“Last Days Living” (2 Timothy 3:1–17)

What is the greatest threat to the church of Jesus Christ in the last days? Is it secular humanism? Is it the new atheism? Is it the ACLU? Is it government efforts to limit religious freedom? Is it the movement that seeks to redefine marriage? All of these are a threat to biblical Christianity but not one of them holds a candle to the greatest threat.¹

So what is the greatest threat to Christianity? It may not be what you think. The greatest threat to the Christian church is religion. “Religion” is humankind’s attempt to earn God’s favor. Religion on the whole has been Satan’s great counterfeit to true spirituality. Religion has done far more damage to the church than all the atheists, communists, and world-class sinners. C. S. Lewis once wrote something to this effect: “If the divine call doesn’t make us better, it will make us very much worse. Of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst.”² Lewis seems to be saying that religion without a dynamic relationship with Christ is fruitless and downright dangerous. Hence, a key to the Christian life is to: Begin with the end in mind. In 2 Timothy 3 Paul lays out three responsibilities that will help us live in the last days.

1. Expect the worst (3:1–9). If you’re a pessimist, this responsibility is an easy one. Paul, however, is commanding you to be a biblically appropriate pessimist who prepares for trying times within the church. He writes: “But realize this . . .” (3:1). The present tense imperative translated “realize” (ginoske) may be better rendered, “Understand this! Mark this! Pay attention!”³ Paul states that we are to “know [and keep on knowing] that in the last days difficult times will come.” Most Christians assume that the “last days” are those immediately preceding the return of Christ. However, biblically speaking, the “last days” began with Jesus’ birth.⁴ So we’ve been in “the last days” for over 2,000 years!⁵ Paul states that “difficult times will come.” The word translated “difficult” (chalepos) is used only one other time in the New Testament, where it describes two demon possessed men who were “exceedingly violent” so that none could pass by them (Matt 8:28). In classical Greek the term is used of dangerous wild animals and of the raging sea.⁶ Hence, the rendering “terrible” (NIV) or “perilous” (NKJV) is preferred.

Who is responsible for these devastating days? The answer in 3:2 is “people.” Not organizations, not nations, not philosophies, not Satan and his demons, but individuals. Paul uses a whopping nineteen⁷ descriptive terms in 3:2–4 to describe the character of these people; what they are. While Paul’s target appears to be false teachers and their followers, these descriptions are often true of you and me as well. So instead of reading this vice list and thinking, “I see these sins in my boss, neighbor, or child, ask, ‘Lord, how am I guilty of these characteristics?’ We can all be “lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents,⁸ ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.”⁹ You will be pleased to know that I’m not going to dwell on each one of these nineteen sins. Instead, I will make two broad observations. First, notice that the word “love” appears five different times: lovers of self (3:2); lovers of money (3:2), unloving (3:3); lovers of pleasure (3:4); and not lovers of God (3:4). This observation tells me something of these characteristics. They can be summarized in a single question: What do you love? Jesus said that. He said that the entire law could be summed up in two commandments: Love God and love others (cf. Matt 22:37–40). When we choose to love God, sin falls off of us.

Second, the pinnacle of this list is found in 3:3: “malicious gossips.”¹⁰ The Greek word behind this translation is the noun diaboloi, which means “devil.” The person who gossips becomes a diabolos, a tool of Satan within the church. This entire vice-list should hit us all between the eyes. We are all guilty of most of these sins. Consequently, our Christian lives can be compromised. May we seek to rid ourselves of these sinful characteristics and pursue Christ with all that is within us. Begin with the end in mind. As we reflect on the disastrous consequences of sin, we will wage war with the flesh.
Paul concludes his lengthy vice list in 3:5 by stating that these individuals “had[n]g] to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power.” Paul’s words confirm the notion that Paul has in mind religious folk (i.e., professing Christians). The word “form” (morphē) means something like, “having the outward appearance” of godliness. These individuals display a spiritual veneer while hiding an inner core of sin. Surprisingly, in the last days, people will become more religious, not less. They will join churches or other religious organizations they will be baptized, attend the services, sing, pray, and give, but their hearts will not be in it. They will deny the very power of the essential truths of the gospel. Such people will propose that the Bible is inaccurate and irrelevant. They will claim that there are many viable paths to God. They will insist that works can be included in salvation. They have denied true godliness.

