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LIFE-STUDY OF SECOND TIMOTHY MESSAGE THREE THE INOCULATOR

We have pointed out that the subject of 2 Timothy is inoculation against the decline of the church. In this message we shall consider five specific titles given to the inoculator in 2:1-15. These titles are a teacher, a soldier, a contender (an athlete), a husbandman, and a workman. If we read these verses carefully, we shall see that Paul regarded Timothy and his other co-workers as those who should be teachers, soldiers, contenders, husbandmen, and workmen.

I. A TEACHER

In 2:1 Paul says, "You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." The word "therefore" refers to chapter one. Paul's exhortation in 2:1 is in view of what has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. Based upon what he has just written to Timothy, Paul now goes on to encourage him to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Paul did not charge Timothy here to be empowered in knowledge or in gifts. He charged him to be empowered in grace. The apostle himself had experienced the empowering of grace in life (1:9-12). Now he exhorts Timothy to be empowered in the same grace. This grace is God's provision in life for us to live out His purpose. Instead of being discouraged, Paul was empowered in grace, even though he was in prison. He realized that grace is nothing less than the processed Triune God—the Father embodied in the Son and the Son realized as the indwelling Spirit. Second Corinthians 13:14 indicates that grace is the very Triune God Himself: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (lit.). Grace is not a thing; it is a unique Person, the living, divine Person of the Triune God processed to be the all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling Spirit. This Spirit now dwells in us as our grace. We all can be empowered in this grace in the indwelling Triune God processed to be our enjoyment.

The more we are empowered in this grace, the more able we shall be to teach others. Thus, in verse 2 Paul goes on to say, "And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also." The things to which Paul refers here are the healthy words in 1:13. The healthy words, after being committed to faithful men, become the good deposit in them (1:14). This word indicates that if someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord's healthy words, he should train the faithful ones, the trustworthy ones, that they also may have a good deposit from the Lord, thus making them competent to teach others.

Paul realized that Timothy had received a good deposit, that he had been taught and nourished with the riches of grace.

Therefore, he charged Timothy to commit these things to others who would be faithful and competent to carry on the same ministry. This indicates that more than one person is needed to carry on the riches of God's New Testament economy. My hope is that through all these Life-study Messages thousands of saints in the Lord's recovery will receive a good deposit of the riches of grace concerning God's New Testament economy. Then those who have received these riches will be able to commit these things to others. Imagine what the situation would be if the Lord had ten thousand saints filled with His good deposit, spreading the riches of His economy throughout the earth. No doubt, this would hasten the time of His glorious appearing.

II. A SOLDIER

In verse 3 Paul continues, "Take your share in suffering evil as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." The apostles considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare, in Numbers 4:23, 30, 35 (lit.). Whenever we minister Christ to others, we find ourselves in a battle. Hence, we should not only be teachers committing the deposit to others, but we should also be soldiers fighting for God's interests.

Verse 4 says, "No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of life, that he may please the one who enlisted him." The word for life here in Greek is bios, indicating the physical life in this age. To fight a good fight (4:7) for the Lord's interests on this earth we must be cleared of any earthly entanglement. The matters of our material, physical life should not entangle us as we are endeavoring to minister Christ to others. This ministry is a fighting, and the fighting requires that we be free from entanglement. On the one hand, the priestly service is a ministry to God; on the other hand, it is a warfare against God's enemies. As the priests were bearing the ark of testimony, they had to be prepared to fight against those who might attack this testimony.

III. A CONTENDER

In verse 5 Paul likens Timothy to an athlete contending in the games: "And if also anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully." At the same time Timothy was to be a teacher and a soldier, he was also to be an athlete. A soldier must fight to win the victory, whereas an athlete must contend lawfully to receive the crown.

It is important for a runner in a race to run fast. That is not the time for him to exercise patience. In a foregoing message I encouraged you to wait and pray. But when it comes to running

the race to win the crown, we should not wait. On the contrary, we should run to reach the goal.

