

# Resources of Faith

AMIDST PRESENT CONFUSION

Two lectures on 2 Timothy 2 and 3

by W.T. Turpin



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609 South Thomas Street • Box 322

Bedford, Pennsylvania 15522 • (814) 623-8737

This pamphlet is sent forth with earnest prayer that the people of God may be made to realize more fully the path marked out for them in His Word: a path of faith "Amidst Present Confusion."

Though these lectures were given about one hundred and twenty years ago, the truth contained herein remains unchanged, and the need for such lines of ministry is even greater today, as we approach the end of the present age.

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# Lecture One

## 2 Timothy 2

It is profitable to look at any portion of God's blessed word, but especially that part of it which bears on times that we ourselves are in. If there be a purposed distinctiveness in any portion of the Word which was intended to bear in a special way on the peculiar position which we occupy, then, I say, we are bound in every way to give special attention to it.

I suppose there is hardly a Christian anywhere, who is walking with the smallest exercise of conscience before God, who will not freely own that we are in a remarkable era of this world's history. And I trust that you would refuse, with all your soul, the horrible idea that (though we are positively in the midst of the confusions which God has distinctly marked out prophetically in His Word, and which He says in this very epistle characterize "the last days"), we are here, left simply, to do our best in them. Mark, beloved friends, that notion, if accepted, would not merely minister to the self-will, self-conceit, and human judgment of poor creatures like us, but it would be a slur on the character and care of our God. It would be a slur on the love of Christ for His people and His Church, to say that we are here allowed to grope our way as best we can in the very confusions that are marked out in this Word—every kind of wickedness increasing and getting to a head on

every side—and yet without one single special instruction for us, without one single truth marked out specially by the Spirit of God to apply to the circumstances in which these times involve us. No, it is this special care of God that makes the second epistle to Timothy, as no doubt many of you know, of special and peculiar value to the saint of God at this present moment. This is the reason why it has been on my mind to call your attention to some of the facts and features that are brought out in these chapters.

Now, first of all, let me say this distinctly to you; and I do so now for the sake of those who have not had the same opportunity of instruction, or of having these things brought before their consciences, as no doubt many of the elder and aged have had. I notice that there is a distinct character marking both these epistles to Timothy. The first contemplates the house of God here upon this earth in its order; so much so that you will find all the minute directions, even to the distribution of money, marked out. There is no point omitted that could possibly bear upon the well-being of the saints of God, who are looked at as His house in both epistles to Timothy. It is well to know this, and to be assured of it.

There is, then, *God's house*, the sphere of His Spirit's activity, God's habitation, here upon this earth; and there is beside that, and distinct from it, *Christ's body*. The expression "church" is applied to both these; both when it is the house of God—the sphere of profession—that is meant, and when it is the body of Christ, composed of all true members here upon this earth, united by the Holy Ghost to the Head in heaven.

There are these two things in Scripture; and I do not hesitate in the least to bring them out, because I am sure of the

truth of them in my own soul. I feel it is wrong not to speak distinctly where one is sure of the truth. One is responsible to God as His servant for speaking what he knows to be His truth. If one were uncertain about it, it would be better to be silent, but if one is clear as to the truth of God, then there is no reason why it should not be spoken plainly.

Now the epistles to Timothy do not contemplate "the body" at all. That is not their subject; that is not what the Spirit of God is speaking of. He is referring to that which owes responsibility to God as *His house, His habitation*, where He dwells, where there is the rule and authority of His Spirit. This may clear the ground a little, perhaps, to those who do not know these things. Remember, I am speaking more with reference to such, than to those who are already acquainted with them.

When we speak then, as we do, of "the ruin of the church"—and you constantly hear people speaking of it—what does it mean? It certainly does not refer to the "body of Christ"; and yet it is a true expression. It means what is found in Scripture; namely, the ruin, the confusion, the thorough break-up, through man's incompetency, of what was committed in trust and responsibility into his hand by God. That is what is meant by the ruin of the church, but that is *not* the ruin of Christ's body. The body of Christ is as safe as the Head Himself. Therefore when we speak of the ruin of the church, we speak of a thing that is true. But at the same time you must be distinct in your mind, and in your thoughts, as to that which can get into disorder and confusion, and that which is outside the sphere of man's responsibility entirely. The body of Christ was never committed to man's responsibility, whereas the house of God was.

Now I see all this distinctly and clearly in Scripture; and how can I refuse what I know to be the truth? You may say, "I do not see it." Very well, then, I say, the Lord help us to search His Word more humbly, and whatever is true, may the Lord enable us to see it. Only let us beware of any *will* about it, because *that* always hinders in the things of God.

When I come to the second epistle to Timothy I find the house in confusion. It is broken up. I find every sort of thing in it that ought not to be there. Look at this one verse for a moment, though it is anticipating a little; I mean the twentieth verse. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." I do not know any passage of Scripture that is more entirely misinterpreted and misunderstood than that. And there is an expression current, which I daresay we have all heard sometime or another, which no doubt has a certain amount of truth in it. It is built upon this Scripture, and the force and power of this Scripture is thereby in measure taken away. The expression is this, "*the* great house." There is no such expression in Scripture. The house of God, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), is contemplated in second Timothy as having become, through man's failure in his responsibility, like unto "*a* great house," with every sort of thing in it, bad and good. There is no such thing in that verse as "*the* great house." The apostle is likening the "house of God," in the confusion in which it is found at this present moment, to "*a* great house," with every sort of vessel, clean and unclean, in it.

