

**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

1 Tim. 1:3-5—Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things ⁴Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith. ⁵But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and *out of* a good conscience and *out of* unfeigned faith;

1 Tim. 6:3-4—If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness, ⁴He is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions,

2 Tim. 1:13-14—Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

2 Cor. 11:2-3—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

Rev. 2:4—But I have *one thing* against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev. 3:8—I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

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.

1 Tim. 6:3-4—If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness, ⁴He is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions,

2 Tim. 3:4—Traitors, reckless, blinded with pride, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

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:**

Col. 1:25—Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

2 Cor. 4:7—But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not out of us.

Col. 2:2—That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,

Eph. 3:4—By which, in reading *it*, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,

Eph. 3:9—And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,

Eph. 5:32—This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

Acts 26:19—Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

- 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.

Phil. 1:19-21—For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and *the* bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Eph. 3:16-21—That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, ¹⁷That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are ¹⁹And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. ²⁰But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, ²¹To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

1 Tim. 3:15-16—But if I delay, *I write* that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth. ¹⁶And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

- 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.

Acts 20:26-27—Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, ²⁷For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.

Col. 1:28-29—Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ; ²⁹For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.

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:

2 Tim. 1:15—This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-18—And their word will spread like gangrene, of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸Who concerning the truth have misaimed, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some.

cf. 2 Tim. 4:4—And they will turn away their ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.

cf. 2 Tim. 4:10—For Demas has abandoned me, having loved the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia.

cf. 2 Tim. 4:14-16—Alexander the coppersmith did many evil things to me; the Lord will recompense him according to his works. ¹⁵You also guard against him, for he greatly opposed our words. ¹⁶At my first defense no one was with me to support me, but all abandoned me. May it not be counted against them.

- 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.

2 Tim. 1:15-18—This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; ¹⁷But being in Rome, he sought me out diligently and found *me*. ¹⁸May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord in that day. And in how many things he served *me* in Ephesus, you know best.

2 Tim. 4:4—And they will turn away their ear from the truth and will be turned aside to myths.

1 Tim. 1:3-4—Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things ⁴Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Eph. 3:2—If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

Eph. 3:8-11—To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel ⁹And to enlighten all *that they may see* what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things, ¹⁰In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church, ¹¹According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Eph. 3:16-21—That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, ¹⁷That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are ¹⁹And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God. ²⁰But to Him who is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which operates in us, ²¹To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all the generations forever and ever. Amen.

Col. 1:25—Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

1 Cor. 9:17—If I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a stewardship.

- 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.

Acts 19:1-20—Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came down to Ephesus and found some disciples, ²And he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they *said* to him, On the contrary, we did not even hear whether there is a Holy Spirit. ³And he said, Into what then were you baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism. ⁴And Paul said, John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe into the One coming after him, that is, into Jesus. ⁵And when they heard *this*, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶And when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷And there were in all about twelve men. ⁸And he entered into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading *them* in the things concerning the kingdom of God. ⁹But when some were hardened and would not be persuaded, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. ¹⁰And this took place for two years, so that all those dwelling in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. ¹¹And God did works of power of no ordinary kind through the hands of Paul, ¹²So that even handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and their diseases left them, and the evil spirits went out. ¹³But some of the Jewish exorcists who also went about took it upon themselves to name over those who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches. ¹⁴And there were seven sons of a certain Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, doing this. ¹⁵And the evil spirit answered and said to them, Jesus I know, and with Paul I am acquainted; but who are you? ¹⁶And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped upon them, subdued both *of them*, and overpowered them, so that they escaped out of that house naked and wounded. ¹⁷And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all, and the name

of the Lord Jesus was magnified. ¹⁸And many of those who had believed came, confessing and making known their practices. ¹⁹And a considerable number of those who practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* before all; and they counted up the price of them and found *it to be* fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰Thus, the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Acts 20:17-38—And from Miletus he sent *word* to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you all the time, ¹⁹Serving the Lord as a slave with all humility and tears and trials which came upon me by the plots of the Jews; ²⁰How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring *them* to you and by *not* teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹Solemnly testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance unto God and faith in our Lord Jesus. ²²And now, behold, I am going bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing what will meet me there, ²³Except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in city after city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I consider my life of no account *as if* precious to myself, in order that I may finish my course and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus to solemnly testify of the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that you all, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, ²⁷For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God. ²⁸Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore watch, remembering that for three years, night and day, I did not cease admonishing each one with tears. ³²And now I commit you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who have been sanctified. ³³I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my needs and to those who are with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you by example that toiling in this way we ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. ³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed. ³⁷And there was considerable weeping by all; and falling on Paul's neck, they kissed him affectionately, ³⁸Especially pained over the word which he had spoken, that they would no longer behold his face. And they escorted him to the ship.

