

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED

2 Timothy 3:1-17

Key Verse: 3:16

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..."

In Second Timothy chapter 2, Paul taught us to remember Jesus Christ in all circumstances. How hard it is to remember Jesus Christ living in this ungodly generation! But if we are going to have true happiness and eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance, we must remember Jesus Christ; we should not be enslaved by the things of the world. In chapter 3, Paul instructs Timothy to live a holy life in this ungodly generation. Paul also instructs Timothy to believe the Bible is the word of life to those who believe

in it.

I. Ungodly people (1-9)

First, ungodly people are lovers of themselves (1-5). Look at verse 1. "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days." Here, "in the last days," has particular conception. The last days does not have any particular dates or time. Magic artists deceived wandering people, predicting that Jesus would come on October 28, 1992, at 9:00 p.m. Biblically speaking, "in the last days" was comparable to the days of Noah. Even the corrupted people nod their heads and say, "They were terrible" (Lk 17:27). People in Noah's days ate and drank until the flood water came up between their necks and noses. Noah's days symbolize the time of ungodly people. Noah's days were the time when God's judgment was imminent. Ungodly people could not think about more than eating and drinking and enjoying sinful pleasure. Each of them says, "Where is God? I cannot see God with my eyes." Their ungodly way of life provoked God to anger. They were so wicked that God could not but de-

stroy them with water, except Noah's family and his folks. "In the last days" is also comparable to the times of Sodom and Gomorrah. People were terrible. They were violent and extremely immoral (Ge 19:5). "In the last days" is also comparable to the times of the destruction of the Roman Empire. At that time, Romans were most violent and immoral due to their ungodliness. High-class Roman citizens worried about their sons' and daughters' marriage. It was because young Roman people were conquered by deadly diseases, especially around their reproductive organs.

Look at verse 2. "People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy...." When we read verses 1-5 carefully, we learn that the characteristics of ungodly people are obvious. They are lovers of themselves. They are also lovers of money. The people listed in verses 1-9 are the children of the lovers of themselves and the lovers of money. They are boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient

to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2-4). It is not easy for us to live among these people. The same is true of God.

Let's think about lovers of themselves. They are people who live in the world against the law of God. God made man to please God and to take care of God's people and God's world. In short, God made man to live a life of mission. But they ignore the original purpose of man's meaning of existence. In short, lovers of themselves are selfish people. In the beginning God created man and gave them mission, creativeness, faithfulness, and especially the freedom of choice. But these selfish people abuse freedom of choice against God's truth. These selfish people are ignorant. They do not know that the cost of freedom is very costly. For example, England was a Viking nation. These people of Viking nation were very ungodly. They used their freedom to gratify

their selfishness and wickedness. In the course of establishing the country, people throughout many generations suffered because of ungodly people's selfishness and wickedness. But the gospel of Jesus came to England and they began to live for mission and for the country. From the time people lived under cruel feudal lords' rule to the time the Parliament of Great Britain was established, it took 1,000 years. English people suffered and bled until Magna Carta was declared.

When people misuse God-given freedom of choice they all become slaves of the devil. Nevertheless, Jesus came into this world to free us from the hand of the devil. It was costly. The cost was giving his precious life as a ransom sacrifice. There is no true freedom apart from Jesus. John 8:31,32 says, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." There is true freedom in Jesus Christ.

But ungodly people use their freedom for the sake of their selfishness. When they live a selfish life they become boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy, unforgiving, brutal, treacherous and so on. As was said before, selfish people are ignorant. They think that if they live selfishly they will be free indeed. They think that if they live selfishly they will be happy indeed. That's not true. They become worthless and useless. They become self-centered men. They gradually become mental patients and self-torturing people. Ironically, ungodly people really want to show themselves to be holy and pious people. They are comedians. Look at verse 5. "...having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."

Second, ungodly people ruin others and the world (6-7). Look at verse 6. "They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all

kinds of evil desires...." Ungodly people have keen instinct to smell sin-stained people. Paul gave as one illustration that an ungodly man catches a very sinful woman and ruins her by using her as his object of pleasure. This man is a great sinner before God.

Third, ungodly people hinder God's work (8-9). God called Moses to deliver his people and train them in the wilderness and help them enter the promised land. It was God's mission for Moses. But Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. Jannes and Jambres were a kind of magician (Ex 8:7; 9:11). Anyway, they hindered Moses' mission to bring his people into the promised land. Thus, they opposed God. It is because they knew what Moses was doing. They knew that what Moses was doing was good. But because of their depraved minds they hindered Moses' mission. Thus they opposed God.

II. Godly life in Christ (10-17)

First, godly people live a life of mission (10-14). Look at verse 10. "You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance...." In this verse Paul instructs Timothy to live a godly life. To live a godly life, we must remember Jesus Christ and his teachings and Jesus' way of life and the purpose of God. Next, we must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit: faith, patience, love, endurance.

