

SURVIVING AND THRIVING

II TIMOTHY 3:10-17

MAIN IDEA

The bible contains instructions on how to survive in this world and thrive in the kingdom of god.

I. EXAMPLES OF SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 10-11)

The apostle Paul gives us an example of how to thrive in the kingdom of God even while suffering in this world.

- A. LIFE IN THE KINGDOM (10a)
- B. QUALITIES OF KINGDOM PEOPLE (10b)
- C. SURVIVING AS KINGDOM PEOPLE (11)

II. EXPECTATIONS OF SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 12-15)

Jesus is clear that his followers will suffer in this world but triumph over it.

- A. GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE WORLD (12)
- B. SATAN'S PEOPLE IN THE WORLD (13)
- C. REMEMBERING WHO WE BELONG TO (14-15)

III. THE ROAD MAP TO SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 16-17)

God has given us clear instructions on how to survive the sufferings in this world while at the same time thriving in His kingdom.

- A. THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF GOD'S MAP (16a)
- B. THE USEFULNESS OF GOD'S MAP (16b)
 - 1. TEACHING
 - 2. REBUKING
 - 3. CORRECTING
 - 4. TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS
- C. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S MAP (17)

Surviving and Thriving

II Timothy 3:10-17

This morning, we are going to examine one of the most quoted and memorized texts in the Bible. I have personally memorized, quoted, and taught this text many times. However, I don't think I ever took the time to carefully examine the context of these verses. The verses I'm talking about are II Timothy 3:16 and 17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that all God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 / New International Version

You have no doubt also memorized these verses, quoted them, and used them. I'm pretty confident that we have used them correctly but if we understand them in context, they are richer. The broader context of these verses is that even though we belong to the Kingdom of God and our citizenship is not of this world, we still have to live in this world and journey through it. The Bible is sort of a road map that helps us navigate the journey.

As we study through this passage, I want us to keep this point in mind. We occupy two worlds at once. Jesus promised us suffering at the hands of this world. Nevertheless, He also promises great joy, peace, and contentment because we belong to Him. In this passage Paul tells us how to survive and thrive on our earthly journey. Actually, when we come to think about it, this earthly journey is part of our heavenly journey. The world tends to think the earthly journey is all there is; so when death comes, the journey has come to an end. We however, no longer look at the grave as any sort of legitimate marker. We continue on our journey all the way home to heaven. The main idea of this morning's text is this. **THE BIBLE CONTAINS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SURVIVE IN THIS WORLD AND THRIVE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

One of the major ways we have to survive and thrive is to live by God's values; not the world's. The primary value in God's Kingdom is love. We are to love God and one another. The world focuses on loving self. Let me give you an example. Two guys were out camping in the woods. They heard the growl of a bear and saw a bear approaching their tent. One guy started to lace up his gym shoes. His friend said, "You can't outrun a bear."

His friend responded, "I don't have to outrun the bear; I just need to outrun you."

One of the things I love about the Bible is that it never sugarcoats the truth. The Bible consistently points out that if we are truly in step with Jesus; we will be out of step with the world. Jesus said that if the world persecuted Him; we should expect suffering to be a normal part of our journeys through this world.

I. EXAMPLES OF SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 10-11)

Verses 10-11 illustrate some examples of surviving and thriving. **THE APOSTLE PAUL GIVES US AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO THRIVE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD EVEN WHILE SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD.** Before we get into the text itself, I want to remind us that last time we saw that false

teachers taught false doctrine, lived immoral lives, took advantage of the weak, and were living high at the expense of others. That's why Paul starts out verse 10 with the phrase, "You however." In this passage Paul wants to demonstrate that we who belong to Christ are everything that the false teachers and worldly people are not. In the first half of verse 10, Paul describes what life in the kingdom is like. In describing his teaching, his way of life, and his purpose, Paul is laying out for Timothy and for us what our teaching, way of life, and purpose are to be as citizens of God's Kingdom.

It's hard to capture the full meaning of the phrase, "You however know. The word translated "know" means to walk alongside of, to walk along the same road, to accompany and to follow someone. Timothy has been following Paul physically, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually.

Timothy has been taught by Paul. Since Timothy accompanied Paul, he heard him preach and teach many times. He heard Paul explain the Gospel to Jews using the Old Testament, the Jewish laws, and the Jewish customs. He heard Paul use philosophy and logic to present the Gospel to Gentiles. Timothy got a PhD education just listening to Paul. Any church that wants to be called Christian must faithfully teach and preach the Bible. The church must faithfully present Jesus.

