

The Great Contrast

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Grab your Bibles and let's go back to our study of 2 Timothy this morning. If you're visiting today, we're going verse by verse, chapter by chapter, through this New Testament epistle. Uh, to be honest, it's been kind of a intimate and impacting experience for me to study 1 and 2 Timothy as it's the testimony, the letter actually of on an older man of God, the Apostle Paul, who by the time he writes 2 Timothy is near his execution, he's in a Roman prison and you could say he's sentimental, he's, he's emotional but not out of control, not, uh, irrational in any way, but just deeply, uh, the deep feelings of his convictions in the things that really matter. And, um, as a pastor reading this as maybe I'm in the last third of my ministry, it's just been quite impacting and I guess I could say honestly that I have done more study verse by verse in these two books than any other study I've ever done. And I, I hope it would be true, I think that it's true that I've been a thorough studyer, um, to preach, hopefully effectively to you guys, but, um, especially teaching the, the intensive that I did a couple of weeks ago. I, I went back through and re-studied every sermon, 60 something of them so far, and, um, that was just ingrained it in me even more. So there's a lot of pathos, if you will, there's a lot of weighty emotion in this, and, um, we come to the the third chapter now, 2 Timothy, and he writes to Timothy and unpacking this exposition, I call it "The Great Contrast." The great contrast. He's going to talk once again about the impostor, the counterfeit, the false teacher, and then he's going to contrast that with, "Now Timothy, that's not who you are. That's not what you've been, and that's not what you are." I told the guys in my class that there's a lot of repetition in the Bible, and that's purposeful so we might reaffirm and relearn and get it sort of melded into our core being some truths that God does not want us to forget. Now, as Paul's writing to Timothy, he repeats some of the same truths and same insights, same exhortations, and we see that again in this text.

2 Timothy 3:12, Paul writes.

12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
13 But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however [that's Timothy], continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is

inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy is the last writing of the Apostle Paul. It concludes the epistles to the Gentiles. Genesis 49 gives us the last words of Jacob. Deuteronomy 33 gives us the last words of Moses. And 2 Timothy gives us the last words of Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles. That should mean something to you because you're a Gentile. Paul brought the gospel over from the Jewish communities to the Gentile communities, and now we have this ending of the letter as we're coming toward the close of 2 Timothy, and once again he's laying out from his heart, "Timothy, here's the things that really matter." Now, there's certainly a strong word for us pastors and church leaders, but for you men out there, since it is Father's Day, let me address you a little more particularly, for you men, there's a word for you, you stand with your pastors, you stand with your leaders when they're doing what Paul tells Timothy is the most important thing. And by the way, you men have done that over these decades, and I am so indebted and grateful to God for you.

I. The identifying mark of godly suffering. The identifying mark of godly suffering. Paul begins in verse 12 writing to Timothy and says, "Indeed, Timothy, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Now we know Paul is suffering deep persecution. He's locked in a Roman jail, he knows his execution is at hand, and so he says, "Timothy, this is not just my lot, this is all of our lot." Now one thing unique about the Apostle Paul is that God actually ordained his specific suffering. Obviously, God's sovereign, we can say that he ordains all of our sufferings, but not all of them are spelled out in Scripture like Paul's was. Acts 9:16 the Bible says, "for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." The Lord is, is, is speaking, Ananias is receiving this word, Ananias is, is to go talk to this Saul of Tarsus but now he's been converted and God says from the very outset, "He's going to suffer greatly to be My minister and to be My witness in the earth."

