

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2026**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE CRUCIAL POINTS OF THE TRUTH IN PAUL'S EPISTLES—
FIRST AND SECOND TIMOTHY AND TITUS**

Message Nine

The Basic Factor of the Decline—Turning Away from Paul's Completing Ministry

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:3-5; 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; 2 Cor. 11:2-3; Rev. 2:4; 3:8

- I. “Do not take for granted that because you are now in the Lord’s recovery, you are secure in the recovery and that it is not possible for you ever to be divisive. Whether or not we are secure in the recovery and protected from divisiveness depends on the vision we have seen”—*Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, p. 54:**
 - A. We need to beware of being “blinded with pride”—1 Tim. 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:4.
 - B. “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself”—Gal. 6:3.
 - C. “Pride goes before destruction, / And a haughty spirit before a fall”—Prov. 16:18.
- II. The Lord’s recovery today is the recovery of the central vision of Paul’s completing ministry; Paul completed the word of God concerning the heavenly vision of three major items—God in us as our contents, Christ as the mystery of God, and the church as the mystery of Christ—Col. 1:25; 2 Cor. 4:7; Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4, 9; 5:32; Acts 26:19:**
 - A. In our present experience, we need to complete the word of God in the sense of experiencing Christ subjectively to enjoy Him in our daily living so that the proper church life may come forth to be the corporate manifestation of God in the flesh, the great mystery of godliness—Phil. 1:19-21a; Eph. 3:16-21; 1 Tim. 3:15-16a.
 - B. In our present experience, we need to complete the word of God in the sense of fully preaching the word, declaring all the counsel of God, all of God’s economy, so that we may present every man full-grown in Christ—Acts 20:26-27; Col. 1:28-29.
- III. The basic factor of the decline and apostasy of the church is the turning away from Paul’s completing ministry—2 Tim. 1:15; cf. 2:17-18; 4:4, 10, 14-16:**
 - A. Second Timothy 1:15 says, “All who are in Asia turned away from me”; for all those in Asia to turn away from Paul meant that they turned away not from his person but from his ministry centered on the economy of God—vv. 15-18; 4:4; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Eph. 3:2, 8-11, 16-21; Col. 1:25; 1 Cor. 9:17.
 - B. Among the seven churches in Asia was the church in Ephesus, which was fully established by Paul’s ministry—Acts 19:1-20; 20:17-38; Eph. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:3-4.
 - C. About thirty years after Paul said that all who were in Asia had turned away from him, the Lord used John to speak to the churches in Asia in the stage of His intensification—Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6:
 1. On the one hand, each of the seven epistles in Revelation 2—3 is the Lord’s word to a particular church, but on the other hand, it is the Spirit’s word to all the churches; every church needs to give heed not only to the epistle written to her particularly but also to all the epistles written to the other churches—2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

2. Because they turned away from Paul's ministry, the churches in Asia declined into degradation; the first letter being written to the church in Ephesus in Revelation proves that they took the lead to forsake Paul's ministry and teaching—2:1-7.
3. This degradation began with their losing their first love toward the Lord and ended with lukewarmness, Christlessness; the Lord as the Head of the church is standing outside the degraded church, knocking at her door—v. 4; 3:15-16, 20.
- D. The church in Ephesus left their first love because they left Paul's betrothing ministry and thus became separated from the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as their life and everything—Eph. 1:4; 3:16-19; 4:2, 15-16; 5:2; 6:24; Rev. 2:4; 2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- E. The striking point of the churches' degradation was three kinds of teachings—the teaching of Balaam (Rev. 2:14), the teaching of the Nicolaitans (v. 15), and the teaching of Jezebel (v. 20); these different teachings crept in because the churches turned away from Paul's teaching, the unique teaching of God's eternal economy.
- F. It is dangerous to turn away from the apostle's teaching with the proper revelation of God's eternal economy; this is why Paul warned us not to teach differently—1 Tim. 1:3-5; 6:3.
- G. One church in Asia was unique and highly appraised by the Lord—the church in Philadelphia; the Lord expressed His appreciation for those in Philadelphia by saying, "You have...kept My word"—Rev. 3:8.
- H. This intrinsically means that they kept the Lord's word that He spoke through the apostle Paul in his completing ministry concerning the healthy teaching of God's economy, the teaching according to godliness—1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 4:3.
- I. The ministry of the healthy, living words of the Lord always brings forth godliness—a life that lives Christ and expresses God in Christ—1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Matt. 4:4; John 6:57, 63; Rev. 2:7.

IV. Whether or not a particular ministry is part of the New Testament ministry can be proved by applying three governing principles: the principle of the processed Triune God being dispensed into His chosen people; the principle of Christ and the church; and the principle of Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church:

- A. If your teaching can pass this threefold test, your teaching is a part of the New Testament ministry, the ministry of the age—1 Cor. 1:10; cf. 14:8.
- B. The leadership in the New Testament ministry is the leadership of the controlling, God-given revelation of God's economy—Acts 26:19; Prov. 29:18.
- C. We should never follow any person outwardly in a blind way (cf. 3 John 9; 2 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 5:3); we should simply follow the Lord according to the heavenly and consummate vision of the age (Acts 26:19).
- D. The saints who have been raised up by this ministry have a taste for this ministry; this taste is the controlling factor in the Lord's recovery—1 Pet. 2:3.
- E. Those who have been raised with this taste will reject a taste that is contrary to it; this means that if you speak something contrary to the taste of the Lord's recovery, your speaking will be rejected, and you will suffer loss.

V. There are two secrets of discerning the genuine New Testament ministry:

- A. The genuine ministry stirs up our love for the Lord Jesus as our Bridegroom so that we may enjoy Him to the uttermost as our Husband—2 Cor. 11:2-3.
- B. The genuine ministry strengthens us to follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings for the building up of the church, His Body—vv. 23-33; Col. 1:25; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12, 16-18.

VI. In order to be preserved in the Lord's recovery, we must "guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us"—1:14:

- A. According to verse 13, the deposit must refer to the deposit of the healthy words of God's economy, including the riches of life in the Lord's words, which He has stored in us; we have to deposit the Lord's healthy words into our being, like we deposit money in a bank—1 Tim. 6:20; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:72:
 - 1. To hold a pattern of the healthy words means to live by the healthy words, being nourished with the words of the full gospel concerning God's New Testament economy and the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ—2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 4:6.
 - 2. If we are persons acting, behaving, and having our life in the Spirit through the exercise of our spirit, all that has been deposited in our being will be guarded through the Spirit who is indwelling us—2 Tim. 1:12, 14.
- B. In a darkened and confused situation, we must cleave to the enlightening and ordering word in the New Testament, the healthy teaching of God's economy, which concerns God's dispensing of Himself in His Divine Trinity into His chosen people so that they may be constituted into the Body of Christ for the manifestation of the Triune God—Titus 1:9; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4.