

Title: True to the Word
Text: 2 Timothy 3.10-17
Theme: The Power of the Word in a life
Series: 2 Timothy
Prop Stmt: God's Word is so powerful that its impact in one's life will be plainly visible to those close by.

Read Text:

Imagine that you are part of an international engineering team that is charged with designing the world's most advanced and sophisticated telescope. In the process of design, however, you discover that your measurement of a centimeter is not the same centimeter as some of your colleagues. How successful is your project going to be? You cannot do anything unless you fundamentally agree on what a centimeter is and unless everyone agrees to the same standard of measure. The same thing is true for language. If there is not a basic agreement on what a word means, then we really cannot even have a conversation. God's Word provides ultimate meaning and definitions. It is evidence that there is a God and that this God has spoken and that what He says provides categories, structure, order and clear definitions. Of course that is challenged and rejected by most people, but the consequence is always personal and civil chaos. This is why our text includes two of the most important and controversial and even hated verses on this issue. But, what so many people reject is actually a wonderful gift.

2 Timothy 3.16-17 is a very important text because it teaches the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, sufficiency, authority and effectiveness of the Bible. These 2 verses are major "go-to" verses because they are texts that prove a particular doctrine. Because they prove a doctrine, we call these verses a "proof-text" and because of that, and rightly so, they are rather well known. So, while the doctrines of the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, sufficiency, authority and effectiveness of the Bible are fundamentally important, this text is here for more than that. Paul is seeking to make a point. What is the main point of this text? Timothy, as a follower of Christ and leader in the church, stay true to the Word (v.14) because you have seen its power in my life, you have seen its power in your life and because it alone will equip you for everything you need in life. There is nothing else like it ever!

Stay true to the Word because:

I. **You know my Testimony** (the Word in me) (10-11)

The background of verses 10-11 is found in Acts 16 and 17. (Read and explain Acts 16.1-5) Timothy went on a short-term mission trip with Paul and Silas. Timothy was probably around 18-20 years old. He had come to faith in Christ on Paul's first church-planting (missionary) journey (Acts 14.8-23) and Timothy had evidenced so much passion for the gospel and gifting that the members and elders of the church commended him to Paul and Silas when Paul revisited the church in his second church-planting and strengthening (missionary) journey. So, Paul and Silas took Timothy with them. Already the believers

in Lystra and in Iconium were really high on this kid. He was already a real blessing and help to them and they believed that Paul and Silas would benefit from him and he from them. So, off they went. Well, things with Paul are never dull. Of course, Timothy could have suspected this, because the first time Paul visited his city, Paul ended up getting stoned. Now, I don't mean drunk or high, I mean, he was mobbed by an angry crowd who took rocks and attempted to kill him and in fact thought they had. They even dragged his body outside of the city of Lystra and left him for dead. The handful of believers (and I am assuming Timothy was among them) went out to do something with his body, when Paul got up and went with them (presumably a bit discreetly) back into the city. This obviously had an impact on Timothy. This was the setting of Timothy's conversion. He had no illusions about what was at stake and what kind of responses he could expect for preaching the gospel.

So, when he and Luke and Silas and Paul arrived at Philippi and Paul and Silas were arrested and beaten and thrown into prison, Timothy probably was not all that surprised. If you remember the story, the missions team was on its way to a place of prayer near the river when they were met by a girl who was demon possessed. She was a fortune teller and she told fortunes by virtue of the demonic influence in her life. But, this girl was a slave, so whatever profit that she made from telling fortunes would go to her owners. So, when she meets the mission team, she starts shouting, "*These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.*" All of this is true, isn't it? But, coming from her in that manner is not necessarily helping the cause. So, it sounds as if the team just tries to ignore her and hope that she stops, but she doesn't. And in fact, she keeps it up day after day after day until Paul gets so annoyed, he orders the demon to come out of her, which it does. Well now she can't tell fortunes anymore and her owners, who instead of repenting and trusting in Christ get really ticked off at Paul and Silas and get them arrested and thrown into jail. Now, again, Luke and Timothy were with them, and I am guessing that these two guys stayed with Lydia who had just come to faith in Christ. The Lord delivered Paul and Silas from jail, and from there they went to Thessalonica where another riot ensued.

During all of this time Timothy is not only learning the cost of following Christ, but he is learning about the gospel. He is learning about the church. He is learning about what it means to follow Jesus, to be part of a community of believers, to have elders, to reach, teach and disciple others. He is learning so much that in Acts 17, Paul leaves Timothy and Silas in Berea while Paul goes to Athens. Timothy then went back to Thessalonica before he rejoined Paul in Corinth. Timothy was with Paul on his third journey and was there in Ephesus for those two years while Paul taught and reasoned every day in the school of Tyrannus. Timothy had an awesome seminary education and he saw the effect of all of this good teaching on the church there in Ephesus. In fact, while the church in Jerusalem was home base and the church in Antioch became a sending church, the church in Ephesus established a wonderful reputation of being a healthy, robust and solid group of believers. They were an enormous blessing to many of the other churches and it was obviously one of the reasons why Paul was so concerned about them continuing that way.