Now but the truth of the text is that only some professing Christians will suffer. Did you get that? Only some professing Christians will suffer. Read what the entire verse says. Verse 12. "Indeed," here's the, here's the qualification, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The phrase "all who desire" means those who willfully choose to do so. A. T. Robertson, the Baptist Greek scholar, says it means to be determined to do so. So he says for every Christian that's serious about honoring God in a godless world, you will have some suffering, you will endure some persecution. Now it's always greater for the leader, it's always more intense for the pastor. I, I remember coming back from Romania, uh, Ceausescu, the brutal communist dictator had just recently been executed. I didn't know what a time in history I was walking into. It was an incredible experience. You go into Romania and you, you go into this country that was once a first world country and communism had turned it into a decrepit third world country. Things hadn't been painted for decades. Roads hadn't been repaired for decades. Just everything was in disrepair and gray and dull. It just, just an awful climate and I'd go into those churches and those churches would be absolutely packed. I've told you about it before, literally there would be people two and three feet from my face while I was

preaching because every square inch was taken up. They wanted to hear the word of God and if you preached for four hours, they would not move. They'd listen to every word. And I remember them talking about the persecutions they endured and how their pastors had been beaten with rubber hoses and locked in prisons simply for preaching the gospel because, brothers and sisters, the gospel of Jesus Christ can't be caught, not cohabit with atheistic communism. They just don't fit together.

Anyway, that's in a more extreme case, but Paul says here to Timothy all who really desire to live godly. When I say live godly, I would think that you could summarize it this way: to have in your heart a glory of God-focus, to have in your heart a Christ-honoring attitude, to strive to be Bible-saturated in your life and practice, to be local church-centered in your service of the Lord, to be genuine and serious about home life discipleship where you take the things from church and you take them home and try to talk of them during the week and be Christ-centered in your homes.

In Christ Jesus, there's a phrase he also uses here, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." I'll think the idea is he's not talking about those who put on religious duty in the power of the flesh but those who by God's doing are "in Christ Jesus." That means they are Spirit-reborn. They are Spirit-indwelt. They are Spirit-transformed and now they are learning to joy in God and love God and honor God's word, that puts them in a collision course with this ungodly world.

The phrase "will be persecuted," A. T. Robertson elaborates on this phrase and he says it literally means they shall be hunted like a wild beast. Pretty powerful, isn't it? Pretty graphic that those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will find that they're hunted like men hunt wild beast. You know you preach this kind of stuff, you wonder who wants to sign up for it? Who's interested in that kind of Christianity? Only those who are Spirit-reborn. Only those who are Spirit-indwelt. Only those who are Spirit-transformed. It doesn't mean any of us look forward to this, it doesn't mean we shouldn't pray and hope that we would be in one of those renewing cycles where maybe the culture does not hate us so badly, but generally speaking all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. You see, you cannot separate Christ from his cross and you cannot separate Christians from their cross.

Now Paul writing this at this time, perhaps he's got two motives in mind here. First of all, we do know that his persecutions and sufferings were being used by his enemies to discredit him. They'd say, "Aha, you don't need to listen to Paul and Paul's doctrine. That's why he's locked in prison. That's why he's about to be executed because God's not pleased with him. He's not the genuine article. He's not a real apostle." And Paul is saying, "Oh, quite, quite the contrary. The suffering I'm enduring is an identifying mark that I am a child of God." And that's why I call it that way, the identifying mark of godly suffering, that's what Paul is saying.

Then he goes on in Timothy and says, "All who desire like I desire to live godly will face this." So first of all, he's trying to undermine discredit, the discrediting of the false teachers who use his persecution as somehow to say that he's not a genuine apostle. But

secondly, he wants all of us believers to know that waves of suffering and persecution are going to come our way if we live godly lives in Christ Jesus. You see, Christ is in full contradiction to this wicked world and to follow Christ in this world puts us on a course that is swimming against the current. We will be going against the grain. Didn't Jesus teach this so clearly? John 15:18 through 21. Jesus said, "If the world hates you," the idea really is since the world hates you or will hate you, "you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." Now, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me."

Now, of course, there are varying degrees of persecution and varying waves of persecution. We have seen in church history when God set something up, an awakening or an enlightenment, and true Christians found more favor in the culture, but there are also those dark, dark waves and seasons when Christians are persecuted and do suffer even intensely for their faith. Some Christians will face harm, incarceration, even martyrdom like Paul did, and early church historians tell us that Timothy had the same end, that is, martyrdom. For others, you'll have to endure the malicious lies and slander and misrepresentation of your beliefs and your doctrine and your views. We may escape some of that from the culture and then others will have the mistreatment of a, of a spouse or a parent or a child who hates Christ and hates Christianity and is constantly reviling you and snide remarks and undermining comments. That's a torture to live in your own home with that.

