

Preach the Word!

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts:  
and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you  
a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

1 Peter 3:15

As we come near the end of Paul's last letter to Timothy, we will see Paul's last appeal, warning, and example to this pastor of the great Church at Ephesus. There is much in the New Testament about this church, and we know from historical information that the city of Ephesus and the Church at Ephesus were very important and influential during this time. But there is very little about the church after Bible times. What happened? We will explore that a little more in 2 weeks when we conclude our study of 2 Timothy. The Book of Revelation gives some insight, which we will touch on today and go into more in Lesson 23.

*Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth  
the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*

Revelation 2:1

In the Book of Revelation, the descriptions of Jesus at the beginning of each of the letters to the seven churches all add up to a complete picture of Jesus as described in Revelation chapter 1. Here the first church shows that He holds, supervises, and protects the churches and their leaders as they shine their lights in the world. This really applies to the Ephesians because they were so enthusiastic about sharing the Gospel and holding to sound doctrine. Their one problem was a cooling of their *first love* for the Lord, His people, and the work given to them (at this later time). We can see this flaw already working in the Church at Ephesus in the letters to Timothy – Paul instructed them to remember God's love; have patience; not strive; be gentle, meek, and longsuffering; and to have faith with love. Paul wrote to the Ephesians to love one another (Eph.5:1-2).

I'm mentioning this now because it ties in with some of our verses today. Also, next week we will take a different subject from Paul to Timothy. In our conclusion (Lesson 23) I will go back to this in more detail.

READ 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Verse 1: This is a strong charge, Paul's last time to tell Timothy these things.

Before God and the Lord Jesus Christ – very serious

Christ will judge all people who ever lived – at the end of this age, the *last days* (2 Tim. 3:1).

Verse 2: *Preach the Word* – This verse begins and ends with giving the Word of God.

*Instant in season, out of season* – be there to do what is needed; whether convenient or not in the situation AND for Timothy personally; whenever and wherever the Lord's work requires the ministry.

*Longsuffering* = much patience; greatly needed – don't be “pushy”!

The care for the life of believers often requires leaders to:

*Reprove* = convict of sin

*Rebuke* = admonish, forbid

*Exhort* = console, encourage

All with the *doctrine*, the teaching of the Word – in love.

Verses 3-4: Dark times ahead

*They* – these were people who called themselves Christians.

They will not listen to the Word.

Instead they seek to satisfy their strong desires for things they like to hear – that which will not disagree with them; will cater to their “pet doctrines;” and will bring “excitement” to their “religious” experiences.

*Heap* – add one upon another – one teacher is not enough.

*Itching ears* – just itching to hear a variety of delights, so they...

*Turn away their ears from the truth* – they won't listen to the Word of God.

We are to turn away from such people: *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.* 2 Tim. 3:5

These people are spiritually dangerous to believers; avoid getting involved with their ideas about spiritual matters.

*Fables* = fiction; they left the truth and followed fictional ideas.

Note that in 2 Tim. 3:6 certain people took advantage of *silly women laden with sins*. They should have ministered repentance and the truths of the Word to them. But they liked having the power over people that came with their deceptions.

*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me,  
let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

Luke 9:23

The above scripture is greatly distorted by people who are described in this passage. It is very foreign to their thinking.

There is a vicious cycle that gets going in this kind of situation. The people become corrupted because they are not taught properly. Then they become easy prey for false teachers to control them. Paul was writing to Timothy to head this off. AND Timothy must have done a good job, judging by what Jesus said to the Church at Ephesus over 30 years later (as recorded in Rev. 2).

Verse 5: *Watch* = be alert, *sober* = of a sound mind, serious; Timothy needed to keep an eye out with his wits about him.

*Endure afflictions* – this concerned the troubles that come our way as people and more so as Christians. Persecutions are more directed against us by those who oppose us.

*Evangelist* = one who give the Gospel of Jesus Christ unto salvation. That should always be a part of any doctrine that goes forth – there is always the possibility that someone hears, even within the church, who does not yet know Jesus as Lord.

*Make full proof* = carry out fully.

This passage was a strong encouragement to Timothy to deal with and head off the coming problems within the Church at Ephesus. Timothy did a good job. Over 30 years later we read in Rev. 2:1-7 that the Church at Ephesus had rejected many of the specific errors and heresies that were trying to come into it. Yet Jesus gave one caution. In it all, their love they had at the beginning for the Lord Jesus, His followers, and their work of the Lord, had faded. Why? Their very strength that they had exposed and rejected false doctrine and false teachers inside and outside of the church. In doing this, they forgot God's love, patience, longsuffering, faith WITH love, and other expressions of God's love.

This is a sober caution to us as well. May we always help each other to stay with sound doctrine – and do so in love. Let's end by hearing Paul's words to the Ephesians, and then Jesus' words to all His followers:

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

Eph. 5:1-2

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another;  
as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

John 13:34-35