

2 Timothy 3 - Characteristics of the Apostasy; Proper Conduct in the Midst of Apostasy; Nine Reasons to Preach the Word

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2 Timothy 3

III. Faithful endurance in the midst of coming apostasy (2 Tim 3:1—4:8)

In 2 Tim 3, Paul begins to warn Timothy about something that would begin to happen, at some point in time in the future, called the apostasy of the church. Paul explains to Timothy how he is to conduct himself when this coming apostasy arrives. Timothy obviously couldn't change the coming apostasy, but Paul tells him what to do once it comes.

- (1) Characteristics of the apostasy (3:1-9)
 - (A) General description of the apostasy (3:1)

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

1 You must realize, however, that in the last days difficult times will come.

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

- "...realize this" - know this, understand this. What Paul is about to describe is not something you can prevent or opt out of. It's coming, so recognize when it arrives. The question is not "if" this will happen, but "when" it will happen.
- "...in the last days" - many people think this is the time of the Tribulation. However, the Tribulation is part of God's program for Israel, not the Church. This epistle is written by Paul to a Church Age pastor, so he is not talking about the Tribulation period. He is talking what is going to happen as the Church Age reaches its conclusion.
 - Technically speaking, the "last days" began in the first century (Cf. Heb 1:2). But what Paul is referring to here is not the "last days" in terms of the church, but the "last days" in terms of how the Church Age is going to end. When "last days" is used in the NT, we need to understand the context in order to pinpoint the time period referred to.
- "...difficult times" - refers to both difficulty and danger; the difficulty and danger will come to anyone who stands for truth. When you stand for truth in an environment where everything is deteriorating makes life difficult, and sometimes dangerous.
 - The difficulty and danger that Paul is describing will not come from the world, it will come from within the church. In the last days, the spirit of the world will invade, and in some cases take over, the church. Then the church will inherit the value system of the world and the thinking of the world. And when that time comes, you will encounter both difficulty and danger.
- "...will come" - doesn't say "might" come or "may" come, difficult and dangerous times "will" come. These times are not something you can opt out of. In fact, this is actually a promise from God. We love to quote the positive promises of God (and rightly so), but we forget or choose to ignore the negative promises of God, such as this one.
 - 2 Peter 3:3: Know this first *of all*, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts,

Apostasy (*apos* = away from; *histēmi* = to stand, thus apostasy means "to stand away from"). It refers to a departure from known or previously embraced truth. When most people think of apostasy, they immediately start looking at the unsaved world around them. But apostasy as described in Scripture is not describing the unsaved world. The unsaved world has no truth to depart or walk away from. They have not yet found the truth.

10 Characteristics of Apostasy

1. Apostasy is a sign of the end times.

When people think about current world events, the regathering of Israel into the Land, the trend toward a one-world government, the significant technological advances

setting the stage for the mark of the beast, and they say, Yeah, we're getting close to the end. But these are signs related to God's program for Israel, not the Church.

Apostasy is an end-times sign not related to Israel, but rather related to the Church.

Paul is telling Timothy (and us!) is to not look for the Church to succeed in establishing the kingdom of God on the earth. In fact, just the opposite. The life of the church will deteriorate, both morally and doctrinally, as the end draws near.

Another passage that refers to the end times apostasy of the Church is the Parable of the Leaven in Matt 13:33, where Jesus said, **"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three sata of flour until it was all leavened."** Leaven (yeast) is a symbol for sin throughout the NT. The point of Jesus' parable here is that leaven (sin, corruption) will find itself in the flour (church), and will eventually spread throughout the entire loaf. What this means is that Christendom will experience internal corruption throughout the age. The yeast working its way through the dough is a picture of sin, corruption, false doctrine working its way throughout the Church to greater and greater degrees as the Church Age comes to a conclusion.

The rising dough is a picture of the growing church. But as the dough continues to rise, the leaven also begins to spread, until leaven has infected/touched every part of the loaf.

2. Apostasy is a massive topic in the NT

Apostasy is the second biggest topic in the NT epistles. In fact, the subject of apostasy runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation:

- Gospels (Matt 13:33)
- Early church (Acts 20:29-31)
- Pauline epistles (Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Cor 11:1-15; Phil 3:2,18-19; Col 2:8; 1 Tim 4; 2 Tim 3-4; Titus 1:10)
- General letters (Heb 2:1-4; 2 Peter 2-3; 1 John 4:1-6; Jude)
- Revelation 2-3

Really, the entire book of Galatians was written to address false teaching and false beliefs in the churches of Galatia. The book of Colossians was written to address heresy. The entire book of Hebrews was written to address apostasy, to persuade believing Jews to not shrink back from their Christian faith and return to Judaism. The entire book of Revelation, written to seven churches in Asia Minor, is also all about apostasy.

3. Apostasy impacts every major biblical doctrine.

There is no sacred ground with apostates. There is no biblical doctrine that they will not contradict or undermine. Every Christian doctrine is on the table for the apostates to

argue against. The Bible gives us some specific doctrines that apostates will undermine:

- The faith (1 Tim 4:1): But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from **the faith**, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,
- God (Jude 4): For certain people have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who **turn the grace of our God into indecent behavior and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**
- Christ and His death (2 Peter 2:1): But false prophets also appeared among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, **even denying the Master who bought them**, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.
- Christ's return (2 Peter 3:3-4): Know this first *of all*, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, "**Where is the promise of His coming?** For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue just as *they were* from the beginning of creation."
- Sound doctrine/truth (2 Tim 4:3-4): For *the* time will come when **they will not tolerate sound doctrine**; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will **turn their ears away from the truth** and will turn aside to myths.
- Resurrection (2 Tim 2:16-18): But avoid worldly *and* empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have **gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place**; and they are jeopardizing the faith of some.
- God as Creator (2 Peter 3:5): For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God *the* heavens existed long ago and *the* earth was formed out of water and by water,

4. Apostasy happens inside the church, not in the world

Paul, while encouraging the Ephesian elders on Miletus, told them that false teachers would come into their church and do significant spiritual damage. He also predicted that some of these false teachers would come out of the Ephesian church itself (Acts 20:29-31). Jude 4 says the same thing. We are not to look for apostates out in the world, we're to look for them inside the church, in Christian bookstores, in "Christian" movies, in "Christian" para-church ministries, on "Christian" websites, or in "Christian" YouTubers.

5. Apostasy knows no limits.

You can identify people who you would think would never be involved in apostasy. These are the ones often leading the charge toward apostasy. Remember Aaron? He was the high priest of Israel, the spiritual custodian of the nation, appointed to that position by God Himself, and he led the way into apostasy by fashioning the golden calf (Ex 32:1-10).

Judges 17-18 describes how idolatry originally entered the land of Israel after Joshua had conquered the land. It did so by a wandering Levite, whose identity is not given until the end of the story. His name was Jonathan (Judges 18:30), and he was the grandson of Moses (Gershom was Moses' son).