That brings us to the next thing Timothy learned about Paul. In order to introduce people to Christ, we must know Christ and follow Christ. The phrase "way of life" has to do with conduct in everyday life. In other words, Paul practiced what he preached. He expected Timothy to practice what he preached. We are expected to live what we believe and who we present ourselves to be. As Christians, we must know and live the Gospel. We must know how to enter, live, and die in the Kingdom of God. Paul lived and died the Gospel. He was a living testimony to Timothy and to the church. I want us to keep this in mind. We are invited by God to enter, live in, and die in His Kingdom. The way we conduct ourselves in everyday life should demonstrate to the world that we belong to Christ.

Paul communicated clearly to Timothy and the church what his purpose in life was. The word for purpose has to do with putting something in plain sight. Our purpose in life is to love, praise, worship, and serve God. We do this by loving God and loving people. By the way we think, speak, and act; God is inviting people to enter His Kingdom. Paul laid out in word and deed what life in the Kingdom is all about.

In the second half of verse 10, Paul invited Timothy to look at him and see the qualities of Kingdom people. Paul describes four qualities. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul listed 9 qualities that people who belong to God should exhibit. He described them as fruit of the Holy Spirit. They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. You can see that these 4 characteristics fit nicely into those.

Christians are called to live by faith. In other words, faith is the actions we take based on what we believe. Unbelievers believe the grave is the end so the actions they take are to gain as much power, pleasure, wealth, and fame as they can. Their motto is, "Whoever dies with the most toys; wins." Christians believe that not only will we live in heaven forever with Christ; but that we already live in the Kingdom of God and we already possess eternal life. Therefore, if we are children of God, then we will live by God's values; not men's.

Patience is the next characteristic Paul described. Literally the word means long suffering. This is the quality that prevents us from becoming angry and bitter; even when we have been treated unfairly and when things don't go our way.

Of course Jesus defined love for us. He gave up His own life that we could receive eternal life and enter a personal, passionate, and intimate relationship with God. He consistently offered this restored relationship to all who would accept it. Even from the cross, He was appealing for people to enter a restored relationship with God. Jesus died for you and me while we were still alienated from Him.

Endurance describes an attitude that is steadfast and is able to demonstrate patience in the face of suffering. It is what keeps us persevering even when things don't appear to be going well. The person who endures is the person who works hard and accepts God's results.

Those are all ways in which God provides for us to thrive as we grow in our relationship with Him. In verse 11, Paul describes how we survive as Kingdom people. Paul reminds Timothy of all the things he suffered for the Gospel. Timothy knew that Paul was forced to flee places and Paul had to endure many insults and hardships. Paul mentions the fact he was chased out of Antioch, was almost lynched in Iconium, and left for dead in Lystra after being stoned. In addition to all this, Paul carried a heavy burden on his shoulders as he worried about the churches he ministered to. Here is how the Apostle summed up his sufferings:

23... I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. 24 Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. 26 I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. 27 I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. 28 Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger.

2 Corinthians 11:23-29 / New Living Translation

And through all this, Paul knew that it was Jesus personally Who rescued him from death time and time again. Paul knew that the time for his death was near but he was equally sure that the timing of his death was in God's hands; not men's. Paul was certain that God could save him from anything, any one, at any time. Paul survived the persecutions and sufferings dealt him by evil people; and yet he thrived in God's Kingdom. THE APOSTLE PAUL GIVES US AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO THRIVE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD EVEN WHILE SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD.

II. EXPECTATIONS OF SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 12-15)

From his own personal testimony, Paul lays out realistic expectations of surviving and thriving for Timothy and for us in verses 12-15. JESUS IS CLEAR THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WILL SUFFER IN

THIS WORLD BUT TRIUMPH OVER IT. If we know to expect suffering, we won't be confused when it comes our way.

Verse 12 lays out the destiny for God's people in the world. I don't think Paul could state it any clearer. He says, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." He states that as fact. I'm not encouraging any of us to go out of our way to look for suffering and persecution. But I do wonder why I am not suffering. Perhaps I have embraced too many worldly values and I fit right in with worldly people. Perhaps the way I think, speak, and act is in tune with the world. Jesus said this:

18 If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. 19 The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. 20 Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave is not greater than the master.' Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. 21 They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the One who sent me.

John 15:18-21 / New Living Translation

It seems to me that if I am thriving in God's Kingdom, I should be suffering at the hands of the world. I have been reading through the Gospels for my devotions. I want to make sure that I have adopted the same values as Jesus. It's something we all ought to do. If after all that, we find that God has placed us in a time of peace and prosperity; we should enjoy it and praise God. But when suffering does come; we should remember that our King Jesus suffered as well. We need to accept the fact that we will suffer for our faith and allegiance to Christ.