Let me now kill two birds with one illustration. I'm gonna try to kill two birds with one illustration. When, when I was a new Christian, a brand new Christian, I, I transferred from Middle Tennessee State University and came down to the University of North Alabama here in Florence because I had some friends from high school who were committed Christians who said now that you're a Christian, you need Christian roommates and I did need Christian roommates. So I transferred down here and I, I took a job at Rivers Hall at the University of North Alabama. I forgot what they called us, but we kind of managed the, the, the desk there and, uh, there was another man who also was hired to work there, and he was a strong believer in Christ and we had the richest, sweetest fellowship. For months and months and months, he and I would talk about the things of the Lord and sharpen each other, encourage each other. Now this is 40-40+ years ago. It just so happened though he is, he, he, he had black skin. It just so happened he had more melatin in his his flesh, melanin, I should say in his flesh. An African American. But it didn't matter to him and it didn't matter to me. We had sweet fellowship in the Lord.

And also at that my, my first year at UNA, I, I, I got one of Jerry Falwell's "Jesus first" pins." Do y'all remember those? And I stuck it on my shirt and I was quite bold and outspoken about my faith in Jesus Christ. And I had a, a, a young lady, a girl in one of my classes who really openly tried to, I guess you'd say persecute me. She was quite critical

and quite aggressive, and it just so happened that she also had darker skin. She was an African American. And it taught me early on I, I wouldn't have been a racist by any stretch before I became a Christian, but it taught me brand new as a brand new believer, here's a brother whose skin's dark and you and him are bonded in Christ and have sweet fellowship, and now here's a girl whose skin is dark and she doesn't know Christ, and she's giving you a hard time in your class. So I'm killing two birds with one illustration. Here's what I mean is this: loving Jesus is what matters. Has God changed your heart, that's what matters. Christianity overcomes all racial, all ethnic, all skin color issues. If you love Christ, I love you and you should love me. Period. That was just a, a neat lesson for me that in that setting it didn't matter the ethnic background, it mattered that I loved Christ, whether or not people really liked me or did not like me.

Little did I know that what that girl was doing to me in my sociology class was just a warm up for the things that were going to happen when I went into full time gospel ministry. I just knew and I mean this, I just knew as a brand new Christian at age 19 with no real church background, I just knew if I went into the Baptist church and opened my Bible and taught those good Baptist people what the Bible says, they would be thrilled about it. No, it didn't happen that way. There was a lot of opposition to the things I would teach and preach, and even though you know these passages, when it happens to you, you're like, this isn't really supposed to happen. Everybody is supposed to love me. Well, let me say to the pastors out there that maybe in the first 10 or 15-20 years of your pastorate that it is tough and there is underminings and there is slander and then you got to deal with your own failures and blunders, you have to repent along the way yourself and you have to grow. And let me tell you something, if you'll stay with it, God will give you a bunch of sheep that love the truth and they will love you. So carry on and keep carrying on. That didn't come out in the text, but I thought I would bring that out.

Well continuing on. Well, let's see, I got another illustration here. I don't wanna miss this one for sure. Hang on. Oh, let's go to II first. So there is that authenticating mark. You will have some persecution and suffering if you desire to live Christ, for godly in Christ Jesus. II. The multiplication of evil in the world. So Paul says to Timothy continuing on this theme, he says, "Now Timothy," verse 13, "but evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." Evil men. One scholar says that word "evil" has the idea that which causes labor or pain or sorrow, or that which is malignant, everything opposite of good. These kind of men, men in the earth who cause you pain and sorrow. They're like a malignancy.

