



Sermon Study Guide

Questions from the Brink: Do You Know What a Christian Looks Like?
2 Timothy 3:1-9 – Sunday, October 20, 2013

**Study questions are in italics*

Introduction

- Before an immigrant can become a U.S. citizen, he must swear the following Oath of Allegiance:

I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.

- These are serious words. To be an American is to give up all allegiance to any other nation or power. To be an American is to be totally committed to the USA—in heart and action. As you read 2 Timothy 3:1-9, think of Paul as the Director of the Church Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. Contrary to the false teachers, Paul teaches that those who follow Christ will be totally committed to him—in heart and action. This requires protecting the purity and integrity of the church. In these verses, Paul charges Timothy (and us!) to be vigilant and confident in the face of false teaching.

The Source of False Teachers [read 2 Timothy 3:1-5]

- Paul knew he was in the last days (see Acts 2:17) when false teachers would arise in the church (Matt. 24:5). The apostle draws our attention to the presence of selfish, corrupt people populating the church in the last days. False teachers will come from this pool (see 2 Tim 3:6). Carefully read verses 2-4. *Why do you*

think this list begins with the sin of self-love? Where do we see examples of self-love in the world today?

- *Though there is a lot of self-love in the world today, how do we know that Paul is referring to people in the church? (Hint: verse 5!) Paul is talking about those who profess faith in Jesus, but they don't really know him. They are just playing a part, like a character in a play. They have the appearance of godliness, but they deny its power. What do you think the power of godliness is? In other words, what makes someone godly?*
- *Paul expected that in the last days there would be churches who have members who profess faith in Christ, but they aren't really Christians? Do you see this as a problem today—why or why not? Think for a moment about how we should respond to this reality:*
 - *First, we should labor for a pure church. Look at how verse 5 ends, "Avoid such people." Paul is probably referring to church discipline here (see Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5; 2 Thess 3:13-15). If someone professes Christ but stubbornly refuses to follow him (after being consistently and lovingly challenged) that person should not be allowed to be a member of the church. What are some practical implications of this for our own church life?*
 - *Second, we should examine ourselves. Scripture tells us to make sure we have genuine, saving faith (see 2 Cor 13:5 & 2 Pet 1:10). Do we spend too much or too little time on self-examination? What are some good ways to incorporate self-examination into your life?*
 - *Third, we should throw ourselves upon the mercy of God. Self-examination, when done properly, should lead to praise. At the cross we find a Savior who took the punishment for the sins we committed. He is a kind, loving, and merciful God. He does not want us to live under the burden of our sin but in the freedom of his glorious grace. Does self-examination tend to lead you to self-doubt? Why? Do you never experience doubt? Why?*

The Strategy of False Teachers [read 2 Tim 3:6-7]

- *False teachers arose from the congregation, and deceived some of the women in the church (probably young widows, see 1 Tim 5:11-12). Paul does not say here or elsewhere that women are more easily deceived (though he does say Eve was deceived first, see 1 Tim 2:14). Paul is pointing out that the false teachers preyed on the spiritually immature in the church in Ephesus. In this case, it was a small group of women. What did their immaturity look like?*
 - *Verse 6, "they were burdened with sins." What does it look like for someone to be burdened with sins?*

- They were “led astray by various passions.” *What does this look like today?*
- Verse 7, they were always learning but never arriving “at a knowledge of the truth.” *How do we still see this happening in the church?*
- It is important to nurture your faith so that you aren’t easy prey for false teachers. *What are some ways that you can dig deeper each week? How can we avoid the danger of always learning but never truly growing?*

The Surprise for the False Teacher [read 2 Tim 3:8-9]

- Every false teacher might be surprised to find out that he won’t get very far. In the end, the truth of the gospel will be plain to all. This may take a lifetime but, remember, with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day (see 2 Pet 3:8).
- Jannes and Jambres were magicians in the days of Moses who copied his miracles (see Exo 7:11). But in the end, these magicians watched as Moses led Israel out of slavery (Exo 12:33-36). Paul compares Jannes and Jambres to the false teachers in the church: in the end, God wins!
- *Do you think much about false teaching in the church? Why or why not? How have you seen false teaching infiltrate the church? Do false teachers know they are false teachers? Why do you think Paul tells Timothy these false teachers will not have the last word? How can you be sure that, in the end, God wins?*

Conclusion

- To be an American is to make an Oath of Allegiance to this country. To be a Christian is to make an Oath of Allegiance to God. Just as a citizen is to agree to protect American from all enemies, “foreign and domestic,” the Christian is to protect the church from all false teachers, from within and without the church.
- We should be vigilant—always watching for the presence of false teachers and always protecting our own hearts from false teaching. We should also be confident—at the end of the day, God will protect his church.
- *What can you do, practically, to be more vigilant and more confident?*