In verse 13, we are reminded that Satan's people are in the world and appear to be successful and powerful. Paul describes them as evildoers and impostors. The word impostor has to do with conmen, actors, jugglers, professional mourners, and enchanters who cast and break spells. I would like to simply call Satan's people bad actors. They will go from bad to worse. Sometimes when I look at the world in which we live, I just want to throw my hands up in the air and say, "What the heck?"

If we believe the Bible, Jesus says that evil is going to increase more and more the closer we get to His Second Coming and the establishment of His physical Kingdom here on earth. It should not surprise us or catch us off guard. We can see our country going from bad to worse. Christians are now being persecuted in the sense we are marginalized, caricaturized, and ridiculed. There will come a time in the near future when we will be physically persecuted for our faith in Christ.

The world is now in this downward spiral. It is a cycle of deceiving, being deceived, deceiving more, and being deceived more, etc. It's interesting for me to see how vile society is towards Christians and Jews; and yet so open and willing to embrace other religions that are much more extreme in things Christians and Jews are criticized for. There is no doubt that our society has been blinded by Satan. Personally I don't believe we will recover from this. Things are going to continue to get worse and worse. People, educational institutions, and government will continue to be deceived and deceive people as a result.

But as verses 14-15 point out, in the midst of all this chaos and escalating chaos, we must remember who we belong to. In verse 14 Paul starts out by drawing a strong contrast between the evil world in which we live and the Kingdom of God in which we have our citizenship. He says to Timothy and to us, "But as for you." We are called to remain loyal to our God and King; Jesus. We have learned the basic Gospel teachings. We have placed our faith in Jesus. We are convinced that His way is the way to life eternal; in this world and the next. We have come to acknowledge that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

Look at the last phrase in verse 14, "because you know those from whom you learned it. Timothy learned the truth of the Gospel from his grandmother Lois, his mother Eunice, and from Paul. They taught Timothy the Scriptures and demonstrated to him what the Gospel looked like, lived out in their lives. We must not only talk about the Gospel and believe it; we must live it out. We must remember we are citizens of heaven. Timothy was blessed to come from a Christian household and to be personally discipled by the Apostle Paul. Let us never forget that the Holy Scriptures have the power to make us wise in our salvation. Remember salvation is not just something we use when we die. Salvation is here and now. The Scriptures have the power to make us wise in the way we live our lives. I just want to make a quick note here. The church used the Old Testament, the verbal message of the Apostles, and the New Testament letters. **JESUS IS CLEAR THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WILL SUFFER IN THIS WORLD BUT TRIUMPH OVER IT.** The Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to inform us, enable us, and empower us.

III. THE ROAD MAP TO SURVIVING AND THRIVING (VS 16-17)

Verses 16-17 point out that the Bible is the road map to surviving and thriving. **GOD HAS GIVEN US CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SURVIVE THE SUFFERINGS IN THIS WORLD WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THRIVING IN HIS KINGDOM.** The first phrase in verse 16 states exactly why God's map is trustworthy. When I memorized this verse, we quoted the first phrase like this, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Today, the word inspired is watered down. We say that artists are inspired, play writers are inspired, and people claim that their books are inspired. I'm glad we have moved to a more literal translation of the word inspired. The word is God-breathed. God breathed out the Bible. I quickly want to inform you of the debate that has gone on in the last couple centuries. There is no verb "is" written into the text. The Greek text says, "All Scripture God-breathed." Traditionally, Bible scholars put the "is" after "all". All Scripture is inspired by God. That means from the first words in Genesis to the last words in Revelation; every word is directly inspired by God.

The second way some modern scholars have translated this is by placing the "is" after "God-Breathed." They translate this phrase, "All Scripture (comma) inspired by God (comma) is." In other words, only the parts of the Bible that have been inspired by God are useful. They are saying that the entire Bible is not inspired by God. Therefore it is up to these scholars to determine which parts of the Bible are inspired and which are not.

Most scholars translate the passage the first way. I believe this to be the correct translation. The entire Bible has been God-breathed. That brings us to the next issue. How did God actually breathe out the Bible? We evangelicals believe in verbal plenary inspiration. The word plenary refers to the full contents of the Bible. The word verbal has to do with God's inspiration carrying over to each word. Let me quickly point out that this does not mean that God dictated the Bible

word for word. To be sure there are portions that God dictated word for word. We know God authored the Ten Commandments. The prophets often say, "Thus says the Lord." However, we believe that God used men to author the Scriptures using their experiences and vocabulary. That's why the Gospels vary so much in style and vocabulary even though they are writing about the same incidents. We have so many manuscripts available to us, that we can even point out the passages we are not absolutely sure of. For example most of your Bibles will make a notation at the end of Mark 16:8 stating that the earliest manuscripts and other ancient manuscripts do not contain verses 9-19. There are very few instances of this. The Bible we have today is extremely accurate and reliable because the Holy Spirit inspired it and watched over the transmission all these years. The Bible we hold in our hands is God-breathed.

