

Rob Thomas, 18 January 2026

2 Ti 3 ¹⁰⁻¹⁷

Lk 4 ¹⁴⁻²¹

"You, however..." (v10)

That's how it starts.

Paul the Apostle

writing to Timothy the young church leader.

"You, however..."

We know what that means.

It means

that what Paul is about to write to Timothy

is going to be in contrast

to what Paul has just written

immediately beforehand.

And here's what Paul has just written.

It starts in v1:

"...mark this. There will be terrible times in the last days.

People will be lovers of themselves,

lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive,

disobedience to their parents,

ungrateful, unholy,

without love, unforgiving, slanderous"

That's not the end –

I could read much more!

In fact, if you have the Bible text in front of you,

you'll see that it goes on like that

for five verses,

and nineteen different counts

of godless and evil

behaviour.

These, says Paul,

are the challenging characteristics of the world

in which Timothy must stand fast

as a witness to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But that's not all.

It's worse than that, much worse.

And the worst of it is

that these kinds of sinfulness and depravity

are to be found not only in the world

but, appallingly, also

in the Church.

In the Church,

where there are people who (v5)

"[have] a form of godliness

but [deny] its power."

That is to say,

people who are outwardly godly,

who make sure to appear to others

as being respectable Christian believers,

even leaders in the Church –

but who, in reality,

lack any kind of genuine grasp

of the Christian faith.

And who make easy prey of vulnerable people,

including exploiting women

alone in their homes

while their husbands are absent.

They draw such victims in
to their warped and self-indulgent way of life
even as their depravity
denies the very truth
that they claim to represent.

What a formidable challenge for Timothy –
for the young, inexperienced, timid
Timothy.

But now we come to v10:
“You, however...”

For you, Timothy,
things are different.
Different for two reasons.

The first is in vv10-11,
where Paul says to Timothy:
*“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.
Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”*

Here’s the first reason
for Timothy to be reassured that,
in the face of these huge challenges,
things are to be different for him.

The first reason is
that Timothy has,
right before him,
the example of the life of the Apostle Paul.
Paul rightly reminds Timothy of what he has seen
of the quality of Paul’s life and witness.
That’s why Paul spells it all out
as we just read
in vv10-11.

This is not self-promotion:
it’s for Timothy’s benefit,
to build his confidence in God
as he develops in Christian leadership.

It’s clear that Paul practises what he preaches
and is willing to suffer for it.

His life has been consistently righteous,
self-controlled,
faithful, and loving.

He’s remained steadfast to his principles
through many grave persecutions.

Persecutions that are inevitable for an apostle.

Indeed, we remember the words
with which the risen Lord Jesus
commissioned Paul into this role
in Acts 9 ¹⁵:

*"... This man is my chosen instrument
to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings
and before the people of Israel.
I will show him how much he must suffer
for my name."*

And Timothy has witnessed all of this.

He's been privileged to see at first hand
the authentic faithful life of the Apostle Paul,
so as to draw from it
an example
and an encouragement.

That's the first reason

for Timothy to be reassured and encouraged that,
in the face of these huge challenges,
things are to be different for him.

And the second reason, says Paul,
is Timothy's knowledge of the Scriptures.

vv14-17: *"... 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."*

Now, unlike Timothy, you and I don't have first-hand access
to view an apostle's life.

But we do have the Scriptures.

A greater advantage, in fact, than Timothy had
because we have the Word of God written
and read out,

whereas although the OT was complete,
the NT was not fully compiled in Timothy's lifetime.
But we are privileged to have it all.

So where did these Scriptures come from?

Well, here's how Peter describes the process:

This is 2 Pet 1²⁰⁻²¹: *"Above all, you must understand
that no prophecy of Scripture
came about by the prophet's own interpretation.
For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,
but men spoke from God
as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."*

Now the prophets and apostles
who were moved by God in these ways
were not being used
as mere dictating machines.
Each communicated in his own unique way.

In fact, one of the tools that scholars use
in answering difficult questions
about who wrote what
is to judge whether a particular passage
sounds like Paul, or Peter, or Luke,
whether it's consistent
with his manner of writing,
and his theological emphasis.

