

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES
"God's Crib Notes On Facing Troublesome Parties in the Church"
(2 Timothy 2:1-4:5)

Introduction: (To show the need)

(1) Church should be a place where godly, totally committed people go and where a troubled, needy person can find compassionate, caring, honest assistance with the deepest concerns of the heart.

(2) Unfortunately, many outside the Church challenge that the "Church is full of hypocrites!" What is sad to say is that often real hypocrites sit in church pews or minister from the pulpit!

(a) Greg Vossler, the former Headmaster of our former Nepaug Christian Academy moved to the Tabernacle Baptist Church of Poughkeepsie, New York where he faced an almost unbelievable tragedy in the church. He had to deal with a case where a member murdered his wife, covering up his methods so as to acquire the life insurance benefits from her policy! Greg joined the leaders in administering discipline on this party!

(b) I know of a case where a woman lied about having an affair with a church leader. The church believed the woman and not the leader, and he was removed from office. Then it was discovered that the woman was a mental case in her lying about an affair with another man, a case where the second man had proof that her charges were false. The church asked the removed leader to return, but he refused as his reputation was suspect due to these false charges!

(3) Sometimes problem people are very difficult to identify at first. (a) Years ago at Nepaug, a guest speaker spoke at a church function we had when he learned that I had been the child of missionary parents. He asked to speak with me alone. When I agreed, he told me that missionary children make lamentable pastors, but that they do well on the mission field. He urged me to consider leaving the pastorate at Nepaug to go elsewhere as he felt I was out of the will of God here. That left me deeply troubled and concerned, as I had considered this person one to esteem, but it countered what I had come to believe was God's will...Who was right, this man, or my convictions to date, and why?! I since have learned that he was quite wrong and badly out of order, but how was I to know at the time...?

(b) A second party later told me that missionary children make good business people but not good pastors! That bothered me also!! I began to wonder if I had missed my calling or something...!

Need: "I have begun to realize that troublesome people exist even in Christian church groups! Beyond adapting to the shock of this fact, how do I function and serve the Lord regardless of this problem?!"

- I. **Paul wrote 2 Timothy to instruct Timothy on facing troublesome people in his ministry, 2 Timothy 1:7-8; 3:1a.**
- II. **Accordingly, we use an overview of 2 Timothy for "crib notes" on identifying and handling troublesome church people (as follows):**
 - A. Prepare ourselves before conflicts arise with the troublesome:
 1. One must first identify these parties to **prepare** for trouble: in 2 Tim. 3:1-5a,6-7, Paul lists their qualities for our identification: They will be (a) self-centered, (b) materialistic, (c) boasters, (d) arrogant, (e) verbally abusive, (f) insubordinate, (g) thankless, (h) not separate from evil, (i) heartless, (j) not reconcilable, (k) slanderous, (l) without self-control, (m) untamed, (n) not loving the good, (o) traitors, (p) reckless, (q) conceited, (r) loving pleasure more than God, (s) having an outward piety but denying its inner dynamics, (t) political manipulators and (u) constantly learning but never acknowledging God's real truth.
 2. As does a soldier, **expect trouble** from these people, 3.
 3. To avoid destructive service **distractions** during conflicts with such men, keep your aim in God's work the multiplication of truth via faithful men, and focus on that task 2:2-4.
 4. Use the truths below to be strong in facing the troublesome, 2:1:
 - a. Take encouragement from evidences of your conversion that you possess Christ's power to succeed during conflict, 1:5f.
 - b. Minister your spiritual gift to counter their efforts, 1:6f.
 - c. Rely on God's Spirit to enable you to face them, 1:8, 12, 14.
 - d. Stand firmly during conflict with them by trusting the promise of final victory in God's eternal plan, 1:9a,b; 2:1.
 5. Be correct in your methods to enjoy God's blessing, v. 5. This expressly applies to using **solid study and lesson delivery** methods as a pastor or teacher, cf. 2 Tim. 2:14-16.
 6. Assume a self-sacrificing attitude for **courage** to stand, 8-10.
 7. Rely on God's promises for impetus during such trials:
 - a. God promises vitality to upright Christian workers facing wrong opposition IF they are self-sacrificing, 2 Tim. 2:11b.

