

# **Preaching Copy: 2 Timothy 3:14-17 “Emmanuel with Us in His Word”**

## **Mid-Week Advent #1**

Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

### **Text: 2 Timothy 3:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup> and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

### **Exegetical Statement**

Paul in his final message of encouragement and counsel to Timothy begins with a warning of what is already afoot and will grow and increase in intensity. Oppression, persecution, and affliction will be directed against the Church by those who do not share our faith, our love for the LORD, and therefore do not share in the unselfish sacrificial love we are to have for one another. They will be turned in on themselves, making their life all about their love for themselves and seeking only their own pleasure at the expense of those around them. They are proud and arrogant, disobedient to authority and lacking in respect for what is sacred and holy, speaking evil against both God and their fellow man. They lack even brotherly affection and will not placated when one is in disagreement with them, not beyond making false accusations to win the argument. They lack in self-control and instead lash out impulsively. They are strong willed and consider themselves to be superior to others. They may appear to be godly but in reality have no faith in Him. Paul warns us to steer clear of them, as some of these will take advantage of people those who are not strong in the faith, who are distraught and are looking for help. They are like TV evangelists selling a snake oil for their own profit, taking advantage of those who are led astray by their own passions, who are always seeking special knowledge but lacking the Spirit are unable to discern the truth. But we are to be like Timothy, recalling what Paul has taught by word and example, taking note of his longsuffering patience and his sharing of Jesus unconditional love. We take note that in Paul's times of suffering and persecution the Spirit drew him closer in his faith relationship and in the end delivered him from all his afflictions. Like Paul we too will suffer at the hands of such evil people as the wicked ones and Christian imposter/swindlers go from bad to worse. We are to hold fast to what we have learned and been assured of by Scripture. Knowing whose teaching it really is- the LORD's. God's Word will continue to make us wise and strong in the knowledge of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. It's the place God is present, truly Emmanuel to completely equip us for life now stretching to eternal life to come.

### **Focus Statement:**

God is with us in a very powerful way through His Spirit breathed out Word. Through it the Spirit works with the same power that called Creation into being. It calls us into His family by creating the power of faith in our hearts to believe that Jesus is our LORD and Savior. The Word is God's free gift to us that was paid for by Christ Himself. Through that Word we are given the knowledge of who God is, what His will is, as well as forgiveness when we violate that will. And empowered by the Spirit it always accomplishes what He sends it to do. He uses it to equip us to live out lives of faith until He returns. And by the power of that Word Christ will calls from death to everlasting life

### **Function Statement:**

#### **Why it's important to know:**

Paul's description of the opposition the Church faces is very appropriate for our day. We are oppressed by persecution from without, but also from within the Church by those who only pretend to be faithful Christians. On top of all this is COVID-19 fears. It can feel like Christ has abandoned us to go it alone

#### **What the hearer should do as a result:**

As we face oppression and affliction in our lives know and believe that God is truly present in His Word, confess the powerful way He works through its performative power, and turn to that Word for comfort and assurance. Study His Word so that the Spirit can equip us to stand through affliction and use it to draw us closer in our faith relationship and protect us from those who would lead us astray. Allow the Spirit working in the Word to be a lamp for our feet and a light to our path.

### **Subject Sentence: The Spirit's powerful presence & work in the Word**

## **Introduction: Relevancy of Paul's Epistle Today**

Those of you who attend the Bible Studies I lead here know that we always begin with prayer. And it serves two purposes. The first is that it helps us all, including myself, unburden our hearts from the worries and concerns that might otherwise stand in the way of hearing and meditating upon what God's Word has to say to us. It also brings to mind those things that are going on around us so that we can open our minds to see how God is at work. For me as your Pastor it helps me to see and consider the things that you, my parishioners, are worried and concerned about. And what are those things as of late, particularly from Bible Study this morning? Along with the names of those who are facing various health problems, there was a request for all the ways that we and those around us have been affected by COVID-19; those we know who have been diagnosed with it and are fighting it, as well as all of us who are concerned about contracting it. We also pray for those who have been adversely affected by the quarantine imposed to restrict the infection rate. We pray for the businesses that have closed down, as well as members and friends who have been or are in fear of being laid off and losing their jobs. In many ways COVID-19 is still a great concern and fear among us.