Perhaps you’ve heard of “Dippin Dots”? Our family discovered this tasty treat while visiting California’s Great America. Dippin Dots our small fingernail-sized ice cream dots. They come in every flavor, including my personal favorite, bubblegum. The concoction is created by flash freezing ice cream mix in liquid nitrogen. Dippin Dots seem to be real ice cream, but they aren’t! There are people in our churches who are Dippin Dots “believers.” They appear to be Christian; however, they have never truly trusted in Christ. Those who have at some point in the past are denying the Lord who saved them.

Thus, Paul exclaims: “Avoid such men as these” (3:5). Now I know you may not like this command. It seems heartless and hateful. It certainly is not tolerance for politically correct. Nonetheless, Paul isn’t willing to play games with spiritual compromisers. He is ever ready to exercise tough love. Of course, Paul is not saying to shun theological liberals and cultists when you see them in the grocery store, the neighborhood, or the workplace. He is not forbidding all contact or witness to them. Rather he is not to have any ministry involvement with those who make a pretense of religious faith but exhibit no evidence of spiritual reality or power. We must not share the pulpit with them, gather for the purpose of prayer, call them “brothers” or “sisters,” or give their viewpoints any credibility. Instead, we must guard the church from such wolves in sheep’s clothing (cf. Matt 7:15). We must begin with the end in mind. This entails recognizing the consequences of sin and choosing instead to protect the body of Christ.

In 3:2–5 Paul described the character of false teachers; what they are. Now in 3:6–7 he transitions to their conduct; what they do. The apostle states: “For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak [‘little’] women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Many accuse Paul of being harsh and chauvinistic towards women because of statements such as these. Yet he isn’t speaking of all women. In this context, he’s talking about a specific group of women. It is important, therefore, to reconstruct the scene in Ephesus. (1) Women in the Ephesian church had no Christian upbringing or formal religious training. Hence, after their conversion they devoured Christian teaching, but their eagerness to learn made them a target for false teachers. (2) At this time in history, there were almost no opportunities for women to be employed. They stayed at home, again making themselves easy prey for false teachers. (3) The church at Ephesus had a large group of widows (1 Tim 5:3–16). These ladies were lonely and desperately seeking intimacy, which made them especially vulnerable to false teachers.

Although our contemporary contexts are different, similar situations arise. In my pastoral experience, I have discovered widows in our church being deceived by “Christian” television charlatans. These prosperous evangelists make promises of health and wealth, and they appear so convincing. Tragically, godly widows have succumbed to giving generously to such religious hucksters who are impotent to fulfill their promises. I have also seen single moms carrying an enormous load led astray by Christians who give unbiblical counsel or take sexual advantage of the emotional instability of these women. I have also watched as stay-at-home moms with too much time on their hands have delved into the “deep things of the Word of God” only to find themselves adopting an extreme version of a theological distinctive, or worse yet, following a heretical teacher or worldview. As Christian leaders, it’s our responsibility to protect the women in our congregation who may be vulnerable to false teaching.
Paul now gives a specific example of these false teachers: “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith” (3:8). Jewish tradition has maintained that the two magicians in Pharaoh’s court were Jannes and Jambres, though they are not specifically named in the Exodus account.16 Paul indicates that certain last day of teachers will oppose the truth in the same way that these two magicians opposed Moses. How then did Jannes and Jambres oppose Moses? By counterfeit miracles! These magicians reproduced the same initial miraculous signs as Moses (Exod 7:12, 22; 8:7). Thus, we see clearly that God isn’t the only source of miraculous events, for Satan also has “miracle working power” (cf. 2 Thess 2:9). This is why it is so critical to “test the spirits” to determine whether they are of God (1 John 4:1).17

