

Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Ignorance	4
Chapter 2	Compromise	8
Chapter 3	Apostasy	11
Chapter 4	Neglectfulness	14
Chapter 5	Materialism	15
Chapter 6	Worldliness	18
Chapter 7	False Teaching	21
Chapter 8	Indifference	24
Chapter 9	Corrupted Doctrine	26
Chapter 10	Lack of Love	29

Forward

Many believers allow the secular things of this world to draw them off course.

They find themselves drifting aimlessly into uncharted and unfamiliar waters that sink their faith in God.

The word of God offers stability when facing the storms of life.

In this study, we will address some of the most glaring and visible dilemmas that may fall into the path of the present day believer.

As these are considered, The Scriptures that define and advocate a remedy for those who wish to change from a world perspective to a Biblical understanding will find that a remedy is offered through God's word.

I challenge you to consider the Scripture that is our only true guide for dealing with the challenges of this world.

Whether it is a lack of love, or lack of knowledge as well as any stumbling block, you can rise above each of these.

Elevate your minds, your emotions, and your spiritual being to replenish your doubts with faith. Remain in the path of righteousness.

God's plan for you is eternal life.

May God's blessings rest upon you

Harold Bollinger

Chapter 1



Ignorance:

Hosea 4:6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Hosea leveled his charges against the religious leaders. Who were these religious leaders? Jeroboam I rebelled against Solomon's son, Rehoboam and set up a rival kingdom in the north, he also set up his own religious system (see 1 Kings 12:25-33).

In violation of God's law, he made two golden calves and told the people to worship them. He also appointed his own priests, who were not descendants of Aaron. At first the residents of the northern kingdom continued to worship God, even though they were doing it in the wrong way, but very soon they also began to worship Canaanite gods.

Before long they had substituted Baal for God and no longer worshiped God at all. It is not surprising that Jeroboam's false priests were unable to preserve the true worship of God.

God accused the religious leaders of keeping the people from knowing him ("destroyed from lack of knowledge").

They were supposed to be spiritual leaders, but they had become leaders in wrongdoing.

The people may have said to one another, “It must be OK if the priests do it.” Spiritual leadership is a heavy responsibility. Whether you teach a church school class, hold a church office, or lead a Bible study, don’t take your leadership responsibilities lightly. Be a leader who leads others to God.

The priests relished the people’s sins. Every time a person brought a sin offering, the priest received a portion of it.

The more the people sinned, the more the priests received. Because they couldn’t eat all of the offerings themselves, they sold some and gave some to their relatives.

The priests profited from the continuation of sin; it gave them power and position in the community. So instead of trying to lead the people out of sin, they encouraged sin to increase their profits.

John 6:45

It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Jesus was alluding to an Old Testament view of the Messianic kingdom in which all people are taught directly by God (Isaiah 54:13; Jeremiah 31:31-34). He was stressing the importance of not merely hearing, but learning.

We are taught by God through the Bible, our experiences, the thoughts the Holy Spirit brings, and relationships with other Christians. Are you open to God’s teaching?

Tim. 2:15

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Paul urged Timothy to remind the believers not to argue over unimportant details (“quarreling about words”) or have foolish discussions (“godless chatter”) because such arguments are confusing, useless, and even harmful.

False teachers loved to cause strife and divisions by their meaningless quibbling over unimportant details (see 1 Tim. 6:3-5). To handle the word of truth correctly, we must study what the Word of God says so we can understand what it means.

Because God will examine what kind of workers we have been for him, we should build our lives on his Word and build his Word into our lives—it alone tells us how to live for him and serve him. Believers who ignore the Bible will certainly be ashamed at the judgment.

Consistent and diligent study of God’s Word is vital; otherwise we will be lulled into neglecting God and our true purpose for living.

In important areas of Christian teaching, we must carefully work through our disagreements.

But when we bicker long hours over words and theories that are not central to the Christian faith and life, we only provoke anger and hurt feelings.

Even if “godless chatter” reaches a resolution, it gains little ground for the kingdom. Learning and discussing are not bad unless they keep believers constantly focusing on false doctrine or unhelpful trivialities.

Don’t let anything keep you from your work for and service to God.

Col. 1:9

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Paul was exposing a heresy in the Colossian church that was similar to *Gnosticism* (see the note on +Col. 2:4ff for more information). Gnostics valued the accumulation of knowledge, but Paul pointed out that knowledge in itself is empty.

To be worth anything, it must lead to a changed life and right living. His prayer for the Colossians has two dimensions:

- (1) That they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, and
- (2) That they would bear fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. Knowledge is not merely to be accumulated; it should give us direction for living.