In Rev 2:5, Jesus says to the church in Ephesus, "You have left your first love." The church of Ephesus was the cornerstone of churches in Asia Minor in the first century. Paul planted the church, and we see how vibrant and on fire it was in Acts. Paul spent three years teaching there, he appointed Timothy as pastor. The Apostle John later in life became a bishop over the church at Ephesus, and he wrote his Gospel and three epistles from there. So we have a lot of history on the church at Ephesus from the book of Ephesians, from 1&2 Timothy (because Timothy was the pastor), and from Jesus' letter to the church in Rev 2:1-7. If you study Ephesians and 1&2 Timothy, there is not a hint of apostasy. But if you look at Jesus' letter to them in Rev 2:1-7, written 30 years later, we see apostasy in that church.

The mission statement of an Ivy League university: "Let every student be plainly instructed and earnestly pressed to consider well the main end of his life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life (John 17:3) and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning. And seeing the Lord only giveth wisdom, let everyone seriously set himself by prayer in secret to seek it from Him (Prov 2-3). Everyone shall exercise himself in reading the Scriptures twice a day that he shall be ready to give such an account of his proficiency therein." [Rules of Harvard University, 1636].

Harvard was the place where many pastors were trained in the Scriptures. Many of our founding fathers, who were believers in Christ, were educated in the Scriptures at Harvard.

6. Apostasy can happen very quickly.

We often think it takes awhile for someone to apostatize, but it actually can come about very quickly.

In Gal 1:6, Paul says, "I marvel that you are turning away *so soon* from Him who called you...". During the Golden Calf incident in Ex 32:8, God told Moses, "They have turned aside *quickly*...". It doesn't take long, once Satan gets a foothold, for a group, a church, a ministry, or a person, to apostatize.

7. Apostasy is Satanically energized

It's always Satan, using fallen men, to promote apostasy.

2 Cor 11:3: But I am afraid that, as **the serpent deceived** Eve by his trickery, your minds will be **led astray** from sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

1 Tim 4:1: But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will **fall away** from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and **teachings of demons**,

Satan's most common deception is to get the church off its mission, to get it focused or concerned about things that are outside of God's mission and purpose for it, which is to (1) Glorify God (Eph 3:21), (2) Edify the saints (Eph 4:11-16), and (3) Fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). The church has power when it operates within these purposes, but if the church deviates from any one of these purposes, to the extent that it does so it dilutes its power.

8. Destructive

Apostasy is destructive. Whenever a group moves away from proper teaching and God's purposes, destruction follows. It leaves behind bleeding sheep, bruised feelings, and a spiritual body count. We understand physical harm, but the Bible reveals the spiritual harm that apostasy leaves behind, and often uses analogies related to physical harm to describe them:

- Acts 20:29: I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
- 1 Tim 1:19: keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.
- 2 Tim 2:17-18: and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth, claiming that the resurrection has already taken place; and they are jeopardizing the faith of some.

9. Apostasy makes life difficult for the man of God.

2 Tim 4:2-4:

2 For people will be **lovers of self**, lovers of money, not to dispute about words, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure **rather than lovers of God**,

- Paul uses here a figure of speech in v2-4 called an anacoluthon, (from Greek: *anakolouthos*, "not following") which is a break in grammatical continuity. It's often used to mimic the often disjointed nature of human speech. Paul is going "stream of consciousness" here with this list of character traits.

— The anacoluthon begins with the idea "lovers of self" (v2) and ends with the idea "rather than lovers of God" (v4), and everything in between fills out or better explains this two-part idea. To explain what Paul means by "lovers of self...rather than lovers of God," Paul provides 17 adjectives that describes what that looks like.

- We often go to this passage, read these 17 adjectives, and think, Yeah, this describes the world perfectly. But Paul is not describing the world to Timothy. The world has always had these traits. Paul's point to Timothy is that he will see these traits inside the church. These things are happening inside the church in the last days because the spirit of the world has infected the church. The end result is that people inside the church are exactly like the people outside the church. If they are saved at all, they are at a very low level of spiritual maturity. Many of them are unregenerate, having never trusted in Christ.

Paul goes on to tell Timothy that once you see these things happening, your job gets a lot harder because you'll be around people who don't want to hear what you're saying. And in fact, they are going to fight against you.

This is why in v1 Paul tells Timothy that "in the last days," when you start seeing these 17 character traits inside the church, "difficult times will come." Timothy's job will get much harder.

10. Apostasy impacts those who have not taken defensive measures

Paul implies that apostasy is inevitable. He doesn't give Timothy a list of things to do to prevent apostasy because apostasy is going to come no matter what Timothy did.

Instead, Paul tells Timothy that if he doesn't do something in his personal life, he would be swept up in it. No action is action. If you're in a river, if you don't do something active to counteract the current, you will be swept away. Inaction means you're "going with the flow" and you will be swept up in apostasy. If you don't swim toward shore, grab a life preserver, or brace your feet against the bottom, you'll be swept away.

The river of apostasy is coming, and is already here. It's coming for all of us. So in order to not be swept away in it, because it's coming for all of us, individually we need to do something active to stand against the current. So how do we stand against apostasy?

Every time you see a command in the NT, you obey it:

- Study God's Word (2 Tim 2:15; 3:17)
- Test all things (1 Thess 5:21)
- Renew your mind (Rom 12:2)
- Put on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:11)
- Contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3)

(B) Characteristics of the apostates (3:2-7)

Paul provides 19 characteristics of the apostasy, what people become like when they move away from God. When society moves away from God, and when the church follows society in moving away from God, these are the 19 characteristics that you can expect to see in people.

What these 19 characteristics show us is that man becomes animalistic, not genetically, but morally, as they move away from God. The world believes that we're becoming more and more advanced and sophisticated, but the Bible tells us that as we move away from God, we're becoming more and more like animals.

2 For people will be **lovers of self, lovers of money, not to dispute about words, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,**

2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, **boastful**, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

- "...lovers of self" - *philautoi*, narcissism; a total preoccupation with oneself to the detriment of everyone else. Part of this is the doctrine of Humanism, the idea (or religion) that believes that man is the center of all things. In Humanism, either God doesn't exist, or if He does exist, He's irrelevant.

— Once the church takes on the mind of the world and begins to act like the world, it no longer has any moral authority to speak to the world. The only thing that gives Christianity moral authority to speak to the world is the fact, as it says in Titus, that we are a "peculiar people".

— We are not to be "peculiar" in the sense of being odd or weird, but different in the sense that we have a morality and value system that is different than the world. The unsaved world looks at that and says that there must be something special about Christianity. Consequently we have a prophetic voice *to* the world when we are separate *from* the world.

— This is why Satan's strategy with the church is to get them to be just like the world. He doesn't care that you fill up gigantic churches when your prophetic voice is neutralized.

