

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 13, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

FAITH TO ENDURE IN TIMES LIKE THESE

Taking a Stand

2 Timothy 4:1-5

In Times Like These

By Ruth Caye Jones

In times like these you need a Savior, In times like these you need an anchor;
Be very sure, be very sure Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

This Rock is Jesus, Yes, He's the One; This Rock is Jesus, the only One!
Be very sure, be very sure Your anchor holds and grips the Solid Rock!

What are some things that can make faith difficult even in our day? Think about it... there are some Biblical examples of a few things can be a challenge to our faith. Here are few examples from Scripture:

6 Areas That Can Prove Challenging to One's Faith:

- 1. Persecution can be a challenge to our faith (Matthew 26:31)** – ³¹Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’” Throughout Scripture we see evidence of this in both the Old and New Testaments. The book of Hebrews in the New Testament was actually written for this very reason, because many who had come into the faith were being tempted to fall away from the faith due to persecution. We are fortunate that we do not face extreme persecution in this country for our faith, but we do face pressure to shy away from our faith and faith stance often and it is not uncommon for believer... Christians to be ridiculed for their faith. Christian ideas and principles are becoming increasingly criticized and singled out. All of this can be a challenge to our faith.
- 2. Death and loss of life can be a challenge to our faith (John 11)** – Listen to verses 17-26 of this passage, ¹⁷So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles^[a] away. ¹⁹And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. ²⁰Now Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. ²¹Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will

give You.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Death and the loss of significant ones in our lives will always have a tremendous effect on our life in general... how can it not affect our faith on some level. It just does.

3. **Health issues and sickness can be a challenge to our faith (Isaiah 38:1-2)** – *“¹In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’”² Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD,³ and said, ‘Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.’” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”* Hezekiah is just Biblical example of how health issues and sickness can be a challenge to our faith. In this case God actually healed Hezekiah and restored his health for a season, but it is easy to see what his health issue did to his faith.
4. **Family problems can be challenge to our faith (Luke 15:10-32)** - Toward the end of this passage we see the effects of these family issues on the faith of the oldest son in **verses 25-30**, *“²⁵ ‘Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’”²⁸ “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’”* Family problems and struggles can certainly cause a struggles to our faith and weaken our walk.
5. **Life hardships can be a challenge to our faith (job loss, financial problems, friend problems, etc.) (1 Kings 19)** – In this familiar story, Elijah has just had a tremendous victory in his work as prophet of God in defeating the false prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18), but that victory turns quickly into defeat as Elijah finds his life threatened, he loses his job or at least flees from his job, faces poverty with nothing to eat or drink, not place to go, running for his life... he is essentially a homeless man, and even feels that he is all alone and all his friends have deserted him as evidenced by his words in 1 Kings 19, “I am all alone. **Verses 3-5** reflect Eliah’s shattered faith in the face of life’s hardships, *“³ And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!’”⁵ Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel^[a] touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.””*
6. **Societal pressures and issues can be a challenge to our faith (Ephesians 5:1-16)** – Paul wrote these words to believer in the church at Ephesus, because obviously their faith was faltering and compromise with the world’s ways had set in... so he write to them in Ephesians 5:3-12, *“³ But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;⁴ neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse*

jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know,^[a] that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit^[b] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” If we not careful and if we do not carefully guard our walk the culture and society in which we live and work each day will affect our faith walk in a very real and impactful way.

You know, we are living in tough times. Anyone who doubts that is either completely out of touch or blindly optimistic. Human depravity is at every turn. False solutions are deceitfully veiled as truth. Humanism has reached an all-time high. Promises are quickly broken and commitments are both shallow and fickle. In the words of Paul, “difficult times” are upon us. How does the Christian cope? What are the techniques that spur us on and keep us stable? The Apostle Paul’s final words of counsel offer wise advice in times like these.

OUR TIMES... *Difficult and Desperate* (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 7,13)

“¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power... ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth...¹³ But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” – 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 7,13

1. Stated in Scripture (2 Timothy 3:1-13)

“*But know this, that in the last days perilous (difficult) times will come.*” Paul wrote of days yet future to him, but we can speak of these days as having arrived. What he described fits our times with precision. The word “*perilous*” (or difficult) is a vivid term meaning “harsh, hard to deal with or handle, fierce, perilous, painful, savage.” The root term is used in one other place in the New Testament... in **Matthew 8:28**, describing two men who had demons, and its translated there, “*exceedingly violent.*” Ours are exceedingly violent times. From the description Paul gives us of the types of behavior associated with difficult times (vv.2-5, 7, 13) we can draw several conclusion about those times.

