

## Useful to the Master - Part 3

WIDESPREAD CHALLENGES 2Timothy 3:1-9

### STIMULATE

\*\* As we strive together to be more "**Useful to the Master**", what three attributes or characteristics should identify us as vessels of honor?

- 1) sanctified - "set apart from sin, unto God"
- 2) useful to the Master - "to the glory of God"
- 3) prepared for every good work - "eager to serve"

\*\* Last week we learned five steps to becoming a vessel of honor, do you recall what they were?

- 1) flee youthful lusts - all self-serving sin
- 2) pursue righteousness - stay in the Word
- 3) pursue faith - be faithful to the Lord
- 4) pursue love - focus on the welfare of others
- 5) pursue peace - so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men!

\*\* When we use "Wise Correction" as His honorable vessels, what does it look like?

It is gentle and humble as it proclaims the truth of God and prays for Him to grant repentance to the hearer, so that they may come to their senses.

The real wisdom in this form of correcting error, lies in the understanding that it is God alone who enlightens the heart. We must present the truth, all the while realizing that we are dependent on the Lord.

### MOTIVATE

\*\* The more that we are prepared for usefulness to God, the more we must realize how grave the battle is. Today, in part 3 of our series, we are going to see the "**Widespread Challenges**" to God's Word that are all around us. Open your Bibles to 2Timothy 3:1 and we will see just how intense the battle is.

Read Passage (V.1-5) (V.6-9)

Opening Prayer

### *Widespread Challenges*

### INVESTIGATE

**V. 1** \*\* To begin with, as we try to correct the error of false teachers, when can we expect difficult times?

"...in the last days..." This phrase is a broad term in Scripture, but never-the-less it can be used to describe a specific period of time.

**Daniel 2:28 & 44** - "...what will take place in the latter days.." Sweeping history from King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to the time when God will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed.

**Isaiah 2:2** - "...in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established..." This describes the time just prior to and including Christ's second coming. (cf. Micah 4:1)

**Hebrews 1:1-2** - "...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son..." A period of time beginning with the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and ending with His second coming.

**1John 2:18** - "Children, it is the last hour..." For the children of God, this is it! From now until He comes for us, the days are getting shorter in number.

\*\* Alright then, what will be the main characteristic of these last days in which we live?

They are going to be marked by "difficult times".

The word for "times" is not "chronos" which would indicate chronological time, but rather "kairos" which refers to periods of time, to seasons, epochs or eras. So Paul is saying that as we confront error with the truth, we are going to experience "seasons" of widespread challenges or difficulties.

## V. 2 - 4

\*\* As you look over the next three verses you will see a deplorable list of sinful traits. Where does it all begin and what is the number one motive for a false teacher?

"For men will be lovers of self..." This was already happening in Paul's time. Look with me at what he wrote to the Philippians (Philippians 2:19-21).

That is why he wrote these same Philippians back in verse 4 to not merely look out for their own interest, but also for the interest of others.

That is why he defined love as something that "does not seek its own". (1Corinthians 13:4-7)

\*\* Now back in 2Timothy 3:2-4, there is a list of 17 sinful traits, which are produced by loving yourself.

Let's quickly go through that list:

- 1) lovers of money - Luke 16:14-15
- 2) boastful - Romans 1:28-32 (external)
- 3) arrogant - James 3:14 (internal)
- 4) revilers - 1Corinthians 6:9-10 (speak against)
- 5) disobedient to parents - Ephesians 6:1
- 6) ungrateful - Romans 1:21
- 7) unholy - Romans 1:26-27 (gross indecency)
- 8) unloving - John 13:34-35
- 9) irreconcilable - Romans 12:18
- 10) malicious gossips - 1Timothy 3:11(diabolos-accuser)
- 11) without self-control - Matthew 23:25(shameless)
- 12) brutal - Ezekiel 21:31 (skilled in destruction)
- 13) haters of good - Isaiah 5:20
- 14) treacherous - Matthew 10:21
- 15) reckless - Proverbs 7:6-7, 22-23
- 16) conceited - Romans 12:3
- 17) lovers of pleasure... - Philippians 3:17-19

**V. 5** \*\* What an amazing list! It is no wonder that difficult times will come, presenting "Widespread Challenges", when men (representing society) continually turn from bad to worse. But what about their behavior is even more amazing than that list?

