**YOU, HOWEVER**

2 Timothy 3:1-17

Key Verse 3:10a, 14

**“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose.”**

**“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it.”**

We want to serve the Lord in 2015 powerfully and fruitfully. We all know the world and people we associate may not become godly but probably all the more ungodly. There are even many Christians who may not follow the word of God in its truth but become lukewarm Christians, distorting the word of God according to their benefit and comfort. In our ungodly and non-mission-centered environment what should we do? Most of all, what do you think is the most important matter? Can you think of it? In this environment when majority of people including Christians are becoming ungodly, what is the most important matter? It is “YOU”. “Your personal decision’. “You” are the most important.

Your decision, if you decide to practice the word of God in its truth, is the most important even if all others falsely pretend to obey it. Indeed our history shows all of great work of God starts from one man when he makes a decision to give his life fully to practice the word of God in its truth.

Therefore, in the sight of God, “you” are the most important. ‘What you think’ and ‘what you decide to do’ is the most important in the eyes of the Lord regardless of your age, gender, spiritual maturity, nationality, and all others. Even if all peoples on earth will go astray it does not matter when you, one individual, makes a firm decision to live by the truth of the word of God. Regardless of what others think or do, what you think and what you do is so important in the sight of God.

In today’s passage Apostle Paul encouraged Timothy, as one individual, and as ‘YOU’, to live mission-centered life. And Timothy, as one individual and as ‘YOU’, should continue in what he has learned.

To Apostle Paul, one person Timothy’s decision and commitment was so important regardless of all others who were following their own desires, distorting the word of God. So he said, “You, however.” “But as for you.” It is the same with YOU. “YOU’ are the most important person and what YOU decide to do is most important in the sight of God.

Today’s passage can be divided into two parts.

Part I. There will be terrible times (v.1-9)

Part II. But as for you (v.10-17)

**Part I. There will be terrible times (v.1-9)**

Apostle Paul prepares Timothy for the coming years of his spiritual life by revealing the spiritual condition of people in the last days. “The last days” refers to the days between Jesus’ first coming and his second coming. In this way Timothy will be ready to serve them and fight a good fight rather than despairing.

Look at verses 1-5.

**But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.**

I was wondering why Apostle Paul described the condition of the terrible times in the last days in so many ways instead of just saying ‘wicked people’ or ‘the ungrateful and wicked’. He used 19 description. I do not know the reason clearly. One possible answer is he did it to reveal how deeply men of the last days could corrupt. When we read the description of the corruption of men in the last days we can say there is nothing sound in men. In all of men’s area of life they were corrupt. Now in order to understand the many descriptions I tried to understand them by looking at the word ‘love’ or ‘lovers’. The word ‘love’ or ‘lovers’ are repeated 6 times in these verses. Let us see what they love and what they do not love.

First of all, what they loved is themselves, money, and pleasure. The three objects of love for the people in the last days are themselves, money, and pleasure. These three things are closely related. In the world people talk about ‘money’ and ‘sex’, but they do not know that behind the love of money and sex there is self love. Money and pleasure are ways to please oneself. They are tools in the course of loving oneself. To love oneself and money and pleasure is what we do in our fallen nature.

Secondly what didn’t they love? What they do not love is ‘the good’ and ‘God’. They do not love ‘the good’ and ‘God’. So ‘oneself’ and ‘money’ and ‘pleasure’ replaces the place of ‘the good’ and ‘God’. According to a dictionary ‘good’ refers to ‘of high quality’. Ultimately ‘good’ refers to God’s character because only God is good.

Jesus said in **Luke 18:18-19 “18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 19  “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”** The word ‘good’ first appears in Genesis 1:4. After God created the light God saw that the light is ‘good.’ So true ‘goodness’ comes from God. But the good and God is the ones the people in the last days do not love.

Now when they do not love ‘the good’ and ‘God’ but ‘themselves’, ‘money’, and ‘pleasure’ what is the result?

They lack 3 things. They do not have ‘love’, ‘self-control’, and ‘godly’ power’. They do not have love. They love themselves, money and pleasure and they do not have ‘love’. Why does the Bible say they do not have ‘love’ when they love ‘themselves’, ‘money’ and ‘pleasure’? It is because their love is not true love. Their love is their selfish love and therefore they do not have ‘true and genuine love’, which is God’s love. What it means that they do not love themselves truly. If one loves himself rather than God he does not love himself truly because his self-love will lead him to destruction.

