

2 Timothy 3:10-17 | “Keep on Keeping on”  
*Preached on March 12, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown*

You can turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3, and we will be in verses 10-17. *[pause]*

In the previous passage, Paul just explained how wicked people will be in the last days.

They will be heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, and treacherous, among many other things.

And they will also capture people away from the truth. *[pause]*

It wasn't a pretty picture at all, and we felt the weight of all that that entailed. *[pause]*

Hearing such things and living in such a worsening world can bring with it numerous temptations that tempt us to no longer be faithful. *[pauseeee]*

There's the temptation to be discouraged and give up.

When we see how bad it is, how wicked people are, and how difficult it is - it's easy to just want to throw in the towel.

We tend to start to think, “Is it worth it?”

Or even, “Are they going to win, I mean, look at how bad people are getting.” *[pause]*

Have you ever felt that way when you see how bad the world is? *[pauseeee]*

There's also a temptation to go with the flow.

When everyone else is going one way, we feel the pressure to go along with them. *[pause]*

Have you ever felt that pressure?

Have you ever thought, “It would make it so much easier to just go along, and not fight against the current.”? *[pauseeee]*

And thirdly, there's a temptation to be deceived by those in the world, for they are often persuasive, and use new, interesting sounding ideas.

And many people like things that sound new and intriguing. *[pauseeeee]*

So amidst all of these temptations of living in a worsening world, Paul is going to basically call us to “keep on keeping on”. *[pauseeee]*

When my wife, Kate, was in college she ran on the cross country team.

Before I met her, I had never actually been to a cross country match.

But due to dating her at that time, I was able to go to many matches. *[pause]*

As you may well know, in cross country, you need to run for long distances and it takes endurance and perseverance.

There are many obstacles and hardships that arise. *[pause]*

In many places, you aren't running on level ground, but you are running through woods, over rocks, and on uneven ground. *[pause]*

So when you take into account the pain of running a long distance, plus the hindrances that come up - it takes a constant 'keeping on' to do well in cross country. *[pause]*

In fact, being at cross country matches, I was able to see how the runners were encouraged.

At certain places along the route, coaches and fans would go and stand and cheer on the runners. *[pause]*

The runners would be tired, in pain, and striving to endure, and the coach and fans would be there saying things like, "Good job! You are doing great! Keep going strong!"

They were essentially saying, "Keep on keeping on!" *[pause]*

They were acknowledging that they were doing well, but also, encouraging them to keep at it and to continue going strong.

And as for the runners, you could see the great difference that this made in them, as they were infused with a renewed strength and determination to continue. *[pause]*

That's a good illustration of what Paul does for Timothy (and us) in the text before us.

He's like our coach, encouraging us on in faithfulness amid a worsening world. *[pauseeee]*

*First, he starts out by saying...*

### **I. You have followed well. (10-13)**

Look down at the passage as I READ verses 10-13. *[read verses 10-13]*

Paul has just described the wickedness of people in the last days, and their devious ways, and now he tells Timothy: "You, however..." *[pause]*

He's making a big contrast between Timothy and the wicked people of his day.

They may be getting worse, and leading people astray, but Timothy has been faithful.

He has followed Paul's teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions, and sufferings. *[pause]*

So while others were teaching falsehood, Timothy followed the right teaching.

While they lived for self, money, and pleasure - Timothy has been living for the Lord, and it has shown in his conduct. *[pause]*

These good qualities that Timothy displayed are in many ways the opposite of the vice list that we learned last week. *[pauseeee]*

This gives us a reminder of an all-important truth: when we live for the Lord, we will live differently than the world around us.

But can people tell a difference in your life? *[pause]*

So often by our fear or complaining, we blend right in.

So often by our attitudes and actions, no one can tell the difference between us and those who don't follow Christ.

That ought not to be!

In this dark world, we should shine as lights!<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

While others live for self, you, however, should live for God.

While others live for money and pleasure, you, however, should live the way God wants.

While others don't care about the truth, you, however, should be a lover of the truth. *[pause]*

People should be able to look at our lives and think, "Wow, they are really unlike other people." *[pauseeee]*

Now we don't strive to become weird, just for weird's sake, but we are different because our values, mindsets, and actions reflect someone who doesn't live for self, but who lives for Another. *[pauseeee]*

To not live for yourself in this world is truly counter-cultural.

People will wonder, "How could you NOT choose to be with that beautiful woman, who desires to be with you, even though you have a wife?"

Or, "How could you NOT take advantage of this situation, and get ahead of your co-worker by lying?"

Or, "How could you NOT be bitter and hold a grudge after someone did something so horrible to you?" *[pause]*

This is because living for self is the default mode of sinners, and therefore, those who don't live for self are seen as anomalies. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>1</sup> See Philippians 2:14-15.