I simply note this now, because it marks out in the most distinct possible way the difference between the two epistles—

the house, in the first epistle, in order; everything arranged and ordered by the Spirit of God, and Timothy instructed how to carry himself there. There were dangers on the horizon, the prospect of what would be developed when the apostle was off the scene. The incipient principles were at work while he was there, but would come to a head when he was removed. Still, the thing was there in its order, and in its correctness. But when you come to the second epistle, you find the exact contrast of all that—confusion, things turned upside down, everything out of gear. The Holy Ghost has marked out through the apostle here for Timothy, and for the saints of God at the present moment, what kind of conduct and character they were to exhibit, and what path they were to pursue in the midst of this confusion.

I see increasingly in Scripture that you cannot take up the directions which are so plainly marked out in God's word with reference to any time in our history or to any conduct that God looks for from His children, apart from *moral condition*. That I see everywhere in Scripture. You might have the most perfect code of directions marked out by God, but what good are they to me if my *condition of soul* is not in some way answering to it? I cannot use them for myself, unless I am walking with God. You will find that is the way people break down. It is in the *application* of the truth where they break down, rather than in their intelligence of it; this is where the difficulty is. There must be a condition of soul suited to God Himself before I can really take His truth and use it for myself in the clearing away of difficulties, or the marking out of my path, or before I can be piloted by it according to the chart and program of the blessed God Himself in the

midst of all the confusions in which I find myself enveloped in these times.

There are certain moral qualities which the apostle seeks to enforce upon Timothy, his son in the faith. In the third verse we have "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life"; and so on. That is all moral condition of soul—a certain state which the apostle seeks to awaken Timothy to a sense of, in order that he might be fitted to make use of these blessed directions of God with reference to abounding disorder. This is very important for every one of us, old or young; because, be assured of it, many of the difficulties of saints of God arise from their condition of soul. It is the state people are in that produces the difficulties. I do not know anything more detrimental than handling the things of God if I am not in communion. I do not know anything that is more searing to the conscience, or that has a more lowering effect upon the whole moral tone of a man than to take up the things of God out of communion. It has a peculiarly deadening effect upon the soul. And that is the reason why I believe you will see everywhere in Scripture that there is no thought in God's mind of a saint of God, either in his individual walk, or as a member of the Church of God, being led apart from that moral quality and tone of soul, under the power of His Spirit. Be assured there is no provision of God for saints not walking with Him. That is an important thing to get clearly before our souls. God has made no provision available to us, apart from characteristics in us, suitable to Himself. Without this, you cannot get people to see and comprehend the things of God. That is where I think the harm and mischief has been, that

there have been attempts to *educate* people into God's things. You can never do it. It is through moral condition of soul, and this alone, that we are able truly to discern the mind of God; and thus we see how distinctly the apostle marks it out with reference to Timothy.

Now the first quality that is spoken of here is a very important one. Remembering the hardships that would be met with in such days as second Timothy contemplates, he says, "Thou therefore endure hardness." You are not fit to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ in days of confusion and disorder unless you can endure hardness. That is the very first quality that the apostle looks for in Timothy, and it is one that we want, every one of us. Of course it was needed in a special way in one who was to be in such a prominent position as Timothy, but it is needed for every saint of God. I do not hesitate to say that a person at this present moment who cannot endure hardness (after his measure, of course) is entirely unfitted for that which God contemplates as to His people now. The rest will come by-and-by—blessed rest it will be; but this is the time to go through the hardships, all those things that belong to a suffering testimony in the midst of a world that has rejected and cast out the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I feel is this, that if there were a little more loyalty to Christ in our hearts, more genuine devotedness to His person and interests, we should not want to be in any different circumstances to those He was in Himself. And (if such were the Lord's will) we should be ready to be thrown into the very forefront in testimony for Him, for it is the path of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the path of His servant. There is really no difference, and therefore you are not carrying upon you the

marks that God looks for in His people in the midst of such a scene as this, if there is not the capacity to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You are to be like a soldier campaigning, able to put up with everything.

There is another thing here in the fourth verse that is important: "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." Now there is immense wisdom—blessed wisdom—of God's Spirit in the very expressions that are employed in that verse. He does not say, "No man that warreth *undertakes* the affairs of this life." He does not say that a man who is warring gives up his lawful occupation and calling. There is a vast difference between a person taking up a lawful calling which God has distinctly marked out for him, and entangling himself with it. The point which the Spirit of God presses upon Timothy here is the *entanglement*. No man that wars *entangles* himself. He does not allow the thing that his hands are occupied with to be a net all around him so that he has not energy, or spiritual desires, or real power of heart to be for Christ. On the contrary, he keeps himself free, although his hands are occupied with his lawful calling. In spirit, in his affections, he is free so that he may "please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Look how wonderfully *objective* all this truth is, in order to produce a *subjective* state in us. You will never have a subjective state answering to God or to Christ unless there is an objective power before your soul to produce it. You cannot *get up* a subjective state of soul suitable to God. You become a mere legal ascetic if you attempt it. There must be an object which is distinctly before the eye of your soul, with reference

to which every thing is handled by you. Look at it here "to please"—whom? yourself? No. Anybody else? No. But "Him who hath chosen you to be a soldier." You see in this warfare the apostle keeps the eye of the one who is enduring hardness and walking through the scenes of confusion into which "the house" has fallen on that blessed One who is outside and above all, and he makes His pleasure to be the commanding power of the heart.

