



Tim Pauley
PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358
304.767.8430
tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

The Christian's Constitution 2 Timothy 3

Each elected official serving in West Virginia state government takes the following oath:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and the Constitution of the State of West Virginia, and faithfully discharge the duties of Senator (or Delegate) according to the best of my ability."

The oath for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives goes even further:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion..."

These oaths of office demonstrate the importance we place on our constitution. The statue of Senator Byrd in our rotunda depicts him holding a copy of the constitution. The recent U. S. Supreme Court nomination and the elections of our new State Supreme Court justices has brought up the issue of our federal and state constitutions are to be read, interpreted, and applied. You cannot work around the Capitol or government very long without hearing the word **"constitutional"**. Every piece of legislation, if not every action and activity is examined carefully to ensure that it is in line with our federal and state constitutions.

As our constitutions serve as the foundation for our nation and our state, God's Word is the foundation for the Christian's faith and life. As every action and activity of government should be in line with the constitution, every action and activity of the believer's life should be in line with the Bible. In this series of studies, we will see how the Word of God is indeed the "Christian's Constitution".

Just as the constitution is crucial to the operation of state and federal government, God's word is essential to followers of Christ. Indeed, God's word is the "constitution" by which we must govern our lives! We often express this by saying that the **Bible alone is our final authority for faith and practice**. Do we express the reverence and priority of God's Word that those in government do for the constitution? During this series we will study a passage of Scripture that describes the unique and important nature of God's Word and the place it should hold in our lives - 2 Timothy Chapter 3 (At this point please take the time to read this entire chapter).

Background of the Letter of 2 Timothy

Timothy was Paul's son in the faith (1:2; 2:2). Most likely Paul had led Timothy to faith in Christ and spent time teaching and training him to become a leader and pastor in the early church. Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus to deal with problems in the churches in that area. It was a difficult task, and Paul wrote Timothy the first letter (1 Timothy) to encourage him and lay out some of the specific issues with which he needed to deal. Now, several years later, Paul has been thrown in prison and it looks as if his end has come. He was imprisoned in chains (1:6) and he knew his life and ministry were almost over (4:6-8). This letter is Paul's final challenge to Timothy to be faithful and bold in the ministry. It has often been called Paul's last will and testament. He lets Timothy know that his

task will be difficult, and he will face challenges and persecutions (1:10-13). In this letter Paul lays out some of the vital truths that will help Timothy be faithful in his ministry.

No truth Paul is more important than Timothy's need to focus and depend upon the Word of God. This emphasis runs throughout the letter. (See 1:13; 2:2; 2:9; 2:15). Paul is saying that the Word of God is Timothy's "constitution" that must govern his life and his ministry.

Paul is writing to a young pastor serving in the local church. Perhaps you might wonder what Paul's challenge to Timothy has to do with you and your life. While Paul is writing to a Christian leader, he lays out vital truths important to every follower of Jesus Christ. These truths are relevant for you as you seek to live out your Christian life in the challenging days in which we live. God's Word will equip believers to serve in the local church. God's Word will quip believers to effectively serve as legislators, lobbyists, and staff in the Capitol as well! Let us consider Paul's message to Timothy regarding the important place of the Word of God.

Why Make the Bible the Constitution for Our Lives?

As we read Paul's challenge to Timothy in this chapter he shows us why it is so important to make God's Word the "constitution - the foundation for our lives.

The Difficulty of our Day – Paul warns Timothy that “difficult times will come” (vs. 1) and then goes on to describe the growing immorality of the culture. Perhaps even more dangerous are the false teachers who would arise. He advises Timothy (and us) that all who seek to live for God will be persecuted (3:12). This aptly describes the conditions of our own day and points us to our own need to depend on God’s Word.

