

***Essential Actions After the Election***  
***2 Timothy 3***

I have done more than one fix-it project at my home where just past the point of no return something has happened that made me think, “Now what am I going to do???” Most of those happened with the water turned off to the house and a pipe that was cut. If we wanted to cook or get clean again, it had to get fixed and I wasn’t sure what to do.

Some of us are thinking that way about the election in nine days. Now that these candidates have been offered, and one of them will be President, what will we do? I suspect there are a few anxious believers among us as we think about the future of this country and the church at large.

With all the debate about the various concerns about policies, morality, and character in this election it's easy to forget that as long as the Lord tarries from His return, there will be work to do on November 9. Whatever happens on November 8, the focus of our ministry and service to each other and in this culture won't have changed. The calling the church was given by Christ 2000 years ago hasn't changed. Our duties are still the same. So over the next two Sundays, we will be reminded of some of those realities from Paul's final letter, his message to Timothy, the pastor of the Ephesian church.

***WHEN LIVING IN DIFFICULT DAYS, GUARD YOUR THOUGHTS TO PREPARE FOR MINISTRY.***

Here are three priorities for your thought life and attitude as you contemplate what you will do —

- 1. Be Aware (vv. 1-9)**
- 2. Be Enduring (vv. 10-13)**
- 3. Be Convinced (vv. 14-17)**

## 1. Be **AWARE** (vv. 1-9)

- When Paul introduces this chapter with the phrase **realize this**, he is calling Timothy and the Ephesians to attention. They are to know (the lit. translation of **realize**); they are to be aware and wary. They are to be vigilant and watchful. Things will change at the end of time.
- And **the last days** refers to the time immediately preceding Christ's return for His own (rapture). They are the final days of the present age, before we move to the next phase of God's redemptive plan.
  - ✓ The list of 19 characteristics that Paul gives is both remarkable and unremarkable. It is remarkable in that it is *so* full of rebellion and sin; and it is unremarkable in that it could be a list for any day at any time in history. These are the kinds of things that sinners always do.
  - ✓ And notice that the days will **be difficult** — it might be that they are difficult for all people, but Paul also means that there will be particular difficulty for believers who will stand for the truth.
- Of what kinds of things does Paul call us to be aware and watchful?
  - ✓ It could be possible to do 19 word studies, but that isn't necessarily Paul's point, since as bad as this list is, it's probably not an exhaustive list of all sins of rebellion against God.
  - ✓ Notice that the list begins and ends with two perversions of biblical love; these "bracket" the list and give us an indication of the theme of the list:
    - **lovers of self** — instead of fulfilling the two primary commands of the OT (Mk. 12:28-31), these individuals live in rebellion against God by loving self instead of God and others. It is a form of idolatrous worship of self — "I am important and God and others are subservient to me." There are a variety of self-loves that are demonstrated in this: self-esteem, self-worth, self-fulfillment, self-worth. Everything is about the individual and nothing is about God and others. The "me-monster" rules over all.
    - **lovers of money** — They do not love money for the sake of sharing with others (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:18), but for what money will do for themselves (1 Tim. 6:9-10).
    - **lovers of pleasure** — They love hedonistic desires — desires that appeal to the flesh and do not affirm anything that is from or for God. These are the world's temporal, licentious desires.
    - and not **lovers of God** — This corresponds to the first sin; if you love self, you cannot love God. If you love self, you *will not* love God (because you will have no desire for Him).
    - And notice that the middle of the list includes the term **unloving** (3:3).
      - ... Biblical love is an exaltation of others and a humiliation of self.
      - ... Unloveliness is an exaltation of self and a humiliation of others.
      - ... These aren't interested in loving others; they are devoid of family affection and they have no kindred spirit with others. They are incapable of and unwilling to sacrificially love others.

