It is your own interpretation." Many of these people become enemies of God, attacking God's people and his church. Paul says of them, "men of depraved minds." Outwardly, they ever learn, having a form of godliness, but inwardly, their inner heart is corrupt. The real problem is that they are not lovers of God, but lovers of themselves, money and pleasure. They must acknowledge it, admit their wrongdoing, and repent and turn to God. But they don't want to do so. Instead, they try to defend themselves, justifying their way of life. Instead of acknowledging the truth and repenting, they gather around the teachers who scratch their itching ears. They are men of depraved minds. Paul conclusively says of them, "who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected." As far as doing Christian things is concerned, they are included; as far as having Bible knowledge is concerned, they are included. But as far as the faith is concerned, they are rejected. Simply, they have no real faith, despite their form of godliness, religiosity, despite ever learning, despite their knowledge of the Bible. Eventually, everyone comes to know what kind of people they are, and no one will follow them.

When we think about these people, we are really burdened, because there are always this kind of people in the church. But we should not be surprised, because Jesus says that the kingdom of God is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore, collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. He says, "This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous, and throw them into the fiery furnace, where

there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mat 13:47-50) Jesus also gave us the parable of the field, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field." But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" (Mat 13:24-30) In view of all these, we must strive hard that we will not be like those who have a form of godliness, but deny its power, those who ever learn, but never acknowledge the truth. Instead, as we come to the church and study the Bible, we must be quick to acknowledge the truth, repent and turn to God.

Second, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (10-17). Look at verses 10 and 11. Let's read these verses together:

¹⁰ You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

Timothy might be confused about true Christian life when those people who had a form of godliness but denied its power increased in number in the church. Especially, when these people become the majority such as in the last days, it is really confusing of how we must live as Christians. So, after warning Timothy about the danger of those strange people in the church, Paul shows him an example of a real Christian life - his own life. Paul says, "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings..." Paul suggests his own life as the standard of a real Christian life. What kind of life did he live? How was his life? It was the life that was fully dedicated to God's mission; he lived for God by serving His mission, pursuing God's purpose upon his life. Then, as he pursued God's mission, there were a lot of challenges and difficulties. Yet, Paul never yielded; he didn't give up. Instead, enduring all hardships and persecutions, he pursued God's kingdom work continually. As a result, his life was full of love for God and for God's people; his life was full of faith in God, full of hope in the kingdom of God, full of persecutions, sufferings, patience, and endurance. In his life, everything was full.

Paul says in Romans 5, "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." This was what he really learned. Through serving God's work enduring all sufferings, godly character was being formed in him and the hope in the kingdom of God became so real to him. That was the

real Christian life. Christian life is not about having a form of godliness; it is not about doing some Christian things. It is not about having a lot of Bible knowledge either. Rather, it is about serving God by pursuing God's mission wholeheartedly. As we struggle to do God's work despite sufferings, pains, sorrows, and persecutions, our faith in Jesus, our love for God becomes concrete, and our hope in the kingdom of God becomes real. Such life has a clear direction and it is very dynamic and action-packed. When we live that kind of life, we are satisfied - simply, we like it.

Look at verses 12 and 13. Let's read these verses together:

¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Paul decisively proclaims, saying, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Do you want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus? Then, one thing is guaranteed: You will be persecuted. That's what Christian life is about. Paul also talks about what will happen to evil men and imposters. They go from bad to worse. Evil men includes all kinds of evil people, even including imposters. So, Paul could have said, "while evil men go from bad to worse." But in case Timothy might not catch his point, he added "imposters." What kind of people are imposters? Imposters are "the ones who deceive or cheat others by pretending to be what he is not." They refer to those who have a form of godliness but denying its power, or those who always learn, but never acknowledge the truth. Here we see great contrast between those who live a godly life in Christ and those who do not. When you live a godly life, you will be persecuted - suffering follows, but as you endure, you will develop a godly character, and you will come to have real hope in the kingdom of God; you will recognize that your life on earth is just a journey, simply, a pilgrimage, and your real home is in the kingdom of God. But those who do not live a godly life will go from bad to worse. Their hearts are full of all kinds of self-seeking desires, and in order to secure what they desire, they deceive others knowingly and unknowingly; but while they do so, others also have the same struggle, so they are being deceived also, and because of this, they come to have a lot of wounds and scars, and bitterness, anger, and hatred grow in them; after getting so many wounds and scars, they cannot afford any more damage, so they do not trust anyone - mistrust. All these people become very strange; indeed, they go from bad to worse.

