

It is indeed tempting to give up all when a great leader of the faith is removed. But we are not to become dependant upon our spiritual leaders, helpful and inspiring as they are. Their job and aim is rather to feed and protect us and gradually wean us from what ever dependance we might naturally have placed in them. We are to grow to become completely and confidently dependant upon Christ alone. So Paul continues to build up Timothy, and faithful others, using himself as an example. He is enduring much hardship. He directs his service as a straight arrow toward the goal despite diversionary temptations of the enemy to become involved in the affairs of this world. He is striving "lawfully," preaching Christ and Him crucified, not contriving human arrangements and attractions to draw an audience or retain a congregation. He is enduring with the patience of a farmer anticipating the fruits of his toils despite the setbacks so familiar to any who seek to make a living out-of-doors. He remains focused upon his objective: that "the elect" may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Does this mean there is an elect out there that will respond to the gospel when they hear it? Or does it refer to those who are believers already whom he desires to bring safely to the ultimate salvation of being with the Anointed King Jesus when He reigns with eternal glory? Perhaps both, but certainly the latter. Not that there is danger of apostasy for a true believer. But, as Peter says, it will be though difficulty we all must be brought through to glory, 1Peter 4:17-18.

If we have died with Him we shall also live with Him. This is a statement that is trustworthy, reliable. He died for us, rose again and lives forever now. We are identified with Him in His death, have died with Him. We were dead in trespasses and sins but He died for us. Now, as Paul teaches in Romans 6, 7, & 8, we, by accepting that we died with Him, have authority to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God. With the power of the indwelling Spirit of God we begin to live our eternal life right here and now. But there is a future "shall also" aspect when we will fully enjoy eternal life with Him, unhampered by the sin nature that is still in us all. But eternal life entails suffering at first, for He suffered, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

...

We have the privilege of actually experiencing a little of what He endured as the Son of Man here in this scene. As Paul puts it:

Colossians 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

Not that we enjoy these experiences, for we are not masochists. But we can enjoy the communion of His presence and His approval in a way unrealized otherwise.

He suffered, He will reign. (This thought is the substance, the romantic story line, of a vast number of novels, nursery tales, plays, musicals published by unsaved man.)

If we deny Him, (as Peter once did) we lose out on some blessings that otherwise would have been ours, and if our faith falters so we believe not, we are not lost, for **He** remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Who would He reject of those He has paid such a terrible price for? How could His heart of love forsake anyone so needy that He died for them? We can't even pry ourselves out of His hand which is already covered by His Father's hand, John 10:27-30. He has purchased us with His blood shed on the cross. If we falter in faith He is omnipotent, omniscient to save. Yet He does reward the faithful and may withhold some rewards from those less faithful. But, by the grace of God, every saved person shall have righteous praise from God, 1Corinthians 4:5.

Again Timothy is urged to put these things in remembrance, to put everything in the correct perspective, in the midst of so many competing thoughts and ideas. Are we confused by some teaching we've heard? Does it conflict with what we've already learned? Who is right? How can we tell? If we remember Jesus Christ! If we remember that He died for us! If we remember He is returning for us, then to reign with us! We will not be led astray if our hearts are fixed on Christ. The Holy Spirit uses the inspired scriptures to lead us into truth. Truth that speaks of Christ. They are the standard. God provided His word in writing and preserved it for us so it could not be distorted in the retelling as verbally transmitted traditions can be. Even so men have come to place greater value on subsequently developed traditions of men than upon the inspired word of God. Timothy (and of course each of us) is charged to "strive diligently," a stronger effort than simply studying. We are to put out the greatest effort to be a person that meets with God's approval. Not to earn His approval so He will save us, but as godly children desiring to please a loving Father. Study in a workman like manner. Schedule the work, gather the needed tools, request the help needed to do the job, set to it, pursue it until completed, review it with the Teacher, pray for wisdom and power to carry out what has been learned.