The Example of Those Who’ve Gone Before Us – Paul reminded Timothy of the faith of his mother and grandmother which was passed on to him (2 Tim. 1:5). He urges Timothy to continue in the things he had learned, **“knowing from whom you have learned them”** (vs. 14). He points Timothy to consider his own teaching, life, persecutions, and faithfulness as an example for him to follow (vs. 10, 11). We can look back on church history and remember those who gave their lives that we might have the Bible in our language and to share God’s Word with others.

The Nature and Power of the Word of God – We will see in our studies to come what Paul teaches about God’s Word. It is what leads us to salvation (3:15). It is inspired by God and profitable for teaching and leading us (3:16).

Making God’s Word our Constitution

How do we make God’s Word the “constitution” for our Christian lives? Paul gives us the answer:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of... (2 Timothy 3:14)

Continue in the things which you have learned. Here Paul gives an imperative command to Timothy to continue in the things he had learned. The word “continue” is a key word throughout the New Testament. Jesus used this word in John 15 when He spoke of the relationship we have with Him: **“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” (John 15:4).** The word “abide” is the same word as “continue” found in our passage. In John 15:7 Jesus speaks of allowing His words to “abide” in us. The word literally means to tarry, remain, dwell, or live in a particular location. The word therefore has the idea of a permanence of position, of occupying a place as one’s dwelling, of holding and maintaining unbroken communion and fellowship with another. It speaks of maintaining a constant, close communion and relationship. Jesus says we are to let His words “live” in us. Paul commands us to “live” in His word. Paul writes elsewhere of letting **“the word of Christ dwell in you richly”** (Colossians 3:16). God’s Word is not something merely to be acknowledged as a “good book”. It is to be a constant and integral part of our lives. How do we go about “continuing” in God’s Word? Our passage goes on to give us the answer.

Continue in the things which you have learned and become convinced of. Continuing in the Word first involves faithfully reading and studying the scriptures. “Learned” is where we get the word “disciple”. It speaks of one who purposefully and intentionally places themselves under the teaching and training of another. Timothy had been faithful to study and learn God’s Word. Not only that, “assured of”, a word used only here, is a form of the word “faith”. Timothy

had a strong faith and conviction that things he had learned were truth from God Himself.

While not spelled out in this passage, continuing or abiding in the Word of God clearly involves obeying God’s Word and seeking to apply it to our lives. Christ Himself challenged those who would **“call Me ‘Lord, Lord’, and not do the things which I say”** (Luke 6:46). Throughout both his letters to Timothy, Paul is clear that continuing in the Word involves obeying it and putting it into practice. There are those who would claim to follow Christ yet show little or no interest or commitment to His word. Our attitude towards the Word of God actually shows our attitude towards God and towards Christ Himself.

We clearly understand why our federal and state constitutions are so important to our government. Throughout this study we will consider why the Word of God is so important in our lives. As we will see in a later study, it is the scriptures which are able to make us **“wise unto salvation”** (3:15). It is in the scriptures we learn of our sin, our need of a Savior, and God’s love that led Him to send His Son to die for us! It is in the Word of God we learn of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. It is in the Bible we learn how to live a life pleasing to God, whether at home, at work, or in the Capitol!

How to Continue in the Word

We should remind ourselves why studying the Bible and making it the foundation for our lives is so important. It is the very inspired Word of God to us! Our days are difficult and we must hold firmly to His Word if we are to stand. We have the examples of those who have faithfully gone before us.

Paul’s letter is to Timothy, a pastor, teaching him what he should do in his church. As a believer we can take this as a challenge to make sure we are in this kind of church with this kind of pastor who faithfully preaches and teaches the Word of God.

We should make a plan to read, learn, and apply God’s Word to our lives.

In 1860 James Smith laid out a case for why we should make God’s Word our constitution:

*I am a **creature** — and am bound to obey my Creator;
I am a **subject** — and am bound to obey my Sovereign;
I am a **pardoned criminal** — and am bound to obey my forgiving Lord;
I am a **child, made so by adoption and grace** — and am bound to obey my gracious and loving Father.*

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

Thursday, October 18

12:00 McManus Conference Room
(M252 Located near House Minority Offices)