**CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED**

2 Timothy 3:1-17 (Key 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.”*

In today’s passage we are going to learn from Apostle Paul’s last words to young Timothy. In these last words Apostle Paul is equipping young Timothy who needs to be ready for there will be terrible times in the last days. Apostle Paul’s direction to Timothy is to continue in what he has learned in order to stand victorious through these terrible times. This lesson is quite useful to us as well as we too are living in terrible times. Therefore, through today’s passage we will dissect these last days, in what sense are they terrible? How does it impact us? And finally, we will learn what continuing in what have learnt means, and how it can leave us victorious against these terrible times.

I pray that God may have mercy on us, humble our hearts to receive one word.

Apostle Paul opened this chapter in **verse 1** by saying: “*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.”* Here Apostle Paul, began by saying” “But mark this” emphasizing the importance of what he is about to say, encouraging one to focus and pay attention. Further to that he spoke about the terrible times that will be seen in the last days. Here the last days referred to the days from the beginning of the church of Christ to the second coming of Christ Jesus. It is the times that young Timothy lived, it is also the times that we are living in today. So, this message from Apostle Paul is as much relevant and important to us as it is to young Timothy.

But now what did Apostle Paul mean that there will be terrible times in the last days? Did he mean natural disasters such as earthquakes, Tsunamis, floods, fires etc or did he mean wars like we see in Israel, Iran and America? Russia and Ukraine? Poverty in African countries? Though these are real issues we are dealing with today, Apostle Paul was not referring to these. What was Apostle Paul referring to? Let us look at **verse 2-5**: “***2****People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,****3****without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,****4****treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—****5****having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”* To Apostle Paul, terrible times are not necessarily times where we experience natural disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, fires etc, but it times where humans are filled with wickedness. Apostle Paul described terrible times as the time where men is at a deprived state, moral degeneration.

Apostle Paul described the deprived state of men, as the state where man love themselves and money, over loving God their creator, a time where man is boastful, proud, abusive and not acknowledging God as their creator. Children disobedient to their parents. Ungrateful, unholy, unloving and unforgiving leading to broken family structures with no love and harmony of living together. Man will be slanderous, telling hurtful lies about other men, and this is even encouraged in media where lots of lies are told and destroying many people’s lives. I was heartbroken the other day when I heard one of the celebrities talking about how media could just report a big lie about them to destroy them or elevate another artist’s career.

Apostle Paul further described the terrible times as the time men will be without self-control, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual immorality, addiction (social media, food, gaming, work etc). A time when men will be filled cruelty and brutality. A time when men will be despisers of the good. Many times, today we hear of stories of people who are hurt, even killed for being good, demonstrating the highest form of jealousy. And finally, Apostle Paul said: “*… having a form of godliness but denying its power.*” The things that Apostle Paul described, are things that should not be present in a Christian’s life, they are not Christ-like, they are not appropriate for a Christian to have in their life. However here we see that in the last days, some who say they are Christian believers will have these things in them and yet not have the urge of repentance. Apostle Paul described them as having a form of godliness but denying the power of God.

Although they call themselves Christians, deep down they are not, they are not because of their unwillingness to acknowledge the power of God, repent and submit to the word of God. Apostle Paul said: “*Have nothing to do with such people.*” What does this mean? Must we stay away from those who sin? Apostle Paul firstly shared this list of ungodly things that we see even today, for us to a heart inventory and repent, confess them, ask for forgiveness and keep these things away from our lives. Of course we cannot completely overcome sin, but we must have repentant hearts, we must not sin casually, we must be holy and hate sin. Apostle Paul is not talking about those who have repentant hearts, he wants us to continue to love and encourage people to repentance, he wants us to have compassion and love of God’s sheep who are lost and in need of Jesus’ word.

The ones that we need to avoid are those who blatantly deny the power of God, the ones who have some form of godliness but deny the power of God. We should avoid people who have wicked characteristics in their lives yet have no intention or desire to change at all. We must avoid people who justify their sins, instead of confessing and repenting of them. In a word, we must avoid hypocritical liars, who pretend to be followers of Christ, but who are rather following their sinful natures. How do we know them? We can know them by looking at the fruit of their lives, their speech, their lifestyle, their hobbies. What they do? What they say? How they are influencing people in their lives? Do they show that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and are serious about following him and growing in his grace and truth, his love and holiness? People pursuing holiness and Christlikeness are the kind of people we must hang out with. Those living in sin or who have just an appearance of godliness are the people we must avoid and get away from. Also it does not mean we should stop rebuking and challenging them. John the Baptist never stopped rebuking king Herod, who married his brother’s wife Herodias.

Apostle Paul further described those we should avoid in **verse 6** saying: “***6****They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,”* These are the false teachers we see even today, only concerned about filling the offering basket for their own personal use. They consult powers of the dark just to increase the numbers in the church and increase the offering basket. They deceive people, take advantage of the gullible and they perform strange practices in the church, such as the eating of snakes, spraying of the congregants with doom. Apostle Paul said they will not get very far, their folly will be clear to everyone. And indeed, many of those we have seen in our times, did not get very far.