Then he uses the word "impostor." The word "impostor" here is an interesting word. It's the same word that's used for the professional mourners of this day. Now, you may not know this, but in this day it was common that when a rich man died, he would pay people to wail and howl and mourn at his death so that people would think he was special and important and greatly missed. Some of these wicked kings spent a lot of money to get some mourners at their deaths, and that's what he means by impostor. They're not the real thing. They're paid. And that's what Satan does, Satan brings Satan brings into the church those that he's promising great advancement or even wealth if they'll just do his bidding but Satan's a liar and he pays in counterfeit money.

And I thought about evil men and impostors and it reminded me of what we're seeing in our culture today of the the Leftist and the Liberals, who today flaunt their virtue. We call it virtue signaling. In effect, they, they want to say, "We have elite virtue. We're superior to everyone else in goodness and in virtue." They claim that they alone really care for the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged, and actually, especially the politicians, they need a large number of the population to feel oppressed, to feel as victims, so then they can assign themselves the role as savior. But if, if they don't have some real victims out there and a lot of oppressed people, then they lose their power because the people won't need them as the savior. So if there's not enough truly oppressed and truly disadvantaged people, and by the way, there are always are some and as Christians we ought to stand for them and help them and support them, but we're seeing something different from that. Matter of fact, the truly oppressed and disadvantaged get lost because they keep making up new definitions for the word oppression and disadvantaged and what a victim is. So they keep building this up.

Recently, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, she said that she and her Leftist colleagues are, "doing the Lord's work." That's her words. We are, "doing the Lord's work." I think that's what the Apostle Paul said, "Timothy, there's going to be some impostors out there who placed themselves as the great elitist good people, who claim to be doing the work of God in the earth, and Timothy, they're impostors." And we know they're impostors because they openly promote wickedness. Doing good and embracing wickedness can never go together. "Oh, we're helping these people." Yes, but you're wicked and you're embracing wickedness so we know you're a false teacher. You're an impostor.

Paul taught us to be careful of those who claimed to be of God and their teaching and their lives are in contradiction to godliness. That's why he said back in 1 Timothy 6:3, we hold to the doctrine conforming to godliness. Paul's point to Timothy was when you hear these guys teach and they have all kinds of different angles to make them look merciful and caring and compassionate, or whatever it may be, but notice at the end of the day, are they embracing, celebrating, promoting that which the Bible teaches is ungodly? Then you know they're false teachers, then you know they're then of God.

For example, Nancy Pelosi and those of the far left in the Democratic Party, they have vividly proven that there is not an unborn baby they would not terminate, or sexual perversion they would not celebrate, or an indoctrination in sexual immoralities that they would not indoctrinate into our children in schools. Folks, that's not the doctrine of godliness. That's wickedness. That's the doctrine of ungodliness. So on the one hand, when they hold to these things yet say, "We're helping people," that's not true. Paul says impostors claiming to do the work of God and they are not of God. This is the doctrine according not to godliness, it's the doctrine according to ungodliness.

Matthew 7:15 through 20, did not our Lord tell us very clearly, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits." Do they have the fruit in their teaching and lives of true

biblical godliness or ungodliness? Because, "Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits."

Yes, et me back up. I know primarily our text is teaching about professed preachers who come into churches, but these politicians keep popping in these little phrases that "we're doing the Lord's work," so they lump themselves in with the impostors Paul warned us about. And a hallmark trait of false teachers is they try to atone for, if not excuse their personal ungodliness by doing good works for the oppressed or for victims. So watch these people.

Then, as I said, even before the service this morning, this past week our, I shouldn't say our because we're not a member, but the Southern Baptist Convention, the biggest Protestant, largest Protestant denomination in the world, has formed a committee to study what the word "pastor" means, obviously making room for the ordaining of women in the role of elder and pastor in the church. That's what this is about. Several prominent leaders in Southern Baptist life have started a drift toward a condoning of homosexuality as acceptable. Maybe they're just "changing with the times," but this is what Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his day called the downgrade, and that's what it is. We're going down and down and down and down.