- ✓ The list is more particular than just a lack of love or loving the wrong things, but that *is* the essence of the list. If you love self and you refuse to love God, not only will people think ill of you, but you will also destroy your life. Loving God is the greatest act of obedience and joy anyone can experience.
  - ✓ And all these characteristics indicate that before Christ returns things will not get gradually better. The world (and even the church) will degrade until God is unwilling to withhold His wrath any longer. There will be an end to His patience (**Rom. 2:4-5**).
- And notice the results of these kinds of characteristics:
    - ✓ They cling to a ***form of godliness*** but ***deny its power***. They don't have the gospel or its power; they don't even have "gospel lite." They have no gospel and no power. They have "gospel imitation" that is powerless to transform them.
    - ✓ And the problem is not merely that these people are in the world, but they are in the church — they come into ***households*** (v. 6) and pervert the truth, preying on those who are most spiritually vulnerable (***weak women*** — those who were uneducated, untaught and licentious in their ***sins*** and desirous ***impulses***). They prey on the spiritually weak and lead them to further sin and do not give them the redemptive hope of the gospel.
    - ✓ These men further ***oppose the truth*** (v. 8); they are not interested in the real gospel. And the end of their lives is that because they are opposed to gospel truth, God ***rejects*** them. They have been found guilty in God's court of law and disqualified and condemned (Tt. 1:16). In a word, they are ***foolish*** (v. 9). They've traded God for sin, the eternal for the temporal and they are lost.
  - When Paul says to ***realize this*** he is doing two things:
    - ✓ He is warning us to avoid these things — ***realize (know) this***. There are people in the world and people in the church that are not fighting against unrighteousness. And they are indicative of the end of the age and they do not indicate the initiation of good times.
      - Oh friend, see these sins for what they really are — they are disastrous to your soul. They will only give you heartache, both here and in eternity.
      - These sins can never give lasting joy.
    - ✓ He is reminding us that this is what it will be like at the *end* of the age — Christ will soon return.
      - Friends, that is a hope-giving, not anxiety-producing truth!
      - Remember that whatever happens in the last days, life is always hopeful for God's people Israel (Hos. 3:5) and the church (**2 Tim. 4:18**; Jn. 6:39-40; 1 Pt. 1:3ff).
      - When we see these kinds of things, we can well say, "It looks like Christ might be returning soon..." and isn't that good news! That should stimulate us to holy living (2 Pt. 3:11-12) and to evangelistic efforts (2 Tim. 4:5).
    - ✓ When we see things that indicate the degradation and destruction of the culture, let us respond and say, "No matter how much some are calling evil 'good,' I am committed to God's righteousness. And the more evil I see the more I long for and anticipate Christ's return" (Rev. 22:20-21).