Rightly divide the word of truth! Can the Truth be divided? In one sense, no, for it is all one unified expression of God's revelation to man. But within this one word of truth there are God given differences and divisions. Paul speaks of a special revelation given him by God to convey to us, Ephesians 3:1-5. Obvious divisions are the Old and New Testaments. The 66 books are God given divisions. The Psalms and some subdivisions in other books are inspired as well. While God Himself doesn't change, His ways from time to time do change. A very obvious example is the law being given the Children of Israel though Moses. Those who

lived before Moses didn't have this law. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph did not have the Law of Moses reveled to them nor imposed upon them. After 1400 years of law, Christ came and brought salvation on the principle of faith and actually presumed to proclaim "the law says thus and thus, but I say unto you this," superceding the law with the command to love. So a diligent study of the word of God will reveal to every believer a number of these very important distinctions. These are so critical that ignorance of them distorts the believer's knowledge of God and His will and ways in this age. The saints in Asia had already forsaken the particular part of the truth given Paul to reveal. They were on their way to disaster. They were being distracted from the essentials of the truth by men quibbling over words, thereby missing the ideas and principles contained in the scriptures as a whole. And beyond mere striving about words their profane and vain babblings were being introduced and mixed in with the scriptures, contaminating the thinking of those who did not personally dig into the word of God. (Amazingly the scriptures referred to here were at first comprised only the Old Testament. Do we know our Old Testament well enough to detect, reject, and counter error and evil teaching? Do we know our New Testament, largely written directly for us and to us, well enough to detect, reject, and counter false teaching? Can we distinguish what was written for Israel from what is written to us?) The mixture of truth and what soon became traditions of men ate like a canker (gangrene, ulcer), like cancer destroying the testimony of the faithful and causing immense pain and division among the people of God.

Two men are named as examples. Their teaching had an appealing allure to it because it put the listeners on earthly ground, where the natural man is most comfortable. If the resurrection is past there is no heavenly hope remaining to the saints. Had they missed it, somehow been left behind? This thought would overthrow faith if anything would. To forsake this hope was to forsake Paul. They probably spiritualized the promise of a real physical hope, the Rapture, a common error today. It denies the Rapture and sets the saints on earth today to work to reform and dominate the world to bring about righteousness worldwide so the Lord can return to reign over a prepared and compliant people. False! So the Lord has seen fit to put this kind of reasoning to shame. We **suffer now, not reign**, though some aspired to, "ye have reigned with out us," 1Corinthians 4:8, and still do. But God's plan is different.

1Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Jesus Christ's Revelation to John tells of great supernatural interventions on earth by Christ Himself while still in heaven. These are necessary before He can reign. So the Lord has provided a direct rebuttal of the error, still prevalent today, that was taught by Hymenaeus and Philetus way back in

Paul's day. Lay hold on the truth. Heed it. Focus on our heavenly hope and calling in Christ. Don't let Satan divert us from the real mission the Lord has entrusted to us, the gospel and the truth of the church. They are what can change the world.

Despite all the attacks, whether sharp persecution or slimy perversions of the truth the FOUNDATION OF GOD STANDS SURE. A deep, stable, solid, dependable foundation neither wavering in every wind of doctrine that comes along, Ephesians 4:14; or sinking under the weight of immoral practices men seek to heap upon it in the Lord's name, 2Peter 5:10 (above). This foundation has a seal. A mark or symbol of authority of the sealer. Pilate sealed the tomb of Jesus. Government seals often have two faces like a coin. (The Great Seal of the United States of America has two faces. It can be seen on the back of each one dollar bill.) The seal on the foundation of God has two faces. They depict His Grace and His Holiness. In some ways this seal is also like an agreement between God and His own. He agrees that "The Lord knows them that are his" and we agree that "Let him that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (unrighteousness)."

