

**2 Timothy 3:10-4:5. You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 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. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. A message to the next generation of Christians**

**1. Living the Christian life is not getting any easier**

**2. By the Word the LORD will keep you faithful to the Word**

We are getting ready to celebrate the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St. Matthew Flora congregation. And therefore it can be a time that we think back to the good old days. It is a time to reflect on the past, but it is also a time to gaze into the future and consider what the future holds for the next generation of believers. In Danube we are just finishing off another Danube Fun Days and this too can be a time that we think about years gone by, but it is also a time when you might just have to wonder about the next generation and what kind of life, and what kind of challenges they are going to have to face. In fact I recall having conversations with some of you about this very topic. What in the world is in store for our children? What is in store for the next generation of believers? How will they ever make it in this world that is certainly not getting any better?

Paul was in that same type of mindset when he writes these words. Like we talked about last week this book of 2 Timothy is Paul's swan song, a final letter from a man facing an imminent death as a martyr. And so 2 Timothy is this final heartfelt letter from Paul to his spiritual son Timothy. Timothy was a young man that Paul had instructed in the word and a man that Paul saw as a future leader for the Christian Church. And so as he faces death, he ever so briefly reminisces about his life, but his main focus is more on Timothy and the next generation of believers. He tells Timothy to expect suffering, to expect rejection, but to learn from the faithfulness that God gave him. He calls on Timothy and other early Christians to learn from the faith that God gave him, to learn from his experience. Paul encouraged Timothy that just like God had helped him God would help Timothy live a holy life, give glory to God, endure hardship, decipher and avoid false teachings, firmly hold on to the word of truth, and faithfully proclaim that truth to many more. Paul warns Timothy and the rest of us that things will not get better, but they will, in fact, be worse. His example of hardship and persecution was the not the exception, but it was the rule, the standard, that those who followed Jesus were to expect. Those who followed Jesus were going to have to expect to be rejected, ignored, harassed, and persecuted.

And yet the picture that Paul portrays for Timothy is not all negative. Paul gives Timothy and believers of all future generations the encouragement that we have been given the very Word of God. And God's Word will sustain us. God's Holy Word is sufficient to guard and protect us from all that may threaten our faith. And therefore he calls on Timothy and he calls on all future generations to faithfully proclaim the word.

I want to specifically address the younger part of our congregation today. I want you to hear Paul's voice as he expresses concern for future generations. And as you hear these words I think it also expresses many of the concerns that your parents have about the next generation of believers. I want you to hear their concerns and I want you to hear the concerns that your Heavenly Father expresses in his Word to you.

As emerging leaders of the church, take note of the faithful service that your parents and in-laws have demonstrated in their faith, and imitate their faith. Take note of the challenges and the blessings they faced in their faith and know that the Lord will continue to be with you as he was and still is with them. Remain faithful to the word like those who passed the word down to you.

However, as we look forward you must realize that you are going to have to face challenges to your faith that your parents and in-laws really didn't have to deal with head on. For example your parents grew up in a culture where everyone was just expected to go to church and so how do you avoid spiritual apathy when so many

young adults, so many people your age, are disinterested in church and religion? How do you live as a young Christian adult in this world, when so many young adults have a completely different set of morals and values? How do you raise a family in this world when life issues like abortion, and premarital sex, and homosexuality - which were clearly viewed as shameful and wrong in your parent's day - are now considered acceptable, even fine and natural?

Let's face it back when your parents were raising you, when my parents were raising me, these things were not really a front line issues, but now they are. Now such things are being flaunted everyday on television, praised in song lyrics, and plastered all over the magazine rack in the grocery store. And not only is this new take on these issues tolerated but somewhere down the line our children will be taught in school that this acceptable and natural behavior. And this epidemic has become so widespread that many churches, which are supposed to be speaking God's Word of truth, are instead caving to the pressure of this world. Some churches are even going as far as promoting this new worldview. It is clear that Paul's warning to Timothy has been fulfilled, "**evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived**". What a sad thing that such imposter false teachers are misleading people with their flawed teachings as they themselves are wandering from God's Word in their delusion.

Things certainly seemed to have gone from bad to worse. Things have gone so far that it seems that right and wrong have been completely flipped upside down, and our biblical morals are viewed as wrong and hateful. And what is worse you most likely have friends and family members that you grew up with that have adopted this new worldview. And that hurts. And it is difficult to speak up in opposition to such popular opinions. What is in store for you, for your faith? What is in store the next generation? How will we ever make it through this world that has wandered so far away from God's will and his word?

Well, that is really the answer, isn't it? People have wandered from God's Word of truth. And we need to get back to God's Word of truth. All these moral issues have to deal with the fact that respect and a reverence for God's Word has suddenly eroded. Rational thinking all too often trumps simple childlike faith and this has led people to discard large portions of God's Word to suit their thinking and fit their opinions. But that is not how God tells us to handle his Word of truth - that some is true and should be held on to and some should be discarded. No, he tells us that all Scripture is to be revered as meaningful and important. **<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.** This is not some book written by human authors; this is God's Word. All of Scripture is God speaking to us through the writers. He gave them the very words

to write. He speaks to us through his Word. He makes us wise for salvation. He convicts our hearts with the awful law that condemns us for our many sins, and yet he heals us and saves us with the good news of the gospel – and both that law and that gospel properly mixed are sweet to the taste, as the prophet says, “sweeter than honey to my mouth”. God’s Word is his precious gift to us and that word fills us up. He rebukes and encourages us. He tells us what it is right. He tells us what is wrong. He gives us his blessed instruction that applies to every single aspect of our life. The almighty, wise, and powerful God in his grace and mercy speaks to us.

And yet no matter what generation we are from we are much like God’s stubborn and obstinate people. Many times we stubbornly refuse to listen to God. It seems that we have selective hearing when it comes to God’s Word. Often we come up with our own ideas about how we should live our life and we refuse to listen when God says otherwise. It is never fun to be rebuked. It is never fun to be corrected. There is a part of our sinful nature that just hates that. And so we cover our ears, we turn away. And because we don’t like to be rebuked, when the Lord tells us that we are to rebuke others in love and concern we shrink back and avoid conflict. We may even go so far as to compromise our beliefs or water down the message as we give into the pressures of this world. After all, no one likes to get singled out. But that is a cross that must carry at times. Like the lonely feeling of rejection that Jesus went through in his own hometown, like the persecution that Paul endured, we too may have to suffer through harassment and ridicule, but we must remain faithful to God’s Word.

The Lord has given us his saving Word. In his underserved love for us he has continued to send out his word even when entire generations rejected it. He continues to cry out to us with his word when we wander away, when we refuse to listen. He comes to us with that message that we have known from little on, pulls us close to him, forgives our sins, guides us through life and helps us share this message with the next generation so that Lane, Leah and McKenna, Henry and Ellie, Holly and Meah, Tyce and Keynan, Mason and Madison, Lydia and all the rest of the children in our congregation may not be led astray by the deceitfulness of this world, but they might be made wise for salvation and guided through this life to their home in heaven.

How will the next generation ever going to make it with all the challenges that they will face? God has given us his Word. And his Word is all sufficient and so this is my charge to you, both young and old: Let us first listen to God’s Word, and then let us proclaim the word of God in its truth purity. Let us keep our heads in all situations and let us **be prepared in season and out of season; {to} correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction;** for it by the power of God’s Holy Word that the Lord will keep us faithful to His Word. Amen.