The opponents have been likened to Jannes and Jambres, and here Paul gives an analysis of their usefulness: they are worthless! The word “rejected” (adokimos) is “unqualified, worthless, base.”18 These men are of no use to the church at Ephesus (i.e., to “the faith”). The articular use of “the faith” here is more likely a reference to the objective body of truth accepted as the rule of faith and practice than to justification.19 Such men are capable of destroying the faith of young and immature believers. Fortunately, Paul definitively states: “But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes’s and Jambres’s folly was also” (3:9). This verse brings me great comfort because when I look out on our world today, it looks like false teaching is winning the day. Islam and Mormonism are on fire, surpassing the present growth of Christianity. New cults are spawning everyday. Yet, Paul says that eventually their progress will come to a screeching halt because every lie has an expiration date! God is still in control. In the end, truth will prevail. One day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10–11). Therefore, may we begin with the end in mind.

[The first responsibility of last days living is “expect the worst.” Our second responsibility is to ...]

2. Live the Life (3:10–13). It is critical that we follow godly examples and cultivate Christian character to live well in the last days. Paul puts it like this in 3:10–11: “Now you followed my teaching, conduct,20 purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra;21 what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!” Paul isn’t being arrogant, he is merely encouraging Timothy from his own personal experience.22 It is a loving reminder from a mentor and friend of how to avoid the temptation to give in to the opponents. Interestingly, Paul lists nine descriptions that seem to counter the nineteen sins of 3:2–4. These verses could be called the curriculum of Timothy’s training program. It is worth noting that only one out of nine courses involved doctrine alone. The training did not take place inside the walls of an isolated classroom, but on the battlefield for men’s souls. In fact, Paul’s last two items (persecutions and sufferings) describe what has happened to him as a result of 3:10. He doesn’t point out his successes, but his scars, for these are sure proof that Christ has had full sway in his life.23 Paul even concludes by expressing confidence that the Lord has “rescued” (rhuomai) him out of all persecutions. What a declaration of God’s sovereignty! God “always” rescues His people... either in this life, or by taking them to heaven! This should increase your confidence! Begin with the end in mind.

Paul concludes this section in 3:12–13 with apostolic authority: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors24 will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Our world isn’t going to get better, it’s going to get worse. Those who “live godly in Christ Jesus” will face persecution. It may not involve beatings or torture or imprisonment or death. However, it will likely involve subtle forms of ridicule, public embarrassment, marginalization, being made the butt of repeated jokes, being passed over for promotion, social rejection, shunning, and being the object of scorn and vicious rumors. If you’re not experiencing such persecution, it’s likely that you are not publicly living out your faith in Christ. It is important, therefore, to remember Jesus’ promise of eternal blessing (cf. Matt 5:11–12). Begin with the end in mind.
[If we are to live faithfully in the last days, we must “expect the worst” and “live the life.” The third and final responsibility is to . . .]

3. **Love the Word (3:14–17).** In the midst of last days living, the only way to survive and thrive is to read, study, and meditate on the Scriptures. Paul writes, **“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of.”** Verse 14 begins with an emphatic “you” (cf. 3:10). Paul wants young Timothy to know that he is speaking directly to him. This is a helpful reminder to each one of us. God expects the Word to transform us on an intensely personal level. In contrast to the false teachers (“however”), Paul urges Timothy to persevere in the Word. Please circle the word “continue” in your Bible. It is the key word in this chapter. It means “to abide or remain.” It is a present-tense imperative (*mene*) that calls for a constant and continual way of life. This means that month in and month out, year in and year out, you remain faithful to God’s Word.  