But there was also a prayer request for our country, for the government workers who lives have been publicly threatened by what are none other than terrorists. There are those still spewing the hate speech of partisan politics as well as the defund the police movement. Those who refuse to wear face masks because they care more about themselves than others. Even in the Church there is division as some congregations (thankfully not ours) who are struggling with whether to remain open for public worship, or close and do online worship only. And this division has brought about a divisiveness that mirrors the recent political campaigns. And there are the attacks being levied at Churches by the government of some other states in the name of COVID-19 prevention, attacking the constitutional freedom we have to assemble and worship as we believe.

I would love to tell you that things will gradually get better for us. But Paul in our Epistle Lesson begs to differ. Paul is writing from prison, most likely from a dungeon where he is being held leading up to what will be his execution at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero. He is writing to his protégé and dear friend, Pastor Timothy. Paul opens chapter 3 with what Timothy, as well as the Church throughout history can expect to come it's way as we seek to follow Christ. He says (**2 Timothy 3:1**) **But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty**. How could Paul, writing in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, say "In these last days"? Because even back then the Church was already living in the Last Days. We too are in the Last Days: the time between Christ's ascension to the Father and His return on THE VERY LAST DAY. The time when God's salvation plan has been accomplished, and the news of that is to be spread ahead of Jesus return at any time.

What does Paul mean by times of difficulty? **2 Timothy 3:2-4** “**2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**” Does this description of things sound familiar? Is it not a description of the world around us? It is what you see and experience and live in every day. It was the case back in Paul’s day and its still going on. I look at these adjectives describing the attitudes of mankind and I can put names and faces to them, as I’m sure you could too. People first and foremost have love for themselves. They are the center of the universe and all others live in orbit around them. They see themselves as God’s gift to humanity, acting proudly and arrogantly, ready to abuse anyone who stands in their way or tries to contradict them. They don’t recognize any authority other than themselves. There is one thing they may see as important as themselves, and that is wealth, either what they have and treasure, or what they desire to gather unto themselves by any means possible, be it legal or otherwise. The one thing they don’t have is a love for God.

We recognize these people in the world around us. But what about within our midst? What about within the Church? **2 Timothy 3:5-7** <sup>5</sup> *(those who are)* **having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”** Paul is talking about people who have the appearance of godliness, who appear to be good and upstanding believers in the LORD, who say the right things and appear to be devout in their worship. But the god they worship is not the LORD God. They worship either themselves or a god of their own imagining. What comes to mind for me here is the TV Evangelists who pray upon those who are desperate for a miracle, and are willing to shell out money in order to receive some of that holy water from the Jordan that will cure their illnesses. Or those who promise miraculous healing by a touch of the hand, and seem to be able to provide it, yet its all smoke and mirrors. Preachers who twist Scripture and proclaim that Christ came to give you heaven on earth now, to bring you blessings upon blessings, all you have to do is claim it. Those who preach you are saved or gain favor with God by what you do and not what Christ has done for you. Those who appeal to people whose ears are yearning for the new secret hidden knowledge, the updated Word of God for our time, because after all Scripture was set in times when the Church was close minded to the innovations and changes that have taken place in our day and age. Churches that proclaim that Jesus actually commends and approves of homosexual marriage and transgenderism, when Scripture clearly stands against it.

## **Where Is the LORD as We Cry Out for Help?**

Add to all this our struggles and fears over COVID-19, cancer, and the other host of medical issues that touch the lives. We have ample reason to cry out for the LORD to intercede and come save us. We are told we can pray for anything, and so we pray for miraculous intervention, but it doesn't always come. Where is He? He promises to work in our lives but is He really? We are told He is present among us in His Word, in the Words of Scripture. But these are just words, right? What can words really do beyond providing encouragement and advice. They can't really change anything, can they? My words can't, and your words can't. But God's Words are a whole different story.

God's Words have the power to do more than just bring comfort and encouragement and advice. **Isaiah 55:8-11** <sup>8</sup> **For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.** <sup>9</sup> **For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** <sup>10</sup> **"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,** <sup>11</sup> **so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."** God's Words of Scripture are on a totally different level than ours. They reveal the thoughts and plans of the God who is far beyond our understanding. They reveal that He approaches and deals with the problems going on around us is not how we would, which is why we often think He is not at work in our lives and world. We are not in the place to second guess Him or even advise Him. Who God is and what He decrees as needful and good are far beyond our knowing. We can only know what He has revealed to us. And what He has revealed is that He sends His word down to us as His means to make things happen. His Word not only states what He wants to happen, but it serves to accomplish that very thing. It always succeeds in the work He sent it to do whether we realize it or not. Because of this we say that God's Word has performative power: it not only tells us what God wants to happen, and prophetically what will happen, but it has the power to make that very thing happen.

