



# ENDURING

Believers must remain faithful to God's truth even when facing persecution.

## 2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17; 4:1-8

Humans can endure a great deal when they believe in their cause. They simply find a way to overcome obstacles. For some, the greater the obstacle, the more they flourish. Believers who have faced persecution demonstrate this same kind of resolve, knowing that the greater the opposition, the greater the opportunity to honor God.

***Why are some people able to endure rejection or opposition for their faith? What truths would you share with a friend facing challenges for his or her faith in Christ?***

---

---

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

## 2 TIMOTHY 3:1–4:22

Paul was confined to a Roman prison awaiting execution for his faith in Christ. There he wrote his final recorded words to Timothy. He wanted Timothy to know that every follower of Christ would face some form of persecution and that hostility against the gospel would continue. Impostors would rise up, and their deceptive belief and behavior would continue to get worse.

Paul strongly emphasized to Timothy the necessity of being grounded in Scripture; it was God-breathed and without error. It would sustain him and the church as he utilized it for teaching God's truth, rebuking those who walked in deception, correcting those who needed spiritual restoration, and training believers to conform their lives to God's righteousness.

Accordingly, Paul commanded Timothy to publicly proclaim the message of the gospel. The foremost task of the church was to proclaim the gospel to all people. Paul expected Timothy to be ready to declare God's truth in favorable or unfavorable times, making the most of every opportunity.

Paul didn't want Timothy to be unprepared for people's reactions to his preaching. Some would not tolerate sound doctrine, but would chase the trendy ideas of false teachers. Paul explained that they would turn away from the truth and turn toward senseless myths. It would, therefore, be of utmost importance for Timothy to keep a clear mind during those confusing and chaotic times. He would need perseverance as he encountered hardship and persecution. He would also need to seize the opportunities to faithfully evangelize and share the message of salvation in fulfillment of his ministry for Christ.

Paul hoped Timothy could visit him before his death. He testified that his life was a drink offering that was poured out to the glory of God.

***As you read 2 Timothy 3:12-17 and 4:1-8, underline the commands given by Paul. Why was Paul so urgent in giving these commands?***

---

---

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## PERSECUTION COMING (2 TIM. 3:12-13)

**<sup>12</sup>Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

### VERSES 12-13

Persecution didn't surprise Paul, and he didn't want it to surprise Timothy. He warned that all believers who ***live a godly life in Christ Jesus*** will face persecution.

Followers of Christ in many nations around the world experience life-threatening persecution. They take great risks to worship the Lord and to share the gospel message. Believers who live outside an area experiencing persecution should not assume, however, that this verse has no personal relevance. When we stand upon godly values in any secular culture and when we strive to live in loving obedience to Christ we can expect to meet with some form of resistance and opposition.

It is important to make a distinction between opposition, bullying, and persecution. It is certainly disturbing when followers of Christ are denied job promotions because of their faith, but such is the opposition in some places. It is more alarming when followers of Christ are intimidated and badgered for their faith, but such is the pain of bullying. When followers of Christ are arrested and tortured for their faith, it is the cauldron of anger and hatred boiling into persecution.

Paul made it clear that the spread of malice and violence would not go away; it would ***go on from bad to worse***. Jesus warned His disciples that they should not expect any better treatment than He had received (John 15:18-20). People who hate Jesus will oppose His followers. Our honor is to suffer with Christ.

***How does seeking to live a godly life lead to potential bullying and persecution?***

---

---



## GET EQUIPPED (2 TIM. 3:14-17)

**14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**

### VERSES 14-15

Paul urged Timothy to *continue* practicing the foundational truths he had *learned* and *firmly believed*. Timothy would have to guard against pastoral pitfalls and doctrinal deviations that could dampen his spiritual fire. He had learned many of the essential themes of the gospel from his mother and grandmother, and especially from Paul. Paul's impact on Timothy was gigantic and Paul wanted him to press on faithfully with full assurance.

Timothy had been equipped *from childhood* with a knowledge of the *sacred writings*. The expression *sacred writings* referred to the Old Testament. The writings of the Old Testament prepared Timothy in two ways. First, they reveal that salvation has always been by God's grace through faith. The law was never a means of salvation. Instead, it was a tutor that pointed to Christ. Abraham was not justified by his works, but by faith. (See Gen. 15:6.) The Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi revealed the horror of sin, the reality of judgment, the incomparable grace of God, and the necessity of faith. Second, the Scripture equipped Timothy to be wise in decision making and godly in daily living. As God's truth took deep root in Timothy, his ministry would bear abundant fruit to the glory of Christ and equip him to tackle challenges at Ephesus.

### VERSES 16-17

All Scripture, both the Old Testament and the New Testament, was *breathed out* from God to divinely-appointed individuals led by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of recording it.

Because Scripture is God's inspired revelation, it is *profitable* in at least four essential areas. First, it is *profitable for teaching*. The word *teaching* describes doctrinal instruction. The content of God's Word is

essential for right doctrine. It is totally true and trustworthy. Second, Scripture is profitable for **reproof**. When we stray from the straight path of God's ways, the Bible warns us of our danger. Such reproof exposes the error of our choices and convicts us of the need to repent. Third, having called us to repentance, the Bible provides the method for **correction**. It helps get us back on the right path. The term translated *correction* means to "straighten up again." God's purpose in dealing with our sin always involves redemption, bringing us back to His way. Finally, Scripture is profitable for **training in righteousness**. This involves doing what is right according to God. God's Word helps us mature as believers, not only in what we believe but also in how we behave.

The **man of God** statement was an expression of encouragement addressed to Timothy specifically but with application for every Christian. The purpose of relying on Scripture was for Timothy to **be complete, equipped for every good work**. The term *complete* carries the connotation of spiritual maturity. Scripture provides everything Christians need to perform *every good work* God places before us.

