

A LIFE TO LIVE

A Verse By Verse Study of
Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

The Bible Notebook Series

By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

DEDICATION

To
Robin

My Daughter-in-Law

And

Abigail's Mother

I thank God upon every remembrance of you.

INTRODUCTION

The First and Second Epistles of Paul Timothy and Epistle to Titus are usually called the Pastoral Epistles because they provide instruction and guidance concerning the care and protection of the churches. The three letters focus upon sound doctrine, conduct within the church, and leadership qualifications and responsibilities within the fellowship. The importance of sound doctrine and a life of godliness are recurring themes throughout these last three letters written by Paul.

Paul was probably released from the Roman imprisonment mentioned at the end of Acts (ch. 28). This provided an opportunity for a fourth, and unchronicled missionary journey, which may be traced to some extent by the geographical and political references in these Pastoral Epistles. Since it is not possible to harmonize all the references in the Pastoral Epistles with the Book of Acts, the places mentioned must have been visited by Paul after Acts was completed. During this time between the first Roman imprisonment and the second imprisonment he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. Later he traveled to Rome where he was imprisoned a second time and finally martyred (around A.D. 66-68). Shortly before his execution, Paul wrote the second letter to Timothy, his son in the ministry.

AUTHOR: Paul, the Thirteenth Apostle. The first verse states that the author is Paul, the Saul of Tarsus who had the dramatic conversion experience on the Road to Damascus. Numerous references (cf. 4:6-18) confirm his authorship. As with 1 Timothy, there have been many attempts to disprove Paul's authorship of the letter, but none are really unconvincing.

DATE: A.D. 66-68. After his release from the imprisonment recorded in Acts 28:30 and his subsequent travels in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), Troas (2 Tim. 4:13), and possibly Spain, Paul returns to Rome as a prisoner (2 Tim. 1:16, 17). We are not given the circumstances, but at some point he either was re-arrested and taken back to Rome as a prisoner, or he returned to Rome where he was arrested and imprisoned a second time. As Paul writes this epistle, he regards his execution as imminent (4:6-8), which means that this is his final correspondence, certainly his final epistle to be included in the New Testament canon. While the letter cannot be dated with precision, a date of A.D. 66-68 is likely, possible toward the end of that period.

The two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus are called the "Pastoral Epistles, because in these three epistles Paul delineates the basic principles for the pastoral ministry, as well as the qualifications for ministers. These letters were written to trusted fellow-servants of the Lord to offer them critical help for pastoral care in trying times. Paul was inspired to write them to provide help for real people in a real time, dealing with very real problems. The principles set forth were obviously needed at the First Century church and for the church of any day.

THEME: Steadfast Christian Living. The First Epistle of Paul to Timothy was written to establish sound doctrine in the church. The Second Epistle to Timothy was intended to encourage steadfast Christian living in the face of threats and trials (1:8, 13; 2:1, 3, 5, 15; 3:1, 10-14; 4:1-5). However, the false teaching mentioned in the first letter was still an issue (2:16-18).

THE THEOLOGICAL MESSAGE. The theological emphasis of 2 Timothy is that faithful Christian living demands the pursuit of godliness in and through Jesus Christ.

A Comparison of Paul's Two Roman Imprisonments

First Imprisonment

Acts 28—Wrote the Prison Epistles

Local sporadic persecutions (A.D. 60–63)

Many friends visited him

He Was optimistic for release and freedom
(Phil 1:24-26)

Persecuted by Rome and arrested as
a criminal against the Empire

Poor conditions, in a cold, dark
dungeon

Opportunities for witness were
restricted

Second Imprisonment

Accused by Jews of heresy and sedition

Decent living conditions in a rented house (Acts
28:30, 31).

Many opportunities for Christian witness
were available.

Time is running out

Neronian persecution (A.D. 64-68)

Virtually alone (only Luke with him)

Anticipated his execution (2 Tim 4:6)

Matthew Henry notes that:

The first design of this epistle seems to have been, to apprise Timothy of what had occurred during the imprisonment of the apostle, and to request him to come to Rome. But being uncertain whether he should be suffered to live to see him, Paul gives a variety of advices and encouragements, for the faithful discharge of his ministerial duties. As this was a private epistle written to St. Paul's most intimate friend, under the miseries of imprisonment, and in the near prospect of death, it shows the temper and character of the apostle, and contains convincing proofs that he sincerely believed the doctrines he preached [MH: QuickVerse, Parsons Tech].

BRINGING THE STORY TOGETHER

(From this writer's study in 1 Timothy)

We are introduced to Saul of Tarsus, the young student of Gamaliel, as a young man who highly approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:58). Next, we find the militant young Pharisee “ravaging the church, entering house after house; and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison” (Acts 8:3). Next, “Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2).

As almost all believers are well aware, Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. He was converted in what has been for two thousand years referred to as a” Damascus Road Experience. “His experience was one of the most dramatic conversions ever recorded, and it happened to one of the most remarkable people who ever walked on the face of the earth. Paul was converted and called to preach the Gospel to Jews, to kings and governors, and to Gentiles. In particular, he was the Apostle to the Gentiles, even though Peter and the other Apostles reached out to Gentiles, and John spends more time working among Gentiles than any of them.

Paul, blinded by his encounter with the risen Lord, was led to Damascus where, after three days, the Lord sent Ananias to lay his hand Saul so that he might receive his sight. After his conversion, Saul spent three years in the Arabia studying the OT Scriptures and relating all he had learned in the Synagogue at Tarsus and in the graduate course in Jerusalem under Gamaliel to the Messiah. After three years he tried to reach out to the Jews in Damascus with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which led to serious consequences, as the former persecutor became the persecuted. Disciples slipped Saul out of Damascus by lowering him in a basket from a window.

Saul then went back to Jerusalem where he presented himself, not to the priest and scribes, but to the church. They did not trust Saul, the militant young man who had ravaged the church only three years earlier. It was Barnabas who befriended him and encouraged the leaders in the church at Jerusalem to accept him. After a brief time Barnabas then wisely took him to Caesarea and put him on a ship bound for Saul's home at Tarsus, where he supported himself as a tent maker while carrying on some kind of ministry in and around Tarsus.

Several years later, Barnabas went to Antioch of Syria in response to exciting reports of phenomenal success in the spread of the Gospel in the area. The extraordinary growth continued and when it became apparent that Barnabas needed an assistant he went to Tarsus and sought out Saul to come back and work with him. After about a year the Lord called Barnabas and Saul to go on a missionary journey which would take them deeper into the Gentile world. First they went to Cypress, taking John Mark with them to the home of Barnabas. From there they crossed to the mainland where John Mark turned back, possibly because the effort was a lot rougher than he had expected.

Barnabas and Paul went to Antioch of Pisidia (or Antioch on the way to Pisidia), where Paul preached in the Synagogue. From there, they went to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, where churches were established, and where the missionaries met with serious opposition. It was at Lystra where a young man named Timothy, half Jewish and half Gentile, was saved, along with his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois.

The missionaries had started out as Barnabas and Saul, but by the time they returned to Antioch of Syria to report to the church they were known as Paul and Barnabas. Paul had become the leader and chief spokesman, and it may be assumed that it was with the approval of Barnabas. When they reported on the mission work among the Gentiles they met Judaizers, Jews who professed faith in Christ, who had come from Jerusalem during their absence. These Judaizers would have made Christianity another sect of Judaism if they had their way. They insisted that the Gentiles must first be circumcised - they had to become proselytes to Judaism and then they could become Christians.

Paul refused to compromise and when they could not settle the issue at Antioch, scheduled a conference in Jerusalem - the Jerusalem Conference of A. D. 51 (Acts 15; Gal. 2). The Judaizers vehemently opposed Paul and Barnabas, but with the help of Simon Peter they convinced the conference that Gentiles are saved the same way as Jews, by grace through faith. James, the half-brother of our Lord, who seems to have been the moderator of the conference, wrote the opinion (decision or ruling) of the conference. Paul tells us in Galatians that he had Titus with him and brought him out as a test case to have the leaders in Jerusalem affirm the opinion of the conference (Gal. 2).

They returned to Antioch with a report and after a period of time they made plans to go back to the church that had been started on the First Missionary Journey and read James' letter to them.

Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again but Paul did not trust him and would not let him go with them. Finally, Barnabas took John Mark and went back to Cypress and Paul took Silas and went back to the churches that had been started in the first mission trip.

They read the letter from James, helped organize the work, elect leaders, and encouraged them in the work. At Lystra, Paul invited young Timothy to join him and Silas on the Second Missionary Journey. Though Paul stated that he would have absolutely refused to permit Titus to be circumcised, he circumcised Timothy before he permitted him to accompany him. What was the difference? Titus was a Gentile, Timothy was half-Jewish. What difference did that make? Timothy would be well received in the synagogues only if he was circumcised.

Paul had a mission strategy. He followed the major Roman roads to the major population centers and once he arrived there he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He was invited to speak and he proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah. He stayed in the synagogue as long as the Jews permitted, but when forced out, took believing Jews and Gentiles and started a church. The Gospel would then spread from the major population centers out into the smaller towns and villages. Timothy would not have been accepted in the synagogues unless he was circumcised (identified with Judaism).

Paul, Silas, and Timothy went on to Troas where they were joined by a physician named Luke, whom the Holy Spirit would inspire to write both the Gospel According to Luke and the Book of Acts, which chronicled the early spread of the Gospel. They would be led of the Lord to go to Philippi, and from there to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and then to Corinth where they would continue for eighteen months. There would be a Third Missionary Journey, which closed with Paul and others taking a love-offering to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. When he arrived, he went immediately to report to James, the half-brother of Jesus. James counseled him regarding his acceptance by the Jews at the Temple, but when someone from Ephesus saw him he began claiming that Paul had brought a Gentile into the Temple. An angry mob - picture the Palestinians in Israel screaming and working themselves in to a frenzy - they took Paul and would no doubt have killed him if he had not been rescued by Roman soldiers (not arrested as some believe, though it meant about the same thing). When the captain learned of a death threat to Paul he sent him by night to Caesarea, where he was a prisoner for two years before appealing to Rome (his right as a Roman citizen). On the voyage to Rome Paul was miraculously saved from a storm, a violent sea, and from a poisonous snake bite. Then came the first Roman imprisonment - Paul was finally in Rome, though not as he had planned. He was released from prison and probably traveled to Spain and then back to Ephesus, where he had spent three years on the Second Missionary Journey. In Ephesus, Paul had to deal with some really serious problems and when he moved on to Macedonia (Philippi). But left Timothy in charge at Ephesus. He then wrote the First Epistle to Timothy to encourage him and to guide him in dealing with problems in the church.

SECOND TIMOTHY

THE SALUTATION, 1:1-2.

1:1 - PAUL. *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus.”* This is Saul of Tarsus, known in the Roman world by his Roman name, Paul. This was the young Pharisee who sat at the feet of the famed Gamaliel in Jerusalem where he surpassed all his peers in his studies in the Mosaic Law and in the traditions of the Jews. This is the young man who so militantly and aggressively attacked Christians before his conversion. We are introduced to him at the time of the death of Stephen. Young Saul held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, after having heard his great sermon, a sermon which only enraged him at the time, but one that he would remember over and over again in the future.

To try to imagine how militant and vicious young Saul was in this defense of Judaism and in his determination to wipe out what he considered a heresy, one only has to recall the latest news footage of a street filled with shouting, rock throwing Palestinians. Of course, we may not want to picture Paul in such a light, but he does not minimize his guilt in his own testimony, which is recorded for us in Acts (Paul’s defense before Agrippa, Acts 25) and in His epistles.

AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST. This is the “Thirteenth Apostle”, whose conversion on the Road to Damascus was so dramatic that the church still speaks proverbially of a Damascus Road Experience. He was saved and appointed an Apostle to the Gentiles. His apostleship had been constantly challenged by the Judaizers, whose defeat at the Jerusalem Conference (A.D. 51) inflamed their intense opposition to Paul, and their attacks on his apostleship. The Judaizers were Jews who professed faith in Jesus Christ, but insisted that since salvation is of the Jews, Gentiles would have to be circumcised - become proselytes to Judaism - before they could become Christians. Peter helped Paul and Barnabas win the victory in Jerusalem, and James, the half-brother of Jesus penned what I like to call the opinion of the Conference (Acts 15; Gal. 2). The Judaizers lost the debate but they would follow him into the Gentile world, visiting the churches he had planted, especially in Asia Minor, telling the people that they knew the Apostles in Jerusalem, and Paul was not one of them.

Paul does not mention his apostleship because Timothy needed convincing, but because the Holy Spirit inspired him to make the statement once again that he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” He was not self appointed, as the Judaizers claimed. He was appointed by Jesus for the glory of the Father, “according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus” which points to the present and the future. Paul had written in 1 Tim. 4:8b, “godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”

1:2 - TO TIMOTHY. “*To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Timothy was indeed, a son-in-the-ministry to the Apostle to the Gentiles, having been converted on the First Missionary Journey, and having joined Paul and Silas on the Second Missionary Journey, Timothy would become his closest associate, pupil, and son-in-the-ministry. No student ever had a greater teacher. Paul trusted him personally, and he trusted him in the ministry.

GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE. In Psalm 23, we have goodness and mercy, and in the New Testament we often find mercy and peace together. In Paul’s introductions we often see the Greek greeting (grace) and the Hebrew greeting (peace) together. In my study on First Timothy I had at first left out mercy because I was intent upon finding and using what I had written in a commentary on Philippians on grace and peace. My good friend, Dr. Gene Jeffries, president of Cambridge Graduate School called my oversight to my attention - and prompted a re-write that I had planned to postpone for a few weeks.

At this point I am going to include a brief study of these three great NT words which I included in the study of 1 Timothy (including Dr. Jeffries’ note on mercy), basically because there are times when I am studying and I look down and see a foot note directing me to go back to notes the author made on an earlier passage, or in another study. I do not always have the time to look it up so I overlook it. The following comments are made in A CHARGE TO KEEP, A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY OF FIRST TIMOTHY:

Paul begins this epistle with the typical style for a Greco-Roman letter of the day, including the author, and the recipients, and a greeting. But Paul’s greeting is not the standard greeting, either for the Jewish readers or the Greek readers. It is a combination of the Greek and Jewish greeting which brings together concepts precious to the early church. The normal Greek greeting (*chairein*) carries the basic idea of joy, pleasure, beauty. Grace is from the Greek word *charis*, which in NT means God’s unmerited favor and love.

In a Greek letter it could simply mean “greetings”, as in Philippians 1, or James 1:1). As used in the New Testament, it refers to the unmerited favor of God. It has been well said that it is easier to define than to believe. To believe in grace we have to give up our arrogance, and ideas about our own worth (self esteem). We can never accept something as ours because of our own merit. We can never claim God’s blessings as our right or as our property by our own merit.

Here is what Dr. Jeffries wrote on mercy (for which I am indebted):

Mercy (*eleoj*) means to "take the hurt out" (as in an eleemosynary institution,

a hospital). What intrigues me is this: only in Paul's Pastorals does he sandwich this in between "grace" and "peace." Could it be that he uses it to Timothy and Titus because God's "frontline servants" need hurt removed more (or more frequently) than others? [Dr. Gene Jeffries, President of Cambridge Graduate School].

Peace (*eirene*, Gk.; *shalom* in Heb.) is the usual Hebrew greeting. The word carries the idea of joining, or weaving together. "Peace in the Jewish sense is the symphony of life made meaningful through a right relationship with God. The theological order is significant as well; it is only through the grace made available by the shed blood of the spotless Lamb of God that peace will come". Peace is positive and not negative. It connotes far more than the absence of strife and hostility - it expresses the desire for harmony with God and with other people.

Here, peace has to do with a new relationship and points to blessings we receive because of grace. There is a problem, however. Today we usually understand peace to mean an inner peace of mind, but Paul was not a post-Freudian psychologist. God seeks to save neurotics. There are sincere Christians who are deeply troubled. Believers are often put to the test. How, then, does grace bring us peace? When one accepts Christ, the warfare between himself and God is over. So, Paul prays for them to realize what they already have (it was not dependent upon his prayer). From the point of one's new birth in Christ the Lord seeks to make the peace that passes all understanding a reality in every aspect of the life of His children.

That other Christian writers would be influenced by Paul's new letter writing style is seen in the writing of the early Church Fathers. Polycarp, who was probably an infant at the time of Paul's martyrdom, would show the influence of Paul's writing style a half century later in a letter to the Philippian church. He began his letter, "Polycarp, and the presbyters with him, to the Church of God sojourning at Philippi: Mercy to you, and peace from God Almighty, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, be multiplied."

Paul prays for both grace and peace. They can only come in that order. Grace is the source of peace - peace is always dependent upon grace. If God withdraws his grace, there will be no peace and we would be lost. Prayer for grace recognizes a continuous need. The grace of God always comes as His free and unmerited gift; it is never our private possession - not an inalienable right. "That Gentiles have finally been made partakers in this marvelous mystery of God is the prime cause of the keynote of joy sounded throughout the epistle."

Millions are seeking peace today, but they will never find it anywhere except in the Prince of Peace. Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker, or read the words

on a church sign: NO JESUS, NO PEACE, KNOW JESUS, KNOW PEACE.
Let me try to adapt that to this Scripture - there is:

No joy without peace,
No peace without grace,
No grace without Jesus.

I. THANKS EXPRESSED FOR TIMOTHY, 1:3-7.

1:3 - I THANK GOD. *“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.”* This is inspired, but it is also personal with Paul. He loved Timothy as a father loves a son and he wanted to express that affection, but there is more - He thanks God for the way Timothy is developing in the ministry. Paul is about to be put to death and, just as he had been ready to go to be with the Lord when he wrote the letter to the Philippians during his first Roman imprisonment, he is ready now and the time is close at hand. That which elicits such expression of gratitude is probably a combination of things. Paul thanks God for Timothy because of what he means to him personally, for what he means to him in the ministry, and for his assuming his responsibilities in the ministry in an outstanding manner.

That Paul serves the Lord “with a clear conscience” hardly surprises the serious student of the NT. What may surprise some is the reference to his pious ancestry: “the way my forefathers did.” This affords a little added information about Paul’s family history. Paul constantly remembered Timothy in his prayers, knowing the awesome responsibility he faced in the ministry to which he had been called, and knowing the danger he faced daily in that ministry. Let’s face it, it is amazing that Timothy was not in prison, facing death with Paul.

1:4 - LONGING TO SEE YOU. *“Longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.”* Robertson wrote: “Longing (*epithôô*). Present active participle of *epithôô*, old word, eight times in Paul (1Th 3:6; Php 1:8, etc.)” [ATR, in the Bible Navigator, from Broadman and Holman]. Paul was in jail, facing death so there is little doubt that he was longing to see his beloved son-in-the-ministry. “As I recall your tears” may be a reference to scenes like that in Miletus (Acts 20:37), where “there was a great deal of weeping by everyone” (HCSB) as they “embraced Paul and kissed him.”

Death is imminent, but joy is eternal. Happiness depends upon circumstances, but not joy. The joy the Lord brings to His children overcomes circumstances.

1:5 - THE SINCERE FAITH. *“For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.”* Paul knew Timothy well and if there had been any hypocrisy in him Paul would have known it. More to the point, if his faith had not been absolutely sincere, the Holy Spirit would not have in-

spired Paul to write these words. Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice had been instrumental in his early development in the faith. Their faith was genuine, and so was Timothy's. There was a time when it was common to walk through a church building and see TEL above a Sunday School classroom - TEL: Timothy, Eunice, and Lois.

The Lord was preparing Timothy for a great work even before he heard the Gospel. He had an outstanding background in the Law and the prophets before Paul showed up in his home town to declare the good news that the Messiah had come, and that He was Jesus of Nazareth.