We can see this most clearly when it comes to the work He does to bring us faith. He begins this work through His Word by preparing our hearts and minds to receive the Gospel Message. **Hebrews 4:12** **For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.** The Law not only tells me the ways in which I disobey and work against God's will, but it makes me despair of them. It makes me see what I don't want to see within my own heart and life. It does this because this Word is not just informative, its living and active through the power of the Holy Spirit, who uses it as His tool, His means. He uses God's Word to show me just how deep the corruption goes, beyond my ability to ever fix or repair. He uses the power of His

word to change my life, break my pride, and make me see that I am indeed a poor miserable sinner, and by myself there is no hope.

Then the Holy Spirit uses the Words of Christ to heal my broken sinful heart. **John 3:16** **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.** These words that Jesus spoke that were recorded by John in his Gospel, are not just the purpose statement of what Jesus came to do. They make things happen. They make salvation happen. Through the powerful working of the Holy Spirit they make God's love the reality of my life and yours. As Jesus would go on to say in **John 5:24-25** **<sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. <sup>25</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.** The dead, the spiritually dead, you and I, have heard His Words and have been empowered to believe them, by the gift of faith worked in our hearts and our lives by the Holy Spirit. He used these words as His means to call you to faith. Through these words, read by you from the page, spoken to you be me or someone else, faith was created in your heart. That faith is the power from the Spirit to make Jesus death and resurrection **for you**. You will not come into judgment, because Jesus has taken away all those sins that you would be judged for. They are gone. Instead, on the Last Day, as the unbelievers are sent to everlasting condemnation, which is the fate that you and I earned by our actions, instead of that, we will be called to Jesus' side, and receive the future that He purchased for us: the eternity in paradise with Him.

But does the Spirit only reside with and work through the Words of Christ? Does He only through those red-letter verses that we have in some of our Bibles? Jesus tells us in **John 5:37-39** **<sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, <sup>38</sup> and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. <sup>39</sup> You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,** The Words of Scripture, both the Old Testament and New Testament are the very voice of God the Father, proclaiming His truth to us. And they have the power of His Spirit to work His will upon men. And all of these words from Him bear witness about Jesus Christ: our need for Him, the promise of His coming, His work of salvation for all mankind, and the free gift of grace through which that salvation comes to us.

### **What the Spirit's presence in the Word Means To You**

That's why Paul can boldly claim in **2 Timothy 3:16** **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.** It is Spirit breathed from God, who uses it correct us when we stray from His way, call us to repentance, and through the work of Jesus Christ restore us to right

standing with God, as well as help us to grow in that right standing. As you live out your life, beset by the world and all that confronts you, sometimes you sit and wonder what you should do. But in those times the Holy Spirit is present in God's Word to help you. **Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.** The Spirit works through that Word to show you where you are walking now, or how you are living now, and the path that the LORD wants you on, the path that leads not necessarily to your health and happiness on this earth. But to the place of eternal health and happiness: eternal life.

And what about those really hard and trying times? Those times of affliction when we are surrounded by mean and selfish and nasty people? Those times when the dark cloud of COVID-19, or cancer, or job loss, or whatever other problems have darkened your life? **Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.** In the darkest of valleys, even when death is on the horizon the LORD is there, truly present in His Word. There with His rod to protect you from all that would serve to separate you from Him. There to protect your life until that time when He is ready to call you home. There to guide you through this life. **Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.** He is there to do more than speak kind and comforting words. Through the power of His Word He restores your soul. He leads you on the path that has God's approval, the path of a life lived out in faith toward Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

We should not be surprised or fearful to the point of doubting God's presence by whatever happens in this world, or in our life. God has warned us in His Word that because we believe in Him and seek to live out our lives in faith toward Him, trials, temptations, adversities, oppression, and even persecution will come. We can see all these things played out in the life and ministry of Paul. But his parting words to Timothy were also parting words to you and me. **2 Timothy 3:14-17 <sup>14</sup>But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it <sup>15</sup>and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.** Continue to grow in your faith and knowledge of His Word. Study it so that you may grow in wisdom and faith in the salvation you have in Jesus Christ. The words of Scripture are Spirit breathed and filled with the Holy Spirit's presence and power. He is there to equip you to handle whatever may come, not on your own, but by His power and presence with you. The answer is found in God's Word that you can carry with you wherever you go: in your Bibles, on your phones, in your head and in your heart. And in all those places the Spirit is there, Emmanuel: God with you, God with us, in person, and with the power of Creation to change hearts and lives. He is there to declare and make reality. May you know and believe that His presence is with you and in you this day and forever and always. Amen.

