

Dr. Robert Yarbrough, Pastoral Epistles, Session 10,

2 Timothy 2:22-3:17 - The Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

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Hey, everybody, welcome back for another deep dive. Today, we're going to kind of shift gears a little bit. We're going to be looking at what it takes to be a good pastor, particularly in a world that doesn't always line up with those values and ideals.

We're going to be diving into a lecture by Dr. Robert Yarbrough, and he really unpacks those pastoral epistles, specifically 2 Timothy 2, verse 22, through chapter 3, verse 17. It's like this guidebook for how to navigate ministry in a world that can be pretty tough. Yeah, it's fascinating how much this passage still feels so relevant.

You know, Paul was writing to Timothy centuries ago, but pastors today still face so many of the same challenges and temptations. And Dr. Yarbrough, he really does a great job of connecting those dots, you know, between then and now. Yeah, I love that.

I love connecting those dots. And he does it right off the bat. He uses this analogy of flower vases and trash cans, and that kind of caught my attention.

I was like, all right, where are we going with this? And he's talking about how every house has containers with very specific purposes. You've got the fancy vases that you bring out for those special occasions, and then you've got the trash can for all the everyday, you know, stuff. But here's where it gets interesting.

He applies that to Christians. He's essentially saying that we should be aiming to be those flower vases, those vessels set apart, cleansed, you know, made holy and useful for God. Yeah, I mean, it's not enough to just, you know, not be a trash can, right? We have to actually become these useful, you know, instruments for God to use for his purposes.

And I love that he uses the Greek word *despot* to drive that point home. You know, how we can be useful to God in a similar way a servant would be useful to their master. You know, and I think about that, especially for pastors, you know, they're constantly around people who are struggling with sin and temptation, and it would be so easy to get kind of dragged down into negativity.

But Dr. Yarbrough seems to be saying that being a flower vase means being proactive about pursuing what's good, even when you're surrounded by those tough situations. Absolutely. He even gives this example of, you know, redirecting a child's energy, you know, instead of letting them, you know, destroy something, you give them something constructive to do.

Yeah. You know, that idea of channeling their impulses towards something positive, something that's going to build others up. And you know, I struggle with that a little bit, that idea of positive ethic, because what does that look like practically? What does it mean to actively pursue good in my everyday life, you know? It's a great question.

And I think that's something that we all wrestle with. And Dr. Yarbrough doesn't really give us, you know, a specific list, but he does encourage us to really consider, you know, what the unique gifts and talents are that God has given each of us, you know, and how we can use those gifts to serve others, to bring light and hope into a world that desperately needs it. It could be something as simple as offering a kind word to someone who's struggling, you know, or volunteering your time at a local charity. Or maybe you have some specific skills, you know, use those skills to make a positive impact in your community.

So it's about going beyond just avoiding the bad and intentionally seeking out ways to be a force for good. Yeah. But let's be honest, even with the best intentions, conflict is inevitable.

Absolutely. Especially when you're a pastor. Yeah.

And Dr. Yarbrough, he kind of dives into that head-on. He emphasizes how important it is to handle conflict well. And for him, that requires knowledge, kindness, and restraint.

And that's especially crucial for pastors because, you know, they're going to encounter people who will oppose them, who will challenge their teachings, you know. Right. So it's not about winning an argument or proving that you're right.

It sounds more like you need to go into a conflict with a very specific goal in mind. Right. What is that goal? So he calls it evangelistic compassion.

Okay. It's really about creating space for God's grace to work, even when you're disagreeing. Yeah.

You know? So the goal is to show kindness and understanding. Yeah. Even to those who are difficult, in the hope that, you know, maybe their heart will be changed.

It's a pretty radical concept, you know, especially in today's world where conflict just feels so personal and so aggressive. Yeah. It's like taking the higher road, even when it's tempting to fight fire with fire.

Exactly. But Dr. Yarbrough makes it clear that this doesn't mean you have to be a pushover or compromise the truth. Right.

He specifically says, you know, don't get caught up in these foolish and stupid arguments that just escalate things. It's about, you know, choosing your battles, focusing on what really matters. And sometimes, you know, the best response is a gentle, compassionate silence.

It reminds me of that verse he quotes: the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone. Right. But then he adds this little extra bit that I think is really important.

Yeah. Not resentful. Ooh, that one hits home.

That's a tough one. It's so easy to let that resentment fester, especially when you feel like you're constantly, you know, under attack or being criticized. But holding onto that bitterness just hurts us in the long run.

You know, it poisons our hearts, and it hinders our ability to actually be, you know, ministers of the gospel. So how do we deal with that resentment? Dr. Yarbrough seems to be saying that kindness and restraint are still key, even when you disagree with someone. But how do you actually do that? Yeah.

