

## Lesson Twelve

FOLLOW THE FAITH  
II Timothy 3:1-17

RECOGNIZE THE COMING APOSTASY

SECTION ONE 3:1-9

**3** But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. **2** For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, **4** treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5** holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people. **6** For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, **7** who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. **8** As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith; **9** but they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

This chapter emphasizes two themes — evil will grow increasingly militant and the only hope to remaining steadfast comes from using

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

Scripture.

V. 1 **Last days** can refer to the immediate days preceding the second coming, but in most cases as here, it refers to the entire Christian era from N.T. times to the end day (cf. Acts 2:17; I Cor. 10:11; Jas. 5:3; Heb. 1:2; I Pet. 1:20; I Jn. 2:18). To warn Timothy to "avoid such people" (v. 5) is ridiculous if they will not appear for several thousand years. (Also, cf. v. 6). These people plagued Timothy, they yet plague us, and if the world continues, they will plague our children's children. Evolutionists preach man is getting better; Scripture indicates he is getting worse.

These **times of stress** ("fierce, difficult, violent, dangerous") are characterized in nineteen ways. Compare the similar list in Rom. 1:26-32.

V. 2 **Lovers of self** is the root sin from which the rest sprout. **Money**, for selfish pleasures, **proud**, boastful swaggering filled with self-praise. **Arrogant**, haughty, disdainful as he looks down on others. **Abusive** ("blaspheming") against God and man. **Disobedient to parents**, even those who gave him life escape not his abuse (I, 5:8). **Ungrateful** to God or parents for he feels he is self-made, an obvious example of "unskilled labor." **Unholy** as nothing is sacred to his mind.

V. 3 **Inhuman** ("lacking natural affection"), his unloving, heartless manner of life is animal-like (or below). **Implacable** ("truce or promise breaker") contains two ideas — one whose sworn word is a lie and/or one who will not make peace but continues the feud forever. **Slanderer** ("devil"), one who hacks others to pieces with his sharp tongue. **Profligates**, one who cannot control himself or his appetites. **Fierce** ("untamed") as a savage animal (Tit. 1:12; Jude 10). **Haters of good**, whether good men or good things or good thoughts (Phil. 4:8).

V. 4 **Treacherous** ("traitor") as Judas, willing to sell anyone for a dollar. **Reckless** ("rash, headstrong, bull headed") as he blunders through life running over anyone who dares stand in his way. **Swollen with conceit** ("wrapped in or puffed up with smoke") and **lovers of pleasure** circles us back to where we began, self-love.

V. 5 **The form of religion** is the most disturbing characteristic of these people as they are "in the church." To these, godliness is a way of gain (I, 6:5). These make religion a farce, not a force; a cloak to hide sin, not a power to cleanse it. As we examine this list, we may find traces of some of these creeping into our lives. Even the Pharisees began as lovers of God.

V. 6 These perverters capture whole **households** as they worm ("creep," cf. Jude 4) their way into the family, beginning first with **weak women** ("weak minded women") who would be more vulnerable than men (Gen. 3; I, 2:11-14). Chrysostom felt that Paul included weak-willed men in this phrase as they were acting like silly-minded women. Certainly, not all women warrant this description (I, 3:11; 5:9, 10).

Three characteristics of these women (not the teachers as the Greek plainly shows) are: (1) **sin-laden**, feeling the heavy burden of wrong doing; thus, easy prey for any conscience-easing teaching; (2) Impulsive as they are **led by various lusts** seeking new and varied delights; (3) **ever learning** but flitting from one moral system to another (Acts 17:21). These conscience-stricken, impulsive, restless beings would gladly invite the "creepy crawlers" into their homes and believe any idea no matter how anti-biblical.

V. 8 These two appear to be the unnamed Egyptian wise men who stood against Moses (Ex. 7:10ff). They, as these teachers, imitated the power of God deceiving people with counterfeit miracles until exposed. We note their: (a) Actions, as they **resist truth**; (2) Heart or motive, **corrupt mind**; (3) Value or eternal state, **reprobate** ("counterfeit"), rejected or disproved as worthless.