So now, years later now, when Paul has been imprisoned again, but is not going to be released this time, and he writes this final letter to Timothy and he says “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, Timothy knew. He had been there. He saw Paul’s life. He saw the power of the Word and gospel in this man’s life. In fact, it is quite possible that by the time that Timothy received this letter that Paul had already been executed.

What an incredible impact this was for Timothy to have had the opportunity to have a front row seat in the life of a man who attempted to live faithfully and consistently for Jesus in all of life. Timothy saw the power of a Word-driven life. The things that Paul lists here in verses 10 and 11 describe all of life. There were no compartments in Paul’s life in the sense of him being one thing here and another thing over here. Paul was the real deal and Timothy experienced that. He heard what Paul taught. He watched Paul’s conduct. He saw what fired him up, what got him excited. He saw Paul’s aim in life. He knew what Paul banked his life on. He saw how patient and hopeful Paul was, even with his enemies. He saw how much he loved others and how faithful he was, even under fire. And then when Paul was in the furnace of persecution, Timothy watched what bubbled out. Suffering will squeeze you and reveal what is on the inside and Timothy saw that.

So, to summarize we would say that the closer Timothy got to Paul, the more he could smell Jesus. This is in contrast to those that Paul just described in verses 1-9. Here Paul is describing leaders who have ulterior motives and who use their leadership as a cloak in order to take advantage of others. It was obvious to Timothy that Paul did not travel and teach because he was on an ego trip; nor was he making a name for himself. He was the real deal. In fact, we are all called to live this way.

Sidebar Commentary – verses 12-13

At this point, Paul points out the obvious contrast between his life and example and the life and example of the false teachers. The false teachers were trying to tell people that you can follow Jesus and live for your own pleasures and get along just fine in this world, while Paul has consistently taught that followers of Christ are out of step with this world. When you do not think like this world, live like this world and when you do not affirm what they are promoting, you can expect some flack. It is true, that we do not experience the level of persecution that other believers do in other portions of the world. But, those days are coming. We do not want them to come, but they are coming. So, here is the contrast: if you live a life devoted to Christ, you can expect resistance. You will be persecuted. The alternative is to believe something that is not true. And the result of that is described in verse 13. Evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. That is a very important truth. Think with me. Why do evil people and imposters go on from bad to worse? Why are those who set out to deceive others become deceived themselves? The reason is found in the very nature of sin itself.

Sin is not static. In other words, we are tempted to believe that we can manage sin. We can keep it under control. We can give sin, a little corner of our life and tell it, like a dog

to stay there and don't leave. It won't stay there. You cannot manage sin. There is no such thing as a little bit of sin. We are idiots to believe "just this once" or "I'll quit tomorrow." The power of sin is in the promise it makes to you. It promises you that it will give you what you want in the moment, and it never satisfies you. That is why evil people and imposters go on from bad to worse. They are trying manage sin. They are trying to use it for their own purposes, but while they are trying to play others, they are being played. Sin does not play nice with others. Sin is not content and will not stay in its corner. It is like a cancer that is hell bent on influencing all of the other cells around it to join in the rebellion that will take you down. That is why John Owen famously said, "either be killing sin or sin will be killing you." As you address areas of sin in your life, you cannot think in terms of a truce. You have to think in terms of an unconditional surrender. Show sin no mercy.

"But as for you..." (14) The second reason why Timothy is challenged to stay true to the word is because

II. **You know your Testimony.** (the Word in you) (14-15)

Timothy, look at your own life. Look at the power of the word in you. God's word made you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, meaning God's Word taught you what was right and wrong. Timothy was acquainted with the sacred writings from childhood. Timothy's mom was a Jew and his father was a Greek. Timothy's mom probably took him to the synagogue where, from his earliest recollections, he heard the sacred writings, which would have been the Old Testament scriptures. He heard God's Word. He heard God's law. He knew the story of the Jewish people which was an ongoing illustration of the truthfulness of God's Word. They were told to trust God, love God and follow him. They didn't. They repeatedly rebelled against God. They needed to be rescued time and time again. All of this knowledge prepared Timothy for the rest of the story. When Paul came to his town and began to preach the gospel, Timothy, like many other Jews in his city now were able to hear the rest of the story. They realized what the Old Testament was all about. It was all about Jesus. The Word of God had made a profound impact in Timothy's life. It made him wise for salvation. What does that mean? A wise person is someone who is aware and who is prepared for what is about to happen, or knows how to respond when things do happen. To be wise for salvation then means to know that you are a sinner who needs to be rescued.