- Paul here is using a figure of speech called an *anacoluthon*, which is a break in grammatical continuity. The *anacoluthon* begins with the phrase "For people will be lovers of self..." and it ends in v4 with "...rather than lovers of God."

- "...lovers of money" - *philargyros*, literally means "lovers of silver". This is materialism, where the primary goal of your life is the acquisition and accumulation of money and material belongings. Paul may have used this word with Judas Iscariot in mind. Judas sold out Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver.

— The Prosperity Gospel feeds into the world's love of money. This false gospel feeds into people's desire to be rich. The Prosperity Gospel has no support whatsoever in the NT, so those who preach this false gospel often take OT verses that deal with Israel out of context and apply them to the church.

— The Bible never condemns money or those who have more than enough money. Abraham was exceedingly wealthy; Solomon was the richest man who ever lived. If God has blessed you with money, praise the Lord.

— What the Bible does condemn is the "love" of money. When money de-thrones God as the most important thing in your life. The focus of our lives should never be money or the accumulation of more of it; it should be on the Lord. If He blesses you with wealth, He does so so that you can be a blessing to others (Cf. 1 Tim 6:17-19).

- "...boastful [NASB95]" - *alazones*, refers to pride as displayed in boastful speech, promoting oneself; words that are always lifting up themselves rather than others or God (Cf. 1 John 2:16).

— Interestingly, almost every time the Antichrist is referred to in Scripture, OT and NT, there is a mention about his boastful words (Cf. Dan 7:8; Rev 13:5).

- "...arrogant" - *hyperephanoi*, refers to a prideful attitude. A prideful attitude often results in prideful speech, but the root of pride is in our attitude.

— This is the sin that caused Satan to fall (Cf. Is 14:12-14; Ezek 28:17)

- "...slanderers" - *blasphemoi*, literally, a blasphemer; someone who uses speech abusively toward God and fellow man. Someone who tries to build themselves up by tearing others down.

- "...disobedient to parents" - *apeithēs*, "unobedient" to parents; the Greek word is an *alpha privative*, which is a negation. It refers to those who have a lack of respect for the authority structure within the family that God has set up.

— God has setup an authority structure within the family that is designed to control the sinful nature of children. This is done both by discipline as well as role-modeling godliness in the home.

— In the last days, the parent-child authority structure will be disrespected. The reason why it will be disrespected is because it was setup by God, and God will be disrespected. If you push God out of your mind and your life, you do not have any basis for understanding the parent-child relationship.

- "...ungrateful" - *acharistoi*, without thankfulness

- "...unholy" - *anosioi*, without holiness; God's calling on every single believer is to a life of holiness, having a lifestyle and worldview that is separated unto God (Cf. 1 Peter 1:16).

— We often focus on happiness today rather than holiness. There is a lack of moral purity today where people casually do things that just a generation ago no one would've even thought to do...one-night stands, multiple sexual partners, pornography.

— Paul predicted that in the last days, there would be a low level of progressive sanctification in the lives of believers, akin to the Corinthians.

3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

3 unfeeling, uncooperative, slanderous, degenerate, brutal, hateful of what is good,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

- "...unloving" - *astorgoi*, in the last days, Christians would be without love for both God and each other, while the love of self increased (Cf. Matt 24:12)

— The Greek word for love here, *storgē*, is the type of love that typically describes familial relationships or close associates. The alpha privative (*a*) in front of *storgē* is a negation of this type of love.

— So in the last days, within the church and among believers, there would be a lack of love between believers and their families and close associates. Maybe the best example of *astorgoi* today is abortion, the lack of love of a mother toward her unborn child.

- "...irreconcilable" - *aspondoi*, unforgiving (Cf. Eph 4:32; Matt 18:21-35). Lack of forgiveness never hurts the person who you won't forgive, and it always hurts you. God commands us to be forgiving because it makes it easier on us, not the other person. It relieves us of the burden of anger and resentment, not the other person. Unforgiveness makes as much sense as drinking poison hoping the person I won't forgive will be hurt by it.

- "...malicious gossips" - *diaboloj*, Paul interrupts his string of alpha privatives here by using a Greek word that sums up the entire list, captures the whole idea of what Paul is communicating here.

— The Greek word *diabolos* is translated as "devil" in English (Cf. Matt 4:12). Paul inserts this word here because when we begin to emulate this list of alpha privatives, we are acting like none other than the devil himself. When people are disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, and irreconcilable, they begin to take on the very character of Satan.

— The Greek word actually means "slanderer". A slanderer speaks untruths about others. This is why the devil is called the "accuser of the brethren" (Zech 3:1; Rev 12:10; Cf. Job 1:11; 1 John 2:1).

- "...without self-control" - *akrateis*, better translated "without strength" and here it is related to impulse control. The last days will be characterized by people who do not have the ability to control their most vile impulses (Cf. Prov 25:28).

- "...brutal" - *anemeroi*, without gentleness; a lack of civility or respect. In the last days, people will be like untamed beasts, animalistic. Like an animal that devours its prey with no sense of sympathy, no sense of mercy, no sense of anything other than their selfish appetite.

— Man was created by God above the animals and was instructed by God to rule over the animal kingdom (Gen 1:26,28; Ps 8:4-8). Man was never designed to be like the animals, he was given authority over the animals. But you don't understand your place in God's hierarchy when you move away from Him. When that happens, we become (morally speaking) just like the animals we were designed to rule over.

— Dan 4 tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar when he became like an animal in his thinking and behavior (Dan 4:15-16). This happened due to his exorbitant pride and because he moved away from God (Dan 4:30-31).

- "...haters of good" - *aphilagathoi*, this describes not just someone who is apathetic to good, but someone who literally hates what is good. It describes total antagonism to whatever is deemed "good" (Cf. Is 5:20).

4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

4 traitors, reckless, conceited, and lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

- "treacherous" - *prodotai*, better translated a "traitor" or a "truce breaker"; a back-stabber. Someone who claims loyalty and friendship while simultaneously working behind the scenes for your demise. Describes people who are no longer bound by basic loyalty, but who will throw you under the bus it is somehow benefits them.

— This type of person emulates Judas Iscariot. Jesus called Judas "a friend" (Ps 41:9) and also a "friend" (*hetairos*, meaning "companion" or "associate" rather than close friend [*philos*] in Matt 26:50).

— This is a characteristic when people are away from God...they can't even be held to their most basic oaths or commitments. It used to be where two businessmen would only need a verbal contract for a business deal, because their word was their bond. Today, because of the basic untrustworthiness of people, we need long, detailed contracts that cover every possible scenario.