1:6 - KINDLE AFRESH THE GIFT OF GOD. *"For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."* When Paul says, "for this reason," he means his knowledge of Timothy's sincere faith (v. 5). The HCSB reads, "Therefore, I remind you to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands." The Holy Spirit indwells us to sanctify us, to nurture and develop us, but it is the responsibility of the each believer to seek a daily filling with the Holy Spirit so that we may keep afresh the gift of God in us.

God gave the gift. The laying on of hands by Paul symbolized that gift. No individual can appropriate that gift for himself, and no one can transfer it to another. In the laying on of hands in an ordination service we recognize the gift of God in one who is called to serve the Lord.

1:7 - THE SPIRIT OF TIMIDITY. *"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline."* The quiet spirit may honor the Lord, but not the timid heart. When the human spirit is endowed by the Holy Spirit, the believer is not given the spirit of timidity, "but of power and discipline." The power comes from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and the discipline comes from a heart and mind in submission the Him.

II. THE CALL OF A MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST, 1:8-18.

A. A Call to Be Courageous, 1:8-12.

1:8 - DO NOT BE ASHAMED. *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God."* If Timothy had not heard gossip, jokes, and slanderous charges about Paul's imprisonment, those people were a different breed from some of our members today. I was the evangelist for a revival and I was visiting in the church office during Sunday School when a man entered. His whole attitude was negative, egotistical, and arrogant. He asked about a staff member who had just resigned, "What happened to Bill?" Someone told him he had moved to a church in another state. Loudly enough that no one in the area would fail to hear him, he said, "Wonder what it cost for

God to move him?!!”

This man was a politician and a year or two later he was elected mayor of that city. The world rewards some people for an attitude that dishonors the Lord.

Currently (Nov., 2003), the media is attacking General Jerry Boykin, Under Secretary of Defense, whom I mention in the study on 1 Timothy, had been had been responsible for the training of the Green Berets before assuming his present responsibilities. Dr. Gene Mims, Vice President of LifeWay Christian Resources, ran a video tape for LifeWay trustees in which General Boykin defined and explained “Force Multipliers.” Two groups of twelve Green Berets had been dropped into Afghanistan to help them take the capitol city and it was obvious to the opposition forces that the commander of the opposition forces was confused and doubtful. The Green Beret Captain asked, “General, how long have you been held up here?”

“Two years,” he replied.

“What has held you up?”

Again, the general tried to control his response, “The Taliban.”

The Captain then asked, “Where are they?” The general pointed out the area and stood staring at the Captain as if to ask, “If they have held up my army two years, what do you think your little group can do?” The Captain explained that they were force multipliers, and then he focused his Laser Target Designator on the target, made his call, and told the general to watch. And they watched as Rolling Thunder rolled over head, guided by Laser Target Designators. For two straight weeks Rolling Thunder rolled overhead, destroying the enemy and the general’s army moved through the mountains and took the city.

General Boykin explained that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare today and that we are Force Multipliers - “We are not the power, the Holy Spirit is.” General Boykin explained the spiritual aspect of this war and challenged us to be Force Multipliers. He has spoken in various churches since that time and someone secretly taped one of his messages, in which he proclaimed the Gospel. He stated that we serve the true God and Osama Ben Laden serves a false god. He also made the statement that God had put President George Bush in office for such a time as this. The liberal media is doing everything within its power to bring down President Bush (How dare he pray in the White House - taxpayers paid for that house!?) And General Boykin was wearing his uniform when he spoke in that church! The tax payers paid for that uniform! How dare He???

David Limbaugh, brother to Rush, is a committed Christian, an attorney, and a columnist whose columns often manifest his faith. He is also an author and his most recent book, PERSECUTION: THE LIBERAL WAR AGAINST CHRISTIANITY (Regnery, 2003), chroni-

cles court cases in which liberals have sued Christians for any and every thing they can interpret as a violation of separation of church and state. After they re-defined that phrase, they adopted it as their mantra and applied it in a manner opposite to the original intent. Instead of protecting the church from the state, now they live in fear that the church may influence the state.

Ted Kennedy stands and calls President Bush a liar over and over, and the media gives him all the time he wants. President Bush asks Christians to get involved in helping those in need, and he is somehow violating the principles of separation of church and state.

Where is this going? Well, people born in the past twenty years may have trouble believing that when I was in high school, our teacher would announce that the Baptist Church was having a revival and all students who would like to attend should bring a note. We walked down town for the morning service. We did it again for the revival at the Methodist Church. We returned one day and Miss Reba Jackson asked, “What did the preacher talk about?” I was surprised when I was the only one to raise his hand, but I was asked to tell her, and the class, about the service. It was the story of the Good Samaritan and I knew it well, a fact that seemed to surprise both the teacher and the other students. What, I wondered, had they been doing in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School?

Now project America ahead fifty years from today. If things continue the way they are going, and as America moves deeper and deeper into the post-Christian period in our history, we may well be seeing some Christians sentenced to jail for their stand for the Lord. If that should happen you can be sure that some of the loudest comments and jokes will be coming from liberals in the church, not just from the media or some liberal professor. Those who suffer for the Gospel should not be ashamed. Countless millions have been imprisoned, killed, or sold into slavery for their stand for Jesus Christ in our life time. We have two thousand years of examples. Millions more have been slain for no other reason than their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul writes, “Join me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.” Timothy lived under that shadow every day, as would every believer who did not compromise his discipleship, during the dark days beginning with Nero’s persecution of the church, and continuing for generations after that. By the end of the century many were called on to lay down their lives for their Lord. The question is, are we willing to do that today?

19 - A HOLY CALLING. *“Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”* Jesus has saved us and called us to serve Him. He has called some to the Gospel ministry, but He has called all believers to salvation and service. There is no believer who has not been called, chosen, and commissioned to a life of service. As a matter of fact, the HCSB renders the Greek “slave” rather than servant when the language calls for it. I had the privilege of listening to Dr. Ed Bloom, the general editor of the HCSB, explain that to a LifeWay Christian Resource trustee from Florida, who wanted to know why he rendered it slave rather than servant. Dr. Bloom explained that this is a literal translation, and the HCSB is a word for

word translation. The word slave may not appeal to us, but when we remember that we are bought with a price. We must understand that we belong to the Lord and that we were purchased with the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The call is a “holy calling.” Something that is holy is something that is different from other things, set apart from ordinary things. The Lord’s day is different from other days. The Bible is different from other books. And Christians are different from other people. They are set apart for the glory of God, and for His service.

We are called “according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” Observe three things:

- 1) We are called according to His purpose - God has a plan, a place, and a purpose for every life.
- 2) We are called by grace - we are called and saved according to the unmerited love of God.
- 3) That grace is granted us from all eternity - Let Islam make that claim!

Does Paul mean that God in His grace and foreknowledge, provided salvation for all those He would call in the future, or does it mean that He could foreknow each individual and know what he would do? I spell my God’s name with a capital “G”, so I do not question what He knows, or foreknows, any more that I question what He can do.

1:10 - HAS BEEN REVEALED . *“But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel...”* The Savior had been promised for several thousand years, a progressive revelation beginning in Genesis 3, and continuing through the OT. “But now” Jesus has appeared, and His grace has been revealed.

- 1) He is Christ - His title, meaning the Anointed One, the Messiah.
- 2) He is Jesus - His name, meaning Yahweh is my salvation.
- 3) He is Savior - His work as supreme High Priest, and the perfect sacrifice.
- 4) He abolished death - By His death, he “abolished death.”
- 5) He brought life - and “immortality to light through the gospel.”

Only our Savior Christ Jesus could make such a claim. There is but one God - one in essence, three in Person. Pagan peoples make many claims, whether they are polytheistic or monotheistic (like the Muslims), but nowhere in their teachings and holy writings is there a message of hope based upon grace as there is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1:11 - APPOINTED A PREACHER. *“For which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.”* He was not recruited by a committee, He was not set aside because of his ministerial skills, and he did not inherit the office. He was appointed a preacher by the Lord on the road to Damascus. I spend several summers working for the Quitman County ASCS office in Marks Mississippi. We said we were measuring cotton, but in reality we were plotting fields on an aerial photograph, and the ladies in the office ran a planimeter around the lines and determined the acreage. One day I drove up to a farm not north of Sledge and got out and introduced myself and told the farmer why I was there. He pulled the sixty six foot chain for me as we measured the fields and waited as I plotted them on the “map.”

As I worked, he talked. “Do you know Orbie Wheeler?” He was my supervisor, so I knew him. The man continued, “You know, I didn’t know Orbie had made a preacher and when he came out here to measure my place I was cussin’ and carrying on, and I never knew he had made a preacher until he told me. I was really embarrassed. Then that Massingill boy came out here from Crenshaw the next time and I was telling him about cussin’ in front of Orbie Wheeler, and that I didn’t know he had made a preacher. The Bobby told me he had made a preacher too - and there I was cussin’ around him. I have known that boy all his life and I sure didn’t know he had made a preacher.

When we finished I shook hands with Mr. Hooper and handed him a card that identified me as a pastor. I was a student pastor during my last two years at Mississippi College. The man looked shocked, and the next time I saw him, he headed for the exit at a local café.

I often heard the expression, “making a preacher.” Someone would say, “I hear you are going to school to make a preacher.” A times I tried to explain that God had called me to be a preacher, I was going to Mississippi College or New Orleans Seminary so that I would be better equipped for the work. Dr. Charles Williams my advisor with Luther Rice Seminary explained, “We are not training you for the ministry, God called you to the ministry. We are training you in the ministry.” Paul was appointed a

- 1) Preacher - He was called to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- 2) Apostle - He preached, taught, and administered with apostolic authority.
- 3) Teacher - He disciplined believers.

1:12 - FOR THIS REASON I SUFFERED. *“For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”* He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as he testified to the Roman church, nor was he ashamed to be a prisoner for the sake of the Gospel. He took advantage of every opportunity to preach, write, and teach for His Savior.

There is more: Paul proclaims, “I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.” When I was a student pastor a lady told me that a former pastor, Bro. Jerry, often quoted this verse (in the KJV), telling them that it was his favorite verse in the Bible. I made it a point to memorize that verse.

As soon as school was out each year when I was at Mississippi College, I headed to Marks, Mississippi, for the ASCS school to train new people how to “measure cotton.” It was an opportunity to learn all the new rules for the rest of us. One day, we went into the field and the supervisor took half the group and went to one field and asked me to take the rest and measure and plot another field on the aerial photograph, or map as we called it. I finished about thirty minutes ahead of the supervisor, so we sat in the shade of a big tree to wait for the other group. As we sat there, I mentioned my work and shared my testimony with them. John was very religious. His sister was in training to be a nun at the time. He said, “I wish I could know I was going to go to heaven!” I was glad I had memorized Bro. Jerry’s favorite verse: “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” This speaks of assurance, and of the absolutely security of believers.

When my sons were young we would take them shopping with us. When we were walking through a department store I would often hold down my index finger and John or Mark would hold onto my finger as we walked. However, when we left the store and started across a busy street, I did not let my young son hold onto my finger, I reached down and took his hand in mine. If he tripped, or approached a pot hole, he might stumble, but I held him up and let him get his feet back under him. His safety did not depend upon his holding onto me but upon my holding onto him. I thank God that my security in Him does not depend upon my holding onto Him. I am not holding onto God, He is holding onto me!

B. A Call to Be Faithful, 1:13-18.

1:13 - RETAIN THE STANDARD. “*Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*” In his first inspired letter to Timothy, Paul had charged him to preach and teach sound doctrine. Here he is urging him to retain the high standard of sound doctrine. He had been taught by Paul in a school like no other one can imagine. Paul had taught him on the great Roman roads, on the sea, in churches, in homes, in prison, through the written word, and through trials most of us cannot imagined.

Paul had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, the great Pharisee in Jerusalem, and Timothy sat at the feet of the greatest of all Christian theologians. Paul asks Timothy to retain sound doctrine, and to keep the standard high. The Word of God is our authority, and we must retain that authority today. Many of us have been engaged in the Battle for the Bible, and sadly, to many people this has been a political battle. For me, it is theological. If the Bible is not our authority, what is.

There must be some authority for doctrinal statements and positions. Any compromise on the Scripture lowers the standard and leads to a corruption of doctrines.

I asked a young lady who was serving my wife Becky and me at a restaurant about her relationship with the Lord and if she was a member of a local church. She mentioned a local church and added, "I know one thing, I don't want anything to do with Southern Baptists." When I asked for an explanation, she said, "They are too judgmental." When I finally retrieved my shin from the toe of my wife's shoe, it was too late to pursue that. However, when it comes to moral and social issues we must look to the Bible as our authority, whether or not the world sees it as narrow or judgmental. The Bible is inerrant, authoritative, and it is sufficient in all things.

When an ordained minister crusades against the display of the Ten Commandments in a court in Alabama because it might make a Muslim or an atheist feel left out, he has lowered the standard. When religious people support those who are kicking Boy Scouts out of parks because they do not want homosexual scout masters, or because they profess a faith in God, the standards have been lowered. When a church ordains a homosexual the standards have been lowered. When any Christian defends partial-birth infanticide the standards have been lowered.

Paul appeals to two things in Jesus Christ:

- 1) Faith - the just shall live by faith. This is the faith James declares through his works.
- 2) Love - there is a mental attitude love that can be directed with the mind, not a warm fuzzy feeling.

1:14 - GUARD THE TREASURE. "*Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*" Don't you love this?!! Paul has continually hammered away at this - preach and teach the sound doctrine which he had taught Timothy. We must live for Him and we must proclaim Him. But how do I do this? Paul has the answer: "Through the Holy Spirit who dwells in you." This is not simply thrown in as a filler. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is essential to our guarding the truth. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the moment we are born again, but we need the daily filling with the Holy Spirit if we are to walk in the spirit and not in the flesh. No one who is walking in the flesh is guarding the treasure entrusted to believers. That treasure is divine truth - the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and sound doctrine that keeps us focused on our mission in this world. This was "entrusted" to us when Jesus gave us the Great Commission, and when He announced that as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon the church (Acts 1:8) they would be entrusted with that awesome task.

1:15 - "*You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.*" All of Paul's converts and associates had not guarded the treasure (v. 14). They had compromised the Gospel and abandoned Paul. Judaizers had opposed

him in Galatia, and the idolaters had attacked him in Ephesus, and vicious enemies maligned him in Corinth. Some had no doubt abandoned Paul when the going got rough, others had simply never come to appreciate the treasure. There may have been some who deliberately tried to put some distance between themselves and Paul to avoid persecution.

Paul gives two names here. One wonders why he singled out two people unless he was either warning Timothy about what they might do, or reminding him of what they had done. Of those who had turned away from Paul, I would assume most were ministers - preachers or missionaries. It is a sad discovery when a pastor runs into trouble in a church today only to discover that many of his fellow pastors, whom he considered his friends, make it a point to keep him at arms length. I have talked with a number of pastors who have turned to fellow pastors when they were going through severe trials, only to find that their "friends" seemed to be more concerned about what others might think if they associated with them.

I personally took a plate at a conference and joined a long time friend at a banquet table, only to see him turn slowly away until he was faced at an angle to the table with his back toward me. There was no way I could have carried on a conversation with him. He had been to my home and I had taught a Bible study for him. When we talked privately it was obvious that we agreed on most issues. A long time friend was forced resign from a church and before long an older pastor came by to see me to gloat over the my friend's problems. Another friend went through severe trials before being called to a church in another state. He send me an e-mail message in which he said that through all his trials "only one pastor stood by me - you." This is outrageous!!!

This man had helped others but when trouble came even most of them maintained a distance from him. Soon after he moved to another state one man who would not even return his calls was calling to ask him to recommend him for a position in the other state. What had this pastor done that was so horrible? He preached that God's people should not be going to casinos to drink and gamble. This made a couple of families angry and they began to stir up others. This pastor is seeing the hand of the Lord on his ministry on his new field.

Every pastor who reads this epistle knows someone who needs his help right now. Of all people, fellow ministers should support those in trouble, as well as those who may be suffering for other reasons over which they have no control. The pastor's daughter gets pregnant and members want to get rid of him. What do other pastors do? A man has been retired twenty years and most of his peers are already in heaven. He desires fellowship with fellow ministers. How does he let them know this without making them think there is something wrong with him?

James White had retired after a heart attack long before we became friends. We met at the health club where we stopped to visit three times a week, both with each other and with other members, our friends. When his health forced him to give up the health club he lost fellowship with a lot of friends. He also longed for fellowship with other pastors. His wife told me that I

was the only one who stayed in touch with him and he grieved over this. He was blessed with a compassionate pastor, but he could only spend so much time with him. There are older pastors who need us today, just as there are active pastors who need us, especially during trials to which pastors are often subjected.

1:16 - THE LORD GRANT MERCY. *“The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.”* Paul utters a prayer that the Lord would grant mercy to Onesiphorus, a man who had shown mercy to him. Onesiphorus, had ministered to Paul in Ephesus, and later sought him out in when he was in a Roman dungeon and there ministered to him. Paul was not ashamed of his chains and had urged Timothy not to be ashamed for him. Now he tells that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chains. One can only imagine how he grieved for Paul under those horrible circumstances. How amazing it is that when Paul needed someone to minister to him, the Lord sent Onesiphorus.

1:17 - HE EAGERLY SEARCHED FOR ME. *“But when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me...”* Onesiphorus did not simply stop by while he was on vacation, he “eagerly searched for Paul so that he might minister to him. How different the circumstances were here than back when Barnabas left Antioch of Syria to go to Tarsus to search for Paul to persuade him to return with him to Antioch to help him in the work there. At the time this letter was written Paul was once again a prisoner in Rome, and this time the time was running out on him. If he had been ready to go home to be with the Lord when he wrote to the Philippian church during the first imprisonment you can be sure he was ready now.

1:18 - WHAT SERVICES HE RENDERED. *“The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day--and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.”* We do not know what services Onesiphorus had rendered at Ephesus but Timothy knew, and we may infer that his services were well known to the church.

III. CHARACTER OF A SOLDIER OF CHRIST, 2:1-26.

A. We Must Be Strong, 2:1-2.

2:1 - BE STRONG. *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”* Jesus clearly taught that His disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts. 1:8). That promise initially referred to Pentecost, but when each individual is born again the Lord places His Spirit in that individual. We may call it the indwelling, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or simply the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same power that the Holy Spirit brought to the one hundred, twenty disciples in the upper room is available to each believer - but not necessarily every manifestation of His presence that they experienced. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God the Father, as promised by God the Son. When the Holy Spirit indwells the believer he

gives that individual one or more spiritual gifts.

The Holy Spirit brings the power of God into the heart and life of the believer, and that power has not diminished with the years. Why then does Paul urge Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ? The Holy Spirit indwells all believers at the point of their salvation. After that, the individual may suppress the Holy Spirit in such a way that He is neither releasing the power of God or producing the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Each believer needs to be filled fully and totally with the Holy Spirit each day. First, there is the indwelling of the Spirit, and then there is the filling of the Spirit. That filling does not occur against the will of, and without the participation of the individual believer. When the Holy Spirit indwells the individual, He comes with the full power of Pentecost. However, that power is not normally released apart from the desire and commitment of that believer. The power is God's, but the individual believer must appropriate that power. At the same time, that appropriation is not a work of the flesh, but a grace gift from Christ Jesus. One cannot appropriate the Holy Spirit, but once he has received the Holy Spirit, he can, in humility and obedience, appropriate the full power, guidance, and ministry of the Holy Spirit through a daily filling which comes to those who are surrendered to Him. This is not a name it and claim it formula for the Spirit-filled life. It is a reality available to each and every believer.

1:2 - THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD. *“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* “The things” which Timothy had heard from Paul were those things he had taught his son-in-the-ministry. Timothy's training must have been very thorough, considering the brilliance and focus of his teacher. He knew the Gospel of Jesus Christ, church administration, evangelism, and systematic theology, which is called sound doctrine in the First Epistle to Timothy.