Paul describes the truths he had instructed Timothy to continue in as, “the things you have learned and become convinced of.” There is an important distinction between “learned” and “convinced,” for the first denotes content, but the second, conviction. Timothy had not only “learned” the truth, but he had “become convinced” of it. The important thing to note here is that Timothy checked things out for himself! What he learned he then went on to confirm personally (cf. Acts 17:11). The difference between the things we “learn” and those we “become convinced of” is that we hold the former while the latter holds us! Until God’s Word becomes not just something we hold, but rather something that holds us, our Christian living will be anemic.  

In 3:14b–15, Paul provides three reasons why Timothy must continue in God’s Word. First, Timothy must continue in the Word because he learned it directly from the apostle Paul. Paul writes, **“knowing from whom you have learned”** (3:14b). The word “whom” (*tinon*) is a plural pronoun. Therefore, this word can’t refer to Paul alone. Others also taught Timothy. We’ll see whom in 3:15. Timothy had seen the awesome effects that God’s Word can unleash in a man’s life (3:10–11). Paul had mentored Timothy. This mentoring relationship grounded him in the Word and equipped him for ministry. Have you had a spiritual mentor who has invested in your spiritual growth? Do you currently have a mentor? If not, why not? Have you prayed for a spiritual man or woman to come alongside you and help you in your Christian growth? Is there a man or woman that you need to ask to mentor you? Mentoring has changed my life. I have peers and mentors who disciple me in God’s Word. I need this! You do too. If you want to grow and continue in the Word, you must be challenged and led by at least one mature believer. Today, will you commit to finding that mentor? It will prepare you for eternity. **Begin with the end in mind.**  

Second, Timothy must continue in God’s Word because he learned it from his immediate family. In 1:5 we read that, before Timothy learned from Paul, he was taught by his grandmother, Lois and his mother, Eunice. Paul recounts this for Timothy in 3:15: **“from childhood you have known the sacred writings.”** The word “childhood” refers to either an unborn child or an infant. The point being, Lois and Eunice taught Timothy “the sacred writings” (i.e., Old Testament Scriptures) while he was still in the womb or shortly thereafter! These godly women filled his head and his heart with God’s Word. The Christian world owes these two heroines of the faith a tremendous debt of gratitude, for who can possibly calculate the number of lives that have been challenged and strengthened over the centuries because of Timothy and the two letters written to him? We must recognize that God can profoundly use the influence of a mother and grandmother to forge a godly legacy. We must elevate and affirm these roles in the church. Ladies, please do not minimize your role. Research indicates that most boys are closer to their mothers than to their fathers. So mothers, take advantage of your relationship with your son. Teach him the Word and help him grow spiritually. Grandmothers, your grandchildren may be more prone to listen to you instead of their parents. Use this to your advantage and teach them the Word of God. Model it before them and speak it into their lives. You will leave a lasting legacy if you do. If you are on the receiving end of such a legacy, please express your appreciation to your parents or grandparents today.
Third, Timothy must continue in God’s Word because it will enable him to make wise ethical choices (3:15b). Paul writes that the Scriptures “are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” The phrase “are able to give you wisdom”\(^{33}\) means “to give the ability to live skillfully.” God’s Word enables believers to “live life skillfully” so that his life is well constructed and built to last (cf. Matt 7:24–27). The “salvation” (soteria) spoken of here must refer to more than deliverance from hell, for this had already been accomplished in Timothy (1:9).\(^{35}\) Here, “salvation” is equivalent to growth and maturity (i.e., sanctification). Paul is saying that the Scriptures have the power to provide life-changing wisdom, which if properly applied will save us from the power of sin\(^{16}\) and the peril of false teaching (cf. 3:13). This deliverance is all through our faith in Christ.

