

2 TIMOTHY

Lesson 3 w/ Answers

2 Timothy Chapter 3

We continue our study of 2nd Timothy by looking at Chapter 3, where Paul provides Timothy a final warning about the challenging times ahead—and the need to remain faithful in preaching God's Holy Word. As we have seen throughout our study of both 1st and 2nd Timothy, Paul's concerns for Timothy were deep and personal. He knew the pressures that Timothy was facing, and would face, and Paul did everything he could in both letters to encourage and build up Timothy so that he, like Paul, would remain a faithful servant to the end.

Paul now turns his attention to the coming return of Christ and the challenges that will accompany that return. While today we are still looking for the return of our savior, Paul at that time believed that Christ's return was imminent, perhaps even during Timothy's time. In the third chapter of his letter, he addresses some aspects of what those days will be like, and how they will challenge the preaching of the true Gospel during a period of false teachers and false doctrine.

In closing this chapter, Paul addresses the need to remain faithful in preaching and teaching the true word of God—a warning we can all use today as well.

I am going to do something a little different in this lesson because of the nature of the content in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 and its relation to Paul's previous letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Specifically, I'm going to "string pearls," and put both of these scripture references together as though they were a single passage. I believe that this will help make Paul's meaning even clearer. The scriptures below, 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9, are quoted from the NIV translation of the Bible.

Read the passages in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Timothy 3:1-9 below. Then consider the questions that follow:

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

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 such people.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved 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.

1. In perusing the passages above, do you think that the end-time things that he is prophesying about are happening today?
 - a. ANSWER: I would imagine that most people will respond a firm yes to this question; but before we get caught up in the same exuberance and false teaching that Timothy was facing, let's consider Question 2 below.

2. Again, reviewing Paul's predictions, do you think that these things were already happening during Timothy's time? Is it fair to say that these same "signs" have been happening since the resurrection of Christ across history's timeline, up to and including today?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Absolutely. Chose any event or period in history following the resurrection of Jesus, and we can see these same actions and kinds of people in kingdom after kingdom, culture after culture—including today. Certainly, this will increase as the time of Christ's return draws closer; but, just as Paul warns Timothy, we need to remain faithful to God's Word and not allow the thinking of man, the actions of man, and the motives of man to lead us into accepting false teaching and false teachers.
 - b. ANSWER 2: It is also important to note that what Paul is describing is behavior and people inside the church—not the lost world around the church. We must be careful to understand that there is a difference. There have always been evil people on the face of the earth; what Paul is alerting Timothy to is the attack on the church from the inside. The church and its spiritual health—or its declining spiritual health—is an indicator of Christ's coming return. We are to guard the church from these false teachers and false doctrines so that the Gospel can be preached and taught right up until the day of Christ's return. Time does not allow us to look deeply at what this will look like—that the church will have become totally useless by the return of Christ. However, our mandate, just as Timothy's was, is to stay vigilant and focus on the evil of the day. Christ's return will take care of itself. Do not allow yourself to get caught up in useless speculation about His coming; he will come at the appointed hour. Rather, be more concerned about accomplishing the purpose that Christ has given you, and run the good race.
3. What can we learn about the "church" from Paul's warning to Timothy? If we recognize that what Paul is describing is the body of the church and the effect on it of the inclusion of false teachers and false doctrine, what are some things we can learn about our "church" today? How can we use Paul's warnings in our own lives today as well?
 - a. ANSWER 1: First, we need to be on guard. We need to be wary whenever someone tells us that our salvation is not just based on faith in Jesus, but also how we act or behave in certain specific ways. It is easy, particularly for new believers, to get caught up in a "works-based" faith mentality. To our (carnal) minds, it only seems logical that to live a "holy" life, we should behave a certain way, pray a certain way, pray a certain number of times a day, abstain from eating or drinking certain foods, and so on. We need to be careful when so much attention is paid to attending church, or giving so much money, or memorizing so much scripture, or not eating this or that, and so on. We cannot allow these practices to define out "religion" and our teaching. While we are certainly to be good stewards of everything that God provides us, including our minds and physical bodies, these things do not replace or enhance our salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. When they become as important, or more so, be warned that false teaching and false teachers are in our midst.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Many "false Christs" have already been on the earth, many are here today, and many more will arrive leading up to Jesus' return. They come as wolves in sheep's clothing. They are cunning, good looking, and logical thinkers it would seem; having a knowledge of the Bible, being clever speakers, and so on. We need to always be on guard that we do not put our faith and trust in anyone but Jesus, period—no one preacher, no evangelist, no smooth-talking alternative thinker, and so on. Above all, we are cautioned not to follow someone or some thing because they have a large and growing number of followers. Red flags will appear everywhere in their teachings—if we maintain a spiritual awareness of these dangers and the fact that they are present with us today. Stick to the Bible and your faith in Jesus—nothing else, period, no matter what anyone tells you. I cannot stress that enough. Jesus provides us preachers, teachers, and leaders within the church and gives us clear direction that we are to follow and respect them. Please don't think I am ever telling you otherwise. However, examples abound of a false teacher or false Christ who has led entire churches astray—and the members didn't see it coming until it was too late. Stay vigilant and don't follow the crowd or social media!

