

## Enduring with the Gospel

2 Timothy 3:1-17

Whether we realize it or not, whether we admit it or not, whether we are willing to think about it or not, here is the truth about the physical state of our planet. The human race is turning the earth that belongs to the Lord into a garbage dump. The facts are just that. The facts.

Sameh Wahba, World Bank Director for Urban and Territorial Development, Disaster Risk Management and Resilience,<sup>i</sup> states it plainly. “Poorly managed waste is contaminating the world’s oceans, clogging drains and causing flooding, transmitting diseases, increasing respiratory problems from burning, harming animals that consume waste unknowingly, and affecting [healthy] economic development.”

We are – by just about any measurement available -- a “throw away” species.

Every year we dump a massive 2.12 billion tons of waste. If all this waste was put on trucks they would go around the world 24 times. This stunning amount of waste is partly because 99 percent of the stuff we buy is trashed within 6 months.<sup>ii</sup>

Take, for example, what we as a world-wide population are doing with plastics.

- Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years.
- Production increased exponentially, from 2.3 million tons in 1950 to 448 million tons by 2015. Production is expected to double by 2050.
- Every year, about 8 million tons of plastic waste escapes into the oceans from coastal nations. That’s the equivalent of setting five garbage bags full of trash on every foot of coastline around the world.
- Plastics often contain additives making them stronger, more flexible, and durable...some estimates ranging to at least 400 years to break down.

Plastic trash in the oceans, Earth’s last sink, flows from land. Major rivers, which act as conveyor belts, picking up more and more trash as they move downstream. Once at sea, much of the plastic trash remains in coastal waters. Caught up in ocean currents, it is transported around the world.<sup>iii</sup>

Once at sea, sunlight, wind, and wave action break down plastic waste into small particles, often less than one-fifth of an inch across. These so-called microplastics are spread throughout the water column, been found in every corner of the globe, from Mount Everest, the highest peak, to the Mariana Trench, the deepest trough. Microplastics are breaking down further into smaller and smaller pieces. Plastic microfibers, meanwhile, have been found in municipal drinking water systems and drifting through the air.

Millions of animals are killed by plastics every year, from birds to fish to other marine organisms.<sup>iv</sup>

A 2018 report projects that global waste to increase by 70% over the next 30 years – to a staggering 3.40 billion tonnes of waste generated annually.

Plastic waste, choking our oceans, comprises 90% of marine debris. In 2016 alone, the world generated the equivalent to about 24 trillion plastic bottles.

And that’s just 12% of the total waste generated each year.<sup>v</sup>

Perhaps one picture is worth a trillion words?

Are there solutions? Yes...and some of them are surprisingly straightforward and simple. But the reality is

that many of us – perhaps most of us together – ignore or refuse to embrace the required solutions.



Now...all of that...is just one way the human race is rapidly choking our world with trash. Just one part of a not-so-pretty picture. But...more consequential than what we are doing to our planet physically is how we are trashing our hearts spiritually. You may be asking: *What do you mean?*

Will you take a Bible and turn in its library to the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter of the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son/disciple Timothy? **2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy chapter three** (p.936 or p.996) in the Bibles under the seats.

The soon-to-be-executed Apostle is making one of his final “discipleship investments” in Timothy. His letter makes a challenging point:

**When God entrusts you with a deposit of truth,  
it comes with a calling to invest that truth in others**  
(make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ)  
**especially in light of the coming Day of Christ.**

“You have,” Paul repeatedly reminds Timothy, “a gift from God. A deposit of truth. The truth about Jesus Christ, David’s offspring risen from the dead. It’s truth that has saved us and called us with a holy calling. It’s truth that can literally change people’s life today and eternal destiny tomorrow.

Paul first calls Timothy (chapter 1) **to embrace** the truth, to publicly identify with, to get “healthy,” and to boldly encourage others in the gospel.

He next calls Timothy (chapter 2) **to be focused** with the truth—

- a focused *need* of God’s grace,
- a focused *perspective* when suffering,
- a focused *priority* on God’s word, and
- a focused *passion* to be the Master’s honorable, available vessel.

