FBS “Farewell, Part 1 of 3—Endurance in Difficult Days” 8-13-17

Joel Breidenbaugh (2 Timothy 3:1-17)

**Intro.** I don’t know if you pay attention to upcoming Olympic Games or not, but the OIC recently awarded Paris & Los Angeles with the 2024 & 2028 Summer Games, respectively. But the biggest concern is the upcoming 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea, just 40 miles south of the demilitarized zone with North Korea & their leader who threatens nuclear war. But did you know the Greeks had a race in their Olympic games that was unique. The winner was not the runner who finished first. It was the runner who finished with his torch still lit. I want to run all the way with the flame of my torch still lit for Him (Joseph Stowell, *Fan The Flame*, 32). As I preach a set of “Farewell” messages these next few weeks from 2 Timothy 3-4, this is “Part 1 of 3—Endurance in Difficult Days.”

Theme: Endurance & the authority of Scripture

Background: 2 Timothy is Paul’s swan song. He had faithfully served the Lord Jesus Christ for over 30 years. He helped plant a dozen or more churches in some of the largest & most strategic cities throughout the Roman Empire. Now he sits in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel for the last time. He doesn’t expect to be released like his other imprisonments. Thus, he writes to Timothy, the pastor in Ephesus & passes off the baton of faith to the church leaders who would be around after he left.

* One thing about the Apostle Paul is he never pulled any punches. He didn’t hold back. He told it like it was. He didn’t sugarcoat anything. He told believers to brace for the worst!
* **I believe this text provides you with 3 reactions to facing difficult days in ministry:**

**1. Be prepared for difficult days (3:1-9)**

Illus: You don’t have to live in Florida very long before you become well-acquainted with hurricane season. Every year Florida residents are encouraged to buy generators, non-perishables, flashlights, water & more, just to be prepared for a possible hurricane, which can knock out electricity for a few days. If you don’t get what you might need, you won’t be prepared for it. I’m telling you, difficult days are coming, so be prepared

* “the last days” (3:1)—the era between the death/resurrection of Christ & His return—we are in the last days, but we have been in the last days for 2,000 years
* The days before Christ returns will only get harder, not easier—ministry is tougher today than it’s ever been, but so is life itself, because we are bombarded by so many allurements of entertainment & self-pleasure & they can keep us from seeing Christ clearly & His call on our lives
* I don’t have time to cover all those sins, but you certainly see them in today’s society (3:2-5)—some of these issues of pride, arrogance, abusiveness and brutality were on display in Charlottesville yesterday
* Paul warns against false religions, heretics & cult leaders who try to entice those who aren’t grounded (3:6-7)—such a warning includes Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses & health-wealth-prosperity preachers who twist the gospel of the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross (the sinless One dying for sinners to cover our sins & placate God’s wrath)
* Those who oppose the truth of the Christian faith (like the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses) are corrupt, disqualified & foolish in their way of life
* Sins & heresies will run rampant in the final days, so be prepared for difficult days

**2. Be ready to endure for the sake of Christ (3:10-13)**

* These first two reactions go hand-in-hand—difficult days are coming, so be prepared & as you prepare, be ready to endure for the sake of Christ

**a. Some lives are worth imitating (3:10-12)**

* Paul says not to follow false teachers, but those who are sold out to the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of their lives—his teaching, his conduct, his aim, his faith, his patience, his love, his steadfastness, his persecutions & sufferings
* But isn’t Paul being prideful here by using himself as an example? No, because like he said to the Corinthian believers, if you need an example to follow Jesus, then follow me as I follow Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1)—you don’t want to just imitate anyone, but find a Christian who is sold out to the Lord & follow his teaching & conduct & aim & faith & patience & love & steadfastness & persecutions & sufferings so you can be used to influence others & a whole army of people can be Christ-followers
* But you need to know that in order to have such a life, it takes intentional discipline to push forward in the Christian life on the path toward heaven (Bible study & meditation, prayer, fasting, fellowship, stewardship, witnessing & more)

Illus: Much like an athlete pushes herself each day to run & lift weights & exercise, so a Christian must be disciplined in the things of God just to remain consistent, let alone grow

**b. Imposters’ lives are worth avoiding (3:13)**—cf. 3:1-9, especially v. 5

* Watch out for those who are faking it (like many televangelists) or those who are in it for their own gain—they will deceive you & they will themselves be deceived & both you & they will end up in hell

**3. Be grounded in God’s Word (3:14-17)**

* The best way to be prepared for difficult days & to be ready to endure for the sake of Christ is to be grounded in God’s Word

**a. It can bring you to saving faith in Christ Jesus (3:14-15)**

* Timothy learned the Christian faith from his grandmother Lois & his mother Eunice (cf. 1:5) & he was rooted in the faith because he was grounded in God’s Word at an early age
* Of all the skills, interests & extracurricular activities we encourage our children & grandchildren to do—sports, academics, clubs, scouting, etc.—the one we must prioritize is grounding them in God’s Word, because only the Word of God is “able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”
* The responsibility to ground kids in the Scriptures is first & foremost the responsibility of Christian parents & grandparents—churches can supplement that, but if they are the main diet, your children/grandchildren won’t be firmly planted

**b. It is inspired by God (3:16a)**

* When Paul talked about “all Scripture,” he was referring to both the Old & New Testaments, because the OT was already considered Scripture (by Jesus, cf. Matthew 23:35) & most of the NT had been written & accepted (see 1 Timothy 5:18 [affirms Luke-Acts & probably Mark’s Gospel]; 2 Peter 3:15-16 [affirms Paul’s Letters])
* God moved upon the prophets & apostles so they would write a true account of the events they recorded. Because God has inspired His Word & because “God cannot lie” (Hebrews 6:18), the Bible is therefore inerrant (without error)
* The best way you model belief in an inspired, inerrant Bible is to live it out

**c. It is profitable for your life (3:16b-17)**

* God gave us His Word so that it benefits our lives—to teach us truth (I teach the Bible, because God gave us the Bible to be taught), to reprove us in our sins, to correct us in our failures & to instruct us in living rightly before God

Illus: I’ve been asked before why I preached through Revelation—because it is profitable for your life. Why did I preach through Genesis—because it is profitable for your life. Why did I preach on divorce & sex & stewardship & controversial issues in the Bible—because the Scripture is profitable for your life!

* The purpose of Scriptures’ profitability is so that the person of God (anthropos) might be competent (skilled), being equipped for every good work—you cannot do good work without being equipped. You cannot be equipped without the Spirit of God in your life & obeying the Word of God, which He inspired. You cannot have the Spirit of God in your life without surrendering to Him by faith

**Conc.** You can have difficult days you have to endure in ministry, in a job, in a marriage & just in life itself. The more persecution you face, the more scars & wrinkles & gray hairs you will have, but you can still endure. You may be going through a severe trial right now, but you can endure. How do I know? Because Jesus Christ endured life for you. He came into this world & lived a sinless life. Though He was tempted in every way you and I are tempted, He never gave in. He always endured. People who claimed to be believers turned on Him & a few religious leaders led the whole crowd to turn on Him to crucify Him. He endured the cross, despising its shame. He died in your place, for your sins. And He rose from the dead to prove Who He is—the Christ, the Son of God. Will you receive His grace-gift of forgiveness & eternal life by turning from your sins & trusting in Him? For those of you who are following Him, endure by His grace.