The Epistle of 2nd Timothy

Chapter 3

 Today as we continue on in our study of the second letter Paul has sent to Timothy, we will now see the reason for the intensity of the letter. Not that Paul is facing his execution shortly, but that maybe so many are taking a leave from the fledgling Church because of massive persecution that has been growing in many quarters, from the Romans, to the Jewish leaders, and the myriad of pantheistic and agnostic beliefs infiltrating the gathering, as well as people purporting to be Christians but offering a different Gospel, and altering the message within the Church.

 Paul brought the charge to Timothy, to stay strong in the face of persecution, as he has been loyal to the faith right from the get-go, and now even more-so. To not be ashamed of the Gospel message but be bold in proclaiming it. Paul likes to use up to date illustrations and here we have the soldier, the athlete and the farmer in one illustration. The discipline of the soldier, and perseverance of the athlete coupled with the rewards of the farmer when the crops he toiled over are harvested. As I stated in the last lesson, diligence, hard work and a single-minded purpose, is what it is going to take for Timothy to be successful at his ministry, and what it will take for any ministry to be successful.

 It is the message that is all important. We must never vary from the message. And this is what Paul has suffered for over these last 20 plus years, never varying from the message and the work of the Holy Spirit within him. This is what Paul wants for Timothy, to be diligent in his work, single-minded with the message of Salvation, and faithful through the persecutions Timothy has faced and the more he is to face. Within this plea is the call to remind all who Timothy teaches, to be just as strong, because frankly friends, this is THEIR LIFE now as well as their eternal life to come.

 Finally, Paul comes to the part of being careful of the false message going on around the Church. Too much gossip, too many false or misinterpreted messages bringing disinformation to the people. When misinformation gets into the church the unity suffers and when the unity suffers the Church will fall apart. Timothy must always be at his best, to be teaching, correcting, disciplining as required, but always in an agape, loving manner.

 A] 2 Timothy 3: 1 through 9; (read)

 1] “*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:”*

Now after all the admonitions to Timothy, Paul is now going to bring up the future of what the Christian community can expect. Back in 2 Timothy 2: 3 to 13, Paul told Timothy what to expect as a soldier of the Cross, all the many hardships he would have to endure, of how he would have to approach the ministry with a singlemindedness of purpose. Now Paul will delineate this as the purported last days approach, especially in light of the failure of the Church and its leadership to provide righteous teaching and training to the Christian Community, and allowing the opposition to get a foothold within the Church.

 There are many separate ideas as to what the ‘last days’ mean, But I believe Paul is referring to, after all the examples of apostasy he has explained to Timothy, that Timothy needs to be careful of, When it is time for the Lord’s return, this apostasy will become full blown, and if there is danger for the Church now, wait and see what is coming. However, as an afterthought, when we note the comment Paul makes at the end of this descriptive series, he states for Timothy to beware, I tend to believe Paul mixes both the far future with the near future as he can see the expanding heathenism around them, and the growing resistance from various authorities over them.

 2] “*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,--”*

Now Paul goes on to explain his statement. What is the common denominator with each of these descriptions? (No, not ‘men’) but the pronoun, ‘themselves’. Where is God? It is all about ‘them’. Their arrogance, ego. Mankind will come to the point of attempting lifting themselves up, no longer needing God, because, let’s face it, today, many people truly believe they are the source of all their successes, triumphs, and believe, they are the end-all be-all.

 What drives so many folks today, is the quest for money, lots of it, power: more of it; popularity and acceptance: but all to the destruction of their souls; Saying or doing things they know is against what morality teaches them. They forget what family values are about, what family was about, in their drive for their future, and in doing for themselves are believing, they are beholding to no one.

 3]--“*unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,--”*

Is any of this hitting home?Paul is continuing on with his description of the future regarding the Churches prospects. All of this comes from the fact, when the Church is shaped in righteousness, it will set the tone for civilizations to come, but when the world is allowed into the church and then Satan is allowed to take charge, and well as we can see, the Church no longer sets the parameters of righteous living, civilization collapses into the chaos of sin and degredation. Just look around us today!