**But then**...Paul’s pen begins to flow with thicker, darker ink. His call in chapter 3 is **to endure, to persevere** in the truth even though facing **the stiff head-winds of a human race headed south.**

**3:1** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty (lit. “terrible times” – stressful, hard, violent/dangerous, “deeds of the angel of wickedness are *evil*”)<sup>vi</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

<sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good,

<sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

<sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

Let’s understand the purpose of Paul’s words here. He wants his spiritual son, his disciple, to

keep his head here. He wants Timothy to thrive even when his world, morally and spiritually, is in a deadly dive. He wants Timothy to make disciples who endure with the gospel. But if they are going to endure, they must be

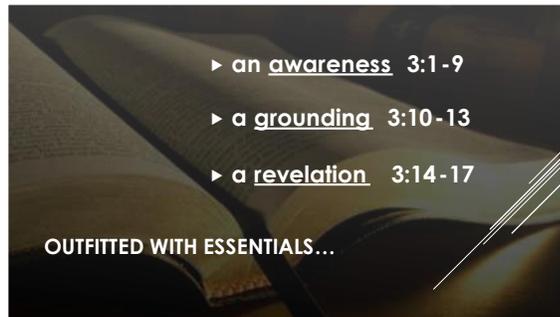
**Disciples who endure with the gospel are outfitted with first things to excellently navigate the last, difficult age**

In 3 critical ways.



First, we must be outfitted with an

- ✓ **awareness of our challenging times** 2 Tim 3:1-9



**KNOW THIS** (Paul writes). You and I live in “the last days.” We are in the last age, the days before the Lord Jesus returns. “You must know,” Paul urges Timothy that these days will be difficult, they will be hard...the word is actually “terrible” or “evil.”

Why? Because the problem with the world – especially in this last era – is what people are becoming. Not everyone...but too many. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Paul explains beginning in vs. 2 – “For men (people) shall be” marked by some 18 characteristics

**Vs. 2 – 8 marks**

- |                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| lovers of self | lovers of money               |
| proud          | arrogant,                     |
| abusive        | disobedient to their parents, |
| ungrateful     | unholy                        |

**Vs. 3 – 6 more**

- heartless
- unappeasable
- slandorous
- without self-control
- brutal
- not loving good

**Vs. 4 – 4 final**

- treacherous
- reckless
- swollen with conceit
- lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

If you're somewhat of a skeptic, you might scoff. “People have always been like this.” And you're correct. In Romans 1 Paul recalls how men/women have plunged themselves in mushrooming manifestations of sin and godlessness:

## Romans 1:19-23

Rejecting what God has clearly revealed about Himself, people refused to honor Him as God or be thankful to God, choosing to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator



## Romans 1:24-31

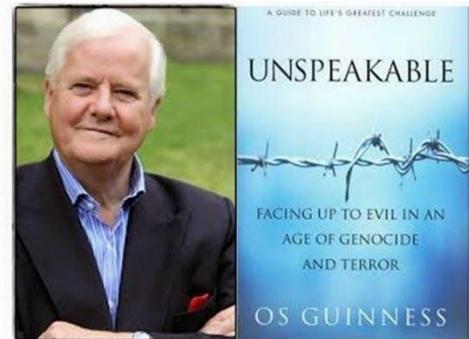
God gave them over to being driven by impure lusts,

- to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves
- to dishonoring passions contrary to nature
- to a debased, dishonoring mind to do what ought not to be done

Paul's description: "They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness..." (Rom 1:29).

Now Paul – again at the prompting of God's Holy Spirit – wants his disciple to be fully aware that in this age, the slope downward is slipperier and steeper.