Alas ! how little that is the case with any of our hearts! How very little that comes before one's soul all day long—"Am I doing this for the One who has chosen me? or am I seeking to do the best thing for myself, and leaving Christ outside?" You may say, "I have Christ as my Object." Well, of course I do not dispute it, though it is a great thing to say. One hopes and trusts in one's own soul that he is true as to that, but mark, there is another thing. Christ may be my Object, but is there the *diligence* of heart and soul to be *suitable* to that *Object*? That is *the thing*. And it is just as He is before you, and you have His pleasure before you, and you study it in order to get tastes, and longings, and desires that are after Him, as you consider Him, as you view everything in relation to Him, that you get power to do things suitable to Him.

Thus, then, the apostle expresses it, "that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." He goes on in the next verse, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully;" that is, being subject to the whole order and mind of God and of Christ. "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

We now come to a Scripture that I want particularly to press upon you. How is all this made good? You may say, Well, it is an immense thing to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and to toil and labor in the midst of all the things that are here, and to be suitable, and so on; but how is all that *secured*? Now look at this eighth verse for a moment; and see the company he puts you into. I know no Scripture more precious and blessed in the midst of the confusion, than this one. It is a most precious word of God to drop upon a poor creature's soul like yours and mine. "Remember"—mark that. May I just say, in all humility, that the KJV fails to give the mind of the Spirit of God in that verse; because, if you read it the way it is given in the KJV, you would suppose that it was a certain fact that the Spirit of God wanted to press upon the attention of Timothy. Now it is not the fact of Christ's resurrection that Timothy's attention is called to at all. There is not a word about the doctrine, or the fact of the resurrection, as such. But the way this Scripture should read is thus: "Remember Jesus Christ, of David's seed, raised from the dead"; and not, "Remember *that* Jesus Christ *was* raised from the dead." There is another Scripture that will make this familiar to your minds. I refer to the well-known passage in the epistle of John, where the apostle says, "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2,3). That Scripture ought to be rendered exactly as this one now before us; "confesses Jesus Christ, come in flesh;" and, "confesses not Jesus Christ, come in flesh." That is, it is not so much the fact about the Person as the Person Himself, in a certain condition.

So here, it is the company he puts the saints into with reference to the confusion of the house which is before us. What does he say, then, when he wants to produce these moral qualities in the man who has to carry himself in the midst of this confusion? "Remember Jesus Christ, of David's seed, raised from the dead." It is wonderful that he should thus link us, as to company, association, and power, with the One who, although He was the seed of David, and therefore entitled to every thing as Messiah (for that is the thought here). He takes it all in resurrection. He was rejected in this world by man, refused in everything, though, in virtue of His death and resurrection, as well as the glory of His person, He will by-and-by take up all things in heaven and earth. Such is the company in which he places us. I press this upon our hearts because it is an aspect of Christ's death which I do think is forgotten. We are familiar with the *victim*-character of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not sufficiently think of the *martyr*-character of it. He died in both characters. He died as a victim; that is a wonderful truth. What would we have without it? But He died as a martyr at the hands of man for the testimony of God, whose faithful witness He was. His death as a victim settled the whole question of our sins; but it is in connection with His martyr-sufferings and character that we, through grace, can be really on the road of testimony with Him. We could not be on the road with Him in His atoning sufferings. We have all the blessedness that flows out of it, but we could not be on the road with Him as to *company*. However, we are privileged to be on the road with Christ, in any sense in which the heart apprehends the fact that He was a martyr for the truth of God in this world which would not have either God, or Himself, or

the truth. In the same measure as I can enter into it, I am in His company, and it is exceedingly blessed to the heart.

In this company of "Jesus Christ raised from the dead" the apostle puts in this word, "My gospel." There is a distinctiveness, and a speciality, and a peculiarity about those words linked with Paul's testimony which the Lord gives you to work out for yourselves, if you have not done so already. "My gospel." It is not the gospel in the abstract, but the peculiar character of testimony which was committed to Paul and entrusted to him as one "born out of due time."

All this, then, marks out the moral condition that the Spirit of God, through the apostle, seeks to create in Timothy as demanded by the terrible circumstances in which the house of God is found in these days. Let me pass over from the ninth verse, where these things are pursued in further details to the sixteenth: "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness." Here we get a little description of what was in this house of God. "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." Now, these men were in the "house," and they had introduced this doctrine into it. Just look for a moment at the solemnity of it. If the resurrection is past already, then we are in our ultimate state. If the resurrection is past already, we may settle down here as comfortably as we can. This is the *effect* of such a doctrine—it brings the most terrible principle of worldliness and earthliness into God's house. Therefore it is that the apostle marks it so distinctly, though it was but one of the things which were then in the "house."

Now mark what he says: "Nevertheless" (notwithstanding all these vain babblings, notwithstanding the janglings that were there, the evils of doctrine and practice too), "the firm foundation of God stands." That is a wonderful thing to have before one's soul. Notwithstanding all that man may do with what is entrusted to him in responsibility, although he may make the most terrible havoc of God's things and introduce the most fearful confusion into God's house, "nevertheless the firm foundation of God stands." Nothing can touch that. Nothing can alter that. It is a firm foundation. There it stands. There is a seal to it, and I should like to dwell a little upon this seal. It is a seal with two sides. "The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." Now that, beloved friends, is God's side. We have nothing whatever to say to that side of the seal, except humbly to own the fact, "The Lord knows them that are His." What a mercy it is that we have not to say, or decide who are His! No saint of God can do that, because, just look at all the mistakes, the ten thousand mistakes, that would be made!

