

2 Timothy Study
Week 3
2 Timothy 2:22-3:13

Day One

22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

v. 22 – **Do you think that youth are more evil than those who are older?** I ask this because Paul referenced the “evil desires of youth.” I can’t say for sure, but I don’t think youth are any more “evil” than their older counterparts, do you? Yet youth have more energy and lack the wisdom of experience, so they can do things that wisdom would dictate they should not do. Yet no “youth” has ever cooked the books and ruined a company. That is reserved for someone who has experience, who is anything but a youth.

I personally feel that we neglect youth with their tremendous energy and creativity when we carry out the work of ministry. We discount their enthusiasm and willingness to risk and dare when we plan missions and other projects, too often relegating youth to, well, youth work. Unless I’m mistaken, the original apostles and Timothy were “youth,” probably in their 20s or early 30s.

Paul urged Timothy to pursue four things – righteousness, faith, love and peace. **Those are good things for anyone to pursue, don’t you agree?** In fact, it would be good to develop a strategy or plan on how to pursue those objectives. **So why not take out a sheet of paper or your journal and put each of those four words at the top of a page?** Then list practical things you can do to “pursue” those four objectives.

For example, under the heading faith, you could put: 1. Clean out closet and give away clothes I don’t wear; 2. Adopt child in Africa and give monthly; 3. Increase my giving to the church by 1%. Under love, you could list: 1. Write my grandmother once a month; 2. Devote one evening to each of my children so we can spend more time together. **I hope you get the idea. Now why not do it?**

v. 23 – We are back to Paul’s warning not to argue over “words.” Paul told Timothy to avoid such arguments. I wonder what Paul would say to the Church today about this issue. I know that doctrine is important but there is a lot of room for interpretation in Christianity and that is a good thing. As long as we agree on the basics – the Virgin birth, Jesus’ divinity, His death, resurrection and ascension – almost everything else is open to interpretation, which leaves a lot of room for diversity of thought and application.

Do you agree or do you think I am “waffling” on matters of doctrine and faith?

Day Two

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 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.

v. 24 – Here Paul listed three more objectives or values to pursue: kindness, ability to teach and not being resentful. So let's do the same thing that we did yesterday. Put those three things on three sheets of paper and do some thinking and praying about how you can improve, with God's help, in each of those three areas. **How can you be more kind? What opportunities do you have? How can you be a better teacher? This assumes of course that you are a teacher. If you aren't, why not?**

We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil (Hebrews 5:11-14).

And finally, are you resentful toward anyone or any situation? How can you resolve that and be free?

v. 25 – It is difficult not to be angry with your opponents, especially when you feel you have a truth that God has shown you and they are resisting it. Paul gave us the strategy to possibly win them over in this verse. We must work to state our position gently yet persuasively so that perhaps God will grant them repentance. I do my job in the spirit of Christ and then God will do His job. Yet I have no control over whom God grants this repentance. I must just gently teach and instruct people by every means possible.

This is why I devote so much time to writing. It makes me a better teacher. First, it enables me to “spread the word” more broadly. Second, it makes me think and state my position more clearly. Writing is an exacting discipline and I find that it helps me be a better teacher and communicator.

Have you considered writing? If so, why aren't you doing it? If you are, how can you be more effective? Can you clearly write out and explain what you believe and why? Is it good enough to convince a skeptic or opponent?

v. 26 – I don't think Paul is referring to someone who disputes another over something like the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I think he was referring to those who opposed basic Christian doctrine, like the divinity of Jesus. I have found that the most serious, destructive heresies in history have centered on the person of Jesus. Those heresies have tried to distort the truth of His humanity and divinity.

What do you believe about Jesus? How clearly can you explain it to someone else? Is your denominational or church doctrine clearly in your mind? I guess I am asking you what you believe and why you believe it.

Day Three

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—

v. 3 – **What were the last days that Paul referred to in this verse? Did Paul think the return of the Lord was imminent? Was he mistaken in this, as many commentators have pointed out?** I don't think so.

Paul was referring to the end of an age, and that age was the Old Testament age, which was still in operation in Jerusalem with Temple sacrifices and a system of priestly worship. A few years after he wrote this, Rome sacked and destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and its worship ceased forever. The days Paul and Timothy lived in were terrible days and the Church, world and Israel endured traumatic times. It was the end of the Old Testament era and the beginning of the New.

