

# Living in God's Church Today

**“But You”**

*2 Timothy 3:10-17*

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# “But You”

## Introduction

According to John MacArthur, “Paul had three overriding priorities in his life: to know Christ, to defend Christ’s truth (Scripture), and to minister in Christ’s name.”<sup>1</sup> In Paul’s two letters to Timothy, defending Christ’s truth was dominant.

In our study last time in 2 Timothy 3:1-9, we examined Paul’s instruction to Timothy about how to identify false teachers. In our study today in 2 Timothy 3:10-17, we are going to see how Paul urged Timothy to continue serving God.

In today’s text, 2 Timothy 3:10-17, Paul twice addressed Timothy with the same two Greek monosyllables *su de*. It is translated literally as “you but.” However, to smooth it out, in verse 10 it is translated as “You, however.” And in verse 14 it is translated as “But as for you.” Paul used these two words (*su de*, “But you”) in verses 10 and 14 to call Timothy to be different. In contrast to the false teachers and their false teaching, Timothy was to serve God faithfully and continually.

## Scripture

Let’s read 2 Timothy 3:10-17:

**<sup>10</sup> You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, <sup>11</sup> my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord**

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 125.

rescued me. <sup>12</sup> Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <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 complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:10-17)

## Lesson

2 Timothy 3:10-17 shows us how to serve God.

Let's use the following outline:

1. Serve God by Continuing in the Work of God (3:10-13)
2. Serve God by Continuing in the Word of God (3:14-17)

### I. **Serve God by Continuing in the Work of God (3:10-13)**

First, serve God by continuing in the work of God.

Paul wrote in verses 10-11, **"You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me."** In verses 1-9 of chapter 3, Paul described the unfaithfulness of the false teachers.

Now, in verse 10, Paul turned to exhort Timothy to live a life of faithfulness—in contrast to that of the false teachers. It is as if Paul was giving final advice to Timothy as he approached the end of his letter to him. Paul's exhortation to Timothy to faithfulness is set first in terms of the example that Paul (and also Timothy's mother and grandmother) had set before him, and then in terms of confidence and obedience to Scripture.

In verse 10, the **“You, however,”** (*su de*) is emphatic and it shows the contrast between the false teachers and the right way. Paul set down his own example with nine qualities. **“Teaching”** (“doctrine”) is first. This is a major theme of both letters to Timothy. **“Conduct”** (*agōgē*) means “manner, or way of life” and denotes Paul's general behavior. **“Aim in life”** (*prothesei*) means “purpose, chief aim.” **“Faith”** (*pistei*) is the body of truth that constitutes the gospel. **“Patience”** (*makrothumia*) denotes “long-suffering,” especially patience with people. **“Love”** (*agapē*) refers to a love that seeks the best for others. **“Steadfastness”** (*hupomone*) is better translated as “endurance.” This is not passive patience but active mastery of the ups and downs of life.

The **“persecutions”** and **“sufferings”** are those that Paul received in his missionary work in **Antioch** (Acts 13:50), **Iconium** (Acts 14:5-6), and **Lystra** (Acts 14:19-20). Paul visited these three cities in Galatia on his first and second missionary journeys. **Lystra** was Timothy's hometown (Acts 16:1). Paul then declared, **“Yet from them all the Lord rescued me.”** This deliverance included a premature death by stoning (Acts 14:19-20). These triumphant words reflect the Psalmist's words in Psalm 34:17 (“When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles”). Though in prison when he wrote, Paul was constantly aware of the hand of God in his life. Paul urged Timothy to serve God

by continuing the work of God, using his own life as an example for Timothy to imitate.

When I was a preschooler, my Dad was involved with a local soccer team in our town. Dad had grown up playing soccer in Austria and so enjoyed scrimmaging with the local team. My favorite player on the team was the goalkeeper. I decided that I wanted to play goalkeeper when I got old enough to play. Our team's goalkeeper had a slight limp. Years later, my parents told me that I so admired that goalkeeper that I started walking with a limp too—just like he did! An example is a powerful motivator. The supreme example for Christians is, of course, Jesus. However, Jesus is no longer with us. But other godly Christians are with us. We can see them and learn from them and imitate their example in following Jesus—just as Paul exhorted Timothy to follow his example in following Jesus.