But now mark what is the other side. "Let every one that nameth the name of *the Lord*" [kuriou] "depart from iniquity." That is our side of the seal. God's side of it is, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Man's side is, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." That is, let every one who puts himself under the authority of that Lord, every one who knows the truth of that Lord, and the claims of that Lord, depart from iniquity.

Now, how many saints of God are falsely using this Scripture as a kind of *relief* in the midst of the terrible confusion into which the house of God has fallen at this present moment, and

amid all the vain janglings and noise around them? Many Christians—not only those that are outside God's thoughts at this present moment, but many that own this truth—say, "There is a dear child of God, a beloved saint of God, a beloved servant of God, in such and such a position, surely he cannot be wrong." I reply, that is not your side of the seal at all. You are using God's side of it. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." You say, "But is not so and so a Christian?" I answer, I am not disputing it; but that is not the question. The question for me is, not who is the Lord's; but, who is departing from iniquity? Here is the question—Who, having owned His claims, is suitable to Himself? A most solemn question, and that is the meaning of "departing from iniquity." Where is the person that departs from iniquity? How little that is in our minds!

Remember, I am speaking upon what I know. I remember perfectly well how that Scripture came to myself, and what use I made of it. I know, alas! too well how easily one seeks to use Scripture as a warrant for continuing every sort of unsuitability to Christ. A person who is religious—and by that I mean any one who has a desire after the things of God, in contrast to the mere worldling—if there are certain things that please such a person, and his own will takes the lead in them, he will always think he has the Word of God to back him up. And therefore, when people are in false associations and memberships so called, at this present moment—and I do not say it harshly—you will always find that this is the Scripture which they misapply, totally misunderstanding the mind of God about it. They say, with reference to any one of these associations, "It cannot be so very wrong; for are there not many dear saints of God in it?" I do not question the presence of such for a mo-

ment, for there are saints of God to be found in all the ramifications of Christendom. There are many that would put to shame some who are outside of them, and therefore we have not anything to boast of. It is not that one would stand up and throw a stone at one's brother, but I am speaking of the *truth*, and not of *people*, and the truth is more dear and precious than the people.

Let us not then be found in the misuse of God's side of the seal. I see those who are, without doubt, His people, scattered up and down and mixed up with all kinds of things. But here is the point as I see it. It is a word to individuals, and I speak it as an individual word for every person's conscience—Have you departed from iniquity? "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord"—that bows to the authority of that Lord—"depart from iniquity."

Now, beloved friends, I trust I need not answer another question—How much? There are some that positively do seem to imply they would raise the question "How much?" Oh, I need not answer that question! Surely there is no necessity whatever to answer such a question as that. Nothing is more solemn, deeply solemn, to our hearts than this. What am I associating the name of *Christ* with? That is the question. If we thought of that, and pondered over it, how differently it would tell upon the things we are connected with. How much iniquity! Am I to put the name of Christ with the smallest particle of iniquity? Surely not. The Scripture, then, is as simple as it can be: "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity"—*all* iniquity.

Mark now how it brings out the next verse. "For in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also

of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor." That is, the house of God, the sphere of profession here upon this earth, has become, in analogy, like unto a great house, with vessels, clean and unclean in it. God's home, the sphere of profession on this earth has become, through the incompetency of man, who had responsibility with respect to it entrusted to him, like a house with all sorts of vessels, good and bad, in it.

What is to be done? Now, observe, you cannot *leave* the house. Bear with me for a moment; there is a little difficulty in *that*, to some. What I mean by *leaving* the house is this, that you cannot give up the profession of Christ. There is not a Christian who would do that. Hence you cannot get outside the sphere of the profession of His name. You cannot leave it. God never tells you to go out of it. God never says you are to get out of this scene of confusion. If He does, show me where He says so. No, I cannot get outside of it. Suppose I had the will to get outside. I could not do it. It is out of my power. What then am I to do? Just read—"If a man purge himself." How simple. Look how individual it is—intensely individual. "If a man purge himself from these"—that is, from the vessels of dishonor that are in the house, from all the elements of confusion that are in the house—"he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work."

I have not touched what is collective at all. I hope to treat that when we take up the third chapter. But here we have the simple claim of the truth of God on the conscience, and as an individual saint of God in the midst of the confusion into which the house has fallen in these times through man's folly.

The Holy Ghost by the apostle addresses me and says, Have you purged yourself from those vessels of dishonor? Have you purged yourself from those things that are unsuitable to Christ in the midst of this sphere of profession? He does not say, "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a Christian, or a true believer in Christ"; but, "he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." Oh how many there are that are not sanctified, not meet for the Master's use! Do let me drop these words into your hearts because they have a moral bearing upon us as well as a historical direction for our path and ways down here. Those words of the Spirit of God come to us with trumpet-voice, even to the very oldest of us here, and even to those who have, in mercy, been given to know what it is to escape from the corruptions and confusions which crowd the sphere where His name is named. Do you not see how plainly God is keeping us up, practically, to the maintenance of the truth? It is not simply to glide into it once and for all, but there is to be the daily inward maintenance of what is outwardly expressed. Therefore there must be the cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Remember that the filthiness of the spirit is worse than the filthiness of the flesh. Some people would make the latter worse, but it is not so. That is a shame to *us*, but the other is a dishonor to *Christ*.

The Lord instruct us and help us by His Spirit to be in suited circumstances in the midst of the confusion of these times so that we may be more suitable to Himself—vessels meet for His use!



# Lecture Two

## 2 Timothy 3

There is one point in the second chapter to which I must revert so as to make that portion of our subject complete. I allude to the twentieth and twenty-first verses and if I recapitulate a little, it is simply to keep up the connection with what I propose to look at in this third chapter.

