

THE CHALLENGE OF A GOOD MINISTER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

In chapter one Timothy was commanded first, to stir up his spiritual gift so he could boldly minister the Gospel (1:6-10), and second, he was to hold tenaciously to the words of Scripture so he could guard the Gospel from false teaching (1:13-14). In chapter two he was told to be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus so he could be rewarded for a job well done in working with the Gospel (2:1-13); and he was given several commands on how to use the Gospel to deal with false teachers, youthful lusts, and those snared by Satan (2:14-26). Now in chapter three Paul warned Timothy about the apostasy that would oppose the Gospel (3:1-9) and he challenged him to combat the apostasy by practicing the precepts taught in the Scriptures (3:10-17).

Paul predicted that believers were going to have difficult times, which would begin in the church in Timothy's own lifetime (3:1). The troublemakers would be identified by a long list of sins that Paul gave Timothy (3:2-4). They would have a form of godliness, but they would lack the power to overcome sin. Timothy was warned to turn away from those that had already turned away from the faith (3:5). The apostates took captive weak women loaded down with sins who were led about by various lusts. They were ever learning, but never finding relief from their sins (3:6-7). Although the apostates would cause much trouble, they would be unmasked and exposed in their sin; they would not overcome the church of Jesus Christ (3:8-9; cf. Mt 16:18).

After Timothy was warned about the apostasy as a dangerous enemy of God's work, Paul told him to follow the Word of God; it would enable him to do the work of God (3:10-17). He was to recall Paul's example in the ministry, how he lived for Christ, suffered for Him and was delivered from persecution by Him (3:10-11). Those who live a godly life will suffer persecution, but those who live an ungodly life will become more ungodly (3:12-13). So Paul charged Timothy to live a godly life, learning from the same Scriptures that had saved him (3:14-15). The Scriptures are inspired by God for the purpose of perfecting believers to perform all good works that please Him (3:16-17).

I. Perceiving the Apostasy — 3:1-9

A. The Certainty of Apostasy — 3:1

3:1 — "This know" - Paul emphatically warned Timothy that apostasy was coming and he needed to beware of it.

"In the last days" — The last days began with Christ's first coming and will continue until Christ returns (cf. Heb 1:2; James 5:31; Jn 2:18; Jude 18).

"Perilous" — Grievous, difficult, terrible. This word was used to describe the demoniacs in Mt 8:28.

"Times" — Seasons within these last days. There will be many seasons of apostasy which will become progressively worse (cf. 3:13).

B. The Character of Apostasy — 3:2-5a

3:2 — "Men shall be lovers of their own selves" - Apostates choose to love themselves rather than God. Self is their god; It is the basis of sin. Men should love God first, others second, and self last (cf. Mk 12:30; 1 Cor 10:24; 2 Cor 5:15).

"Covetous" — They are money-lovers, or lovers of silver (cf. Luke 16:14; 1 Tim 6:10). This is not the common word for covetous. This word specifically refers to the love of money, which is their god.

"Boasters" — They are braggers who use their mouths to make vain boasts (outward arrogance). It is a popular practice among the secular humanists.

"Proud" — They are haughty; believing in their hearts that they are better than others (inward arrogance). It is a vicious sin of the flesh (cf. Prov 6:16-17; James 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5; Phil 2:3).

"Blasphemers" — The apostates speak evil words against God (cf. Mk 7:22; 1 Tim 1:13; 6:4). They also blaspheme others that upset them.

"Disobedient to parents" — They are rebellious and refuse to be controlled by their parents. Children must learn to obey their parents before they can learn to obey God. Rebellion is a treacherous sin (1 Sam 16:23).

"Unthankful" — They are ungrateful of the blessings that God has given them (cf. Rom 1:21). True believers should be the most thankful people on earth because of their salvation from Hell, the daily blessings they receive from the hand of God and the glorious future that awaits them (1 Thess. 5:18).

"Unholy" — They have no respect for the sacred things of God. They are irreligious, secular.

3:3 — "Without natural affection" - They have no love for others, not even for those they should naturally love, such as family members (Rom 1:31).

"Truce breakers" — The Greek word is better understood as unforgiving. They refuse to be reconciled.

"False accusers" — They slander others with no regard for the truth (cf. Rev 12:10). They are liars.

"Incontinent" — They have no control over their lusts and appetites; they are unable to deny the desires of the flesh.