## 2. Be **ENDURING** (vv. 10-13)

- When things get hard it's hard to keep going. We are prone to quit.
  - ✓ When dietary change and exercise are no longer novel, but painful, we want to quit.
  - ✓ When we get to Numbers in late February we want to stop reading the thru-the-Bible plan.
  - ✓ When financial changes mean we need to tighten our budgets, we are enticed by one more purchase on Amazon.
  - ✓ When others around us gossip and criticize, it's hard to not speak and hard to be content.
  - ✓ When the culture and church become a moral wasteland, it's hard to be hopeful. When vv. 1-9 are a reality, we are tempted to run away, we are prone to despair and joylessness. That's what Paul addresses in vv. 10-13.
- When Paul says, ***Now you followed*** he is speaking to Timothy and reminding Timothy of what he had previously done to remain faithful — Timothy followed the example of Paul. When Paul says ***followed*** he means that Timothy persevered and persisted in following Paul's example closely. And he paid particular attention to Paul's ***teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings***.
  - ✓ These attributes of Paul are in contrast to the way of the worldly church in vv. 1-5. Where the world was unloving, Paul loved; where the world was unholy, Paul was holy; where the world rejected God, Paul followed Christ. Where the world lived for hedonistic pleasure, Paul joyfully endured suffering.
  - ✓ There is a good example here of following people in the faith who have been faithful to Christ (e.g., Heb. 11; 1 Cor. 11:1). But more than that, Paul is simply encouraging Timothy to be faithful in the midst of suffering and persecution.
  - ✓ Remember Paul's suffering in ***Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14:19-23)***. And God did ***rescue*** him, yet Paul's final deliverance was going to come through martyrdom (2 Tim. 4:18). And that leads to Paul's conclusion about suffering and persecution...
- ***All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.***
  - ✓ There is a certainty to persecution. If you haven't experienced loss because of Christ, you will. If you haven't been mocked, if family haven't ridiculed or ostracized you, if you haven't been reprimanded or fired at work, if you haven't experienced financial loss because of your standards, you will. It is coming and it is a certainty.
  - ✓ And not only that, but notice v. 13 — evil men and (spiritual) imposters will proceed from bad to worse... That is, there is no fixing the culture. [Hear that.] There will always be evil and times will only get worse. It is the nature of sin and evil to get progressively worse. And friends, while we grieve for those who are trapped and ensnared by that evil (some of whom are family members) that should not overwhelm us or discourage us. Just because evil is getting worse does not mean God has lost His sovereignty. He is still authoritative and will always be authoritative.

- These verses are a reminder to us that we need to prepare for suffering and persecution. We need to anticipate it and be ready for it. We will be ready for persecution as we think rightly about it.
  - ✓ If Christ was persecuted, His followers can expect to be persecuted; persecution is normative for the believer (Mt. 5:44-45; Jn. 15:20; Phil. 1:29).

- **Matt. 5:44-45** *"But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."*
- **John 15:20** *"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."*
- **Phil. 1:29** *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

- ✓ No one who is persecuted is ever alone if he is in Christ (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

**2 Cor. 4:7-10** *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; **persecuted, but not forsaken**; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*

- ✓ Persecution is an opportunity to boast in the power and effectiveness of Christ's cross (Gal. 6:12-16).

**Gal. 6:12-16** *Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*

- ✓ Persecution is a means to learning to live in godliness — and is the believer's calling (1 Pt. 2:18-21; Phil. 1:29).

- **1 Pet. 2:18-20** *Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.*

- **Phil. 1:29** *For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

- ✓ Persecution is a means of testing and proving the quality of one's faith (1 Pt. 1:6-9).

**1 Pet. 1:6-9** *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

- ✓ Persecution is not unusual; and we can respond to it with settled joy in Christ (1 Pt. 4:12-19).

**1 Pet. 4:12-19** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

- All this is another way of saying what we've said in the past couple of sermons:
  - ✓ This world is not our home; this government is not our hope; political victory is not our joy.
  - ✓ Heaven is our home; Christ's return is our hope; spiritual redemption and seeing our Savior is our joy. And none of those things (and a host of others) can be taken away in by persecution or suffering. So we will not despair.
  - ✓ This week I've had several emails forwarding articles about the lay pastor in GA who has been fired from his government job and been ordered by the state's attorney general to turn over his sermon notes or manuscripts. It is wrong; but we should expect this and more (and I do).
  - ✓ John Piper was exactly right when he wrote [*Roots of Endurance*, 19.],

Existence in this fallen world will not be pain-free and trouble-free....Frustration is normal, disappointment is normal, sickness is normal. Conflict, persecution, danger, stress — they are all normal. The mindset that moves away from these will move away from reality and away from Christ.

