

Study 17: 2nd Timothy Chapter 3

Introduction

Paul concludes the second appeal with a contrast of opposition to his loyalty to God. In the third appeal, Paul's loyalty is compared to those who are causing problems in Ephesus. Timothy is instructed to stand firm in the gospel.

Body of the Study

Second Appeal – Opposition (again)

Their characteristics
Their behaviour

Third Appeal – Paul's Loyalty

Appeal to Timothy

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *Read the notes as a review of the study*
- *Read chapter 4 in preparation for the next study.*

- *Paul's works are contrasted against those of the false teachers. Timothy had first hand knowledge of Paul's situation, and was able to determine what was true and what was false. When we are faced with similar situations, what do we have to enable us to determine what is right and what is wrong?*
- *How do "cult groups" attempt to perpetrate true religion, and in what ways are their methods of infiltration similar to the situation in Ephesus? What should we do when confronted by these situations? How should we handle it? What principles does Paul teach in this chapter about dealing with it?*

Notes for study 17: 2nd Timothy Chapter 3

Paul concludes the second appeal with a contrast of opposition to his loyalty to God. In the third appeal, Paul's loyalty is compared to those who are causing problems in Ephesus. Timothy is instructed to stand firm in the gospel.

Second Appeal – Opposition (again)

In contrast to the support that Timothy was showing, there was widespread opposition. Paul emphasised this by a reference to “...*the last days...*”, which the Old Testament prophets had spoken about (Is 2:2; Joel 2:28; and other places). *The last days* is not a reference to the closing sunsets of human history (ie a sign that the return of Christ is imminent), but a reference to the last dispensation of God dealing with man. It began following the cross, and will last until Christ comes again. On the day of Pentecost, Peter quoted Joel to show that they last days had arrived (Acts 2:16-17).

Their characteristics

Paul describes the *characteristics* of this dispensation “...*There will be terrible times in the last days...*” (2:3:1 NIV), and then describes them with a contrast to the *characteristics* that he (Paul) exhibited, and were to be shown by Timothy. “...*People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,* ³ *without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,* ⁴ *treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—*⁵ *having a form of godliness but denying its power...*” (2:3:2-5 NIV). These characteristics describe a person who is not focused on God and the gospel, yet on the outside they appear to be very religious “...*having a form of godliness...*” but underneath it all they are just imposters, as they “...*deny the power of the gospel...*”. Timothy is instructed to turn away from these hypocrites, and “...*Have nothing to do with them...*” (2:3:5 NIV). This latter instruction clearly shows that the time of *the last days* does not refer to the short time before the Lord's return (as some would describe *this present time*), but it was at the time when Timothy needed to do something about it. It is a continual problem throughout the christian dispensation.

Their behaviour

The people that Paul has in mind (presumably those in Ephesus) are deceptive, and use that as the basis of accomplishing what they do. “...*They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women...*” (2:3:6 NIV). Notice how Paul describes their means of entry, and what they do when they get there. They are influencing psychological dominance over their victims.

But there is also a lack of resistance by those who are influenced by them, whom Paul describes as *weak-willed women* (gullible women NKJV). This is certainly not to say that this is a characteristic of women *per se*, but rather the specific situation in Ephesus at the time. These people do not have a firm grasp on the truth of the gospel, or else they would resist the false teachers. Consequently, there is also some responsibility brought to those who are led away, since they are “...*weak-willed women who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires...*” (2:3:6 NIV). Their lack of understanding is further described where they are “...*always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth...*” (2:3:7 NIV). They were forever getting information, but they failed to understand how to apply that information to their lives, and consequently were following after *every wind of doctrine*, and were unable to discern truth from error.

An example of how these people are regarded by God comes from the Egyptian magicians who attempted to stand up to Moses and Aaron (Ex 7:11). Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned by

name in the Old Testament, however they are named in several documents of antiquity, including Pliny, and Origen. Paul (the Jewish scholar brought up under Gamaliel) was aware of the names of these people.

The point here, is that these people resisted against God, and with their conjuring, they were attempting to discredit God's ambassadors. The false teachers in Ephesus were doing the same thing to the teachings of Paul (and most likely also Timothy). "...Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth..." (2:3:8 NIV). Just as Jannes and Jambres did not ultimately succeed in their mission, neither would those who oppose the gospel "...men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. ⁹ But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone..." (2:3:8-9 NIV).

...it is obvious that character determines behaviour. What we are is seen in what we do. Even though we can adjust our behaviour temporarily to correspond to what is socially acceptable or in our self-interest, we will eventually show our character by what we do. This fact leaves us with the challenge of allowing God to mould and alter our character.¹

Third Appeal – Paul's Loyalty

Paul's manner of live stands in stark contrast to those who were trying to deceive others. No false teacher would go through the trials and tribulations that Paul went through in order to act out a lie. His teaching was clear and consistent, and the characteristics of his life were the exact opposite to those describing the false teachers (2:3:2-5). "...You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ 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..." (2:3:10-11 NIV).

Timothy had first hand knowledge of the things that Paul had endured. He had been with him as his companion on the second journey, as his trusted messenger between Corinth and Thessalonica, and (as emphasised in this verse), he was almost certainly present when Paul was stoned at Lystra on the first journey. The contrast between Paul and the false teachers was substantiated by Timothy's first hand knowledge.

Paul was not alone in his sufferings, and there is a strong implication here that Timothy was also feeling their effects in Ephesus as he attempted to correct the situation there. Christians everywhere will suffer as Satan uses the influence of the world to try to upturn the truth of God. "...In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived..." (2:3:12-13 NIV). The extent of the persecution will vary from circumstance to circumstance, and from culture to culture. But Satan will not rest and let God win. The attacks against us are a sign that we are standing for the truth.

Appeal to Timothy

Timothy is encouraged to exercise commitment in standing against the attacks of Satan. The things that Timothy had learned from Paul and taught were not *cunningly devised fables*, but they were the truth of the gospel that had been demonstrated with the power of the Holy Spirit (Timothy had the miraculous gifts, and was able to confirm the things that he taught were the truth from God - 2:1:6). "...But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it..." (2:3:14 NIV).

Some of the things that Timothy had learned, he had received from Paul, but he also knew the certainty of these things, because they were consistent with the Old Testament scriptures. "...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus..." (2:3:15 NIV).

¹ Lea, Thomas D. "The New American Commentary Vol 34: 1,2 Timothy, Titus" ISBN0-8054-0134-2 p.229.

Whilst Paul is writing here a part of the New Testament scriptures (the last preserved letter that he wrote), he is discussing Timothy's knowledge that was gained from the Old Testament. However, the test that he outlines is not limited to any Testament, and includes all scripture. This was not just man's writing – Paul asserted that the things that he wrote were the commandments of God (1 Cor 14:37). They were written through men's hands, by God had put into the minds of the writers the very thoughts and the very words that were to be used (2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Cor 2:4,13). "...*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work...*" (2:3:16-17 NIV).

The scripture is able to thoroughly equip us, and make us complete. When Jesus faced the temptations of Satan in the desert, He responded with scripture (Lk 4:4, 8, 12). Whilst Timothy had the miraculous gifts, they were partial, and temporal (1 Cor 13:8-12). We have God's complete and perfect revelation in the New Testament, which is able to make equipped for every circumstance that Satan can throw at us.