It is inconceivable to me that Paul would have been so “off” to have believed the return of Jesus was at hand. At the same time, Paul had a sense of urgency in his work because of the conflict that was coming with Rome.

v. 4 – These characteristics pertained to Timothy's generation, not to the end times before the return of Jesus. **Why would Paul have said to Timothy not to have anything to do with people like this if those people would not even exist for thousands of years?** That makes no sense. No, the application for Timothy was then and there; it was not a warning about people centuries later.

Yet the principle still holds true today. We can see our modern era characterized by the traits described by Paul in this letter. The advice from Paul would be the same for you and me. We should avoid people who exhibit such characteristics, especially if they are in the Church.

Yet this provides a checklist for me of things *not* to do and be as a follower of Jesus. Since these traits will be prevalent, I must watch not to be conformed to those around me, but allow the Spirit to mold and make into the image of Jesus. **How about you? Where do you stand with this list of “no-nos”? Are you a believer in name or action? In doctrine or behavior?**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

Day Four

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 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, 7 always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

v. 5 – This describes the world of religion perfectly. A religious person as opposed to a spiritual person is one who talks about God, who appears to know God, who is comfortable with their image of God, but they lack the power to live a godly life. This is easy to do since man is basically a religious being. We are created in the image of God, so we gravitate to God, but we are incapable of living a godly life without an intervention from God. Without that intervention, we then treat God like we would any other subject, such as sports or nature. He is then One to be discussed and debated, but not to be known intimately.

The Christian life is an impossible life. We cannot live out God's will in our own strength or capability. We need help! That is why Christianity makes so much sense. God sets the standards and when we say, "I can't do that," He says, "I know. So I'll do it for you, if you allow me." That is the best deal available in the universe! **Have you taken full advantage of it? Remember what Paul wrote to the Galatians:**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).

Is Christ living in you to the fullest? Do you have a form of godliness and the power to live it?

Paul directed Timothy to have nothing to do with people like this. **With whom do you fellowship? Are you with other believers who can stimulate and encourage your faith, or are you with people who cause you to question or limit your faith? If it's the latter, then you may need to change the company you are keeping where faith is concerned.**

v. 6 – This is a strong assessment, that there are those who take advantage of "weak-willed" women, weighted down by sins. I don't think I want to comment on this verse, but I think all of us in ministry must be careful not to victimize the weak or those who can be manipulated or taken advantage of.

Day Five

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth — men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

v. 8 – The names here are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but most believe that it is a reference to the magicians who matched Moses’ miraculous signs before Pharaoh. I am not sure how the experts are sure this is the reference, but they are unanimous in their position. Here is the passage itself:

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did just as the LORD commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it became a snake. Pharaoh then summoned wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same things by their secret arts: Each one threw down his staff and it became a snake. But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs (Exodus 7:10-12).

These names must have been part of rabbinic teaching, to which Paul would have had access. Notice that these two men were on Pharaoh’s payroll, so to speak, and they were committed to oppose the truth by black magic and evil means.

These men were committed to oppose the truth, not help find the truth. There are still people like that today. They are not interested in the truth, but rather in maintaining their own system and position. It just isn’t that some aren’t interested in truth; there are some who *oppose* it. There are some that aren’t indifferent to God and His ways; they hate Him. That has always “blown my mind” but it is the truth. We must accept the reality that some are enemies of God and the truth; therefore, they are our enemies as well.

Does any group or doctrine come to mind that fit this description? I think of Islam.

v. 9 – The good news is that these men had limited success opposing Moses by imitating his signs only to a point. Eventually, however, they ran out of magic and they were left helpless. Our God is all-powerful and will not be outdone, outsmarted or outmaneuvered by His creation. That isn’t possible. Every “ism” becomes a “wasm.” *Communism*, *atheism*, *fascism*, *intellectualism*, *Mohammedism*, *materialism*, *capitalism*, *racism*, *humanism* are all destined to fail, along with their proponents, prophets and followers.

It may be a fair statement that Pharaoh and his advisors ruined Egypt forever. That nation has never returned to the prominence it once had because they opposed the Lord and His truth as delivered by His servants.

