



2 Timothy 3:10-4:5

Our Great Heritage 1
Grace-Benson/Vail, AZ

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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. 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. 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. 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.

⁴ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: ² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

My Friends in Christ,

I like to avoid trouble. So I don't go looking for dark alleys with suspect characters lurking in the shadows. I prefer to be liked rather than disliked. So I try not to annoy people and give them reasons to be upset with me. I'm probably not too much different than most of you in those regards.

It's kind of interesting then, that we are willing to endure trouble and unpopularity for God and his Word. This goes against the way we normally are and the way we usually think and behave! Where do we find the kind of conviction required for tightly aligning ourselves with God and the kind of strength needed to staunchly hold to his Word? One of the places in the Bible is our lesson this morning from 2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4. Here we find the emphasis on **SCRIPTURE ALONE** and find that it

1. Brings Trouble (3:10-13)

2. Is Not Popular (4:1-5)

3. But Is Worth It! (3:14-17)

1. Brings Trouble

Our lesson comes from Paul's second personal letter to a young pastor, Timothy. Paul had chosen Timothy to serve alongside him, which he faithfully did. Now as Paul's life is near its end and he finds himself in a prison in Rome, he writes to this young pastor, giving him some practical instructions for day-to-day ministry. Here Paul mentions his own faithful service to God. This is not the first time in this letter that Paul does something you and I might be reluctant to do—he gives himself as an example to follow. In chapter 1 he said, **What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.** In chapter 2 he wrote, **And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.** And here he says, **You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured.**

If Timothy didn't know Paul better, he might have considered him arrogant and boastful. But in his previous letter to Timothy, Paul confessed that he was the worst of sinners (1:15). He remembered well his previous life of persecuting the church. It tempered boastful thoughts. No, Paul is simply focused on the sound teaching the Lord had him do and the need for Timothy to teach that same Word of God faithfully.

It's not only Paul who suffered for his adherence to the truth of Scripture. In fact, he says that all Christians will endure persecution for their faith! ...**everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (12)**, he says. This assumes, of course, that a person is living their faith—sharing gospel, standing up for God and his Word, acting as a shining light in this world, being the good tree bearing good fruit that is obvious to all, as Jesus talked about.

Now, you and I may not face the extreme persecution that Paul did, living under a Roman government that considered Caesar to be god and among Jewish people who rejected Christ as the Messiah and violently opposed those who believed that he was. That was a different place and time. Our persecutions may come in different forms but living our faith does come at a cost.

We might not have our life threatened as Luther did around 1500 AD. His strict holding to Scripture and its focus on Jesus brought persecution from the church! Shockingly, it was the church that threatened his life! A strict holding to Scripture jeopardized the power of church officials so they literally made life difficult for Luther.

At the time of Paul and at the time of Luther, Scripture was proved right—people were deceiving people and being deceived themselves. It is not any different today as Christians who outwardly live their faith find persecution of one kind or another.

But this is also true: the Lord is our Rescuer! Paul mentions that the Lord rescued him from these sufferings and persecutions. The history of Luther's life is fascinating as you see how the Lord rescued him—kidnapped by friends for his protection, protected by a German prince, and holed up in a castle (where he translated the Bible into German, by the way).

The Lord who rescued them is the Lord who rescues us. Perhaps that protection and care comes in an earthly way and allows us to endure the suffering. It can also happen that the Lord rescues us by pulling us from this world's persecution, bringing us to our safe home in heaven!

2. Is Not Popular

To be sure, our holding to God's Scripture Brings Trouble in this life. It brings us trouble because the Bible—when all of it is proclaimed—is not popular. Paul warned Pastor Timothy that there would be times when people would not put up with sound doctrine. This was borne out throughout the centuries after Paul. False teachers and false doctrines invaded the church. Luther certainly combatted this. Think of how he was denounced by the church for even proposing to discuss those 95 Theses that he posted. Consider the great number of meetings and councils he had with bishops and cardinals and popes. The church of the time would not even discuss or debate on the basis of Scripture! Instead, the church insisted on considering as equal to Scripture or even greater than Scripture, church traditions and papal decrees and decisions of men! It was not Scripture alone which captured their minds and bent their wills!

But we are not living in 60 AD or 1500 AD. It's 2017. How's it going today? Well, the fact that there are so many Christian denominations is a testimony to the truth of Scripture that people will not put up with sound doctrine. Some still hold to traditions of the church and decrees by the pope and decisions of councils—all superseding the words of God. Some insist that reason must be able to explain all things in the Bible. So human beings and their logic supersede the plain words of Scripture. This is why all the different denominations agree that we are not all the same. We do not agree on how to approach Scripture...or even what Scripture is!