Paul wanted the Colossians to be wise, but he also wanted them to *use* their knowledge. Knowledge of God is not a secret that only a few can discover; it is open to everyone. God wants us to learn more about him, and also to put belief into practice by helping others.

Sometimes we wonder how to pray for missionaries and other leaders we have never met. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. His prayers teach us how to pray for others, whether we know them or not. We can request that they

- (1) Understand God's will
- (2) Gain spiritual wisdom,
- (3) Please and honor God,
- (4) Bear good fruit,
- (5) Grow in the knowledge of God,
- (6) Be filled with God's strength,
- (7) Have great endurance and patience.
- (8) Stay full of Christ's joy

Chapter 2



Compromise:

Eph. 5:8

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

As children of light, your actions should reflect your faith. You should live above reproach morally so that you will reflect God's goodness to others. Jesus stressed this truth in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:15-16).

Jude 1:3

Dearly loved friends, I had been eagerly planning to write to you about the salvation we all share. But now I find that I must write about something else, urging you to defend the truth of the Good News. God gave this unchanging truth once for all time to his holy people.

Jude emphasizes the important relationship between correct doctrine and true faith.

The truth of the Bible must not be compromised, because it gives us the real facts about Jesus and salvation. The Bible is inspired by God and should never be twisted or manipulated; when it is, we can become confused over right and wrong and lose sight of the only path that leads to eternal life.

Before writing about salvation, then, Jude felt he had to set his readers back on the right track, calling them back to the basics of their faith. Then the way to salvation would be clearer. *Saints* refers to all believers.

Philippians 1:27

But whatever happens to me, you must live in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ, as citizens of heaven. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing side by side, fighting together for the Good News.

When he said, “in chains,” Paul was probably referring to his imprisonment in Philippi, recorded in Acts 16:22-36. In Phil. 1:13-14, Paul speaks of his Roman imprisonment.

Wherever Paul was, even in prison, he faithfully preached the Good News. Remember Paul’s inspiring example when hindrances, small or large, slow down your work for God.

Galatians 2:11-12

But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him publicly, speaking strongly against what he was doing, for it was very wrong. [12] When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who don't bother with circumcision. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore because he was afraid of what these legalists would say.

The Judaizers accused Paul of watering down the gospel to make it easier for Gentiles to accept, while Paul accused the Judaizers of nullifying the truth of the gospel by adding conditions to it.

The basis of salvation was the issue—is salvation through Christ alone, or does it come through Christ *and* adherence to the law?

The argument came to a climax when Peter, Paul, the Judaizers, and some Gentile Christians all gathered together in Antioch to share a meal.

Peter probably thought that by staying away from the Gentiles, he was promoting harmony—he did not want to offend James and the Jewish Christians.

James had a very prominent position and presided over the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

But Paul charged that Peter's action violated the gospel. By joining the Judaizers, Peter implicitly was supporting their claim that Christ was not sufficient for salvation.

Compromise is an important element in getting along with others, but we should never compromise the truth of God's Word. If we feel we have to change our Christian beliefs to match those of our companions, we are on dangerous ground.

Proverbs 29:25 says, "Fear of man will prove to be a snare."

Sometimes sincere Christians, even Christian leaders, make mistakes. And it may take other sincere Christians to get them back on track. If you are convinced that someone is doing harm to himself/herself or the church, try the direct approach. There is no place for backstabbing in the body of Christ.

Chapter 3



Apostasy

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

If you think you are standing strong, be careful, for you, too, may fall into the same sin.

In a culture filled with moral depravity and sin-inducing pressures, Paul gave strong encouragement to the Corinthians about temptation. He said:

- (1) Wrong desires and temptations happen to everyone, so don't feel you've been singled out;
- (2) Others have resisted temptation, and so can you;
- (3) Any temptation can be resisted because God will help you resist it.

God helps you resist temptation by helping you

- (1) Recognize those people and situations that give you trouble,
- (2) Run from anything you know is wrong,
- (3) Choose to do only what is right,
- (4) Pray for God's help, and

(5) Seek friends who love God and can offer help when you are tempted.

Running from a tempting situation is your first step on the way to victory (see 2 Tim. 2:22).

Hebrews 3:12-13

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God.

You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

Our hearts turn away from the living God when we stubbornly refuse to believe him. If we persist in our unbelief, God will eventually leave us alone in our sin.