Also they do not have ‘self-control’ when they love themselves, money, and pleasure rather than the good and God. Self-control is the very sign that shows that God created man in his image who is the sovereign Lord. Man controls himself instead of living as the result of others’ influences or circumstances. When man does not have a self control he is like a city with broken walls. It means he cannot be protected. When he does not control himself who can control him for his safety? **Proverbs 25:28 “Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.”**

They also do not have ‘godly power’. Verse 5a reads, “**having a form of godliness but denying its power.”** ‘Not to have godly power’ means ‘they do not believe real divine power’. They may have religion but they do not believe its power. So they are not changed. Religion is just a theory. But the religion without power is useless. Apostle Paul said **1 Corinthians 4:20
“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”** Religion without the power is useless because it does not change men.

So in summary, the people in the last days love themselves, money, and pleasure whereas they do not love ‘the good’ and ‘God’. Then they lack three things. They do not have ‘love’, ‘self-control’, and ‘godly power’.

Paul continued what these people in the last days do in verses 6-9.

**6They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,7always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.**

In those days they say women did not receive proper education compared to men. So certain women were gullible and loaded down with sins and are swayed by evil desires. These women kept learning but they could not come to a knowledge of the truth. The people in the last days preys those women.

Not only they took advantage of gullible women but also they opposed the truth. Verse 8a reads, “**Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth.”** Jannes and Jambres were two magicians who opposed Moses. By their magic they pretended they had divine power. But they did not have it. They were deceptive like false teachers who seemed to have the form of godliness but denied its power because they did not have it.

In the same way ‘these teachers’ opposed the truth. Here the word ‘these teachers’ shows that they were false teachers. The evidence of their false teaching was their ‘lack of faith’. As far as the faith was concerned they were rejected. God did not approve their faith. They did not have faith. What they know was just a theory.

“Lack of faith’ was their real problem.

They did not know the truth and they did not have the faith. Spiritual truth is revealed through faith and these false teachers did not have faith and therefore they did not know the truth.

Verse 9 reads, “**But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”** Although their false teaching is serious but ultimately they cannot get very far because eventually their false teaching will be exposed to be false and lose its power. God who is sovereign Lord will uphold the truth, and the bad influence of false teachers will become nothing.

**Part II. But as for you (v.10-17)**

Let’s read **verses 10-17** responsively.

“**10You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

Here, Paul says there are two reasons why Timothy should continue in what he has learned based on personal conviction. They are Timothy’s personal knowledge of Timothy’s teachers and the Holy Scriptures.

First, Timothy’s personal knowledge of his teachers should encourage Timothy to continue in what he has learned with personal conviction.

Second, Timothy’s personal knowledge of the Holy Scriptures should encourage Timothy to continue in what he has learned with personal conviction.

Look at verses10-13.

**10You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. 12In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

Timothy was different from all false teachers and people in the last days because Timothy knew all about Apostle Paul’s teaching, his way of life, his purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to him in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions he endured.

Timothy lived in Lystra and he ended up knowing all of Paul’s teaching after he became a disciple of Paul and followed him through all of his spiritual journey. He knew Paul’s purpose of life, his troubles and his faith and love and patience and endurance. He also ended up knowing all of Paul’s persecutions and sufferings which he experienced in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. If we read the book of Acts we can see how much Paul was persecuted and went through so much troubles. In Lystra he was stoned and people thought he was dead.

He was stoned by the crowds because the crowd were stirred by some Jews who came from Antioch and Iconium. **Acts 14:19-20** “**19Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead.20But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.”**

The life of an evangelist, obeying Jesus’ command to go and preach the gospel to all nations was very hard and challenging to Paul. Yet the Lord rescued Paul from all the persecutions and troubles. And most of all Timothy knew all of Paul’s teachings, and all about his life, and his life purpose and his personal faith and love and endurance.

I have been msn Isaac’s bible student and a disciple for the last 30 years. I have personally known all of his teaching, his way of life, his purpose, and his faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions and sufferings. What kind of things happened to him in the course of coming to America and making disciples of Jesus here in the land of America.

About 30 years ago, one day he was helping one person. The person’s old car ran out of gas. We did not have much money or did not know how to do it. What msn Isaac did was socked me. He somehow brought a hose and gasoline can and with his mouth he was sucking the gasoline in order to help the gasoline flow into the gas tank of the car. I know people can die when they drink gasoline. And I was amazed to see how much he was ready to sacrifice in order to serve one person.