A wise person takes sin and takes his sin, very seriously. A fool blows it off. Timothy, do you see what the Word did in your life? The word informed and formed your conscience. The Word gave you mental categories so that you know where certain ideas belong and how you are to think of them. But the word prepared Timothy to receive Christ as his Savior through faith. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to give us faith in God, love for God and affections for Christ. When Timothy heard the gospel he believed it because he wanted to believe it. His life had been prepared by the Word to believe in Christ. So, Timothy, your life, like mine has been changed from the inside out, by the Word. These are good reasons to stay true to it, but there is a third reason and in fact this third reason why we should stay true to the Word is foundational to the first two reasons.

In other words, the reason why the Word was so powerful in Paul's life and in Timothy's life is because of the power of the Word itself.

The third reason why you should stay true to the Word is because of...

III. **The Testimony of the Word.** (the Word in every believer) (16-17)

A. **Source – God** (16a)

Have you ever heard of quark soup? You will not find it as the soup of the day at a local restaurant. Scientists were able to get gold ions to smash into each other traveling at nearly the speed of light. If that sounds a bit dangerous, it is! What happened was the formation of this stuff they called quark gluon plasma or quark soup. The stuff was 4 trillion degrees – Celsius!! That is 250,000 times hotter than the sun. In normal matter, quarks are confined, but in quark gluon plasma, they are unconfined. This is really powerful and obviously dangerous stuff.

Have you ever heard of chlorine tri-fluoride? This stuff is supposed to be some of the most flammable material on the earth. There's a story that a ton of it was spilled once and that it caught fire and burned through 12 inches of concrete and then through another 3 feet of sand and gravel before it finally burned out.

These substances and others are so powerful because of how destructive they are. They destroy life. God's Word is infinitely more powerful because it is able to form life. All Scripture is breathed out by God. God breathed out, God spoke and hundreds of thousands of angelic beings were brought into existence. God spoke and the universe came into being. God spoke (perhaps through a song) and the sun and stars were set into place, mountains, oceans and rolling meadows were laid out. Day and night, seasons, tides, orbits were all established. God spoke and dinosaurs and dogs, cats and crawfish, birds and bats, lions and lambs, butterflies and bears appeared. God spoke and Adam became a breathing, thinking, responding, loving, eating and amazing being. When God speaks everything that he wants to happen happens because there is nothing that can stop his Word from accomplishing everything that he intended. And because it is so powerful, and can create life, it is so powerful that it can shape life. That is the effect that God's Word has.

B. **Effect – Life-Shaping** (16b)

God's Word is profitable. In fact, all of God's Word is profitable. Some of these false teachers were claiming to find secret meanings in genealogies and so Paul is countering that by saying, that all Scripture is profitable. And it is profitable for teaching: telling us what to believe. It is profitable for reproof: telling us what not to do. It is profitable for correction: telling us what not to believe. It is profitable for training in righteousness: telling us what to do.

Seriously, what else do you need? Why would I preach anything else? I am not going to waste your time and life on the thousands of theories of human behavior, motivations and causes, when I have the most powerful, penetrating, life-giving and life-forming thing ever! Here you have what you need from God to tell you how to believe, how not to believe, how to live and how not to live. And what you have is so powerful that it will enable you to think and live this way. In fact the result of knowing, loving and submitting to God's Word is that your life will be ready for whatever you face.

C. **Result** – Prepared for life now and life to come. (17)

The man of God (the believer and of course, the minister) is competent. He is skilled. He is ready. He is ready for every good work. The Word prepares him to face whatever life throws his way and the Word prepares him for death. Timothy, Cornerstone, stay the course. Continue in what you have learned. There is nothing in all of life that can compare to God's Word. There is nothing in all of life that can make you alive, but God.

Conclusion:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters." And it was so. And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place." And it was so. And God said, and God said, and God said. And it was so and it was so and it was so and it was good.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Your word, O LORD is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. The LORD said to Moses. Then the LORD said to Joshua. The LORD said to Gideon. The LORD revealed himself to Samuel through his word. The word of the LORD came to Elijah. Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD." This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD. And we have the word of the prophets...and you will do well to pay attention to it. Above all you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. For the word of God is living and active sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The unfolding of your words gives light. Your word is light unto my path. Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

You have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does, prospers. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus I give you this charge: Preach the Word! For all men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the LORD stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.

Persecution won't last, God's Word does. False teachers won't last, God's Word does. This world won't last, God's Word does. Tough times won't last, God's Word does. Sorrow won't last, God's Word does. Sickness won't last, God's Word does. Disappointment won't last, God's Word does. Philosophies won't last, psychology won't last, trends won't last, technology won't last, countries, economies and universities won't last, but God's Word does. Forever, your word is settled in heaven.