But God can give us new hearts, new desires, and new spirits (Ezekiel 36:22-27). To prevent having an unbelieving heart, stay in fellowship with other believers, talk daily about your mutual faith, be aware of the deceitfulness of sin (it attracts but also destroys), and encourage each other with love and concern.

1 Tim. 4:13

Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

The Scripture that Paul mentions is in fact the Old Testament. We must make sure to emphasize the entire Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments. There are rich rewards in studying the people, events, prophecies, and principles of the Old Testament.

As a young leader in a church that had a lot of problems, Timothy may have felt intimidated. But the elders and prophets encouraged him and charged him to use his spiritual gift responsibly.

Chapter 4



Neglectfulness

Hebrews 2:1-4

So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it.

The message God delivered through angels has always proved true, and the people were punished for every violation of the law and every act of disobedience.

What makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation that was announced by the Lord Jesus himself?

Those who heard him speak passed it on to us, and God verified the message by signs and wonders and various miracles and by giving gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose to do so.

The author called his readers to pay attention to the truth they had heard so that they wouldn't drift away into false teachings.

Paying careful attention is hard work. It involves focusing our minds, bodies, and senses. Listening to Christ means not merely hearing, but also obeying (see James 1:22-25).

We must listen carefully and be ready to carry out his instructions.

“The message spoken by angels” refers to the teaching that angels, as messengers for God, had brought the law to Moses (see Galatians 3:19). A central theme of Hebrews is that Christ is infinitely greater than all other proposed ways to God.

The author was saying that the faith of his Jewish readers was good, but faith must point to Christ. Just as Christ is greater than angels, so Christ’s message is more important than theirs.

No one will escape God’s punishment if he or she is indifferent to the salvation offered by Christ.

Eyewitnesses to Jesus’ ministry had handed down his teachings to the readers of this book.

These readers were second-generation believers who had not seen Christ in the flesh. They are like us; we have not seen Jesus personally. We base our belief in Jesus on the eyewitness accounts recorded in the Bible.

God also testified to it continues the thought from Hebrews 2:3.

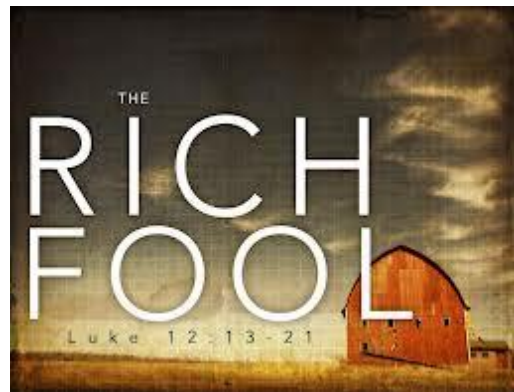
Those who had heard Jesus speak and then had passed on his words also had the truth of their words confirmed by “signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.”

In the book of Acts, miracles and gifts of the Spirit authenticated the gospel wherever it was preached (see Acts 9:31-42; Acts 14:1-20).

Paul, who discussed spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, and Ephesians 4, taught that their purpose is to build up the church, making it strong and mature.

When we see the gifts of the Spirit in an individual or congregation, we know that God is truly present. As we receive God’s gifts, we should thank him for them and put them to use in the church.

Chapter 5



Materialism

Luke 8:14

The thorny ground represents those who hear and accept the message. All too quickly the cares and riches, and pleasures of this life crowd out the message. And so they never grow into maturity.

People, like many of the religious leaders, refused to believe God's message. People, like many in the crowds who followed Jesus, believed his message but never got around to doing anything about it.

People, overcome by worries and the lure of materialism, left no room in their lives for God. "Good soil" people, in contrast to all the other groups, followed Jesus no matter what the cost. Which type of soil are you?

1 Tim. 6:6-18

Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth.

After all, we didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die. [

So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content.

But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

But you, Timothy, belong to God; so run from all these evil things, and follow what is right and good. Pursue a godly life, along with faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

Fight the good fight for what we believe. Hold tightly to the eternal life that God has given you, which you have confessed so well before many witnesses.

And I command you before God, who gives life to all, and before Christ Jesus, who gave a good testimony before Pontius Pilate, that you obey his commands with all purity.

Then no one can find fault with you from now until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

For at the right time, the blessed and only almighty God, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, will reveal Christ from heaven.

He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant that no human can approach him. No one has ever seen him, nor ever will. To him be honor and power forever. Amen.

Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need. They should always be ready to share with others whatever God has given them.

These statements are the keys to spiritual growth and personal fulfillment. We should honor God and center our desires on him, and we should be content with what God is doing in our lives (see Phil. 4:11-13).

