

BEHOLD THE WORD OF GOD

2 Timothy 3

Perilous Times and Perilous Men

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

The Man of God and the Word of God

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

This is the 2nd and last letter from the Apostle Paul to Timothy, who was, as Paul called him, his spiritual son. This is a very personal letter of which Paul wanted Timothy to know that his, and our, walk in faith in this world will have its share of pain, sorrow, grief, and suffering, as not everyone is on the same game plan, but that he and we, are to keep the faith in Christ Jesus, and then of utmost importance, is to know His Word. We are always looking TO Jesus as our blessed Savior, as His Spirit is working in us, and then also, we are to KNOW His Word. It is what, time and time again, we find **throughout His Word**, that we are being taught by God, **through His Word**, to know Him, trust Him (as all His ways and works are perfect), and to honor Him, by loving Him and others, obeying Him, worshipping and praising Him, as He alone is our Lord, God and Savior.

Paul knew that his time on this earth was coming to an end, as he mentioned it in the following chapter, saying, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have **loved His appearing.**" (**2 Timothy 4:7-8**) I intentionally put the emphasis on the loving of His appearing. The rewards will belong to those WHO love His appearing! God will right the wrong in His perfect judgment. Paul was speaking of Jesus' initial appearing, at the time of the apostles, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (**John 1:14**). Yet soon and very soon, Jesus will be appearing again, as it says in **Revelation 1:7**, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." While the rest of the world will mourn at His appearing, as they hadn't loved His **previous** appearing, we, and hopefully you, are looking for, longing for, and anticipating more of our Lord, God, and Savior presently, as He is a "rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (**Hebrews 11:6**), so that we too will keep the faith and finish the race, and then we also will be ready for His next appearing, as He comes on the clouds, as Christ the Conqueror, or that we will be ready if we should leave this earth before then.

What a day THAT will be! We are promised and encouraged, through the prophet Isaiah, saying, "Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young." We need to differentiate, as Paul did, between beholding His reward with the one who has the reward. Are we are beholding the reward or are we presently beholding our Lord, God, and Savior? The reward will be a given, as it will be with Him, as we are beholding our Lord, God, and Savior. The world will mourn at His appearing, but all of His saints will rejoice, as we have loved His appearing, for behold, Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God!

While there is then a difference between looking to our rewards and beholding the Lord, there is also a stark contrast to those people of the world to those who are reading, meditating on, and living according to the Word of God. What we really can see in Paul's letter here, is that, while the whole world is heading one direction and is not looking for, with anticipation, the coming of our Lord, we ARE looking to JESUS, as our salvation comes from Him alone. We are also called to, and expected to live, an active faith in Christ, as Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have

kept the faith." The Holy Spirit leads us to believe on Christ, through the faith that He gives us, and then by the Wisdom He gives us, as He ministers to us **through His Word**. We learn to live **in that redemption** that is in Christ Jesus. That is how Paul said, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**) Paul said he kept the faith. Faith is defined in **Hebrews 11:1** as, "the substance of things hoped for", that is, to behold our Lord, God, and Savior, and then "the evidence of things not seen", to be with Him, to see His face, and to live with Him in the fullness of His glory. In Him IS the reward-yet we behold our Lord, God, and Savior! To those who truly believe on the revelation that is given us, by God, through His Holy Spirit, in believing on Christ Jesus, dying on a cross for our sins, shedding His blood for the remission of our sins, and that He also conquered death by raising from the grave on the third day, He gives us too, **eternal life in Him**, as we believe on Him and receive Him. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (**John 14:6**), He wasn't speaking of a one-time experience, where we are saved and that's it. HE IS our Way, Truth, and Life, from the beginning of our faith to when we behold Him in His glory, of which there is no end, to those who are in Christ Jesus, and yes, His reward will be with Him. While it is important for us to know His reward is with Him, otherwise He wouldn't have told us that in His Word, yet HE IS OUR WAY, TRUTH, AND LIFE! Another notable proclamation of beholding was by John the Baptist. "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**) While that was a moment in time proclamation, it is a forever clarion call to "Behold the Word, the Lamb of God!"