- ✓ (the story goes) G.K. Chesterton, along with other journalists, were asked to answer the question "What's wrong with the world?", his reply was two words. "I am." He would write a book by that title.
- ✓ A must read today for any aware disciple is Cornelius Plantinga Not the Way It's Supposed to Be, or Don Carson's How Long O Lord?
- ✓ or Os Guinness' Unspeakable



"In our day, it is considered worse to judge evil than do evil."  
~ Os Guinness

Not surprisingly, Guinness is right on target. The list of immoral, detestable ways of thinking and acting – what the Old Testament calls an abomination to God's character – is rapidly shrinking ...not with God, but with us. We actually believe that as long as we together consent that something we want to do is good...well then God must be good with it as well. Isaiah's words still echo –

Isaiah 5: 20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil,  
who put darkness for light and light for darkness,  
who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,  
so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust;  
for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts,  
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Please notice how Paul finishes the list – vs. 5b **Avoid such people.**<sup>vii</sup> He's not directing that we go

off and live in an isolated commune, but rather that we discerningly refuse to get our cues and direction *from that crowd*. The word (*αποτρεπω*<sup>viii</sup>) literally means to “turn oneself in the other direction,” or “refuse to get your direction from” such people. In other words, the list merits some thinking, some reflection on our part.

Let’s come up for air for a moment. Look...if you’re a young Christian, if you’re a young person growing up in a home where the gospel is believed and Jesus is followed, you/I need to understand the age in which God has called you to be His disciple. It is a tough season in human history. There is a swirl of godless living that is aggressively promoted in your world. Listen to this seasoned Apostle. Understand that influential people who make music and make movies and drive culture are vss. 2, 3, 4, and 5. It can be tough to follow Jesus in this day, and in the days to come.

KNOW IT...SIZE IT UP... **BE OUTFITTED with AWARENESS**. But there’s additional help.

✓ **(Be outfitted with) grounding from a mentoring model** 2 Tim. 3:10-13

**2 Timothy 3:10** You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> 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. <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.

There are two truths to underscore here. First, the model of mentoring seen in Paul’s relationship with Timothy. Paul lived it, Timothy observed it and followed it. The good and the tough, the objectives and the outcomes. Over the years, so many of you have invested in the next generation; my own son and daughter the product of the mentoring they received from key servants in this body. In the years to come, it will be inexpressibly critical that you/I do the same with the young Timothy(s) God is raising up in this church.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> truth? Vs. 12 “Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Scott Sauls would remind us

For Christians who live in this place we call “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” we must reconcile our assumed vision of the good life with something Jesus said would be true for every one of his followers: *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt.5:10)

We must remember that systemic, pervasive persecution of Christian believers is not merely an ancient reality. Today more than 75% of the world's population lives in societies that impose severe religious restrictions. Christians in more than 60 countries experience persecution from their governments and their neighbors. Each month, 322 Christians are killed, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, 772 forms of violence such as forced marriages, rape, beatings, and arrest are perpetrated globally against believers in Christ.<sup>ix</sup>

How critical is it, in a day when thinking and living righteously will come under increasing rejection if not persecution...is the grounding of having a spiritual coach, a mentoring model.

Be outfitted with AWARENES. Be outfitted through a GROUNDING MENTORING...Be...

✓ outfitted with **revelation** – **divinely adequate to fully prepare my character/living**

<sup>2 Timothy 3:14</sup> 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.

You've already observed what I'm going to tell you. There is but one directive from Paul the mentor to Timothy the disciple. Vs. 14 – "continue in" (μενω - Jesus: "abide, remain connected, stay vitally attached"). Young Timothy had already been raised in this rhythm. His grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice – they together had poured through the Scriptures with Timothy the boy.

Understanding all necessary "beginnings" in the book of Genesis. Apprehending God's promises through the seed of Abraham in the law and the prophets. Worshipping in the Psalms. Drinking in God's wisdom from the problems. These 2 godly women, having been entrusted with the truth, invested that truth faithfully in Timothy's heart.

Now Timothy the young man hears Paul – "*continue*" in the Scriptures. Let God's breathed-out revelation *daily teach* you, *reprove* you, *correct* you, and *train* you in right living.

## WRAPPING UP

In *More Jesus, Less Religion*, Steve Arterburn writes:

Some time ago, I read about the work of a Wycliffe Bible translator in a remote village in Papua New Guinea.