5 Observations About the Times Paul is Describing in 2 Timothy 3:1-13: *(Remember that Paul is basically describing our day in which we live... a day he saw coming that now is)*

- (1) It will be harder to walk with God.**
- (2) It will be more difficult to keep marriages strong.**
- (3) The activity of the enemy (Satan) will be hard to handle and fiercely powerful.**

- (4) **It will be far more threatening for men and women to stand for the things of God in the arena of society.**
- (5) **Crime, immorality, temptation, and heresy will surge.**

2. **Illustrated in Life** – In recent times the events of society have defied past imagination. With current trends, that which seems startling and bizarre today will be upstaged by something worse twelve months later. The contrast is perhaps most noticeable when one looks back several decades to times when:

Remember when: *(These are some things that have changed drastically in my lifetime in the last 50 years or less)*

- (1) **There would never have been on film or television what is now considered regular diet.**
- (2) **Except in a very limited number of places in large cities, people were safe on the streets both day and night.**
- (3) **Magazines and newspapers were vehicles of interesting and informative journalism, rather than lewd, sensual, and violent exposes.**
- (4) **The law was respected. Agencies of government were viewed with reverence and dignity.**
- (5) **Punishment of criminals was encouraged. The rights of victims was honored. Politicians were servants of the people.**
- (6) **Marriage vows were upheld and children were valued... not abused.**

We've come upon harsh... hard to deal with... savage... fierce times.

OUR STAND... Clear and Concise (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." – 2 Timothy 4:1-5

How do we walk with God in times like these? How do we rear our families? If alone, how do we maintain our purity? How can we stay balanced and determined to live for God in a world so rapidly bound for destruction? In succinct fashion, the apostle Paul helps us answer some basic questions. In fact, he **"charges"** us **"before God and the Lord Jesus Christ"**... his words... about these matters.

3 questions Paul help us answer on living out our faith in times like these: (2 Tim. 4:1-5)

- (1) **What are we to do?**
- (2) **Why are we to do it?**
- (3) **How are we to do it?**

Let's explore a little deeper Paul's answer to these three (3) very important and practical questions from what he has to say in 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

1. What are we to do? (2 Timothy 4:2)

"² Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." -2 Timothy 4:2

3 Things We Are To Do: (... in times like these)

- (1) **We are to make the Scripture our standard** – *"Preach the word..."* In difficult times that standard is easy to shove aside. When in need, almost by instinct we gather together the latest writings for the best men and women of our day and implement their finest thoughts. Ever notice how the "experts" come out of the wood work when something happens? I always wonder what qualifies someone to be an "expert?" But we do this at the expense of overlooking God's time-honored directives. Books are helpful if we've sought the counsel of Scripture first. What we seek first is telling of our standard.
- (2) **We are to be persistently on alert** – *"... be read in season and out of season..."* Christians of faith need to think critically, in contrast to the trend to think sloppily, careless and just openly embrace the newest trends and fads that come down the pike. God's Word is inerrant, trustworthy, and relevant... it really is! The advice *"be ready"* means to "be at hand, to have an alert mind." If we don't, it's only a matter of time before we get sucked into the world system and watered down in our own thinking and acting... and we backslide. It takes the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit to keep a life seasonally ready.
- (3) **We are to take a stand** – Standing is exercised in such activities as reproving, rebuking, and exhorting... when each is appropriate. But, they must not be performed apart from the intent to instruct with great patience and care. Taking a stand involves our saying, "I will do right, whether anybody else in my entire area does right."

2. Why are we to do it? (2 Timothy 4:3)

"³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers." -2 Timothy 4:3

In his own tradition, Paul not only gives advice, but supports it with reasons. Observe the word *"for"* at the beginning of verse 3... it means "because." In other words, "We are to do the things we just listed because of what Paul says in verse 3... for these reasons."

Reasons we are to do what we are to do in times like these:

- (1) **Christians are to do what Christian are to do in times like these because truth is rejected** – Notice Paul says in the first part of verse 3, *"for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine."* In other words, "Sound doctrine and the truth will be rejected because it's not popular, it's not what others want to hear, it's too hard to take, etc." Is this a true characteristic of our day? Is truth and sound doctrine that Scripture openly embraced today or rejected in your opinion? Can you give any examples?