- "...reckless" - *propeteis*, means to "fall forward"; to refers to people who are quick to action but slow to think. People who act rashly or are impulse-driven.
- "...conceited" - *tetyphomenoi*, refers to someone who "has their head in the clouds"; not connected to the rest of the world or reality; conceited to the point of insanity.
- "...lovers of pleasure" - hedonism; a person who is focused and pursues at all costs the momentary window of pleasure that sin provides. They often bounce from experience to experience seeking the small, passing pleasures of sin.
- The devil is very good at blinding us to the consequences of sin. Of course sin is fun, enjoyable, otherwise we wouldn't pursue it. But that pleasure is often momentary or passing, but the consequences of sin stay around for a long time (Cf. Heb 11:25).
- "...rather than lovers of God" - Paul now ends the *anacoluthon* that began with "lovers of self" in v2. Everything in between is what people will be like when they become lovers of themselves rather than lovers of God. See note on v2.

5 holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power; avoid such people as these.

5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

5 They will hold to an outward form of godliness but deny its power. Stay away from such people.

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

- "...to a form" - *morphōsis*, holding to the shape of something, but not the substance.

This is the same Greek word used to describe the mold of the golden calf, the mold that the gold was put in and pressed into, but not the golden calf itself.

— Paul is referring to a form of spirituality that takes on the "form" of being spiritual, but lacks any substance of spirituality

- "...godliness" - *eusebeia*, not *theos* (the typical word for God). It appears that what Paul means is that a day will come when spirituality will be in, but just not the spirituality of God. People will become very spiritual in nature, but it won't be spirituality having to do with the living God or described in the Scriptures.

- "...denied its power" - this "form" of godliness has the trappings of spirituality, but it is devoid of substance and devoid of God's power. It is devoid of power and substance because the way we leverage the power of God is through our relationship with Him.

— This "spirituality" that will be prominent in the last days will be devoid of any power because it lacks any relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ.

- "...avoid" - shun, turn away from; have nothing to do with people like this, who are spiritual, but who lack a relationship with the Lord.

6 For among them are those who **slip into households** and **captivate weak women** weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

6 For some of these men go into homes and deceive foolish women who are burdened with sins and swayed by all kinds of desires.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

- Paul now describes the evangelical methods of these "spiritual" people who have no relationship with the God who made them...

- "...slip into households" - Paul knew the dangers that were in the world in his day and in the last days. But he seemed especially concerned that the world would begin to creep into households, into families. It's one thing for evil acts and behaviors to go on out in the world, it's a complete other thing for those same acts and behaviors to be present in your household.

- "...captivate" - those described seek to carry off as captives the most vulnerable

- "...weak women" - why are they weak? Because they are already being led around by these spirituality, these impulses to be spiritual yet reject God at the same time.

— When Paul brings up "weak women" here, he likely has what he wrote in 1 Tim 2:12-14. It appears that there were women in Timothy's church in Ephesus who desired to be in roles of authority as elders, or even as pastor-teachers.

— Paul is not saying that women are beneath men or that women are less important in any way, shape, or form. He is making an argument against women teaching because there is something in the composition of women, going all the way back in the Garden of Eden, which causes women to be more emotionally driven than men. And when someone is more emotional driven, they are in a greater danger of spiritual vulnerability.

— Paul is saying that it is easier to deceive a woman than it is a man because women are more driven by emotion than they are facts or information.

7 **always learning** and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

7 These women are always studying but are never able to arrive at a full knowledge of the truth.

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- "always learning" - always acquiring information about the form, not the substance; always learning more about spirituality rather than God.

— They are absorbing "sermon" after "sermon" through media, where they are learning spiritual truths, which Satan then uses as a substitute to fill the "God-shaped vacuum"

inside of them. A cheap substitute to keep their eyes off the true power of Christianity, which comes from a personal relationship with God.

— Once you have a relationship with God, no cheap substitute will satisfy. But Satan will do everything in his power to keep a person's mind and eyes away from the ultimate power that could satisfy the thirst of a human being, and instead keep them focused on cheap substitutes.

— These people are always learning about spirituality, but they are always chasing after the form and never the substance. They never arrive at the relational aspect, thus they never really understand the purpose for their existence.

(C) Illustration of Jannes and Jambres (3:8)

8 Just as **Jannes and Jambres** opposed Moses, so **these men also oppose the truth**, men of **depraved mind**, worthless in regard to the faith.

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men oppose the truth. They are depraved in mind and their faith is a counterfeit.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

- "...Jannes and Jambres" - the names of the magicians who imitated the miracles that God brought forth through Moses (Cf. Ex 7:8-13,19-23; 8:5-7,16-19). These names are nowhere found in the OT; their names were preserved through Jewish tradition, which evidently Paul was aware of.

— These two magicians were able, under Satan's power, to replicate God's miracles through Moses up until the Lord produced the plague of flies. They were able to cast down their rod and turn it into a serpent. They were able to turn water into blood, and they were able to bring forth frogs.

- "...these men also oppose the truth" - Paul tells Timothy that just as these two magicians opposed Moses, Timothy was also going to encounter opposition as he preached the truth. There were people in Timothy's life who would oppose truth.

— Like Jannes and Jambres, they will be able to work miracles by the power of darkness, but their power will be limited.

- "...depraved mind" - a mind that no longer operates properly or thinks correctly; it does not function the way God designed it to function. It describes people who are constantly wrong, consistently saying wrong things at wrong times, and in the wrong ways. Common sense has departed from these people.

— How do people get a depraved mind? Prov 1:7a says: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Someone without the fear of the Lord, without respect for God

or His ways. The moment a person decides to walk in a relationship with the God of the universe, to read and do His Word, their capacity for knowledge and understanding increases exponentially.

(D) Conclusion: apostates are known by their works (3:9)

9 But they will not make further progress; for their foolishness will be obvious to all, just as was that also of Jannes and Jambres.

9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.

9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those two men, their stupidity will be plain to everyone.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

- A verse with a glimpse of hope in an otherwise dark chapter. It reminds us that God is in control, and that nothing is a surprise to Him.

— The Bible consistently reminds us that evil will increase and eventually overtake the world, but God has evil on a short leash. It's time will be limited, then it will be replaced.

(2) Proper conduct in the midst of the apostasy (3:10—4:8)

Paul makes it clear in the first nine verses that the apostasy is coming, and there's nothing that anyone can do about it. But Paul never gives us a problem without giving us a solution to that problem. The coming apostasy is inevitable, but Paul encourages Timothy that in order for him to stand firm in the midst of the apostasy, and to finish well in the last days, you need to have a strategy.

The strategy that Paul gives is two-fold: the first strategy is to follow Paul's example (v10-13), and the second strategy is to focus on the Word of God (3:14—4:8). As the apostasy becomes more of a reality, more and more attention must be given to the Word of God.