Observe how the apostle *presses* this truth of *the house of God*—all-important, not only in the consideration of the epistles before us now, but of any portion of Scripture. You cannot grasp the mind of the Spirit unless you intelligently understand the difference between the Church of God in its responsibility as His house, and the body of Christ, in its perfectness before God. The former is before the apostle distinctly when he likens (in this twentieth verse) the “house of God,” the sphere of profession, committed to man in responsibility as a builder, not to *the great house*, as we noticed before, but to a *great house*. That is, he takes up the figure of a house, any house, with all kinds of vessels in confusion in it; and he likens the house of God, which he calls the “church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth,” to this house. He says this is what it has become in man’s hand. God entrusted it to man, as the sphere of his building, and that is what he has made out of it. He has reduced it to that

state, that it is compared to a great house with everything in it, clean and unclean.

And now comes the solemn question—what is a Christian, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to do in that state of things? And what becomes a child of God, awakened to the sense of the confusion in which everything is, the wreck which the house of God has become? How is he to walk according to God? What is called Christendom is really “the house of God.” Let people say what they will. I will only say, if you deny that Christendom is the house of God, you take away the ground upon which God will judge it. It is because it is His house that He will judge it. No one denies that Christendom will be judged. On what ground, then? Because it is His house. He has a claim on it. He has authority over it. It is an entire blunder to say, as many do, that because man has introduced all sorts of false materials into it, that therefore it ceases to be, in responsibility, the house of God. I tell you what it has become. It is a witness to confusion, but it does not cease to be God’s house because of this confusion.

Well now, the apostle here, speaking to any saint of God (because it is *individual* here) wishing to find his or her way in the confusion in which everything is, says, “If a man therefore”—what? Leaves it? How can he do that? Let me dwell a little further on this for the sake of many who may not understand. You cannot *leave* this house of God. Are you prepared to give up the profession of Christ’s name? Leaving the house would be as much as to say that you give up the profession of the name of Christ. In other words, you would cease *publicly to profess* that you were a Christian. If a person *could* go out of the house, that is what it would amount to. It would be an entire

disavowal of the distinct and open profession of Christ's name. You cannot do that. That is the very thing that a Christian glories in. He rejoices to profess the name of Christ.

But the words of the Spirit of God, through the apostle, to any one seeking His path in the midst of confusion, are these—much more difficult than going out of the house, if that were possible—"If a man purge himself" from what is unsuitable to God in the house, "he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified...." Beloved friends, it is that purging one's self from vessels to honor and dishonor that are found now in the house of God here upon this earth that entails upon us trouble, exercise, anxiety, difficulty, and persecution. When I see I have to retain and keep my place in the house, but to purge myself from vessels that are in it, then I am called to exercise of soul and nearness to God to know what is suitable to His tastes, and what is not suitable. It also requires boldness, which nothing but devotedness to Christ can really give, a determination that at any cost I will glorify Him. Therefore, says the apostle, "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Now I do not deny that there are *instruments* whom God in His grace uses which have not purged themselves from the things that are unsuitable. But mark this, they are not sanctified vessels, not meet for the Master's use, and not prepared to every good work. I could not deny that God uses as instruments many who are mixed up with all the things that are unsuitable to Him in the sphere of profession. There is one thing—just let me suggest it in passing, because it may be helpful to bring in what is closely connected with this subject.

A difficulty presents itself to some people with reference to the gifts which Christ has given to His church because these gifts are found in all sorts of associations. Now mark this, the gifts are in the whole church, not in part of it. When you see intelligently that this is the case, that the gifts are scattered over the whole thing, and not found only in one part of the church, then you are not in the least surprised if God in His sovereignty is pleased to make use of the gifts though they may be in associations unsuitable to Him. Many a person argues to a false position, because of the sovereignty of God in the use of some gift. Now I cannot argue so at all. I may argue as to His sovereignty, or as to the fact that the gifts are in the whole church; but I understand this clearly from Scripture, that in order for a man to be a vessel suited to the Master's use, sanctified, and prepared unto every good work, he must be purged and therefore it comes down to the individual thing, "If a man therefore purge *himself*."

Now that is the first practical point which the Spirit of God brings out in connection with the disorder in which this sphere of profession is found. The first thing is, I have to purge myself from the things that are unsuitable to Him in this house of His. Mark the next verse, and then we will proceed to the third chapter: "Flee also youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." The pathway of God for His people in times like these would not be clearly marked without that verse. I can conceive this, that many a person might have confidence in God sufficient to say, "Well, I will purge myself." Many a person says, "I am not connected with any of the associations." And I am not speaking this unkindly, or disrespectfully,

with reference to any denomination so-called. Many say, "I am not mixed up with any of the associations which are found in that sphere which has become confused. I am apart from them all." But observe this, the apostle does not say that a man is to purge himself so as to remain in intense *individuality*. There is not a word of that in Scripture, but this is the condition in which we find some Christians. They say, "I am apart from the whole thing. I am standing all alone by myself, and I am not with anyone else."