Paul instructed Timothy to teach “the things” to faithful men who would then be able to teach them to others. I thank God for the emotions of the Christian faith; feelings are important. However, I am

especially thankful “the things” God would have us teach to others. “The things” denotes divine truths which are to be taught to “faithful men,” men who were interested enough to learn sound doctrine. This training was not prescribed to meet the curiosity of these “faithful men.” Most any pastor can appreciate the reason for this requirement. Who among us has not seen what a waste of our time it is to try to teach those who are not interested.

For fifteen years, I served a church that was often referred to as “a teachers’ church” because we had so many elementary and high school teacher, administrators, and retired teachers. I spent a lot of time with teachers - I am married to one. At first, I found it somewhat difficult to comprehend when a teacher or principal would refer to a particular class and predict the problems the might expect from that class as they moved from elementary school into high school. Over the years I discovered that these teachers really understood children.

I often heard teachers mention the student who was simply not interested in what they were

teaching. This was an unusual school at the time. The principal, Lavelle Hammett, helped take a group of young people to summer camp and one day as we talked with the camp director he mentioned how well behaved our young people were. Mr. Hammett said, "I can stand right here and point out the valedictorian and salutatorian for our school for the next few years." These teachers knew how important it was to have an interested student. They knew the children who had a desire to learn and a will to work. They stressed that at some point it was not just a matter of what their parents wanted, they had to assume some responsibility on their own. On the other hand, there was no joy in the prediction that "you will be reading about some of students in that class within the next few years." These were the ones who were not interested in learning, but seemed determined to rebel against the rules.

Pastors need to train and develop faithful members. No matter how much we want to see some members disciplined to the point that they might become leaders, there are some who are never going to study to show themselves a servant who will skillfully understand and teach the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15).

One other thing almost jumps off the page when we read this verse. He actually said, "faithful men." He did not say faithful people or faithful women. Does he mean that women are not to teach? Is he using the word "men" in the generic sense of people? We live in a day in which many women have asserted their influence and demonstrated outstanding abilities in many areas of church work. I would hate to think where the church would be today if it had not been for the faithful women who have carried the load for the past century.

Many men have failed miserably in leadership, in administration, in evangelism, in missions, in music, and in the teaching of the Word of God. I even heard that Sunday School experts had learned that men and women should be in different classes after age forty because at about this age if they are in the same class the husband will stop growing and leave the Bible study up to his wife. If the husband and wife are both in the same class, she may study and he may simply look to her for help recalling or interpreting a passage of Scripture. In such cases, the husband may well think his wife is brilliant, spiritual, and gifted only because she has grown more than he has (she may be, but again she may not be so brilliant, which can lead to problems if she is also convinced that she is brilliant).

Women are often more faithful than the men. They are also stronger in many ways. At the same time, we need to stay with Scripture. Some would be quick to criticize Paul's instructions concerning women in his first letter to Corinth: "The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says" (1 Cor. 34). Several questions will may be asked here. Did his restrictions apply only to tongues, or to teaching a class - or preaching a sermon?

Most churches elect women to teach women in Sunday School, but do not often elect a women to teach men - I don't know how many women want to teach men. Women are usually elected to

teach children, even though there are men who are especially gifted in working with children. Some denominations ordain women as deacons and others ordain women to the ministry. A lady once told me she was concerned about her son because he was going to church with his girlfriend. When I asked for an explanation she said, "The pastor has three living husbands!"

The issue of women in the ministry will be dealt with in other passages, but we may draw a few conclusions from this verse. First, they did not have Sunday School, so those who taught may have been teaching before the whole church. Second, some would say, as one lady judge said to me, "Paul was strictly a product of his time." Well, Paul may have been a product of his time, but the Holy Spirit, the divine Author was not a product of His times. We must at least consider the possibility that Paul means exactly what he says in this letter. In a pagan society women participated in worship. In some cases these were fertility cults. Paul certainly would not have wanted Christian women to be confused with pagan women. He clearly taught that men are to be set aside for pastors and deacons.

I might add here that there are many women who are convinced that women should not preach, and that they should not teach men in Bible studies. I have even heard women say, "I don't want a woman to teach me the Bible." I do not know how many will agree with that, but I am sure that most of them would agree on one thing - they do not want to be taught by an unprepared man.

B. We Are Soldiers for Christ, 2:3-4.

2:3 - SUFFER HARDSHIP. "*Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*" It is just a song, but what a song it is: ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS. We are Christian soldiers if we are followers of Jesus Christ, for we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Earlier, I mentioned General Jerry Boykin, Assistant Secretary of Defense, who is being attacked even as I write by the liberal media - and by many conservatives - for stressing that the war against terrorism is indeed a spiritual war, pitting the soldiers of Jesus Christ against Satan and his forces.

Those responding are often criticizing General Boykin without any knowledge of the true character and mission of Islam. Sean Hannity is defending General Boykin because he believes only the radical Muslims are serving the cause of Satan. Others condemn him because he had the audacity to make those statements in uniform. Few critics care that he was speaking in an evangelical church when he made the statement. Let us be very clear here - we are Christian soldiers engaged in a spiritual war against the forces of Satan, and today Satan is getting more mileage out of the non-radical Muslims who are coming to this country, claiming that they are non-violent, and having babies at a rate several times that of the most Americans. At this rate Islam will be a major minority within a generation, and every politician will be weighing every decision against the response of Islam - just as they are doing in France and Germany today. They

are changing the face of America, they have the media and politicians proclaiming them Islam to be a religion of peace, even if their clerics will not condemn terrorism.

A lot of people have converted to Islam in recent years, including many who are in prison. Do the Muslims tell people about their role in slavery? Do they tell them that in many places in the world Muslims kill Christians and sell their children into slavery? Islam has learned to use the media, and in our age of diversity and toleration no one is supposed to condemn their religion. They are peaceful, reverent, loyal, and somehow or another they are not what their Koran insists that they are! How can they get away with that? Some students of Islam tell us that the Koran read in American has been edited so that people will not find some of the most shocking statements about killing those who would leave Islam.

We are Christian soldiers and we are engaged in a spiritual war. But if we continue the way we are going, we are going to be seriously disadvantaged in America. As I mentioned elsewhere, Gen. Boykin is paying a price for telling the truth about the spiritual nature of our war against terrorism. If we continue like this, students and teachers are going to be muffled in school, Christian reporters will be silenced, and preachers will have to be very careful what they say about Islam. Franklin Graham was severely criticized for making a statement on the Fox News Network's "Hannity and Colmes" about the true character of Islam. What I want to know is why no reporter or news program host has not taken the Koran and read passages that demand the murder of one leaving Islam, or even the killing of one who opposes Islam.

Sadly, the young man who is called into the ministry today may face trials we cannot predict - only God knows. Christians may well be forced to suffer for their faith, especially those who take it seriously. We are Christian soldiers and we are at war, regardless of how many are in denial.

If you have not been there you cannot imagine how exciting it is to be a young man in the ministry looking upon a new field of service in anticipation of great things that are about to happen. These people are going to be cooperative, they are going to love the pastor and his family, they are going to pray for their pastor, they have a burden for lost people, they will win the lost to the Lord, they will help with hospital calls, they will build a new sanctuary just as soon as this one is filled, and the fellowship is going to be heavenly. You know it because they have told you so! They are not at all like the people in the church you just left. It takes a few weeks for reality to set in.

There is an old story about the young man who was saved one Sunday and the next Sunday the church began a revival. The evangelist preached and the minister of music announced that they would sing "Rescue the Perishing" for the invitation. The new convert was not familiar with the hymn but as he listened to the words he became excited, After another verse he stepped out and walked briskly down the aisle, took the pastor's hand and asked, "When do we start?"

"Start what," asked the pastor.

“Rescuing the perishing.”

“Son, that’s just a song, its just a song.”

The Bible calls us Christian soldiers, but is that just a song? We are not going to win battles if we do not know we are at war, but we will not lose this war because our Savior is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and the day is coming when kings and clerics will become His footstool.

2:4 - SOLDIER IN ACTIVE SERVICE. *“No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”* The metaphor of the soldier is a natural for Paul because he spent a lot of time being guarded by Roman soldiers. He saw himself as soldier in active service of his Lord and he had been associated with many others who were in active service - Barnabas, Silas, Titus, Luke, just to name a few. But we must not think that only those who are called to be pastors, missionaries, or evangelists are soldiers in active service for Christ. Lay persons like Priscila and Aquila were also soldiers for Christ and they were in active service.

No soldier “entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life.” Many today serve in the National Guard or the Reserves and after basic training they work, live at home, go to ball games, hunt, fish, and take vacations. Apart from the two weeks each summer they spend in summer camp and the one week-end a month they spend with their unit they are free to live a normal life - entangled in the affairs of everyday life. But in time of war, if they are called up, as many have been called up for active duty in Iraq at this time, they must not, and cannot get caught up in those affairs of everyday life that would either interfere with duty or distract them from it.

America watched the news with interest as a young mother returned from her military assignment in Iraq to see her family, which included five children and two step-children. Her husband was stationed in Iraq and she was in danger of losing the two step children if she did not star home. She refused to go back to Iraq and with the media covering the story as it unfolded, the army permitted her to leave the active service and return to a national guard unit. This was a unique case, but if large numbers refused to return to active duty because of responsibilities at home our military would be seriously compromised.

The soldier must face duty with a singleness of mind, always ready to respond to any command from his superior officer. The American soldiers who have served, or are now serving in Iraq or Afghanistan are without a doubt the best trained soldiers in the history of the world. They have the most sophisticated equipment ever, and no soldiers have ever gone into battle with better intelligence than the modern American soldier. These young soldiers could not do what they do if they were entangled in the affairs of the world.

C. We Must Endure Suffering, 2:5-10.

2:5 - IF ONE COMPETES. *“Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.”* Paul often uses the metaphor of the athlete, just as he uses the metaphor of the soldier. The athlete who expects to win the prize must compete according to the rules. First, he must have the physical ability for the sport in which he participates. He must be well conditioned and then he must train for competition. He must know the rules and compete according to the rules if he ever expects to win the prize.

The golf world knew they were looking at a special kind of man the day a young golfer by the name of Arnold Palmer approached an official and told him that he must be assessed a one stroke penalty for a violation no one has seen. Arnold Palmer knew the rules and he played by them.

2:6 - THE HARD WORKING FARMER. *“The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.”* I grew up on a cotton and soybean farm seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. My mother called me at 4:15 every morning and I headed for the barn to do the milking. I came in for breakfast and then went back to finish feeding livestock. During school, I would run in and get a quick bath and walk a mile and a quarter to catch the school bus - in all kinds of weather. I never missed a day in high school and only two in junior high. When we were not in school, we ate breakfast and then started getting ready to go to the field. We worked at least ten hours in the field each day, Monday through Saturday. We never worked on Sunday and we always stopped in time to get to prayer meeting on Wednesday night.

We did not just mark time in the field, we worked. When I was twelve years old my parents told me they expected me to lead the field when we were chopping cotton, and I did. When the crops were laid by, we worked in the new round, graded turn rows, pulled ditches, and cut weeds on the end of the rows. Then when the cotton opened, before we started picking with a mechanical cotton picker, we took nine foot cotton sacks and headed for the field where we engaged ourselves in the one job I hated above all others. We were soon wet from dew in the morning, and by the time the dew was gone I was wet from sweat the rest of the day. When it rained, the gumbo, or buckshot balled up on the cotton sack as well as my shoes. I had to carry, weigh, and empty sacks others had filled, which meant that I was exposed to someone else's sweat and odor. This was especially loathsome when strap to the cotton sack smelled especially rank but you had to put it over your head in order to pick up the nine foot sack in which cotton was packed so that it looked like a long white sausage. You would feel the wet strap touching your neck, but it was very difficult to pick up the sack and throw it over your shoulder without having the strap around you neck. However, I did work out a method.

I do not know how much Paul knew about farming, other than what he observed, but I can tell you from personal experience, the farmer deserves his share of the crop. I once had a professor who was fond of the expression, “It goes without saying...” What Paul says here goes without saying.

2:7 - UNDERSTANDING. *“Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”* Paul urges Timothy to give careful attention to the profound statement he is about

to make - “the Lord will give you understanding in everything.” If this seems like a bold claim, remember that the Holy Spirit inspired every word of it. God will give us the understanding we need to deal with any situation. We may study to gain knowledge but there is wisdom that one can only receive from the Lord, as the Book of Proverbs teaches.

Sadly, many of the Lord’s servants have had to seek greater understanding in dealing with cantankerous church members than with the world. Their greatest threats have come from church members, not for lost people. Even under the best of circumstances, the pastor needs understanding for his work, and this verse promises that God will provide it. He often uses faithful church members

assist and protect pastors. One lady discussed with me a particularly vicious group in a church to which she had belonged for many years. She said, “I could take it as long as the disagreement was over the color of the carpet, but when they tried to control the pulpit that was just too much.” It seems some of them were telling the pastor what to preach, and what not to preach.

In the large mega-churches, pastors are often given the opportunity to lead with a greater measure of pastoral authority. One such pastor said, “In our church we have a theocracy, and I’m Theo!” In many smaller churches pastors come and go, with many moving every few years. Gene Mims, in *THE KINGDOM DRIVEN CHURCH*, says that it takes from five to seven years for a pastor to get to be a pastor. Assuming he is right, questions surface concerning churches that have never had a pastor to stay seven years. Pastors have been terminated for no better reason than, “He’s been here three years and that’s long enough.” A long time denominational worker told me that Pastor Search Committees often told him they wanted a young pastor because he could reach young people. This request often came from mature members. He added that after listening to them for a number of years he had concluded that most of them were not primarily concerned with his reaching young people. What this Director of Missions was hearing was that they wanted a young man because he was less experienced and they felt that they could control him.

Any pastor needs wisdom and understanding in dealing with church issues. With the American culture changing drastically in these days, wisdom and understanding are critical. One church member confided that some of his fellow church members treated him like he was from another planet when he tried to talk with them about the need to teach members the Word of God. His church, he says, is more interested in “marketing” youth than in teaching the people they reach.

2:8 - REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST. *“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel.”* We must never take our eyes or our minds off Jesus Christ. This demands a vital, personal relationship in which the believer walks daily with his Savior, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is but one Christ, no matter what various cults may claim. The Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus of Mormonism, nor is He the Jesus of Islam. There is no comparison between Jesus Christ and Mohammed. Jesus was “tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin.” Mohammed was

a pedophile who married his youngest wife when she was six years old and consummated the relationship when she was nine - If he had lived when Israel was a theocracy, they would have taken him outside the town and stoned him to death.

The Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus of the New Age Movements - and “movements” is the right word. There is no one movement. Almost everything that falls under the umbrella of polytheism or monism is welcomed - as long as it has nothing to do with Christianity. They may have dropped the New Age name, but their philosophies are continued in postmodern religious movements. We may not hear the same New Age jargon from these groups, but some of them have their own ideas about Jesus. He did not have to preach a sermon on homosexuality, the Old Testament covered it well enough, and He knew the New Testament would affirm the sinfulness of it. He did not preach a sermon on abortion, but He knew it was covered in the Old Testament (see Psalm 139:13-18 and see if you see a description of DNA, centuries before modern science discovered it!).

We might add that we had better be sure the Jesus on whom place our hope really is the Jesus of the New Testament. We often see and hear things about the Jesus of the Bible that did not come from the Bible. The Jesus of the Jesus Seminar is definitely not the Jesus of the New Testament. The Jesus of the New Testament is the Son of God, the descendant of David, the risen One.

1:9 - THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT IMPRISONED. *“For which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.”* Paul had known more suffering than anyone I have ever known for the sake of the Gospel. He lists some of things to which he had been subjected - and he had suffered many things since he wrote 2 Corinthians 11:

- 1) Labors (more than any of his critics)
- 2) Many imprisonments (many recorded by Luke)
- 3) Worse beatings (than his critics)
- 4) Near death many times (More than Luke records).
- 5) Five times I received from the Jews 40 lashes minus one.
- 6) Three times I was beaten with rods.
- 7) Once I was stoned (and left for dead).
- 8) Three times I was shipwrecked.
- 9) I have spent a night and a day in the depths of the sea.

He adds:

On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers; labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing. Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me:

my care for all the churches” (2 Cor 11:22-28, HCSB).

Paul wrote, “But the word of God is not imprisoned.” God could not be imprisoned in the Soviet Union. He has not been imprisoned in Communist China. His Word could not be imprisoned by Nero - Paul wrote the prison epistles and they were delivered to the intended recipients. Paul also ministered to those who visited him in prison. Today, city, county, state, and federal prisons are a great mission field - unfortunately, the Muslims have discovered it, too. I have known a number of people who committed their lives to the Lord while in prison. Some of these men spent as much time as possible in prayer and Bible study. Some of them were instrumental in reaching others for the Lord. These men were not in prison for preaching the Gospel as Paul was, but they affirm that the Word of God cannot be imprisoned.

Joe Fortner was an active member of the Clear Creek Baptist Mission, several miles southeast of Lambert, Mississippi when I knew him. In time, I learned that Joe had been a POW during the Second World War. They were in some town in Germany when a large troop of Germans entered the town and discovered that Americans were hiding in a cellar. They ordered the American GIs to surrender. Several climbed the steps and exited the building but Joe buried himself under a huge pile of potatoes. When the last man came out a German officer demanded to know if there were any more down there and the soldier said, “One more.” They ordered him out and told him they would begin throwing hand grenades in there if he didn’t. He was a POW for about three years, subjected to abuse, extreme weather conditions, and a diet that brought them to the brink of starvation.

Suddenly one morning they looked out and there were no guards, and no army. Their hopes began to rise - the Americans are coming! Joe found a one gallon bucket and located a pile of potatoes and began boiling a potato. When he finished that one he boiled another. And another. He said, “I didn’t think I could eat another one, but when I finished one I put another one in the bucket.” He ate them slowly, but he kept eating for some time. One man found some chocolate bars and gorged himself on them and died from the experience - at least they assumed that it was that killed him.

One can only imagine what Paul had seen in various prisons. Fortunately, there were times when the Lord had some servants in place to assist Paul, especially when he was a prisoner in Caesarea and in Rome.

2:10 - I ENDURE ALL THINGS. *“For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.”* Paul had suffered more than I can imagine and he tells us here that he had suffered all these things for “Those who are chosen.” The HCSB has, “This is why I endure all things **for the elect**: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (emphasis added).

Paul was looking ahead to the final salvation of the elect, “which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.” This phrase appears only here and 1Peter 5:10 - in 2Cor. 4:17 we find “eternal

weight of glory.”

D. We Must Be Faithful, 2:11-13.

2:11 - WE...LIVE WITH HIM. *“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him.”* When Paul writes that this is a trustworthy statement he is saying that we have it on the authority of the Word of God, and every statement from the Word of God is trustworthy. Volumes have been written on the Bible during what has rightly been called The Battle for the Bible. The battle began when it was discovered that there were professors in Christian schools who were teaching things that were in shocking conflict with the theology of the person in the pew. Furthermore, these professors seemed to feel that their education placed them above the person in the pew, as well as above those pastors who disagreed with them. Opposition was dismissed, sometimes with arrogance and academic smugness.

There were professors who questioned the virgin birth and others who did not think it was a significant doctrine - “young maiden” would do nicely (Is. 7:14). A long time friend failed his entrance exam to work on his doctorate, in part because he insisted on translating the Hebrew word *alma* “virgin” instead of young woman or maiden. When someone asked about, he said, “If I had written a lie on the test I would have been lying for the next several years.” This man has taught Hebrew and Old Testament in another seminary for many years.