Then Paul wrote in verse 12, **"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."** Paul alerted Timothy about what to expect as a faithful Christian. He should expect persecution and suffering and trial and difficulty. This Biblical principle is found throughout the Scriptures. Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, "...and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Jesus also said in John 15:18-21, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."

Sometimes people believe that coming to faith in Jesus means the end of one's troubles. But that is just not true. A Christian must expect great opposition and persecution in this world. The commentator William Barclay comments: "It is Paul's conviction that the real follower of Christ cannot escape persecution.... If anyone proposes to accept a set of standards quite different from the world's, he is bound to encounter trouble. If anyone proposes to introduce into his life a loyalty that surpasses all earthly loyalties, there are bound to be clashes. And that is precisely what Christianity demands that a man should do" (*The Daily Study Bible Series, Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, pp. 197, 198).<sup>2</sup>

Continuing in verse 13, Paul wrote, **"while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived."** Paul wanted Timothy to understand that the effects of false teaching will continue to grow. Their impact will become increasingly more successful. That does not mean that Timothy must not press on to proclaim the good news of the gospel. He must just realize that he will always be in an uphill battle.

This will be helpful for us to keep in mind today. Yes, we long for and pray for a revival of biblical truth and faith. We want to see widespread revival as was sometimes seen in previous generations. Yet, we are realistic and know that we will fight the good fight of the faith until the Lord Jesus returns. False teaching will always be with us. And it is likely that the false teaching will spread and that we will see vast numbers in our community fall under the deceiving spell of false teaching. Nevertheless, that must not discourage us. Rather, it is a call to

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<sup>2</sup> Ralph W. Harris, ed., *Galatians–Philemon*, The Complete Biblical Library: Study Bible (WORDsearch, 2009), 463.

serve God by continuing in the work of God.

## II. **Serve God by Continuing in the Word of God (3:14-17)**

And second, serve God by continuing in the word of God.

In verses 14-17, we see two truths.

### *A. The Word of God Saves (3:14-15)*

First, the word of God saves.

Paul wrote in verses 14-15, **"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 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."** Paul reminded Timothy of his godly heritage. Timothy was raised by a godly mother and grandmother (1:5). They taught him the truths that are in the **"sacred writings,"** what we now call the "Old Testament." Paul had also instructed Timothy in the truth, especially as to the fulfillment of Old Testament truth in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

I was converted at nineteen years of age. Though not a dramatic conversion to Jesus Christ, it was nevertheless clear and evident to me. For a long time, I used to think that all believers needed to know the day and time of their conversion to Christ. I did not think that young children could have such an experience. But then I came to realize that children growing up in a Christian home may have an experience similar to Timothy's. In a home in which faith in Jesus is front and center, children may never know a time when they did not know about

Jesus. Like Timothy, they **“have been acquainted with the sacred writings”** and, by God’s grace, they may come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ at a very early age in life. May that be so in every Christian home!

*B. The Word of God Sanctifies (3:16-17)*

And the second truth about continuing in the word of God is that the word of God sanctifies.

Paul wrote in verses 16-17, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and 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.”** This is the “Golden Text” on the inspiration of the word of God. **“All Scripture”** here refers to the Old Testament since there was no collection yet for the New Testament.

There are three truths I want us to see from these verses.

*First, note the origin of the word of God.* Paul wrote in verse 16a, **“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”** The expression **“breathed out by God”** (*theopneustos*) occurs only here in the New Testament. It does not even occur in any other Greek writing. The expression refers to the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Paul does not say that the human authors were inspired. Instead, it is the words themselves that were from God. It is important to keep in mind that divine inspiration applies to the original autographs of Scripture and not to the Bible writers. There are no inspired Scripture writers, only inspired Scriptures.