In a day when others were getting more wicked, Timothy stood out.

Paul could look at the world, and then look at Timothy and say, “You, however, live differently.”

And this should be reflected in our own lives.

Especially as the world waxes worse and worse, our lives should shine brighter and brighter.

*[pause]*

The more you darken a room, the more you see the light of a lamp, so also, that should be the case with our lives. *[pauseeee]*

You see, Timothy didn’t just show glimpses of doing well, but he had *followed* Paul’s teaching and life.

These things characterized him. *[pause]*

Timothy followed the right way and was a dedicated disciple that Paul had trained up.

Could that be said of you?

Are you a dedicated, faithful disciple of Jesus Christ?

Could someone say, “You have followed well.”? *[pause]*

So many times we follow the ways of the world, we follow our own desires and feelings, or we follow the trends of the day.

But may it be said of us, “You have followed Christ.” *[pauseeee]*

Imagine hearing from the Apostle Paul, “You have followed well.”

What encouragement that hearing this surely was for Timothy!

This is what Paul uses to encourage Timothy on to future faithfulness - he points out his past faithfulness. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever been encouraged to keep being faithful when someone acknowledged your faithfulness?

Who could you talk to this week, and encourage them with the good that you see in their life?

It could be as simple as saying, “Thank you so much for your faithfulness in this church over the years.” *[pause]*

You never know how that could motivate them and stir them up to even more love and good works.<sup>2</sup> *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>2</sup> See Hebrews 10:24.

Now as you are sitting there, you may be thinking, “This is great. But what exactly does it look like to follow well?”

Well this list of ways that Timothy has followed Paul gives us the answer.

They show us what it looks like to live faithfully in a worsening world. *[pauseeee]*

For some people, as the world gets worse, they get more militant, more mean, and more grumbly.

But what do we see in Timothy’s example?

He simply continued in godliness. *[pause]*

As people moved away from the truth, he followed Paul’s teachings.

As people got more brutal, he was patient.

As people were more heartless, he was loving.

As people aimed to get more money and more pleasure, his aim was to please the Lord.  
*[pauseeee]*

Looking at this list closer, we see that following Christ well means having right doctrine.

Paul says that Timothy has followed his teaching. *[pause]*

Timothy didn’t move away from the truth, or believe some false teaching.

Instead, he followed Paul’s teaching well. *[pauseeee]*

Following right teaching truly matters, but here’s the thing, right conduct matters, too.

What good is it if we know all the in’s and out’s of doctrinal truth, and we live like pagans?  
*[pause]*

So faithfulness in the midst of a worsening world looks like a life of godliness.

It looks like people who have great faith and single-minded purpose to live for the Lord with all that they have, even when others don’t.

The worsening world hasn’t squelched their patience and love, but their patience and love are seen even during the hardest of times.

And when any other person would have given up by now, their eyes are on Christ,<sup>3</sup> and they are steadfast amidst the circumstances of life. *[pause]*

Could these things be said of you?

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<sup>3</sup> See Hebrews 12:2.

Do you cling tightly to right teaching?

Are you growing in patience, love, and steadfastness?

Is your aim in life to live for the Lord?

If not, then why not determine to follow Christ faithfully starting now? *[pause]*

You can't change the past, but you can certainly live differently now.

Ask for forgiveness, and ask God to help you to follow Him well in the days ahead. *[pauseeee]*

As we look at this list, it's easy to stop where I stopped - at steadfastness - but there's more isn't there?

Timothy had also followed Paul into suffering, in fact, Paul says, "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." *[pause]*

So we see that living faithfully in a worsening world also looks like *suffering*. *[pause]*

Though we don't like to admit it.

Though others try to portray the Christian life only in terms of ease and prosperity.

The Bible is clear that ALL who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. *[pause]*

There's no getting around it.

You want to be godly? Be ready to suffer. *[pause]*

Paul is a clear example of this, for everywhere he went, it seems as though he met persecution. *[pause]*

He specifically points out Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. *[pause]*

In Antioch, Paul was reviled, persecuted, and driven out of the town.<sup>4</sup>

In Iconium, the people wanted to stone him, and he fled.<sup>5</sup>

And at Lystra, he was stoned, dragged out of the city, and presumed to be dead.<sup>6</sup> *[pause]*

Certainly, Paul knew what it meant to be persecuted and to suffer.

And it was all because he wanted to share the Gospel and live a godly life. *[pause]*

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<sup>4</sup> See Acts 13:45,50.

<sup>5</sup> See Acts 14:5-6.

<sup>6</sup> See Acts 14:19-20.

This is true for any of us who desire to live a godly life because the world is in rebellion against God.