Some college and seminary professors totally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity (preferring a unitary theory of God). As I have mentioned in a number of Bible studies, Francis Shaeffer said it was the doctrine of the Trinity that moved him from being an agnostic to a theist. He discovered that God did not have to create other beings in order for Him to have fellowship with another intelligent being. There is, and has always been perfect horizontal fellowship in the Godhead. There is no inadequacy in God that compelled Him to create man. The wonder of it all is that He gives us the privilege of fellowship with Him.

Miracles were questioned by those who believed the Bible needs to be demythologized. Jesus did not walk “on” the water, He walked “toward” the water, and Peter waded “in” the water! These people denied the existence of Satan and hell, holding to a theory of animalization - that like animals, lost people simply ceased to exist.

Above all, these liberal professors attacked the Bible, questioning the authorship of various books, rejecting the miraculous, redefining the doctrines. Hiding under the banner of the priesthood of the believer, they insisted that they had the right to interpret the Scripture as they saw fit. They also believed they had a right to a salary provided by those people in the pew, yet they were teaching things that were in conflict with the convictions of the average church member.

They would sign articles of faith, rationalizing that they could sign them if they could interpret them in their own way (they redefined terms). Articles and faith and the Baptist Faith and Message Statement had to be strengthened to prevent them from finding loopholes. The line was

drawn over the word inerrancy. They did not have a problem with the word “inspired,” but they rejected inerrancy of Scripture.

I had read a book written by Jimmy Draper on the authority of the Bible, and was surprised when a friend began attacking Dr. Draper and all those who agreed with him - I was one who agreed with him, not because we was a friend or an acquaintance for that would come later. Others would have agreed that the Scripture is authoritative, as long as we left out inerrant.

What is it here that is trustworthy? “For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him.” Baptism is a beautiful picture of this. Timothy was aware of what Paul had written in Romans 6:3-4:

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

2:12 - IF WE ENDURE. *“If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us.”* “If we endure” does not imply that we are saved through our own effort, or that our salvation is maintained by our endurance. What he is saying is that those who live godly lives may expect to suffer (3:12). Questions regarding suffering in general, but particularly the suffering of the righteous, occupied the minds of people like Job and Peter, as well as Christians in our time.

“Although all the reasons for suffering are not revealed, some are clear in the text of Scripture: (1) some of our sufferings fulfill the sufferings of Christ for the church (Col. 1:24); (2) others have to do with the steadfastness of the Christian's witness (1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 4:7-10); (3) some suffering produces humility and dependence on God (2 Cor. 12:7); (4) there are sufferings that are disciplinary in nature (Heb. 12:5-11)” [RSB].

Regardless of the reason, the sufferings of the present time can be victoriously endured by the believer in light of the certain glory that lies immediately ahead (Rom. 8:18). However, “if we deny Him, He will deny us” before the Father in heaven.

2:13 - HE REMAINS FAITHFUL. *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”* Any question is about our faithfulness, not God's. This statement is conditional, not on God's part but on ours. We may be faithful, or we may not be. God is always faithful. “He cannot deny Himself” means that it would be contrary to his nature to be anything other than faithful. He is faithful and just in all things (1 John 1:9).

E. We Must Be of Sound Faith, 2:14-19.

2:14 - SOLEMNLY CHARGE THEM. *“Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.”* Paul instructs Timothy to remind the people at Ephesus of all the things he has charged him to teach. What are those things? The emphasis has been on preaching and teaching sound doctrine, encouraging one another, remaining faithful to the Lord, and enduring suffering for the Lord. He also instructs Timothy to “solemnly charge” them to avoid useless wrangling over words.

Senseless wrangling over meaningless things does not honor the Lord, it does not edify the teacher, and it “leads to the ruin of the hearers.”

For most of my ministry I have been involved ,to one degree or another, in the Battle for the Bible, and the effort to try to keep Southern Baptist Convention grounded in sound doctrine. I have tried to do this in a manner consistent with the nature and character of Jesus Christ and that may be the reason I have fellowship with some friends who may well vote against me on certain issues. The more I reflect on this the more convinced I am that if we could focus on the theological issues and leave the politics out of it seventy to eighty percent of us would agree on most things. There will always be radical fringes - on the left and the right. If I cannot find anyone to my right I am on the right extreme, and if I cannot find anyone to my left I am an extremist on the left. Pointing fingers and name calling will never honor the Lord.

2:15 - BE DILIGENT. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* This was one of the verses I memorized when I was participating in the Junior Memory Work Drills as a young boy, except for the fact that we used the KJV, which reads “Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The Greek means to be diligent or to give diligence in preparing to teach and in teaching the Word of God. The translation, “be diligent,” is correct, but the KJV captures the idea of studying the Word of God so that we may accurately teach it and apply it. Throughout both epistles to Timothy Paul stresses the importance of teaching sound doctrine and this dovetails with those other passages.

Study is serious work, as surprising as that may be to some of those who do not recognize anything as work that does not demand a lot of manual labor. Serious Bible study also requires diligence. Chuck Chaison is a paint contractor in south Louisiana. Chuck had grown up in the Catholic Church, but he was saved when he was thirty-nine years old. He loves the Lord has a great desire to know the Word of God. He gets up at 3:00 A.M. each morning for prayer and Bible study before beginning his work for they day. When Chuck prays you are aware of the fact that you are in the presence of one who has been in the presence of God. When he speaks you know he has been diligent in the study of the Word of God.

“Accurately handling the word of truth” means to be skillful in the application of the theological principles and teachings of the Bible. A mature deacon. Eugene Abbey, told me about a friend who approached him in a somewhat confidential manner, and said, “I am going to tell you this because I think you can handle it. I have been studying this for three years and I believer there

were people who existed before Adam.” He based his conclusion on a passage from Jeremiah that described the desolation the land would see during the Babylonian Captivity, but not knowing about the Captivity he had concluded that desolation had come between that early civilization and Adam and Eve.

Failure to read and apply this verse has led to many schisms in the church. It has given rise to new denominations. The Bible is our authority, and that applies to the private lives of members as well as the church as a whole. Denominations are divided over everything from inerrancy of Scripture, to same-sex marriage, to homosexuals in the ministry, to abortion, and a host of other social and spiritual issues. The pastor and Sunday School teachers must work diligently to prepare to teach the people the Word of God.

It should concern us when we hear reports that there are pastors who state openly that they helped to win the battle for the Bible, but now that they feel that the battle for the Bible has been won, they do not proclaim the Word. One Director of Missions confided that pastors in his areas are no longer preaching or teaching through books of the Bible. He says that if they preach or teach through a book of the Bible, they may have to deal with some issues that will not be popular for an age that values tolerance and diversity above sound doctrine. They do not want to hear anything negative. Here is a challenge those conservatives who helped “win the battle for the Bible”: IF YOU BELIEVE IT, PREACH IT! TEACH IT! Charles Haddon Spurgeon will still be quoted when all the popular preachers of our day are gone, should the Lord delay His return. Perhaps one statement about the Bible will illustrate the reason for this. He said, “You don’t have to defend a tiger, all you have to do is turn it loose. You don’t have to defend the Bible, all you have to do is turn it loose.”

The pastor must preach expository sermons in order to meet the needs of his people and Sunday School teachers can help equip the saints by preparing to teach the material in the Sunday School books. Gene Mims is Vice-President over LifeWay Church Resources, one of the departments of LifeWay Christian Resources. I have talked with Gene many times and heard him give numerous reports about our Sunday School materials as well as the other materials. John Kramp of the Church Resources department has responded to requests in such a way that I know there is a commitment to provide quality material for teachers and class members to help them grow in the Lord. Tim Vineyard, LifeWay Vice-President over the Technology Division, has designed websites to aid members in their Bible study. He has recently released a new electronic Bible Library, the BIBLE NAVIGATOR, which includes commentaries, dictionaries, atlases, and various translations of the Bible, including the new Holman Christian Standard Bible translation. There is more help available today than at any time in the history of Christianity for those who will diligently pursue the truth.

2:16 - AVOID WORLDLY...CHATTER. *“But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness.”* The HCSB has “But avoid irreverent, empty speech, for this will produce an even greater measure of godlessness.” The NKJV renders it, “Shun profane and idle babblings.” The pastor or Bible teacher who is diligent in preparation to teach the Word of God

will not want to waste time with idle chatter, and he will certainly not want to waste time with that which is worldly. There is a place for humor, but he must resist the temptation to entertain the sheep, just as he must resist the temptation to traumatize them or to psychoanalyze them. It is bad enough when a class member wants to chase rabbits, but far worse when the preacher or teacher encourages it.

I had walked out of the room with the television on and when I returned I could here the sound of a crowd of people laughing at something. I stopped to look and discovered a young man who was preaching to a very large audience. He was personable and entertaining, walking back and forth across the state, delivering quips and clichés, smiling at the response of the people. At one point the camera found a young lady who was making notes in a small notebook. The preacher was talking about walking through a field of dried weeds and finding a flower blooming in the middle of all of the dead grass and weeds.

Nothing he was saying was bad, but neither was it expository preaching. He was well aware of the fact that the people wanted to be entertained and he was providing a mix of advice to families to individuals who needed to bloom where they were - complete with jokes. I kept wondering what the young lady had heard that made her want make notes. What I heard was “church lite.” Keep it simple and entertaining and keep your audience. Jesus preached the truth, even when masses turned and followed Him no more.

What does Paul mean by “further ungodliness”? As sad as it is, we must admit that there is ungodliness in the church. We have members who do not want the pastor to preach on social issues, many favor women in the ministry, abortion (it’s the mother’s right to choose), ordination of divorced men (surely Paul only meant one wife at the time, discouraging polygamy). They defend things their grandparents would have fought uncompromisingly. We do not need to do anything to cause further ungodliness in the church (gossip and backbiting is bad enough), and we do not need to overlook anything that will permit further ungodliness.

2:17 - THEIR TALK. *“And their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus...”* Solomon gave ample warning against the sins of speech in Proverbs. James wrote that the tongue is full of deadly poison. Paul wrote to the Romans:

“Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; **The poison of asps is under their lips**; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:13-18, emphasis added).

Some where years ago I found the following verse but the author remains unknown to me:

The tongue a tiny member is,
Which lights a mighty flame.

The jungle beasts can man control,
The tongue he cannot tame.

It is true that the tongue can spread deadly poison when one uses it for gossip or slander, but that is not the specific issue here. This warning has to do with the spread of error, or heresy, which may lead to “further ungodliness: (v. 16). It is amazing, and disturbing to see people who profess to be Christians going door to door spreading heresy. You answer the door bell and two young men are standing there, clean cut, courteous young men, their bikes parked at the curb. They introduce themselves as Christian missionaries. Their commercials offer callers a King James Version Bible and they boast of their family values and relationships. What they do not tell you is that the Jesus of the Bible is not the Jesus of Mormonism. They do not tell you that Mormons are polytheistic. They do not tell you about their violent attacks on others during the early days of the church - but they will tell you about all the atrocities committed against them.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses (another so-called Christian cult) come to your door with literature, and their own translation, which identifies Jesus as “a” god (John 1). They make one absurd claim after another. Two men showed up at my door when I was a young pastor, and had not had training in dealing with the cults. When I opened the door the older of the two men demanded, “How can you tell your people to love one another when you kill your brother?”

“What?”, I asked, trying to figure out what he had in mind. He was animated as he pointed to the church and said, “You tell your people to love one another and you kill your brother!”

When I asked, “What are you talking about?”, he said you go to war and kill your brother. I said, “Baptists have gone to war and suffered, and bled, and died to keep this country free so people can walk up and down the street doing what you are doing right now. And as far as I am concerned, a man who will not defend his county is like a man who will not defend his family. He’s not much of a man.”

The older man, who had done all the talking, said, “I think we had better go.” I am sorry, but I didn’t know any better. That really is not the way to witness to a cult member.

We know that the cults preach a strange doctrine, but it is even more regrettable when churches that consider themselves mainline denominations proclaim heresy. At one end of the spectrum are those to whom everything is a sin, and on the other end are those to whom nothing is a sin, except calling something a sin - intolerance they call it.

On November 5, 2003, President George Bush signed into law a bill that bans partial birth abortion. At the time he made a statement that included a reference to the Creator. Liberals have attacked him with a viciousness that defies the imagination - he is pandering to conservatives, or right-wing fundamentalists. It is amazing how much zeal they can muster for infanticide!

2:18 - MEN WHO HAVE GONE ASTRAY. *“Men who have gone astray from the truth saying*

that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some.” Hymenaeus and Philetus, about whom Paul had warned in the First Epistle to Timothy,

“exemplify the danger of deviating from Scripture. They insisted that the bodily resurrection of believers had already happened. The only way to justify this claim is to assert that resurrection is a spiritual reality with no physical aspect (cf. 1 Cor. 15). There are several modern versions of this kind of heresy, especially among more liberal theologians and some of the cults” [BSB].

2:19 - THE FIRM FOUNDATION OF GOD. *“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’* I discovered this verse when I was a young man and committed it to memory so that I could recall it when I needed encouragement. I have often used it as a “prayer verse” - a verse I have quoted to remind myself of God’s providential care. There are three statements that merit our attention. The “seal” is a mark or certificate of ownership. We belong to Him.

First, “the foundation of God stands” secure. God is on His throne, and there has never been a time when He was not on His throne. His is an eternal throne. He never ascended to the throne, He is the sovereign God of eternity. His sovereignty has never been threatened. His very name, I AM, settles it forever.

Second, “The Lord knows those who are His.” I need to know that. I need the assurance. When I go to Him in prayer, I need to know that He knows who I am, why I am coming into His presence, and what I really need. Even when I do not know how to pray, He knows what I need, and He knows what he wants for me. Prayer, when we really know God and desire His will, is not about getting what I want from God, it is about His getting what He wants from me.

I was sitting in the sauna of my health club a number of years ago, enjoying an interesting conversation with a black deacon. We were talking about prayer and he said something I will never forget: “He’s sittin’ high and lookin’ low.” That might not be the way they express it in Systematic Theology class, but he could not have expressed it any better.

Third, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.” We owe our salvation to the love of God. God is love. He is also holy, and the holiness of God demands holy living. God expects every born again believer to abstain from evil.

F. We Must Be Sanctified, 2:20-23.

2:20 - VESSELS. *“Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.”* Paul uses some interesting metaphors, here it is the metaphor of the house. By the same token, the use of the word “vessels” should not surprise us. What he is saying that in a the church there will always

be some members who are honorable and some who are dishonorable. However, even if one is dishonorable, there is no reason that he should stay that way (see the next verse).

2:21 - A VESSEL OF HONOR. *“Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”* Now Paul leaves the metaphor of the house to focus on the individual believer. Even if one is, or has been dishonorable, he can seek forgiveness and pursue righteousness (v. 22) and in so doing he will become a “vessel of honor.”

2:22 - FLEE YOUTHFUL LUSTS. *“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”* There is a time to fight, but this is not it! When it comes to lust, the answer is flight. Joseph understood that thirty-five hundred years ago. We live in a society that feeds lust like one throwing dry pine on a forest fire. They tell us there are thousands of porn sites on the Internet. Someone on AFR reported that an incredible large number of church leaders have visited pornographic web-sites.

I sat at the table with Tim Vineyard and several other LifeWay Christian Resources trustees in September, 2003, and questioned him about the filters he has set up at LifeWay to block pornographic material. Thousands of porn messages try to access their system but are blocked. I asked him why they were sending this material to LifeWay, assuming that it was just an in your face reaction to the Christian message. Tim explained that pornography is highly addictive, which I understood. What I did not understand is what they hoped to gain by sending it to LifeWay. I wondered how the one sending the material would expect to benefit from it. In other words, if Bill Jones gets hooked on pornography sent by XYZ Porn Unlimited, how do they profit if Bill goes somewhere else to buy material from them? Tim explained how they sell it over the Internet. All you have to do is click on a button and give them your credit card number in the privacy of your home or office. The way to deal with lust is not to go to “R” and “X” rated movies, or to watch them at home on TV. The best way to deal with lust is not to rent “X” rated movies or to surf the Internet looking for gratification for one’s lust. What we should do is flee lust. “Youthful lust” is a reminder that there are temptations that are strongest in one’s youth, but all believers should flee that which is immoral.

There are things which we must flee, but there are also some things we should pursue:

1) Pursue righteousness - We have no righteousness of our own, but when we trust Jesus Christ His righteousness is imputed unto us, and He produces righteousness through us.

2) Pursue faith - Paul wrote, “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ” (Rom., 10:17 (HCSB)). Faith is a gift from God, according to Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith comes through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, nurtured and enhanced through our study of the Word of God. But, in the context of the tenth chapter of Romans, the emphasis is on the word preached. When the Gospel is faithfully preached, God speaks to the hearts of people.

3) Pursue love - Paul, in the great Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, wrote, “Love is **patient**; love is **kind**. Love **does not envy**; is **not boastful**; is **not conceited**; **does not act improperly**; is **not selfish**; is **not provoked**; does not keep a record of wrongs; finds no joy in unrighteousness, but **rejoices in the truth**; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. **Love never ends**” (1 Cor 13:4-8a, HCSB, emphasis added).

4) Pursue peace - Peace in the Bible does not mean a non-aggression treaty. Peace seeks the highest good for others. It means that you are not only not a threat to others, but one who will actively seek their highest good.

Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace - which is exactly what “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart” are doing. Pursue denotes an active pursuit. Some Christians seem to think that they can just live a quiet life and avoid controversy and God will bless them with these things. This verse calls on us to actively pursue those things.

2:23 - FOOLISH AND IGNORANT SPECULATION. *“But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”* Foolish and ignorant speculations are some else’s speculations, not mine! Many of the members of the church at Ephesus had come out of a pagan background and had sought to blend what they had learned with the pagan speculation with which they had grown up in the pagan temples. Others were Jews who focused on holy days and genealogies. Such speculations had no doubt already produced quarrels, and there is always a danger that they will today.

The Lord has revealed many things about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and His promises should bring both hope and peace to the believer. In fact, “quarrels” over various eschatological views or positions have led to some serious problems.

G. We Must Be a Servant, 2:24-26.

2:24 - BOND-SERVANT. *“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged.”* The HCSB has “The Lord’s slave must not quarrel.” In the study I prepared on 1 Timothy, I noted that in February, 2001, I sat at a table with Dr. Ed Bloom, the general editor of the HCSB, after a really long committee meeting in which those of us on the Broadman and Holman Committee (LifeWay Christians Resources) voted to continue with the project. At noon, someone who was not on the committee wanted to ask Dr. Bloom a question and Jimmy Draper led him over to our table where he took a seat and answered questions. The reason for repeating this account is that the question concerned the word translated “bond-servant” in the NAS and “servant” in the NKJV. The man asked Dr. Bloom why the HCSB translates it “slave” instead of “servant.” Dr. Bloom explained that the Greek word (*doulos*) literally means slave, though it is translated bond-servant by some. Dr. Bloom stressed his commitment to accuracy in the HCSB.

The true slave of Jesus Christ should not be quarrelsome. Rather, he should:

1) Be kind to all - It is natural to be kind to those who are kind to you, but the Scripture tells us to be kind to all. This means that we are to apply the Golden Rule in all relationships. Think what this attitude would do if adopted by all sides in the Middle East.

2) Able to teach - To be able to teach one must diligently study the Word of God, he must have developed some skills in interpreting the Scripture, and he must be mature enough to know how to make an application of what he has learned. He should teach the Word so that people will have knowledge, and he should seek to motivate others to study it and make an application of it.

3) Be patient when wronged - "Patient" here means a willingness to remain under circumstances and let the Lord work them out. It does not mean that we will like all circumstances, but it does mean that we will not quit and we will not let offensive people run us off. This is applied Christianity, consistent with the Sermon on the Mount and other teachings of Jesus.