IV. A HUSBANDMAN

Verse 6 continues, "The laboring husbandman must be the first to partake of the fruits." Here Paul likens Timothy to a husbandman, a farmer. Just as a soldier must win the victory and an athlete must receive the crown, so a husbandman must partake of the fruits, the food. This requires patience. As athletes we should be quick, but as farmers we need to be patient. If out of impatience a farmer would pluck up the tiny sprouts, his crop would be ruined. Likewise, if he drives his cattle too much, he may hurt them. With both crops and livestock, farmers must learn to have patience.

Verses 7 through 14 are related to Paul's charge to Timothy that he be a husbandman. After telling Timothy to consider what he says and that the Lord will give him understanding in all things (v. 7), Paul goes on to say, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel." The word "raised" in verse 8 indicates Christ's victory over death by His divine life with its resurrection power. The expression "seed of David" indicates Christ's dignified human nature exalted and glorified along with His divine nature. The words "my gospel" indicate that Paul's gospel was the glad tidings of the living Person of Christ, who possesses both the divine and human nature, who was incarnated to be the Son of Man and resurrected to be the Son of God, as indicated in the parallel portion, Romans 1:1-4.

Immediately after charging Timothy to be a husbandman, Paul speaks of suffering. This indicates that a husbandman must be one who is able to suffer and endure. As a farmer, he must learn not only to suffer, but also to die.

Verse 12 says, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Enduring is related to life in this age, and reigning with Christ, to the coming age. If we deny Him, He will deny us; that is, He will not acknowledge us (Matt. 10:33; Luke 9:26).

Verse 13 continues, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." The word faithful in this verse refers to the Lord's faithfulness to His own word. If we are faithless, the Lord will remain faithful, for He is not able to deny Himself. If we become faithless to Him, although He remains faithful, He cannot accept us as faithful by making Himself unfaithful, that is, by denying Himself, by denying His nature and His being.

In verse 14 Paul says, "Remind them of these things, solemnly charging them before the Lord not to have contentions of words, which are profitable for nothing, to the ruin of those who hear." By "these things" Paul refers to the charge that faithful, competent men, to whom the good deposit has been committed, should be not only teachers, but also soldiers, athletes, and husbandmen. Like the Lord Jesus during His life on earth, they need to be patient and have endurance. The Lord suffered with patience, and He endured. After He was put to death, He was resurrected. Based on this, Paul says that if we die with Him, we shall live and that if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him.

V. A WORKMAN

In verse 15 Paul says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth." Here Paul indicates that the inoculator is to be a workman. As a carpenter, this workman must cut straight the word of the truth. This means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion. Just as a carpenter has the skill to cut wood in a straight way, so the Lord's workman needs the skill to cut straight the word of truth. This is necessary because in the decline of the church so many truths are twisted and presented in a warped, biased form.

"Contentions of words" (2:14), "profane babblings" (v. 16), the eating word of gangrene (v. 17), and "foolish and ignorant questionings" (v. 23) are often very much used by the Devil (v. 26) in the down current among the churches to produce contentions (v. 23), to ruin the hearers (v. 14), to promote ungodliness (v. 16), and to overthrow people's faith (v. 18). Hence, there is the need of the word of the truth rightly unfolded to enlighten the darkened ones, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the right track.

Among Christians today, only the superficial aspects of the truth are not twisted. Virtually all the deeper things of the truth have been distorted. Concerning these things, many have not cut the word of truth straightly, but cut it in a way that is curved and biased. Therefore, we should be not only teachers, soldiers, contenders, and farmers, but also workmen, carpenters, cutting straight the word of the truth. The truth here does not merely denote biblical doctrine; it refers to the contents and the reality of God's New Testament economy. The main elements of this truth are Christ as the mystery of God and the embodiment of God and the church as the mystery of Christ and the Body of Christ. We all need to learn to cut straight the word of truth with respect to Christ and the church.

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for YP that they will be companions with one another to pursue the Lord together.
- Pray for the English-speaking testimony in Campbell.
- Pray for the follow-up of door-knocking contacts in Campbell.
- Pray for gospel preaching on West Valley College campus.
- Pray for the growth of the feeling of the Body of Christ.
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: 2011 Thanksgiving International Conference Message Five: Living in the Focus of the Lord's Recovery as Inoculators and Ministers of the New Covenant
- YP Bible reading: Correspondence Course for Gospel of John
- Prayer meeting Tuesday (1/31) at Campbell Meeting Hall
- Boston Training Center financial needs.