- Paul's admonition to Timothy in the face of a degrading and hostile Roman culture was to exhort him to remember what he had previously done in the face of affliction and persecution. We need the same message. Prepare to endure; and one of the best ways to endure is to be convinced of the power and authority of Scripture at all times:

### 3. Be **CONVINCED** (vv. 14-17)

- Notice that Paul says, *continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of...*
  - ✓ What were the things that Timothy had learned? They were the **sacred writings** (v. 15, the OT)
  - ✓ It was the OT and Scriptures that gave **wisdom** to Timothy that led him to **salvation**.
  - ✓ It was the Scriptures that led Timothy to **faith** and **Jesus Christ**.
  - ✓ And it was not only Timothy that gained this treasure, but it was also a treasure to those who had taught him (Paul, his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice; cf. **1:5-6**; Acts 16:1ff).
  - ✓ Timothy had been **convinced** of the reliability of the Scriptures and **known** salvation in a real (not theoretical) sense. He is living the faith of others, and passing it to another generation. His suffering and his faithfulness are not just about him avoiding trouble and being comfortable; they're about him being true to his calling and demonstrating a reliable faith to others.
  - ✓ He had been convinced of the power of Scripture; Paul is calling him to remain convinced. And if Timothy might have forgotten what Scripture does, Paul reminds him —
- **All Scripture is inspired by God** — that is, it is by God and from God. All of it. The Scripture doesn't merely contain the Word of God or become the Word of God. It *is* the Word of God. It is the expression and revelation of His person — His heart, mind, and will. It's by Him, from Him, about Him, and for Him. And it is powerful to achieve everything we need.
  - ✓ It is **profitable** for **teaching**. Wherever we are ignorant of God and whatever we need to know about Him and life, the Scriptures are adequate to teach us.
  - ✓ It is **profitable** for **reproving**. To reprove means to refute error and to expose sin. When Scripture teaches us, we will find the error of our ways being exposed. And that is painful, good news. (And this is a good reminder that my greatest problem is not the sin that is in the world but the sin that is within me; and the good news about the sin that is in me is that God can forgive and redeem it...).
  - ✓ It is **profitable** for **correction**. That is, Scripture "fixes" us — it restores us and transforms us. And the main way that it transforms us is that it trains us to live righteously...
  - ✓ It is **profitable** for training in **righteousness**. It trains us to think and live justly and righteously. This is the ultimate goal of Scripture; and only Scripture, applied by the Holy Spirit can do this.
  - ✓ It is able to make us **adequate** and **equipped for every good work to which God** calls us. That is simply another way of saying that Scripture is wholly sufficient for everything we need. If we have the Scriptures, we are equipped and prepared.

- So here is the question: we talk often about the value of the Scriptures around here and we spend much time explaining and expounding them (the Scriptures are the foundation of all our ministry); are you convinced that the Scriptures can do what they say they will do? Are you convinced that the Scriptures are superior to the President, the Supreme Court, Congress and the Senate, the governor, the mayor, and the city council? Yes, we are. But do we act like the Scripture alone is powerful?
  - ✓ Government can (and does) legislate morality, but it is powerless to change lives and hearts. Only the Word of God is adequate to change a man's life and heart. We must live like we believe that.
  - ✓ That's why we may develop new strategies for ministry and we may expand ministries and dream about ministry possibilities, but everything we actually do is going to be centered on the Scriptures because only the Scriptures are authoritative to change the lives of individuals. So in a very real sense, not much around here is going to change on November 9 — our task will still be the same: to explain the Scriptures so that the Scriptures can do its transforming work in people.
- Friends, after the election is over, my suspicion is that there will not be many delighted believers, no matter who wins. And there are going to be questions about what we're going to do. I'll tell you what we're going to do — we are not going to change a thing. We're going to do the same things we do every week in every ministry. We are going to open the Scriptures and let the Lion of Judah and the lion of the Word out of its "cage" and let Him and this Word change people's lives. That's the only hope any of us has ever had and it's the only hope this world has now.
- And if we allow the Scriptures to change our mindset about sin, suffering, and Scripture, then we will be content.

**CONCLUSION:** What will we do after the election?

- ✓ We will be aware of the false enticements of the world.
- ✓ We will endure when we are persecuted.
- ✓ And we will remain convinced and committed to the authority of the Scriptures.

**BENEDICTION:** Jude 24-25