



Sermon Study Guide

Questions from the Brink: Are You Prepared to Suffer?

2 Timothy 3:10-17 – Sunday, October 27, 2013

**Study questions are in italics*

Introduction

- The title of this lesson is a bit intimidating, “Are you Prepared to Suffer?” It’s not a cheerful topic, but it’s biblical. Suffering is inevitable. *What comes to the mind of most people when they think about suffering?*
- The suffering Paul describes in 2 Timothy is primarily the personal rejection a Christian receives when taking a public stand for Jesus.
- Paul wanted Timothy to stand firm in the face of those who would challenge him to preach a different gospel. Not only that, Paul is confident that Timothy can stand firm. In fact, every Christian can live in obedient, sacrificial faithfulness. In 2 Timothy 3:10-17, Paul explains how.

First, Embrace Core Convictions (verse 10)

- In verse 10 Paul lists six core convictions he holds to that Timothy has embraced as well. They offer us a stunning description of the character of a Christian: Timothy followed: 1) Paul’s *conduct*. He lived in step with the Spirit of God—a Spirit of holiness. 2) Paul’s *aim in life*. And the aim of Paul’s life was the glory of God; 3) Paul’s *faith*. Timothy trusted in a crucified and risen Savior when life’s trials prompted him to doubt; 4) Paul’s *patience*. God is sovereign, and Timothy knew to wait for God’s glorious plan to unfold; 5) Paul’s *love*. Love for God, love for the church, and love for the lost; 6) Paul’s *steadfastness*. Others had abandoned Paul and denied Christ, but not Timothy.
- In light of these core convictions, answer the following questions: 1) *Where do you struggle most in the fight for holiness?* 2) *What does it mean for the glory of God to be your goal?* 3) *What is most likely to shake your faith in Christ?* 4) *Where, in your life, is patience most difficult?* 5) *How does the gospel lead you to lay down your life for others?* 6) *How do you know you’re prepared to suffer?*

Second, Accept That Suffering is Inevitable (verses 11-13)

- Paul began his preaching ministry in the cities of Antioch (Acts 13:16), Iconium (Acts 14:4-6) and Lystra (Acts 14:10). In each city he shared the gospel, and in each city he was persecuted. The point is clear: suffering is inevitable.
- Suffering is not only guaranteed for apostles and preachers. Look at verse 12, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Gospel suffering is the lot of every believer. Look up Mark 10:30, Matthew 5:11-12, and John 10:17. *What do these passages say about suffering? What is the difference between choosing suffering and choosing a path that leads to suffering?* It's a hard truth that faithful Christians will suffer for their faith.
- Observations:
 - First, the fear of rejection is a cancer in the American church. Sadly, many believers don't want to engage non-Christians, because we want to appear cool, or intellectual, or anonymous. We fear rejection. *How can we create church culture where our fear of rejection is regularly exposed or challenged? What have you found most helpful in your fight against the fear of rejection?*
 - Second, it's becoming more obvious that Christians are strangers and aliens in this world. Christian convictions regarding homosexuality or same-sex marriage, for example, are increasingly unacceptable in the eyes of our non-Christian neighbors. *What examples do you see of a rising intolerance against certain Christian values? How can we prepare ourselves for this kind of rejection?*
 - Third, serious persecution is taking place daily. Most of the global church ministers in the face of horrible suffering. Whether it's underground churches in China, believers in India hiding from their Hindu persecutors, or Muslims killing converts in Saudi Arabia, we should be aware that serious suffering is taking place daily. We should be thankful for the freedom we have in the United States. *How can we be a good steward of this freedom?*

Third, Grip the Word of God (verses 14-17)

- Paul has only one command for Timothy in our passage, and it's found in verse 14, "Continue in what you have learned." Timothy knew the Bible from a young age. He'd been taught by his family and disciplined by Paul. Timothy gripped God's Word, and now Paul calls him to continue in what he's learned.
- *According to Paul, why is the Word of God worth clinging to? (hint: look at verse 15!) When Paul mentions salvation in verse 15, is he referring to salvation from sin and/or salvation from suffering?*
- In order for Timothy to live a faithful, sacrificial life, he will need to rely upon Scripture? Look carefully at verses 16-17:

- *Why can we be confident that when we read Scripture, we are reading the Word of God?*
- *How would you define “teaching,” “reproof,” and “correction”? How does the Word work these ways in your life?*
- *What does Scripture produce in the life of the believer? Look at your own life: how has Scripture “equipped you for every good work”? Be specific.*

Conclusion

- For most of his young life, John Bunyan hated Christianity. But he was born again at the age of 27 and eventually became a preacher in seventeenth-century England. The authorities imprisoned him for preaching the gospel in public. He refused to stop and, as a result, spent 12 years in jail. Throughout those years, he saw God at work through the Word in Bunyan’s life:

I never had in all my life so great an inlet into the Word of God as now; those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before, are made in this place and state to shine upon me; Jesus Christ also was never more real and apparent than now; here I have seen him and felt him indeed . . . I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world . . . I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns.

- Bunyan’s focus in prison was not on himself, but on Christ revealed in the Scriptures. You can live an obedient, sacrificial, and faithful life. But not because you are so strong and so able to embrace those core convictions, and accept the inevitability of suffering, or even grip the Word of God. But because the Word of God teaches us that Christ did it for us. Because of the cross, we can now live for him.