(A) Imitate Paul's example in nine ways (3:10-13)

10 Now you **followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,**

10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,

10 But you have observed my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, my faith, my patience, my love, my endurance,

10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

- Paul was so committed to Christ that he could confidently tell Timothy to follow him as he followed Christ. Paul did instruct the churches to follow or imitate him numerous times:

- 1 Cor 4:16: Therefore I urge you, be imitators of me.
- 1 Cor 11:1: Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.
- Gal 4:12: I beg of you, brothers *and sisters*, become as I *am*, for I also *have become* as you *are*. You have done me no wrong;
- 2 Thess 3:7: For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined way among you,

— Paul was aware, and we should be to, that we only have influence over other people to the extent that we are following Jesus in our daily lives. If you want to expand your sphere of influence, ask yourself if you are following Christ. If you are following Christ in your daily life, your sphere of influence that God has for you will automatically take care of itself.

— But if you're not following Christ, if there's compromise in multiple areas of your life, your ministry and influence will not be what it could be and what God wants it to be - "...followed" - *parakoloutheō*, means to "faithfully follow"; to make an extensive effort to learn the details about something (Cf. Luke 1:3). Paul wants Timothy to make an "extensive effort" to learn the details of Paul's life, then put what you learned into practice. This would keep you out of the apostasy.

- "...my" - Paul's; he uses the possessive here to claim ownership over all nine characteristics that he is urging Timothy to follow or imitate in Paul

— Paul is saying: Timothy, you see all nine of these characteristics in me (Paul), and as you imitate these nine characteristics, you will have the fortitude to keep yourself out of the apostasy that will come from within the church.

— Paul is contrasting himself against the false teachers (Jannes and Jambres) that he talks about in v8-9. They are the negative example, now Paul says to Timothy, I am your positive example of what to do.

- Paul calls Timothy to focus on nine areas of Paul's life and ministry, and to imitate them. While it is not translated in English, each of these nine areas has a definite article ("the") in front of it, indicating that Paul is speaking specifically in each case:

- "...[the] teaching" - the teachings that Timothy had learned from Paul (Cf. 2:2)

- "...[the] conduct" - teaching is the easy part, Timothy just had to listen; doing it, converting what Paul taught into daily conduct is the important part. Paul is saying: pay attention to what I say, but also pay attention to what I do (Cf. Acts 20:35; 1 Thess 2:9-12).

- "...[the] purpose" - Paul knew his purpose in life. He knew what God had planned for his life (Cf. Phil 1:21): to allow Jesus Christ to express Himself through his life. That was Paul's purpose and that is also our purpose.

- "...[the] faith" - *pistis*, Paul's faith was demonstrated by continuing to trust in God in the midst of problems and bad circumstances. Jesus did the same thing (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus endured the horrors and atrocities of the cross by continually entrusting Himself to the Father over and over again. 1 Peter 4:19 applies this to the NT believer.

— The Greek word *pistis* can also be translated as faithfulness, one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). God is working to develop a characteristic of faithfulness in every believer so that they trust in Him through every problem and being faithful in life's circumstances. Faithfulness means trustworthy, consistent, the type of person who can be counted on.

- "...[the] patience" - another fruit of the Spirit that God seeks to develop in us. Today, we have instant gratification in almost everything. Don't know something, I can find it out on my phone in seconds. Need something, I can press a button from anywhere and it's mine.

— At the same time, God is trying to teach us patience, delayed gratification. So He puts us in circumstances where our immediate needs are not met, and we immediately think that God has forgotten about us or is holding out on us. God is trying to teach us patience, which is why He doesn't jump when we have the slightest need because God doesn't function according to our desires. He's trying to develop patience in us.

- "...[the] love" - *agapē*, a love that demonstrates itself to others without expecting or desiring anything else in return. A love of the most unselfish variety. Paul wanted Timothy to imitate the *agapē* love that Paul had for others as Jesus expressed Himself through Paul.

— Lust can't wait to *get* something; love can't wait to *give* something (Cf. 1 Cor 13:1-3).

- "...[the] perseverance" - *hypomonē*, a capacity to bear up under difficult circumstances (Cf. Prov 24:16). If Paul was any of the traits he lists here, he displayed perseverance (Cf. Acts 14:19-20). Jesus too (Cf. Heb 12:2).

11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

11 persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!

11 and how I was persecuted and suffered in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

- "...persecutions" - notice the plural; it wasn't just one isolated incident of persecution, but multiple, constant persecutions that Paul endured. If Paul knew anything, he knew about persecution.

— Before he was converted in Acts 9, Paul was the greatest persecutor of Christianity (Cf. Acts 9:1-2; 22:4; 1 Cor 15:9; 1 Tim 3:13). But it's interesting that as soon as Saul became Paul by believing in Jesus Christ, the persecutions he wielded against the church were suddenly aimed at him (Cf. Acts 9:23).

- "...sufferings" - Paul summarizes his various sufferings in 2 Cor 11:23-33 (Cf. John 15:20; 1 Thess 3:2-4). Most people do not ever endure the sufferings that Paul did, but when we do encounter suffering (unfair treatment by others), we must remember that not only are we in the will of God, but the favor of God rests on us (Matt 5:10-12; Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 1:6; 12:10; 1 Peter 4:12).

- "...such as happened to me" - the reason why Paul had such an influence over the lives of Timothy and others...he did not simply point to his words, what he said, but he pointed to what he did.

— This is the great secret for having influence over others. We don't influence others with our words as much as we influence them with our lives.

— And where you really get a picture of someone's character is not when they are on the mountaintop, when everything is going well. The times when you get insight into a person's character is when things are not going well. Not in the midst of prosperity, but in the midst of adversity.

- Now Paul draws Timothy's attention back to Acts 14, Paul's first missionary journey through southern Galatia, where he visited each of these cities (among others). Timothy likely heard Paul's preaching in Lystra, his hometown (Acts 16:1), and got saved. This was about 20 years before Paul wrote this epistle.

- "...at Lystra" - while Paul was ministering in Lystra, Jews came from Antioch and Iconium (where Paul had previously stopped and preached), rallied Gentiles against Paul, then dragged him outside the city and stoned him (Acts 14:19-20).

— While the disciples were standing around Paul, thinking he was dead, he got up and went back into the city of Lystra. The next day, he left for Derbe.

— By giving Timothy these examples, Paul is telling him, Don't just listen to my words, imitate my actions. Remember how I did not give up and shrink away after I was stoned nearly to death? I didn't quit, I got up and went right back into the city to complete the task that God gave me to do. I'm not just lecturing you on endurance, I lived it.

- "...out of them all the Lord rescued me" - at the end of his life, Paul could look back on a track record of the faithfulness of God.

— In the midst of recalling all of the persecutions and sufferings that Paul endured throughout his life, he tells Timothy here that the Lord rescued him out of every single

one of them.

— When we look back on the pattern of God delivering us out of every trial, persecution, or suffering, it strengthens our faith. If God delivered me numerous times in the past, why wouldn't He deliver me again from what I'm going through right now (Cf. Ps 34:19).

12 Indeed, **all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus** will be persecuted.

12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

12 Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in union with the Messiah Jesus will be persecuted.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

- Paul's example (v10-11) is followed by a promise. Many Christians have a book on their shelf that list the promises of God. These books are great, they are uplifting, they provide encouragement from God's Word and keep us focused on His promises when we are going through a trial or suffering.