All the time that they are doing those terrible things, **these guys are going to church!**

"...holding to a form of godliness..."

\*\* What do their hypocritical actions deny?

The "power" of God! cf. Romans 1:16 The gospel of Jesus Christ saved us unto holiness and the false teachers deny that power by their sin and then proclaim doctrines of demons for their own personal gain.

\*\* What was Timothy to do with these men?

"...avoid such men as these." Like the sin of the dishonorable vessels in the church, we are also to cleanse ourselves from the influence of these men.

**V. 6** \*\* What specific practice of the false teacher does Paul now describe for us?

They "enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses..."

\*\* Why did these guys go after "weak women"?

Because they are of their father, the devil, they fully understand how vulnerable women are! Emotionally and spiritually, these women were prime targets for the false teacher's arrows.  
cf. Genesis 3:1, 1Timothy 2:11-14, 1Peter 3:7

**V. 7** \*\* How deep is the spiritual confusion within the minds of these women?

They were "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They would rather hear the false doctrine, which allowed them to stay in their impulsive sinful lifestyle.

**V. 8** \*\* What does verse eight say about the preoccupation of a false teacher?

"...these men...oppose the truth..."

\*\* Who were they acting like?

**Jannes** - "he who seduces"

**Jambres** - "he who makes rebellion"

Jewish tradition holds that they may have been the magicians in pharaoh's court who opposed Moses and later pretended to convert to Judaism in order to subvert Moses in his divine assignment to liberate Israel from Egypt. cf. Exodus 7:10-12

Note: Jannes and Jambres supernaturally opposed Moses with the power of Satan, so does the false teacher oppose the truth with Satan's lie!

\*\* What is the mental state of false teachers?

They are "men of depraved mind". Remember we read earlier from Romans 1:28, "God gave them over..."

\*\* How does that effect their chances of being saved by faith in Jesus Christ?

These men have been rejected as regards the faith!

**V. 9** \*\* We know that false teachers are used by Satan to disrupt the body of Christ and even stop some people from becoming saved, but is there any limit to the damage these men can do?

Yes, "they will not make further progress..." They cannot rob God's children of their salvation. As bad as Satan's attacks are, Jesus is stronger. cf. Matthew 16:18, John 6:37 & 18:9

\*\* Sooner or later, what becomes of the false teacher?

"...their folly will be obvious to all..."

Some contemporary examples would be Jim Jones, David Koresh, Jim Baker, Jimmy Swaggart, all of whom were removed by God.

\*\* What about our two magician friends, how did they do?

They were total failures in opposing God!

Exodus 8:18 - "...they could not...(create gnats)"

Exodus 9:11 - "...could not stand...(boils)"

## **EXTRICATE**

\*\* As we desire to be "**Useful to the Master**", what single characteristic of men is going to present the "**Widespread Challenges**" to the truth of God's word?

The fact that men will continue to become "lovers of self". (V.2)

## **DELINEATE**

\*\* Since we learned last week that we are to be able to administer "Wise Correction", how can understanding the list of sinful traits that we saw today better prepare us for the battle?

Remember last week that we said you could practice your response when you hear error, even when you are not directly involved? Well, in today's list, we have been enlightened about seventeen forms of error against God's word. As we realize that this is where men are coming from, we can prepare and then practice what kind of response we should have when we encounter it face to face.

## **EVALUATE**

\*\* Am I willing to take the time to get prepared? That is no small question! It will require sacrifice!

## **ACTIVATE**

\*\* As you try to answer that question within your own heart, may I suggest how you might go about putting it into practice?

In your own time of devotion in the Word, take just two or three items from this infamous list and develop a Biblical response for what you might say to someone who says they are right for living that way.

We need to offer the lost world around us the "**Wise Correction**" of God's truth and if you will realize the "**Widespread Challenges**" coming your way every day, you just might be moved to get prepared.

\*\* As a closing thought, this is not a homework assignment, but rather an opportunity to grow. If you were to do it and desire to share it with a brother or sister in Christ during the week or send me an e-mail, we would love to hear from you how your life is bringing glory to our gracious God.

Let's ask the Lord to prepare us for the challenges of life!

Closing Prayer