

LESSON 11

Faithfulness and Apostasy

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1 and 14
- Lesson 11 case study from resource CD
- 2 Timothy 3:14 verse card from resource CD

Scripture Focus

2 Timothy 3

Key Verse

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14).

Overview

Paul warned that reprobates would create difficulties for believers, opposing truth and leading people astray. However, the servant of God is to follow the faithful example of Paul and remain true to the inspired Scripture.

Topic

Faithfulness to Scripture

Theme

We deal with opposition and false teaching by faithfully continuing in the inspired Scripture, which provides the mind of God for every area of life.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will appreciate that God breathed the very words of Scripture and remain faithful to the Scriptures.

Outline

- I. Character and Deeds of Reprobates (2 Tim. 3:1–9, 13)
 - A. Their character (3:1–5, 8)
 - B. Their deeds (3:6–9, 13)
- II. Timothy’s Comprehension (2 Tim. 3:10–12)
- III. Timothy’s Continuance (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

Getting Started

Looks Can Be Deceiving

A father took his son to a baseball card show when he was a young boy. The father bought a ball and his son got some autographs. One signer made the little boy’s heart sink when he “ruined” the ball by “scribbling” on it—his penmanship was definitely subpar. In disgust the little boy stored the ball away. It turned up about twenty years later, and the young man was shocked to read the scribbled autograph—Cy Young.

Ask: How could the young man's experience with the autographed baseball parallel the experience many of us have had with God's Word? When was the last time you read a familiar passage and gained a fresh insight? (Questions 1, 2)

Today's lesson is about the powerful, transforming nature of God's Word.

Searching the Scriptures

When are the last days? The writer to the Hebrews said that God had spoken in times past, which would be Old Testament days; but He "hath *in these last days* spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2). Here Christ's first coming is included in the "last days." Two other passages with similar wording convey the same idea. The work of Christ as the Lamb of God was foreordained before the foundation of the world but was manifest "in these last times" (1 Pet 1:20). John very clearly said, "Little children, it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). These passages indicate that the last days began with the first coming of Christ. We live in the last days.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:1. **ASK:** What comes to your mind when you think of perilous times coming in the last days? (Question 3)

The word for "times" could be translated "seasons." The Greek language has several words for time, and this word refers to time with a view toward its quality. We may talk about good times, happy times, or sad times; in so doing we describe their nature or quality. In the last days there will be seasons that are perilous. They will be dangerous to the Christian because of opposition, and as a result they will be difficult to endure.

Timothy was living in the last days, and he was facing one of the perilous seasons. Paul described the kind of people who would make the seasons perilous and then told Timothy specifically to turn away from such people.

I. Character and Deeds of Reprobates (2 Tim. 3:1-9, 13)

The times will be perilous "for" or because a certain type of person will create problems.

A. Their character (3:1-5, 8)

Paul gives nineteen character qualities of these reprobates in verses 2-5 so that Christians might be able to identify such people.

The first quality is "lovers of their own selves." The word "love" is *phileo*, or affection, rather than *agape*, or caring concern. They have affection for themselves, yet at the same time they lack affection for good and for God (vv. 3, 4).

They are "covetous." Literally, this word means to be a lover of silver.

READ: 1 Timothy 6:10. **ASK:** What is the root of all sorts of evil? (Question 4)

The third quality characterizes them as boasters. They brag and elevate themselves to great heights. This behavior is closely related to the fourth quality, pride. The word means “to appear above.” Reprobates like to appear superior to others, and so they boast in an attempt to lift themselves to a higher level than those around them.

READ: James 4:6. **ASK:** What is God’s response to proud people? (Question 5)

“Blasphemers,” speaks of those who lack respect for God and say evil things about Him. Disobedience to parents shows that they lack respect for their earthly fathers, as well as for the Heavenly Father. They generally do not submit to authority.

They are “unthankful.” This indicates a lack of conscious dependence upon God. Thankfulness comes easily when one is aware of his total dependence upon God for every good gift.

They are “unholy.” The description is not so much of a life of sinful practices (though they do live in sin) but of a lack of respect for the sacred. In addition to lacking respect for God, gratitude toward God, and a sense of dependence upon God, they lack respect for anything that is associated with God or is holy.