As I did in the above section of this lesson, I am placing the remaining verses of Chapter 3 below, as they represent Paul's final charge to Timothy. They also represent Paul's final charge to all believers, as many scholars believe that Paul was beheaded shortly after writing this letter.

Read below Paul's final charge to Timothy (again, from the NIV translation of the Bible) in 2 Timothy 3:10-17, and answer the questions that follow:

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 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 evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4. Paul makes an interesting comparison between those wanting to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus and the evildoers and impostors. What is it?
- a. ANSWER: It is a paradox. Those who want to live a holy and Godly life are going to suffer persecution, while those bent on doing evil within the church will go from bad to worse. Never confuse living a holy and Godly life with peace and prosperity, as man defines these terms. Living as a follower of Jesus will bring heartache and persecution, and in some cases from those that you have trusted, loved, and counted as a friend—just as Jesus experienced during his earthly ministry (e.g., Judas Iscariot). What is worse is that it will happen to you within the confines of the church body. How many of us have experienced a broken church, or broken fellowship brought on by trouble makers within the church, appearing to be in the right, but who are actually motivated by causing dissension within the body? It is unthinkable that a body of believers devoted to living a holy and Godly life would allow such things; and yet, as Paul writes, the evildoers will continue going from bad to worse. We are not to allow contentious, false, and deceitful people to be a part of the body of Christ. The Bible is clear on this, as is reflected in Paul's various letters. Namely, we are admonished to drive out the contentious and the evil from within the body and hold to sound doctrine. This is his charge to Timothy as well.
5. How does Paul know that Timothy has been taught correctly and will know what to do once Paul is no longer on the earth?
- a. ANSWER 1: First and foremost, he knows that Timothy is grounded in scripture—just as we should be. You will not find good leaders or teachers within the church if they are not firmly grounded in scripture, no matter their background or education.
- b. ANSWER 2: Secondly, Paul not only taught Timothy; he also provided Timothy a living witness, a model, that Timothy could follow when Paul was not present. He points out to Timothy in the 2 Timothy 3:10-11 that he knew that Timothy knew all about him, i.e., he knew all about Paul's life, his teaching, his suffering, his travels, his witness; etc. Paul made sure to live a life that was always teaching, through word and deed. He knew that, in the coming days when he wasn't there, Timothy would be able to look back at Paul's life—his actions and his teachings—and would derive encouragement and direction whenever Timothy felt challenged. Are we sure about ourselves in a similar manner today? Do we live our lives in such a way that shows those around us what our faith is all about? Are we actively looking for a Timothy in our lives to mentor and grow into a servant of Jesus? Are we that kind of witness to our children, grandchildren, spouses, brothers and sisters? As with Timothy, we should follow Paul's example and live our lives in faith and holy living—witnessing as we do this to all those around us.
6. Paul's final comments in Chapter 3 reflect a truth that we have been studying for several lessons in our study of Paul's letters to Timothy. What does he show us is the most important thing that we can do in order to grow in Christ and avoid the false teachers and false teaching that is so prevalent today?
- a. ANSWER: Paul reinforces, one last time, the importance of knowing and studying Scripture. It is our rock, the Holy Word of God; and if we anchor ourselves to it, we cannot be misled by false teaching, Scripture is the key; be grounded in it. Do you know it? Do you study it each day and lay it up in your heart? This is the key in order to discern anything false; and Paul wanted Timothy, and us, to understand that.

The lesson that follows will be a short one and will conclude our study. Throughout his two letters, Paul is an encourager, a challenger, and a mentor to Timothy. He is that to us as well. By following Paul's teaching and his life, we can faithfully finish the work that God has started in us. During these troubling times, we desperately need Paul's words of encouragement as much as Timothy did back then.

Anchor yourself on God's word, stay faithful in prayer, and watch for false teachers, false teachings, and false Christs—they are everywhere today. Put your faith in Jesus and God's Holy Word and nothing else. God will bring us the victory!

In Christ,

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