***How does using Scripture for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (v. 16) equip a believer for "every good work"?***

---

---

### **KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures***

Scripture has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

### **PREACH THE WORD (2 TIM. 4:1-4)**

**<sup>1</sup> 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: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> 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,<sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.**

### VERSES 1-2

Paul charged Timothy with the task of proclaiming the gospel under the awareness of Jesus' judgment of all people, ***the living and the dead***. Timothy could draw motivation for ministry by the anticipation of Jesus' return. The sure return of Christ serves as a powerful motivation for urgently and clearly communicating the gospel message to every person.

Paul gave Timothy five directives in verse 2. First, Timothy was instructed to ***preach the word***. The word *preach* involved a public communication on behalf of a superior. Timothy was to communicate *the word* of God on behalf of God. He did not have the luxury of sharing personal preferences; he was responsible for faithfully declaring God's Word. Second, Timothy was to preach ***in season and out of season***. This meant to be prepared to share the good news at all times. The proclamation of the gospel did not depend on Timothy's mood or life situation.

The third and fourth directives involved rebuking and correcting. Timothy's preaching would require the necessity of rebuke as he exposed the false teaching and deviant behavior in Ephesus. At the same time, Timothy was to offer correction. Whereas rebuking involved pointing out sin, correcting involved bringing repentant persons to understand God's truth so that they can adjust their belief and behavior to God's standard.

Fifth, Timothy would need to ***exhort, with complete patience and teaching***. By teaching the Word patiently, Timothy would demonstrate love toward the people and trust toward God, depending on God's Spirit to change human hearts.

**Paul warned about the growing number of people who reject God's truth in favor of personal preferences.**

### VERSES 3-4

People will be increasingly intolerant of the truth of the gospel. Earlier, Paul warned about false teachers. Here, however, he warned about the growing number of people who reject God's truth in favor of personal preferences. They champion preachers who appease their

lust for what's trendy at the expense of God's unchanging truth.

Paul explained two results of "itching-ear spirituality." First, people would **turn away from listening to the truth**. Second, they would **wander off into myths**. The expression *wander off* was a common medical term to describe a dislocated joint. Individuals who turn away from God's truth to embrace fabrications and falsehoods suffer a spiritual dislocation.

**What are some contemporary examples of "itching-ear" spirituality? How do those examples distort God's Word?**

---

---

**FINISH WELL** (2 TIM. 4:5-8)

**<sup>5</sup>As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. <sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>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.**

#### **VERSE 5**

Paul called on Timothy to remain faithful to Christ. First, Timothy needed to **always be sober-minded**. The term *be sober-minded* conveys the idea of personal moderation. It also requires being serious-minded and alert. Second, Timothy must be ready to **endure suffering**. The easy road of convenience and compromise was not an option. Paul urged Timothy not to give up in the face of opposition, but to *endure* it. Third, Timothy needed to **do the work of an evangelist**. One does not need a special gifting to evangelize. The mandate to be Christ's witnesses applies to every follower of Christ.

#### **VERSES 6-8**

Paul used himself as an example for Timothy. He knew his life was approaching the finish line. He believed he would be put to death for his faith in Christ and announced his resolve to finish well.

**Being poured out as a drink offering** referenced a sacrifice to the Lord,



honoring His holiness and goodness. Drink offerings were regular parts of the daily sacrifices in the tabernacle, and later the temple (Ex. 29:38-41). The imagery portrayed Paul's life being poured out as an offering to the Lord. The term **departure** pictured a ship disconnecting its ropes from the shore and heading home. An obvious reference to his pending death, Paul knew his time was close upon him.

Reflecting upon his life, Paul affirmed three accomplishments that carried continual implications. First, Paul declared that he had **fought the good fight**. Possibly a reference to his many battles with opposition throughout his ministry, this phrase could also encompass Paul's overall spiritual endeavors. Second, he had **finished the race**. He could look back as he was about to cross the finish line and feel satisfaction from a race well run. Third, Paul had **kept the faith**. More than having faith, this phrase addressed *the faith*, meaning the faithful adherence to Jesus and His gospel.

In the Roman Empire, champion athletes received a wreath-like crown for their victories. Paul anticipated an eternal **crown of righteousness**. He did not claim this award for himself alone, but promised it to **all who have loved his appearing**. All of us who love Christ and long for His return share an encouraging promise. No matter what trials we might face, our reward is secure with Christ who conquered sin and death to reign forever and ever.

***What is the relationship between fighting the good fight and keeping the faith? Can you have one without the other? Explain.***

---

---

### **BIBLE SKILL: Compare similar passages.**

Compare Paul's last testament with the closing statements of others: King David (2 Sam. 23), Moses (Deut. 33), the dying thief (Luke 23), and Stephen (Acts 7). What common things, if any, do you find in these accounts? What do these reveal about the importance of faith at the end of life on earth?

---

---

# IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers should not be caught off guard when persecution arises.
- Believers can trust the Scriptures as God's Word.
- Believers must be ready to present the gospel at all times.
- Believers demonstrate the genuineness of their faith by remaining faithful to Christ to the end.

***How can your group draw attention to the plight of persecuted believers? What specific action steps can you take to be a voice for them?***

---

---

***What are you doing to more fully understand and put into practice God's Word? What actions do you need to take to build on what you are already doing?***

---

---

***As you are running the race of faith, what inspires you to persevere? List the names of believers who inspire you to finish well. What characteristics inspire you the most? What can you do to continue to develop those characteristics in your own life?***

---

---

## Prayer Needs

---

---

---

---

---

