

## ALL SCRIPTURE IS BREATHED OUT BY GOD

2 Timothy 3:1-17

Key Verse: 3:16-17, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Happy and Blessed New Year to you all in 2023! Are you grateful to God for getting you through 2022? Was it a memorable and eventful year for you? It's good to do some reflection and find topics and reasons to thank God for getting you through 2022. Did you have a 2022 key verse? Mine was Lk 18:1 and 13: “...always pray and not give up...God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” These verses helped me to pray more in 2022. For my and me family, our first son got a job after a long search, we visited our second son and his wife in South Carolina, our third son got married, and our twins changed a lot as high school juniors. On the down side, a mentally ill person threatened to kill me (that was a first for me). I always thought I was a pretty nice guy. Oh well. In July, on the same weekend that my son got married, while I was in Florida, to my surprise, relief and hope, P.Mark became the new senior pastor of Chicago UBF, for which I still thank God, every day. This opened a door for me as well to begin a Doctor of Ministry program at Wheaton College. My wife worked hard at work and home and on her Masters degree in Public Health. We both had one faithful NU Bible student. Maria's father passed on to God's kingdom just before Christmas. We all made it through sicknesses and we all stand in God's grace in Jesus Christ.

How about you? Have you reviewed your 2022 year personally? If not, I hope you can. And perhaps more importantly, have you all thought about how you want to grow in your faith and walk with God in 2023? That's an important question to prayerfully consider. Reviewing last year can help us to identify an area in our life or character or relationships that we really want to grow in. The secular world calls this a New year's Resolution. The problem with these resolutions is that they are often broken and abandoned within a few weeks. So we want to a direction through God's word and prayer, a godly goal that we believe God not only wants for us, but that God will help us to keep and grow by. Do you want to grow in your prayer life, or in your Christian relationships? Perhaps you want to grow in boldness, or in confidence, or in peace that overcomes anxiety. There are Bible verses in all of these areas that we can meditate on, cling to, and find promise in.

My key verse for this message is intended to help us find God's direction, wisdom and strength for our lives. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

God's word is living and active (Heb 4:12). God's word makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. God's word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps 119:105). Do you realize how blessed you are to have access to God's word in the Bible? So many people don't know this since they haven't experienced the wisdom, the truth and the power of God's word in their own lives. Still, even many of us Christians take for granted the blessing of having easy access to God's word. Let's look at one chapter of God's word, the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Paul's second letter to his disciple, Timothy. This is more than a personal letter. It is the word of truth and life to a young pastor and to all Christians for the last 2000 years. In particular, we want to know the sins and attitudes to avoid as Christians, and we want to know the attitude and character to pursue as followers of Jesus Christ.

## I. THE UNGODLY LIFE TO REPENT OF AND TO AVOID (1-9)

In verse 1, Paul writes to his disciple, the young pastor Timothy: "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty." The words "times of difficulty" could generally mean many things. For example, there are natural disasters like earthquakes, fires, floods and snowstorms. Last week Buffalo, NY had a terrible snowstorm in which several dozen people died of various causes. There is also the man-made political tragedy of war, as we have seen between Ukraine and Russia. But Paul is not specifically talking about these difficulties, as bad as they are. Paul focuses on the wickedness in human hearts. He gives a long list of wicked attitudes and behaviors in verses 2-5. In fact, he mentions 19 evil, ungodly attitudes and behaviors in these verses. Paul writes: "For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people."

Why does Paul give Timothy this long, descriptive list of ungodly, wicked people? And why does Paul say to avoid them? Shouldn't we help sinful people?

First of all, let's be clear that Paul lists things that should not be present in a Christian's life. The things that Paul lists are not Christ-like and they are not appropriate for any Christian to have in their lives. So, as Christians we must do a heart-inventory. If we find any of these things attitudes or behaviors lurking in our hearts or lives, then we must, first all, repent. We must confess any such sin in our hearts or lives, ask God's forgiveness, and resolve to keep that sin out of our lives. This is part of growing in holiness or being sanctified. We, as Christians, are not sinless, but we should be sinning less. If we are not, then something is wrong with our faith or our walk with God.