This passage of 2Timothy is one of the most important, yet misunderstood, in the New Testament. But it is basic to continuation of a faithful testimony in the midst of worldwide departure from the truth of Christ and the Church. Yet it is denied, rejected, twisted, ignored, and just "dumbed down" by those who should know better.

God's will could not be put more simply.

"Let him that names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (unrighteousness)."

That's it. Sounds simple enough. Sounds good! Why is it so hard to understand and put into practice. It is consistent with God's nature, character and ways revealed to men since the beginning.

We have the clear call of God's seal on His foundation "Depart from iniquity." (Not "put unrighteousness out of me.") It doesn't matter if the person might be a believer. I am to depart **from the iniquity and, obviously, persons or groups practicing or embracing iniquity**. This means not going on as if nothing is wrong, with a person whose conduct or teaching is unrighteous. Nor should we yoke ourselves to one who claims to be a believer and isn't living like one.

Now if the person doesn't claim to be a believer we cannot go out of the world but we can depart from partnering with them in business or socially. Here is one of scripture's distinctions. I can be a faithful fellow employee with unsaved employees of an unsaved master but not a partner in business with an unsaved person, Corinthians 5:10; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1. And we shouldn't join the social, charitable, political organizations, etc., of the world.

2Corintians 6:15 what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

The statement "Depart from iniquity" is dramatically

illustrated in an incident during the forty year wilderness trek of the Children of Israel, the rebellion of Korah.

Numbers 16:25 *And Moses rose up and went unto Dathan and Abiram; and the elders of Israel followed him. 26 And he spake unto the congregation, saying, Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins. 27 So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: . . .*

There are two ways one can take the word “depart.” Many translate the phrase in a way that makes it a personal purifying, removing evil from one’s self, one’s motives, thought life, fantasies, and actions. Like, “Search me O God ...” Psalm 139:23-24. This is indeed an essential part of a believer’s life and never to be neglected.

2Corinthians 7:1 *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

But Paul’s thought here goes further than that. Upon personal cleansing one can find his righteous soul is still vexed and repeatedly contaminated by the sinful atmosphere of his associates, even though they claim to be the Lord’s. Worse, the name of Christ is blasphemed by their teaching or conduct. If this happens we mourn, 1Corintians 5:2! We plead, Matthew 18:15-17! . . . Aw, why do I even care, as long as I know **I’m** safe and won’t get lost in the shuffle waiting for the Lord’s return? But can I sit by when the One who died to save me is defamed by those who claim to be “Christians”? Can I refuse to honor Him and walk apart with Him? Cannot I refuse to walk with those who are unrighteous? David got it, why can’t we?

Psalm 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

“The Lord knows them that are His”

We know who **says** they are a believer but only the Lord knows if they really are His. He knows me, knows you! He knows who are the hypocrites. He knows if you are His, or if you aren’t! But we may not always be able to tell for sure who is a believer and who is not. Does it matter? Yes, Paul tells the Corinthians “be not unequally yoked with unbelievers,” 2Corinthians 6:14, and “come out from among them and be ye separate saith Jehovah.” 6:17. How can we

avoid such yokes if we can’t always positively tell believers from unbelievers? How can we know who is His? How can we decide with whom to fellowship and whom to come out from among? What if I mistakenly **link** (yoke) myself with an unbeliever who says he is a believer and really isn’t? Or what if I **refuse** to fellowship (yoke) with one who says he is a believer but whose life at the time does not bear witness to that he is Christ’s. Shouldn’t Christ be evident in his life? That is the key. Given a person’s claim to be a Christian, our responsibility and grounds for decision on association is based upon observation of their words and conduct. Their teaching and morality. Their reverence for the Lord’s name and respect for His word. Are they righteous or not? Briefly, if they are not then appeal to them. If still necessary, depart from unrighteousness.

2Corinthians 6:14 *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty*

John 17:15 *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 17 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 ¶ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

John 1:7 *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds*

More next week.

By Ron Canner, June 28, 2006