

Enduring
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2 Timothy 3:12-4:8

Opening: In 2009 a British technology help service Gadget Helpline, surveyed 75,000 calls. **What percentage of men would you guess didn't look at the manual before calling for help? What percentage of women?**ⁱ

2 Timothy 3:1 says, "in the last days there will come times of difficulty." The NIV renders it "terrible times;" the NLT, "very difficult times;" the NKJV, "perilous times." Specifically, it refers to a time when many will turn away from God.

In "terrible times" where do you turn for instruction? Maybe it's a trusted friend, a professional advisor (attorney, accountant,) or an expert in the field. In the cockpit of an airplane the FAA requires a Pilot's Operating Handbook in a standardized format known as an Aircraft Flight Manual. I doubt that pilots have to pull out the "operator's manual" unless they encounter a "difficult" situation with the equipment. We have a pilot in our class who could confirm that either way.

A properly trained pilot knows how to operate the plane because they've learned how the plane works and put that knowledge into practice on a daily basis. In the event of an unusual circumstance they can consult the manual for a refresher.

Young pastor Timothy had been exposed to the truths of Old Testament scripture since childhood, and the teaching of Paul in his adult years. Still, in his last letter, Paul felt it necessary to remind Timothy about the crucial importance of scriptural truth, particularly when people are turning away from truth.

Big Idea: To endure when times are terrible, followers of Christ must:

- Trust the truth of God's word (scripture is from God and dependable)
- Live in obedience to God's word (obedience = blessing)ⁱⁱ
- Share the good news of God's word (the message of the gospel)

- Let's begin with verse twelve of chapter three where Paul states the facts:

2 Timothy 3:12-4:8 (ESV)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- In that day persecution for faith in Christ could mean death. That may never happen to us, but the closer you live to Christ the greater the attacks by Satan through people he has deceived and recruited.
- In those “difficult days” we must “continue” in the truth of scripture.
- By the way, verse fifteen is another reminder of the importance of teaching children about Jesus at an early age. Is that a priority in our homes?
- Why can we trust scripture? How does it equip us as believers?

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

- Verses sixteen and seventeen are a favorite memory passage.
- **What does it mean that scripture is “God breathed?”**
- We can rely on scripture because God is the ultimate source.

2 Peter 1:20–21 (ESV)

20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

- In God’s amazing plan He used men to write what His Spirit inspired.
- Wiersbe: *“The Spirit did not erase the natural characteristics of the writers. In fact, God in His providence prepared the writers for the task of writing the Scriptures. Each writer has his own distinctive style and vocabulary. Each book of the Bible grew out of a special set of circumstances. In His preparation of men, in His guiding of history, and in His working through the Spirit, God brought about the miracle of the Scriptures.”ⁱⁱⁱ*
- Scripture is not just scholarly, historical, or philosophical writing. Scripture is supernaturally empowered to speak to the heart of Christ-followers through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 2:10-16)
- Charles Spurgeon: *“If you do not understand a book by a departed writer you are unable to ask him his meaning, but the Spirit, who inspired Holy Scripture, lives forever, and He delights to open the Word to those who seek His instruction.”^{iv}*
- Paul stated how the scriptures are helpful/profitable for all believers: Quoting Wiersbe again, *“They are profitable for doctrine (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right)”^v*

- The NLT says scripture teaches us “what is true,” makes us realize “what is wrong in our lives...” and “It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”^{vi}
- All this is for a specific purpose: ¹⁷ “that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
- One commentator: *“We neglect the Scriptures at our own peril. Through them we gain the ability to serve God and others. The Scriptures not only point the way; through the mysterious union of God’s Word and faith, they give us the ability to serve.”*^{vii}
- It’s obvious that knowledge and application of scripture is essential for preachers and teachers. **How is it helpful in ANY ministry role?**
- Timothy’s place of service was centered on sharing God’s word. As Paul reminds him of this he takes on a serious, solemn tone.

4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season;

- A “classic” passage for preachers with implications for us in the pews too.
- **The word for “preach” is the word “herald.” We don’t hear that word much. Do you know what it means? Google it and read the definition.**
- Paul’s “solemn” charge is elegant in its simplicity: “preach the word.”
- Don’t give opinions or theories, don’t pick and choose what pleases people, and don’t preach to impress or entertain, just preach the word.
- If God’s word is not the “main course” then it’s “junk food” preaching.
- There are many great books about the Bible, but they are NOT the Bible.
- As we said, the text of scripture has a supernatural power that the words of even the most anointed writers don’t possess.
- “In or out of season” means preach whether it’s convenient or not.
- **How does “in season/out of season” apply to every believer?**
- The next verses highlight the serious job of the preacher:

...reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- People will reject sound teaching “will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will reject the truth and chase after myths.”^{viii} Sounds like our world today!
- Preachers have to “keep their head,” “endure,” and share the gospel.
- Some translations render sound teaching as “sound doctrine.”

- Every follower of Christ needs to become familiar with the “essential” doctrines of our faith.
- That’s a big topic that deserves deeper personal study, but here’s a starter to whet your appetite. DOCTRINE is Christian truth and teaching passed on from generation to generation...^{ix}
- If it doesn’t come from scripture then it’s not sound doctrine. Jesus said to the Pharisees: ⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.” Mark 7:8 (ESV) Doctrine must come from scripture!
- Some doctrines are so fundamental and essential that rejecting them would mean rejecting Christianity. For example: “the deity of Christ, salvation by God’s grace and not by works, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, the resurrection of Christ, the Gospel, monotheism [one God] and the Holy Trinity...”^x [I would also add the virgin birth as essential.]
- Other doctrines are important but those are non-negotiables according to scripture.
- Book recommendation: Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know by Wayne Grudem
- Paul closes this section of the letter in an emotional and poignant manner:

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- The war against the Christian faith is hotter than ever in history.
- How will we endure as followers of Christ?
- Trust the truth of God’s word (scripture is from God and dependable)
- Live in obedience to God’s word (obedience = blessing)
- Share the good news of God’s word (the message of the gospel)
- This week, let’s use God’s word like the essential handbook it is!

ⁱ Answer: 64% of its male callers and 24% of its female callers had not read the instruction manual before ringing up.

ⁱⁱ See: [Psalm 128:1](#); [James 1:22-25](#); [Psalm 119:1-2](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 252). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} <https://www.christianquotes.info/quotes-by-author/charles-spurgeon-quotes/?listpage=5&instance=2>

^v Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 2, p. 253). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{vi} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (2 Ti 3:16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vii} Larson, Knute. *Holman New Testament Commentary - 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon: 9*. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

^{viii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (2 Ti 4:3–4). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{ix} Mohler, R. A., Jr. (2003). *Doctrine*. In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 436). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

^x <https://www.gotquestions.org/essentials-Christian-faith.html>