

Ready! Set! Go!
Persevering through the Word
2 Timothy 3:14-4:4

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Text Introduction: We are going through this wonderful book called 2 Timothy which is actually a letter from Paul to Timothy. Paul writes from prison. He is preparing Timothy to take the mantle of leadership. His general theme is a call to perseverance. Another issue for Paul as he writes to Timothy is the existence of false teachers around Timothy and the churches. Paul is warning Timothy to be vigilant against these false teachers.

As we come to the end of chapter 3, we find some of the most familiar words of the entire book—words from Scripture about Scripture. We discover that a key to our perseverance and our battle against false teaching is to be well grounded in the Bible.

Text: ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, ¹⁵ and you know that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

4 I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge the living and the dead, and because of His appearing and His kingdom: ² Proclaim the message; persist in it whether convenient or not; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. ⁴ They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Introduction: Jesus ended His Sermon on the Mount with a story about a wise man and a foolish man. The wise built his house upon a solid foundation; the foolish man built his house on a weak foundation—sand. The point of the story is discovered in the statement that Jesus made as introduction of the story. Jesus said, “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man.” Later in the story in introducing the foolish man, Jesus said, “But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like the foolish man.”

I want to talk to you today about the foundations of our lives being based on the Bible—the Word of God. I want to talk to you today about persevering in our belief and obedience to the Word of God.

A Foundation Needed

Remember from last time:

1. We live in difficult days.
 - We live in a world where sin is rampant.
 - We live among religious people.
 - We often are led by various impulses.

- We live in a day of infinite information, but not Godly wisdom.
- We live among many evil imposters of truth.

2. The deception will grow.

A Foundation Provided

The good news about this needed foundation is that we have that foundation. The foundation for truth is the Bible.

Claims what no other book claims. (3:16)

The Bible claims about itself that the words are “God-breathed.” There are lots of words used to describe the Bible, but we can do no better than the word used by the Bible: God-breathed.

Another verse says: **2 Peter 1:20-21 (New King James Version)**

20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation **21** for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.

Still the question remains—How do we know? How do we know the Bible is true?

There are many reasons that I believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but recognizing the constraints of time, let me build my case around 4 key reasons.

Theological Logical Reasons

Because I believe in the reality of the resurrection of Jesus, then I trust and believe in the One who was raised from the dead.

What does this have to do with the truth of the Bible? For me, there is only logic in believing all or nothing. If I believe that Jesus rose from the grave, then I believe in what He has said.

Prophetic Reasons

Another reason that I believe that the Bible is God’s Word, that is “true,” is that the Bible validates itself with the accuracy of prophetic predictions. Among the multitude of examples I could give, let me focus on just a few.

1. God very clearly entered into a covenant with Abraham about the promise of land in a little strip of land now called Israel. Over the scores of years that have passed, there have been numerous threats to the security of that land and at times discipline from God involving that land, but the descendants of Abraham continue to occupy that land.
2. The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied (predicted) that invaders from the North would overtake the land of Israel and send many of the inhabitants of Israel into exile.
3. Another feature that dominates the prophets of the Old Testament is the correct prophesy of the Messiah—details of Jesus’ birth, life, and death are all prophesied with accuracy centuries before Jesus’ coming.

4. Finally, the Prophet Daniel prophesies the existence of four major kingdoms of the world that would follow from his lifetime to the time of Jesus.

Historical Reasons

For me, this is one of the greatest reasons. We stand on the shoulders of those believers who lived much closer to the time of Christ's time on the earth. Here's the big thing: The early church believed that these 66 books were inspired by God. They preserved them, protected them, and were willing to give their life for these books all because they believed that here are the very words of God. This is very important to me. It was not one man who said, "I have the word of God." It was not one man that said here are the books that are authoritative. The church in unified agreement said "Here are the books." How did they decide you ask? Their chief guide or measuring rod was the agreement of the book with the teaching of the apostles.

One of the leading evangelical scholars in this area of study is a man by the name of Bruce Metzger. He died in 2007, but he was one of the church's greatest scholars on the subject of the ancient texts. Lee Strobel asked him, "All these decades of scholarship, of study, of writing textbooks, of delving into the minutiae of the New Testament text—what has all this done to your personal faith?"

Metzger answered, "It has increased my faith. It has built it. I've asked questions all my life. I've dug into the text, I've studied this thoroughly, and today I know with confidence that my trust in Jesus has been well placed—very well placed."¹

Personal Reasons

I could say the very same thing that Dr. Metzger said. God speaks to me through His Word. It is my most important tool for maintaining and growing my relationship with God. I am comforted by His Word. And, by the way, His word tells me in Psalm 119:52 that I ought to find comfort. I find conviction in His Word. I find direction in His Word. His word is described in Hebrews 4:12 as a living word. I have found that to be true in my life.

Does what no other book does.

1. Leads to Salvation.

Notice the lead in verse 16—verse 15. Paul wrote "and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The first reason that I want people to read the Bible is because I believe that simply by reading the Bible, a person will come to the truth about Jesus Christ. Listen to what Paul said in Romans. "17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17) If I want someone to come to know Christ as personal Savior, committing his life to Him, one of the first strategies that I am going to employ is getting that person to read Scripture.

2. Profits the believer.

¹ Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1998, p. 71.

Back in 2 Timothy 3:16, we read a second reason to read the Scripture—a reason that the believer ought to read the Scripture. Depending upon the translation you are reading from, you are going to see four different words that give indication of the profit that a believer is going to gain through reading the Bible. Two words are positive in tone; two words are negative in tone. The idea is that the believer is going to profit from reading the Bible. The believer is going to be instructed about the ways of God through reading the Word of God.

3. Equips the believer.

Verse 17 tells us that the benefit of receiving the correction and instruction is that the believer is going to be equipped to do what God calls us to do. Do you see my motivation in encouraging every person to read the Bible? Something dynamic is going to happen every day in your life.

A Foundation Questioned

Unfortunately, rather than accept the foundation provided, many choose to question the validity and relevance of the Bible.

So What?

1. We must trust the Word.

The implication of “preach the word” is to have a resolve to speak the truth. We cannot preach the Bible unless we trust its validity.

2. We must teach the Word with perseverance.

“Be ready in season and out of season.”

3. We must teach the Word with patience.

Somebody said, “There’s only one time when we read something for all we are worth—when we are in love.” I happen to know that is true. My wife and I traded letters back and forth, before the invention of e-mail, for nearly two years while we were dating. The happiness of my day was determined by whether I had a letter from her or not. Well, the Bible is a love letter. The Bible is God’s special letter of love just to you.

I have learned that there is another time when we read something for all that we are worth—when our life depends upon it. It wasn’t reading, but it was listening that I encountered this some weeks ago. As many of you know, I participated in a rappel down a 25 story building in Baton Rouge. My training occurred in 30 minutes immediately preceding my rappel. In fact, I was not altogether sure when the training ceased and the actual rappel began. However, I can tell you this. Even though, that was now several weeks ago, I can tell you every instruction that the trainer gave to me. Why? My life depended on my following his directions. I was tuned in to every detail of the instructions. I heard the instructions, remembered the instructions, and followed the instructions.

May we do the same with the Word of God.