 So in continuing, when real ‘Phileo’ love diminishes ( and let’s face it, Agape love, apparently has disappeared when this societal delusion began, don’t you think?) and with the end of that ‘phileo’ love, forgiveness with one another vanishes, and as forgiveness for one another vanishes, there goes any respect left for one another, and with that loss of respect for one another, we talk about one another in not so nice terms, without personal filters, and it does become brutal. How often do we see today, folks sneering at those who attempt to minister to others in various ways to ease their burdens? That callousness has set in and we have entered the chaos described above.

 4]--”*traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure instead of lovers of God--”*

Therefore there is no honor and with disrespect for a society, one will turn against that society for whatever reason, and with this , mankind becomes too proud to admit mistakes, and places themselves above all others in their quest for power, and once man accrues power, his thoughts turn to, “what can I get with this power?” Because now with money and power what more is there? So I turn to what pleasures can life can bring me. All about ‘me’ and God no longer is in the equation, as far as mortal man is concerned.

 Right now we are seeing the results of disrespect for truth, lack of honor, family values, chastity, and morality all because we have let go of truth, for the world and all the hopes pinned in it. We see the riches, the good times, the dreams of tomorrows, instant entertainment, and have forgotten the Hope that is in Christ Jesus, because Satan has dazzled our eyes, with the seeds of glory now. Just look at what the media has done, the promises from corrupt leaders, for a better life, and the churches offering false promises that were never scriptural. It is there, folks.

 5]--”*having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”*

Just as the Jewish Leaders of the Temple worship in Jerusalem, or vain religions go through their programs of religious service, little is meant and nothing is accomplished except the worshipper is satisfied he has done his duty, and the worship leader is satisfied with his entertainment of the masses. We see much of this in Churches today, where a person may stand to sing a hymn out of a hymn book never knowing the words, just singing what the organist or band is playing. Sometimes worship is done out of habit, and the worshipper does not really know what he is worshipping.

 Paul tells Timothy, let’s not go there, do not allow this kind of blasphemy to enter the lives of the believers, this is why I believe that the last days are maybe Paul’s or Timothy’s last days and they need to get things set in stone before they are called away.

 6] “*For, of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women, loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,--”*

Now friends, this must be read in the context of ancient times and understanding the condition of women, both single and married, how they lived and occupied themselves. There were and frankly still are, men of rank in some Churches who still prey on gullible women, who may be harboring some secret sins or guilt, and sucker these folks into things that should not be. This goes for men too, who may be searching for truth and all these folks do is lead them into false and misleading lies.

 7]--”*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”*

Make no mistake, these people are always in learning mode, but never understanding what it is they are learning about, they then parrot empty words of deception to a gullible audience, and lead them astray from the real truth.

 I know a gal who publishes her ‘New Age’ babble on facebook, and has literally made church out of it, meeting for meditative services and coffee hours on Sunday morning. Similar is the Church of scientology, that was formed over a bar bet between L. Ron Hubbard and some friends, that he could make a religion out of a book he wrote on Dyanetics. Fools have bought into it. (many movie stars--)

 8] “*Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;--”*

Jannes and Jambres, according to some scholars, were two magicians Pharoah brought to oppose Moses. These men, according to oral Jewish tradition, were originally teachers of a young Moses in the Egyptian court, and when Moses had returned from is 40 years in the wilderness to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Pharoah brought out these two, to not so much oppose Moses but to oppose God. Paul brings this up as a familiar story every Jewish boy should know, as a contrasting, or counterpoint to what Paul is teaching.

 There were and still are those teachers who actually resist truth in all forms except that truth they formulate for themselves. I look at the incorrectly revised Scriptures that some publish to prove their own points. Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses to point to two. However, friends, and I will be careful with this, but too many teachers , today, have their own agenda, and that is to make large sums of money off of an unsuspecting congregation, many who can ill-afford to continue to give into these teachers coffers. They are not teaching God’s truth, but their own.