2:25 - WITH GENTLENESS. *"With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth."* Gentleness, like kindness, is a quality the Holy Spirit will nurture in the hearts of those who are yielded to Him. Christians should consciously seek to develop a spirit of gentleness, especially when it comes to correcting those who need it. The purpose in correcting those who are opposed to sound doctrine is to try to persuade them to open their hearts to the Lord, trusting Him to "grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth." Priscila and Aquila were able to take Apollos under their wing and correct his theology.

2:26 - THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL. *"And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."* These people were already teaching false doctrines and they needed to do two things:

1) They needed to come to their senses - they needed to repent and actively seek the truth.

2) They needed to escape from the snare of the devil - They were already in the devil's snare so this is corrective and not just preventive. Those who escape the snare of the devil are the ones who come to their senses, spiritually speaking, and trust the Lord to deliver them.

IV. WARNINGS FOR THE SERVANT OF CHRIST, 3:1-17.

A. The Danger of Apostasy, 3:1-9.

3:1 - IN THE LAST DAYS. *“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.”* With the words, “realize this”, Paul is reminding Timothy of the importance our understanding of the doctrine of last things (Eschatology). By “last days” he means the entire period between the writing of this letter and the Lord’s return . As we draw nearer and nearer to His return, the problems mentioned here will intensify (see 1 Tim. 4:1-5). In the following verses (vv. 2-9) we have a picture of widespread corruption and a breakdown of law and order.

“The phrase ‘in the last days’ is a general expression for the messianic age (cf. Isa. 2:2; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17). Clearly the apostle has in mind present realities generally recurring throughout Christian history, which shall climactically culminate in the eschaton (end time) prior to the return of Christ” [BSB].

3:2 - “LOVERS OF SELF. *“For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy...”* As the Second Coming draws near men will become more and more worldly and ungodly. Paul lists some of the character traits of mankind in the last days before the return of the Lord. Men (in the generic sense of humanity) will be:

1) Lovers of self - What do they call it, the “me generation”? Has any generation ever spent so much on entertainment, make-up, designer clothes, cosmetic surgery, exercise, and diets? Mothers walk off and leave their husbands and children feeling fully justified with the explanation, “I just want to find myself.” A lot of worthless fathers have abandoned their family throughout the centuries, but when a mother can walk off and leave her baby we know that society is on that proverbial slippery slope.

Young adults today are so caught up in recreation and entertainment that many will put their parents and grandparents in a nursing home as soon as they become an inconvenience and then go for long periods of time without visiting. Some who do that are not young, but they are still lovers of self.

One lady stayed in a nursing facility for nine years and received one visit from a relative during that entire time.

2) Lovers of money - Does that sound like modern America? Paul had already written to Timothy, “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for the same sin:

“The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and scoffing at Him. 15 And He told them: ““You are the ones who justify yourselves in the sight of others, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly admired by people is revolting in God’s sight” (Luke 16:14-15, (HCSB).

3) Boastful - A. T. Robertson points out that this is an old Greek word for “empty pretender.”

This sin is listed in the catalog of sins in Romans 1. Have you listened to a lot of modern athletes? There have always been boastful people, but this problem seems to be intensifying today. In the first playoff between the National Football League and the old American Football League, Joe Namath made a lot of predictions and got a lot of coverage on television. Today, we are used to the Mohamed Ali type of boasting, Namath's attitude disturbed a lot of people. Others, however, like it. I heard someone say, "It ain't bragging if you can do it." Later, a sportscaster made the statement, "Joe Namath proved he is a football player; Johnny Unitas proved he was a man." Johnny Unitas was the one man upon whose shoulders the NFL rode into the national limelight and surpassed baseball as the true national past time, yet he was not given to boasting.

4) Arrogant - The HCSB has "proud." Elevating one's self above others is the literal meaning. As men become more and more lovers of self, arrogance will increase. Arrogance is the opposite of the humility God recognizes. He condemns arrogance but responds to humility.

A college student who loved the Lord showed his pastor a letter he was required to write for a business class. His letter was to be addressed to some business and his assignment was to give reasons why they should hire him. Later, his pastor asked what kind of grade he got on his assignment. He said, "I got a "B" because the teacher said I was too humble." The world does not always recognize humility but God does.

5) Revilers - Blasphemers. Blasphemy means to speak evil against. Paul confessed to being guilty of blasphemy in the First Epistle to Timothy (1:13). He had spoken evil against Jesus and against the church.

6) Disobedient to parents - Another sin mentioned in the catalog of sins in Romans (1:30). My wife has taught in public schools for thirty years and she has observed serious changes in attitudes of students toward teachers and parents. Her second year in education she taught fifth grade at Forest Hill, a suburb of Jackson, Mississippi and had no problem taking forty-five students on field trips as long as she had two parents to accompany them. Within fifteen to twenty years our whole culture had changed. In one school where she taught for twelve years, she says that when she began at that school almost all students made it a point to speak to all teachers when they met them in the hall. Within five years they were not speaking. Five years later they would run over teachers in the hall and never think to say, "Excuse me." They had lost respect for parents, and when they lose respect for parents they often lose respect for others in authority.

Sadly, many parents have created the little monsters who make their life miserable. Some parents are too busy, some are too permissive, some are caught up in a struggle with a former spouse, others abandon their children. One child confided to her teacher her father had told his family to move out, and he told his children to stop calling him Daddy. In other cases, the mother leaves her children because she does not feel fulfilled. Children who disobey their parents are going to give an account before the Lord, but a lot of parents are going to have a lot of accounting to do.

7) Ungrateful - ingratitude is not only the door to all sorts of other sins, it refuses to acknowledge God as the source of all our blessings.

8) Unholy - To be holy is to be set apart, to be different from other people. To be unholy is to seek to be like the world

3:3 -UNLOVING. *“Unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good...”* The list continues, with no sin unique to any time or age, but intensifying as the return of Christ approaches:

9) Unloving - When I began my ministry it was the distraught young wife who showed up at the pastor’s study, weeping because her husband had left her and their children. She might say, “You can talk to him, he’ll listen to you.” Occasionally a young man would come to see the pastor when his wife had become involved with someone else. What I do not recall was a mother simply walking off and leaving her children with no more explanation than, “I just don’t want to be married,” or “I have to find myself.”

The first chapter of Romans records a catalog of sins, possibly showing a progression in sin until people reach the point that they commit acts that the KJV calls “vile affections.” Paul went on to stress the sinfulness of homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27) - and no sociologist, psychologist, or theologian can make that which is described in that passage less vile. Read what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write:

“For this reason God gave them over to **degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men **abandoned the natural function** of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error” (NASB, emphasis added).

Ordaining homosexuals, passing laws, or marrying homosexuals do not make the sin any less “degrading.”

In Romans 1:31, the Scripture mentions another sins - “without natural affection.” This might have applied to homosexuality, but he had just dealt with that sin in no uncertain terms. Here, it seems that the sins is that people reach the point that the do not love the very people it is most natural for them to love - their children, their parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts. This is a sin that intensifies as the Second Coming draws near. This seems to describe the world in which we live.

A friend told me that when his father died all family members were called. Once sister simply said, “I told you when I left home that I did not want anything else to do with this family. Now, don’t call me again.” That is not natural.

10) Irreconcilable - Unloving people are more inclined to be irreconcilable. I asked the manager

of a manufacturing company if he could tell the difference in Christians and non-Christians in his work.. He said, “Absolutely. Christians will do some things that are wrong but when they do you can talk with them and work things out a lot better than you can with lost people.”

11) Malicious gossips - Gossip has always been a problem, a problem that often tells you a lot more about the snake delivering the deadly venom than it does about the victim. It seems that gossips will become more malicious as the end draws nearer. I listened to a lady who was saying some really harsh things about someone I did not know. The person to whom she made the statement laughed. I thought, “That will not be so funny if she ever turns that tongue on you.” She did and it wasn’t.

12) Without self control - Have you ever seen a person who has been addicted to drugs who wanted to function in a normal way, but could never seem to remain focused for any length of time? This lack of self control is seen today in sexual sins, but also in gambling, alcohol, and drugs.

13) Brutal - Only yesterday, October 29, 2003, Fox New Network showed a new tape the army released from Iraq. It was a video of the Saddam Hussein’s Republican Guard beating a man who was tied to a post. The twenty three minute tape also showed them beheading one man, chopping off the fingers of another, and throwing men from the top of a building. These people have redefined the word “brutal.” We have always had brutal people, from the barbarians who threatened Europe, to the Mongol hordes that pillaged and raped their way across a continent, to the Nazis (whom the media hates), to the Communists (whom many liberals seem to love, even though they have killed eight to ten times as many people as Hitler). But today, if you want to see brutality magnified, look to the Middle East.

14) Haters of good - Liberals hate President George W. Bush but loved Bill Clinton. Clinton was grossly immoral, vile, and profane (according to various reports). It was all right for him to commit vile acts in the oval office, but highly offensive for President Bush to pray in the oval office! They hate him for political reasons, a hatred spewed out through the media for the world’s scrutiny for the enemy to enjoy. Democratic Senator Zell Miller of Georgia says point blank that many in his party, are encouraging our enemy in Iraq. Senator Miller likened President Bush to Churchill, a man for the hour. When General Jerry Boykin said in a message at a church on the Lord’s Day that God put President Bush in the White House for times like these, the liberal media went into the shark mode. “Haters of good?” You decide.

3:4 TREACHEROUS. “*Treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...*” The list goes on - and these things will intensify as the end of the age draws near:

15) Treacherous - Is there evidence that the world is becoming more treacherous? Look at the terrorists, both at home and abroad. Snipers killing people in the Washington area, students slain in schools. Nine-eleven! The attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon were treacherous acts. Many other such acts have apparently been prevented through the work of Homeland De-

fense and other law enforcement organizations. Today in Baghdad, people are attacking American troops, and other Muslims in a brutally treacherous manner.

16) Reckless - No one age has a monopoly on recklessness, but it does seem to be multiplying in a day when the latest technology is employed in sinful ways (high-tech recklessness?). But, if you want to see recklessness, look to the homosexual men who, according to some reports, deliberately expose themselves to AIDS because they believe medical science is making a lot of progress in the treatment of a preventable disease. Some reportedly deliberately expose themselves to AIDS because they believe they are going to get it anyway and they develop a fatalistic attitude toward it, trusting that someone will come up with a cure.

17) Conceited - Conceit has always been with us, and as long as there are those who are “lovers of self” with us we will have to contend with such conceit. Examples abound in every field, including politics, social settings, athletics, and in any profession or craft. Self love, self-worth emphasis can breed conceit. Robert Schuler, and possibly other New Age (postmodern) preachers believe that sin is nothing more than low self-esteem, but source of conceit is high self-esteem, not low self-esteem.

18) Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - The forty hour work week and longer vacations have given more people the time and ability to pursue pleasure. Recreation can be very good for any person, but we live in a day in which pleasure takes precedence over family, society, and church. There may be little pleasure in some parts of the world, but in America and other industrialized nations, pleasure is pursued with a religious zeal.

3:5 - A FORM OF GODLINESS. *“Holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.”* Millions of religious people today will illustrate this point. A Fox news host condemns something he does not like and then announces, “I’m a Catholic, but...” Someone in the work place says, “I’m a Baptist, but...” There is a form of godliness, but sometimes there is little substance to support the claim. It is shocking when the defenders of everything from abortion to homosexuality are often leaders of one church or another. Senator Hilary Clinton led the fight to prevent a bill from being passed that would prohibit partial-birth abortion - which is infanticide. Yet, the Clintons were often seen attending church service when her husband was president.

The story is told of the bishop who stood with a village priest admiring a very beautiful church. The bishop said, “No longer do we have to say, ‘gold and silver have we none.’” To which the priest said, “Nor can we say, ‘Rise, take up thy bed and walk.’”

There is something wrong with church leaders attack the Bible, deny miracles, and redefine morality. It is happening all the time, and it is intensifying. Does that mean that the return of our Lord is drawing near? There is nothing to prevent it. As John declared, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

3:6 - CAPTIVATE WEAK WOMEN. *“For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses.”* Feminists today call the Bible a sexist book, and some may point to this verse to justify that claim. However, Paul is not calling all women weak, nor is he claiming that all women are weighed down with sin, or “led on by various impulses.” Obviously, some women in the church at Ephesus were of that order, just as some today are easily led astray by strange doctrines. The Charismatic movement of the sixties and seventies split some churches and placed a strain on personal relationships. There were men involved in that, but some were convinced that if you had taken the women out of the movement it would have died almost overnight. There are some women today who look for an emotional release and will never be happy in any other kind of church, just as there are men who love a church where there is a variety of activities and a strong emphasis on recreation - and entertaining services.

The subject about which Paul is writing here is the return of Christ, so it seems that before the Lord returns women will be more susceptible to strange doctrines. The warning here is not so much about the women who may be deceived, as serious as that is, but on those who would deceive them. Before the Lord returns false teachers will “enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins.” These are not mature Christian women, but women weighed down with guilt and burdened by the consequences of their sins. They are looking for something and these people enter their homes and take them captive. Think of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons with their emphasis on the family and on relationships. Think also of all those televangelists who have been entering the home for over fifty years, some with sound doctrine, some with strange doctrines.

3:7 - KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH. *“Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* Once one embraces a false doctrine, they may commit themselves to the study of that religion and never know the truth. Millions of Muslims today think they know what Christians believe; they think they know what the Bible says. Some have made a lifelong study of Islam with missionary zeal to try to convince the world that Christianity is corrupt and only Islam is pure. Someone has pointed out that you should never read to a Muslim from the King James Version of the Bible because they are taught that King James translated it - and corrupted it. They are horrified at the thought of the Trinity, insisting that we are polytheistic.

The Mormons preach a Jesus that is not the Jesus of the Bible. Early in December, 2003, there was a brief announcement on AFR Radio that recent DNA tests totally refute the Mormon claims about the ancient Hebrews coming to America and becoming the ancestors of any group here (Indians or Mormons!). The Jehovah’s Witnesses have their own translation with a distorted view of Jesus. Once one accepts a false doctrine he may continually increase in his knowledge of that which is wrong and never find the truth. I have seen training videos in which a Mormon church official instructs learners with an arrogant attitude, as he “proves” that his church is the only church: “Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

3:8 - OPPOSE THE TRUTH. *“Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.”* This is interesting! Nowhere in the OT do we read that the names of Pharaoh’s two magicians were named Jannes and Jambres (see Ex. 7). However, the divine Author, the Holy Spirit, knew their names and reveals it here. These men represented the wisdom of Egypt, and those who teach false doctrine and deceive people today are in reality “men of depraved mind,” who had reject faith and in turn are rejected by the Lord.

3:9 - THE FOLLY. *“But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes’ and Jambres’ folly was also.”* The Egyptian magicians symbolize the folly and futility of opposing God. Those false teachers at Ephesus would be exposed and they would be remembered only for their folly. Think about the folly of some human being, even if he is possessed by demons, standing forth to challenge the Creator. The fact that people are still doing that today shows that human nature has not changed, not has satanic activity. The enemies of the Cross today are line up in an effort to prevent the progress of the kingdom of God. There are the Communists who desire a classless, godless, stateless society, and Communism is not dead - not in China, Cuba, or in the media in America. Other enemies of the Cross include Islam - and not just radical Muslims either. Even those who do not commit murderous acts against Christians, Americans, and Jews are enemies of the Cross.

All the religions of this world are in fact committing this same type of folly. A teacher e-mailed someone (I believe it was Bill O’Reilly) to tell him she was a teacher and she was opposed to saying the words “under God” in the pledge because she is a Buddhist and Buddhists do not believe in a deity. Hollywood was very quick to embrace Easter Mysticism in its New Age expression a quarter of a century ago. Little did they realize that some guru in India had told those who came to America to plant the seeds of Hinduism that Americans would not buy the idea of human beings being reincarnated as cows or insects, so they should concentrate their message on a reincarnation as someone either higher or lower on the socio-economic ladder.

The ACLU and Americans for the Separation of Church and State, who seek to secularize our society, or at least to confine religion to the home and church (synagogue or mosque) stand with those whose folly will be exposed. They will be on their face before Jesus Christ in the time of judgment and they will be with those who will be crying for the rocks and the hills to fall on them to hide them from the wrath of God.

B. Defense Against Apostasy, 3:10-17.

3:10 - YOU FOLLOWED. *“But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance.”* In contrast to the apostates who followed opposed the truth, the faithful believers at Ephesus had followed Paul’s

1) Teachings - They were grounded in sound doctrine.

- 2) Conduct - Sound doctrine was translated into godly behavior.
- 3) Purpose - They may not have known about mission statements, but they knew the purpose of God.
- 4) Faith - Without faith it is impossible to please God.
- 5) Patience - In the NT, this means endurance, a willingness to remain faithful during trials.
- 6) Love - Faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.
- 7) Perseverance - We must persevere until we overcome.

3:11 - PERSECUTIONS. *“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!”* Paul urges his readers to persevere through persecutions and suffering, just as he had at Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe during the First Missionary Journey. Obviously, they were well aware of his suffering, both at that time and since then. He had endured severe persecution then and later, but the Lord rescued him time after time.

3:12 - GODLY IN CHRIST. *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”* Those who desired to live godly lives in Ephesus at the time would be persecuted. Those who desire to “live in Christ Jesus” in Islamic countries can expect to be persecuted. Sadly, that persecution is coming, step by step to America. More sadly, you can shout it from the house top and no one will believe it. After all, is tolerance not the gospel of the day? It is unless your gospel is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The liberal media today is in love with Islam, and seems to be determined to level the playing field to encourage anyone and anything other than Christianity.

David Limbaugh has chronicled the persecution of Christianity in America in his book, *PERSECUTED*. He illustrates the persecution of Christianity with an actual court case. He writes, “In May, 1995, Samuel B. Kent, U.S. District judge for the Southern District of Texas, decreed that any student uttering the word ‘Jesus’ would be arrested and incarcerated for six months. Lest you think this was some month-late April Fools’ joke, the judge expressly avowed his earnestness in his official order. His ruling stated, in part:

And make no mistake, the court is going to have a United States marshal in attendance at the graduation. If any student offends this court, that student will be summarily arrested and will face up to six months incarceration in the Galveston County Jail for contempt of court. Anyone who thinks I’m kidding about this order better think...Anyone who violates these orders, no kidding, is going to wish that he or she had died as a child when this court gets through with it” [David

Limbaugh: PERSECUTED, Regnery, Washington, 2003, p. 5].

Early Supreme Court cases cited Scripture in deciding cases! Liberals love to point to Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin to prove that the Founders did not intend this to be a Christian nation. Jefferson led congress to fund missionaries to the Indians and led in a number of Christian missions. Benjamin Franklin appealed to the Continental Congress to God in prayer and seek guidance. That takes care of the two well known framers of the Constitution who were not known for their faith in Jesus Christ. Almost without exception, all the other signers were committed Christians.

3:13 - EVIL MEN. *“But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”* Paul does not say that these people announce that they are evil men, nor does he say that they even believe they are evil men. But if they teach false doctrine, seduce believers, and hinder the lost, they are evil men. Evil men and impostors (false prophets) “will proceed from bad to worse.” Is that what we are seeing today? In recent days (October, November, 2003), news reports have focused on the installation ceremony for an openly homosexual bishop, whose election to that office has been met with opposition from conservatives within the Episcopal church. At the ceremony, a spokesman for conservatives spoke against his being installed as bishop, but the homosexual priest apparently had overwhelming support from those present. This is evil, and those who oppose this action see it as evil. Why would that priest not refuse the action rather than cause such a division in his denomination?

A deacon refused to serve on the active deacon body on two or three occasions when his church voted to elect him to serve on the active body. When asked, he explained that he had heard that a non-member of his church who had done business with him in the past had made the statement that if that man was a deacon in that church he would not go to there. He did not want to be a hindrance to anyone. Why could that priest not have made a similar decision? Was it because he was carrying the homosexual banner for a group of his peers and supporters?