We have now arrived at two of the most important verses about the Bible itself. In 3:16 Paul affirms that “All Scripture is inspired by God.” He doesn’t say “some” Scripture or “most” Scripture; he says “All Scripture.” The word “Scripture” (graphe) specifically refers to the Old Testament. However, in 1 Tim 5:18 Paul uses graphe to refer to quotations from both the Old and New Testaments (Deut 25:4; Luke 10:7). In 2 Pet 3:16, Peter also calls Paul’s writings “Scripture.”\(^{37}\) This means that God has inspired every biblical book (this includes Leviticus and Numbers). Every word and every idea is “inspired by God.”\(^{38}\) The phrase “inspired by God” comes from a single Greek word (theopneustos)\(^{39}\) that means “God-breadth” (cf. Gen 2:7; Ps 33:6). Just as we must expel breath from our mouths when we speak, so ultimately Scripture is God speaking. Proverbs 30:5 says, “Every word of God is pure.” Therefore, God’s Word can be trusted unreservedly as the final authority on whatever it addresses.\(^{40}\) Have you come to the place of absolute conviction that the Bible is God’s Word? Think this through very carefully. Are you willing to submit to the Scriptures as the final authority in every area of life and doctrine?

Paul writes that the God-breathed Scriptures are “profitable”\(^{41}\) or “useful” (NIV) for four specific tasks:

- **Scripture is profitable for “teaching.”** This is a mandatory use of God’s Word (cf. Acts 2:42). The Word must instruct us! My greatest priority must be to teach and preach the Word of God. One of your highest commitments must be to corporately sit under God’s Word and let it transform you. Solid biblical teaching must be designed to bring God’s people to completion. But corporate teaching is not enough. This is just the first step. As an individual believer you must also let the Word teach you. What does God want most from you?

- **Scripture is profitable for “reproof.”** The word “reproof”\(^{42}\) means “to reprove or convict.” It is to show us when we’ve departed from the path of righteousness. The Word of God is a faithful, two-edged sword, which ruthlessly cuts across many of our actions and attitudes (Heb 4:12–13). We must be willing to undergo this divine surgery if the Great Physician would heal us. This is the other side of teaching. As believers we must use the Scriptures to expose the errors of false teachers. We must also use the Scriptures to reprove ourselves.

- **Scripture is profitable for “correction.”** The word for “correction” is a companion of “reproof,” but emphasizes the behavioral side of things. The word literally means “to restore to an upright state” (cf. 2:15).\(^{43}\) The Scriptures not only show us where we’ve fallen, but also how to get back on our feet. They point the way back to the path of righteousness and seek our quick return. Have you stumbled in your relationship with God? If so, God wants to restore you.

- **Scripture is profitable for “training in righteousness.”** The word that is translated “training” (paideia) originally referred to “the rearing of a child.” God’s Word was not given simply to increase our knowledge, but mostly to infuse our character and conduct. The Word has its full effect upon us only when it produces a transformed and righteous life. It is worth noting that all four of these words involve a change of life.\(^{44}\) What a reminder: Knowledge that does not change one’s life is useless. How fully functional have you allowed the Scriptures to be in your life?
This leads us to 3:17. When all is said and done, what is the ultimate purpose of God’s Word? Paul explains that we are to train in God’s Word “so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” Though we cannot see it in English, Paul uses two forms of the Greek word for “equip”: the adjective “adequate”45 and the participle “equipped.”46 These two words form a play on words. The adjective “adequate” or “complete,” means “to be fit, sufficient, and complete—able to meet all demands.” The participle “equipped” means “to be completely outfitted, fully furnished or supplied.” It was used of a wagon or rescue boat, which was completely outfitted, or of a machine sold in good condition.47 Note carefully that Paul did not say that God’s Word is adequate for “many good works,” or even, “most good works,” but “every good work.” We should not study the Scriptures to simply increase our knowledge or to help us win arguments. We should study the Scriptures so that we will know how to do God’s work in the world. Knowledge of God’s Word is not useful unless it strengthens our faith and leads us to do “every good work” (cf. Eph 2:10). Begin with the end in mind.

