

## **Departure From The Truth**

In Paul's first letter to Timothy he speaks of the latter times and depicts conditions that have now been fulfilled. However, these conditions were in the distant future when he wrote of them. Paul wrote, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,<sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,<sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." (1 Timothy 4:1-3) The Church has observed these things taking their toll throughout church history until this day. Cults have come and gone and some have stayed. False prophets like Jim Jones and David Koresh abound and they have taken people away from the true God to end in tragedy both here on earth and more importantly for eternity. False teachers and doctrines have existed throughout church history. There are a growing number of churches that identify themselves as "Christian" but are in truth "devoted to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" as verse 1 states. Beginning in the early first century church and continuing to this day are those insisting we must return to all the Jewish laws, customs, traditions and a works based religion. False teachings base salvation on works. People gain the sense they have earned their salvation and/or the feeling of superiority over those who are not following the rules. This certainly was true when I was Mormon. This is legalism and a danger sign that these teachings are not of God. However, it is easy for those who know God's Word to recognize these false churches and doctrines. They simply are not the church of Christ because they are not living the Word of God in truth with love, grace and mercy. Paul wrote in his letter to the churches in Ephesus, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it

is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

Now here in Paul’s second letter to Timothy he is writing about events even further down the stream of time and history. Paul is writing of the last days we now live in. Since its birth the church has had influence on human events. The influence has grown and waned throughout history; we are now in a period of diminished influence. Europe has become a spiritual wasteland with a remnant church left to hold firm to God and Bible. Muslims in Europe are increasingly converting empty Christian church buildings into mosques. Over 1000 churches have closed in England in the last 2 decades and over 600 converted into mosques. Thousands of churches have closed in Germany and France and hundreds are now mosques. The proliferation of mosques housed in former churches reflects the rise of Islam as the fastest growing religion in post-Christian Europe. There are now more practicing Muslims than practicing Christians in many parts of Europe, not only in large urban centers, but also in smaller towns and cities across the continent. Muslims Moors invaded the Iberian Peninsula in 711 and were not pushed out of Europe until 1224. Now we are seeing an invasion of a different type.

Studies indicate that 80% of American churches have declining membership. Last year 3 to 4 thousand churches closed and about a thousand new churches were planted. The biggest influx into the Mormon cult, over the last 10 years is from the Southern Baptist Church. Why? The more legalistic the Southern Baptist Church has become the easier the transition to Mormonism, which is a works based cult. The Southern Baptist Church is now working to address this problem. Islam is rapidly growing in America with the number estimated to double in the next 20 years. The largest number of new converts to Islam are Americans not refugees.

Jesus spoke of the end times in Matthew chapter 24, “See that no one leads you astray. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will

lead many astray. <sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”

(Matthew 24:4–8) You might want to spend some time reading Matthew 24 and see which of the signs have been fulfilled and which are yet to come.

The United States was founded on Christian principles and our laws are based on the laws God gives in the Bible. The Church in America is losing its influence and laws are no longer administered equally and logically. Penalties for the most horrible crimes are becoming so lax that many crimes are no longer considered outside the normal. The true and false churches are being separated like the sheep and goats as related in Matthew 25:32. The remnant church stands as God’s bulwark against evil and will hold true to the Bible. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write concerning the conditions in the professing church in the later days. Paul wrote about those who appear godly and are within the church while denying God’s power and the complete truth of His Word. These are those who Jesus spoke of, “**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.**” <sup>16</sup> **You will recognize them by their fruits.**” (Matthew 7:15–16) Paul is writing, here in 2 Timothy, concerning these false prophets within the church and the conditions within the church in the last days. I believe we are in the last days and this makes what Paul has written so pointed for us. How are we then to understand this list of prophecy found at the beginning of 2 Timothy, chapter 3, concerning the church in the last days or this day?