We have learned of everything today - what we must do and how we must live our life as Christians. It is indeed the trend that people just have a form of godliness but deny its power even in the Christian community - they have no burden of self-denial, no burden of taking up the cross of mission, but they just enjoy benefits of being Christians. Eventually, these people, however, oppose the truth, coming up with strange ideas and theories that support their way of life;

they become bad weeds, not good wheat, bad fish that are thrown away at the end of the age. We must not be such wicked people. Instead, we must live a godly life, even if it comes with persecutions and sufferings. Be lovers of God and live a godly life.

Look at verses 14 and 15. Let's read these verses together:

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, **15** and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Here the expression, "But as for you," means, "No matter what others do," or "No matter how others live." This means living a godly life despite harsh persecutions is a personal matter each of Christians should do before God no matter how others live. Timothy lived a godly life, and Paul encouraged him to do so continually no matter what. In this last days, even if the majority of church-going people just have a form of godliness but deny its power, we still must live a godly life, dedicating ourselves to God completely, pursuing God's mission. Even though people love themselves, money and pleasures, we must live as lovers of God pursuing God alone.

Look at verses 16 and 17. Let's read these verses together:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

After talking about all those challenges Timothy might have, Paul changes the subject to the Scripture - the word of God. The expression, "God-breathed" means "inspired by God." All Scripture, each and every book of the Bible, each chapter, every verse, every sentence and every word - all of them are inspired by God, and thereby, there cannot be any mistake or fault. Even though about 40 people wrote the books of the Bible taking about 1,400 years, the Ultimate Author of all these books of the Bible is God Himself, and thereby, the Bible is the word of God, carries the absolute authority and becomes the standard of everything. This is the authenticity and infallibility of the Bible. We hold this truth beyond human logic, or archeological or scientific discovery. How can we say so? It is not because we try to believe this, but when God's grace reached to us, when we were born again, this knowledge, this confidence was given to us that suddenly we could see it. It seems like this knowledge or understanding or confidence was downloaded from heaven to our hearts or brain that we just know it. We don't need to say, "I believe this," but we simply know it just as we know $1+1=2$. All Scripture is God-breathed, so we need to study all Scripture, starting from Genesis to Revelation, not only reading the gospels but also the laws such as Leviticus or Deuteronomy.

And the Bible is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Let's say, there is a young man dedicated to God. But even if he is dedicated to God, it does not mean that he is really well prepared for God to use, because that person's value system, understanding, view point and hope may be still mundane, fleshly, humanistic or materialistic as he just came out of the world. Or this person may still have terrible sin problems, or he may insist his own style or idea, thinking that he understands better. So, how can we establish that person as a well trained and prepared servant for God, useful and effective for God's kingdom work? Paul says that the Scripture is the best tool. Through the Bible, as that person comes to the word of God sincerely and struggles to accept and obey its teachings, he is instructed, corrected and trained in righteousness. Even fully committed disciples may have wrong understanding of God's will and purpose, or God's way and direction; even they may insist their own style and understanding. At that time, when the word of God is given them, when they see what God is talking about in the Bible, they can be corrected, renouncing their own styles and accepting God's style. Also, God's word is useful for training God's people in righteousness. For example, despite our hectic schedule, and even if we are tired, we struggle with the word of God in testimony writing, spending many hours, staying late at night, learning how to put our fleshly desires under our full control. As this kind of training continues, we grow up as reliable men and women of God that when a task is given us, we somehow can fulfill our duty in any circumstances. At the same time, we come to understand the word of God really and grow as excellent Bible teachers, knowing how to handle the word of God correctly. Indeed, through the word of God, we are being purified, sanctified and beautified, and grow up as reliable and effective servants for God's kingdom work. We are being trained in righteousness.

Paul gave Timothy a lot of instructions of how he should do the work of an evangelist despite challenges and oppositions. But Paul knew that ultimately he should be established as a well prepared and effective servant of God through the Scriptures. With the word of God, Timothy would be equipped for every good work God had in mind. So, Timothy should struggle with the word of God. At the same time, it was Paul's direction for Timothy to rely on the Scriptures in serving his church and dealing with all those challenges he had in the church. With the word of God, all his church members would overcome their problems and eventually be established as reliable and effective children of God, equipped for every good work. So, in all circumstances, Timothy should teach them the word of God diligently.

One Word: So That The Man Of God May Be Thoroughly Equipped