



2/20/25

I've been reading the Bible in full this year. One thing I am always struck by when reading the Old Testament is just how seriously God takes sin. There was one point when the Aaron's sons (the priest's sons) disobeyed God's rules in the holy place, and they were consumed with fire!!! Yikes! I think God wants us to know how seriously He takes sin so that we understand how incredible the sacrifice of Jesus was. All that wrath that I deserve was poured on Him. I am amazed at His mercy.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

2 Timothy 3:1-17

This is the last letter Paul wrote before his execution. He was writing to Timothy, a fellow servant of Christ, who he called "my beloved child." Timothy was a pastor, and Paul knew how quickly a church could be derailed. This letter was written to remind Timothy how to protect the integrity and faith of the church. Paul knew that the tactics Satan used in the Garden of Eden were still being used in their time, and his tactics are still being used today. We, the church, need to be on our guard because Satan never gives up on trying to destroy us. So how do we cooperate with the Lord in safeguarding our church?

Vs. 1-5 ~ First, we need to understand that we are in the last days, just as Paul and Timothy were. From the moment Jesus ascended to heaven, we entered "the last days." The last days will hold "times of difficulty." If we think this is supposed to be our "best life," we're in trouble. If we KNOW and grasp that these days will be difficult, it will affect how we live.

WITHIN THE CHURCH, there will be people who are lovers of SELF - who enjoy the sea of selfishness... lovers of money - who use the church to get for themselves... proud, arrogant, abusive - even using the Bible to domineer over others... disobedient to their parents - falling into the trap of the world that says kids don't need their parents and know better than them... ungrateful - viewing everything as though they're entitled to whatever they want... unholy - and justifying it... heartless - having no compassion for those they hurt... unappeasable - enough is

never enough... slanderous - accusing and attacking others in the church or in their families... without self-control - indulging in whatever they want... brutal, not loving good - justifying behavior that God detests... treacherous, reckless - not caring who they hurt... swollen with conceit - calling themselves the hero in every story... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Here's the most shocking part... "having the APPEARANCE OF GODLINESS but denying its power." The people who are engaging in these things that are so against who God is are IN THE CHURCH and putting on a facade that they are godly. YIKES!!!

Paul says, "Avoid such people." Do not put them in leadership. Do not let them teach the children in the church. Do not let them hurt the flock. If they have the APPEARANCE of godliness, how can we know who they are? By their fruits. Anyone can SAY they love the Lord. Their actions will prove whether or not it's true. We need to weigh people's authenticity on how they handle God's word... which means I need to know God's word.

I'm grateful that Paul says to avoid these people... rather than... try to love them and get close to them. They know how to manipulate. They will work hard at trying to pull me down rather than letting me pull them to Jesus. I can pray for them, that the Lord would change their hearts... but I should never think that I know better than God how to handle them. Trust the Lord. Avoid them.

Vs. 6-9 ~ These people in the church who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power look for "weak women" who are weighed down by their own sins. They look for the vulnerable in order to use them for selfish gain and then throw them away. These vulnerable people are going to church every week but are caught in their own sea of selfishness. They're hearing the truth of the word, but they're never applying it to their lives.

Jannes and Jambres were the names given to magicians who opposed Moses and Aaron when they were going before Pharaoh and asking him to let the Israelites go to worship God. These magicians did everything they could do discredit Moses and Aaron as being sent by God. That is the same thing some people in the church try to do. If anyone is speaking against the leadership of the church, trying to discredit them, and not praying for them, they are in danger of doing the very thing Paul is telling Timothy to avoid. If anyone is concerned about what the leaders are doing, they need to go to them WITH SCRIPTURE to talk to them about their concerns. It isn't about preference, but sin. God does not want His people divided.

Whoever is manipulating people for personal gain, no matter who they are... they are "corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith." These are SERIOUS charges!!!

As a believer in the church, I need to be weary of people who speak against leaders without respect or biblical guidance. They are doing it for the wrong reasons. As a believer in the church, I need to be praying for my leaders. Even being a leader in my current role, I still need to be praying for the other leaders in our church. It would be so easy to compare myself to

them or judge them. But God calls us to unity!