Satan's tactic from the beginning has been to discredit God's Word. When tempting Eve to sin, the devil started off with this phrase, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

We know how that conversation ended. Eve fell for Satan's lie. Jesus on the other combated Satan's temptation by quoting Scripture. Each time Jesus was tempted, He started off each response back to Satan, "It is written." We need to keep this in mind.

The second half verse 16 lays out the usefulness of God's map. Periodically I remind you that I am not a great scholar. Everything I preach and teach; I have read or heard somewhere. When possible, I give credit to the authors I am taking from. In this case, I am borrowing directly from Warren Wiersbe's commentary on II Timothy. On your outlines, I have written the exact Biblical words, teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. Wiersbe is going to define this section in terms of being right with God and right with people.

The Bible is useful for teaching. Wiersbe defines teaching as knowing "What is right." In other words, God wants everyone to enter His Kingdom. However, since entering the Kingdom means that we become God's children; there are protocols and rules that govern the actions of the Royal Family. The Bible informs us how God's children are supposed to comport themselves. The Bible teaches us what God's will and expectations are for us.

The Bible is useful for rebuking us. Wiersbe says the Bible points out "What is not right" in our lives. I have a friend who has to dine and interact with royalty. He is required to go through training in how to address each royal person, how to act, what to say, which fork to use, how to use it, etc. If he makes a mistake, he may lose some very expensive accounts. When we make a mistake, we don't get kicked out of the family. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible to point out our errors so we can correct them.

And that brings us to correcting. Wiersbe says this is a map that shows us "How to get right." The Bible never leaves us hanging. When we get off track, the Bible provides with the way back through confession and repentance.

And finally the Bible is useful for training in righteousness. Wiersbe says the Bible shows us "How to stay right." I can't emphasize this enough. God has graciously made you and I part of His Royal Family. Each one of us is a prince or a princess. The Bible is a handbook, a roadmap that instructs in how royalty is to think, speak, and act. When we learn these things, we can enjoy the abundance of love, peace, joy, and contentment Jesus promised all those who follow Him.

If we choose not to live as part of the Royal Family, there is no way for us to enjoy the abundant life that Jesus promised. I'm sad to say that I have seen too many Christians living like beggars and not royalty. I want to emphasize this in the strongest possible terms. The devil wants us to live like beggars. God wants us to live like royalty. Jesus made it perfectly clear:

¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

John 10:10 / New Living Translation

The Bible is trustworthy since it was authored by God. The Bible is useful in preparing us to live as part of God's Royal Family. Verse 17 reminds us that the Bible lays out our purpose in life as we travel as royalty through this dark and fallen world. Our lives have purpose and meaning. When we look at England's Royal Family, we see them being good-will ambassadors to the nations of the world. God expects us to be His Good-Will Ambassadors to this world. We are living messages that God is love and that He wants to be in a personal, passionate, and intimate relationship with human beings. We are called to proclaim, live, and offer this message. What a fantastic purpose we have. Earlier, Paul wrote this to the church Timothy was pastoring:

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Ephesians 2:8-10 / New Living Translation

The Bible is a trustworthy map. It is a useful map. It is a map that gives our lives purpose. GOD HAS GIVEN US CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SURVIVE THE SUFFERINGS IN THIS WORLD WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THRIVING IN HIS KINGDOM.

Speaking about the trustworthiness, the usefulness, and the purposeful map we call the Bible, Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of God is still growing in numbers and in strength. Evil may look like it has the upper hand; but actually evil's days are numbered. Jesus told the Disciples this:

³³ I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

John 16:33 / English Standard Version

I'm urging us not to forget who we are. We are God's children and live each day in an abundance of His blessings. We are safe because He has given us a trustworthy map and the Holy Spirit to lead us on our journey home. We have a great purpose in this life. We are to use our gifts, talents, and resources to accomplish all sorts of good works along the way. We are Christ's heart, hands, and feet to one another and we are God's living offer of love to those who have not yet given their lives to our King. THE BIBLE CONTAINS INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO SURVIVE IN THIS WORLD AND THRIVE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.