Eph. 1:1—Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

1 Tim. 1:3-4—Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things ⁴Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

- 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:

Rev. 1:4—John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Rev. 3:1—And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write: These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead.

Rev. 4:5—And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

Rev. 5:6—And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having *just* been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

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.

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev. 2:11—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev. 2:17—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives *it*.

Rev. 2:29—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:6—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:13—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:22—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

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.

Rev. 2:1-7—To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ²I know your works and your labor and your endurance and that you cannot bear evil men; and you have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false; ³And you have endurance and have borne *all things* because of My name and have not grown weary. ⁴But I have *one thing* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will

remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. ⁶But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

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.

Rev. 2:4—But I have *one thing* against you, that you have left your first love.

Rev. 3:15-16—I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

Rev. 3:20—Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

- 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.

Eph. 1:4—Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish before Him in love,

Eph. 3:16-19—That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, ¹⁷That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸May be full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are ¹⁹And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ, that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Eph. 4:2—With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love,

Eph. 4:15-16—But holding to truth in love, we may grow up into Him in all things, who is the Head, Christ, ¹⁶Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and *through* the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Eph. 5:2—And walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

Eph. 6:24—Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.

Rev. 2:4—But I have *one thing* against you, that you have left your first love.

2 Cor. 11:2-3—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

- 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. **Rev. 2:14**—But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication.

Rev. 2:15—In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Rev. 2:20—But I have *something* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, she who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and leads My slaves astray to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices.

- 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.

1 Tim. 1:3-5—Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things ⁴Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith. ⁵But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and *out of* a good conscience and *out of* unfeigned faith;

1 Tim. 6:3—If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

- 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.

Rev. 3:8—I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.

- 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.

1 Tim. 1:10—For fornicators, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars, perjurers, and whatever other thing that is opposed to the healthy teaching,

1 Tim. 6:3—If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

2 Tim. 4:3—For the time will come when they will not tolerate the healthy teaching; but according to their own lusts they will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears,

- 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.

1 Tim. 6:3—If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness,

2 Tim. 1:13—Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Matt. 4:4—But He answered and said, It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.”

John 6:57—As the living Father has sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me.

John 6:63—It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Rev. 2:7—He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

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.

1 Cor. 1:10—Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

cf. 1 Cor. 14:8—For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

- 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.

Acts 26:19—Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

Prov. 29:18—Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

- 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).

cf. 3 John 9—I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not receive us.

cf. 2 Cor. 4:5—For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake.

cf. 1 Pet. 5:3—Nor as lording it over your allotments but by becoming patterns of the flock.

Acts 26:19—Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

- 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.

1 Pet. 2:3—If you have tasted that the Lord is good.

- 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.

2 Cor. 11:2-3—For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present *you as* a pure virgin to Christ. ³But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ.

- 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.

2 Cor. 11:23-33—Ministers of Christ are they? I speak as being beside myself, I more so! In labors more abundantly, in imprisonments more abundantly, in stripes excessively, in deaths often. ²⁴Under *the hands of* the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* less one; ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep; ²⁶In journeys often, in dangers of rivers, in dangers of robbers, in dangers from *my* race, in dangers from the Gentiles, in dangers in the city, in dangers in the wilderness, in dangers in the sea, in dangers among false brothers; ²⁷In labor and hardship; in watchings often; in hunger and thirst; in fastings often; in cold and nakedness—²⁸Apart from the things which *have not been mentioned, there is this*: the crowd of *cares* pressing upon me daily, the anxious concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I myself do not burn? ³⁰If I must boast, I will boast of the things of my weakness. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king guarded the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me; ³³And in a basket I was lowered through a window, through the wall, and escaped his hands.

Col. 1:25—Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

cf. 2 Tim. 2:12—If we endure, we will also reign with *Him*; if we deny *Him*, He also will deny us;

cf. 2 Tim. 2:16-18—But avoid profane, vain babblings, for they will advance to more ungodliness, ¹⁷And their word will spread like gangrene, of whom are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸Who concerning the truth have misaimed, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and overthrow the faith of some.

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; Psalms 119:72:

1 Tim. 6:20—O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane, vain babblings and oppositions from what is falsely called knowledge,

Col. 3:16—Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Psa. 119:72—The law of Your mouth is better to me Than thousands of *pieces of* gold and silver.

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 Tim. 1:13—Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

1 Tim. 4:6—If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

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.

2 Tim. 1:12—For which cause also I suffer these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit unto that day.

2 Tim. 1:14—Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

- 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.

Titus 1:9—Holding to the faithful word, which is according to the teaching *of the apostles*, that he may be able both to exhort by the healthy teaching and to convict those who oppose.

Acts 2:42—And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

1 Tim. 1:3-4—Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things ⁴Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.