"Fierce" — They are savage, vicious. Since they have no self-control, they become brutal as wild beasts. They are controlled by their vices.

"Despisers of those that are good" — They despise anything good; it is not limited to people. The Greek text literally is "not lovers of good." They hate the good and love the evil (Mic 5:2). They call the good evil and the evil good (Isa 5:20). They have a distorted mind.

3:4 — "Traitors" - They are treacherous and betray those who place their trust in them (cf. Lk 6:16; Acts 7:52).

"Heady" — They are headstrong; reckless; they have no regard for the consequences of their acts.

"High-minded" — They are puffed up by pride, conceited, blinded to advice from others (1 Tim 3:6; 6:4).

"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" — Pleasures are uppermost in their lives. Anything that is loved more than God is a false god. When a person stays at home to watch a sport event or a movie on television rather than be in God's house to be taught by His Word and have fellowship with His people, they show by their actions that they are worshipping the god of pleasure.

3:5a — "Form of godliness" - They profess to be religious. They attend church services and they give to support the programs of the church. They appear to be good and claim to worship God. Since they believe there are many roads to Heaven and sincerity will put a person on one of those roads, they believe they are on their way to Heaven.

"Denying the power" — They deny the power of Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus said no one can come to the Father, except by Him. That is too exclusive for them. They deny the power of Jesus to permit or deny them entrance into Heaven. They claim the power is in every person by nature to reach Heaven. They are humanists.

C. The Command against Apostasy — 3:5b

3:5b — "From such turn away" - This implies that there were apostates in the church at this time, or that they were trying to get into the church. Timothy was to turn away from them (2 Jn 9-11). This sounds like it contradicts 2:25 where Timothy was to try to help those who had been ensnared by the apostates. Timothy was to turn away from apostates, but turn to the victims of apostates and help them.

D. The Captives of Apostasy — 3:6-7

3:6a — Some of the women were clandestinely approached by the apostates.

"Creep" — They were secretly approached by apostates, who stealthily gained entrance into their homes, like a snake.

3:6b — These women had completely surrendered to the apostates.

"Lead captive" — They surrendered their wills and consciences to these teachers and were taken captive by them.

3:6c-7— These women were characteristically vulnerable around the apostates.

"Silly" — They were "little" or "weak" women; a term of contempt. They are little or weak in spiritual and moral discernment.

"Laden with sins" — "Heaped up" with sins. Their consciences were burdened with sins and they were easily led away by these apostates who offered them help through their religion, but without repentance, their sin remained.

"Led away with divers lusts" — They are led away by a variety of desires. They sought new doctrines and popular teachings (cf. Eph 4:14).

"Ever learning" — They always were anxious to hear new things from teachers, but without discernment.

"Never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" — They did not repent, but continued to run after errors, so they never came to a full knowledge of the truth.

E. The Conclusion of Apostasy — 3:8-9

3:8 — Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned by name in the Old Testament, but were named in Jewish tradition as the magicians who withstood Moses (cf. Ex 7:11; 22, 9:11). In like manner some modern apostates withstand God's men by doing miracles and healings through Satan's help (cf. Mt 24:24).

"Resist the truth" — Intentionally, willfully, they stand against God's Word.

"Corrupt minds" — Their understanding is darkened because they have rejected the truth. They are completely corrupted.

"Reprobate" — They are rejected because they failed to pass the test regarding their faith. They were uncovered as counterfeits.

3:9 — "Proceed no further" - They will not advance in their attempts to seduce others, even though they attack the truth and attract some followers.

"Their folly" — They will be made known to others, even as the folly of Jannes and Jambres was made known, when they received the boils like the other Egyptians (cf. Ex 9:11).

II. Practicing the Word — 3:10-17

A. The Example of a Great Believer — 3:10-11

3:10 — "Fully known" - Literally, it means "followed closely." Timothy knew Paul's life by closely following him. He knew Paul's life intimately.

"Doctrine" — Paul's teaching was well-known by Timothy.

"Manner of life" — This refers to the "conduct" of Paul.

"Purpose" — It was the aim or resolution in Paul's life.

"Faith" — Trust in God; it kept him going in serving God. This word also can mean "faithfulness."

"Longsuffering" — Paul was patient amid trials; cf. James 5:7.

"Charity" — Divinely imparted love; not natural to man.

"Patience" — It is being steadfast, remaining firm under discouraging circumstances.