Scripture originated in God's mind
and was communicated from God's mouth
by God's breath or spirit,
and we call it the Word of God because God spoke it.

For example, in Isaiah,
the prophet speaks (eg 40⁵) and then he declares
"... the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The Biblical authors spoke and wrote their words
in their own way
and in their own historical and social context,
but behind it all
was the invisible guiding hand
of the Holy Spirit of God.

This means all Scripture, OT and NT.
Paul makes that point very succinctly
In this very letter (1 Ti 4¹⁸).

Let's look at this carefully, because it shows us
something important.
1 Ti 4¹⁸ *"For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox
while it is treading out the grain',
and
'The worker deserves his wages'".*

Now, as we look carefully at this,
and ask where Paul takes those two quotations from,
we realise what he's done!

You see, he's taken an OT quotation
(Do not muzzle the ox while it's trading out the grain) –
which comes from Dt 25 ⁴ –
and he's taken a NT quotation
(The worker deserves his wages) –
which is a quotation from Jesus in Luke 10 ⁷. –
he's taken an OT quotation
and a NT quotation
and he's put them right next to each other
and he calls them all 'Scripture'!

So that's the first point in v16 –
the question of what Scripture is:
“All Scripture is God-breathed...”
It is God-breathed, God-inspired.
That's what Scripture is.

Then Paul goes on to tell us what Scripture is for.

Look at verse 16.
It's “*God breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting,
and training and righteousness
so that the man of God
may be thoroughly equipped
for every good work.*”

In fact, Paul begins this explanation of what Scripture is
in verse 15
where he says that the holy Scriptures
are able to make you wise for salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus.

The Bible is essentially a handbook of salvation!
Its overarching purpose is to teach
not facts of science –
we can discover those
by our own study of the world around us –
not facts of science but facts of salvation
which no human exploration can discover,
but only God can reveal.

The whole Bible unfolds the divine scheme of salvation.
Let's summarise it now.

Let's summarise what we know of God's great plan
of salvation.
And as we do that, let's think about how we know these things...

First, mankind's creation in God's image
How do you and I know
that we are created in the image of God?
Well, we know about it
only because God has disclosed it to us
in His Word.

In our pluralist and permissive society,
some Christians are swept from their moorings
by the flood tide of sin and error.

But the Apostle Paul says to us
as he did to Timothy:
Stand firm.
Never mind if the pressure to conform
is very strong.
Never mind if you're young, inexperienced,
timid and weak.
Never mind if you find yourself alone
in your witnessing.

You've followed my teaching so far,
says Paul.
Now continue
in what you have come to believe.
You know the Biblical credentials of your faith.
Scripture is God breathed
and profitable
even in the midst of these grievous times
in which evil men and imposters
go from bad to worse.
It can make you complete
and it will equip you for your work.
Let the Word of God make you into
a man or woman of God!
Don't doubt it
and it will lead you on into Christian maturity.

And let me add a word,
not from our passage,
but from my experience.

Some Christians, for their knowledge of Scripture,
rely on what is read out in Church
on a Sunday.

Now, I don't knock that at all!
Keep it up!

But it's not a sufficient diet.
For that, we should aim to be reading a Bible passage
every day.

There are lots of notes available to help you do that.
I know that many of you already use
some form of daily Bible reading notes.
If you don't currently do that,
I can show you some notes as an example,
and I can help you get hold of them.
Just grab me at the end.

Another fruitful exercise,
if you haven't already tried it,
is to read the Bible in big chunks,
perhaps reading the whole thing once a year.
That can give you a really fresh perspective,
and there are simple schemes
to help you do it.

And also how about trying out a homegroup –
perhaps first try it for six weeks in Lent,
which starts in the middle of February.
Spend an hour or two
exploring God's Word with other like-minded pilgrims,
and see what different people make
of the passage
as they share points of view.

Yes, Scripture can make you complete
and it will equip you for your work.
Let the Word of God make you into
a man or woman of God!
Don't doubt it
and it will lead you on into Christian maturity.

Thanks be to God for His Word.

Amen