SESSION 10

ENDURING

2 TIMOTHY 3:12-17; 4:1-8

12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed. You know those who taught you, and you know that from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 15 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

1 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 Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching.
3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. 4 They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved his appearing.
1. PERSECUTION COMING (2 Tim. 3:12-13)
- Paul explained that every believer will be persecuted in some way.
- He also stated that this persecution will gain momentum over time.
- Differentiate between oppression, bullying, and persecution.

2. GET EQUIPPED (2 Tim. 3:14-17)
- Paul challenged Timothy to remain faithful to Jesus regardless of what he may face.
- He reminded Timothy that the Scripture provides all that believers need to be equipped for God to use them.

3. PREACH HIS WORD (2 Tim. 4:1-4)
- Paul challenged Timothy to be faithful in preaching the gospel.
- Paul warned that some would rather hear a pleasing message, but Timothy must remain faithful to delivering the whole gospel.

4. FINISH WELL (2 Tim. 4:5-8)
- Paul called on Timothy to remain faithful to Christ.
- He pointed to himself as an example, knowing he would be put to death for his faith in Christ.
- Paul announced his resolve to finish his life well, knowing that eternity with the Lord lay beyond his execution.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers must remain faithful to God’s truth even when facing persecution.
- Believers shouldn’t be surprised when persecuted.
- Believers can trust the Scriptures as God’s Word.
- Believers must be ready to present the gospel at all times.
- Believers demonstrate the genuineness of their faith by remaining faithful to Christ to the end.
FOCUS ATTENTION
What promises, positive or negative, from God’s Word would you consider to be especially fundamental to surviving and thriving as Christians?
• The promise of eternal life dooms unbelievers while at the same time forms the basis for everything we do as Christians.
• Understanding that God never leaves us nor forsakes His followers brings great comfort no matter what happens.
• Realizing that persecution will come our way prepares us to endure it.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE
2 TIMOTHY 3:12-13
Why would Paul think it’s important to warn us that Christians will face the threat of persecution?
• Identifying with Christ means we become like Him in every way, including attracting the contempt and enmity of the world.
• People who are unprepared for persecution may struggle to maintain biblical responses instead of personal, emotional responses.
• Instead of becoming less of a threat over time, persecutors have sharpened their skills and proven to be cunning adversaries for many Christians.

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17
How does knowing the Bible help believers when they face persecution?
• Whether or not we have faithful family members who trained us in godliness early in our lives, every Christian can find a church that teaches the Word, learn from the faithful, and trust God’s Word to lead through deep waters.
• Equipped with the principles of Scripture, believers have the tools to discern truth from untruth and help others do the same.
• On a practical level, the by-product of knowing God’s Word, which takes the form of good works, also serves to nullify and counter persecution.

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-4
What do we glean from Paul’s charge to Timothy on preaching that can be applied in today’s church?
• We should be alert to the theme of the messages we hear from our local church and the church at large. Straying from traditional Christian doctrine is an indicator that we also stray from truth.

2 TIMOTHY 4:5-8
What did Paul value in a preacher that indicates whether one truly has a pastor’s heart?
• The call into ministry isn’t taken lightly but earnestly; it’s not a whimsical decision but an earnest, deeply-felt calling.
• Longevity means something because the persecution pastors face—and endure—becomes a testimony to their commitment to Christ and church leadership.
• An evangelistic spirit represents a heart to reach the lost and disciple Jesus’ followers.

What in Paul’s testimony about his resolve also would be important for the living to remember?
• If you’re not exhausting your life on behalf of Christ, you’re not fully alive.
• When we review our lives at death’s doors, we don’t want to go with regrets.
• If we forget that God has promised rewards for our service while on earth, then we’re less likely to be serious contenders for those blessings.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE
How do you want to finish out your life?
• A life well lived may encompass many things, but for believers it will feature an enduring, unswerving spirit and loyalty to Christ, His mission, and the message of truth.
• The persecution that each believer must expect may seem to slow us down but won’t permanently deter us from our mission.
• Taking advantage of opportunities to become equipped for Christian living will help us to face hardships.
• Finishing well requires living well all along, something which God has empowered each Christian to do.

Personal Challenge: No one welcomes persecution, but being on the lookout for it helps us endure it when it comes. Meanwhile, you can prepare through absorbing God’s Word and standing on His promises when you’re tested. Surrounding yourself with encouragers who will support you during troubled times also gives you an enduring spirit. Meanwhile, look around to see if there are other Christians who need your support. Whether it’s a word of encouragement or holding up someone else’s arms, it can make a huge impact when it comes to staying strong.
OBITUARY, PAPER, AND PENS

Search the Internet to find an intriguing obituary (one that includes details of the person’s spiritual, family, and work life) to share during the session. Make copies to hand out for members to read along or project it on a screen. In addition, plan to give out paper and pens for group members to write their own obituaries.

Read aloud the obituary you chose to feature and discuss what it reveals about the person. Ask: Would you have wanted to know this person? Why or why not?

Encourage the group to consider what they want said about them after they’re gone. Talk about how we’re in the process of writing our obituaries by how we live from the moment we’re born.

Point out that Christians begin writing their spiritual obituaries upon conversion. Say: What makes an obituary compelling reading for Christians isn’t just what they did but what they endured.

Distribute paper and pens and invite the group to write down details on not just what they’ve already done but what they would still like to do as Christians. Encourage them to dream up ways they may experience persecution or oppression and how they endured.

(note that it’s OK to fictionalize for this exercise). When they are finished, invite one or two members of the group to share their obits. Challenge the group to determine whether they feel comfortable with adding the words of Paul from 2 Timothy 4:7: “I have kept the faith.”

THE SCRIPTURES

Paul’s directive to Timothy about God’s Word sheds light on one of our most basic doctrinal convictions. The Baptist Faith and Message serves as the primary expression for Southern Baptists regarding what we believe. This important doctrinal statement binds us together as we serve the Lord by fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). What it says about the Scripture underscores Paul’s instruction to Timothy regarding the absolute need to embrace God’s Word.

The Baptist Faith and Message contains a series of articles on doctrinal topics that Southern Baptists embrace. In each article, you’ll find a somewhat brief statement regarding each topic along with a wealth of references from Scripture that address it.

The first article is about the Scripture. In the article, the Bible is affirmed to be “written by men divinely inspired and is God’s revelation of Himself to man.” Therefore, “all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.” In addition, “all Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.” These excerpts from the article convey simply and clearly the absolute certainty of the priority of God’s Word in our churches and in our lives.

The priority of the Bible helps us when we think about the challenges facing us as followers of Jesus Christ. Like the Christians in Paul’s day, believers today talk with people whose views about spiritual matters fly in the face of biblical truths. Of course, they’re devoted to what they consider to be the truth, and many of them base their convictions on what they’ve read. Some of them have studied books they believe to be sacred. Others have read sources that they’ve deemed trustworthy. Still others base their convictions on what they’ve heard. Pivotal individuals in their lives have filled their minds and hearts with insights that have become trustworthy because of the credibility of the people who shared them.

In such a world Christians carry out the Great Commission to extend the borders of the kingdom of God by every person who receives Christ. Thanks to God’s Word, we can make an eternal difference in the lives of people. Under the leadership of God’s Spirit, His Word points people to His Son. Paul’s instruction to Timothy about Scripture provides an opportunity for believers in every generation to embrace the priority of the Bible in our walk with the Lord.