- (2) **Christians are to do what Christians are to do in times like these because lies are supported** – The last part of verse 3 tells us, “...according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.” Thus, there is the development of an accommodating theology. Teachers of this kind are available in abundance. In contemporary times these teachers can come for the ranks of entertainers, athletes, professionals, or musicians... any whose life-style is marked by godlessness. They’re skilled in the art of rationalization and misinterpretation.

A Necessary Perspective: Stability is the badge of the Christian in an unbalanced and often insecure world. If you are the individual who has determined that his life-style will be in accordance with the Bible, then most likely you will find yourself the only one in your sphere of influence. But doing it God’s way results in reward. Hebrews 11:6 reminds us, “⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Those who “diligently” seek Him.

3. How are we to do it? (2 Timothy 4:5)

⁵But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” – 2 Timothy 4:5

The way to get through difficult times is to operate as follows according to Paul’s Biblical and Holy Ghost inspired words.

How to get through difficult times:

- (1) **Calmly** – The term that most modern translation us in 2 Timothy 4:5 is the words “sober” or “soberly”... “But you, be sober in all thing...” The NKJV uses the word “watchful.” The term does not mean “free from the influence of alcohol,” but “calmly.” “But you be calm in all thing...” Don’t panic! Remember who is in control! Remember God is still God and He is still on His throne... He is still in charge, and He wins in the end. Be calm because you are God’s and God has your best interest at heart.
- (2) **Patiently** – “endure affliction”... the word “endure” means to be stretched out. In other words, don’t pop, don’t bust, don’t quit... stay in there and be stretched out in your faith. And honestly, God is in the process of stretching us out all the time... Why, do you think? To grow and mature us in our own faith.
- (3) **Diligently** – “do the work of an evangelist”... An evangelist is one who goes to the lost to tell them the good news about Jesus Christ and seek to win them to Him, therefore there are certain things this is tell us.

What and evangelist does diligently?:

- **An evangelist loves the lost** – They are not changed by the lost or influenced by the lost. They are not seeking to be like the lost or take on their characteristics, but they do love the lost. They have a really burden for those who don’t know Him and their only desire is to seem the lost come to Christ and find the life and hope that He gives.

- **An evangelist will endure the hardships and even the ridicule that the lost may throw at them and not be discouraged by it** – They have such a narrowed focus on winning the lost that the evangelist will put up with everything the lost world will throw at them and just keep coming.
- **An evangelist sees how they handled the hardship and challenges of their life as a great witnessing tool** – In other words, when hardships and difficulties come in their life their perspective is different. They see it as an opportunity to show a lost world that Jesus truly offers hope in the midst of trials and hardships.

Paul is telling us that we are to have the same “diligence” in difficult times and not lose heart or give up, but be diligent at what God has called us to...and that is to tell the world about Him like an evangelist.

- (4) **Thoroughly** – “... *fulfill your ministry*”... see it to completion. Don’t give up! Don’t quit! Don’t allow the trials and challenges, the difficulties and hardships to impede or inhibit your ministry... your calling.

OUR IMPACT... *Pure and Practical*

The world we’ve described needs many who will take a stand. God uses such ones of His to influence their surrounding regions. In what ways?

Practical Advice On How Taking A Stand Makes a Difference:

1. **Being unique makes an impact** – Different stand out, and Christians are different. If you aren’t different on some level something is wrong... something is missing. Christians go against the flow, they work against the grain... not just for the sake of being different, but we are different by design. Remember that as a Christian, this is not your home... you are a stranger, an alien here. That means you are different and people notice different. It has an impact.
2. **Being pure provides a model** – And by being pure we means, being right, doing what’s right, not just professing it but living it. Something that is pure, is genuine, real, it 100 proof, concentrate. It is the real deal! Our being “pure” in our lives as a Christian is a great witness to those who don’t know Him, but it also a great witness and encouragement to those who do and may be struggling.
3. **Being consistent keep us stable** – The more consistent you are over and over the easier it gets to be consistent. If we will become habitual Christians in our walk you will find that doing the right thing and living it becomes a little easier all the time. That doesn’t mean that there won’t be times when the enemy will try to rob you of your joy and trip you up, tempt you, and attack you. That will happen! It is inevitable! But the more consistent you are the more stable in your Christian walk you will find yourself becoming.
4. **Being committed gives us determination** – Listen, it’s not going to be easy. There are going to be times when you get weary and tired and may even want to sit down in the race, but if you have a made a prior commitment it will keep you going. Those who are truly committed find that extra something and are able to dig down deep and keep going with the going gets tough.