Are you concerned about any movement or “ism”? I am not saying they are not powerful and won’t have their “day” of power and prominence. Ultimately they are doomed to failure, for our God is in control. You can rejoice and rest in that fact and act accordingly. Don’t be anxious. The message of the Bible and especially of Revelation is that no throne can exalt itself over or against our God. He rules and reigns! **Are you**

living in the reality of that fact? I hope you are. If not, what changes do you need to make in your thinking and actions?

Day Six

10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

v. 10 – Paul confidently and boldly set himself apart from Jannes and Jambres as a carrier of God’s word and truth. Paul knew who he was and his way of life was consistent with the truth he bore. Look at the aspects of his life to which he drew attention: 1) teaching; 2) way of life; 3) purpose; 4) faith; 5) love; 6) endurance; 7) persecutions; 8) sufferings.

These aspects must be important or Paul would not have mentioned them to Timothy. So if they are important, let’s take a look at them in your life. Give yourself a score of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) in each of those areas. Here are some things to think about as you consider what scores to give yourself:

- 1. Are you teaching? Do you know what you believe and why? Can you impart that to others?**
- 2. What is your way of life? Your values? Your life philosophy? Are you living it or do you just talk about it?**
- 3. Do you know your purpose? How effective are you fulfilling it?**
- 4. How is your giving? What project are you involved with that, unless God comes through in a miraculous way, you will fail?**
- 5. Are you growing in your relationships with other people? Are you loving some who are unlovely?**
- 6. How long have you been working and trusting God for some outcome or project?**
- 7. Jesus warned that you should beware when all men speak well of you. Who is speaking ill of you for the cause of the Lord?**
- 8. Are you suffering in any area? Why? For your testimony and purpose or for dumb decisions?**

Add up your scores for all areas. What is the total? 80 is the highest you could score and 8 is the least. **Are you happy with your score? What can you do to improve and in which areas?** I would suggest that you start with the area that has the lowest score and develop a plan to improve in that area. Then do this assessment again in three months to six months.

v. 11 – Timothy was aware of what Paul had been through but had also been delivered from. There are some who are always going through things must seldom delivered from those trials and tribulations. **Paul had victory *and* fruit in his life; do you have those two things as well? What is your fruit? Where is your victory? As Timothy could**

attest to Paul's trials and successes, do you have people close to you who could do the same?

Day Seven

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

v. 12 – This is an important fact to keep in mind. If you are living for God, you will upset someone who will then try to make life miserable for you or at least challenge what you believe. That person will probably be committed to some degree to one of the –isms that I mentioned on day five above. Your faith will threaten their “theology” and they won’t like it.

Your persecution isn’t a sign that you are doing something wrong, but rather something right. And don’t fret that you aren’t perfect in what you do. That doesn’t minimize the truth or witness that you express. People will try to label you a hypocrite because you declare truth beyond your ability to live it out at some point. Don’t be deterred.

Maintain your integrity and humility, but don’t back down from declaring and living what you believe. Be ready to apologize when your truth goes beyond your lifestyle.

How can you do this?

You may proclaim that God is love and not always love everyone. You may get angry or “blow it” at times. When you do, be quick to acknowledge your faults but don’t back down from your witness. God is good and forgiving. That won’t make everyone happy and they will look for reasons to discredit what you say so they won’t have to do it themselves. Just don’t back down or off when you fail. And don’t run from persecution. Don’t seek it but don’t run from it either. Often your persecution will come from those who matter most to you, so that you can put your trust in the Lord who matters and cares more than anyone else in your life.

v. 13 – While you “work out your salvation with fear and trembling,” your persecutors and opponents may go forth, seeming to prosper and increase in stature or position. Don’t be unnerved or deterred when this happens. Just don’t quit! Keep going forward and don’t give up your purpose or witness to what God has done for you and can do for others.

Have you backed off in any area of your witness or work? Has persecution gotten the best of you, causing you to be tentative or discouraged? Then it’s time to go back on the offensive! Don’t back down, don’t put the focus on you. It’s all about Him! I urge you to join Paul and countless millions of others through the ages who have suffered for their testimony, but have overcome. Remember the formula in Revelation and be strong:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our

brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (Revelation 12:10-12).