This is what Paul meant, look at it there in your text, verse 13, "but evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse." It was bad enough, but Timothy, they don't stop, they just keep getting worse. Now bad to worse here is what we're seeing happening in, in our culture and our denominations and all around us. And it's so pervasive, it is so seductive, and it's quite difficult to, to, to keep your stand on what matters when it's happening all around us. That's why Paul writes to Timothy and through Paul's writing, Paul writes or God writes to us today, "Do not compromise. Keep your convictions and they're gonna keep going from bad to worse."

Some scholars point out the phrase "from bad to worse" doesn't necessarily always mean a growing amount of wickedness, but a more vile, corrupt and evil types of wickedness. Let me give you another illustration. Roughly speaking, in the 1950s and '60s, Baptist churches gave a wink and a nod to out-and-out fornicators and out-and-out adulterers. Then along comes abortion, and pretty much that's tolerated. Then now there becomes a warming to homosexuality being maybe it's okay, and women elders and pastors. I mean, the question is, where does this end? I mean when you start pulling away from the Scriptures, what holds you then? It doesn't end, Paul said it goes from bad to worse. When you start, it goes from bad to worse. Today we have a sprinkling of open homosexuals filling pulpits and also in some Baptist churches. We're beginning to hear of some who, who live in open rebellion to their God-given gender, possibly having mutilated themselves, taken hormones and started dressing and acting opposite of their God-given gender actually becoming church pastors. From bad to worse. And often these things are celebrated.

So he says, "Timothy, you're gonna have to keep standing. Timothy, I'm not telling you it's gonna get any easier. There may be some respite in there where it's not as hard or difficult, but generally speaking it's gonna go from bad to worse." Now, he says, he uses the words, the phrase there these impostors are going to be deceiving and being deceived. Deceiving means they're actively trying to convert others. The idea is that they fervently want all to embrace their revolution. They cannot tolerate opposing opinions. And the prominent point here is the one who's trying to deceive us is, they are themselves being more and more deeply deceived. They are increasingly losing the power to resist self-deceit. Because of their willful involvement and embracing of scented wickedness, they are increasingly given over, the Bible teaches, to a reprobate mind.

So they're deceived and they, they keep getting more deceived and they want to deceive others and are more aggressively seeking to deceive others. I cannot, I, you know, when we heard a few weeks ago that many public school systems are actually wanting to teach kindergarten and elementary school children about gay and lesbianism and transgenderism and all these things, and I thought back, and I don't mean to be crude here or, or, or distasteful from the pulpit, in the 1st through 6th grade I didn't know my teachers had sex. I mean, you know what I mean? It's not to be talked about. It doesn't matter. That's not the place. And furthermore, they're teaching unbiblical view of sexuality. So, dads, I'm telling you, so this is blood in the street. A line we will not allow to be crossed. Period. We have to start our own school or whatever it is.

Now thank God I don't hear any of that in Alabama and I know a lot of more conservative states, they put up a wall and thank God for our Christian administrators and leaders and teachers who wouldn't go there. But I just want to say it now: your pastor's not moving. I just can't. I've come too far to go wobbly on you now. I don't want any of you men to go wobbly on me. Unthinkable. You know why? Because they told us some years ago, just let homosexuals get married. They just love each other and it's okay, and then that domino fell. Then another domino fell. Now we don't even have enough letters in the alphabet to describe the immoralities and perversions that they want to partake of. Now in balance, Christian kindness and compassion, we show to all peoples. Amen? But don't ask me to celebrate what the Scripture says is wickedness.

Going from bad to worse, and here's the fruit problem. You say, "Well, how did they get there?" Well, God took them there because of their own choices. Romans 1:21. "For even though they knew God," they knew in their heart of hearts they shouldn't go down that road, "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened." Romans 1:28, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer," notice the first thing is always, "I'm gonna push God out and I'm gonna be my own God in this. I'll push my Creator out and the way He's designed me to function," in the context here is human sexuality, "and I'm gonna do what I want to do." So "God gave them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper." Gave them over means God abandoned the building. God left them and left them which, with that which is not God. Now they only have the ungodly.

