

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/16/92
II Timothy 3:13-17 "Back to the Basics"

Intro:

Q: What do we need to do in times like these?

A: Go back to the basics!

Q: What are the basics? What basics do we need to affirm in times like these?

Proposition: There are 2 basic truths we need to affirm according to II Timothy 3:13-17.

I. The Deterioration of Society--Society will continue to deteriorate (13).

II. The Dependability of Scripture--Scripture will always be dependable (14-17).

A. Scripture is dependable for Salvation (14-15).

B. Scripture is dependable for Sanctification (16).

C. Scripture is dependable for Service (17).

The Setting:

II Timothy sounds like a military book. Its author was General Paul. Its recipient was Paul's first officer, Timothy. Paul had been captured in battle, the battle of winning lost people from the snare of the Evil One by the power of the gospel. Why was Paul in the battle? Because of a commission he had received from the King of kings. His commission was clear--to take the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. But the general's days were numbered. His execution was imminent.

But that's not what troubled Him most. What caused Paul great grief was what he heard about Timothy. Tim had served by Paul's side in the ministry for 15 years. Yet something had happened to Timothy. The sudden surge of hostility against the church, and the arrest of Paul, had sent Timothy into his shell. Timothy was intimidated and hesitant. Though he had the task of leading the church in Ephesus, he was inclined to hold back, perhaps out of fear.

1:8 "Be not thou ashamed..."

2:3 "Thou therefore endure hardness..."

Notice carefully. Paul didn't say, "It's not so bad Timothy. Suffering for Jesus is fun!" Nonsense! Paul didn't pull any punches. The circumstances were tough. The times were rough!

3:1 "This know Tim that in the last days perilous times shall come..."

Q: What did Paul want Tim to do? Go back to the basics! The first basic...

I. The Deterioration of Society--Society will continue to deteriorate (13).

V 13 "But evil men and seducers shall become worse..."

For the past 2 Sunday mornings we've listened to Paul's vivid description of the "last days." These are certainly "perilous, stressful times (1)." The problem is people. And the problem with people is a misdirected love. Instead of loving God, we live in a

society of people that love themselves (2). Instead of loving God people love money (2). Instead of loving God people love pleasures (4). And to top it off, they throw in a little religion to cover up their spiritual adultery (5).

But the danger is not just out there in the world. It also creeps subtly into the church. Satan's cohorts disguise themselves as ministers of the gospel and seduce gullible, susceptible Christians (6). They also resist the genuine servants of Christ, and seek to impede the progress of the gospel (8).

Q: Will it get any better? Is the opposition to the gospel only temporary?

V 13 "But evil men and seducers (=swinders, imposters) shall become worse..."

Timothy, let me lay it out on the table. Here are the terms of service for Jesus Christ. The world is hostile against the true Church. It always will be.

Basic Truth #1: Society will continue to deteriorate.

NASB "will proceed from bad to worse."

Objection: "Wait a minute. What about in Russia and Romania today? Aren't they enjoying new freedoms and new opportunities for the spread of the gospel? Yes, and thank God for it! But listen. The opposition will come again. Just as we're seeing in America..."

Illust:

Tran: If we're going to stand as God's people, we must go back to the basics. Here's the first affirmation--Society will continue to deteriorate.

Q: So what should we do?! Affirm the second basic...

II. The Dependability of Scripture--Scripture will always be dependable (14-17).

Illust: Story about man who threw away the Guttenberg Bible...

Do we really understand the treasure we possess in the Bible?!

Quote: What Presidents have said about the Bible...

V 14 "But continue thou"

Strong contrast. "But as for you Timothy!" What was Tim to do?

V 14 "...continue in the things which thou hast learned..."

Right there is the key verb of this section. CONTINUE. It's a present tense command. That means it was something Paul expected Timothy to always do. Continue in the Scriptures. Abide in the Scriptures. Remain in the Scriptures.

Why? Because the Scriptures are dependable. They are sufficient. The Word of God will never become outdated. We never need fear it will go out of style.

Q: Do you believe the Scriptures are sufficient? Do you really?

That question is one of the key questions facing the church at the end of the 20th century. In earlier decades the church wrestled with issues like Inspiration and Inerrancy. There were fierce battles. The church has affirmed that the Bible is both.

But a more subtle, yet equally dangerous threat haunts us today. The issue under attack is the sufficiency of Scripture.

Q: Do we believe the Scriptures are sufficient? Do we believe they are sufficient to restore a man whose life has been wrecked by alcohol? Do we believe they are sufficient to repair broken marriages? To reconcile strained relationships between teens and their parents?

Illust:

Are they Scriptures sufficient? That's Paul's point in vv 14-17. Yes! The Scriptures have been, and always will be dependable! So what should I do with them? V 14 "Continue in them!"

Note: We studied this text carefully back in the Winter of 1990 in a series entitled "The Sufficiency of Scripture." We won't rehearse what was said then. Rather let's look at this familiar text from a different slant.

Granted the Scriptures are dependable. But for what?

I want you to see that the Scriptures will always be dependable for 3 things...

A. Scripture is dependable for Salvation (14-15).

Timothy knew that firsthand. Listen to what Paul reminded him.

Vv 14-15 "Continue...knowing of whom thou hast learned...wise unto salvation..."
"the HOLY Scriptures" = sacred writings (NASB)

Caution: We are not supposed to worship the Book. That would be bibliolatry. Nor do we worship a particular translation. The Bible is not a good luck charm. Having said that may we never forget that the Scriptures are "sacred." This book is sacred because of its Source. It came from God. It's God's Word.