That's a great question. And I don't think there's an easy answer. Yeah.

You know. But Dr. Yarbrough, he points us to the example of Jesus, who faced, you know, unimaginable opposition and injustice. And yet he remained perfectly loving and compassionate.

Right. And I think it's a reminder that we can't do this on our own. We need God's grace to empower us to forgive, to let go of that bitterness, and to extend grace to others, even when it's difficult.

You know. Okay. So we've talked about being those flower vases, pursuing a positive ethic, and handling conflict with grace.

But Dr. Yarbrough doesn't shy away from this reality that there are some pretty dark forces at play in the world. Yeah. He actually refers to them as the terrible times in the last days.

And he paints a pretty bleak picture of the kind of negative characteristics that are going to become really prevalent. And he says this is going to happen even within the church. Yeah.

And he lists all sorts of vices. Yeah. You know, the love of money, disobedience, ruthlessness, slander, lack of self-control.

Yeah. You know, and it's a sobering reminder that even within the church, there will be people who distort the truth and who lead others astray. You know.

And honestly, some of those vices sound really familiar. You know, I mean, we see these things happening all around us today. It's like Dr. Yarbrough had a time machine and saw what our world would be like.

It does feel that way. And I think what's really interesting is this warning he gives about being deceived by outward appearances. He talks about people having a form of godliness, but denying its power.

Right. So in other words, they might look the part, but their actions tell a totally different story. It's like those people that Jesus talked about, you know, whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the outside, but inside they're full of decay.

Exactly. And Dr. Yarbrough is like, hey, pay attention. Don't be fooled by the people who talk the talk but don't walk the walk.

Right. He even draws a parallel to Janice and John Bray's, those figures in Jewish literature who opposed Moses. Okay.

And they were these, you know, skilled magicians who could perform miracles, but their hearts were far from God. Yeah. Yeah.

Wow. And I think Dr. Yarbrough is warning us that there are going to be people who try to deceive us with, you know, flashy displays and smooth talk. Right.

But eventually their true motives are going to be revealed. So how do we avoid being deceived? Yeah. How do we spot those negative characteristics, not just in others, but in ourselves too? It's a great question.

And I think the point is that discernment is crucial; you know, we need to be students of Scripture. We need to understand what true godliness really looks like and be able to spot the counterfeit, you know, and it also requires self-reflection, you know, to really look at our own hearts and motivations. Yeah.

And that's uncomfortable, isn't it? It is. To look in the mirror and admit that maybe I've been fooled, or even worse, that I've been fooling myself. It's not easy, but it's essential.

Yeah. Because if we're not willing to be honest with ourselves, then we're so much more susceptible to those who would exploit our weaknesses and lead us astray. And that leads to maybe the most unsettling part of Dr. Yarbrough's lecture.

Okay. He talks about this danger of pastors themselves becoming corrupted by the very people they're trying to minister to. He even draws a parallel to the scandals within the Catholic priesthood.

But he's quick to point out that this isn't a problem that's limited to one denomination. Yeah, this can happen anywhere. It can happen anywhere.

And it's a really sobering reminder that even those in positions of spiritual authority are still human. Right. And they're susceptible to temptation and sin.

Yeah. And when those in leadership fall, the consequences can be devastating, not just for them, but for the entire community of faith. It's easy to point fingers and judge.

But I think what Dr. Yarbrough is trying to do is say, hey, we need to be aware of these very real dangers that pastors face. Absolutely. And then he brings it into the modern context by talking about the virtual world and the temptations that it presents.

And specifically, he talks about pornography. And he suggests that this easy access to explicit content is contributing to this decline in spiritual strength, both for individuals and for the church as a whole. It's a tough conversation to have.

It is a tough conversation to have, but I think it's an important one. How do we navigate a world that is so saturated with these kinds of temptations? How do we stay strong in our faith when we're constantly bombarded with messages that contradict our values? That's a great question. And I think that's where we're going to pick up in the next part of our deep dive.

You know, Dr. Yarbrough doesn't offer easy answers. But he does point us back to the example of Paul, who faced intense persecution and yet remained faithful to his calling. Okay.

So stay tuned as we explore how Paul's example can inspire us to stand firm in our own faith, even when it feels like the world around us is crumbling. So we're back, and we left off talking about those dark forces that Dr. Yarbrough warns about, you know, the things that can really chip away at our faith, especially with that easy access to things like pornography. It can feel pretty overwhelming when you think about it.

It's definitely a challenge. And Dr. Yarbrough doesn't really sugarcoat it. But even in the midst of all those warnings, he offers this really powerful reminder of hope.

Okay. He points us back to the example of Paul, who faced incredible persecution, but never wavered in his faith. Yeah.

