2 Timothy 3:15 How from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

I am going to guess that everyone here knows that when it comes down to Confirmation, I always encourage the kids, the kid in this case, to look through the Catechism book or the Bible and pick out a verse for themselves. As I encourage them to do this I give them a few things to consider. I tell them, “Pick a passage that strikes your heart and that means something to you. Pick a passage that will serve as your motto in life, a passage that says, ‘This is the direction I want to go.’ And I believe over the years that is exactly what the kids try to do. They try to find a passage that that will serve as their motto.

Now I am hoping that if you were confirmed in this church or any Lutheran Church you remember your passage? I have no doubt that on the day you picked your passage your sincerest desire was that this passage would be your guide and confidence in life. Has it been? Do you still remember your passage? I can tell you that some 50 years ago I chose my passage. My passage is Revelation 2:10. **“Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”** I can say, by the grace of God, that that passage is my motto in life.

That isn’t to say that I was always faithful and always true to the Lord. For that matter I will be honest with you and tell you that my choosing of that passage was probably a fluke. Because on the day I was confirmed I am not sure that I understood the message of Jesus and Christianity. As I look back at my life, I will tell you that for many years after Confirmation I did not get the wonder and marvel of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. And yet the Lord God, in his total grace, kept putting me in places and surrounding me with people and God’s Word so that eventually His message of grace and love did sink in. I thank God for having such patience with me and for helping me through my unbelief.

As I sat and contemplated the passage that you chose for yourself on this day, Michael, I am reminded all the more of the grace and mercy of God. The passage you chose is especially relevant in today’s world and as we talk about this passage and its importance, I pray that God will grant you all the more His grace so that this passage does indeed serve as the motto for your life. Our theme will be: **IN JESUS CHRIST.**

It is most helpful, for understanding the full bent of this passage, that we should consider the context of what is being said here and why. This epistle was written by the Apostle Paul, well, okay, it was written by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul. It was written to a man who was serving as the Pastor of the congregation at Ephesus, a good and strong congregation but one that nevertheless had its problems both big and small. As these words are being directed at Pastor Timothy, it is clear that the major concern is the ministry, the souls under the care of this ministry really. Pastor Timothy is being given some powerful and straightforward direction from the Lord.

Why? Because of the problems. Let me just share with you a few of the sections of this epistle that lay out what I would consider the most challenging problem for this congregation and pastor. You can see the bent of the problem as you just consider that immediately after the greetings a whole section titled *Encouragement to be faithful* is found. In that section you hear such words as 1:6, **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God…for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”** We go on and hear verses 13-14, **“What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in you.”** It is clear by these words that the most important thing for Timothy and the souls under his care was the truth, the wonder and marvel of God found in Jesus.

Now I want you to know that throughout chapters 1 and 2 this emphasis on faithfulness, sticking to the truth of God, hearing, studying and believing the Word of God is clear. What good is it to belong to a church if that Church is not going to teach and preach the truth of God’s Word? What good is it to claim yourself a Christian and yet have no clue about what Christ has done or even is? What good is it to belong to a church that changes its teachings as often as TV shows are changed? To turn away from the truth of God, from the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and our Savior will only make you more comfortable in this world but in the heaven to come such a denial of Jesus will get you into very hot fire.

Again we want to ask “Why?” Why all this emphasis on faithfulness? That’s where chapter 3 comes in. The heading for Chapter 3 is: *Godlessness in the Last Days.* Listen to what the opening verses say. **“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”**

Boy, you hear those words and you think, “We must be getting close because that sure sounds like our world of today!” It is our world. Just watch the news or read the news. Shootings in schools, police being picked off as bad guys, abortion, aggrandizing anything illegal…the list goes on and on. That’s your world Michael. I think your world is tougher than the world I grew up in. In my day, if a neighbor came out and told you to stop something, that’s the way it was. You listened and did what you were told. Today the worldly kid is going to tell that neighbor where to go and then later on Mom and Dad will come down and threaten them with a lawsuit for daring to tell their kid what to do! Or recognize that we are legalizing dangerous drugs in the name of recreation! It is our world.

