

Message Series: **'Stronger: discovering truths for a resilient life'**

Message Title:

Scripture Source: **2 Timothy 3:10-17**

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Stronger: by Choice, not by Chance

There are moments and experiences we face and live that remind us, often in unsettling ways that strength and wisdom are needed to live with purpose and hope. We want to live...stronger. How do we grow stronger and wiser? What have you learned? Who have you learned from? I think we have a reliable instructor in the apostle Paul. Here was a man who expressed a deep concern for his younger partner in Christian ministry, a man named Timothy. Paul knew that Timothy struggled with emotions such as fear and fearful thoughts such as inadequacy. Yet, Paul knew that Timothy loved God and was serious about following Jesus and helping others do the same. Yet, he needed to grow stronger in faith, hope, and love.

In today's Scripture passage Paul reminds Timothy of three essential choices that if made consistently, will result in a deepening strength of character and maturity and resilience of behaviour, including times of distress, opposition, and suffering.

These choices are offered to us, to you and me. We grow stronger by wise choices, not by random chances.

Which choice jumps out as especially relevant to you?

1: Choose Role Models Carefully: vs. 10-11

2: Choose a Realistic Outlook Courageously: vs.12-13

3: Choose to be Biblically Rooted and Directed: vs.14-17

Your Role Models Matter: 2 Timothy 3:10-11

Friends, let's be honest...each of us look up to certain people as role models or examples to be inspired and instructed by. Who are some of those people in your life? Illustrate: role models for different realms of life...work place, sports, family, spiritual life etc.

Timothy has chosen Paul as a primary role model for his Christian life. And Paul knew it. These words of Paul underscore the power of influence. 'Timothy, you know me well, my life is an open book to you and you have chosen to follow my example. Learn from my life...and as you follow me, you will be inspired and instructed to follow Jesus more fully and freely.'

Whose life is God using to inspire you to more fully and freely follow Jesus? What is it about that person that causes you to want to watch them, listen to them and follow their example of being a follower of Jesus?

Here are some things that Timothy 'picked up' from Paul. Honesty about the ups and downs of life. An 'open book' approach to life, appropriate vulnerability. vs. 10 "You know all about..."

Paul shared his life freely with Timothy, there was a radiance of honesty about Paul. Paul was honest about the really hard times he experienced. vs.11, compare 2 Corinthians 11:23-29.

Timothy absorbed that trait from Paul. He also learned about God's faithfulness to his people from the life of Paul. "Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them." vs. 11. Timothy picked up the trait of a humble faith from Paul. He was deeply influenced by Paul's resilient and passionate resolve to fulfill Christ's call on his life. Timothy watched a man of the towel, a servant who consistently put the interests of others ahead of his own. That example deeply marked Timothy.

Make no mistake about it, Timothy chose Paul as a role model for a life of faith and following Jesus. Paul earned that choice. Who are you choosing as role models? Who is earning your thoughtful choice? Why that person or that group of people? Please ponder and answer these questions. Our choice in this area matters to us and those looking at our lives. Choose to grow as a role model for others, starting with those closest to you. Consider Philippians 3:17

Ditch the Rose Coloured Glasses: Choose Reality: 2 Timothy 3:12-13

It takes courage to see life as it is, without trying to put a positive spin on things that defy 'spin.' Yes, there is much beauty and love to be nourished and inspired by...and there is much evil muscling its way into people's thoughts and hearts. Ditch the rose coloured glasses and put on lenses that see what is and respond accordingly. Evil and error live well together as do those who teach by life and word erroneous teachings. Be aware of those who are adept and skilful at conning and misleading people. Illustrate:

Why does it take courage to choose a realistic outlook on life? Because it means you and I have to take responsibility to grow in wisdom and knowledge in addressing misleading ways of thinking and living. It means at times we have to take a stand for God's truth and not everyone will cheer us on. Some will turn on us, some will accuse us of all sorts of unpleasant things. Illustrate:

Yet, as we choose a realistic outlook, there will be some drawn to us, wanting conversation and help to sort things out. Wanting truth and we are able to point them to and hopefully introduce them to Jesus, who is 'the way, the truth and the life.' John 14:6. People like you and me can experience new expressions of reality by God's grace and power.

Treasure the Bible: Choose God's Truth 2 Timothy 3:14-17

The source of lasting strength and directive wisdom is a life rooted in relationship with Jesus and one responsive to God's word, the Bible.

Paul reminds Timothy of his rich spiritual heritage and challenges him to 'continue' believing in the trustworthiness of Scripture. Timothy is reminded of the credibility of those who taught him God's word and he is clearly reminded of the source of God's word...God himself. "All Scripture is God breathed" vs.16. The Bible is the 'fruit' of God's mindset and heartbeat. It is not a human document at its source. Compare 2 Peter 1:20-21. God's Spirit guided very real people in the writing of Scripture.

God's word can have a life changing impact on people...if read, understood to some meaningful degree and responded to with faith and obedience. Vs. 15...the foundational purpose of Scripture is to lead people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour from the penalty and power of sin. To lead people into a whole new way of living and relating with others.

God's word is profitable on a practical level. Scripture educates us what to believe and how to live and corrects us when we go astray. God's word is meant to help us grow stronger and wiser in all areas of life so that we can fulfill God's purposes for us. Vs.17

Choose to be biblically rooted and directed: words of direction from Pastor Stephen.

The Choice Challenge

Choose role models carefully

Choose a realistic outlook courageously

Choose to be biblically rooted and directed

What choice is stirring something deep within you? Please don't ignore God's stirring in your soul. Act on it. Ask questions to gain understanding or clarity. Take a next step in your spiritual life that will stretch you. Make time reading the Bible a priority and a practice. Don't settle for hoping by some chance you will grow stronger; choose to grow stronger and wiser, for God's honor, for the sake of others who are looking at you, and for your own peace of mind and strength of character.

Will you engage in the choice challenge today?