— But these books don't have any of the "negative" promises that the same God promises us, such as the fact that we "will" be persecuted if we desire to live a godly life.

— Christians have a tendency, in the midst of opposition, to ask God what we are doing wrong. Based on this verse, if you're experiencing opposition, suffering and persecution, it's not what you're doing wrong, it's what you're doing right.

- "...all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus" - if you are living a life of leisure, without much opposition, no persecution or suffering, maybe you aren't living out your part of this bargain.

— If you're not experiencing the promise of this verse, maybe your ambition to live for God isn't there. Because this verse is clear that once that desire or ambition enters the heart of a person, they will experience opposition.

13 But **evil** people and **impostors** will proceed *from bad* to worse, **deceiving and being deceived**.

13 But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad* to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

13 But evil people and impostors will go from bad to worse as they deceive others and are themselves deceived.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

- An explanation of the promise of v12...the reason why the person who desires to live a life pleasing to the Lord will be persecuted is because of the state of this world (and the

church) in which we live.

- "...evil" - *ponēros*, three words for "evil" in Greek, this one is the worst. It's the same word used to describe "the evil one" in Matt 13:38. What Paul is describing in the last days is that there will be satanically-energized people. The numbers of these people, both in the world and in the church, will not decrease, but will increase.

- "...impostors" - Paul is likely referring back to Jannes and Jambres (v8-9), who were magicians (religious leaders) in Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses. It was the religious aristocracy of Egypt that opposed Moses, not the general public.

- Paul is telling Timothy that he (and us!) are going to get opposition from religious leaders, from the people you least expect. He (and we) will be opposed by people who ought to know better. But they are satanically influenced and energized people with only a veneer of spirituality.

- "...will proceed *from bad* to worse" - as we get closer to the end of the age, Paul says, these people will not get better...they will get (much) worse. They started out bad, and they will quickly progress downward from there.

- This verse completely destroys the postmillennial position, which believes that the church is going to grow in numbers and Christ-likeness until the end of the age, when Jesus will return. They believe that the church is responsible for bringing in the kingdom. This verse contradicts that belief on its face.

- Jesus predicted the slow apostasy from within the church in one of His Matt 13 parables. In the Parable of the Leaven, He demonstrates how apostasy will penetrate the church in the same way leaven (yeast) penetrates throughout a loaf of dough.

- "...deceiving and being deceived" - the wickedness of these satanically energized people and these religious impostors will increase as time goes on. They will not only deceive others, but their sins and others will deceive themselves. This is the perversity of sin...a cluster of deception.

(B) Reasons for continuing in and preaching the word (3:14—4:8)

The second thing Timothy needs to do, in light of the coming apostasy, is to cling to and proclaim the only barometer of truth that God gave to mankind: the Scripture. As the apostasy comes, the Scriptures will become progressively denied and discarded. Paul wanted Timothy in the midst of apostasy to not follow everyone else, but instead to gravitate toward the truth. If Timothy ever lost sight of the truth, he would lose his vantage point for living.

Paul now gives Timothy nine reasons why Timothy, as the apostasy of the church grows, must continue on with the study and proclamation of the Word of God.

Nine Reasons Why Timothy Must Continue to Preach the Word

1. Impact of God's Word on people (3:14)
2. Impact on salvation/justification (3:15)
3. Divine origin (3:16a)
4. Impact on sanctification (3:16b)
5. Impact on equipping (3:17)
6. Paul's charge to Timothy (4:1a,2)
7. Timothy's evaluation at the Bema Seat (4:1b)
8. Preference of men to avoid the Word (4:3-4)
9. Need to complete Timothy's ministry (4:5-8)

(a) The effect of the word on Paul (3:14)

14 You, however, continue in **the things you have learned and become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and found to be true, because you know from whom you learned it.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

- "...the things you have learned and become convinced of" - the nine things that Timothy learned from Paul during their 20-year relationship, outlined in v10-11

— Timothy saw each of these nine character traits preached as well as lived out in Paul's life. These same things are what people will lose confidence in the midst of the apostasy, but Timothy you have become confident in these things, and Paul says I want you to continue on in these things.

(b) The effect of the word on salvation (3:15)

15 and that from **childhood** you have known the **sacred writings** which are **able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**.

15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

15 From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to give you the wisdom you need for salvation through faith in the Messiah Jesus.

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

- "...childhood" - *brephos*, used to describe both a newborn baby (Luke 2:12) and a pre-born baby still in the womb (Luke 1:41)

- "...sacred writings" - God's Word, specifically the OT. When Timothy was a child, none of the NT books had yet been written, so Paul is referring here to Timothy being taught the OT throughout his childhood (1:5; Cf. Acts 16:1).

- "...able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation" - the "sacred writings" (the OT) is able to give you wisdom that leads to salvation. Paul is saying that Timothy got saved because he recognized, from being taught the OT, his need to be saved.

— A lot of people aren't saved today because they don't recognize their need to be saved. And they don't recognize their need to be saved because they are not exposed to the Word of God.

— Paul is clear here that it is only the Word of God that makes us aware of our need for a relationship with God and our need for God. The Word of God is the instrument by which people are saved. This concept is taught throughout Scripture, from cover to cover (see detailed notes on Rom 1:16):

- 2 Kings 22: during a temple remodel, Hilkiah the high priest found the Book of the Law hidden in the temple. That Book was then read to King Josiah, who tore his clothes in repentance.
- Neh 8: Ezra read God's Word to a crowd in the public square, the people stood to hear, raised their hands, and kneeled down to worship with their faces to the ground, and they wept in repentance to the Lord.
- Ps 19:7: The Law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
- Ps 119:9: How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word.
- Jer 23:29: "Is My word not like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer *which* shatters a rock?"
- Is 55:10-11: "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it produce and sprout, And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes out of My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the purpose* for which I sent it.
- Ezek 37:4-5: Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'You dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: 'Behold, I am going to make breath enter you so that you may come to life.

- Luke 16:27-31: the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house and warn his father and five brothers about what happens after death. Abraham told him that they had Moses and the Prophets, and if they did not understand salvation from them, they wouldn't believe a man who rose from the dead.
 - John 6:63: **It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh provides no benefit; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life.**
 - John 6:68: Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.
 - Rom 10:17: So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
 - James 1:18: In the exercise of His will He gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.
 - 1 Peter 1:23: for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.
- "...through faith which is in Christ Jesus" - this little clause at the end sometimes just gets glossed over because it's present so simplistic: faith in Christ Jesus.

— "faith" - *pistis* is the noun form, *pisteuō* is the verb form

Dan Wallace, Greek scholar, said this of 2 Timothy:

By my count, there are 27 explicit commands given in the body of this letter. In 27 words Paul tells pastors what to focus on. You have to be blind to miss the thrust of Paul's instructions here, because 18 of those commands—fully two-thirds—have to do with the ministry of the Word.