 9]--”*but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all as theirs also was.”*

What is being said here is these false, misleading teachers will eventually fall and be made to look foolish just as Jannes and Jambre were made to look foolish before God and their own people as well as Pharaoh. The Christan Church today, knows these blasphemous religions, and they are for the most part shunned, although just as the ‘last times’ may be upon us, Christianity in this country is being almost forced to being inclusive of these anti-Christian movements, where, it seems, the state is almost controlling the Church. At the same time class, aren’t all of these blasphemes quietly entering the church and isn’t the church literally accepting much of what we know is wrong?

 As we are studying about the growth of the church and especially ours, we MUST be about looking into the history as Paul relates to Timothy, and with all that Paul writes, should we not begin to apply these truths into how and where we must grow as a church? Are we dedicated enough to do this?

 B] 2 Timothy 3: 10 through 17; (read)

 1] “*But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,--”*

After the admonishments, and warnings, Paul switches thought to Timothy, that he should be emulating all that Paul has been. I believe that Paul was looking for Timothy to pick up the mantle as Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah, and carry on the ministry as Paul has been discipling him to do. He starts out with the encouraging fact, that Timothy HAS followed Paul’s teaching and doctrine, and as Timothy was that close to Paul, he has followed his life style, accepted Paul’s sense of purpose, his faith, and the attitude of long suffering. Timothy has within him that Holy Spirit Agape love and that strong sense of perseverance. Timothy has faced the persecution as Paul has and kept his right attitude.

 2]--”*persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra---what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”*

Now as reported in Acts 14: 19; Paul and the brethren had visited Lystra, and healed a man there and Jewish zealots from Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra and proceeded to stone Paul leaving him for dead and throwing his body out of the city gates. By the next day he was back on his feet and proceeded to continue on with the ministry actually going back into that city. But suffice it to say Paul met with resistance and misfortune in many of the places he went and endured.

 3] “*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

Here is a promise I wouldn’t want to hear, especially in times like where Paul had been ministering. Suppose he sends me directly to witness to Nero Himself, could I go? Or just to be a witness to the Praetoriate guards? Frankly I knew a couple who just had to go to Turkey and begin a ministry even after knowing the fate of Pastor Brunson and his two year imprisonment. They went on the pretext of opening a coffee shop, in Ankara. That lasted 6 months and they were found out and then told to get out. They did.

 I understand that if you are a Christian and firm in your faith, you will suffer persecution, we are not going to escape this, but friends in spite these warnings the people persevered, and the Christian faith grew. Can we be so strong?

 4] “*But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

 Paul has already exposed a few false teachers but there are so many more and as each generation rises so do even more of them as Satan is able to grab them for his use, and in turn, they employ worse and worse tactics to break this ministry, but God is faithful because no matter how many there are at any given point in time, and how many generations of these evil folks rise up, they are put down and the Word of God carries on.

 Even today the Church is being persecuted throughout the world, yet we note the strength of the believer especially in China and in some of the Arabian countries, but what is happening in America?

 5] “*But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

The emphasis is there, with all this in front of you, Timothy, you MUST continue on with what you have learned all the way back to your childhood, and now know because of the Holy Spirit within you has given you that enlightenment. You know these things to be true, so never let fear dictate your choices. Knowing the truth or veracity of the Word of God, makes you wise in all things related to God Grace for you.

 6] “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Friends, we have all read this verse, and some have even memorized it at some point, but now we see it in its full context. Timothy has been told to rely on his knowledge of scripture, and this is why. We know (or should know) and accept that **ALL** of scripture is God’s inerrant word in the original languages it was written in. It is literally God in Word form. (See John 1: 1)

 The Word is profitable for teaching, for the correction of man in his living, and teaches man how to attain to be righteous, or to be cleansed by God through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. It is the blueprint for man’s life here that will translate into the life to come in Heaven through God’s redeeming Grace.