

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Making a Lasting Difference

2 Timothy 3:10–14



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Facing reality in the raw, as we did in the previous message, can damper even the most hardy spirits. It can convince us that these days of darkness are a deepening shadow. Not so! Evil may go “from bad to worse” (2 Timothy 3:13), but God has limited its progress (3:9) and commanded us to soldier on for truth (3:14). It's the only way to make a durable difference. Don't be distracted by difficulties or hampered by hardships; don't despair because you don't have the highest IQ, the richest portfolio, or the finest pedigree. Rather, master a few great, majestic, unchanging, simple, glorious truths—and let them master you.



LET'S DIG DEEPER

1. The Goal: To Make a Lasting Difference

Passion. It's the stuff of which dreams are made . . . and accomplished. It'll change the world. But change doesn't just happen. It comes from possessing the right qualities and the determination to pursue the right goals. And the goal for believers, according to Paul? *To make a lasting difference in the lives of those around us.*



Quotable

*To make
a lasting
difference we
must hold to the
truth, stand on
our convictions,
and refuse to
be fearful.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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2. The Past: To Model the Truth We've Been Taught (2 Timothy 3:10–11)

Looking to the past, we find the courage to make a lasting difference. A powerful link exists between remembrance and continuance—a link forged on the anvil of a heart that's learned truth. Paul instructed us, therefore, to learn from the past—to *model the truth we've been taught, regardless of tests and trials*.



GETTING TO THE ROOT

Living Someone Else's Lifestyle

The Greek verb *parakoloutheo*, translated “you followed” in 2 Timothy 3:10, has a broad range of meaning. It can either mean “to follow one as to be always at his side, to follow faithfully (a standard or rule),” or “to conform one's self to.”¹ In other words, *parakoloutheo* could mean to follow physically—to walk beside someone through life's travails; to follow intellectually—to be a student of a mentor; or to follow spiritually—to be a disciple of a master's way of life.

Timothy fulfilled all three—he was Paul's true comrade, student, and disciple. However, the emphasis in 2 Timothy 3:10–11 is on the last meaning—Timothy was a dedicated disciple who followed Paul's lifestyle.



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3. The Future: To Face Tomorrow Realistically (2 Timothy 3:12–13)

Looking to the future, we find the conviction to make a lasting difference. It's axiomatic that the godly will provoke the ire of the worldly and that things will go from bad to worse. But Paul prepared us for the future—to face tomorrow realistically, regardless of how hard the times become.

4. The Present: To Be Ready for Whatever May Occur (2 Timothy 3:14)

Looking to the present, we find the command to make a lasting difference. Paul closed the chain between remembrance and continuance by forging one last link—living the truth. That's why Paul summons us in the present—to be ready for whatever may occur, regardless of how dark everything appears.



LET'S LIVE IT

Paul challenged Timothy to make a difference where he lived, in Ephesus—a city filled with every conceivable falsehood. The challenge is ours as well. Therefore, *let's make a lasting difference by holding fast to the truth, standing strong on our convictions, and refusing to be fearful.*

How do you develop convictions?



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Name five convictions you're willing to live and die for. Explain why you chose each.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

ENDNOTE

1. Kenneth S. Wuest, "The Pastoral Epistles in the Greek New Testament," in *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 148.



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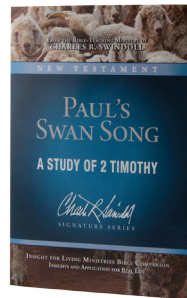
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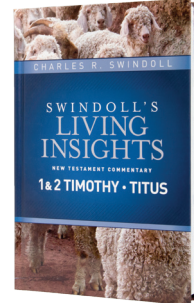
Tools for Digging Deeper



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