When the opening chapters of Genesis were first translated into the native language, the attitude toward women in the tribe changed overnight. They had not realized or understood that the woman had been specially formed out of the side of the man. Without even hearing this concept developed, these people immediately grasped the ideas of equality between the sexes and began adjusting their behavior. The people heard. They believed. They obeyed. They changed. Just like that.

That change doesn't mean everyone in the tribe immediately came to faith in Christ, however. While they immediately recognized the respect God has for both men and women, the members of this tribe **had their own hard-to-abandon gods and superstitions**. One of their practices was to spit on the wounds of the sick. Their medicine men were known as the spitters, and they did not want someone like Jesus to take away their status in the village.

However, the attitude changed **as more of the Bible** was translated into the tribe's dialect. When translators read the passage where Jesus cured a blind man in a most unusual way, the medicine men pricked up their ears. The Master spit on the ground, made a paste of mud, put it on the man's eyelids, told him to wash it off—and the man was healed. When these tribesmen heard this story in their own language, they saw that Jesus was not against them, but for them. They found one of their own, a Savior who was also a spitter! And they came to the Lord because of this connection.<sup>x</sup>

Ask yourself this morning – Am I fully outfitted to navigate as a disciple of Jesus Christ in this age, in these days...when just about everything we thought was nailed down is coming loose. Where am I going to get my direction? Who will be my model? Is there anything I can count on to be absolutely true? General Omar Bradley, US Army field commander and general through two world wars, in his 1948 Armistice Day address, put it like this.

We have too many men/women of science, too few men/women of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.... Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.<sup>xi</sup>

We need to learn to set our course by the stars, not by the lights of every passing ship.

Here's my invitation today -- As you seek to be Jesus' courageous, focused, persevering disciple, as you seek to disciple those God is calling you to, take some time with this chapter. Personally. Take some time with your family in this chapter. Let the Word breathed from God equip you with first things for every good work.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2018/09/20/what-a-waste-an-updated-look-into-the-future-of-solid-waste-management>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/planet-earth/state-of-the-planet/world-waste-facts/story>

<sup>iii</sup> On Henderson Island, an uninhabited atoll in the Pitcairn Group isolated halfway between Chile and New Zealand, scientists found plastic items from Russia, the United States, Europe, South America, Japan, and China. They were carried to the South Pacific by the South Pacific gyre, a circular ocean current.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/plastic-pollution> Nearly 700 species, including endangered ones, are known to have been affected by plastics. Nearly every species of seabird eats plastics.

<sup>v</sup> The water volume of these bottles could fill up 2,400 Olympic stadiums, 4.8 million Olympic-size swimming pools, or 40 billion bathtubs. This is also the weight of 3.4 million adult blue whales or 1,376 Empire State Buildings combined. [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) – see endnote <sup>i</sup>.

<sup>vi</sup> BAG, καλεσῶν, h, on, p.882)

<sup>vii</sup> But why are they to be avoided? Because (vss.6-9), those kind of people have (M. Yarbrough) “skilled, toxic leaders” and those leaders, those influencers on “on the offensive.”

<sup>viii</sup> For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup> Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. <sup>9</sup> But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

<sup>viii</sup> BAG, p.101, 833.

<sup>ix</sup> Scott Sauls, *A Gentle Answer*, pp.74,78, referencing Brian, “10 Dangerous Myths About the Persecuted Church,” *Open Doors*, April 24, 2017, [www.opendoorsusa.org/chrisitan-persecution/stories/10-dangerous-myths-about-the-persecuted-church/](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/chrisitan-persecution/stories/10-dangerous-myths-about-the-persecuted-church/).

<sup>x</sup> Steve Arterburn and Jack Felton, *More Jesus, Less Religion* (Sisters, Oregon: Waterbrook Press, 2000), p. 116

<sup>xi</sup> Omar Bradley, in his 1948 Armistice Day address, from *1001 Quotations That Connect*, Quotation 117 and 118.