Eventually, anyone who uses manipulation or control over the vulnerable will be exposed for their corrupt and foolish behavior. The Lord will not allow them to go on for long... just as Jannes and Jambres could only discredit Moses for a short time.

Vs. 10-13 ~ Paul said to Timothy, "You, however, have followed me." Timothy did not follow the ways of those who just want power. He did not hurt and manipulate the vulnerable. I need to follow Paul's example as well.

I need to follow his...

- *Teaching... What he wrote and taught were inspired and led by the Holy Spirit. Pay attention and obey.*
- *Conduct... Actions speak louder than words... If he had said, "Do what I say, not what I do," he would have lost all credibility... and so would I. I can't be perfect, just like he couldn't, but I need to be seeking the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to transform my life to be like Jesus.*
- *Aim in life... to have the same goal, "For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain." "I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." "For the love of Christ controls me... I live for Him."*
- *Faith... "I walk by faith and not by sight."*
- *Patience... "For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." "For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness."*
- *Love... "The love of Christ controls me."*
- *Steadfastness... "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ." "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."*
- *Persecutions and sufferings... "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." "So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

Whoa! Follow Paul's example in EVERY ONE OF THESE THINGS!!! Let me never forget what he said... Even with all the persecution he faced with people following him from town to town as he endured their persecution... "yet from them all THE LORD rescued me." Ummm... excuse me, Paul, but you're writing this letter KNOWING that you're in prison waiting for your execution. How can you say the Lord rescued you? The answer... Paul had an eternal perspective. The Lord DID rescue him. At the end of this letter, he said, "The Lord WILL rescue me from EVERY evil deed and bring me safely into HIS heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen." The Lord took Paul home to heaven where all his scars from all the beatings are gone... where he will never face another second of persecution. He has been rescued. Paul... and the Lord... want me to have the SAME MINDSET, the same eternal perspective. O Lord, please make it so!!!

I NEED to follow Paul's example, because "ALL who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus WILL be persecuted." Let me not be surprised by this and let me not have an earthly perspective. I will see the impostors in the church go from bad to worse. I will see them deceiving others and being deceived. BUT they WILL eventually be exposed, and I WILL be rescued by the Lord. Am I willing to follow Jesus at any cost? Do I remember that He sacrificed Himself for me at the GREATEST cost?

Vs. 14-17 ~ Now Paul encouraged Timothy... "CONTINUE in what you've LEARNED and have FIRMLY BELIEVED." Continue to grow in what you know and in where you've placed your confidence. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and the hope of eternity with Him.

Timothy had the privilege of being raised in a household of faith. He studied the scriptures, even as a Gentile, from childhood. That was rare. He learned from his mama and grandma who loved the Lord with all their hearts. He studied the word which made him "wise for salvation through faith in Christ." How do we know that the word is our answer for wisdom and salvation? By knowing the word itself... by studying it not just for information, but for transformation. How much do believers miss out on because we don't understand the value of God's word? O Lord, please help me to treasure Your word!!!

Why is God's word such a big deal? It is God breathed. He wrote it and gave prophets and apostles the privilege of putting His words on paper. Hebrews 4:12 says it's "living and active." It is not just words. It is the breath of God Himself. He wants me to know Him.

He uses His word to teach me so that I can understand... to reprove me or to show me when I've gotten off the path of what's right, when I've drifted from my faith... to correct me or restore me to His straight path, to deeper relationship with Him... and to train me in righteousness so that I love what He loves and hate what He hates... All of this is for a purpose... that I may be complete, perfect, whole and that I may have EVERYTHING I need to accomplish all the good works that God has prepared for me to do (Ephesians 2:10). This is so fulfilling! Any time I do things that I know please God, I have joy... I get excited. This is the life God wants me to have!

God does not call us AWAY from a life of living for self and all that goes with it in order to withhold goodness from us. He calls us TO a life of living in faith and confidence in Him so that we can deeply enjoy relationship with Him, His peace, His joy, His contentment. Everything God has for me is good. I pray that I will take to heart the words Paul spoke, that I will not be the weak who can be deceived and destroyed, but the equipped who can enjoy life with Jesus. Amen.