But mark this, it is "follow *with*." Who are we to follow with? Now just leave out for a moment the beginning of that twenty-second verse, so as to make the sense a little clearer, and read the passage thus: "Follow with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." There are certain characteristics of this following—"righteousness, peace"—but just leave them out for the moment. The associations, then, what are they? What is their character? Not that I am to be an individual unit, that is clear. Not a person isolated and alone, associated with no one else. It is "follow with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." What is the meaning of that? I have no hesitation in saying that it refers not so much to *individual* purity of heart, as to *corporate* purity. That which is in the mind of the Spirit of God here is *collective* purity; that is, a purity marking the association. Those who are gathered together in the association which is spoken of here are those who meet on the ground of the Word of God with a devotedness and affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, seeking the maintenance of His name, His truth, and His honor, in the non-toleration of everything that would be unsuitable to Him. That is, I believe, what the apostle speaks of when he says, "Them that call on the

Lord out of a pure heart." Purity of heart, integrity of heart, and personal devotedness to Christ are the characteristic marks of the association that I am bound to seek when I have individually purged myself.

Thus we have the two things, very distinct and marked, as to the path which becomes the saint of God in days contemplated in Second Timothy. He must "purge himself," then "follow with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Well, now I will say one word on the twenty-fourth verse. The infinite wisdom and blessed care of God the Holy Ghost in putting these words in connection with what has gone before is manifest. He says in this verse, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." There is nothing that makes more demands on the patience, meekness, and long-suffering of the saint, than to be called to walk in a path of entire separation and isolation from all that is unsuitable to Christ in such days as these. And that is the very reason those words are put in there by the Spirit of God—a seasonable exhortation to Timothy, and, of course, to every saint of God in measure. Every saint of God is a servant in one sense, though of course Timothy was in a special sense, and therefore more exposed to the attacks, trials, and difficulties which beset the path.

Let me recall to your memory then these three things before we pass on to the third chapter. The first simple direction of the Spirit of God is, that I am to purge myself from what is unsuitable to Christ in the house. Then I am to follow all these characteristics of godliness with those that are corporately pure.

And last, I am to maintain this position in patience, and gentleness, and meekness. These three things are most distinctly brought out in these verses.

When we come to the third chapter we find what comes down more to our own times, because we have in it the distinct features of this present moment. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall be present" (not "come"). These are the very times in which we are. We are in the perilous times of the last days. Now the first thing the apostle does is to give a description of certain great characteristics of these times. I do not dwell upon them, because I believe most are familiar with them. When we come to the fifth verse we have what unquestionably fastens all these characteristics upon the present period, and that is, "having a form of godliness." It is a wonderful thing that with all that is enumerated in those verses, all the covetousness, boasting, pride, blasphemy, and so on, that mark these days, there should be this "form of godliness." With all these salient features of the very times we are in, there is to be found around it and over it all a specious pretext or form of godliness, but without "the power thereof."

That this really brings the subject down to our days must be acknowledged. Is there any one so lacking in observation as to the character of our times as not to see that the apostle is exactly describing them? If you were asked to delineate them, you could not do so more accurately than this. You could not select certain great features of character which would more adequately describe the circumstances we are in than what we find in these verses before us. Is it not what is all around us? Is there not an increasing, growing "form of godliness"? Is not "religion" entwined around everything that men take up? You

must remember, there is a very great difference between "religion" and Christ. Man will do anything for "religion." He is "religious" in his very nature, and thus "religion" is connected with everything. There must be a certain amount of "religion" about everything to give it respectability in the eyes of man, and to make it palatable, oftentimes to an uneasy conscience.

But where is the "power" of it? Now you must know very well that men will not have Christ, and that is why I make the distinction between "religion" and Christ. People must have "religion," they have no objection to it whatever. But when it is *Christ*, when it is what is *suitable* to *Christ*, when it is what is becoming the claims of *Christ*, the honor of *Christ*, it cuts, like a knife, far too deep for such an age as this, and thus people reject it, and throw it off.

Now I would speak even to those who may have escaped from the corruptions that are in the professing house of God. Although we may have escaped, through sovereign grace and mercy, so as to stand outwardly upon a divine position, it is quite possible for us to put that position in place of Christ. When a person puts any position, be it ever so divine or true in itself, in place of Christ, he will lose the power to retain that position, suitably to Christ, and sooner or later he gives it up. You can never maintain anything of God except as in relation to Christ. That is the safeguard of your heart, and a power to keep the affections of your heart true to it.

Now here, you observe, it is very distinctly said that there is all the outward show of godliness, and that is on the increase. There is formality and profession abounding, and everything of the kind is freely accepted and freely

owned, but the "power" is wanting. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Well, I go on to verse six. "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Such are the actings of the promulgators of this false system that abounds. When we come to the eighth verse, we find another character of present days. "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be made manifest unto all men, as their's also was."

The apostle here is likening the characteristics that are found in this great show, this empty pageant of religion without the power of it, to what took place in the history of God's dealings with His people Israel when He was bringing them out of Egypt into Canaan. There were the magicians of Egypt (they are those referred to here) who sought to set aside the power of God (through Moses) in the hearts of His people. It was not by open opposition, not by distinct, hostile, inimical display; not that, but something a thousand times more dangerous—it was subtle imitation. It was the imitation of the real thing which was attempted by Satan, through Pharaoh's magicians, to turn aside the power of God through Moses in the deliverance of the people.

There is a saying with which we are familiar—"history repeats itself." That is perfectly true in divine things, as in human. Here you have Satan repeating himself. The very effort of the devil to hinder the deliverance of Israel through the hand of Moses is the principle which is resorted to by him in

Christendom at this present moment to set aside the truth of God—a specious, subtle, and crafty imitation. You will therefore admit that we are justified in saying, and in saying solemnly, that what is most dangerous at this present moment is the thing that is nearest to what is true. The thing that is nearest to *the truth* is the thing that is most dangerous because there is more of imitation about it, and souls are less on their guard respecting that which has the appearance of truth upon it than that which is marked by open opposition.