So God left, godliness left and ungodliness fills the void and they are left to engage in unbridled and often unnatural lust thus Paul's phrase to Timothy, and by the way, homosexuality and those unnatural affections were very common in the day that Paul wrote this in the Roman and Greek empires. They're going from bad to worse. They're deceiving. There's a maliciousness to their deceiving. They have a plan to take things from bad to worse, and all the while, while they themselves are deceived and trying to be deceiving, they become convinced they're trying to take us from bad to good and they're warped, they're backwards. That's how deceived they are.

Brothers and sisters, it first started with toleration. "Well, it's okay. We'll just let them do what they're gonna do." Then it turned into celebration. You know, today that it's not enough just to tolerate now you'd better celebrate it with them. Look at all of our great companies in our land embracing the Pride Month issues. Toleration to celebration and now they're moving in on indoctrination. It's starting with our children. I told you years ago and I beat on the pulpit and told you, I said they're coming for our children. I said mark it, they're coming for our children. You know why? Because there's at least a smidgen of God-ordained conscience in them, and they need more converts to soothe their guilty conscience. A rebel always wants company. He don't want to face the consequence of his rebellion by himself. Started with toleration, then we moved into celebration, now they're [knocking] banging on the door of the schoolhouse and other places, it's time for indoctrination. Not with my grandchildren and not with yours.

"Pastor, I just thought we'd have happy church." Why don't we try a true church? You know what I found? When I love Jesus, it makes me happiest. My flesh didn't want to deal with this today but I don't do what I want to do.

Now the contrast, verse 14, the mandate to the truly godly, that's III. He said, "Now Timothy, in all this that's going on, you, however, continue in the things you've learned and become convinced of knowing from whom you've learned them." So subpoint A: continue in the pattern of sound doctrine in godliness. The word "continue" is present active. It means, "Timothy, you have been living this way, now, Timothy, continue with the doctrines and the Godly convictions that you have. Don't be swayed by this stuff." And by the way, in Paul's day, as in our day, stuff was happening in the culture and in the professing church. He said, "Timothy, don't go with them." He said, "You know what you've learned." Learned in verse 14 is an aorist tense, which means you've already learned this and you're continuing to walk in it. Continue to do that.

Then he says, "You've become convinced of it." In other words, this is a passive indicative. You, you hold yourself, you have convinced yourself this is right and this is where I'm going to stand. And dads, that's where a lot of us need to be today. You need to convince ourselves the old truth is right and this is where we're going to stand.

Then he says in verse 14, "knowing from whom you've learned them." Who did Timothy learn these doctrines and the doctrines according to God and list from? The Apostle Paul, but also from his mother and his grandmother, who the Bible says taught him the things of Scriptures from an early age. And so thus we see here in this verse the twin towers of

building the next generation in the truth. What does that mean? Number 1, you better have a Paul, you better have a faithful preacher preaching to your children the truth of God. You're not equipped, God did not design you alone as a father or as parents to do it by yourself. Get your children a solid place. Get them under the preaching the word. Then the other would be, he said, "Timothy, you know what I'm referring to, your mother and your grandmother taught you the things of God." That's home life, discipleship. Those are the twin towers of building the next generation truth: a faithful preaching of the truth and home life discipleship where that truth you learn at church is reverberated and reflected and talked about in the home.

Well, verse 15, he said, "These things you've learned, you know where you got it from, you got it from me, you got it from your godly mom and grandmother," and he says in verse 15, "that from childhood you've known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The faith we have in Christ Jesus saves us, and it sanctifies us, and it keeps us. It's a faith that makes us God-like in that God looks on us and sees the very righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ if we've believed on Christ, and it's the faith that, uh, gives us a, a godliness, a God-likeness in our lifestyles that we can't go with the world when it goes off this way or that way.