Yet this shouldn't cause us to fear or to quit, for we remember Who we are serving.

As Paul says of the persecutions he endured, "yet from them all the Lord rescued me." [pause]

God gave Paul the strength to endure, and he was rescued from death in those moments.

This is not to say that persecutions won't claim our lives, yet it is to say that if it's not our time, God will rescue us from physical death. [pause]

We are rescued until our ministry is over in this life.

And even when we physically die, we go on living, rescued from eternal death, for we have life in Christ. [pauseeee]

What an encouraging thing to remember in the sufferings we face!

God gives us the strength to endure, and if it's not our time to die, God will rescue us from death, so we don't need to fear.

We are in the good, all-powerful hands of the Almighty, no matter what. [pauseeee]

What's confusing to many people is this...

They wonder, "How is it that Christians suffer and are persecuted, while wicked people prosper?"

They think, "If God is really God, then wouldn't it be switched?"

But look at what Paul shows us in verses 12-13...

"All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, *while* evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." [pauseeee]

God isn't caught off guard by that reality.

It's not like He's weak and powerless against the tide of evil.

Instead, He's the One who has told us that this is what was going to happen. [pause]

So we don't have to worry that something went awry, or that evil will prevail.

But rather, those who reject God will fight tooth and nail until Christ comes back and makes all things right. [pause]

This shouldn't cause us to give up, or wonder what went wrong.

But we should remember that God told us that this would happen, and we are to remain faithful through it all. *[pauseeee]*

Timothy had followed well - could that be said of you? *[pause]*

So after telling Timothy that he has followed well, Paul goes on to say...

## II. Now continue on well. (14-17)

Look at verses 14-17, as I READ. *[read verses 14-17]*

Yes, others will get worse and worse.

Yes, it will be hard.

Yes, this is life in a worsening world, *but as for you, continue!* *[pauseeee]*

As the world worsens and it becomes less and less popular to be a Christian, it will become harder and harder to resist the flow.

But we don't go with the flow.

We don't allow ourselves to be deceived or despair at what we see.

Instead - as for us, we continue living faithfully in a worsening world. *[pause]*

It's time that we stand up and say like Joshua, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."<sup>7</sup> *[pause]*

We may see others doing the opposite.

We may feel the pressure and the temptation, yet we must continually say, "But as for me..."

"As for me, I will live differently. I will continue in what I have learned and believed." *[pause]*

That's what it looks like to live faithfully in a worsening world - it's continuing in what you have learned and believed.

So to be faithful, we don't go looking for the new and exciting.

We don't follow the trendy and popular thing of the day.

We continue in the truth! *[pauseeee]*

A big part of faithfulness is a clinging to the truth of Scripture, believing it, and living in accordance with it. *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>7</sup> Joshua 24:15.



Are you continuing in what you have learned and believed in the Word of God?

Where's your authority for what you believe and how you live?

Is it in your desires and feelings? What the world says and thinks?

Or is it in the very Word of God, the Scriptures? *[pause]*

It is the Bible that is our anchor in the sea of a sinful world that splashes, flows, and moves around us.

We will need this anchor, and we will need to continue holding onto it, if we are going to be faithful against the flow.<sup>8</sup> *[pauseeee]*

What else can hold us steady when people try to say, "The Bible doesn't really condemn homosexuality, does it?"

What else can help us to live a godly life when everyone else is saying, "You have to put yourself first and love yourself, and if you don't you won't be happy and fulfilled!"

What else can keep us afloat when we look around and see things getting worse and worse?

It's the Scriptures! It's what we have learned and believed! *[pauseeee]*

In order to continue in what we learned and believed, we have to remember the trustworthiness of *who* taught us the Scriptures. *[pause]*

Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he learned and believed, "knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings." *[pause]*

He had learned the Scriptures from Paul and from his mother and grandmother.

Hearing it from Paul meant he heard it from an authoritative place, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

But he also knew of Paul's godly life, and the impact that the Word had on Paul's life. *[pause]*

When he remembered that, he could remember, "I heard Scripture from someone reliable, and whose life has demonstrated the power of the Scriptures." *[pause]*

He could also do this with his mother and grandmother, and he knew they were trustworthy and godly, too.

Timothy could know that he wasn't deceived by some falsehood, for he could just remember who taught him. *[pause]*

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<sup>8</sup> A reference to the title of a sermon I preached from 2 Timothy 1:12-18 on January 22, 2023.

Are the people who taught you Scripture trustworthy? Does their life reflect the godliness that only Scripture can produce?

Then let that motivate you to continue faithfully holding onto the Bible! *[pauseee]*

But Paul also shows us that we should remember the trustworthiness of Scripture itself. *[pause]*

Let me tell you this: if you are going to live faithfully in a dark world, you will need a high view of Scripture.