The godly life is to live a life of mission. When Paul wanted to live a godly life in Christ Jesus, he was terribly persecuted. For example, when Paul went to Pisidian Antioch and proclaimed the gospel, many people accepted the good news of Jesus Christ. But the Jews envied him. They came with gangsters and threatened Paul not to put his feet in Antioch again and cast him out to Iconium. Paul was greatly persecuted and cast out. But God made the Syrian Antioch church the world mission headquarters. When Paul went to Lystra there was a crippled man. Paul healed him in the name of Jesus

Christ. Then the crowd of people deified Paul and Barnabas, calling Paul Hermes and Barnabas Zeus. Then the Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and beat Paul until he looked as if he were dead. As soon as they disappeared, Paul's consciousness came back. The persecution Paul received was not verbal persecution but violence in a foreign land. Here Paul demonstrates that godly people must live as men of mission and that mission accompanies persecutions. Paul reminded Timothy that God rescued them from persecutions. When we study Genesis, we see that from the beginning, God gave man mission to take care of God's world. Therefore, man is mission. For this mission Paul went through many persecutions. But he was not depressed nor did he cry under the tree because of the persecutions. Rather Paul encouraged Timothy, who was not ready for this kind of persecution, to carry out God's mission and receive much persecution. Here we are greatly moved by Paul's challenge to Timothy to live as a man of mission.

Of course, Paul knew that evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived (13). Mostly clever people want to deceive others. But there are cleverer people. They pretend to be naive and sincere. They draw deceiving people's attention and they show themselves liable to be deceived by the clever people. Later, clever people find that they are greatly deceived by cleverer people. Once there was a clever multi-millionaire. In his cleverness, he searched for naive and sincere-looking people who were in need of money. The rich man lent huge amounts of money to each person with sky-high interest, believing that 12 of these naive and poor people would pay him back. Later, when the rich man wanted to get the money back, each of them said, "You did not make contracts with us in order to receive sky-high interest. No contract, no obligation."

But Paul instructs Timothy to continue in what he has learned and has become convinced of (14). In short, Paul is saying to Timothy that he should

not be distracted by the worldly people's material prosperity (Ps 73:2-3). Definitely, Timothy must live a life of mission. It is easy for anyone to envy ungodly people's easygoing way of life. Even many sincere Christians fall into depression when they see ungodly people's easygoing way of life. But we must listen to Paul's instruction to see ungodly people's worldly life as less than nothing. We must carry out the mission given to us in this generation, even though many feel that this generation is in the last days and God's judgment is imminent.

In this terrible generation, to engage in world mission seems to be foolish. But as David served God's purpose in his generation (Ac 13:36), so we must serve God's purpose in this generation. There are two characteristics of this generation. The first is that sinful freedom has been publicly accepted. The second is that individualism has degenerated into selfishness. Because of selfishness, no one wants to commit to anybody or anything. There are innu-

merable young people who live without marriage. Jean-Paul Sartre's insight about human relationships in the near future was really disgusting to read. But we can see his insight turned into reality. To the worldly people, Bible teaching is a very funny thing. They see Bible teachers like grandfather Noah. But communism failed and capitalism has become chaotic. People do not know where history is going. In this generation, God wants us to shepherd his flock of sheep. God wants us to raise them as Bible teachers and shepherds of his people. God wants us to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. When we calculate, this is an impossible task. But when we obey God's command it is indeed a glorious mission for us. Imagine that 10,000 Bible students are raised through our prayers and Bible teachings. And 10,000 houses are abundantly happy. If this becomes the direction of this country, this country will be glorious.

Second, the Bible is the word of life (15-17). Ungodly people treasure money

or unpredictable boyfriends or girlfriends. But we godly people treasure the Bible. It is because the Bible is the word of God and it is also the word of life. We must raise our children with the word of God. If they are not growing by the word of God we must know that we failed our mission of raising God's children. Look at verse 15. "...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Next we must believe that the Bible is the word of life. All other books do not give life to man. Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote "Émile," (how to educate children). It was a best-seller at the time and it became a classic. Yet he gave three illegitimate sons to orphanages. But the Bible gives life to man and man's purpose of life. Look at verse 16. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness...." There is God's life in the Bible. The Bible makes man great if one lives according to its teachings. Usually sinful men seem to have determined not to listen to others. But in history, so many people read the Bible and received

God's life and experienced God's glory. John Newton was chief among the slave dealers. Once he happened to read a Bible placed in the cabin. He realized that he was so selfish that he was selling people as slaves to make money. But Jesus Christ gave his life to save men from their sins. Suddenly, heavenly light began to shine in his soul. He shouted, "Amazing grace!" He received God's life.

In this passage we learned that ungodly people are selfish people. But godly people serve God's purpose in their own generations. Above all, let's pray that God would move our hearts to believe the word of God is the word of life.