

# How to Prevent an Apostasy

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Paul warned Timothy that apostasy was certain (1 Timothy 4:1). Yet Timothy was to hold fast the pattern (2 Timothy 1:13), teach this to others (2 Timothy 2:2), and continue teaching without compromise, even if others departed (2 Timothy 4:2-5). There was hope that those who would listen would be saved (1 Timothy 4:16). So how was Timothy to approach his work as a preacher to help prevent apostasy? And how would the brethren need to respond in order to keep from falling away?

## **Put the Brethren in Remembrance (v. 6)**

- Putting the brethren in remembrance assumes a proper foundation to start with – the word of God is truth (John 17:17), and it must be written on our hearts (cf. Hebrews 8:10); with this foundation, reminders are essential (2 Peter 1:12); truth does not change (Galatians 1:6-9), so we must be content with the old paths (Jeremiah 6:16)
- This means brethren must be willing to listen (Luke 8:8) – Timothy could only help those who would “hear” him (1 Timothy 4:16); we need to actively and intentionally listen to the word when it is taught (Nehemiah 8:3, 5, 7)

## **Avoid Worldly Fables (v. 7)**

- These were associated with false teaching (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:4) – when a preacher departs from the truth, he needs to fill his message with something else; avoid the frivolous; focus on sound words and the doctrine of Christ because these produce godliness (1 Timothy 6:3)
- This means brethren must not have “itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3, KJV) – come together to hear what the Lord has said (Acts 10:33); this is the only way to hear the words of eternal life (John 6:66-68)

## **Be an Example of the Believers (v. 12)**

- Timothy was to show himself an example in several areas – this would help himself (pleasing God) and others (being a model and source of encouragement); also important in view of any possible apostasy; Timothy was to stand for the truth, and any failure to live up to the standard would hurt his efforts (cf. Romans 2:24) and could lead the brethren into the waiting arms of the false teachers
- This means brethren need to follow good examples (1 Corinthians 11:1) – good examples are those that are according to the pattern found in the NT (Philippians 3:16-17); imitate the faith of others as we see the result of their conduct (Hebrews 13:7)

### **Give Attention to the Scriptures (v. 13)**

- Paul mentioned three things (reading, exhortation, teaching) that all focus on the Scriptures – similar to the first point [put the brethren in remembrance]; we do this by speaking as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11); “book, chapter, and verse” preaching; topics must be Biblical and Scripture must be used to back up what we say; be careful to accurately handle God’s word (2 Timothy 2:15), in context, not twisted (2 Peter 3:16)
- This means brethren need to test what they are being taught (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; 1 John 4:1) – the only way to do this is by searching the Scriptures (Acts 17:11); we can find out if someone is teaching what is false (Revelation 2:2), and it is commendable when we do this

### **Fulfill Your Work (v. 14-15)**

- Timothy’s “spiritual gift” was not something miraculous – received from the “presbytery,” not the apostles; it referred to his role in preaching the gospel; he was to fulfill his ministry (2 Timothy 4:5) by doing the things we have already discussed; he was to “take pains with these things” (1 Timothy 4:15); there would be difficulties, but he was to overcome them
- This means brethren are to support those who are engaged in the work of preaching – this can be done financially (3 John 7-8), in prayer (Ephesians 6:19), and by working together (Colossians 4:10-11)

### **Pay Close Attention (v. 16)**

- The possibility of apostasy requires being alert – the threat could come from anywhere (Acts 20:29-30); Timothy was to pay attention to himself so he did not become disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:26-27); he was also to pay attention to his teaching and speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11); yet he could only help those who would listen; but regardless of their response, he was innocent if he fulfilled this responsibility (Acts 20:26-27)
- This means brethren need to listen when warnings like this have to be made – the people of Israel hated those who reprovved the people of their sin (Amos 5:10); the people were upset with Moses because God punished Korah (Num. 16:41); many will blame the ones defending the truth for division that inevitably comes, yet they are not the ones to blame (Jude 17-19)

### **Conclusion**

- The Holy Spirit warned that apostasy was coming – many brethren and churches fell away; the same thing can happen to us if we do not heed the warnings found in the Scriptures
- Preachers have a responsibility to try to prevent this – brethren also have a responsibility

- The church at Smyrna was told to be faithful until death to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10) – all of us need to be striving to remain faithful, helping one another along the way