3:11 — "Persecutions" - Paul was persecuted throughout his whole ministry for the cause of preaching the death and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of lost sinners.

"Afflictions" — "Sufferings" are the result of the persecutions that Paul received.

The following names of places are cities where Paul was persecuted. These places were familiar to Timothy, because they were in and near his home town.

"Antioch" — Acts 13:14, 50.

"Iconium" — Acts 13:51; 14:1-5.

"Lystra" — Acts 14:6, 19. This is where Paul was stoned and left for dead. This is where Timothy had lived.

"Endured" — Paul willingly suffered and survived.

"The Lord delivered me" — An encouragement to Timothy so that he need not fear persecution.

B. The Expectation of a Godly Believer — 3:12-13

3:12 — "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus" - Christians that determine to live godly lives must discipline themselves to follow a plan. They must devotedly read their Bibles, diligently pray to God and decisively obey the commands of God. They should read their Bibles from Genesis to Revelation and memorize verses that the Spirit impresses on their hearts. They should pray to God. Using a list of people and their needs for prayer can help along with these four considerations in their prayers: Adore God and His Son; Confess any sins that come to their attention, which may come from their Bible study; Thank God for the blessings He has given them; Seek God's supplies for their needs and the needs of others. The letters underlined spell ACTS. This will help them remember four "acts" in praying. Then they need to obey what God impressed on their minds as they read the Bible and prayed. Following this plan will enable believers to live godly lives.

"Shall suffer persecution" — Those who walk with Christ in godliness shall suffer with Him (Phil 1:29). The world hated Christ because His godly life revealed their sins. The same will happen to believers that live godly lives (cf. Jn 15:18-19; 16:33).

3:13 — Apostates get worse and worse; therefore, Christians can expect persecution to get worse and worse as time draws closer to the end of this age.

"Seducers" — There will be imposters, deceivers and sorcerers, just like the magicians in Moses' day. They can produce magic by Satan's power today as seducers did in the days of Moses and Paul (cf. Acts 19:19).

"Wax worse and worse" — Evil men will become more degenerate as long as they live. Sin is not static; it always drives sinners downward unless they are saved.

"Deceiving and being deceived" — They lead others astray, even as they had been led astray by deceivers.

C. The Exercise of a Growing Believer — 3:14-17

3:14 — Timothy's past training centered in his home, where he was taught the Hebrew Scriptures. This prepared him to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior when Paul preached Christ in his city.

"Continue" — Timothy was to stay with the doctrines which he learned at home. He was not to allow "new" doctrines of false teachers to trap him. Timothy had learned Bible doctrine from his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (1:5).

3:15 — "From a child" - Timothy had been taught the Scriptures from an early age. The Greek word that is translated "child" is "babe" (Deut 6:6-7).

"Through faith" — A mere intellectual knowledge of the Scriptures did not save Timothy, but it laid a foundation for saving faith. His salvation came through faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9) when Paul preached in Lystra or Derbe on his first missionary trip (Acts 16:1-2; 1 Tim 1:2).

3:16 — All Scripture is inspired of God and is profitable for salvation and Christian growth.

"Inspiration" — Literally, it means God-breathed. The Scriptures were given the life-breath of God through human writers. Every word recorded was what the Holy Spirit intended (cf. 2 Pet 1:21).

"Profitable" — It will meet all the spiritual needs of believers.

"Doctrine" — "Teaching" is another word for doctrine (cf. Rom 10:17).

"Reproof" — The Holy Spirit brings "conviction" to the hearts of believers that sin (also unbelievers). He also convicts of righteousness and judgment through the Word of God (cf. John 16:7-11).

"Correction" — Restoration - it is setting a person's spiritual life aright (Gal 6:1).

"Instruction in righteousness" — Disciplining or training in righteousness; literally it is the training given to a child to bring him to maturity.

3:17 — "Man of God" - Any believer can be a "man" of God, a person that is mature in Jesus Christ.

"Perfect" — Complete, mature; this is the result of God's Word when it is practiced by the believer.

"Thoroughly furnished" — A believer is fully equipped by learning the Scriptures and obeying them. They must not depend on their feelings for making decisions or to their own intellect. God's ways are higher than man's ways and His thoughts than man's (Isa 55:8-9). God's Word will give believers all that they need in order to be prepared for the work that He has given them to do.