I have a confession to make. Some of you know that I enjoy drinking coffee. Now I’m not an addict but I have been known to partake in what’s been called, “Baptist booze.” When I was in Russia, my traveling partner, Dr. Paul Benware, brought some Maxwell House instant coffee. Every morning, he and I would take a packet of this coffee and drop it into a mug of boiling water. Dr. Benware explained to me that I could make the coffee strong or weak. The difference would be found in the number of times I dipped the packet into the water. Since we both like strong coffee, we would dip that packet in the water again and again. The result was that the coffee would permeate the hot water, bringing out all the potential fragrance and flavor.

Consider the difference between a strong and a weak cup of instant Maxwell House coffee. The same ingredients—water and coffee—are used for both. The difference is that the strong cup of coffee results from the packet being immersed in the water longer, allowing the water more time to get into the coffee and the coffee into the water. The longer the steeping process continues, the stronger the cup of coffee. In the same way, the length of time we spend in God’s Word determines how deeply we get into it and it gets into us. The longer we are in the Word, the “stronger” we become.

We need to sit under biblical teaching. We need to read the Bible. We need to study the Bible. We need to trace themes. We need to tear apart individual books. We need to ponder the details of whole paragraphs. We need to discern biblical characters. We need to study specific words. We need to apply God’s Word to our lives. Will you make that commitment today? I’d like to ask you to stand. In Russia, believers always stand or kneel when they pray. This is true when they pray in church or in the privacy of their homes, when they pray before a meal. As you stand, will you pray that the Lord will enable you to remain in the Word? You can’t live well in the last days unless you’re a man or woman of the Book. So expect the worst, live the life, and love the Word. Begin with the end in mind.
Scripture References
2 Timothy 3:1–17
Romans 1:18–32
1 Timothy 4:12–16
John 15:18–20
Acts 17:11
Matthew 7:24–27
Hebrews 4:12–13

Study Questions
1. How am I preparing for “the last days”? Do I recognize any of Paul’s descriptive phrases occurring within my own heart? If so, which sin is most evident? What can I do to put away this sinful practice? How can I have a clear view of life’s trials and persecutions and remain optimistic in my faith? How can I encourage others to have guarded expectations for the future and yet not lose hope?

2. Why do people like to hold to “a form of godliness”? How does doing so benefit them? What does it mean that these individuals “have denied its power”? If we are commanded to “avoid” such people, how can we see them converted or restored to the faith? How can I interact with professing believers from liberal or mainline churches, especially when we may disagree on significant doctrinal issues?

3. Which of the nine items in 2 Tim 3:11 are people most likely to see in me? Who am I inviting into my life that might see these characteristics in me? How have I experienced Christian persecution? If I am not being persecuted, am I truly seeking to live a godly life in Christ? How can I be bold in my verbal witness without being unnecessarily offensive to unchurched people who do not share my biblical convictions?

4. Have I experienced a Christian heritage through relatives who taught and modeled God’s truth? If so, what have I learned from these people and how have they influenced me? How am I passing on my faith to others? Do I ever find myself tired of the Christian life? If so, what causes this? How can I maintain a positive, enduring, continually maturing life in Christ?

5. How does 2 Tim 3:16–17 build my confidence in God’s Word? Of the four benefits listed, which do I most often and least experience? How would I describe my present Bible reading and study? What has worked particularly well for me? How can I become more diligent in my study and application of Scripture? Who can help take me to the next level?

21 This word *agoge* (“conduct”) is found only here in the NT. It is used in Esth 2:20 LXX to describe one’s upbringing or training. However, it is sometimes used in classical Greek and in 2 Macc 4:16 to describe one’s “way of life.”

22 Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 440 comments: “These towns were in the area from which Timothy came, and Timothy was aware of these episodes when he agreed to join Paul in the ministry (Acts 16:1–6). Paul mentions these earliest persecutions rather than later ones, probably because he wants to remind Timothy of his commitment to the apostle and his ministry from the very beginning and that from the very beginning that ministry has involved persecutions.”


24 Edwards, “II Timothy.”

25 The term “impostors” (*goetes*; “magicians,” “sorcerers”) places the false teachers into the category of the magicians who opposed Moses, but doesn’t imply that they practiced sorcery.