(c) The divine origin of the word (3:16a)

(d) The effect of the word on sanctification (3:16b)

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness;

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

- The third reason Paul gives Timothy for preaching the Word is the divine origin of the Scripture

- "All" - both the OT and NT are inspired as the divine Word of God. This means that divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts and words of the Bible so that the whole Bible, in the original manuscripts, is without error.

— The word "all" here is so significant to understand because it does not give us (including pastors) the right to pick the things that God says. We don't have the luxury to say one part of the Bible is more significant than another part.

— If the word "all" in this verse was not there, it would put too much power in human beings, who could then decide what parts of Scripture they like and which parts they don't like.

— The word "all" should shape every church's ministry philosophy. Every part of God's Word is equally beneficial, equally inspired, and equally useful to the believer. When pastors or teachers disregard the word "all" here, they have the liberty to skip over things that they may not want to talk about or topics that may be controversial (Cf. Acts 20:26-27).

— Deut 8:3: ...man does not live on bread alone, but on **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.

- "...inspired" - *theopneustos*, only usage in the NT; a compound word: *theos* = God; *pneustos* = breath. So inspired here is better translated as "God-breathed" (Cf. 2 Peter 1:20-21).

— The Bible doesn't merely *contain* the Word of God; the Bible doesn't *become* the Word of God; the Bible *is* the Word of God.

- "...beneficial" - *ōphelimos*, profitable, advantageous; useful. Bringing something into your life that is good for you, profitable. When you avail yourself of the Scripture, you're availing yourself of something that is beneficial for you (Cf. Is 55:10-11; Jer 23:29).

— Our natural posture toward the Word of God should be to take in as much of it as we can, as frequently as possible (Cf. Joshua 1:7-8; Job 23:12; Ps 1:3; 119:99-100). Even more so as the church loses interest in the Word of God in the last days apostasy, Paul tells Timothy that he needs to be even more bold in studying and proclaiming the Word of God.

- Unlike justification, which happens in a split-second, one time, at the point of faith, sanctification is a life-long process that all believers are currently in and continue in until their dying day. During this process, we are gradually being released (or "saved") from the power of sin over our lives and our lives begin to reflect the moral qualities of Jesus Christ.

— Sanctification is God's agenda for every single saved person. Most of the NT is written to help believers in the sanctification tense of their salvation. For example, spiritual gifts are designed to help the believer in their second tense salvation.

— And what we learn from this verse is that the Scriptures play a pivotal role in our progressive sanctification process. In fact, sanctification cannot and will not occur in a believer's life independent of the Word of God (John 17:17). A believer's progress in sanctification is directly based upon their exposure to the Word of God consistently,

and their subsequent obedience of it under His power. Sanctification will not happen independent of the Word of God (Acts 20:32).

— The latter half of v16 is a tremendous description of what the Word of God seeks to do in the life of every believer. About the following four phrases, Warren Wiersbe sums them up by saying: *They are profitable for doctrine/teaching (what is right), for reproof (what is not right), for correction (how to get right), and for instruction in righteousness (how to stay right).*

- "...teaching" - *didaskalia*, doctrine or body of truth. The Scripture gives us the proper body of truth to teach us what to base our life on. It's a tragedy for any believer who does not live their life with a fixed set of principles and boundaries defined by the Word of God.

— Hosea said that God's people were destroyed by lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). They did not have knowledge of proper doctrine that only the Scriptures could give them, thus they had nothing to build their life on other than reactions to one circumstance after another.

— This is why Paul patterned his ministry on the perpetual teaching of the Scripture (Acts 20:20). He refused to "pedal" the Word of God, meaning charge people to hear his teaching (2 Cor 2:17). He believed the Word of God was so important that he didn't want charge a fee to receive from him what is spiritually beneficial.

— Paul also didn't adulterate the Word of God (adultery = mixing two things that don't go together). He taught the Scriptures straight, without mixing it with human philosophy, without watering it down one bit (2 Cor 4:2).

— If you don't think Satan understands the power of the Word of God, try teaching it sometime. If you reliably teach God's Word, you can expect Satan to come against that with every trick in his book because his goal is to derail the teaching of the Word of God. In the early church, when the Sadducees were in charge, the first thing they did was shutdown the teaching ministry of the church (Acts 5:28).

- "...rebuke" - *elegchos*, reproof or rebuke. The Word of God exposes sin in the believer's life and in the believer's heart. There is nothing that will more quickly bring these sins to the surface than the Word of God (Heb 4:12).

— A great example of this was at Pentecost, when Peter gave a beautiful, Scripture-filled sermon to these unbelieving Jews. At the conclusion of Peter's sermon, Acts 2:37 says that the audience was "pierced to the heart." The Spirit inspired Luke to use the word "pierced" because God's Word is a two-edged sword.

— God's Word pierces, injures, exposes, jabs, by design, sinful motivations and sinful conduct in both believers and unbelievers. Peter's audience was so cut to the core, the only thing they could say to Peter and the apostles was, "Brothers, what are we to do?"

— How badly we need more of the Word of God in the church today. The biblical illiteracy rate in the church today is at an all-time high. Christians sitting in church pews, without Bibles in hand, know little to nothing about what they believe. And because of this, while church attendance may go up, Christlikeness in the daily lives of churchgoers is going down.

— We need reproof today more than ever because our hearts are sinful. My heart is so sinful that many times it contaminates how I think and reason. This is why Proverbs says, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not unto your own understanding*. The Bible tells me not to lean on my own understanding because my default way of looking at things is warped because of sin. My thinking seems right, but it leads to death (Prov 14:12).

— Many believers in the church today want to hear something spiritual, but don't want it to be too biblical because it cuts too deep. Amos 8:11-12 talks about a famine in the land, not of food to eat, but of hearing the words of the Lord. People will be wandering around everywhere to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.

— This is why we need our minds renewed by the Word of God (Rom 12:2).

- "...correction" - *epanorthōsis*, doesn't deal with cutting, but rather with mending. The Bible will often tell us something not to do (*elegchos*, reproof), but then it will tell us what to do that is right (*epanorthōsis*). The Bible doesn't only tell us what to not do, what is not right, it tells us how to get right.

- "...training in righteousness" - you're cut by the Word of God, bleeding, then mended (corrected) and put back together. Training in (for) righteousness instructs us how to stay in that circumstance, how to stay right.

— The Greek word for training here is *paideia*, the same word used in Eph 6:4, translated as "bring them up" to describe how to raise or parent your child. The Word of God prepares us for spiritual adulthood. With adulthood comes more freedom and more privileges.

— The vast majority of Christians today are in spiritual infancy. It's cute when a baby sucks their thumb, but it's not cute when the child is 16-years-old. That's where many Christians are today because they have been starved, or starved themselves, of God's Word so they have not had the opportunity to grow in their faith and knowledge of Christ (Cf. 1 Cor 3:1-3).

