

Pastoral Epistles: Apostolic Instruction for Pastoral Leaders and Their Followers

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Session 10 (2 Timothy 2:22–3:17)

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Abstract

In Session 10 on the Pastoral Epistles, Dr. Robert W. Yarbrough provides an exposition of 2 Timothy 2:22–3:17, guiding pastoral leaders on navigating conflict, avoiding moral corruption, and remaining anchored in God's Word. He begins by addressing the metaphor of household vessels, instructing Timothy to flee youthful lusts and engage opponents with gentle, redemptive instruction in hope of their repentance. Dr. Yarbrough then warns of the severe moral decay characteristic of the "last days," cautioning against hypocritical forms of godliness while highlighting the destructive impact of secret compromise and sexual immorality. Finally, he stresses the inevitability of persecution for those who pursue godly living, pointing to the divine inspiration and supreme authority of Scripture as the indispensable tool that fully equips the servant of God for every good work.

Outline

I. Dealing with False Teachers and Pursuing Personal Holiness (2 Timothy 2:20–26)

A. The Metaphor of Household Vessels (2:20–21)

1. Distinguishing between articles of gold/silver (special purpose) and wood/clay (common use).
2. The mandate to cleanse oneself from common use to become holy, useful to the Master, and prepared for good work.

B. The Positive Ethic: Fleeing and Pursuing (2:22)

1. Fleeing evil desires of youth and turning energy toward holy purposes.
2. Pursuing righteousness, faith, love, and peace alongside a pure-hearted community of believers.

C. Handling Conflict and Opponents with Redemptive Gentleness (2:23–26)

1. Avoiding foolish and stupid arguments that breed unnecessary quarrels.
2. Characteristics of the Lord's servant: non-quarrelsome, kind, able to teach, patient, and not resentful.
3. Instructing opponents with gentleness in hope that God grants repentance and deliverance from the devil's snare.

II. Navigating Spiritual Decay and Counterfeit Godliness in the Last Days (2 Timothy 3:1–9)

A. The Character of Moral Decline in the Last Days (3:1–5a)

1. Recognition that "terrible times" and "last days" are a present reality for the church.
2. Vice list of self-love, love of money, arrogance, slander, unholiness, and lack of self-control.
3. The danger of maintaining a form/external appearance of godliness while denying its transformative power.

B. Pastoral Separation and the Exposure of False Influences (3:5b–9)

1. Mandate to turn away from and avoid unrepentant hypocritical influencers.
2. Subversive exploitation: leaders who worm into households and manipulate vulnerable individuals through sin and false teaching.
3. Historical comparison: false teachers opposed the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses before Pharaoh.
4. Assurance of ultimate failure: their folly and depraved minds will eventually be made obvious to all.

III. Enduring Persecution and Standing Firm in Apostolic Tradition (2 Timothy 3:10–13)

A. Paul's Example as a Model for Timothy (3:10–11)

1. Contrast between false teachers and Paul's personal example of teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, love, and endurance.
2. Reminding Timothy of past persecutions endured in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.
3. Testifying to the Lord's divine deliverance from every trial.

B. The Inevitability of Suffering for Godly Living (3:12–13)

1. Universal principle: all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will face persecution.
2. The trajectory of evildoers and imposters: continuing from bad to worse, deceiving others while being deceived themselves.

IV. The Divine Inspiration, Utility, and Sufficiency of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:14–17)

A. Continuing in Received Truths (3:14–15)

1. Exhortation to remain steadfast in the truths learned from trustworthy witnesses and early upbringing.
2. The foundational role of Sacred Scripture known from infancy in imparting wisdom leading to salvation through faith in Christ.

B. The Nature of Scripture: God-Breathed (3:16a)

1. Understanding inspiration (theopneustos): Scripture as organic, breathed out directly by God.
2. Universal applicability: "All Scripture" carries divine authority and origin.

C. The Fourfold Utility and Supreme Purpose of Scripture (3:16b–17)

1. Fourfold practical benefit: teaching (doctrine), reproof (rebuke), correction (restoration), and training in righteousness.
2. Ultimate goal: that the servant/person of God may be complete, mature, and thoroughly equipped for every good work.