This section goes on. It says in verse 6-9: **“They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of deprived minds, who as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”**

Get this! Those words are talking about the religious leaders of the last days. Again as you hear those words you realize that this is today. Most mainline denominations today do not teach the Bible IS God’s Word. They teach the Bible contains God’s Word and you get to pick and choose what part you want to believe and what part you don’t! Whole groups of people being led astray, not because the Bible isn’t clear but because they don’t want a clear and concise Bible, they want to be their own gods and lords of all.

It is all of this that leads to the words of our text. Because after laying out all of these truths, Paul and the Holy Spirit then turn back to Pastor Timothy and once again reiterate, they hammer at the importance of staying faithful and true to God’s Word. Verse 10-13. **“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me while in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.** Did you catch that? If you are going to be a Christian in these end times you will be persecuted! The world will make you suffer in some form and way. It used to be that such things were only heard about in other countries on other continents. Not anymore! As the time gets closer for the coming of Christ I am telling you that persecution will get worse and worse and yes, it will be in your own backyard, maybe even in your own house as Christ is all the more rejected. It is with those words then that the next very important verses are spoken.

Verse 14. **“But as for you, continue in what you have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,”** You can be sure of your faith because of where that faith came from. For Timothy that faith came from men directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, inspired to write and proclaim the truth of God for all to see and consider. And what those men wrote, or rather, what the Holy Spirit wrote through those men is of utmost importance. And Why?

Verse 15. **“And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”** In Timothy’s life, it was the Word of God that sustained, changed and brought salvation. And get this, really, these words are speaking of the Old Testament and how even the Old Testament is the wisdom and wonder of God. The Old Testament will lead you to the wisdom of God because it is a part of the Holy Scriptures. And do note that the Old Testament does exactly what the New Testament does…it leads to Christ. It leads you through the law to understand your sinful nature and total depravity before God. It leads you to understand your desperate need for a Savior and to find that Savior in Jesus. Jesus who fulfills the Old Testament and its promises. Jesus who came and did exactly what God proclaimed again and again that he would do. He would save us from our sins!

Yeah, I know, there is that same old Jesus stuff you keep talking about Pastor! Don’t you have anything new to say? No, I don’t! Because the news about Jesus is the only news that counts. He lived the perfect life we could not. He served as our substitute on the cross, suffering the wrath and anger of God the Father for all the sins of all the world. Jesus endured hell for us while dying on that cross. And then Jesus rose from the dead. He is God’s Son. He is our Redeemer. He will raise us from the dead and grant eternal life and salvation to us by grace through faith. Jesus is all that matters. Because Jesus provides answers and solutions and wisdom and wonder and strength and comfort and…well, everything we need to get through this life to His eternal kingdom. All of this found in the Holy Scriptures. All of this poured upon us as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds through the Gospel of Jesus…the very power of God’s Word. For this word is the power, the wisdom of God for the salvation of our souls.

And how do I know this? Because of how the next verses go on. Verses 16-17. **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”** We are directed to the Scripture because it is the wisdom and marvel of God. It fits every nook and cranny of life. It fits because it is the very God-breathed Word of God. The Bible doesn’t just contain the Word of God…it IS the Word of God. It is the most eye opening, soul changing, death defying and life giving thing this world has. It is what we need. It is the very thing, that even in infants, grants the wisdom to be a part of the salvation of God in Jesus Christ.

Michael, you have also known the Scriptures from infancy. You were baptized into the kingdom of the Lord at this very church and on that day the Holy Spirit called you to be his. Stay in the word He has taught you. No matter what the world throws at you, and it will be considerable, stay in the word. It is the Holy Scripture that will make you wise for salvation. It is the Holy Scripture that will bring you the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who will grant you faith in Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God and our Savior from sin. It is the Holy Spirit working in you through that word that will keep your faith strong and sure in Christ Jesus. There is your hope and your salvation: Jesus Christ.

Now I hope that all of you grasp that I wasn’t just talking to Michael. I was talking to every one of us here and every one of you who will later on read or watch this sermon. Stay in the Word. It is the wisdom of God for our salvation. It will lead us to Jesus and what He has done for us. He won the victory. And then he, with the Father, sent the Holy Spirit so that His victory is ours by faith. In Jesus Christ. That’s the heart of it. Amen.