And it's easy to think of these biblical figures as almost superhuman, you know. But there's this one detail that Dr. Yarbrough brings in that really made Paul feel so much more real to me. He talks about how Timothy might have actually witnessed Paul being stoned.

Maybe even in those specific places, you know, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra. That's powerful. It's powerful.

And it's like saying, look, this isn't just some theoretical concept. These were real events, things that Timothy experienced that shaped the people in places he knew. Yeah.

It makes those stories of suffering and resilience all the more powerful, you know. And it makes you wonder what gave Paul that kind of strength. Right.

How do you face that kind of opposition and not back down, you know? Yeah. Well, this is where Dr. Yarbrough brings in another example, and it's Timothy himself. Okay.

He reminds Timothy of his own upbringing, how he was raised in a godly home, you know, surrounded by the Scriptures from infancy. And it's like he's saying, Timothy, look at the foundation that you've been given. Look at the power of God's word to shape us and sustain us, even through the toughest trials.

So it's not just about avoiding the bad stuff, right? It's about being transformed from the inside out, having your heart and mind renewed by the truth of Scripture. Exactly. Dr. Yarbrough even uses the example of Paul's own transformation, you know, how he went from being a blasphemer, a violent person, a murderer to this dedicated apostle, you know.

That's pretty dramatic. It is. It highlights how the gospel can radically change even the hardest of hearts.

You know, it makes you realize that no one is beyond redemption. Absolutely. No matter what they've done in the past.

Yeah. And this leads to a really crucial point that Dr. Yarbrough keeps coming back to. Okay.

And that's the importance of scripture. Okay. He gives this powerful affirmation of the inspiration and the usefulness of scripture, emphasizing its ability to make us wise for salvation.

So it's not just some ancient text, you know, gathering dust on a shelf. It's a living, breathing word from God that's meant to guide and shape our lives. And Dr. Yarbrough is very clear that this applies to all of Scripture, not just the parts that we like or that we agree with.

Right. He even critiques those who try to, you know, water down or reinterpret scripture to fit their own agendas. Hmm.

You know, highlighting the importance of actually engaging with the text in its entirety. I appreciate that he doesn't shy away from those tough questions. It's easy to pick and choose the verses that make us feel good, but Dr. Yarbrough is challenging us to wrestle with the whole of Scripture.

Yeah. The whole thing. Even the parts that make us uncomfortable.

Absolutely. And he talks about the dangers of devaluing scripture, especially in our modern context where it's often seen as, you know, outdated or irrelevant. Mm-hmm.

You know, he challenges us to remember that scripture is the lifeline for faithful service, the source of true wisdom and strength for daily living. He pushes back on this idea that clinging to scripture is just some outdated tradition that the church got stuck on. Yeah.

He's saying, no, this is about recognizing that scripture has the power to transform lives, to bring us into deeper communion with God. And he even quotes Peter's words to Jesus, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. It's powerful.

It's a reminder that scripture isn't just about acquiring knowledge. It's about encountering the living God who speaks through his word. Yeah.

And Dr. Yarbrough talks about the importance of having Timothys in our lives, you know. Those pastors and teachers who are deeply grounded in Scripture and who can help us to understand it and apply its truths to our lives. I think we all need those mentors, those people who can help us navigate the complexities of scripture and apply that wisdom to our everyday lives.

Absolutely. And he doesn't shy away from the fact that this journey can be difficult. Right.

He even says that everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Ooh, that's a tough one. It's a sobering thought, but he's not shying away from the reality that following Christ comes at a cost.

It's a hard truth to swallow, especially in a culture that tells us we should always be comfortable and happy. Right. But Dr. Yarbrough is reminding us that true faith often requires sacrifice and perseverance.

And he connects this back to Paul's own experiences, reminding Timothy that he too will face opposition and challenges. But he also offers this word of encouragement, you know, reminding Timothy that God brought Paul through those trials and that he'll do the same for him. It's a reminder that we're not alone in this journey.

We have the examples of those who have gone before us, and we have the promise of God's presence and his strength to sustain us through the storms. And that leads to this final section of Dr. Yarbrough's lecture, where he really focuses on the ultimate purpose of Christian discipleship. He talks about being fully equipped for every good work, and he connects this back to the transformative power of Scripture.

So it's not just about knowing the Bible inside and out. It's about letting it shape our hearts, our minds, our actions. Exactly.

And Dr. Yarbrough is essentially saying that this is the holy grail of Christian discipleship. You know, being so in tune with God through his word that we're ready and able to do whatever he calls us to do. I love how he makes that connection between enduring suffering and being equipped for good works.