So our first subpoint, the mandate to the truly God list to continue in the pattern of sound doctrine and God and this now B: continue in the pattern of being Bible-centered and Bible-saturated. This book is so timeless. I feel like someone needs to stand up and scream at the "leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention" and say all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now the idea of all Scripture here means both the Old and the New Testament. I'll not belabor it very long, but 2 Peter 3:2 says, "that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by your holy prophets and the command of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." So the New Testament writers were begin to incorporate into this understanding in the churches, is the Old Testament and the forming New Testament that make up all the Scriptures. He puts them all together. In Colossians 4, and 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul requires that his letters to specific churches be circulated to the other churches, knowing they had divine authority in them. Then 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received," notice what he says, "the word of God which you heard from us." Paul says, I was giving you the word of God and you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, "which also performs its work in you, who believe." So when he says "all Scripture" he means the old and New Testament text.

Then, he says, "inspired by God." That literally means God-breathed out. It's God's instruction to us as it's, if he were standing before speaking to us. Has divine authority that he says.

Then he says, "it's profitable for teaching." The idea of teaching means the formation of doctrine. In other words, if you want to know who is God, then form your teaching, your doctrine from the Bible. If you want to know the question and answer the question, "Well, what is salvation?" Then go to the Scriptures. If you wanna know, "What what, merit, what defines marriage?" You go to the Scriptures, it's profitable for teaching, for forming your teaching on these essential topics.

Then he says it's, it's it's, it's profitable for reproof. The word "reproof" has the idea of evidence of what is true, that is, that which is tested and shown to be true. It has the idea you shine the light on it, and you can see really what's true and false.

That leads to the next one correction. Correction means is to make a change. Here's the proper path you take. Now we shine the light on it, and now you see where you are. Now here's what the Bible says, the steps you're to make, the corrections you're to make in your thinking or in your lifestyle. Every week when I preach to you, you're getting reproofs, the light's shining, and the Spirit of God through the word of God is giving you corrections. Now start thinking this way instead of that other way. Stop letting your emotions lead you to this conclusion, that's unbiblical. Say no to your emotions and stand on what God says in your thinking, and also in your life take these steps of correction. That's what Christianity is.

Then, he says, "training in righteousness." The word "training" means the system used to change your thinking and your behavior. Some of you, like your pastor, had to, no, all of us, like our pastor, had to battle in our thinking. We are so prone to think things that are not true. The Bible commands us, think on things that are true. So many of you are worried this morning because, you're worried about what might happen, and it hadn't happened so it's not true. Here's what you gotta do. I love doing this. Are you hearing me? Stop it! You don't know it. Don't base anything on anything that's not fact yet. Think on what's true. Well, see, that's what he means, training. You, you're training yourself to go to the book and put in truth and kick out that which is not truth. That's where sanity comes in, rest comes in, peace comes in. Well, there's so much we could talk about training, but that's the idea here.

Then he said, "training in righteousness." In other words, when you take the book and begin to train yourself by the old book, the Old and New Testament Scriptures, then you're training yourself to act acceptably to God, that which is truly right. We have the impostors, Paul says, who want to indoctrinate us with wickedness. We reject that and we go back to the old book as Paul is telling Timothy, and we train ourselves in that which is truly acceptable to God, righteousness.

Then he says of her 17, "so that the man of God may be adequate," that means perfect. The idea is you're missing nothing. You know what happens if I pastor this church for 42 years and I'm on my 42nd year, and I just stay with the word of God, you know what I've done? I've been, I've been thoroughly adequate. I have been perfect for what you need. Not that I'm perfect. I fell a lot. But the book's perfect. We, we don't have to have Freud or Skinner or Jordan Peterson, though I like a lot of what he says. We need Paul. John.

Matthew. James. Then you'll be perfect. You don't you won't miss a thing. You're completely adequate. "Thoroughly," he says, "adequately equipped." It's the idea is thoroughly furnished or perfectly equipped.