3:14 - CONTINUE. *“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”* Paul charges Timothy to continue in the things he had taught his son-in-the-ministry, and the things the Holy Spirit had revealed to him. Paul had been his mentor and friend, but the Holy Spirit is the one who makes the teaching a reality, guides in the formulation of one’s theology, and matures the believer in the faith.

3:15 - THE SACRED WRITINGS. *“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.”*

Timothy had been taught the sacred Scripture from childhood by a godly mother and grandmother. Paul had led Timothy to faith in Jesus Christ on the First Missionary Journey and Timothy had joined him on the Second Missionary Journey.

We should not miss the emphasis on the “sacred writings.” We have fought the Battle for the

Bible in the Southern Baptist Convention for more than a quarter of a century, and the fight goes on. Some have nothing but contempt for the word “inerrant.” I heard two pastors on the same day say, “I believe the Scripture is inerrant, I just don’t want anyone to force me to say it.” Brilliant! I have never seen a pastor or lay person who was ever forced to say that the Scripture is inerrant. That is not to say that professors should not be asked to sign articles of faith before they are hired to teach in a college which is owned and supported by churches of that denomination.

Those who do believe that the “sacred writings” are the Scripture must read them and proclaim them with absolute confidence that they will not return unto the Lord void and fruitless. Those who claim that they believe the Word of God is inerrant must preach it and teach it. We hear reports of pastors today who have backed off and proclaimed that their music director is their “worship leader”, and then we hear of “worship leaders” who announce that when their part of the service is over the worship is over. People then have to sit and listen to a sermon. Pastors must not buy into this absurdity. It is through the foolishness of preaching that people are saved, and it is when the Gospel is preached (not sung or posted) that God speaks to His people and provides the faith lost people need to believe, and the faith Christians need to live victoriously. When Paul wrote those words in Romans 10, the emphasis was upon the preaching of the Word.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Rom. 10:14-17).

But there is another matter that concerns me now. A man called me and then send an e-mail message in which he lamented the change in attitude toward the Scripture he is hearing from the pulpit of one of the large mega-churches that is now run like a major cooperation. This man says that his well known pastor is not using the word inerrant, he is saying that the Scripture is “reliable” and “relevant” And this is coming from one who has fought for the authority of the Bible for many years. It seems that even some pastors fear that too strong a stand on the “sacred writings” may offend some people. Believe me, they do offend, and so does Jesus Christ. But we are not given permission to water it down. According to one report a pioneer in the mega-church movement has removed a large cross from his sanctuary because it offends some people. Of course the cross offends some people!

The man who called me said that his pastor never mentions sin and has not preached on hell in years. Someone might be offended. A choir was planning to tour California and according to one report, they received a call from a staff member of a large area church asking to see a list of the songs they would sing in their church. The staff member stressed that they did not want to hear anything about the blood or anything else that might offend their people.

A Nashville area church had a brochure printed a few years ago that caused them some embarrassment when members began asking questions. The brochure was an expensive and well done piece that seems to target Gen-X'ers. There is a segment called "Top 10 Reasons People Attend" this church.

10. Real People - Real Faith and Really good parking!
9. We won't embarrass or harass you, but we will help you feel at home.
8. Our children's program rocks.
7. No funny Baptist smells.
6. Two words: No Organ.
5. No boring sermons, but practical, relevant messages.
4. No stained glass!
3. Dancing Baptists!
2. Dr. John Smith (not his real name)...a preacher with a WATCH - we'll get you out of time.
1. One Word: Shopryland!

Here is a new message series that they advertised:

- How to recover from a broken relationship.
- How to deal with stress that won't go away.
- How to get over personal rejection
- How to deal with pressure at work.
- How to become someone you can admire.
- How to bounce back from disappointment.

The following is the testimony of a denominational leader whose experience has given him a unique opportunity to observe what is happening in churches and in pulpits across America. He has observed churches and pastors on the nation, state, and associational level, often speaking in colleges, seminaries, and state conferences. He writes in response to a question sent by a friend:

I have waited intentionally to answer your request. I want to share with you some thoughts I have had on the subject both from a practical and experiential background. I have been a part of a church that took the ideas of Saddleback and without thought put them into practice. As a result the 100 year old church was split right down the middle. I am not talking about a 25 to 50 member church but one running around 600 in SS with millions of dollars in buildings and land.

I don't believe you can actually find fault with what is being taught because it is scriptural in nature. However, when you leave this point, an idea is taught to go out and make the church change. No one likes to be forced to do anything. Therefore, I believe there is a lack of discernment on the part of many who are trying to implement "Saddleback" mentality at "Whatever Church". It is being done overnight without thought or concern of the impact and it is causing chaos all across

our land. I am finding it is not just from the older people who are reacting to it but also the young adults. Many do not like the choruses. I don't particularly like them myself but some are Bible verses. Who can argue with that? If you try, you are seen as one who does not want the Bible taught. The attitude of the leader determines the success.

I also am seeing a great disdain for the traditional church. It is almost a scorn for the church in the county that is not growing and is facing decline in the area, both economically and physically. When the decline or plateauing of the churches is mentioned, nothing is said about the change in the city, town, etc. There are some legitimate reasons why some are not growing. Instead of looking with disdain upon these struggling churches, we ought to be thanking God for a role they are playing. Many of people in these churches are being ministered to in ways that are not being promoted. I live in a very rural county. The three major churches have blended services and doing very well. However, if they tried to go completely "contemporary" they would find themselves in a struggle. Many still like the messages found in "What A Friend We Have In Jesus", and "Just As I Am" still means something to them. There is a lot of therapy in these messages.

Finally, I would mention that "Praise and Worship" seems to be replacing what has been done all these years. It seems that the idea is that what has been done in the past is all wrong and you can't win the lost with that mentality. Most of us would have never had a transformed life without it. Can there really be praise and worship from someone who is not a believer? Is all praise and no repentance valid? Where are we heading? I would like to know how many of these who deal strictly with praise and worship have an ongoing Biblically based message week in and week out. Will the people sit still for an in-depth study of the "Word" or do they need a high before they feel they have been to worship?

Also, I have voiced concern to some of our state leaders about advertisements that go out concerning events sponsored by our state and other entities. They usually mention the speaker and then the worship leader (music) as if when the music is done, the worship is over. Also some of the arrogance on the part of the "Worship Leader" bothers me. The preacher of the "Word" is the worship leader to me. The Bible does not say, "How shall they hear without a singer". Don't get me wrong, I am not against singers. I love to preach after a wonderful music service. I believe it can set the stage for the preaching but does not supersede the preaching or replace it. These are just a few thoughts I have on the matter. [November, 2003].

3:16 - ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED. *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."* This verse is of vital importance and for many years the word "inspired" was sufficient, but then some liberals began to reinterpret the meaning of the word. "Infallible" was stressed by those who considered the Bible to be "Authoritative." In time, the word "inerrant" was adopted, and this word has been strongly resisted by some people. Without a doubt, that word has been politicized by some on both sides

of the debate. As far as I am concerned, If God could not have produced a perfect work why call Him god; and if He could have produced a perfect work and would not, what kind of God is He? The note in the Believer's Study Bible is excellent:

the clearest way to give Paul's meaning is to translate as follows: "All Scripture, because it is God-breathed, is profitable...." The suggestion made by some translators that Paul believed that some parts of the O.T. were not inspired by God is ridiculous. The origin of Scripture is stated: it is "God-breathed" (theopneustos, Gk.), i.e., the words of Scripture are to be received as from God Himself. The doctrine of Scripture maintained by the Bible is that its words are "God-breathed." Something of the method of the communication of God's Word to man is included in this term. Part of the term translated "inspired" (pneustos, Gk.) is derived from pneuma (Gk.), meaning "spirit." Second Peter 1:21 furnishes additional evidence that the Holy Spirit communicated to the authors of Scripture precisely those truths which God desired to transmit. Because it is all "breathed out" by God, it is profitable in four ways: (1) "for doctrine"-to know what to believe; (2) "for reproof"-to discern what not to believe; (3) "for correction"-to learn what not to do; and (4) "for instruction in righteousness"-to understand what should be done [BSB].

3:17 - EQUIPPED. *"So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."* This speaks to purpose. God has given us His inspired, inerrant Word so that His servants will be "adequate" for the work to which He has assigned us, and to be "equipped for every good work." The Scripture is our authoritative guide. The Holy Spirit, the divine Author Who inspired it, has miraculously preserved it, and miraculously illuminates our hearts so that we may understand it and apply it.

VI. CHARGE TO THE SOLDIER OF CHRIST, 4:1-5.

4:1 - I SOLEMNLY CHARGE YOU. *"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom."* Paul's charge is inspired by the Holy Spirit, Who focuses Timothy's attention on the Father and the Son. He also calls attention to the judgment that is placed in the hands of the Son, to his return, and His kingdom.

4:2 - PREACH THE WORD. *"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."* Central to the charge to Timothy as well as any modern preacher of the Word is just this: "Preach the Word!" A re-visitation of this charge is especially timely today as many preachers seem to be minimizing the preaching of the Gospel. A Director of Missions has observed that pastors in his area are no longer preaching or teaching through books of the Bible. If they do that they have to deal with all issues contained in that book, which some fear may offend some people, especially those called "seekers." In reality,

Jesus is the divine Seeker Who came to seek and to save the lost. No person ever comes to the Lord simply because he sought the Lord. We can only come to Him as He draws us to Himself.

One man complained that his pastor is preaching mini-sermons, trying to keep them interesting and exciting, but avoiding difficult subjects, like sin. How do we preach the Gospel of salvation without any emphasis on what it is from which we need to be saved? We are to:

1) Reprove. Some people today tell us they do not want anything to do with evangelicals because “They are too judgmental.” How much less judgmental should we be than Jesus? Someone called a forty year old man narrow when he questioned why sermons had not dealt with difficult issues in the seven years he had been at that church. He called to ask me how to respond and I told him that I would hate to think that I am less narrow than Jesus. Jesus would no doubt be called intolerant by many people today. The preacher who preaches the Word faithfully will reprove sinners.

2) Exhort - The faithful preacher of the Word will exhort, encourage, plead, and even beg the lost to trust Jesus Christ for His great salvation. He will exhort the saved to be faithful. Brother Albert was one of my all-time favorite deacons. He loved the Lord, he loved his church, and he loved his young pastor. His pastor’s family loved him and when their son John was about four years old he had a little toy dog he named Brother Albert. The dog was on wheels and when John pulled it, it was supposed to bark - what it actually did was squawk. John was not the only child in the church who loved Brother Albert. He was faithful in attendance and in stewardship, but somewhere along the line Brother Albert had come to a disturbing conclusion. He said, “Brother Johnny, everyone around here knows where the church is and they know they are welcome here. I just don’t think we ought to have to beg people to come to church.” The word Paul uses here means that we must beg people to come to Jesus - and if we have to beg them to come to church we should be willing to do that, too.

The preacher will exhort “with great patience and instruction.” Patience means that he will make a commitment to stay the course even when it is not popular. Instruction is essential, and that includes the use of the Bible and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

It is time for the church, especially the leadership, to return to a high view of preaching. Today, many people are concerned only with praise, which of course is important, but should not be the central part of worship. Unfortunately, many today believe that when the praise service is over the worship part of the service is over. The pastor must never buy into that attitude. Paul wrote to the Romans that “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God,” and the emphasis there (Romans 10) is on the preaching of the Word.

4:3 - THE TIME WILL COME. “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires.*” The disturbing thing here is that we may well be living in a day when “they” (even church leaders) will not endure sound doctrine,” and the “they” does not

mean lost people. Many church members are not at all interested in sound doctrine. Even some preachers and denominational leaders recommend that the Sunday morning sermon avoid anything deep - make that sound doctrine. Many people want to “have their ears tickled,” they do not want to be fed and they certainly do not want to deal with sound doctrine. They will change churches or denominations to avoid being reproved, and they will avoid services in which they are challenged to think or to make decisions.

These people actively seek pastors who will preach what they want to hear. I even had a deacon to tell me that he did not want to hear anything negative. He only wanted to hear sermons on love, joy, and faith. A friend told me about the pastor who preached through First Corinthians, and got himself fired. There have been people throughout the centuries who would not bear sound doctrine and rebelled against anyone who preached a message in which they were reprovved. It does seem however, that this attitude is intensifying. Look at the preachers who have been terminated over the last thirty years and look at the reasons they were fired.

4:4 - TURN AWAY. “*And will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.*” Millions of professing Christians have turned to New Age religions, to Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and even Islam in within the last quarter of a century. Celebrities have led the parade from the church into some of these New Age (post-modern) religious groups. They have been so subtle that even evangelical Christian churches and denominations have permitted them to use their facilities without knowing what these people believed and what they were teaching.

4:5 - BE SOBER. “*But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*” But you, Timothy, I charge you to:

1) BE SOBER - Be serious. The preacher of the Word must be sober “in all things,” Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church (5:8): “But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2) ENDURE HARDSHIP. If one preaches the Word faithfully he must expect hardships. In some countries preaching the Word will lead to severe hardship. In some Islamic countries witnesses are beaten or killed and their children are sold into slavery. In Communist China Christians have been subjected to severe hardships, but the church has not only survived, it has flourished.

3) DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST - Obey the Great Commission. Mavis Allen, who was at the time the editor of the OUTREACH MAGAZINE for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), asked me to write some articles. One article was based on Acts 1:8, and in that I stated that just before the Ascension Jesus repeated the Great Commission.

Later, I was writing a verse by verse study of the Book of Acts, and had an opportunity to talk with Dr. Leo Eddleman about it. He was preaching in revival services for us at the time and he was writing a commentary on Acts, spending every spare minute working on it each day. When we talked about 1:8, he told me that this was not a restatement of the Great Commission, but that Jesus was predicting that as soon as the Holy Spirit came upon them they would be His witnesses. If you are saved you have received the Holy Spirit, and you will do the work of an evangelist.

We are to do the work of an evangelist. Peter delivered the first evangelist sermon on the Day of Pentecost when three thousand people were saved. Many others were doing personal evangelism on the same day. From that day forward Christians have focused both on personal (one of one) evangelism and on mass evangelism.

I led a group from Mississippi College to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson every Thursday afternoon for two and one-half years. In addition, I was a student pastor (Dockery Baptist Church, Cleveland, MS). I usually drove to my home at Sledge, MS after class on Friday, and I left home at 6:00 A.M. on Sunday morning to go to the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I sought to do one-on-one evangelism, church evangelism in regular services, and mass evangelism through revivals.

When I was a student at Mississippi College and two seminaries we studied evangelism and evangelists: Wesley, Whitefield, Dwight L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Billy Graham and others. In my youth I attended the Green River Baptist Mission and then got home in time to see R. G. Lee on television each Sunday. After Sunday dinner we saw and heard a young, dynamic Billy Graham.

When I was still young in the ministry I had an opportunity to work with some highly respected evangelists. I was Youth Pastor at First Baptist Church, Rayville when Dr. D. Wade Armstrong preached a revival for us. I worked with his revival plans and then went door to door with him as he witnessed to people. I had never seen anything like it. Soul winning was an obsession with him, more so than anyone else I have ever seen. His wife was dying of cancer and he was burdened for her, but he was totally focused on winning souls. When we visited he was courteous and gracious, but he was not one to become distracted. Weeks before the revival he asked us, "How many people do you want to see saved during the revival?" They had never been asked anything like that before, and most of us would have considered it a great revival if ten people had walked the aisle in that church.

Dr. Armstrong asked, "How about fifty people? Would you like to see fifty people saved that week?" Well, of course we would like to see fifty people saved, but that was not very realistic! I believe there were sixty two who made professions of faith that week.

When Dr. Leonard Sanderson, Director of Evangelism for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, arrived for a revival I informed him that in preparation for the revival I had taught his book on PERSONAL EVANGELISM. At first, I did not know how to read his response. He hesitated

before saying, “Johnny, I don’t use that method any more. That is too aggressive. I share my faith with people and trust the Lord to bring them to the point that they will trust Him.”

The Lord did not stamp out all pastors, evangelists, and missionaries with a cookie cutter. Each person must do the work of an evangelist as the Lord leads him or her. There is no one way that is right, to the exclusion of all other ways. Dwight L. Moody was said to have reached a many people for the Lord through one-on-one evangelism as he did through his crusades - if so, that is amazing.

I think the most inexcusable thing I have witnessed is the arrogance of some pastors and evangelists who has decided that they are superior to others because they have produced more impressive numbers. I can recall some very bad numbers, as well as some very good numbers, and while I wish they were all good, I can at least recognize some of the factors that must be considered. The first thing we should look at in evaluating our work is whether or not we were faithful. If baptisms alone were proved the worth of an evangelist, Paul was a miserable failure. If keeping a large following was the criterion, Jesus blew it, because once the masses discovered what He was really all about they turned and followed Him no more.

4) FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY. How do you do that? One way is to do the work of an evangelist. In addition, the pastor is a teacher, counselor, encourager, administrator, as well as a preacher. This is not a work that can be done in the flesh, even though many have tried it, and some may feel that they have been successful. A man can deliver a speech, but the Gospel is on-ly preached to the glory of God when a godly man proclaims it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

VII. CHRISTIAN SOLDIER IS BLESSED, 4:6-18.

A. Finishing Strong, 4:6-7.

4:6 - THE TIME. “*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*” There are two statements in this verse, but one commitment. First, Paul assures his son-in-the-ministry, “I am already being poured out as a drink offering...” The background is found in Lev. 23:10-14. Paul is prepared to meet his Lord, he is joyfully anticipating his departure to be with the Lord. “He is certain of his imminent death (v. 6), content with his record of service (v. 7), and confident of his reception by the Savior (v. 8). Paul’s use of the athletic metaphor is especially descriptive of the life of a believer in that it denotes characteristics such as struggle, endurance, discipline, and finally, victory” [BSB].

The Feast of First Fruits, as Ryrie explains, involved

Presenting to the Lord a sheaf (lit., an omer, about two qt; see note on Ex. 16:16) of the barley harvest on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (16th of

Nisan). This was accompanied by burnt, grain, and drink offerings (cf. Ex. 29:40). **The drink offering** (cf. Ex. 29:41), consisting of about two pints of unmixed wine, was poured on the grain offering as **a symbol of joy**. First Fruits symbolized the consecration of the entire harvest to God and was an earnest, or pledge, of the full harvest yet to be gathered (emphasis added) [RSB].

The drink offering was poured out as a symbol of joy on the an offering that promised a bountiful harvest. Paul had suffered many trials and hardships and it is no wonder that he is ready to go home to be with the Lord. The time is so near for Paul that he does not say that he is being prepared to be poured out as a drink offering - he is being poured out. During his first Roman imprisonment, the Apostle to the Gentiles had written to the saints at Philippi, "But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you" (Phil 2:17, HCSB). Now toward the end of his second Roman imprisonment, he was being poured out as a libation on the altar at that very time. The end was imminent.

Paul the prisoner of the Lord adds, "the time of my departure is at hand." I believe it was Lehman Strauss who, years ago, wrote that Paul was using a nautical term here when he used the word "departure." It was the equivalent of saying, I am about to set sail for some distant shore. Any pastor who has gone through a few of the trials that Paul had faced would appreciate Paul's desire to go home to be with the Lord, but his willingness to remain here as long as it served the Lord's purpose.

One of the most outstanding witnesses for the Lord over the past forty years has been that wonderfully courageous lady we have admired so much, Joni Erickson Tada. I know of very few people who have touched hearts the same way as this marvelous Christian lady. In a way, I think those who know her would like to keep her here in this world so that she can continue to be a blessing to them. At the same time, we understand why she has such a desire to go to heaven. She longs for the day.