I feel it is exceedingly important, and very solemn, to read such a word as this, and connect it with the past history of God's dealings with His people, and also with the present moment—that as Jannes and Jambres, by their imitation of God's doings, sought to withstand God's working, so do these also “resist the truth.” And I would say to my brethren in the Lord, be not without exercise in your consciences and hearts as to whether you are lending yourselves in any sense to a principle like that, because I believe there is far more of this imitation going on, and receiving countenance, amongst the saints of God, than we have the smallest idea of.

There is one peculiar element about all this, one special feature—it is all intensely *human*. The more a thing appeals to what is human, the more general is its reception on all sides; it is acceptable and attractive. But the moment you introduce what is *divine*, that which makes demands upon a person's conscience, and brings a person to stand totally outside the whole platform of the first man, as such, and to have to do with “the second man,” the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is another matter altogether. Therefore you find now that any effort in Christendom that seeks to benefit man as he is will be

acceptable to the mass. Why? Because it does not ignore and disallow totally the *standing of the first man* as such. In fact, it works *from* the first man as a basis. It seeks to ameliorate him, it gives him a place, it seeks to operate upon him, whether upon his religious feelings, like ritualism, or upon his intellectual feelings, like rationalism. You get these two things—ritualism and rationalism promoting the status of the first man in a religious way and in an intellectual way.

These are *world* powers. You know well—you must be aware of it—that these are increasingly popular. There is a certain large class that is caught by each of them. Now I call that imitation. It is Jannes and Jambres repeated. It is exactly the same thing over again as that by which Satan sought to obstruct the deliverance of God's people. And therefore, says the apostle to Timothy, warning him with reference to it, "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all, as their's also was."

Where then is the *security*? I answer, as I have often done before, that the only security for any person against what is false is, *knowing what is true*. I do not believe any one is ever safe against that which is spurious unless he knows the genuine article. You must know the real thing not only in order to be fortified against what is false, but in order to be able to unmask it. Is it not solemn to think that there are numbers of God's saints who could not tell you what is false? Why? Because they do not know what is true. They have not the knowledge of the truth, by which to weigh that which is false.

Here, then, is the preservative. The apostle says to Timothy in this tenth verse, "Thou hast fully known my doctrine." Now, may I ask you, What does the apostle really mean, what has he in his mind, what is the purpose of the Holy Ghost in speaking in that way? If you were asked what is Paul's doctrine, what answer would you give? He speaks of something special, something peculiar—"My doctrine." What was it? Let me tell you in as few words as I can. Paul's doctrine started with this—the total and complete setting aside and non-recognition of man as man—the utter denial of the first man before God, and the putting of everything in connection with the second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His death closed the history of the first man, and in His resurrection became the last Adam, the second Man, the beginning of God's creation.

That is what Paul's doctrine especially rested on; that was the basis of it. Of course I do not mean to say that he does not include here the Church, the body of Christ—what he calls elsewhere "the mystery." But mark this, even the truth of the church, the mystery (that is, the taking Jews and Gentiles out of their respective nationalities, and uniting them in one new man to the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have it in Ephesians 2), all this stood for its basis on the redemption work of Christ, which was itself the complete setting aside of man in the flesh, and placing everything in connection with the second Man. The whole truth of the Church, the body of Christ, flows from that. And therefore Paul's doctrine may be described as specially that which brought out the complete setting aside of man as a child of Adam before God, and the union of Jew and Gentile in one body, united by the Holy Ghost to the Head in heaven, and equally to one another on earth. Paul says to

Timothy, "You have fully known my doctrine." The same is true today, for no soul is safe from the hostile wiles and imitations of Satan unless he knows Paul's doctrine. You are not, be assured, safe without this. You may be tripped up at any moment by the subtilty of Jannes and Jambres unless you are versed intelligently in your soul in what the apostle speaks of here, by the Spirit, as "my doctrine." Unless you know that, you will not be able to unravel the mysteries, cunning, and imitations of Satan at this present time.

Now Timothy had "*fully known Paul's doctrine,*" not *partially* known it. In connection, there is a passage I should like to refer to in Colossians 1:24, 25, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to *complete* the word of God," that is, "to fill up the word of God." What he means is, that until he had by the Holy Ghost brought out the special truth which God had committed to him to be the minister of, the testimony of God was not filled up. The testimony of God, or "Word of God," comprised all that we have in the Old Testament Scriptures, and in the New Testament Scriptures, minus "the mystery." But the moment that the apostle brought out what is called "the mystery"—something that was hidden, but is now revealed—as soon as he had brought out this special revelation which was committed to him, exercising his stewardship in bringing it out, then the Word of God was complete. The *whole* Word of God, His testimony, as the fortifying power to keep His people in the midst of the hostilities and imitations of present times, was then fully filled up.

Now it is to this that the apostle alludes here, when he says to Timothy, "You have fully known my doctrine." The whole Word of God is complete. The testimony which God has provided for His people to guard them against the counterfeits and imitations, and everything else that Satan would bring against them, is embodied now in the Scriptures. Hence it is that the apostle refers to the Scriptures a little lower down, when he says, "From a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

There are thus three great realities in 2 Timothy 3 upon which the apostle would ground Timothy and the saints of God which are their security with reference to everything that besets them. There is Paul's doctrine, which was pre-eminently the truth of Jew and Gentile, united into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, with the "manner of life" corresponding to it. That is the first thing. Then there is the person of Christ, in which everything is secured for eternal life, and for God's ways even upon this earth. That is the next reality. And then there are the Scriptures, which reveal it all to us.

