**ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED**

2 Timothy 3:1-17

Key Verse 3:16

***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."***

In 2 Timothy chapter 2, Apostle Paul taught us to remember Jesus Christ and be a good soldier of Christ. How hard it is to remember Jesus Christ while living in this ungodly generation! But we must remember Jesus Christ if we are going to have true happiness and eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. In chapter 3, Paul instructs Timothy to live a holy life in a terrible time. Paul also instructs Timothy to believe that the Bible is the word of God that gives life to those who have been trained by it.

**I. Ungodly People** (vv. 1-9)

First, terrible times in the last days (1). Look at verse 1. ***"But mark this: There will be***

***terrible times in the last days."***Biblically, "the last days" began with the ministry of Jesus

Christ and will continue until he comes again (Is 2:2; Heb 1:2). Apostle Paul foresaw terrible times coming in the course of human civilization. Those are times in which people reverse the creation order and demonic power dominates their lives. As a result, human society is marked by moral anarchy and violence. The times of Noah and the times of Sodom and Gomorrah foreshadowed the terrible times of the last days. Those were the times when God's judgment was imminent. In Noah's time, people could not think about more than eating and drinking and enjoying sinful pleasure (Lk 17:27). Their ungodly way of life so grieved God that God could not but destroy them with water sparing only Noah's family. In the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, people were violent and extremely immoral. They justified their shameful deeds as living naturally (Gen 19:5). The last days is also comparable to the times of the destruction of the Roman Empire. Rome did not fall by outward enemies. Instead, she collapsed from the inside due to people's ungodliness and moral perversion.

We are living in a time labelled "the post-Christian or post-modern era." Two features

characterize our time. First, sinful freedom has been publicly accepted; most people think there is no truth, no moral standard. Second, individualism has degenerated into selfishness; people live with no commitment, seeking satisfaction even at the cost of others' happiness. Evil grows deeper and to greater intensity. Today, most people do not know where history is going. Even many secular people feel a crisis in human civilization and worry about disintegration of society. We are indeed in "terrible times."

Second, ungodly people live a selfish life. Look at verse 2. ***"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy..."***In verses 2-5, Paul illustrates 19 characteristics of ungodly people. First of all, he puts "lovers of themselves" as the root of all sins. In short, selfish people are ungodly people. Man was created to love God, to love fellow men, and to be stewards of God's world. Man is truly happy when he lives this purpose. After man's fall, however, an alternative life style prevailed--an egocentric life style. Cain nourished his ego to such an extent that when his pride was hurt he rebelled against God and killed his brother. Among his descendants, this egocentric life style produced a godless and violent human society. St. Augustine intuitively understood the characters of two cities existing in world history--the City of God and the City of Man. The City of God is based on the love of God while the City of Man is based on the love of self. The City of God seems invisible and insignificant in the eyes of men. But it grows steadily and will stand forever when Jesus comes again. On the other hand, the City of Man seems prosperous and secure. But it rises and falls and will eventually turn to ruin when God's judgment comes. Do I belong to the City of God or to the City of Man? St. Augustine draws a line of citizenship – anyone who loves God more than himself belong to the City of God, and anyone who loves

himself more than God belongs to the City of Man.

What happens to men who love themselves? First, they become lovers of money. A godless man puts money in God's place because he thinks money can give him security and happiness. But the Bible points out that love of money is a root of all kinds of evil

(1Ti 6:10). Lovers of money neglect spiritual life as well as their roles at home. Love of money suffocates one's spirit until he becomes a slave of money. Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:7-8, *"For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."* If one keeps this principle and also keeps himself from the desires of lust, he will surely become a great man of God. Next, lovers of self become boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God (2-4). These verses illustrate how selfish and materialistic people produceviolent and fierce

generations.

Selfish people are ignorant. God gave man creativeness, ability and, most of all, freedom of choice so that man might render glory to God by taking care of other people and God's world. But selfish people abuse their freedom of choice and act against the law of God to satisfy their selfish desires. They do not know that freedom involves great cost. They think that if they live selfishly they will be free and happy indeed. But that is not the case. Verses 2-4 tell us that when a man lives a selfish life, he becomes very miserable. A proud man can never be happy. An ungrateful man never smiles. An unholy man hates others and hates himself most of the time. When man lives a selfish life, he becomes a slave of sin, and a slave of the devil. Selfish people eventually become self-torturing people. Nevertheless, Jesus came into the world to free us from the hand of the devil. The freedom he brought was very costly. The cost was giving his precious life as a ransom sacrifice. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."* Only Jesus can give us freedom from sin and the power of death, and from torment of evil spirits. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6). When we submit ourselves to His word, the life and power in Jesus sets us free.