Right. And he argues that it's through Scripture that we learn how to respond to opposition with courage and integrity. So we're back to that idea of scripture being more than just an ancient text.

It's a source of strength and wisdom for navigating the difficulties of life. Absolutely. Including those times when our faith is really tested.

And that leads to this final thought-provoking question that Dr. Yarbrough leaves us with. Okay, I'm ready. He asks, what are the good works that God might be calling you to do? I love how he brings it back to us, personally.

Yeah. It's easy to get caught up in the big picture stuff. But this question forces us to get practical, to think about how these teachings apply to my life, my own unique situation and calling.

Absolutely. And he doesn't give us a checklist of specific actions, you know, but he equips us with the tools we need to discern God's will for our own lives. You know, he points us to the wisdom of Scripture, the example of faithful servants like Paul and Timothy, and ultimately to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It's both challenging and encouraging. Yeah. Challenging because it requires us to step out of our comfort zones and be willing to do hard things.

Right. But encouraging because we know we're not alone in this. Right.

We have God's power working in us and through us. Absolutely. And maybe that's the biggest takeaway from this whole deep dive.

Yeah. Yes, the challenges of being a faithful Christian are real. Yeah.

But we don't face those challenges alone. We have the power of God's word, the support of our fellow believers, and the example of faithful servants who have gone before us. And to Dr. Yarbrough's point, every one of us, not just pastors, is called to be equipped for good works.

Yeah. So let's take what we've learned from this deep dive and put it into practice, you know, seeking God's guidance and stepping out in faith to make a difference in the world around us. It's been a fascinating conversation.

It really has. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. We hope it's given you some food for thought and some practical tools for navigating your own journey of faith until next time.

It's heavy stuff. You know, and you consider what some people have endured for their faith. It is.

And it makes you think about how we often view suffering, especially within the church. Yeah. Dr. Yarbrough actually addresses that directly.

He points out how Paul describes his own suffering, not as something that Christians should be exempt from, but almost as an expected part of following Christ. That definitely goes against that whole prosperity gospel idea that we hear so much about these days, you know, the idea that if you're a good Christian, you'll have a good life free from hardship. Yeah.

And Dr. Yarbrough really pushes back on that pretty strongly. Yeah. He reminds us that suffering in various forms is something that all believers can expect.

You know, he even talks about his own experiences and how it's important to acknowledge the trauma of persecution. Right. And the need to support those who've gone through those kinds of ordeals.

So it's not about pretending that suffering doesn't exist or thinking that if we just pray hard enough, we can avoid it altogether. Right. It's about recognizing that hardship is a part of life.

Yeah. And that it can actually be an opportunity for growth and spiritual maturity. It makes you think about how you handle those difficult seasons in your own life.

Yeah. Do you try to run from them, or do you lean into them, trusting that God is with you even in the midst of the pain? You know. That's a great question.

And I think Dr. Yarbrough would say that it's in those moments of suffering that we often discover the true depth of God's grace and the power of Scripture to sustain us. He makes this really strong connection between enduring suffering and being equipped for good works. Exactly.

He argues that it's through Scripture that we learn how to respond to opposition with courage and integrity. So it's not just about reading the Bible to feel good or get a spiritual pep talk. It's about letting those words seep into our souls, shaping our character and preparing us for the real life challenges that we will inevitably face.

Right. So we're back to that idea of scripture being more than just an ancient text. It's a source of strength and wisdom for navigating the difficulties of life, including those times when our faith is tested.

And that leads to the final thought-provoking question that Dr. Yarbrough leaves us with. He asks, what are the good works that God might be calling you to do? I love how he brings it back to us personally. It's so easy to get caught up in the big picture stuff, but this question really forces us to get practical, to consider how these teachings apply to my life, my own unique situation and calling.

He doesn't give us a checklist of specific actions, but he equips us with the tools we need to discern God's will for our own lives. He points us to the wisdom of Scripture, the example of faithful servants like Paul and Timothy, and ultimately to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It's both challenging and encouraging.

It is. It's challenging because it requires us to step out of our comfort zones and be willing to do hard things, but encouraging because we know we're not alone in this. We have less power working in us and through us.

And maybe that's the biggest takeaway from this whole deep dive. Yes, the challenges of being a faithful Christian are real, but we don't face those challenges alone. We have the power of God's word, the support of our fellow believers, and the example of faithful servants who have gone before us.

And to Dr. Yarbrough's point, every one of us, not just pastors, is called to be equipped for good works. Absolutely. So let's take what we've learned from this deep dive and put it into practice.

You know, seek God's guidance and step out in faith to make a difference in the world around us. Well said. It's been a fascinating conversation.

It has been. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive. We hope it's given you some food for thought and some practical tools for navigating your own journey of faith.

Until next time.