- b. God promises influence with others for upright Christian workers in conflict **if** they endure godless opposition, 2:12a.
 - c. God promises salvation security to upright believers in conflict regardless if they fail in **ministry**; thus, it is worth trying to take your stand in conflict with such men, 2:13.
 - d. God warns that He'll remove blessing from the upright if he abandons his godly stand, 2:12b. Thus, the anxious, upright "soldier" is **more primed by God** to stand than to run!
- B. Relate wisely with others **while experiencing** such conflict:
1. For self preservation (middle voice of *apotrepo* in v. 5b), the Christian must withdraw close ties with troublesome people! (UBS Gr. N. T., p. 735; *The An. Gr. Lex.* (Zondervan), p. 48)
 2. Then the believer must fill his resulting relationship vacuum by associating closely with upright people, 2:22b. (*meta*)
 3. The upright who is affronted by the troublesome must not argue but gently instruct him, trusting God to help, **for he faces spiritual warfare**, 2:23-26; 4:5.
 4. The believer must use credible input from godly believers, what God allowed him to believe is true before conflicts with others arise and Scripture to counter manipulations from those who oppose his upright stand, 3:13-17; 4:1-4.
 5. We must seek God when troublemakers have hurt a group, and when **leaders** have made a right stand, 2:17-19; 3:10-12.
 - a. Since some had lost faith due to errant teachers, Paul quoted Numbers 16:5 from the Septuagint: "The Lord knows those who are His," 2 T. 2:19b (Ibid., UBS Gr. N.T., p. 734).
 - b. That context reveals Moses' resting on God's intervention to offset Korah's opposition to his leadership, cf. Num. 16:1-5.
 - c. By writing "Let every one... depart from iniquity" in 2 Tim. 2:19c, Paul referred to Num. 16:26 where Moses called for the congregation to separate from Korah to escape God's judgment.
 - d. Thus, Paul taught that God would reverse the ruin incited by troublesome people when upright Christian workers, like Moses and Aaron, take the proper stand, Num. 16:28-35.

Application: *To face troublesome parties in church groups, one must (1) believe on Christ to be related to God to deal with them (2 Tim. 1:5-6; Jn. 1:12). (2) Then, if he has sinned since salvation, he adjusts himself with God for divine help: (a) he confesses his sins for resulting empowering (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) relies on the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23). (c) Thus prepared, he obeys 2 Tim. 1-4 for solutions in handling troublesome people.*

Conclusion: (To provide an illustration of solution...)

In the beginning of this message, I related a personal challenge of parties that privately, sincerely urged me to consider leaving the pastorate at Nepaug as, in their estimations, children of foreign missionary parents make unfavorable pastors but good missionaries or business people. In applying the information in this message, I have been able to see clearly through the maze of this challenge as follows:

Business! Wheaton felt I needed more language than my single year of Spanish, so I attended Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon, taking New Testament Greek to fill this language requirement. The plan was to transfer to Wheaton in a year to pursue my career in **business**!

Pastorate gave me that opening! While at Dallas Seminary, I read an article by a French man who said that the U.S. set the pace for the world on thought patterns, though he didn't like it. While pastoring in Nebraska out of seminary, I heard a nationally known actor on TV say that one had to go to the East or West coasts to make an impact on a large group of people. I also knew that the New England area sets the academic pace for American and much of the world, so I considered New England the most effective area in the world to minister!

World-known missiologist, told me that New England is a mission field, and that he felt **God had sent me to Nepaug to use my missionary background to build a work here!** Also, Ian Hay, former General Director with SIM, sent me an encouraging letter, affirming that solid churches needed to be set up in this area for years!

God directed me **away from** business and **into** this pastorate with missionary needs **before** my being inaccurately challenged by two parties. According to 2 Tim. 3:14b, I was to **stick** with what God had let me be **convinced** was His leading **to date**, and **continue** to serve the Lord at Nepaug, **and relax about it!!**