ASK: List some ways that “unholy” people make times perilous for believers. (Question 6)

Reprobates are without the affection that would be normal by nature (v. 8). Affection toward other family members is strangely missing. The description “trucebreakers” means they are unbound by covenants. They feel no obligation to keep a promise, whether it is spoken or written. They lack appreciation for the sanctity of promises.

“False accusers” translates the word *diabolos*, from which we get “devil,” the accuser of the brethren. Reprobates do not hesitate to point fingers at others and place blame on others, even without assurance that the charges are true.

“Incontinent” means without proper power or control and probably applies to self-control. Since unbelievers in the last days lack self-control, they appear to be fierce, untamed, or savage. Their lack of self-control becomes so extensive that they could be compared to wild beasts. Whenever their emotions are stirred, they just act out the way they feel.

“Despisers of those that are good” reminds us of Romans 1:32, which says that evil people not only commit things that are worthy of death but have pleasure in others who do such things. They enjoy evil people and despise good. The expression Paul used in 2 Timothy 3:3 could include good things, good beliefs, and good events as well good people.

READ: Titus 1:8. **ASK:** How does the qualification of a pastor contrast with the character of these people? (Question 7)

“Traitors” are willing to hurt someone else for their own gain (v. 4). They would betray a friend, an acquaintance, and certainly a Christian. The word “stubborn” would appropriately convey “heady” in contemporary speech. The minds of these people without God have been made up, and they do not want to be bothered with the facts of God’s truth.

We use the word “high-minded” in a positive sense to mean someone who has noble and worthy thoughts. The idea in verse 4 is quite different. It describes those whose heads are in the mist, the smoke, or a cloud. They think they know everything, but they are really in a fog and do not see reality clearly.

“Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” are those who choose pleasure rather than God and His will. The hedonism of our day teaches people to do whatever they want to do, not what they ought to do.

ASK: What are some evidences that our society is becoming more and more a society of lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? (Question 8)

The final quality is “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” These people are religious and profess to be following God. They remind us of the scribes who devoured widows’ houses while saying great, flowery prayers (Mark 12:40).

Two additional character qualities of these reprobates are given in verse 8. First, they were people of corrupt minds. Sin affects every part of our being. It affects one’s thinking so that person does not think the way God thinks. The people of whom Paul spoke had minds that were spoiled or depraved.

READ: Ephesians 4:22, 23. **ASK:** What remedy does God provide for the depravity of our minds? (Question 9)

Second, they were reprobate concerning the faith. “The faith” means the body of doctrine or truth, the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The term “reprobate” is the negative form of the word “approved” (2 Tim. 2:15). Believers who handle the Word of God correctly are approved by God. These people were unapproved or disapproved by God with regard to doctrine because they departed from the truth.

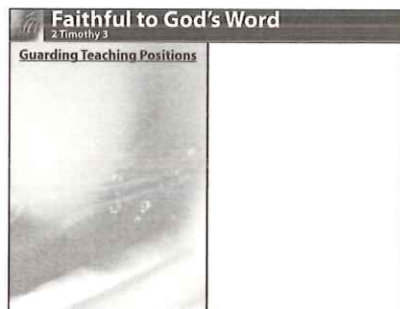
B. Their deeds (3:6–9, 13)

The deeds of some of these people, certain ones “of this sort,” fall into two categories. First, they “creep into houses” and “lead captive” those who live there. Paul said they “creep” because they presented themselves as servants of God but were not; they were deceptive. Once inside, they made the dwellers captive to false teaching and ultimately to Satan (cf. 2 Tim. 2:25, 26). These false teachers, who were involved in a home visitation program, directed their ministry toward women. Perhaps some of the teachers themselves were women.

Pity should swell up in our hearts as we read the description of these

captivated women. Paul summarized their spiritual condition in three statements. First, they are silly (2 Tim 3:6). Literally, the word means “little,” and in context it relates to their wisdom or understanding. Second, the women are laden with sins. They are burdened with a conscious weight of sins, and captive to various desires of the flesh (v. 6). Third, they are ever learning and never able to come to the truth (v. 7).

What a pathetic sight. These women were laboring under a burden of guilt and constantly searching for answers, but they were led astray by the teachers of their home “Bible” studies.



TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 14 with the right half covered. **READ:** 2 Timothy 3:6, 7. **ASK:** How can a church ensure that it is not allowing reprobates into teaching positions? (Question 10) Record learners’ answers on the transparency.