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that money brings happiness. Rich people craving greater riches can be caught in an endless cycle that only ends in ruin and destruction.

How can you keep away from the love of money? Paul gives us some guidelines:

- (1) Realize that one day riches will all be gone (1 Tim. 6:7, 17);
- (2) Be content with what you have (1 Tim. 6:8);
- (3) Monitor what you are willing to do to get more money (1 Tim. 6:9-10);
- (4) Love people more than money (1 Tim. 6:11);
- (5) Love God's work more than money (1 Tim. 6:11);
- (6) Freely share what you have with others (1 Tim. 6:18).

It is often helpful to distinguish between needs and wants. We may have all we need to live but let ourselves become anxious and discontented over what we merely want. Like Paul, we can choose to be content without having all that we want.

Greed leads to all kinds of evil: marriage problems, robbery, and blowups in partnerships.

To master greed, you must control it at its root. Get rid of the desire to be rich.

Paul uses active and forceful verbs to describe the Christian life: flee, pursue, fight, and take hold. Some think Christianity is a passive religion that advocates waiting for God to act. But we must have an *active* faith, obeying God with courage and doing what we know is right

Paul concludes with a charge to Timothy to keep "this command," referring to the commands Christ has given to his church, or perhaps to Timothy's promise to serve Christ.

Timothy's own confession of faith is compared with Christ's before Pilate.

Chapter 6



Worldliness

1 Tim. 4:10

We work hard and suffer much in order that people will believe the truth, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and particularly of those who believe.

In our society, much emphasis is placed on physical fitness, but spiritual health (godliness) is even more important.

Our physical health is susceptible to disease and injury, but faith can sustain us through these tragedies.

To train ourselves to be godly, we must develop our faith by using our God-given abilities in the service of the church (see 1 Tim. 4:14-16).

Christ is the Savior for all, but his salvation becomes effective only for those who trust him.

Lukewarm



Rev. 3:14-18

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation:

“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth!

You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’

And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. And also buy white garments so you will not be shamed by your nakedness. And buy ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see.

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities, known for its banking industry, manufacture of wool, and a medical school that produced eye salve. But the city had always had a problem with its water supply.

At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshingly cool—only lukewarm. The church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city.

Lukewarm water makes a disgusting drink. The church in Laodicea had become lukewarm and thus distasteful and repugnant.

The believers didn't take a stand for anything; indifference had led to idleness. By neglecting to do anything for Christ, the church had become hardened and self-satisfied, and it was destroying itself.

Don't settle for following God halfway. Let Christ fire up your faith and get you into the action.

Some believers falsely assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing.

Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was also wealthy. But what the Laodiceans could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal.

Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent.

No matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have nothing if you don't have a vital relationship with Christ.

How does your current level of wealth affect your spiritual desire? Instead of centering your life primarily on comfort and luxury, find your true riches in Christ.

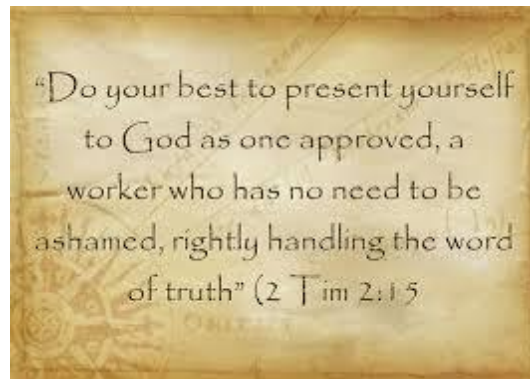
Laodicea was known for its great wealth—but Christ told the Laodiceans to buy their gold from him (real spiritual treasures).

The city was proud of its cloth and dyeing industries—but Christ told them to purchase white clothes from him (his righteousness).

Laodicea prided itself on its precious eye salve that healed many eye problems—but Christ told them to get medicine from him to heal their eyes so they could see the truth (John 9:39).

Christ was showing the Laodiceans that true value was not in material possessions, but in a right relationship with God. Their possessions and achievements were valueless compared with the everlasting future of Christ's kingdom.

Chapter 7



False Teaching

Col. 1:6-9

This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners.

Epaphras, our much loved co-worker, was the one who brought you the Good News. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us in your place. He is the one who told us about the great love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

So we have continued praying for you ever since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you a complete understanding of what he wants to do in your lives, and we ask him to make you wise with spiritual wisdom.