The sinful nature doesn't want to hear that the Bible's Words are truth, the whole truth, and the unchanging truth. The sinful nature does not want to accept that there are things we cannot explain or understand about God and how he works or why he draws the lines and standards he does. Itching ears will go where they hear what makes them comfortable and agrees with what they want to be true. Perhaps you know this from personal experience, even. The truth is, you can fill churches by telling people what they want to hear—either by avoiding things Scripture says or by adding things that the Bible does not say. Scripture Alone is not popular!

Now, it's easy pickings to point out how other individuals and churches do not hold to Scripture Alone, but what about us? If we're being honest, we have to admit that we sometimes don't like the clear words of Scripture in some parts either! We have a sinful nature that would like to skip parts or bend the rules of God. We may have even chosen a church in the past for things other than a correct teaching of Scripture: we liked the children's program or the music or the pastor—so we were willing to tolerate a little false teaching in order to have something else that we wanted.

The point is this: we all have enough itching in our ears that it simply won't do to merely point out historical problems in Christianity or the faults of other churches today. You and I need to repent for our sinful thoughts regarding God's Word...and the sinful words we have spoken about God's sound doctrine...and our actions or inactions related to the Bible and its truth. We need the correction, rebuking and encouragement that pastors like Paul and Timothy provided for Christians and which our pastors and Christian friends give us today.

And what a comfort it is to hear what Scripture Alone tells us—that we are forgiven because Christ paid for those sins. Jesus lived and taught the Scriptures perfectly. Doing that brought him trouble and made him unpopular, but he sinlessly held to them. That perfection of his offered at the cross paid for the many ways we have not held to Scripture Alone.

3. But Is Worth It!

When we are reminded of the forgiveness we have by faith in Jesus, a desire for a proper outlook on Scripture is renewed in us. Though holding to it will bring us trouble because it is unpopular, it is Worth It!

Sola Scriptura, "Scripture Alone," was one of the battle cries of the Reformation. Luther and others resolved to let God's Word stand and take their stand on God's Word. Their determination was based partly on the words of our text: **But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

Young Pastor Timothy was encouraged by Paul to continue in the Scriptures in the face of persecution and in spite of a sinful nature that could sometimes make his ears itch for something else. He was to trust those who taught it well—and this was not just Paul himself. Timothy had the blessing of learning it from the time he was born. His mom, Eunice, and his grandma, Lois, are mentioned by Paul earlier in the letter (1:5). What those God-fearing women taught Timothy was to focus on his Savior. That is really the purpose of the Bible—the thing that makes it valuable and worth the trouble it brings us and the way it makes us unpopular right along with it. God declares that the Scriptures are able to make you wise for salvation.

The focus is on salvation in Jesus—from the beginning in Genesis, where the first gospel promise is given, to the prophets who looked forward to the coming Savior and what he would do to pay for sin and bring salvation, to the final book, Revelation, where it looks forward to the return of Jesus, finishing, **“Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen (22:20b-21).”** Salvation through Christ Jesus is the focus of the Scriptures from beginning to end!

This is the message that is vital for the world to hear, so God had the actual words written that he wanted. It says that the words of the Bible are God-breathed. He then preserved his Word over the centuries with accuracy that can only be explained by his divine, protective hand. And why? So that people can know of his undeserved love seen in Jesus and come to trust in him for salvation.

Since the Bible is the actual Word of God, it is extremely useful! Paul mentions “teaching.” This is the word for doctrine, for instruction. Sometimes we must use God’s Word to rebuke someone. That means to point out something that is wrong, to refute an error. The Word also corrects faults or failures that it exposes. We use the Bible to train us in discipleship, in following our Savior, in doing what is right before God. It has the ability to make us competent to do good things that God is looking for in our lives. By stacking up all of these descriptions of what Scripture is good for, Paul is telling us that whatever we have to suffer because of it, it is Worth It! It is spiritually Worth It!

For the times we have not respected God’s Word, not made use of the opportunities to study it, to hear it by going to church, to read it at home, we find forgiveness in Jesus and the encouragement to treasure it going forward.

Perhaps we can have a new-found appreciation for God’s Word like the people of Luther’s time. Imagine NOT having a Bible, NOT having Bible study opportunities and then, all of the sudden because of Luther’s devotion to the Scriptures and his translating it into the language of the people—and that coinciding with the invention of the movable-type printing press by Gutenberg—the people can read it on their own for the first time! Imagine their excitement! Imagine how they devoured it, understanding God better than ever before! Perhaps today God’s Word brings about a reformation in us that brings an excitement and joy like that to our hearts.

Though it brings us trouble and makes us unpopular in the world—and sometimes even in the Church—Scripture is worth it! It is worth it because it tells us about Jesus and the forgiveness and salvation we have through him. We want to keep it as it is—God’s Word—pure and unchanged. It makes us want to defend it when it is threatened. It makes us want to proclaim it no matter what it might cost us. It is unpopular because of people’s sin, but that sin is exactly the reason we need to share it. It also makes us want to use it in all the ways the Lord instructs us to use it. May God help us do these things! Amen.

**Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**