

TITLE: The Landscape

TEXT: 2 Timothy 3:1-17

PREACHED AT: Castine 2/05/2023

MAIN POINT: The decline of Christianity in our culture

SERMON SERIES: Who or What Do I Trust

INTRODUCTION

1. We begin a new series related to your confidence in God, especially concerning national and international circumstances. I titled the series, “Who or What Do I Trust? Our global conditions press on this question profoundly, as does the religious landscape. Rather than confident-trust, anxiety and confusion are confounding too many.
 - 1.1. Anyone giving even slight attention to global affairs recognizes poor decision-making, covert agendas, and a lack of sacrificial leadership.
 - 1.2. With the power of the internet, many have become spokespeople for God with no accountability to the local church. They proclaim God’s future, and anyone questioning their authority is criticized as acting ungodly. When something said is wrong, most dismiss it and move forward to the next idea. Worse, few Christians even pause to consider whether this is pleasing to God because of biblical ignorance.
2. All of the uncertainty creates instability in life because of weak trust. So who or what do I trust is the question all must answer in some way.
 - 2.1. We are beginning this series to help you consider where you actually place your trust. You will know this answer by what you do, especially in stressful times. If God is your trust, you will have a settled heart despite global events and the white noise of the religious landscape because your heart proclaims, “I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” (2 Timothy 1:12)
3. I also would like to say as we begin this series that I have learned that life change comes only from God. Ultimately, no human effort can change someone’s mind. Nothing will occur unless the Holy Spirit creates the desire and power for change. Therefore, my effort is only to cooperate with the Spirit in His plans for you. I know nothing within myself will strengthen your trust in God.
4. I must also say that life choices have lifetime consequences; some of life’s choices have eternal consequences because where you place your trust matters eternally.

DISCUSSION, 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 4:1-4

1. Paul wrote this letter as he awaited execution. Despite all that Paul was facing—death, the end of his ministry, abandonment by most of his friends for fear of persecution—he faithfully directed his spiritual son Timothy to the hope that is in Christ. As he exhorted Timothy to boldness, endurance, and faithfulness in the face of false teaching, Paul showed his customary concern for sound doctrine. Scripture, said Paul, is “breathed out by God” and is sufficient in all things pertaining to the faith and practice of Christians (3:16–

- 17). Older believers, therefore, should be eager to pass on their knowledge of Scripture to those who are younger in the faith (2:2). Paul probably wrote from Rome, A.D. 67 or 68. ([*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ti.)
2. Whether or not Paul is intending to name Timothy as his successor, the charge from Paul to Timothy in 4:1–8 is central to understanding the letter’s major themes, which include: encouragement, false teachers, problems in the days to come, the value of Scripture, and the necessity of pursuing the truth (being the gospel Paul proclaims). Looking ahead, Paul notes that there will be difficult times in the days to come. He provides a list of types of people to avoid (3:1–5) with reasons to avoid them (3:6–7). Paul even provides specific examples: Jannes and Jambres (3:8–9; compare Exod 7:12, 22). (Rick Brannan, “Timothy, Second Letter to,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).)
 3. I understand the “last days” (3:1) to include the time between the first coming of Jesus and His second coming. This seems abundantly clear by the use of ἔσχατος (last days) in the New Testament, including Paul’s writings. “‘Last days,’ is used here as elsewhere in the NT (Acts 2:17; Jas. 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3; cf. Heb. 1:2; cf. further [“later times”] in 1 Tim. 4:1) to refer to the time of the Messiah, that last period of days before the final messianic action takes place. . . . The concept and language are taken over from the OT (cf. Acts 2:17, quoting Joel 3:1; cf. further Is. 2:2). . . . Here, as in 1 Jn. 2:18, where [last hour] is used, the phrase does not designate some yet-to-come period of days. Rather, Paul is reminding Timothy that the Christian community is living in the ‘last days,’ and, because that is true, he must come to grips with what characterizes those ‘days.’” (George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 428–429.)
 - 3.1. One expectation of the “last days” is each generation will be self-indulgent with little interest in God 3:1-5.
 - 3.2. A second expectation is the mishandling of truth 3:6-7. There is much learning that does not result in understanding God and His ways.
 - 3.3. Paul counsels his understudy Pastor Timothy in these “last days” to “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed.” Ultimately for him to place complete confidence in the Bible 3:15-17.
 4. This entire series is to assist you in firmly believing the Bible in every area of life and not be “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” 3:7.
 5. If you firmly believe the Bible, there will be life indicators.
 - 5.1. While showing respect for all people, if you firmly believe the Bible, there is no confusion that Christianity is unique among all religions, making exclusive claims shared by no other religion.
 - 5.2. If you firmly believe the Bible, you understand that full surrender to Jesus and His work is a clear expectation.
 - 5.3. If you firmly believe the Bible, you will increasingly model Jesus in speech and actions.
 - 5.4. If you firmly believe the Bible, quiet confidence will mark your life.
 - 5.5. If you firmly believe the Bible, God and His ways hold first place in all areas of life.
 - 5.6. If you firmly believe the Bible, your love for others will draw them to you and not repel them away.

5.7. If you firmly believe the Bible, you will have confidence in death.