

**2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:14-17**

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Second Timothy is classified as a Pastoral Epistle; the others are first Timothy and Titus. These letters are personal letters with a pastoral tone. It is traditionally thought that the Apostle Paul is the author. He is portrayed as being near death and warns of problems to come. He is an excellent example of faithful endurance in the face of persecution and suffering. The encouragement to Timothy is canonized into the Bible and is therefore, an encouragement of perseverance and endurance for all Christians during times of trouble.

Timothy is instructed to hold firmly to his education because he was taught the scriptures. The Bible is the foundation for all doctrine; it is the supreme book of religion. God reveals God's self in the Bible through interaction with real human beings. The more one understands the word of God, the more one understands God. The central theme of the Bible is God's relationship with humanity. All scripture is inspired by God, for the people of God to know the word of God. The Apostle Paul's steadfast character and heroism under persecution are excellent examples of faith. He is a model for all Christians that are being persecuted and all believers face the possibility of persecution. Timothy must be sure to follow the teachings of the sacred scriptures. As such, all believers are to follow the word.

The lesson is to hold fast to the scriptures as people are led astray by deception and go from bad to worse. Timothy is to remain fixed on what he has learned from the scriptures. The education that he has received is sufficient. There is no need to get mixed up in popular rhetoric or opinions. He has the knowledge that leads to salvation. He has received salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The main theological focus is Jesus.

Recently I was asked about the doctrine of our denomination. I said "the focus is on Jesus, not theory or opinions. We all have different opinions and no one has all of the answers. However, the one thing we all can agree upon is what Jesus said and what Jesus did. This is doctrine that is focused on Jesus and theology that is centered on Christ." The Christian faith is secured by the scriptures – the written word of God.

Timothy is urged to hold fast to the doctrine that his teachers have taught him. His faith is embodied in the scriptures. He is to hold fast to the word of God. His teachers have taught him the word of God and his faith is cemented in the word of God. Timothy has accumulated through life, knowledge of the scriptures from his family, his religious upbringing, and also his close association with the apostle Paul. Timothy is well familiar with how Paul has suffered for the gospel, was imprisoned for the gospel in Rome, and was forsaken by some of his close friends. In the face of all of this he was still empowered by the Lord. Timothy and all us should not be ashamed of the gospel but be bold in testimony, without restraint, even to the point of suffering for the word of God.

The exhortation to Timothy is to be strong, teach others correctly, and adhere to Paul's example of suffering for the gospel.

The contemporary lesson is one of priority, to put the scriptures above any of the popular contemporary influences. The letter reveals the harsh reality that persecutions are expected for anyone that lives a godly life. For the followers of the crucified Christ, persecution dates back to Jesus. The word of God is full of wisdom, without wisdom it is easy to be led astray and do wrong without recognizing it as being wrong. The scriptures have a targeted purpose – to make you wise for salvation. When hard times come, faith strengthens you and empowers you. The scriptures prove to be beneficial in teaching and equipping you to effective living as a Christian.

What is true for Timothy is true for all of us. We are to hold steadfast in faith, hold firm to the teachings of the Bible, and not be swayed by what is popular at any existing time. When you pay attention to the word of God, it will lead you through life with fortitude and wisdom.