Wherever Paul went, he preached the gospel—to Gentile audiences, to hostile Jewish leaders, and even to his Roman guards. Whenever people believed in the message that Paul spoke, they were changed.

God's Word is not just for our information. It is for our transformation!
Becoming a Christian means beginning a whole new relationship with God, not just turning over a new leaf or determining to do right.

New believers have a changed purpose, direction, attitude, and behavior. They are no longer seeking to serve themselves, but they are bearing fruit for God. How is the gospel reaching others through your life?

Epaphras had founded the church at Colosse while Paul was living in Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

Epaphras may have been converted in Ephesus, and then he returned to Colosse, his hometown. For some reason, he visited Rome and, while there, told Paul about the problem with the Colossian heresy.

Because of their love for one another, Christians can have an impact that goes far beyond their neighborhoods and communities. Christian love comes from the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22).

The Bible speaks of it as an action and attitude, not just an emotion. Love is a by-product of our new life in Christ (see Romans 5:5; 1 Cor. 13). Christians have no excuse for not loving, because Christian love is a decision to *act* in the best interests of others.

Jewish males were circumcised as a sign of the Jews' covenant with God (Genesis 17:9-14).

With the death of Christ, circumcision was no longer necessary. So now our commitment to God is written on our hearts, not our bodies.

Christ sets us free from our evil desires by a spiritual operation, not a bodily one. God removes the old nature and gives us a new nature.

In this passage, circumcision is related to baptism; therefore, some see baptism as the New Testament sign of the covenant, identifying the person with the covenant community.

Baptism parallels the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and it also portrays the death and burial of our sinful old way of life followed by resurrection to new life in Christ.

Remembering that our old sinful life is dead and buried with Christ gives us a powerful motive to resist sin. Not wanting the desires of our past to come back to power again, we can consciously choose to treat our desires as if they were dead. Then we can continue to enjoy our wonderful new life with Christ.

We can enjoy our new life in Christ because we have joined him in his death and resurrection. Our evil desires, our bondage to sin, and our love of sin died with him.

Now, joining him in his resurrection life, we may have unbroken fellowship with God and freedom from sin. Our debt for sin has been paid in full; our sins are swept away and forgotten by God; and we can be clean and new.

Who are these powers and authorities?

Several suggestions have been made, including

- (1) demonic powers,
- (2) the gods of the powerful nations,
- (3) angels (highly regarded by the heretical teachers), or
- (4) the government of Rome.

These powers and authorities were probably not the demonic forces in Col. 2:10. More likely they are the angels who were mediators of the law (Galatians 3:19).

The Colossian false teachers were encouraging worship of angels. But at his death, Christ surpassed the position and authority of any angel. So rather than fear angels or worship them, we are to view them as deposed rulers.

Paul meant no disrespect toward angels, but he showed that they are not to be compared with Jesus Christ.

Some scholars believe these powers are the powers of Rome. By his resurrection, Christ stripped the power away from a world empire that seemed to temporarily defeat him.

Chapter 8



Indifference

Matthew 12:30

Anyone who isn't helping me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.

It is impossible to be neutral about Christ. Anyone who is not actively following him has chosen to reject him.

Any person who tries to remain neutral in the struggle of good against evil is choosing to be separated from God, who alone is good. To refuse to follow Christ is to choose to be on Satan's team.

Boastfulness

Matt. 6:1-4

"Take care! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired, because then you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven.

When you give a gift to someone in need, don't shout about it as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I assure you, they have received all the reward they will ever get.

But when you give to someone, don't tell your left hand what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in secret, and your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you.

The term *hypocrites*, as used here, describes people who do good acts for appearances only—not out of compassion or other good motives.

Their actions may be good, but their motives are hollow. These empty acts are their only reward, but God will reward those who are sincere in their faith.

When Jesus says not to let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, he is teaching that our motives for giving to God and to others must be pure.

It is easy to give with mixed motives, to do something for someone if it will benefit us in return. But believers should avoid all scheming and give for the pleasure of giving and as a response to God's love. Why do *you* give?

It's easier to do what's right when we gain recognition and praise.

To be sure our motives are not selfish, we should do our good deeds quietly or in secret, with no thought of reward. Jesus says we should check our motives in three areas: generosity (Matthew 6:4), prayer (Matthew 6:6), and fasting (Matthew 6:18).

Those acts should not be self-centered, but God-centered, done not to make us look good but to make God look good.

The reward God promises is not material, and it is never given to those who seek it. Doing something only for our self is not a loving sacrifice.