The apostle thus casts Timothy upon this blessed Word of God, which is able to make a child wise unto salvation, and to fully furnish the man of God for every good work. And if ever there was a day when the saints of God needed to be recalled with more distinctness than ever to that blessed, precious revelation and communication of His mind, these are the days. It is to be feared there is little deep searching of God's Word. And there is a danger, that what is merely *based* upon Scripture, and founded upon it, though blessed and useful in its place, should take the place of the authority of God's own blessed Book, in the hearts and consciences of His people. Such will make the

saints correspondingly deficient as to power, and firmness, and definiteness, amid a hostile Christendom. Because, be assured, if it is not the Scriptures that are at the foundation, if it is not the Word of God that is the power of our souls with regard to every position I take and occupy, then our faith is simply standing in the wisdom of men. And I do say that we are not free from that danger. We as much as others are exposed to the snare of our faith resting in the wisdom of men instead of the power of God. It is the Scriptures, the word of God alone, which can furnish and perfect (*Artios*) a man of God for every good work.

I will say a little upon the latter part of the tenth verse. "You have fully known my doctrine," which he connects with "manner of life." Now, here is the terrible lack, more or less with us all; that is, as to the "manner of life" which is suited to "my doctrine." What is the "manner of life," as he expresses it, which he connects with his doctrine? I have no hesitation in saying that it was a practical maintenance of heavenly citizenship in an earthly scene. I believe his "manner of life" was that complete, total, thorough strangership, heavenly strangership, in the midst of a scene that is pre-eminently earthly, and in the midst of a world characterized greatly by those who profess largely, and yet "mind earthly things."

This it is which makes it solemn to every one of us. A man may say, "I know what Paul's doctrine is"; but let us challenge our hearts, Is there "the manner of life"? Are there the circumstance, habit, ways, appearance, suited to that doctrine? And mark how he lays as much stress upon one as the other. It is not simply, "You have fully known my doctrine," but "doc-

trine, manner of life." Then he tells the features of this life, "purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience" (endurance). All these are to be combined with the maintenance of a distinct, isolated, heavenly citizenship, and narrow path in a hostile world.

I know very well we are sometimes inclined to plead the narrowness of the path as an excuse for the narrowness of our affections. That will not do. If a man says, "My heart is narrow because my path is narrow," I say he is ignorant, foolish, or worse. If your heart is narrow it is because you are not near enough to Christ. That is the true reason. The nearer I am to Christ, the more I know what it is to have personal fellowship with that blessed One who has brought me into such a wondrous position. My path will be narrower, but I shall seek to have my heart large. That is, my heart will expand in proportion to my knowledge of the heart of Christ, and at the same time my feet will traverse more closely the path which He has marked out for me.

May the Lord, by His Spirit, fix these things upon our hearts. I feel it is a subject of the deepest importance for every one of us in view of the nearness of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have positively arrived at the beginning of the end. If the apostle could say, by the Holy Ghost, that it was "the last hour" — "little children, it is *the last hour*" (1 John 2:18) — how much more are we in the closing seconds, as it were, of that last hour? And ought there not to be in your heart and mine, not merely a desire to be found in a clean path in the midst of the corruptions around us, but if Christ is our object, ought there not to be in our hearts at least this longing to be suitable to Him?

It is not merely that I may be suitable to the claims of my conscience. I believe many are satisfied with that. But the thing is, suitability in the power of life, and in the affection of a heart that draws its springs from a love that never changes goes beyond the conscience. It is suitability to my Object, and how can I be suitable to Him if I do not study His pleasure, and how can I know what that is, unless I personally know Himself? It is from Himself I get the expression of His mind and will, His desires and His tastes. How much do we study the pleasure of the One that we delight to call our Object? What exercise of heart does it give us to be suitable to Him? What exercise of heart do we go through to find out what He would like? And when we have found out what would please that blessed One (who is so little pleased in this world), how much self-denial is there to carry it out?

Remember, too, that you will never get motives apart from your object, and you never get the satisfaction of your desires except in the Person who creates those desires in you. Oh, what one looks for increasingly is, such a real, whole-hearted, genuine desire to be suitable to Christ, that blessed One, the rejected man on earth, but the accepted, glorified Man at God's right hand. This alone will enable one to please Christ in the face of the hostilities, confusions, and imitations that are in His house! And do not forget that it is His house still. You may call it "the great house," if you rightly understand the expression, but it is His house, "the house of God." It belongs to Him. He has authority, claims, and rights over it, and He will judge it.

Here we are, then, in the midst of all this, with Himself set before us as the spring and power for all that is suitable to Him. If we are looking for His coming, and expecting Him,

what delight to the heart to desire through grace that which is suitable to Himself. What a blessing it would be if there was a little more of that amongst us, that nothing about us could hinder us from looking forward, with welcome and anticipation of joy, to His coming for us any moment.

May the Lord, by His Spirit, set Him before us increasingly, and give us a more true desire to know His mind, and cast us more upon the Word of God in these times, more upon the blessed revelation of God so that we may know what we are standing upon. I maintain there is not one of us who ought not to be as certain about his position ecclesiastically as he is about his soul's salvation. We ought to have as much divine certainty about the one as the other. If it is contained in this Book, then I ought to be sure of it—divinely certified because my soul is resting upon this unerring testimony, just as I know the truth with reference to my title by the blood of Christ.

The Lord bless His Word by His Spirit, and create a desire in us to know its depths, for His own name's sake!



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