4:7 - THE GOOD FIGHT. "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.*" Many people have been able to say this: Think of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Zwingli, Luther, Huss, Calvin, Knox, Smythe and Helwys, the Wesleys and George Whitefield. And in America: Edwards and Brainerd, Roger Williams and Obadiah Holmes, those itinerant Methodists, Luther Rice and the Jussons. Think of the missionaries: Hudson Taylor, Lottie Moon, and Annie Armstrong. There are the pastors, evangelists, denominational servants, and Christian educators. And never forget the godly lay members who stay and serve faithfully year after year, even when one pastor moves on to another field and a new pastor is called.

1) I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT. Paul is fond of metaphors, and the metaphor of a fight is a good one, whether we think of war or an athletic event, spiritual warfare is intended. A. T. Robertson says he means an athletic contest, or boxing match here, and I suspect that he is right, based on other athletic metaphors Paul uses.

2) I HAVE FINISHED THE COURSE. Paul had used this expression in addressing the elders at Ephesus when the course was still before him (Acts 20:24). Now in a letter to Timothy to encourage him to teach the church at Ephesus he says that he has finished the course. This is also an athletic metaphor, a picture of a distance runner who finishes the course.

Mickey Steward is one of the most remarkable people I have ever known. The daughter of the first Italian immigrant to receive a degree from Harvard Law School, she ran away from home and was befriended by a family, and married the son of the family. He father-in-law was an Indian who fled the territory, taking with him one of the wanted posters. He settled in Mississippi where he was very successful in business, which meant that he would be able to send his young daughter-in-law to what ever school she chose - which led to seven degrees and a remarkable career.

Mickey's husband had flown during WW II and later flew commercial planes until he got a position with the FBI. He had flown a son to Washington to meet J. Edgar Hoover and take a tour of the FBI facilities before writing a college paper. On the way home, her husband detected some problem and immediately ejected his son Charlie, and before he could eject himself the plane exploded and he was killed. Two sons had been killed in Viet Nam and later one of her daughters was killed by a drunk driver. That daughter had been saved before her death. When she "converted" Mickey took her to the Alps to de-program her, but instead she came under conviction her self. I had the privilege of baptizing her a few years ago.

After the deaths of so many people so close to her, she retired and after several years began caring for Alzheimer patients. I never cease to be amazed by this lady - one son is a Jesuit priest often seen with the pope at the Vatican and on tours. On a trip to Mexico Bo stood with the pope waving a copy of my commentary on Philippians, UNDEFEATED: FINDING PEACE I A WORLD FULL OF TROUBLE, before the world. Of course only his mother knew what he was waving. She had sent it to him and he called later to tell her he had read it twice and was making copies of sections and passing them around over the Vatican.

Mickey has had private audiences with pope, and when she left the church, she received personal visits from ranking Catholic officials who tried to talk her out of leaving her church. She has a cross cast at the Vatican, 1 of 24 to be given to special people (copies would be available for others). This lady has performed sophisticated surgery, met or associated with American citizens whose names would be recognized by millions. She was also a marathon runner who competed in a number of Boston Marathons.

What is more amazing is the care she gives her "friends"(she does not think of them as patients) in her home, stroke victims and Alzheimer patients. She has had cancer for fifteen years, suffered two heart attacks and a serious stroke, spinal fractures, gall bladder surgery, and other health problems. Still, she gets up and checks all patients every three hours. On a number of occasions she has given up her bed and slept on the floor or on a couch in order to take someone's mother or father. Her sacrificial care giving has been an inspiration to the whole area.

When you take the tour of her home you are amazed at the love she has for her friends. She really loves them. She even brings some of them to Sunday School and the morning worship service. They do not remember the message after they leave, but it means a lot to them while they are listening to it.

Mickey had her first baby when she was fifteen years old, but until her father came from St. Louis to see his first grandchild, her husband thought she was eighteen! After that, when she had a baby she brought two home (she adopted a baby to grow up with her biological child). She has spent her entire life caring for other people. She grieves when she loses a patient (or friend), and she has lost about forty-five since she has been providing this service. I visit with her friends often and sometimes leave feeling ashamed that I do so little for others compared to this lady.

Whenever the time comes for this lady to go home to be with the Lord, she will surely say, "I have finished my course." She now understands that Heaven is not her reward for good works, even for one whose works would embarrass most of the rest of us.

B. Forever Blessed, 4:8.

4:8 - CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. *"In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."* The future to which Paul refers here is Heaven. He has just written that the time for his departure was at hand - he was ready to set sail for eternity's shore. Look at the hope expressed here:

1) LAID UP - His future award is kept safe, secure, assured. Peter expressed it like this:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

2) THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS - only here in the NT, though "crown" appears many times. Paul calls believers his crown:

"Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved" (Phil. 4:1).

Peter wrote, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5:4).

The crown is the victor's crown in an athletic event. Paul had run the race of life faithfully and

knew that he would receive a crown of victory. He was ready to celebrate the victory. The highest incentive for serving the Lord is His love for us; the second highest is our love for Him; the third highest is our love for others; but like the author of Hebrews, we can run the race of life with our eyes on the reward that waits at the finish line. Here it is called the crown of righteousness.

People have a tendency to read something that is symbolic and translate it into something physical. Some have painted pictures of beasts from Revelation and preoccupied themselves with their hideous appearance and even more frightening purpose. In reality, we do not see Jesus literally as a lamb, though He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. We do not picture Him as a lion, though He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Will we wear crowns in Heaven? Will there be big crowns for the super saints and small crowns for the rest of us? There are many questions we cannot answer because we are simply not given the information. But this much we do know, we will cast our crowns before Him. We will be joyfully subservient to our Lord. Some may forget His Lordship here but that will never happen in Heaven.

Another question of interest to Christians concerns our rewards. Do we live this life with our eyes and hopes on a mansion in glory? Or do we understand that the glory of Heaven is our Lord? To be where He is and to live in the place He has prepared is more than enough. I cannot imagine all the activities in which we will be involved in Heaven. I know we will worship Him and serve Him. I also know we will be with Him and with all who worship the King. I anticipate that, as the hymn says: "Ready to go, ready to stay; ready my place to fill."

3) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE - In 4:1, Paul refers to Jesus as the one who will judge the living and the dead. Jesus is the righteous Judge who will sit in judgment on all lost people. He will also judge the righteous according to their deeds so that they may be rewarded for their faithfulness. It is not a sin to anticipate rewards in Heaven, but we should seek a higher motive for worship, service, and ministry. Love the Lord, serve Him, and trust the rewards to Him. You will never be denied what He has planned for you.

4) THOSE WHO LOVED HIS APPEARING - all believers must look to His return as a blessed hope. This emphasizes the importance of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The early church longed for His return, but that spirit seems to have waned in the affluent society in which we live today.

I have known some people who have gone to seed on Eschatology, the study of last things. I have also known some people who almost dismiss the whole subject, simply trusting the Lord to work it all out in His Own time. Well, He is going to do that, but he provides a lot of information for us, and if He provides that information there must be a reason for it. For one thing, as we fight the battles of life - and we are engaged in a spiritual warfare right now - we are encouraged by the knowledge that nothing that is happening in the world has surprised the Lord. Nothing that is happening is a challenge to His sovereignty. He will win, and when He wins, we win.

C. Some Practical Instructions, 4:9-18.

4:9 - COME TO ME. *“Make every effort to come to me soon.”* Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to instruct the people in sound doctrine, ministry, and administration. He had sent an earlier epistle (First Timothy) with instructions about how he should deal with certain issues. Now he is sending a second letter to his son-in-the-ministry, urging him to discharge his responsibilities as quickly as possible and join him. Paul’s time was running out and he wanted to see Timothy.

4:10 - HAVING LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD. *“For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.”* Paul reports on three associates:

1) DEMAS - Demas had deserted and gone to Thessalonica. We are not told why Demas had deserted Paul, but clearly, the reason has nothing to do with ministry to Paul or to the Lord. He had simply abandoned Paul. He may well have feared for his life. However, there are many young people who start strong and the fade before the finish. The adventure turns to risk, the excitement to fear, and some simply run away. This seems to be what Demas had done.

John Mark had turned back on the First Missionary Journey and when Paul and Barnabas prepared to leave on the Second Missionary Journey Barnabas wanted to take his kinsman with them again, but Paul absolutely refused. While one may appreciate Paul’s dedication and commitment, most of us have needed a Barnabas at one time or another. Thankfully, many people who have quit, or shirked their responsibility at one time or another have repented and become faithful servants of the Lord. The clear indication here is that Demas was a deserter in the Battle of the Ages. Many Christian soldiers have failed in one battle but when convicted, they returned to the Lord’s service.

2) CRESCENS - This associate had gone to Galatia, we may assume that Paul had sent him for some reason, but he may have simply left on his own.

3) TITUS - Titus to Dalmatia. There is no reason to believe Titus had ever been anything other than faithful and loyal. This is the Gentile Paul took with him to the Jerusalem Conference (A.D. 51) to use for a test case when the conference agreed that Gentiles are saved the same way as Jew - by grace through faith, not by works, ritual, or ceremony. This is the man whom Paul sent to Corinth when both he and Timothy had failed in resolving problems there - and Titus succeeded. It is reasonable to believe that Titus was about the Lord’s work, just as Timothy was at this time.

4:11 - LUKE. *“Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.”* Here, Paul is offering information and making requests:

1) LUKE - How appropriate that Luke is with him. Only Luke was with him at the moment. His personal physician was there to care for him as he had ministered to him on missionary jour-

neys and in prison in Caesarea. Luke was inspired to write the Gospel According to Luke, which he had carefully researched. probably while Paul was a prisoner in Caesarea. He also wrote the Book of Acts.

At this point, as Paul awaits his martyrdom, only Luke was with him. Luke had joined Paul, Silas, and young Timothy at Troas while Paul was on the Second Missionary Journey. You can tell when Luke is with Paul in the account of Paul's missionary work that Luke chronicles in the Book of Acts. Luke is with Paul in the "we" sections, but not with him in the "they" (or "he") sections. One can only imagine what Luke's presence meant to Paul at this time. Just having a friend there must have been a comfort.

2) PICK UP MARK - "Pick up Mark and bring him with you" when you come to see me. This is refreshing. Paul, who had emphatically rejected Mark earlier, praises him now (Peter also praised Mark). Not only does he recognize his ministry, he wants to see him before his death. It is good to know that Paul's rejection had not discouraged Mark. There is no way of knowing how much Barnabas influenced Mark in the ministry, or in his attitude toward Paul. There are times in every young person's life when he needs a Barnabas instead of a Paul. Of course, Mark had been wrong. He really did not deserve another opportunity - but who among us cannot identify with Mark, at least in some small way.

I have a confession. When I was a student at Mississippi College I was asked to speak at an associational mother/daughter function, and during the meal that followed a group of ladies approached me and asked me about working with their youth the following summer. They wanted me to visit their church the following Sunday. I made excuses. I really did. I didn't have a car at the time. I would have to ride the train, which mean that I would have to get someone to drive me to Jackson to catch the train, and then I would have to get someone to pick me up in Batesville and then I would have had to drive my father's truck to the church that Sunday. I will admit that I was keenly aware of the fact that some of those people were very wealthy. It occurred to me that they would have looked at my clothes and my father's truck and decide I would not fit in with their young people. I did not go. I knew that Paul Brown, from my hometown had worked in their church, but Paul was a town boy and I was a country boy. Paul went on to become president of an outstanding Southern Baptist College.

I never forgot that experience. I had based a decision on my own insecurities, not on the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Oh, I convinced myself that the Holy Spirit was giving me reasons not to go to that church, but later I was convinced that I had said no before He had an opportunity to lead in any way. I would later think of what might have been - but it would never be. Opportunities are not often recalled.

I once received a letter from a Bible professor, in the days before Bible professors became religion professors, asking me if I would preach at a church to which he had recommended me. I would be going in lieu of a call. He gave me the name and location of the church - Red Lick. Can you imagine that? Red Lick! And it was out in the middle of the hills - the fact that I was

out in the middle of the delta didn't seem to register. I used the fact that I was having work done on my car as an excuse, but to be perfectly honest, I was thinking about what it would be like to tell my friends that I was at a place called Red Lick. I am ashamed of it, but I know that was a factor. Why that should have bothered me I do not know, especially when I was a member of the Green River Baptist Mission, seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi. There is also that bias we in the delta held toward those hillbillies who lived in the hills of Mississippi - believe me, they had their thoughts about delta rats.

Another factor was that I was living at home and working to try to save to get ready for school in the Fall and I was not sure I could afford to live there and go to school. It may have been that the Lord planted those negative thoughts in my mind, but He did not plant pride or cowardice in my heart. I despise cowardice, especially when it is mine! I just thank Him for giving me another opportunity.

4:12 - "*But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.*" Either Paul had already sent Tychicus to Ephesus earlier, or he was on the way at the time of this epistle was written. Or, did he deliver this epistle?

This information does not provide the modern student with a lot of information, but it did give Timothy information he might have needed, and it gave the Ephesian church information that would have been of interest to them, and it reveals something about Paul's commitment to missions that should be of interest to us today.

The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention supports almost six thousand missionaries in foreign countries, and the North American Mission Board supports about that many in North America. Information is very important to those who are supporting their ministries through the Cooperative Program and special offerings. It is also important for those in positions of leadership to communicate with the missionaries on the field. The IMB must stay in touch with the missionaries both for their support and for their protection. This information is also important to the families of the missionaries.

I know missionaries who are serving somewhere in some foreign country. Before leaving they asked me to delete their name from my Internet address book, and if we establish contact later, I was given strict guidelines about what my messages might contain. There must be no reference to Jesus, Christ, God, prayer, or anything that would suggest that this family was involved in anything other than teaching computer science, or whatever they were to teach. Betrayal could endanger the missionaries and their children.

Southern Baptists and others who support missionaries around the world glean a lot of information from the Bible about missions. For example, Paul's mission strategy was brilliant, and without a doubt it was given him by the Lord - the Spirit did prevent his going to certain areas. He wanted to go into Asia but the Spirit would not permit it. Paul's missions strategy was to follow the major Roman roads to the major population centers. When he arrived in a new city he went to a Jewish synagogue where he was invited to speak. He stayed with the synagogue until

they forced him out and then, taking believing Jews and Gentiles, he planted a local church and as that church grew they helped evangelize the region.

4:13 - WHEN YOU COME. *“When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.”* Paul made three requests of Timothy:

1) BRING THE CLOAK - This is a practical request. The man who has been called the greatest of all Christians had few of the world’s possessions. The cloak was important to him, primarily because the cold dampness of his Roman prison was a severe trial to the aging Paul, who was apparently in poor health. One can picture Paul shivering against the cold in his prison cell. The cloak would help keep him warm during the day and he could use it for cover at night.

2) THE BOOKS - Paul is a prisoner, near the end of his life, but he was still a student of the Word, and he would have a great desire to continue his studies. The “books” were probably rabbinic commentaries written on papyrus.

3) ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS - “The parchments” (vellums) were more were probably OT manuscripts, but whatever they were, these Paul especially desired.

4:14 - MUCH HARM. *“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.”* We are not given any information about Alexander. Ryrie notes that this man is:

“possibly not the same as the one mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20. We may infer from verse 15 that he may have caused the arrest of Paul in some city, that he was still active, and that he was hostile to Paul's teachings” [RSB].

4:15 - BE ON GUARD. *“Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.”* From this warning we may infer that Alexander lived in Ephesus and had a lot of influence there. He may have hated Paul only because converts to Christ were no longer customers for the idols made of gold, silver, and other metals. However, there are people who are so controlled by Satan that they hold a hatred for the servants of the Lord that defies reason. They hate God and those who serve Him, and they will do everything within their power to destroy them.

4:16 - AT MY FIRST DEFENSE. *“At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.”* There is very little to go on in trying to determine the circumstances or the time. A. T. Robertson, to whom generations of preachers owe a debt of gratitude, speculates that this refers to

“Either the first stage in this trial or the previous trial and acquittal at the end of the first Roman imprisonment. Probably the first view is correct, though really there is no way to decide” [WORD PICTURES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT].

4:17 - THE LORD STOOD WITH ME. *“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.”* Paul reveals several things here:

1) THE LORD STOOD WITH ME - This is not surprising - neither the suffering, nor the fact that Lord stood with him. Jesus had promised to be with us always. But that is not all. He has also promised that the Holy Spirit would stand with his servants when they were hauled before judges - to put His word in their hearts and on their lips.

Furthermore, at the time of his conversion and call, the Lord promised that Saul of Tarsus would take the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, and before governors and kings. He also revealed to him how he would suffer for the Lord in the ministry to which he was called (Acts 9).

2) STRENGTHENED ME - Any pastor, missionary, or evangelist who has ever suffered for the cause of Christ has needed strength to face those trials. We may draw some strength from within, some from friends and fellow believers, but there is a limit to how much strength they can supply. God is not limited and He has promised to strengthen us. His hand has not been shortened (Is. 59:1).

3) PROCLAMATION FULLY ACCOMPLISHED - Opposition, rumors and innuendoes, arrests, beatings, stoning, and imprisonment could not prevent the proclamation of the Gospel and God had seen to it that His word would not return unto him without accomplishing His purpose. God called Paul to be faithful, not to be successful! Every preacher, evangelist, missionary, and denominational worker needs to understand that.

4) THAT ALL THE GENTILES MIGHT HEAR - The Apostle to the Gentiles had taken the Gospel to the Gentiles. A formerly narrow-minded, fanatical Jew loved Gentiles and poured out his life for them. Arab evangelist Anis Shorosh was at Mississippi College when I was a student there. I spend a lot of time with Anis and learned a lot from him, but I learned more when I read him autobiography. I heard him speak years later and can never forget a statement he made. He said, “When I stand on a street in Jerusalem and look at a Jew and love him, it is a miracle from God.” This is from a man who admits very frankly that his number one purpose in life as a child and younger youth was to live to get old enough to kill Jews, whom he blamed for his father’s death.

5) I WAS RESCUED OUT OF THE LION’S MOUTH - We are given no information about the rescue, but if we can take Paul’s word for it, his rescue was miraculous. If this is to be taken literally, he would have meant the Roman arena where Christians were slaughtered by gladiators, killed and eaten by half-starved beasts, and killed in other ways, all for the entertainment of the Emperor and his court as well as the audience (fans) in the stadium.

Since Paul was a Roman citizen, however, he may have used this metaphorically. He had been imprisoned earlier and then released, only to be arrested and returned to the Roman prison where

he was awaiting execution at the time this letter was written.

4:18 - THE LORD WILL RESCUE ME. *“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* We might add, “Amen and amen!” The Lord was about rescue him from the evil of Roman persecution, not to another jail, not to another ship wreck, not to another stoning, not to another hostile mob. No! This time God was going to rescue him from all the sufferings of the world and, in his words, “bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.”

No wonder that he exclaimed, “to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” After all he had suffered, he was ready to go home to Heaven and he knew that home-going was immanent. There is no verb in the Greek in Paul’s doxology, which was in reality his swan song. He is going home.

Paul had been ready to go home to be with the Lord during his first Roman imprisonment when he wrote to the Philippian church:

For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don’t know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you” (Phil 1:21-24, HCSB).

VIII. FINAL GREETINGS, 4:19-22.

4:19 - GREET. *“Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.”*

1) PRISCILA AND AQUILA - These were Paul’s friends, originally from Rome, but now in Ephesus. Paul had met them in Corinth after Jews had been ordered out of Rome (the city) by the emperor. They traveled with him to Ephesus as he was closing out his Second Missionary Journey. On the Third Missionary Journey Paul spend three years in Ephesus before going to Macedonia, and then to Corinth. With the offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, and associates to guard the offering, he sailed back to Troas, and then and after meeting with leaders from the church at Ephesus, continued his journey to Jerusalem where he faced persecution and imprisonment in Caesarea for two years. During his three years in Ephesus these friend must have been a blessing the great missionary. They were fellow tent-makers who were so well grounded in the faith that they could take a young Apollos under their wing and instruct him in sound doctrine. They were ever faithful to the Lord and loyal to Paul.