For a low view of the Bible only leads to unfaithfulness. *[pause]*

The reason is that if you think that the Bible is only good advice and neat stories, you will push it to the side when something else sounds like better advice.

If you think of the Bible as outdated, then you will neglect it in favor of ideas that you think are more relevant.

But when you know and believe that the Bible is what it is, it makes all the difference.

They are God's very Word to us, for as Paul says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God." *[pause]*

This shows us that Scripture comes from God Himself; it is His very Word. *[pause]*

It's this image of God breathing out and producing the Scriptures.

He used human writers, but it ultimately comes from Him, as he moved them along to write exactly what He wanted.<sup>9</sup> *[pause]*

This is how we continue in the truth: because we know it is the truth from God Himself!

How could we turn elsewhere when we have the very Word of God?! *[pauseee]*

As we continue faithfully serving God here in Clearfield, I sure hope people think, "Everything they believe or do is based on what the Bible says, but why are they so about the Bible?"

And our answer will always be: "Because it is God-breathed." *[pauseee]*

So remember the nature of the Scriptures, but also, remember the power of the Scriptures.

It has saving wisdom.

Paul says that the sacred writings "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." *[pause]*

It is the Bible that shows us the way to be saved.

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<sup>9</sup> See 2 Peter 1:21.

The Bible gives us the needed wisdom to know where to find salvation: through faith in Christ.

And so that means that people *need* the truth of Scripture to make them wise for salvation.

*[pause]*

Knowing this, how could we disregard the Bible when it has such saving wisdom?!

How could we think it's outdated or irrelevant?

How could we move past something that gives people wisdom for salvation?

It has eternal value because it shows us Christ, who saves, so hold onto it with everything that you have! *[pauseeee]*

We can continue in the truth, knowing it's God's very Word, but also, knowing that it gives us everything we need to live for Him.

It has 'equipping' power. *[pause]*

Paul says that Scripture is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." *[pause]*

This is an astounding statement!

It's showing us that the Bible has all that we need! *[pauseeee]*

My pastor from Lancaster used a good illustration of these four terms once that I've never forgotten. *[pause]*

He said it's like a road.

Scripture shows us the road to go on, for it teaches us.

Scripture shows us when we are off the road, for it reproves us.

It shows us how to get back on the road by correction.

And it shows us how to stay on the road by training us in righteousness. *[pause]*

What else is needed?

It guides, directs, and corrects us so that we are on the right path, and so that we stay there.

And the wonderful purpose in all of this is so "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." *[pause]*

It is the Scriptures that lead us to be capable and proficient - complete.

We are equipped to do what God has called us to do. *[pause]*

You can't neglect the Scriptures and expect to be godly.

You can't neglect the Scriptures and expect to serve others better.

It's through the Word that God equips us with the knowledge, encouragement, and all the resources we need to do good works.

He equips us for whatever He calls us to do. *[pause]*

God doesn't leave us on our own, but He has given us His Word to lead us to salvation, and to equip us to serve Him.

How could we turn anywhere else when we have God's very Word, which provides the wisdom for salvation and the equipping for service?

Everything we need for life and godliness is given to us.<sup>10</sup> *[pause]*

*And so if God has given us what we need, then...*

**Even amid a worsening world, continue on in faithfulness!**

We truly do live in a worsening world...

False teachers are all around, leading others astray.

People are being deceived and deceiving others.

We are reviled and persecution is starting to get worse.

*But as for us, we will continue on in faithfulness. [pause]*

**This faithfulness looks like a godly life lived, and entails suffering.**

But God has given us His Word, which equips us with what we need.

**So let's continue on in faithfulness! [pauseee]**

Maybe you're someone here today and as you think about your life, it hasn't been characterized as following Christ well.

Well guess what? You can start now!

The Lord can change you from the inside out, and lead you to live a life of following after Him.

**Look to Christ, who died and rose again, and who gives you the power to live for Him.**  
*[pauseee]*

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<sup>10</sup> An allusion to 2 Peter 1:3.

And for those who have followed well - ‘keep on keeping on’.

Continue being faithful; continue in what you have learned and believed. *[pause]*

Don’t let the worsening world cause you to give up, despair, or go with the flow.

Instead, keep following Christ with your life.

It is He, who we serve, and He is worth everything, for it by His grace that we have been saved.  
*[pause]*

**We were sinners, in rebellion against God, and standing under condemnation.**

Yet Christ died for our sins and rose again, so that all who believe in Him can be forgiven and given eternal life. *[pause]*

He then changes us from the inside out and gives us everything we need to live for Him, even amid a worsening world.

So what else could we say, but to say, “But as for me, I will serve the Lord.”