Some people justify their sin saying, “Jesus died for my sins. So it doesn’t matter how I live.” That’s not biblical. In fact, anyone who has that attitude does not know the grace of Christ. They don’t appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for them. They don’t understand the seriousness of their sin. One person said to me recently, “We’re not broken people. No one is broken.” Of course, this person was not a Christian. Not only is that statement obviously false, but I had to ask in my mind: Are you saying that cold-blooded killers aren’t broken people, with something terribly wrong? Moreover, do you really think there is nothing in you that you see as broken or needs fixing or changing? That’s an incredibly high-minded and arrogant view of oneself! The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We all need healing. We all need to change. We all need God’s grace and mercy. The worst thing we can do is say, “I’m all right. I don’t need to change a thing. I’m just fine the way I am.” That’s a clever lie of the devil. Such a person is self-deceived.

Paul says “Avoid such people.” Of course, as Christians, we must avoid such attitudes and behaviors as Paul listed. In fact, we should do more than avoid them. We must put them to death, confessing them, renouncing them, and turning away from them.

Paul wrote in Col.3:5-8, “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.”

So we have established that as Christians we must not indulge our sinful nature. But Paul goes further. He says, “Avoid such people.” What about loving and helping people who are lost in their sins? Of course, we should do that. In fact, Paul later tells Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2Ti 4:2). So God’s servant, and Christians in general, should help others to get off a wrong path and get on a right path to God, truth, righteousness, and holiness.

Then who should we avoid? Simply said, we should avoid unrepentant people. We should avoid people who have wicked characteristics in their lives, yet have no intention or desire to change at all. We must avoid people who justify their sins, instead of confessing and repenting of them. In a word, we must avoid hypocritical liars, who pretend to be followers of Christ, but who are rather following their sinful natures. How do we know? Just look at the fruit of their lives, their speech, their Facebook posts, their lifestyle, their hobbies. What are they doing? What are they saying? How are they influencing people in their lives? Do they show that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and are serious about following him and growing in his grace and truth, his love and holiness? That should be quite obvious. Is it obvious to others that you are serious about pursuing holiness in your life? People pursuing holiness and Christ-likeness are the kind of people we must befriend

and hang out with. Those living in sin or who have just an appearance of godliness are the people we must avoid and get away from. It could be appropriate to rebuke and challenge them as well.

Paul explains avoiding such false Christians in 1 Cor.5:9-11: I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.”

Paul is telling the Corinthians, as he is telling us, to avoid people who call themselves Christians but who are not pursuing a holy life at all. Rather, they continue on in lives of sin, such as immorality, greed, lying and idolatry. What if we encounter sin in our Christian fellowship? What should we do? As I mentioned before, we can rebuke what we clearly see as sin, not to crush or humiliate the person, but to help them come to repentance. One of our important missions in the church is to help one another to pursue and grow in holiness. We need help from each other. We need brothers and sisters in Christ who will call us out when we mess up in sin, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Paul wrote earlier in this letter: “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (2Ti 2:24-26)

In verse 5 Paul warns against those who have an appearance of godliness but deny its power. These are people who appear to be godly but give no credit or glory to God. Rather, they take credit themselves. They don’t depend on God’s power, but their own effort, goodness and righteousness. Paul says they take advantage of people who are gullible and seem to want to learn something. In actuality, they are opponents of the truth of God, just like the magicians in Pharaoh’s court in the time of Moses. These magicians even performed miracles like Moses by trickery or by the devil’s power. These people who want to teach others, without learning or repenting themselves, are people to be avoided. As Jesus said, “Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.” (Mt 15:14)

## II. THE GODLY LIFESTYLE AND ATTITUDE TO PURSUE (10-17)

Paul reminded Timothy of his own lifestyle, which contrasted the ungodly attitudes and behaviors he warned against. Look at verses 10-11: “You, however, have followed my

teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.”

Paul was confident of his teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love and steadfastness. Paul was a serious follower of Jesus Christ. His life bore good fruit in the Holy Spirit. Paul endeavored to fix his thoughts on Jesus. He wrote in another letter: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:1-2). Still, in another letter, Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians to think about things that are: true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Php 4:8).