Third, ungodly people deny the power of God. Look at verse 5a. ***"...having a form of godliness but denying its power."***The last characteristic of the last days is that even religious people lose faith in God. They keep Sunday worship services and rituals, but they believe neither the word of God nor the power of God. They live selfish lives as unbelievers do, so they have no influence on society. Ungodly people not only ruin themselves, but also ruin others. Verses 6-9 mention about false teachers who ruin others and hinder God's work. In Paul's time, they poisoned weak-willed women with their false teachings and abused them for sinful pleasure. Just as the Egyptian magicians opposed Moses by their counterfeit magic, the false teachers opposed servants of God and God's work by their counterfeit truth. These false teachers today are the liberals and leaders of heresies. The modern day liberals deny the authority of the Bible and substitute human wisdom and philosophy. In their attempt to be "modern," they deny the reality of sin and people's need for salvation. Such false gospel workers deny the power of God to justify their depraved mind.

Three phrases--"lovers of themselves," "lovers of money," and "lovers of pleasure" well depict the selfish, materialistic and hedonistic lifestyle of the modern people. Paul gives clear direction to Timothy in verse 5b; ***"Have nothing to do with them."***We must make a clear decision to turn away from the godless lifestyle of people in our time.

**II. Godly Life in Christ** (vv.10-17)

First,godly people live a life of mission (10-14). Look at verse 10. ***"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance..."***Paul instructs Timothy to follow the example of true spiritual leaders, especially of himself. Ever since Paul had been saved, he remembered the grace of Jesus Christ and set his life direction to follow Jesus' teaching, Jesus' way of life and Jesus' purpose. He accepted Jesus' world mission command. Then Paul made fulfilling God's mission his life purpose. He said in Acts 20:24, *"I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus had given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."*

Our Lord Jesus suffered unbearably when he fulfilled his mission of testifying to the truth of God's kingdom. Likewise, when Paul lived a godly life of mission in Christ Jesus, he was greatly persecuted. For example, when Paul preached the gospel in Pisidian Antioch during his first missionary journey, the Jews came with gangsters and cast Paul out of the city. When Paul went to Lystra, the Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium stoned him and threw him away almost dead (Act 13-14). He suffered endlessly while living as a servant of God, yet the Lord rescued him from all harm (11). Humanly speaking, he lost too much. Was he miserable then? When he had lived for himself, he was a slave of sin and his giant ego made him a proud, heartless and violent man. He was miserable to the point of death. But Jesus set him free from the heavy burden of sin. Then heavenly joy filled his soul. God's love filled his heart. So he could say, *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1Th 5:16-18)* God blessed him to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit -- faith, patience, love, endurance and so on. It is a biblical truth that JOY comes when we love Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself third.

Remembering Jesus Christ, Paul was not intimidated by his sufferings and persecutions. Rather Paul encourages Timothy to boldly confront persecutions. Read verse 12. ***"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."***The response of godless people to a godly life is not a praise, but persecution. Martin Luther said, "If I don't receive persecution, I am not living by the truth." Evil in the world will go from bad to worse. Thus, a spiritual war cannot be avoided between the people of the City of God and the people of the City of Man. A Christian must take account of the cost of being a citizen of the City of God and live a godly life, carrying out God’s mission.

Look at verse 14. ***"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become***

***convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it."***Paul is saying to

Timothy that he should not be distracted by worldly people's material prosperity or easy-going life style. We must be convinced that the things of the world amount to nothing, but sufferings for Christ will bring us eternal glory. As David served God's purpose in his own generation (Act 13:36), so must we serve God's purpose in this generation. If we live and suffer for the purpose of God, our life will be truly victorious and glorious.

Second, the Bible is the word of life (15-17). Look at verse 15. ***"...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."***Paul reminds Timothy that his greatest blessing was that he had Bible teachers in his youth. Timothy's mother Eunice and grandmother Lois nourished young Timothy with the word of God and prayer. How precious are mothers who nourish their children with the word of God and prayer! Let us pray that God may raise many American women as praying and Bible teaching mothers. Read verses 16-17.***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."***The Bible was written by 40 people over a period of 1,400 years. Yet the Bible has a unified theme--the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit breathed on each writer so that each word perfectly conveyed the message of God.

Books of philosophers and great writers analyze human problems, but cannot give any solution. Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote "Emile," (a book about how to educate children). It was a best-seller and it became a classic. Yet he sent his own three illegitimate children to orphanages. These days, governmental leaders and scholars put great emphasis on school education in an attempt to improve the moral degeneration of our society. But school education cannot change human beings. Only the work of the Holy Spirit through the word of God can transform man's inner person. The Bible makes anyone upright and great if he is taught and corrected by its teachings. Moreover, a man of God can be thoroughly equipped in holiness, wisdom and power for every good work if he trains himself by the word of God. No matter how terrible the times are, the word of God saves and changes any kinds of people. By our own strength, we cannot serve God's work. But when we hold on to the word of God, we can serve our generation by God's power.

Today, we learned that a selfish life is an ungodly and miserable life. We also learned that a godly and happy life is a life of living the word of God. Our Lord gave his life for us so that we may be freed from sin and devil and serve God's purpose in this generation. May God help us to live as life-giving Bible teachers and shepherds for God's glorious purpose.