Application: I agree with an observation by Warren Wiersbe, "The way we treat the Bible shows others how much or how little we respect it. While I don't want to become a crank in this matter, I must confess I hate to see a Bible on the floor. When we are carrying a Bible and other books, the Bible should be on top. There is a difference between properly marking a Bible as we study and defacing it by careless marking. I have seen people put a cup of coffee on a Bible!" (252)

We don't know a lot about Timothy's childhood. We do know:

1. He had an unsaved, pagan Greek father (Acts 16:1).
2. He had a Jewish mother Eunice and grandmother Lois.
3. Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the Scriptures from early childhood.
"from a child"--word used of a newborn, even pre-born child

Listen. Timothy had a big strike against him. He grew up in a divided home spiritually. But he had one great advantage in his favor. His mother started very early in teaching him the Scriptures.

Rom 10:17--"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." I'm convinced it is important to read the Bible to children. At an early age. Even infants. Even pre-born children. Why? It reminds you as a parent what your authority is in raising the child. And it reveals to the child what his guide is to be in life.

Illust:

Children are so impressionable when they're young! They'll take in everything you give them. They'll listen to Bible story after Bible story. They'll memorize verses. And all the while, you're whetting their appetite, and creating habits.

But if you wait, if you neglect the opportunity, you may lose their interest.

Tim's mother didn't wait. She taught him to love the OT Scriptures early. So one day when he was in his late teens, when Paul came preaching Jesus to his hometown of Lystra, Tim was ready. When Paul announced that Jesus was the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures, the Savior, the Lord, Tim's heart was pricked. He was saved!

The Scriptures are dependable for salvation. Look what they can do.

V 15 "...which are able to make thee wise unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus."

Ps 19:7 "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul..."

Illust:

Scripture is dependable for Salvation. Secondly...

B. Scripture is dependable for Sanctification (16).

V 16 "All scripture is given..."

What is sanctification? The root idea means "to set apart, to make holy." The Bible speaks of sanctification in 3 critical senses:

1. Past Sanctification--We have been sanctified if we are in Christ.

I Cor 1:2 "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints..." (also I Pt 1:1-2; Jude 1)

If we are in Christ, we have been sanctified, once for all, past tense. All the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. Positional Sanctification. Past Sanct.

2. Future Sanctification--We will be sanctified.

We never reach perfection in this life.

3. Present Sanctification--We are being sanctified.

This is present, practical sanctification. Sanctification is a lifelong process. We are being transformed into the image of Christ.

I Th 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord..."

We have a responsibility in this process of sanctification. II Tim 2:21 "If a man purge himself...he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified..."

Who is the agent of this moral transformation? The Holy Spirit. And what does the Holy Spirit use to accomplish this process? The Scriptures.

Jn 17:17, 19 "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Key: God uses His Holy Word to sanctify us. That is, we can depend on His powerful, sharp Word to chisel away the flaws in our life and character. The Scriptures are sufficient to transform us into the image and likeness of Christ.

Why is that? Because of the Source of Scriptures...

V 16 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (lit. "every Scripture")

lit. "God-breathed"--not so much "inspired" as "expired"; breathed out by God; The Scriptures were brought into existence by the very breath of God. Granted, He used a variety of men, and did not destroy their individuality of the human writer in the process. But the Spirit of God superintended. We can be sure that the Scriptures are God's Word.

Why is that important for our sanctification? Look what else is true of Scripture. It is "profitable" (means "useful, beneficial"). The Bible is not, contrary to popular opinion, a list of do's and don'ts. It's profitable. For what? Without repeating what we studied in detail in the past, notice 4 things:

1. For Doctrine--answers the question: What should I believe?
2. For Reproof--What should I change?
3. For Correction--How should I change?
4. For Instruction--How should I live?

The word instruction means "training." The Bible is God's training manual for right living. Do you want to know how to live life the way God intended it to be lived? Here's the blueprint. Scripture is dependable for your sanctification.

Illust:

Tran: We must affirm this basic truth. The Scriptures are dependable. For salvation, for sanctification. Is that all? No. God saves us and sanctifies us for a purpose.

C. Scripture is dependable for Service (17).

V 17 "That..."

God saves us for a purpose. We are saved by God in order to serve God.

V 17 "...the man of God may be perfect (complete, fully qualified), thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Wiersbe points out that the word "furnished" means "equipped for service." In other words, God's Word is sufficient to take ordinary people like us, and refashion us to we can serve the Living God! Just think of that!

Objection: "But what can I do for God? I can't serve God..." Really?

God's Word changes lives.

Illust: I read the story this week about a Brazilian, Signor Antonio of Minas. He bought a NT which he took home to burn. When he got there the fire was out. So he lit it. He flung the NT on the fire. It would not burn. He opened the pages to make it burn more easily. It opened at the Sermon on the Mount. He glanced at it. His mind was caught. He picked it up, and read on through the hours of the night. Just as dawn was breaking, he stood up and declared, "I believe." (Barclay 201)

Illust:

Response:

We've gone back to the basics today. II Timothy makes 2 truths perfectly clear for us. One, society will continue to deteriorate. Two, Scripture will always be dependable.

Listen. God's Word is sufficient. God uses the Holy Scriptures to transform lives. His powerful Word penetrates our heart, and brings us to a point of decision and commitment. I'm convinced that God uses His Word...

1. To enable us to experience Salvation.

I Pt 1:23 "Being born again, not of corruptable seed, but of incorruptable, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Some have been coming to this church for months now, maybe longer. You've heard the Word. And God has been working in your heart. You need to be saved.

2. To enable us to experience Sanctification.

God's plan for each Christian here is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Some of you are resisting that plan. You have pet sins you are hiding, wrong attitudes you are harboring. The Scriptures are tugging at your heart today. You can experience the freedom of God's forgiveness, if you will repent of the sin, and submit your life to the authority of His Word.

3. To enable us to enjoy His Service.

Challenge: All of us here today have specific decisions to make.