I know his life purpose, which is to serve the Lord’s world mission command. He came to America holding on **Romans 1:5 “Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.”**

For the last 30 years he was never swayed from the purpose of his life which is to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. I saw how much he struggled to love James Hopeman, Robert Fishman and Terry Lopez with all his heart. He did his best to help them with all his heart.

I have seen his suffering and pain in the course of helping Neal Renzi. I have known his life and the purpose of his life and what he wanted to do in his life. I really respect him. His personal life of faith is one of my main reasons why I commit myself to our ministry. His life example is the very living proof that our ministry is not cult no matter what others say. People can say many things. But I will say, “shows me your actual life of faith, your actual sacrifice for others and show me your purpose of life, and show me how much you suffer in order to serve others and then I will know who you are”. Missionary Isaac never swayed from his purpose of life, which is to go and make disciples of all nations especially here in America.

Then when God’s time came he entrusted everything into God’s hand and he went to Redding, far away from LA. But he believes that God will help us to serve the Lord wholeheartedly. Indeed the Lord is blessing us not because we are doing well but because the Lord honors his prayer and his sacrifice, and devotion and commitment. Praise God who gave us such a spiritual father, a man of God.

If you want to follow someone spiritually, go and see what kind of practical life he lives.

Msn Mari’s new year’s key verse for 2015 is to feed Jesus’ sheep based on John 21:15. Some people complain that our ministry emphasizes feeding sheep too much. Indeed John 21:15 is burdensome verse to obey to other people. But she chose the verse and she committed her life to feeding Jesus’ sheep as the expression of her love for Jesus. Where did she learn it? Where did she get it? None other than the life of faith of msn Monica and msn Matthew and the Holy Scriptures. One sheep just left her when Msn Mari challenged her to live a godly life although msn Mari gave her whole heart to serve her for the last 4 years. In such a trouble and pain and difficulties she still commits herself again to feed Jesus’ sheep. Is she crazy? No. She is not crazy. She is a beautiful woman of God. Jesus loves her as his own daughter. Praise God who raised up such a woman of faith.

No matter what others say, to go out fishing on campus and invite strangers and teach the word of God until God works in him and helping him to grow as disciples of Jesus is challenging job. But as apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in what he has learned with personal conviction because Timothy knew those from whom he learned and how from infancy he has known the Holy Scriptures so the Lord encourages us to continue in what we have learned.

Dr. Timothy Park, dean of Fuller Seminary school likes our ministry although he knows all kinds of ministries. I asked him the reason why. He said, “When other churches send out missionaries, they go out and establish schools, hospitals or seminary schools. But UBF people go directly to soul wining. They involve themselves to saving souls directly by teaching the word of God. To live as an evangelist, to preach the word is challenging, but it is worthwhile because one soul is more precious than the whole universe according to Jesus’ teaching. But don’t get me wrong. I am not saying all other people who work together are not important. We work together as one body with many units and functions. So people who are working together are also as precious as those who actually reach out people.

Look at verses 15-17.

“**15and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

These verses teaches about 3 things about the Holy Scriptures.

First, it is able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The Scripture may not make us wise for making money. But certainly it is able to make us wise for salvation. And the wisdom about salvation comes through faith in Christ Jesus. So if one does not have faith in Christ Jesus, the wisdom about salvation may not be revealed to him.

Second, all Scripture is God-breathed. It means all Scripture has God’s breath in it, and God’s breath is the Holy Spirit. Since it is God-breathed it has almighty power of God because it has the breath of God who is almighty. **Genesis 1:1 reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” When God said ‘let there be light’ and there was light.** This shows simply the almighty power of God’s words. So what we see visibly came from invisible command of God’s word. The word of God brings out visible reality. So the Scripture is more fundamental reality. That is why we should live by faith in the word of God far more than visible reality.

Thirdly, God gave us Scriptures to equip servant of God to do every good work. The Scripture is spiritual equipment. Many times we may not know what to do in serving God. But the Lord God equips us with the Scriptures so that we can do every good work.

In conclusion, today we learned that why Timothy should continue in what he has learned although persecution and suffering were waiting for him. He should do it with personal conviction because of his personal knowledge of his teachers and the Holy Scriptures. May the Lord bless us to continue in what we have learned with personal conviction in the coming year.

One word: YOU, HOWEVER