## **Difficulty**

We begin by reading the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of 2 Timothy, follow along with me in your Bibles, “**But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.**

<sup>2</sup> **For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive,**

disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,<sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good,<sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,<sup>5</sup> having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.” Well, how do we stay holy in the midst of all this corruption? The simple answer is we are to “avoid such people.” Simple answer, but not easy to implement, we must live in the world but we are not to be of the world. Jesus said, “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:19) We are called to respond to the world’s hate with the truth dispensed with love. We are called to be the remnant of Christ calling others to the saving message of the gospel, while the world continues to slip further into ruin.

The first point I would like to make is that in context verse 2 begins with “people” or “men” and this is not referring to mankind in general and the unsaved world. It is referring to members of the church and is especially directed at men in leadership of Christ’s Church. It is hard to avoid the men leading a church and their influence, if you are a member. This is why Paul spent time defining the qualities of men to be elders or pastors of Christ’s Church in 1 Timothy chapter 3, “The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.

<sup>2</sup>Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,<sup>3</sup> not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money ...<sup>4</sup> manage his own household well ... keeping his children submissive ...<sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert ...<sup>7</sup> he must be well thought of by outsiders ...” (1 Timothy 3:1–7) Paul builds a picture of a man that holds fast to Christ, God’s Word, his wife, family and works at being faithful to all God has placed under his care. Such a man is the opposite of the problems listed in the first 5 verses in chapter 3 of 2 Timothy. Every church is in need of godly men to step up to lead the church through these turbulent

times. Next month we will begin the process to consider Leland as an elder of Canyon Bible, this is part of the process to address the need for godly men to lead.

Because of weak teaching and weak leadership the church is susceptible to false teachings. There have been a number of movements within the church universal aimed at taking people's focus and worship from God through false teachings by false teachers. Whenever people feel the need to change who God is or the need to adjust God's Word to make it more appealing to the masses, the result is the lowering of God and elevating of mankind. Let me list some of the more important movements and beliefs that man has tried throughout church history. These adjustments, changes and new beliefs were meant to raise mankind and to replace or lessen God.

## **Deception**

**Sacramentalism** – the church replaced God. A sacrament would best be described as an act that a person performs, and through which, the grace of God is conferred to that person. The Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it this way: “The sacraments are efficacious (*effectual*) signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.” (Article 2 #1131) This places ritual between Christ and people and makes it difficult to have a relationship with Christ. Ritual replaces sound doctrine of the Bible.

**Rationalism** – reason is god. Rationalism is the belief that opinions and actions should be based on reason and knowledge, not on religious beliefs. The Bible is true only in so far as it can be seen as rational solutions for mankind.

**Orthodoxism** – god is sterile. Salvation comes through works and works are to follow the creeds. God is found in the works of Christianity and it creeds as observed in the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches. One earns God's approval by their works and adhering to Christian creed and doctrine.

**Politicism** – god is the state. This is what happened in Rome and it weakened the church. Christianity is not a political system and it is devoid of the political and therefore, can function in any system, even if it has to be underground.

**Ecumenism** – the church is everything. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> century's attempt to bring all churches into unity by taking doctrinal positions of the Bible to the lowest common denominator. The Bible can mean whatever people want it to mean and God's truth is sacrificed to bring everyone into unity.

**Experientialism** – god is personal for each person. Knowledge is based on personal experience. Experience is the source of meaningful knowledge. Each person experiences shows them truth for their lives.

**Subjectivism** – self is god. There is no objective truth. Truth is relative and found within the person. We are all gods because we are the center of all creation.

**Mysticism** – we are all one with god. Belief that union with or absorption into the Deity can be absolute, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through self-surrender allowing the spirit to rule ones life even if it violates scripture.

Have you observed any of these belief systems in history or in our world today? Are these beliefs not the fulfillment of what Paul wrote in his first letter to Timothy?