26 This may sound like an easy task. I can assure you, it is not; many have failed. Elsewhere, Paul tells Timothy that some have refused to “fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience;” rather they have “rejected [this] and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith” (1 Tim 1:18–19). He also predicts that “in the later times, some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1).

27 The phrase “become convinced of” (*epitosthē*) is only used here in the NT.

28 Edwards, “II Timothy.”

29 For a brief overview of Paul’s relationship with Timothy see 1 Cor 16:10; Phil 2:20, 22; 1 Thess 3:2. For a helpful study of Timothy’s career, see William J. Peterson, *The Discipling of Timothy* (Wheaton: Victor, 1980).

30 The participle “knowing” (*eidos*) places the cause or reason for Timothy’s assurance.

31 Acts 16:1 informs us that Timothy’s mother was a Christian Jewess, but that his father was a Greek. This may explain why his mother and grandmother raised him in the faith.

32 Gk. *brephe* refers to a child that is still unborn, a fetus (Luke 1:41, 44) or a very small child, baby, infant (Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 1 Pet 2:2). See BDAG s.v. *brephe* 2.

33 Bible commentators point out that the early Church Fathers, Philo and Josephus, used the phrase *hiera grammata* (“sacred writings”) to refer to the OT Scriptures.

34 The phrase that is translated “are able to give you the wisdom” (*soφhais*) probably reflects the usage of the Greek OT in Ps 19:7 (“making wise the simple”). This contrasts with the folly and deception of the false teachers in 2 Tim 3:9, 13. See also Gordon Fee, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Peabody: Hendrickson), 279.

35 It could be argued that the phrase “which are able” (*ta dunamena*) is to be taken as a past event rather than a present event. In this case, “salvation” would be the equivalent of justification and the new birth. However, Paul is quick to note that this justification did not take place simply because of the Scriptures, but “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” It is the written Word that points to and points out the Living Word (John 5:39), and it is our faith in the Living Word (Christ) that saves us.

36 God’s Word has the power to free believers from the bondage of sin. Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32).

37 See also 1 Cor 2:13; 14:37; Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27; 2 Thess 2:15.

38 This is true of our English translations to the degree that they reflect the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts.

39 Gk. *theopneustos* is only used here in the NT. The adjective *theopneustos* is compounded of *theos*, “God,” and the verb *pneō*, “breathe.” This word provides the base for one of the greatest NT texts on the inspiration of the Bible.

40 It is of no small significance that the first words Satan ever spoke to man were an attempt to deny the trustworthiness of God’s Word: “Has God really said . . . ?” (Gen 3:1). Those today that deny the absolute trustworthiness of Scripture are echoing Satan’s question to their generation and as such, become (knowingly or unknowingly) messengers of the devil himself.

41 Gk. *opheleimai*: used only here and 1 Tim 4:8; Titus 3:8.

42 Gk. *elegchoi*: used only here and in the NT. It is used for the “conviction” of a sinner in the Greek OT (Num 5:18ff).

43 Gk. *epanorthosai*: used only here in the NT. It comes from the Greek word for “straighten.” The NLT renders the phrase, “It straightness us out.”

44 Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001), 57 comments: “In six passages (twenty–two verses) Paul urges Timothy to guard or proclaim the Gospel (1:8; 13–14; 2:2, 8–14; 3:10–14; 4:4–5). In five passages (again twenty–two verses) he exhorts him to endure or watch his life (2:1–8, 15, 22; 3:5; 3:10–14). Doctrine and ethics are allies. Both equip the saints for good works.”

45 The adjective “adequate” (*artios*) is only used here in the NT. The word pertains to “being well fitted for some function, complete, capable, proficient = able to meet all demands.” See BDAG s.v. *artios*. 

9
46 Gk. *exartizo*: used only here and Acts 21:5. BDAG s.v. *exartizo* 2: classifies as “to make ready for service, equip, and furnish.”