— Many Christians should have grown into spiritual maturity a long time ago, but instead they are still wandering around in infancy, sucking their thumb, not enjoying the emancipation and privileges of spiritual adulthood for the simple reason that the Word of God has a negligible, if any, role in their lives. They'd rather occupy themselves with anything other than the Word of God.

(e) The equipping function of the word (3:17)

17 **so that the man *or woman* of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.**

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

17 so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good action.

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

- The fifth reason Paul gives for why Timothy must be faithful to preach the Word is because of its impact on equipping the believer.

— There's a lot of things that we want to do in the natural world that we are just not fitted for. I think flying a 747 would be fun, I'd love to do that some time, but I'm completely ill-equipped to do so. I'd kill myself and anyone else who dared by onboard with me, I'd destroy the plane, and I'd probably kill a bunch of people on the ground (if I was able to get it off the ground). I'm not trained or equipped to fly any plane, let alone a 747.

— There are many Christians who want to do something for God, they have a zeal for some ministry or vision that they have, but they have never really allowed themselves to be equipped by God's Word for that task. The Word of God then becomes a tremendous tool that the Holy Spirit uses to equip us.

- "...so that" - *hina*, describes causation; the Scripture as described in v16, which causes our growth in Christ, causes or produces something in the life of a child of God. What it produces is "equipment" that can be used in every good work that God wants us to do.

— This "*hina* clause" connects v17 to v16. The content of v16 was the believer's sanctification, where the believer doesn't become sinless, but he sins less. The Word of God is what causes the believer's sanctification or growth in Christlikeness.

— Notice the order, which is obvious throughout Scripture: personal holiness comes first, then the ministry of good works that God has for every believer comes second. God uses vessels that are pure (Cf. 2:19-22).

— This order isn't found often in the church world today, where too often we only look for talent...talent to sing, talent to teach, talent to administrate, and we have a tendency to promote that person without knowing anything about their personal holiness or walk with Christ. This thinking is foreign to God's Word.

— God uses people who are personally holy. The greater strides you make in the realm of personal holiness, the more God graduates you to greater and greater degrees of usability. You ever see a person that obviously has talent, they have a gift that obviously comes from the Lord, but they aren't being used to their full extent? And you wonder why God isn't using that person more to fulfill His purposes on the earth. It's highly

likely that the reason why is that there is a deficiency in their character. There is a habitual sin in their life that they have not brought under the authority of Christ, so God basically puts them on the bench, not in the game. They are very talented people, but God can't use them the way He wants because He will only use vessels who are holy before Him.

- "...man *or woman* of God" - we learn who a man (or woman) of God is from 1 Tim 6:11: Timothy, and by extension, all believers who have a heart to serve the Lord.

— Just because a man (or woman) is of God does not mean they are qualified to do great exploits for God. There has to be some kind of equipping process which only the Word of God can provide.

— Being sincere about the things of God or being zealous to accomplish God's work, but yet God looks at them as a sincere and zealous man or woman of God who lacks the equipping necessary, which can only be obtained through the Word of God.

— The prophet Ezekiel had a great ministry, but early on when God initially called him, God told him to "eat the scroll" that God would give him, to digest the Words of God that he was to then communicate to his audience, the exiles in Babylon. God knew Ezekiel would have a tremendous ministry, but he needed to be equipped for it first.

— Jesus had a 30-year preparation period for a three year ministry. Most people would rather have it the other way around...a three year preparation for a 30 year ministry. But that's not how God works.

— There are many believers who go out and try to do some things for God, but who have never had a season in their life where they just sat and absorbed truth. They may have talent, they may have the gifting, they may have the energy, but they have no depth.

- "...may be" - *eimi*, subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility; maybe you will, maybe you won't. Maybe Timothy would submit himself to the equipping nature of God's Word, maybe he won't. Paul didn't know.

— This is why Paul used the metaphor of a workman to describe what Timothy should be like in the midst of apostasy, in the midst of feeling depressed and wanting to throw in the towel (2:15). In order to accurately handle the word of truth, it requires diligence, consistency, and you have to submit yourself to God's Word. This is the process that God uses more than any other single thing to prepare people for what God wants them to be. In order to be the husband, the wife, the parent, or the friend that God wants you to be, you must be equipped by the Word of God. In order to do any number of different tasks, your job, your career, your ministry, or your relationships, you must first be equipped.

- "...fully capable" - *artios*, adequate, complete, proficient, competent. Timothy wasn't any of these things on his own. He was a man of God, a believer, gifted as a pastor-

teacher, but he still was not equipped for his calling without being diligent in the Word of God.

- "...equipped" - *exartizō*, to fully furnish. God's structure is the following: He gifts some with the gift of pastor-teacher, whose job it is to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

— So the gift of pastor-teacher is the ability to understand the Word of God and explain it in a way that the average person will understand. It's "putting the cookies on the bottom shelf." And as the Holy Spirit uses the gift of pastor-teacher, the body of Christ is growing in maturity and Christlikeness. And as that happens, and they are blessed, what happens is that they are equipped to go out and be a blessing to others through good works.

- "...every" - *pas*, adjective meaning "all." The problem in the church today, and with many ministries, is that they believe in the inspiration of the Bible and the inerrancy of the Bible, but they do not believe in the sufficiency of the Bible.

— The Bible is sufficient to provide us with everything we need to do everything God wants us to do. The Bible is not a piece of swiss cheese, where we have most information we need, but there are some holes that I need to fill in with human wisdom. The Bible is sufficient, no other source of information or direction is necessary to fully comply with God's purposes in our lives.

— There's a parallel passage in 2 Peter 1:3-4:

3 for His divine power has granted to us **everything** pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

4 Through these He has granted to us **His precious and magnificent promises** [Scripture], so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world on account of lust.

- "...good work" - sometimes, because of the theological culture in the church today, good Bible teachers or pastors will preach so aggressively against good works as a means of salvation that one could get the impression that good works aren't expected or necessary in a believer's life. However, this is about as distorted an interpretation as you can get out of the Bible. Believers were created for good works (Eph 2:10).

"Every good work" is the ultimate goal of our lives on earth (Eph 2:10). The mastery and use of Scripture is only a means to an end, not an end in itself. God did not give us the Bible just to satisfy our curiosity, but to enable us to help other people—especially spiritually. [Constable]

— And while an infinite number of good works cannot gain us even a little favor with God, but nonetheless the desire of God in our lives is that we are abundant in good works.

He (the Christian) must study the Scriptures to make himself useful to God and useful to his fellow man. He must study not simply and solely to save his own soul, but that he may make himself such that God will use him to help to save souls and comfort the lives of other people. [Barker]

— God does not want us to be diligent and understand the Scriptures so we can win a Bible Trivia game...He wants us to be diligent in the Scriptures so that He can use us to save souls and bless other people.