Now when we look at these two verses, verses 16 and 17, all Scripture, Old and New Testament, is God-breathed, is profitable for teaching, forming your teaching, your doctrine about all areas of life, for improve, shining the light on where you are, showing you what's good and bad, right and wrong. Correction, showing you the steps to take out of the wrong and getting more to the right both in your thinking and in your footsteps. Training in righteousness the systems that you use to keep getting this in you and walking it out in your life. And then so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. These, these two verses are foundational to our convictions about the doctrine of Scripture. In other words, what is Scripture. This God-breathed truth for us.

We hold that the Scriptures are inerrant, inerrant meaning they are completely without error or any mixture of error. Period. Are there difficulties in the Bible? Yes. Other things we can't quite explain? Yes. But you could almost fill the dictionary with the illustrations of, for example, it probably wasn't 150 years ago, Bible skeptics ridiculed the Bible for talking about the Hittite people. The Hittites, it's all in the Old Testament, because, they would say in all of our anthropological works and digs and excavations, we've never found a trace of any people who call themselves the Hittites. And then a British anthropologist was digging in a remote area and he started finding all these artifacts and tablets and stones and bases, and it had inscriptions of the Hittites all over it, and today there are museums full of artifacts from the Hittite peoples. It just takes science awhile to catch up with the old book sometimes. So you be careful when you think, "Well, I think they got us now. I think they found something that's proven this not authoritative." You stay, Timothy, Grace Life Church, fathers of Grace Life Church, stay with the book.

Inerrant, also fully authoritative and sufficient for all faith and practice. And here's my last word. At the end of the day, there's a lot of historical and scientific things we could say about the trustworthiness of the Bible, but at the end of the day, listen to me, the Bible is self-authenticating. It is self-authenticating. You just turn it loose. Turn it loose and the Spirit of God will apprehend the hearts and minds of boys and girls and senior adults and single folks and middle-aged folks, and grab their hearts and they'll say, "I can't explain it, but I love that book. And even if I wanna run away someday and get away from Jeff Noblit's screaming, there's something in me that says I got to get back in hear the book preached again. Just gotta have it. Just can't stay away from it long." You see, it's self-authenticating. So somebody, some skeptic, some scholar, some self-established elitist debates with me about the truth, I'll just go chapter 1, verse 1, and start teaching it. Chapter 2, start, keep. Chapter 3, keep teaching it. And they'll either run from me or run to God. The Bible os self-authenticating.

Jesus said in John 7:17, "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching," the doctrine, "whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." What Jesus was saying is, if, if God's done a work in your heart, if you're a born again child of God, if the Spirit's renewed you, if you're reborn of the Spirit, transformed by the Spirit, a

new creature in Christ Jesus, when the truth of God is preached something in you says, "Amen." Amen. Even though that bothers me, something in me says, "Amen." Even though that rebukes me, something in me says, "Amen." Even though I never thought about it that way something in me says, "Amen. God, You're right and I'm wrong." Self-authenticating. If you're willing to say, "God, You're Lord and I want to honor You," and you can only do that if God's really changed your heart. Can I ask you, sir, has God changed your heart? Are you are you born again? You must be born again. You can't just add this thing on. You can't just walk down an aisle, you can't just repeat a prayer. That may be okay, but have you changed? Then you will know the teaching whether it's from God. There'll be the Amen of the Holy Spirit in your heart as the word of God is preached. Who it was, I forgot who it was that said, you know, the word of God's like a lion, you just turn it loose and it'll do its work. Just turn it loose.

Jesus said if you're not born again, John 3:3, you cannot see, you just don't see the kingdom of God. The great contrast. "Timothy, here's where the world is, impostors, deceivers, being deceived and trying to deceive you, trying to indoctrinate you, trying to get you to swerve away from the old faith, and they're just going from bad to worse, Timothy, and they'll get worse but, Timothy, that's not you. The great contrast is you know what you've been taught. You know where you should stand. Your mother taught you this, and your grandmother taught you this and now I'm teaching you, Timothy, don't budge." And I'm here to declare to you emphatically with every fiber of my being, Grace, Life Church of Muscle Shoals is not going to budge from the faith once for all given to the saints because we're going to live in great contrast to the impostors who keep going from bad to worse. And all of God's people said. Amen.