V. 9 Again, Paul concludes with assurance as he did in 2:18-20.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Is Paul describing one person with all these vices or society? Can you pin-point some of these vices in our culture?
2. How is it possible to have the "form of religion" but not its power? What is its power?
3. How do false teachers "creep" into our homes today? Are movies, T.V., books, and magazines part of this?
4. What keeps a person "always learning" without coming to a satisfying conclusion?
5. Does anyone imitate God's program today? How can you know they are counterfeit?

## AVOID THE COMING APOSTASY

### SECTION TWO 3:10-17

10 Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions, my sufferings, what befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra, what persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. 12 Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, 13 while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. 14 But as for you,

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

V. 10 Timothy is to be strengthened by: (1) Paul's example to inspire him (10-14); (2) Holy Scripture to instruct him (15-17); (3) Coming judgment to soberize him (4:1-5); (4) Paul's approaching death to motivate him ("All responsibility will soon be yours, my son," 4:6-8).

**Observed** ("follow by one's side") can mean to understand in the mind or to imitate. Son Timothy studied father Paul's life and is now urged to do the same in his life (Phil. 2:20). These seven items comprise active obedience, while the two in v. 11 are more passive. For greater details of these general categories sketched here, read II Cor. 11:21-31.

V. 11 For persecution at **Antioch** and **Iconium**, read Acts 13, 14. **Lystra**, the boyhood home of Timothy, was the site of Paul's stoning possibly witnessed by this young disciple (Acts 14:19, 20). Perhaps Paul even spent the night in his home and ate at his table. Stoning was used to kill blasphemers (Acts 7:59) and Paul had been left for dead. The next day he continued his journey. Certainly God worked some type of wonder (resurrection or healing of a broken body) to enable Paul to go on with his ministry. Surely, the **Lord rescued** him!

Vs. 12, 13 Timothy will not have it any easier. Whenever the church is active, persecution is bound to follow. Scars, physical or spiritual, is the price every Christian must pay to follow Jesus. Paul suggests that persecution will increase and false teachers multiply as time wears on.

V. 14 The **you** is emphatic in the Greek standing at the head of the sentence. Timothy need not fear persecution nor deception for his faith is built on a firm foundation. God's revelation to Moses was what had kept him strong.

V. 15 Jewish children were taught Scripture from infancy (Deut. 11:19; 4:9; 6:7) and Timothy was no exception (II, 1:5). One Jewish maxim stated that "the Jewish child received the law in his mother's milk." Lessons early taught are firmly established (Prov. 22:6). The purpose of Scripture is to bring us to faith in Jesus (Gal. 3:24) and are not an end in themselves.

V. 16 Here is the classic verse affirming the **inspiration** ("God breathed") of Scripture (Cf. II Pet. 1:21; I Cor. 2:6-16). How one regards the Bible will determine his faith. The modernist who considers part of it God's revealed word or who sees it only as a record of man's search

for God has a faith not grounded on substance and will soon be a disciple of those mentioned in verse 6. The one who knows his faith is based upon God's revealed words, the Bible, has everything he needs for firm footing and growth. That is why Paul constantly returns to this vital doctrine throughout these epistles.

Paul says five things about Scripture. (1) It is **God-breathed**, thus reliable and truthful. (2) It is **profitable for teaching**, its truths are just as valid today as when first uttered to Adam and Eve. (3) And for **reproof**, the negative side of stopping error. (4) And for **correction**, the positive aspect as one is pointed to the correct way. (5) And for **training** ("discipline") **in righteousness**, as one grows into the likeness of Jesus. Where the Bible is taught, faith abounds. When the Bible is forgotten, the whole society sinks into a moral morass.

V. 17 This verse follows naturally out of the preceding. If one gives himself to Scripture, he will find himself **complete** ("fitted") or whole, not a fragmented man who is unable to cope with life or work. And he is able to do **every good work** for God has so prepared him. God doesn't call us to do jobs we can handle; He makes us able to handle jobs to which He calls us. Don't pray for God to remove mountains; pray for God to make you strong enough to climb them!

#### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Does God always deliver us from persecutions? When He does, does He always use "miraculous" means?
2. If we are not being persecuted for our faith, should we wonder why?
3. How can we make God's Word second nature to us as it was to the Jew? What home practices, church practices, leisure time activities are helpful?
4. The more Bible a man knows, the more God should be able to use him. Are there exceptions to this? Why?