It is most certainly true that we are saved by the grace of God and that we are not saved by our own works. A most beautiful example in Scripture that speaks to that is **Ephesians 2:8-9** that says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." While it is definitely God who is doing the saving, we have a part to play IN our salvation, so to speak, as we must believe, through faith, and then receive His salvation in Christ Jesus. That gift that we are receiving isn't JUST a promise from God, it is the receiving of the Holy Spirit, that, as Paul said in **2 Corinthians 1:22**, God "set[s] **his seal of ownership on us**, and put[s] his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." That is an establishing of a covenant we have in Christ Jesus. The Apostle John spoke of that very same process of believing and receiving Christ, saying, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (**John 1:12-13**)

We have to start with the proper foundation in Christ Jesus before we can get anywhere, spiritually speaking of course. Jesus Himself stated, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23) That sounds very much like an active faith, doesn't it? Once we have believed on Christ Jesus, we are receiving Him, that is, the Spirit of Christ, known to us also as the Holy Spirit, and that is where we begin to live our lives as a new creation, one who is "born-again", as a child of God-as we KEEP HIS WORD! Going back to **Ephesians 2:8-9**, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Paul continues then saying, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (**Ephesians 2:10**)

At times, the gospel message of being saved by believing on Christ, and just getting people to recite a sinner's prayer has been a stumbling-block for many Christians. We hear the good news that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and that we must believe and receive Him. While that is true, that is just the beginning of our new life in Christ. As any of you know who have been walking with the Lord can attest to, that does not mean that we suddenly have everything just fall into place and we just get to skip through life without any hindrances. We have to put our trust in Him as the Way, Truth, and Life continually, which means it necessitates us to be in prayer and in His Word, continually. There are many pitfalls and other people who want to pull us into their depraved lifestyle. Right?

In previous messages we have acknowledged, as Paul explains to us through his letters, that while we are saved by the grace of God, we also are then expected to then walk in the leading of the Holy Spirit, according to God's will, and we learn of it by reading His Word. On numerous occasions Paul explains the correlation and the difference in his efforts compared to the working that the Holy Spirit was doing in him. In **Colossians 1:29**, Paul says, "to this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." In **1 Corinthians 15:10**, Paul says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." One more is **Philippians 2:12-13** where Paul says to the church at Philippi, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

Simply stated, there is, and should be, a distinct difference, in us, that is, those who ARE saved, are a CHILD OF GOD, and have accepted the covenant that we have in Christ Jesus, to those persons who

haven't. Paul starts off in **2 Timothy 3**, saying, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come." Not only are WE in the last of days, the Apostles themselves said that THEY were in the last of days. The Apostle John even said that we are in the last hour. "Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now **many antichrists have come**, by which we know that it is the last hour." (**1 John 2:18**) If time was considered short for the Apostles almost 2000 years ago, it is then most definitely getting close now. The focus for us isn't though intended to be looking for "The Antichrist" and for when Jesus comes back. As we are told, there are many antichrists already. That really applies to all who are living contrary to the will and the Word of God. Jesus tells us in **Matthew 24:36** that no one knows the day nor the hour of His return. Jesus then goes on to say, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also **be ready**, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (**Matthew 24:42-44**)

That **being ready** for us, is to be always looking unto Jesus, not just for His return. There has been close to 50 generations that have come and gone since the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet, with each generation, they were told, as we are told, to "be ready". "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**) To those who have loved His appearing will also be ready and rejoicing at His next appearing. That speaks of an active faith and it also speaks of an active relationship with our Lord, God, and Savior, and an abiding in His Word, not giving room for a falling away in our faith. Let us then "Behold, the Word of God"!