In addition to creeping into houses and leading unwise women astray, these people also resisted the truth (v. 8). In place of truth they practiced and promoted error.

At this point Timothy received a word of encouragement, that such people would proceed no farther, for their folly would be manifest unto all men as Jannes’s and Jambres’s was also (vv. 8, 9). Tradition says Jannes and Jambres were the names of the Egyptian magicians who, by sleight of hand or demonic power, duplicated turning water to blood (Exod. 7:22) and bringing up frogs (8:7). However, when the magicians tried to bring forth lice with their enchantments, they could not do it (8:18). When the boils struck, the magicians were unable to stand before Moses because they had boils all over themselves (9:11). Certainly the magicians of Moses’ day had their folly made very clear. Likewise, those of Timothy’s day would proceed no farther.

The question arises, they shall proceed no farther than what? No farther than they already had? That answer would be contradicted by 2 Timothy 3:13. The word “wax” is the same word translated “increase” in 2:16 and “proceed” in 3:9. Evil people and seducers proceed to become worse and worse. The best answer would be that they should proceed no farther than God permits. This understanding accords with the overall teaching of the Bible.

READ: Job 1:10. **ASK:** What had God done to limit how far even Satan could go? (Question 11)

II. Timothy’s Comprehension (2 Tim. 3:10–12)

The character and deeds of the unfaithful sharply contrast with the faithful actions of Paul. Paul’s faithfulness was “fully known” to Timothy. The various parts of “fully known” mean “to be closely joined together on the road.” Paul may have been thinking of the times when Timothy traveled with him as his companion.

The little word “my” belongs with each of the things mentioned in verses

10 and 11. Paul set himself before Timothy as an example. Paul had been through perilous times, and Timothy knew it. But Timothy also knew that Paul had endured and that God had delivered Paul. Timothy comprehended a shining example of faithfulness.

ASK: How have you benefited in your Christian walk through the examples of others? (Question 12)

Paul then expressed a staggering promise—Timothy and those faithful to God through the ages could expect the same kind of treatment that Paul had received! “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (v. 12).

III. Timothy’s Continuance (2 Tim. 3:14–17)

Timothy must continue faithful in the sound doctrines that Paul had taught him. Evil men, reprobate concerning the faith, shall become worse and worse. But Timothy must be separated from error, for his orders were, “From such turn away” (3:5).

Paul spent the remainder of this section speaking of the Word of God, for the sound doctrine to which Timothy must be faithful has been revealed by God in His Word. The apostle called God’s Word “the scriptures,” which means “writings.”

READ: 2 Timothy 3:15. **ASK:** What are the Scriptures able to do? (Question 13)

The Scriptures “are able” (v. 15) to make one wise unto salvation. This is an enduring quality of the Word that was true in Timothy’s day, and it continues to be true today. Salvation is through faith, and faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

Verse 16 speaks of the source of the Scriptures. *All* Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The five words “given by inspiration of God” are a translation of just one word in the Greek. It means “God-breathed.” When one speaks, he breathes out. The Scriptures are God’s out-breathings; they are God’s Word.

Notice that the text says that the *writings* are God-breathed. The writers were not inspired, but the words they wrote came from the mouth of God. And since the writings were inspired, they properly are called the Holy Scriptures or Holy Writings.

Notice also that the writings—the very words written—were inspired, not just the ideas. Certain philosophers have suggested that God gave the writers ideas and they recorded them as best they could, incorporating their misunderstandings and errors. But this verse says the very words that were put down in writing came from the mouth of God.

ASK: What better reason is there to stay faithful to God’s Word than the fact that they are inspired? (Question 14)

The verb “are able” is a present participle and thereby communicates an enduring quality.

Notice, too, that *all* the writings were inspired, not just the religious statements nor merely certain books nor passages. The text says “*all* scripture.” Some prefer the translation “every Scripture,” but whichever way you take it, you come to the same inescapable conclusion that the whole Bible and each and every one of its parts is God-breathed.

How could fallible people who make many mistakes write down a message that was God-breathed and without error?

