

December 19
2 Timothy

We have talked before about the importance of finishing well and have noted that the majority of identifiable leaders in scripture did not accomplish that goal. It is very sobering to realize how often an individual who has started well for Christ fails to finish the race. It is critically important that you and I not become lax about our walk with Christ. The danger is great that we will be distracted and "pulled away" from our commitment to Him and to the work He has given us to do.

Paul places so much emphasis on the subject of spiritual discipline in this little Book. He emphasizes to Timothy again and again that the Christian life is not easy -- it takes discipline and toughness, determination and grit. "Join me in suffering" (chapter 1). "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ" (chapter 2). "Endure hardship like a good soldier", "Compete like an athlete", "work hard like a farmer", "Guard the deposit with which you have been entrusted."

Anyone who has the idea that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is supposed to be an easy thing did not get that idea from the Apostle Paul who says over and over again, expect it to be hard -- expect to be persecuted -- expect it to be more like a war than a walk in the park. And they didn't get the idea that Christianity would be easy from Jesus either.

We encountered another of Paul's trustworthy sayings today. It was found in chapter 2. "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him: if we endure, we will also reign with Him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." It is sobering and comforting all at once. If we disown Him, He will disown us -- but take great encouragement from this, even if we are faithless, we can rejoice in the fact that He will remain faithful. God always keeps His word and His word to us is that even when we have fallen, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness! We need to be careful how we live and we cannot abandon our commitment to Christ, but we need not live in fear because God will never abandon His commitment to us!

Some Christians seem to live in constant fear that because of some thoughtless or unintentional sin they might lose their salvation and be rejected by God. God will not stop us. Other professing Christians take exactly the opposite road. They believe they are automatically saved no matter how they are living or what they have done. If we disown Him, He will disown us.

Two verses well worth memorizing: 2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." These verses are critically important to us because they teach us that the Bible is not man's word about God but God's word about Himself and about us.

As Christians we believe that the Bible is the "inspired word of God." That word inspired comes from the King James translation of 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." The NIV translation we read today gives it a more literal translation of the word "theopneustos." It means "God-breathed" -- "exhaled by God." That carries some pretty important implications. It means that scripture is authoritative. It is God's Word.

God never makes an error. He never makes a mistake. There is nothing He does not know and He is in possession of all the data, all the time. There will never be a time when His knowledge becomes outdated or in need of revision. If God says it -- it is true and it will never stop being true.