Chapter 9

Corrupted Doctrine



2 Tim. 1:13

Hold on to the pattern of right teaching you learned from me. And remember to live in the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus.

Timothy was in a time of transition. He had been Paul's bright young helper; soon he would be on his own as leader of a church in a difficult environment. Although his responsibilities were changing, Timothy was not without help. He had everything he needed to face the future, if he would hold on tightly to the Lord's resources.

When you are facing difficult transitions, it is good to follow Paul's advice to Timothy and look back at your experience.

Who is the foundation of your faith? How can you build on that foundation? What gifts has the Holy Spirit given you? Use the gifts you have already been given.

2 Tim. 2:12

**If we endure hardship, we will reign with him.
If we deny him, he will deny us.**

God is faithful to his children, and although we may suffer great hardships here, God promises that someday we will live eternally with him.

What will this involve? It means believers will live in Christ's kingdom, and that we will share in the administration of that kingdom. This truth comforted Paul as he went through suffering and death.

If you are facing hardships, don't turn away from God—he promises you a wonderful future with him

2 Tim. 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.

It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

The Bible is not a collection of stories, fables, myths, or merely human ideas about God. It is not a human book.

Through the Holy Spirit, God revealed his person and plan to certain believers, who wrote down his message for his people (2 Peter 1:20-21).

This process is known as inspiration. The writers wrote from their own personal, historical, and cultural contexts.

Although they used their own minds, talents, language, and style, they wrote what God wanted them to write.

Scripture is completely trustworthy because God was in control of its writing. Its words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives. The Bible is "God-breathed." Read it, and use its teachings to guide your conduct.

The whole Bible is God's inspired Word. Because it is inspired and trustworthy, we should read it and apply it to our lives.

The Bible is our standard for testing everything else that claims to be true. It is our safeguard against false teaching and our source of guidance for how we should live.

It is our only source of knowledge about how we can be saved. God wants to show you what is true and equip you to live for him. How much time do you spend in God's Word? Read it regularly to discover God's truth and to become confident in your life and faith. Develop a plan for reading the whole Bible, not just the familiar passages.

In our zeal for the *truth* of Scripture, we must never forget its *purpose*—to equip us to do good. We should not study God's Word simply to increase our knowledge or to prepare us to win arguments.

We should study the Bible so that we will know how to do Christ's work in the world. Our knowledge of God's Word is not useful unless it strengthens our faith and leads us to do good.

Chapter 10



Lack of Love

Col. 3:14

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Christians should live in peace. To live in peace does not mean that suddenly all differences in opinion are eliminated, but it does require that loving Christians work together despite their differences. Such love is not a feeling, but a decision to meet others' needs (see 1 Cor. 13). To live in love leads to peace between individuals and among the members of the body of believers. Do problems in your relationships with other Christians cause open conflicts or mutual silence? Consider what you can do to heal those relationships with love.

Galatians 5:13

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Leviticus 19:18

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.

1 Peter 4:8

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

1 Cor. 13:1-13

If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but didn't love others, I would only be making meaningless noise like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I had the gift of prophecy and if I knew all the mysteries of the future and knew everything about everything, but didn't love others, what good would I be? And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, without love I would be no good to anybody. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would be of no value whatsoever.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud [5] or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.

It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Love will last forever, but prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will all disappear.

Now we know only a little, and even the gift of prophecy reveals little! But when the end comes, these special gifts will all disappear.

It's like this:

When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child does. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now.

There are three things that will endure—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

Love is more important than all the spiritual gifts exercised in the church body. Great faith, acts of dedication or sacrifice, and miracle-working power produce very little without love. Love makes our actions and gifts useful. Although people have different gifts, love is available to everyone.

God's kind of love is directed outward toward others, not inward toward ourselves. It is utterly unselfish. This kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. It is possible to practice this love only if God helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so that we can give love while expecting nothing in return. Thus the more we become like Christ, the more love we will show to others.

Paul offers a glimpse into the future to give us hope that one day we will be complete when we see God face to face. This truth should strengthen our faith—we don't have all the answers now, but one day we will. Someday we will see Christ in person and be able to see with God's perspective.

In morally corrupt Corinth, love had become a mixed-up term with little meaning. Today people are still confused about love. Love is the greatest of all human qualities, and it is an attribute of God himself (1 John 4:8).

Love involves unselfish service to others; to show it gives evidence that you care. *Faith* is the foundation and content of God's message; *hope* is the attitude and focus; *love* is the action. When faith and hope are in line, you are free to love completely because you understand how God loves.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

***Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print**