Paul urged Timothy to learn from his life of faith and devotion to Christ. Can that be said of your life? Are you living a life that you would urge others to follow? If not, that’s where we need to examine our hearts and lives and repent. That’s where we can ask God to do his good work in ourselves to grow in the image of Jesus by the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul said in 1 Cor.11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” We can encourage others to follow us, only inasmuch as we are following Christ ourselves.

One of the best evidences of Paul’s life of following Christ, was his willingness to suffer persecution for Jesus Christ. Paul was rejected severely wherever he went and preached the gospel, such as in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. His persecutions in these towns are detailed in the book of Acts Ch.13-14. The persecution against Paul increased to the point of him being stoned and left for dead in Lystra. But Paul survived the stoning. The Lord rescued him from every evil attack. Paul was confident that the Lord would bring him safely to his heavenly kingdom (2Ti 4:18).

Paul said in verse 12 that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” This contrasts evil impostors, who will “go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” False christs or false saviors deceive, and false believers are being deceived. Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you.” (Mk 13:5, NIV)

Are you hated or persecuted by anyone because of your faith in Jesus? Jesus said to his disciples, “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Jn 15:20). We want to be liked and appreciated by the world. But the closer we get to Jesus, the more serious we are about following him, pleasing him, being like him—we will be misunderstood, hated and persecuted by people who love the world and its desires.

Finally, in this chapter, Paul pointed Timothy back to the sacred writings of the Bible. Look at verses 14-17: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly

believed, knowing from whom you learned it 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. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

We learn several things from these verses. Paul mentions here “the sacred writings,” and he says that these writings are able to make a person wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. What were these sacred writings? Of course, Paul was referring to the Bible of his time, which would include the Hebrew Scriptures in the Old Testament—for us, the books of Genesis to Malachi. It would also certainly refer to the circulating teachings and stories of Jesus among the early Christians. The Christian New Testament was not yet compiled, which later included even this letter of Apostle Paul. But the teachings and miracles of Jesus were being passed on, both orally and in written form.

How did Timothy know these sacred writings from infancy? In 1:5 of this letter, Paul wrote, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” Acts 16:1 tells us that Timothy’s mother was a Jewish woman, and a believer. So was his grandmother. Perhaps they were converted through Paul’s preaching. In any case, Timothy was taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and came to believe in Christ for himself. Paul took Timothy along on his mission journey, and Timothy later became the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

What are the sacred writings for us? Of course, this includes both the Old and New Testament of our Holy Bible. These writings are still able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Even when we study Genesis, we can find Jesus and how he ultimately fulfills all of the promises and hopes for our salvation.

Paul urges Timothy to continue on in what he has learned, to cling to the Word of God. Paul declares, “All Scripture is breathed out by God.” This means that the Bible is the Word of God from the Spirit of God. It is the message of God written down by men who were inspired by God. These men who wrote the Bible did not write from their own interpretation. Rather, they spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2Pe 1:20-21).

Paul tells Timothy in verse 16 four things that the Scriptures are useful or profitable for: teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. The word of God teaches. So we must have a posture to want to learn. The Bible is God’s teaching manual for us. Just as a new car or a new phone has an owner’s manual, created by the manufacturer, the Bible is our Owner’s manual, written by God. Someone said the word BIBLE could stand

for: “Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth.” Of course, the Bible is not only to prepare us for heaven, but it is God’s wisdom to give us abundant life while on earth.

The Bible is also useful for reproof and correction. I already mentioned how we all need to learn, grow and change. We all need correction and rebuke from time to time. We can also help others out of error who need God’s guidance and wisdom in their lives. But we need to repent ourselves first, removing the planks from our own eyes to see clearly to remove the specks from others’ lives—that is, to help them in the journeys of faith. Finally, the Bible is useful for training in righteousness. God’s word helps us to think right thoughts, speak right words, and do right things, as we grow in a right relationship with God.

Verse 17 concludes with a very good purpose of God’s word. It says, “...that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The word of God equips men and women to do good works. We are saved by faith, not by good works. We are not saved by good works, but we are saved to do good works in Christ Jesus our Lord. May 2023 be a year of growing in holiness in the image of Jesus through his holy word.