That sin that the writer(s) of Hebrews speaks of, that can ensnare us, is spoken of in our passage of Scripture for today in 2 Timothy 3. "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power." Once again, as we know, if that was speaking to anyone who has ever sinned and been or done any of those things, we would all be doomed. That is though speaking to those who continue to practice those things, those who do not repent of those things, those who refuse to live according to the will and Word of God, to live a godly

life in Christ Jesus. Paul continues by saying, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution". How is that? Because of all those who have not loved His appearing, to those who will mourn at His next appearing, are all around us. Nevertheless, they are not our enemies. Paul tells us that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." (**Ephesians 6:12**) We are in a spiritual battle, between God and Satan, for living souls. We are told by Jesus, "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven". (**Matthew 5:44-45**) As God desires for none to perish, we are to have that same hope that others too will come to a saving faith in Christ Jesus and will also love Jesus at His appearing. We must continue to pray for one another, even those who seem to be our enemies. God will separate those who are His from those who are not. God will right the wrong, and reward the good and the bad. That time though has not yet come.

For those who have believed on Christ Jesus and have received Him, He begins working in us, and there are four primary things that God is working in us through His Holy Spirit. Paul tells us, in **1 Corinthians 1:30**, that God, through Christ, that is, through His Spirit, works in us His, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. It is then up to us to begin walking in that, even when we aren't "feeling it". The perfect gauge, so to speak, is what Jesus spoke of as the greatest commandment, and the second that is like unto it, to love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then to also love others as ourselves. (**Mark 12:30-31**) That is contrary to what Paul described as basically being those ungodly attributes, and can be essentially summed up as not being lovers of God.

As Paul mentioned those people who are practicing in unrighteousness, he said of such people turn away. That can have two meanings. To turn them away from your gathering or to turn away yourself from the, to not partake in the ungodliness. I tend to look at it in the latter, since for the most part we can't control other people. In a setting of a church building there is a case for turning them away from the church, asking them to leave. In a public setting, such as what we are in, we must be patient, kind, tolerant, and hopeful, and be in constant prayer, reminding ourselves that the battle belongs to the Lord, trusting God in any and every situation. Also, if we turned away all those who need Jesus, then no one would be saved. Once again, He is our Wisdom.

We have many example of the Israelites, from the Old Testament, even acting like they were godly, saying they loved God, but their actions

betrayed them. They were, as Paul described them, "having a form of godliness but denying its power. Jesus spoke of them, in quoting Isaiah, saying, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Many times you will encounter someone who will one minute be "honoring God" and then the next, their actions will betray them. Once again though we are His workmanship. Trusting God involves realizing that we, I, cannot save anyone, heal anyone, or deliver anyone. Christ alone can and does. That is who our focus is on, that who we are trusting in every situation. Paul tells Timothy, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured."

He then says, "But you must continue in the things which you have **learned** and been assured of, **knowing** from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have **known the Holy Scriptures**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work**." Without having the Word of God to guide us, we eventually start operating as those who have a form of godliness but are denying its power. It is in the Word that leads us in our faith in wisdom which leads to righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is in the Word of God alone that will make us complete and thoroughly equipped for every good work. It is even one of the 5 "Solas" that Martin Luther penned to start what is now called the "Reformation". "All **Scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be **complete, thoroughly equipped** for every good work."

We know of the Word having a two-fold meaning. The Word is the inspired Word of God that we call the Holy Bible, and the Word is also the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who became flesh and dwelt among us. Christ Jesus, the Word, uses His Word, the Word of God, to minister to us, training us in righteousness that we may be made "complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." You will be hampered and lacking if the Word of God, that is, the Holy Scriptures, are not working in your heart and mind. That is what Paul was telling Timothy and what the Holy Spirit is saying to us, in His Word. We will overcome in Christ Jesus as we continue to behold the Word of God, as we continue to know Him, trust Him, and honor Him. As we have loved His appearing, we will love His appearing as we behold the Word, the Lamb of God, in all of His glory!