2) ONESIPHORUS - This associate had ministered to Paul in Ephesus, and then he sought him out in the dungeon where Paul was confined in Rome and ministered to him. We know very lit-

tle about him, but from what we do know, he loved the Lord and showed it by ministering to one of His servants.

4:20 - ERASTUS. “*Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.*” Paul kept up with these fellow missionaries and there is little doubt that he wrote personal letters to them and received personal letters and reports from them.

Trophimus Paul had left behind in Miletus because of illness. Whereas God often heals the sick, through physicians or without them,

it is not the case that in all situations there is instant healing. Epaphroditus was seriously ill for some time (cf. Phil. 2:25-27; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; James 5:14, note). If it were God's will that all should be healed, surely Paul would have been able to heal Trophimus [BSB].

The words “Left behind” speaks of travel. Paul was obviously touching base with as many churches and missions as possible. He was taking advantage of his freedom after being released from his first Roman imprisonment. That freedom was short-lived. Now, Paul was back in prison awaiting his execution. We are not told when he was sentenced, but he knew his death near.

4:21 - COME BEFORE WINTER. “*Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.*” Paul was not looking forward to the winter in a cold, damp prison. The cloak might help, but he was still facing a miserable time. Timothy could help minister to many of his needs until the time of his execution. He wanted him with him, and he obviously needed him.

Faithful saints in Rome sent their greetings to Timothy. They were helping to meet Paul's needs and were available to carry on his work in the area. He taught them and they ministered to him. Obviously, Timothy had met them during Paul's first imprisonment.

4:22 - THE LORD BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT. “*The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*”

There could be no better way to close this pastoral epistle than with a prayer that the Lord would be with his son-in-the ministry. He signs off with, “Grace be with you.”

CONCLUSION

How better to conclude:

“The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.”

APPENDIX

GOD

You hold one of three views of God. You either believe he exists, that He does not exist, or you do not know if He exists. Your conclusion will have eternal ramifications.

A Brief Study
By

Johnny L. Sanders, D. Min.

INTEREST IN GOD

A popular satellite network has run a number of “investigative reports” on The Bible, on God, on Jesus Christ, and on miracles. These programs are well publicized by an announcer whose voice and eyes tell you he has the final answer. One of the most recent programs advertised talks about the many names for God, and of course they seek to offer a balance between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

If you want to know about God, you may watch television programs and read books. If you want to know God you must turn to the Word of God. God might have chosen to reveal Himself to us in any number of ways, but the simple fact is that He reveals Himself to us definitely, absolutely, accurately, and authoritatively through His Perfect Word.

I think it was Martin Luther who said, “To be ignorant of Scripture is to be ignorant of Christ.” John Stott adds, “To know Scripture is to know Christ.” We might add, “To know Scripture is to know God.” The Bible tells us that God reveals Himself before us and within us but it is through His inerrant Word that we know the character, nature, purpose of God.

INTRODUCTION

A man who seemed young and well educated called the host of a secular radio talk-show and launched a militant attack on Christianity. Suddenly he exclaimed, “Man was not made by God; God was the invention of man.” What do you think? Is there really a God, or did man invent a god to meet some psychological need? If God really does exist what kind of God is He? These and other questions follow.

I. DOES GOD EXIST?

PROPOSITION: Either you believe God exists (theism), you believe He does not exist (atheism), or you do not know if He exists (agnosticism).

A. Atheism Is an Indefensible Position, Both From the Standpoint of Scripture and Logic.

1. Atheism will not stand the test of logic.

I exist. Since I do not exist of myself, I must conclude that Someone is responsible for my existence. Things around me exist. Someone is responsible for their existence. I also observe that there is a design, order, and motion (activity, energy) in my universe. Imagine that a person who has never seen a watch suddenly finds one. If he observes the design and the orderly movement of the hands, is it not reasonable that he would conclude that somewhere there must be a watch maker?

By the same process I should deduce that somewhere there must be a world maker. Scientists tell us the very first cell contained over a million bits of information, as well as a very complex arrangement of amino acids. If they suddenly appear in the right combination with exactly the right information, we may conclude that there is intelligence behind creation. Sir Fred Hoyle, a former agnostic scientist, calculated the probability of life evolving from random chance he discovered that

probability to be less than one in 10 to the 40th power (Morris, Henry M., *THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR MODERN SCIENCE*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1984, 3rd printing, 1988, p. 234). As my friend Tim Mercer from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, points out, that's 1 with 40 zeroes behind it, or 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000.

2. The Bible refutes atheism.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 53:1). According to Romans 1:18-21, God's revelation of Himself, both within and before each person, is so clear that He will accept no excuse from those who reject Him.

B. Theism Has the Support of Both Logic and Scripture.

1. There is nothing more logical than the existence of God.

If there is a design to the universe there must be a Designer. If there is a creation there must be a Creator. The law of cause and effect holds that every effect must have a cause. If we follow this through to a logical conclusion we discover this is true - with one exception. Behind it all there is must be an uncaused Cause. That Uncaused Cause we call God.

Many people reject creation ex nihilo (out of nothing). But it is more reasonable to believe that God created some- thing from nothing than to believe that nothing created some- thing out of nothing. It is also reasonable to assume that the uncaused Cause is infinite, eternal and immutable, and that is exactly what the Bible teaches (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). He did not evolve from some lower form (man, for example). There is neither mutation, nor evolution in the God-head.

2. The Christian Bible tells us there is a God.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). There is no attempt to prove the existence of God. His existence is simply declared. No definition of God is given, but revelation and discussions of His attributes, nature, character, and purpose are voluminous. The word God appears 4444 times and the word Lord 7836 times in the Bible (KJV).

C. The Agnostic Can Find Help in the Bible.

An honest agnostic is not saying there is no God. What he is saying is that he does not know if there is a God. If he is honest he will admit that he does not know everything, so it is possible that there is evidence he does not now possess, evidence which might convince him of the reality of God. He is willing to ask questions and seek answers. He is willing to be convinced when evidence is presented.

II. HOW MANY GODS ARE THERE?

PROPOSITION: If you believe there is a God, you either believe there is one God (monotheism) or you believe there are many gods (polytheism).

A. Polytheism Is an Illogical Concept.

1. A polytheist believes there are many finite gods.

The polytheist believes there are innumerable gods in the universe, but deny that there is one infinite God beyond the universe. Examples of polytheistic gods are the gods of ancient Greece and Rome and modern-day Mormonism. Proliferation of the New Age Movements has led to a revival of polytheism - even in America.

Polytheism presents its adherents with one dilemma after another. It is diametrically opposed to monotheism, which has the support of both Scripture and logic. It offers no absolutes in terms of human morality, but raises many questions about the origin of these gods, their nature and character, and the realm of their authority.

2. The Bible clearly rejects polytheism.

The Lord was very clear in addressing His people:

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2-3). God also said, “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6).

III. HOW DOES GOD RELATE TO HIS CREATION?

PROPOSITION: If you believe there is one God (and only one God), you either believe that He is separate from (transcends) creation, or that He is inseparable from it (pantheism, monism).

A. Both Pantheism and Monism Fail the Test of Reason and Scripture.

1. Pantheism can be disproved logically and scripturally.

Pantheism is the doctrine that God and nature are identical. For the pantheist there is no God, or Creator, beyond the universe. God is the universe and the universe is God. For the pantheist there is just one reality. The Creator and creation are two ways of looking at one reality. “Many religions are identified with pantheism, including many forms of Hinduism, Zen Buddhism, and Christian Science (along with other modern-day mind-science cults)” (Geisler, Norman, *FALSE GODS OF OUR TIME*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 1985, p. 27). In addition,

many people have been influenced by pantheism who are not identified with any religion. “Pantheism is one of the fundamental beliefs of the New Age Movement groups, and it underlies the world view of the ever-popular Star Wars saga” (IBID, p. 27). At the center of Star Wars was the emphasis on the “Force” which creator George Lucas identified with God.

Geisler rightly observes that “the most fundamental criticism of a strictly pantheist world view is that it is actually unaffirmable by man, for no finite individual really exists as an entity really different from God or the absolute” (Geisler, Norman L., CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976 - paperback, 1988 - p. 187). Other problems with pantheism have to do with creation, the personality of man, and the inability to address the subject of good and evil. Francis Shaeffer points out that we must chose between God and gods. He concludes, “The difficulty with gods instead of God is that limited gods are not big enough” (Shaeffer, same as above, p. 286).

2. Inherent in Monism are most of the same errors found in pantheism.

Monism is the belief that all reality is ultimately unified - all is one and one is all. Monism is closely related to pantheism and fails the test of truth for basically the same reasons.

B. God Is Superior to and Distinct from Creation.

1. Logic demands that the Creator be separate from creation.

He had to pre-exist creation, be distinct from it, and superior to it. “Since Darwin the concept of natural selection has dominated evolutionary thought, providing a ‘naturalistic’ explanation for the origin of the species, and thus (as Julian Huxley used to say) eliminating the need for God” (Morris, Henry, “Pantheistic Evolution,” IMPACT, No.234, Institute of Creation Research, El Cajon, CA, Dec., 1992). But a growing number of scientists have been rejecting Darwin’s theory, primarily because they recognized the fact that the design of the universe required intelligence. They are rejecting the atheistic evolution of Darwin in favor of pre- Darwinian pantheistic evolution. “In fact, this is the pseudo-scientific rationale underlying the so-called New Age Movement which is sweeping over the world today” (IMPACT-IBID).

Some serious scientists, however, recognized that pantheistic gods could not have created the world because they could not exist apart from it, nor could they pre-exist it. Creation required a pre-existent God who was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

2. The God of the Bible is transcendent, and sovereign over all He created.

His sovereignty is predicated upon creation. He created to world, therefore it is His. “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalms 24:1; See also, Psalm 90:2).

IV. DOES GOD INVOLVE HIMSELF WITH US?

PROPOSITION: If you believe there is one God Who is separate from creation, you either believe He involves Himself with His creation so as to reveal His existence, or you believe He does not (deism).

A. Deism Is Refuted By Both Logic and Scripture.

1. Deism is an illogical world-view.

The direct opposite of pantheism, it holds that God created the world but denies any supernatural intervention on the grounds that “the world operates by natural and self-sustaining laws of the Creator” (Geisler, CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS, p. 151). In deism God is distinct from the world, but in pantheism God is identical with it (God is the world).

Deism contradicts itself. Toward what end would God have created the world if He could not interact with His creation? In particular, why would He create man in His own image if He could not, or would not, relate to him? It denies the supernatural while professing faith in God. But God is supernatural.

2. In the Bible God reveals Himself as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.

In either capacity He interacts with creation. He Created, Genesis 1; He judged the world, Genesis 6-8; He delivered His chosen people, Exodus. The New Testament accounts of miracles abound, including the incarnation and the Resurrection. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is God’s supernatural intervention in human affairs.

B. God’s Involvement with Creation Is Verifiable.

1. His involvement with the world is consistent with Creation.

Failure to involve Himself with that which He has created would be illogical. If God cared enough about man to create Him in His image, it is reasonable that He would intervene in his behalf.

2. The Lord claims sovereignty over all He created (Psalms 24:1).

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Psalms 19:1). “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

V. HOW DO I KNOW THE TRUE GOD FROM A FALSE GOD?

PROPOSITION: Those who believe there is one God either believe the God of the Bible is the true God, or they believe some other god is the true God.

A. One Who Believes There Is but One God Can Believe in the Wrong God.

1. We must believe in the right God.

Christians, Jews, and Muslims all believe in one God. Since more than one religious group claims to believe in one God, how do I know which is the right God?

There are many things in Islam that Christians may affirm, beginning with their concept of God as one. The Koran, the Islamic holy book, teaches that God is one, the creator, and absolute monarch of all He created. The Koran teaches that God is not three persons, and that the Christian concept of the Trinity is heresy. The Koran also teaches that Jesus, though born of the virgin Mary, was not God, nor the Son of God. Islam also denies the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. These beliefs contradict the claim that we all worship the same God, Christians through their prophet, Jesus, and Muslims through their prophet, Mohammed. A close comparison of the Bible and the Koran provides irrefutable evidence that the god of the Koran is not the God of the Bible. The nature, character, program, and methods of Alla are not those of the God of the Bible. Who could conceivably ascribe to Yahweh the loathsome bloody jihad of the god of the Koran? When you hear that a terrorist or a group of terrorists have killed a group of innocent people, do you immediately think, "They are Christians", or do you think, "They are Muslims?"

2. Christians and Jews are monotheistic.

Both look to the God of the Bible as the one and only God. Both accept the Old Testament Scripture, and both subscribe to an ethic based on the Mosaic Law. There are, however, some major differences in doctrine. A Jewish rabbi invited students at a Baptist college to visit his temple for a special service. He said, "You believe all we believe. We just don't believe all you believe." Christians accept the Old Testament as the Word of God. Orthodox Jews, however, reject the New Testament.

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Judaism rejects Jesus as Messiah. The question is, who is right? Christians believe that Jesus Christ was God in human form. This belief is essential to Christianity, but can Christians verify this claim? The answer is yes. The New Testament is accepted by millions of Christians as the Word of God. It provides an accurate account of the life, teachings, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It also affirms the deity of Christ.

In addition, Jesus makes numerous claims for Himself:

1. He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.
2. He identifies Himself as one with the Father (John 1:1-3; 5:23; 8:58; 10:30).
3. He was the agent of creation, John 1:1ff.
4. He had the authority to forgive sin, Mark 2:10.

VI. DO CHRISTIANS WORSHIP ONE GOD OR THREE?

PROPOSITION: Christians worship one God Who manifests Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (The Trinity).

A. Christians Believe in a Triune God.

Christians believe in one God who manifests Himself as three in personality. The Scripture is very clear - there are three Persons, but one God (God in three Persons). Francis Shaeffer once said, "I would still be an agnostic if there was no Trinity, because there would be no answers. Without the high order of personal unity and diversity as given in the Trinity, there would be no answers" (Shaeffer, Francis, HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT, The Complete Works of Francis Shaeffer, Vol. I, Crossway Books, Westchester, ILL., 1982, p. 201).

In the Godhead there are three Persons existing in perfect harmony, loving each other and communicating with each other prior to creation. "If this were not so, we would have a God who needed to create in order to love and communicate. In such case, God would have needed the universe as much as the universe needed God" (Shaeffer, p. 289).

B. God Is One in Essence, and He Relates to Us as Three in Personality.

1. He is the heavenly FATHER (Matthew 6:1).
2. He is the SON (Jesus Christ, Mark 1:1).
3. He is the HOLY SPIRIT (Spirit of God, Acts 2).

At the Baptism of Jesus the Son was baptized, the Spirit descended in a visible form, and the Father spoke (Matthew 3:16f). Paul was ever conscious of the ministry of the Father, Son, and Spirit on behalf of believers: "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord (Jesus), because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:13).

VII. CAN I KNOW GOD?

PROPOSITION: If you believe in one God Who acts in human history so as to reveal His existence, you either believe He is knowable, or you believe He is not knowable.

A. The Evidence Proves We Can Know God.

1. He actively reveals Himself to human beings.

The first three books Francis Shaeffer authored formed a trilogy which have been called Shaeffer's apologetics. The titles are - THE GOD WHO IS THERE, ESCAPE FROM REASON, and HE IS THERE AND HE IS NOT SILENT. The thesis of the first book is He is there. In the third he Shows that He is there and He is not silent. In other words the God Who is there adequately and sufficiently reveals Himself to human beings.

2. The testimony of millions of Christians affirms the fact that man can know God.

Hundreds knew Him personally during His earthly ministry and scores of them embraced Him as Savior. Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ were so convincing that the numbers of believers multiplied times after time. Millions today believe Jesus is the Son of God Who died for their sins, was resurrected, and ascended to the Father where He is making intercession for those who trust in Him.

B. The Bible teaches that God enables man to know Him.

1. You may know God through Jesus Christ.

You may know God only through Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

2. An individual may know God - not through his own efforts - but by God's grace.

First, God reveals Himself to each person, and then gives that individual the faith necessary for him to know Him (Matthew 16:15-17). Second, one may not only know about God; he may know Him intimately. Paul wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Man may come to a "saving knowledge" of God through Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31; Acts 4:12).

3. God's way of salvation is set forth in the Bible.

- 1) Romans 3:23 - all have sinned.
- 2) Romans 6:23 - the penalty for sin is death.
- 3) Romans 5:8 - Christ died for us.
- 4) Romans 10:8-13 - we may be saved through faith.
- 5) Ephesians 2:8-10 - we are saved by grace.
- 6) John 3:16 - God loves us and sent His Son to provide eternal life.
- 7) John 10:28 - we are secure in Jesus.
- 8) John 14:1-6 - He is preparing a place for us

VIII. HOW MAY I LEARN MORE ABOUT GOD?

PROPOSITION: If you accept the reality of God and the fact that He seeks to reveal Himself to you, you either believe the Bible is the Word of God, or you will believe it is not the Word of God.

A. Internal Evidence Proves The Bible Is the Word of God.

1. The Scripture is Inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16). If one accepts the God of the Bible as the true God, he should have no problem accepting the Word of God as His perfect Word. The Bible is the revelation of God's redemptive love for man as expressed in Jesus Christ (John 20:30f). See II Peter 1:21.

2. The content of the Bible verifies it.

First, The Word of God has provided spiritual and moral answers for millions throughout the centuries. Second, the propositional truth contained in the Bible has stood the test of time, attacks by enemies, and scrutiny by the faithful.

B. External Evidence Supports the Claim that the Bible Is the Word of God.

1. Christians see the Preservation of the Scripture as proof that God is protecting His Word.

It has survived the attacks of enemies as well as the apathy and misuse of those who profess to believe it. Historians, archaeologists, and language experts have often affirmed the Scripture by uncovering artifacts, inscriptions, and scrolls.

2. A comparison to other ancient writings affirms the accuracy of the New Testament.

Scholars report that around 5,000 Greek manuscripts survive from antiquity. This compares with 200 copies of the work of Demosthenes, 8 copies of Herodotus, 20 of Tacitus, and 643 of Homer. Accuracy of the New Testament manuscripts, 99+%, is vastly superior to any other work from the ancient world (Geisler, APOLOGETICS, p. 307).

SOME FACTS ABOUT GOD

1. God is Omniscient (All knowing) - Ps. 139:1-6. In the Scripture wisdom has a moral as well as an intellectual quality. “Wisdom is, in fact, the practical side of moral goodness” (Packer, J. I., Intervarsity Press, Donners Grove, IL, 1973, p. 80).

2. God is Omnipresent (Present everywhere at same time) - “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” (Psalm 139:7). “In His infinitude He surrounds the finite creation and contains it. There is no place beyond Him for anything to be. God is our environment...” (Tozer, A. W., THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1961, p. 74).

3. God is Omnipotent (All Powerful) - “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite” (Psalms 147:5). See also, Ps. 139:13-16.

4. God is love - “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). See also, I John 4:8.

5. God is merciful - “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4).

6. God is Long suffering - “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psalms 86:15).

7. God is Holy - This points both to His character and his motive in judging sin. “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Revelation 4:8b).

8. God is immutable. “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Malachi 3:6a).

CONCLUSION

There is a God. There is only one God. He exists beyond the World, He is sovereign over the world, but He intervenes in human affairs when He chooses to do so. Not only is He knowable, He enables us to know Him through His revelation of Himself. He reveals Himself through the Scripture, by the Holy Spirit, and He manifests His greatness through His creation (He is there and He is not silent). He permits us to know Him through Jesus Christ. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

*The Lord bless you and protect you;
the Lord make His face shine on you,
and be gracious to you;
the Lord look with favor on you
and give you peace.
[Num 6:24-26, HCSB]*