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared.” (1 Timothy 4:1-2) Jesus said in the last days there would be more and more false teachers and doctrines leading to corruption of society. “Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:11–12) Have we seen a rise in lawlessness in America? How about the world? In our instant information world one only has to access the Internet or TV and we

can see this prophecy that Jesus shared with his disciples on the Mount of Olives two thousand years ago is true. The Scripture tells us things will get worst before Christ returns. We need to understand this and make sure our children understand. We need to prepare and stand firm and equip our children with the Armor of God found in Ephesians chapter 6. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:10–11)

This is what Paul is saying here in 2 Timothy, chapter 3. “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.” “But understand this” Paul is addressing the leaders of the church and he is saying yes, all these things, these 19 things listed in verses 2 to 5 will devastate society. Paul starts his sentence with “But” showing a change of direction from what he has been saying; that we are to be vessels of honor is this deteriorating society that is increasing lawless because the world is ever more filled with people who are “lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” (2 Timothy 3:2-4) As leaders, of the church and their families men are the sentries and warriors who stand between the world’s sin and evil and protect their church and families. Look back at chapter 2, verse 24 and 25. We all, but especially men as spiritual leaders, are called to live in this corrupt world holding fast to the teachings of God in the Bible and as “the Lord’s servants we must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, <sup>25</sup> correcting his our opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.” (2 Timothy 2:24–25) We are to be vessels for honor in a society that lacks honor. My beloved, show me what you honor and I will know what kind of person you are!

Often when men demand to be honored for their degrees earned or their accomplishments it is because they, in their hearts, know they are unworthy before a holy God and seek to gain status from among men. This is why they often fill lifted up by putting others down. As Christians we seek all honor for Christ and among men and it is better to deserve honors for living as Christ among men and not receive any, rather like many men who require honor from others and do not deserve it.

## **Untruths**

Men are not the only ones who fall into the lures of false teachers. Beginning in verse 6, “For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.” These two verses are the kind that pastors would like to skip over considering the political correctness of our society today. I will do my best to address them after spending time in study and prayer.

Paul begins by saying false teachers in the church “creep into households.” Wrong doctrine leads to wrong living and wrong living opens the door to wrong doctrine. Just as Eve was Satan’s first target because Adam did not stand between her and Satan, so too, woman are often the devil’s target when their fathers or husbands do not follow the scriptures and live out the scriptures in the life of their family and stand between the females of their household and the devil. The apostle Peter gave instructions to wives and husbands writing, “For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” When women submit to their husbands as the spiritual leader of their household they need not fear. Their submission encourages the husband to take his rightful role as spiritual leader and protector of the family. Peter continues with instruction for the husbands, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the

weaker vessel, (*women are not physically as strong as men*) since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:5–7) It is a husband’s sacred duty to be the spiritual leader and protector of his family. A husband cannot allow another man, woman or spirit to come between him and his wife. Men we must learn from the story of Adam and Eve and men must be diligent in their husbandry.

Women are much more emotional creatures than men, which is a good thing for it balances men, but it opens some up to false teachers who appeal to emotions to lay the groundwork for their false teachings. False teachers are always teaching and their followers, both men and women, and these followers are always learning but because what is being taught is not grounded within God’s Word they never arrive at true spiritual understanding or knowledge of what God wants us to learn and who we are in our relationship with God through Christ.

## **Opposition**

Paul ends giving an example of those who will oppose Christ’s Church until His return. Reading at verse 8, “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.<sup>9</sup> But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.” (2 Timothy 3:8–9)

The names Jannes (*lannes*) and Jambres (*lambres*) do not appear in the Old Testament but only here in the New Testament. However, there are references to them in Jewish, pagan, and Christian literature as two of Pharaoh’s magicians who tried to demonstrate that they could work miracles as effectively as Moses did in Exodus chapters 7 and 9. (Exodus 7:11; 9:11) The similarity between Jannes and Jambres and the false teachers throughout history may refer to their common use of magical or occult methods. The magicians of the false opposed God and His chosen

leader, Moses and the false teachers in Ephesus are opposing God the Son and His chosen leaders Paul and Timothy. Today there are many false teachers with visions, special gifting, and mystical powers who are drawing people away from God and into the devil's lair.

Paul wrote to deal with the problems within the church and the efforts to destroy the church both from within and without. My beloved, take heed of what our Lord and Savior said, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. <sup>23</sup> But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.” (Mark 13:22–23)

My beloved, we are to stand firm, know the Scriptures and live them out in this troubled world. Let us as a church know and live this, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. <sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:29–31)