The Bible is thus unique. It is the only divinely-inspired text. No other religion has a text that is from God himself. They may claim that it is from God but they are wrong. Only the Bible is the inspired Word of God. So whatever we read in



the Bible we must know that we are reading the very words of God himself to us. It is such a comfort to know that we don't have to guess what God has on his mind. He has revealed to us all that we need to know for faith and life. That is why we read and study and memorize and apply God's word to ourselves. It is the very bread of life!

*Second, look at the functions of the word of God.* Paul said in verse 16b that all 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.”** The second half of verse 16 sets down four **“profitable”** uses of Scripture: (1) **“Teaching”** (“doctrine”) is important to a correct understanding of the truth and the reception of salvation. (2) **“Reproof”** (“rebuking” or “conviction of sin”) from reading or hearing the word of God is important to conviction, repentance, and confession. (3) **“Correction”** (“restoration to an upright position or a right state”) brings a person back to a proper relationship with God. (4) **“Training (instruction, discipline) in righteousness”** is profitable because it gives God's view of life's priorities.

These four functions of Scripture are as valid today as they were when Paul wrote them to Timothy. Our supreme authority for all of faith and life is the word of God. When I was a young Christian, I would talk with non-Christians about Christianity. Sometimes they would mention something and I would have difficulty answering it. After our conversation, I would open my Bible and find the answer to the matter mentioned. I would always kick myself because I did not go to the Bible sooner to deal with the matter raised by my non-Christian friend. Over the years, I have discovered that I need to open God's word to find some teaching, reproof, correction, or training in righteousness to answer the issue before me.

*And third, look at the purpose of the word of God.* The four functions of Scripture (“teaching,” “reproof,” “correction,” and “training in righteousness”) have a purpose: **“that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”** (3:17). Earlier, Paul used the term “man of God” to refer to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:11). Here in this verse, the term **“man of God”** is used as a technical term to refer to an official preacher of divine truth. Paul was thinking particularly of Timothy in this verse as he was to continue proclaiming the truth of God’s word when Paul was no longer alive. The expression **“equipped for every good work”** means that Scripture will supply all that is necessary to meet all the demands of godly ministry and righteous living. The Scripture accomplishes this not only in the life of the man of God but in all who follow God (see Ephesians 4:11-13).

Dr. Kent Hughes tells the story of Dr. William Evans, who pastored College Church from 1906–1909, and who was an unusually accomplished man. He had the entire *King James Version* of the Bible memorized as well as the New Testament of the *American Standard Version*. Dr. Evans also authored over fifty books. His son, Louis, became one of the best-known preachers in America and for many years pastored the eminent First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. When Dr. William Evans retired, he moved to Hollywood to be near his son, and when Louis was away he would substitute for him.

One unforgettable Sunday Dr. William, as he was affectionately called, spoke on the virgin birth. All were amazed when he raised his Bible and tore out the pages that narrate the birth of the Lord. As the tattered scraps floated down toward the congregation, he shouted, “If we can’t believe in the virgin birth, let’s tear it out of the Bible!” And then as he drove home

his point, he tore out the resurrection chapters, then the miracle narratives, then anything conveying the supernatural. The floor was littered with mutilated pages.

Finally, with immense drama, he held up the only remaining portion and said, "And this is all we have left—the Sermon on the Mount. And that has no authority for me if a divine Christ didn't preach it." After a few more words, he asked his listeners to bow for the benediction. But before he could pray, a man in that vast and sedate congregation stood and cried, "No, no! Go on! We want more!" Several others joined in. So Dr. Evans preached for another fifty minutes.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Evans was right. You cannot pick and choose from the Bible what you want to believe is inspired. It is *all* breathed out by God. Serve God by continuing in the word of God.

## Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the further exhortation in 2 Timothy 3:10-17, we should continue in the work and word of God.

You cannot continue in the work of God if you do not have a relationship with the God of the work. So, if you are not a Christian, repent of your sin and believe in Jesus. And if you are a Christian, serve God by working for him.

And you continue in the word of God by submitting to every word of God.

May God help each one of us to continue in the work and word of God. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Ethel May Baldwin and David V. Benson, *Henrietta Mears and How She Did It!* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1966), 149.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church  
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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1. <https://tampabaypresbyterian.org/SermonAudio>.
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