But now, why did Apostle Paul tell young Timothy about these things, and men who commit them without repentance? Firstly, he wanted Timothy to be aware of them, to help those who are willing to repent and to avoid those who are unwilling to repent and deny the power of God. But also, Apostle Paul told Timothy these things, because those who deny the power of God, were not like this from the beginning, they were once genuine Christians. Because of lack of repentance and not taking a genuine inventory of their hearts against these things that are not appropriate for a Christian believer, they ended up as those who denied the power of God.

And so, to shield Timothy and equip him to be ready and come out victorious during the terrible times in the last days, Apostle Paul reminded him of his own lifestyle which contrasted the ungodly attitudes and behaviours he warned against. Let us look at **verse 10-11**: “***10****You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,****11****persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.* Here Apostle Paul contrasted his life to that of those with ungodly behaviours, lovers of themselves, without love, patience for others and not willing to submit to God. While Paul fully committed himself to God, he lived by faith, with patience, love and endurance. Yes, because of his faith he was persecuted, he went through much suffering, he was even stoned with an intention to kill him. While writing this letter he was even in prison. But in his heart, he was filled with so much joy and hope for the Lord rescued him. This is very encouraging for Timothy, though it might seem like the whole world is filled with people pursuing ungodliness, thinking about Paul whom the Lord rescued gives hope. In **verse 4:7-8** Apostle Paul said: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

Apostle Paul was very open with Timothy, that in the last days those who live a godly life will be persecuted. The world we live in despises the truth, when we tell the truth we will be persecuted, we will be hated. We will be hated by our friends, family, our colleagues, we may also not be our sheep’s favourite. If we are not experiencing persecution and we are friends with everyone, and enjoying, we should check ourselves. We should check whether our lives are pleasing to God, are we serving God, is the Lord God and ruler of our hearts? It is better to be persecuted, than to be loved by the world and deny the power of God. In verse it says: “***13****while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”*

But how can we live a godly life like Paul, how can we practically overcome the terrible times, and come out victorious like Paul. We can do it by continuing in what we have learnt. Let us look at **verse 14-15**: *“****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,****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.”* Here Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in what he has learnt and was convinced of from his elders such as Paul. What is it, that Timothy has learnt from the elders and Paul. What Timothy has learnt and must continue to do is to rely on the word of God, to live by the word of God.

Similarly in our ministry, the foundation is the word of God, that is the pillar of our ministry. When UBF was established, the pioneers prayed and had 1 to 1 Bible studies with campus students and encouraged students to write testimonies. Through 1 to 1 Bible studies and testimony writing students could meditate and have the word of God planted in their hearts. Why do we need to have the word of God planted in our hearts? We need the word of God planted in our hearts for it will make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. When we have the word of God in our hearts, the hope of the kingdom of God becomes established in our hearts. We no longer live for the world, we no longer live for the pleasure of the world, to be liked, for money. Our hearts become changed, instead of being proud, boastful, arrogant, ungrateful lovers of pleasure, without self-control, we become filled with the hope of salvation. When Apostle Paul was filled with this hope, he was filled with endurance, self-control, even though he was persecuted he did not waver for the word of God filled him with power to overcome and focus on finishing the race.

Furthermore, in **verse 16** it says: “***16****All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”* Here Apostle Paul urged young Timothy to continue to cling on the Holy Scriptures, for “*All scripture is God-breathed.”* What does this mean? This means that the Bible is the Word of God from the Spirit of God. It is the message of God written down by men who were inspired by God. These men who wrote the Bible did not write from their own interpretation. Rather, they spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Apostle Paul revealed to Timothy that all scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. These are all the ingredients required for one to overcome the terrible times, required to overcome ungodly living. So when we read the Bible we must not just read for head knowledge, we must read with a humble mind and heart, willing to obey and surrender, we must read it with openness to be corrected, to be taught something that we can immediately apply as a matter of life and death and we must consider the word of God as training for righteousness.

This week we were talking with my wife about training; we spoke about Lionel Messi his attitude towards training how disciplined he is in his training. So, in the same way we must have discipline when it comes to the study of the word of God. The little we do must show discipline. I was so rebuked, challenged and so ashamed when I realized my lack of discipline when it comes to the study of the word of God and testimony writing, even with the brothers in my fellowship. Our Shepherds from South Korea left us with a great gift of Bible study and testimony writing, however lately I saw myself not thoroughly preparing saying I don’t have time because of work and my daughter. I pray that I may repent, accept God’s training and be disciplined to prepare Bible study and testimony writing thoroughly on time. This is a serious matter, Apostle Paul spoke of terrible times in the last days, referring to ungodliness, moral degeneration and spiritual depravity, all resulting in the lack of the word of God in people’s hearts.

I pray that we may continue in what we have learnt from the Korean missionaries, study the word of God thoroughly, meditate on it through testimony writing. Yes, it will not be easy, unlike the people in the world, instead of coming home and relaxing in front of the TV we will join Bible studies at night and write testimony, have morning devotions, spend the entire Saturday preparing Sunday message. In **verse 17** it says: *“****17****so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* When we immerse ourselves in the word of God, we become complete, equipped for every good work, ready to be used by God to do good works, instead of being like those who worm their way into homes to gain control over gullible women. I pray that our attitude towards the word of God may be transformed, humbly accept it, surrender to it and be led by it. So that we too can confess like Paul in verse **4:7-8** saying: “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.*”