READ: 2 Peter 1:21. **ASK:** What did the Holy Spirit do to ensure that God’s Word was recorded as God intended it to be? (Question 15)

This gives a glimpse into the method God used to ensure accuracy. The men were “moved” by the Holy Spirit. That does not mean they were motivated or encouraged. The word “move” means to carry along or to bear as a stream would bear a leaf. As the stream changes speed or direction, the leaf does likewise. Similarly, the Holy Spirit controlled the writers, and what they wrote was free from their fallibility.

It is important for us to cling to the testimony of the Scriptures concerning themselves. If they indeed are the very Word of God, then their own testimony is the highest authority we can have as to their character. If they are not the very Word of God, then the whole issue of their authority is a moot point.

Verses 16 and 17 speak of service and the Scripture. The Word of God is profitable for both belief and behavior. A Christian believes certain things and acts in certain ways; that is, when one receives Christ his mind is illuminated to accept the doctrines of the Word, and his behavior is altered to fit the commandments of the Word. This does not happen in an instant in the total sense, but the direction of the mind and behavior is reversed and growth begins to take place.

The Word of God is profitable for *doctrine*, teaching us what we should believe. It is profitable for *reproof*, pointing out what is wrong in both our beliefs and behaviors. It is profitable for *correction*, showing what right thing should be substituted for the wrong. And it is profitable for *training in righteous living*, which may summarize the first three points.

READ: 2 Timothy 3:16. **ASK:** How have you seen the reality of the transforming nature of God’s Word in your life? (Question 16)

The goal of the profitableness of Scripture is that the man of God may be “perfect,” thoroughly “furnished” unto all good works. The word “perfect” means complete, equipped, fitted out just right. The word translated “thoroughly furnished” is from the same root as “perfect.” Perhaps Paul was thinking of the soldier with every piece of armor and equipment (2 Tim. 2:4). Maybe he was thinking of the workman with every one of his necessary tools (2 Tim. 2:15). The point is that the Bible completely equips the believer to do everything that God considers good and wants done. The Bible comes from God,

shows us how to get to God, and makes us useful in His service. Therefore, proclaim the Word!

TRANSPARENCY: Display transparency 14. **ASK:** Given the transforming nature of God's Word, what can a church do to ensure that God's Word is at the center of its ministry? (Question 17) Record learners' answers on the transparency.

Making It Personal

Faithful to the Word

Some people are more faithful to their favorite TV program, newspaper, or recipe book than they are to God's Word. That is a shame when we think of the transforming power of God's Word.

We would all do well to meditate on the amazing fact that God breathed the very words of Scripture. Consider that Scripture is able to make one wise unto salvation and perfectly outfit us to do everything God wants. **Ask:** Will you covenant with God to remain true to His incredible Word? (Question 18)

Case Study

Distribute the case study for lesson 11 to the learners. Have a learner read the case study. Use the questions on the case study to lead a discussion.

Review Transparency

Use transparency 1 to review the Mark of the Faithful for this lesson: Remains faithful to God's powerful Word.

Memory Verse

Distribute copies of the 2 Timothy 3:14 verse card from the resource CD. Encourage the learners to memorize the verse.

NEXT LESSON

Encourage your learners to complete lesson 12 before the next class.



LESSON 12

Faithfulness in Ministry

Materials

- RBP transparencies 1 and 15
- Lesson 12 case study from resource CD
- 2 Timothy 4:7, 8 verse card from resource CD

Scripture Focus

2 Timothy 4:1–8

Key Verses

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

Overview

This text makes two major points. The first, which is the bases of faithful ministry, provides reasons to faithfully minister for Christ. The second, the behaviors of faithfulness in ministry, lists a number of specific activities that exemplify faithful ministry.

Topic

Faithfulness in ministry

Theme

There are reasons for and specific activities that define faithful ministry.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will be a faithful minister for Christ this week.

Outline

- I. The Bases of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:1, 3, 4, 6–8)
 - A. God witnesses and judges (4:1)
 - B. Reward awaits (4:6–8)
 - C. Opposition arises (4:3, 4)
- II. The Behaviors of Faithfulness in Ministry (2 Tim. 4:2, 5)
 - A. Preach the Word (4:2)
 - B. Be instant (4:2)
 - C. Reprove (4:2)
 - D. Rebuke (4:2)
 - E. Exhort (4:2)
 - F. Watch (4:5)
 - G. Endure (4:5)
 - H. Do the work of an evangelist (4:5)
 - I. Make full proof of thy ministry (4:5)