

Nine Characteristics of the Man of God

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Date: 17 November 2014

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[0:00] So let's get started with this evening.

! I am amazed at how my Sunday morning lessons are dovetailing with my Monday night lessons. ! Perhaps I should be because they have the same inspired author, the Apostle Paul, the same divine author, the Holy Spirit of God, and for the most part the same human author, John MacArthur. They all seem to be teaching the same thing here. But in my Sunday morning, if you're going to steal, Anthony, steal from good guys. Do not steal from. In my Sunday morning lesson, we have been talking about the apostasy that will be prevalent in the last days. And in our lesson last week, the topic of apostasy came up, and tonight we're going to devote time to apostasy and how to deal with it. And let me again define apostasy because it can be confused with other types of unbelief. It's a very specific type of unbelief. And actually it's more of a rejection. Apostasy apostasy or apostates are in a class by themselves. The reason is that they originate within the church. That's where apostates are born, inside the church. Being inside the church, apostates receive or have received some degree of light because they've been around true believers. They've been sitting under pastors that are preaching truth or teachers or whomever. And they've been exposed to truth from pastors and teachers. They may be pastors and teachers themselves. And there's a whole gaggle of those guys out here. Apostates have for a time displayed traits consistent with true faith.

They are so similar to true believers at the beginning of their walk that they're indistinguishable.

[2:45] Everyone assumes they're in. Well, what happens then to turn a church member or even a staff member or pastor into an apostate? What happens? They walk away from the faith. They walk away from the true faith.

And there can be a thousand reasons why a man would do that. And let me quickly add, none of them defensible before God. Can't defend that before God. But the apostate comes to the point where he does not believe in orthodox Christianity, the truth as it is taught in Scripture.

Now, he doesn't lose his salvation as a result of apostasy. He never had it to begin with. He went out from us, whether physically or spiritually, because he wasn't one of us. If he'd been one of us, he would have stayed with us. But by going out, he proved that he wasn't one of us. By the way, that's not me. That's John, 1 John 2, verse 19. Put simply, he was never saved to begin with. He was exposed to truth, but abandoned that truth prior to salvation. Now, and this is mine. This is originally, this isn't Paul. This isn't John MacArthur. I have to put that in every now and then. One of the dangers of an apostate is that often when they walk away from the faith, they don't walk away from the church.

Probably better if they did. Instead, they hang around because misery loves company. They hang around and they try and persuade people to come over to their side. Entire denominations exist that are under the control of apostates who sadly are under control of Satan. The consummate apostate. Man lived in heaven.

[5:11] Lucifer, angel, you know, the exalted angel. It would be much better if they would leave, but they do not. Now, in my view, apostasy is the explanation for the positions taken by the liberal church that run counter to sound Bible doctrine. One of the most difficult passages in the Bible is found in Hebrews chapter 6, verses 4 to 6.

People have disagreed for centuries on the meaning of those verses. And I'm really sad that Don is here, because I added this for him, this is not surprising. People can't even agree on the fact that Paul didn't write the book of Hebrews. That was for Don. He's not here. Listen to these words.

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of

the age to come and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance since they again crucified themselves to the Son of God and put him to open shame. Now, the debate for centuries is whether or not these were true believers who fell away from the faith and then lost their salvation.

And my Armenian friends and I have dozens and dozens and dozens of good people. They hang their hats on this passage as proof that a true believer can lose his or her salvation.

And when they say that to me, when they use this passage to prove that, I then have a lot of fun with it because I point out that if in fact this passage teaches that a true born-again, blood-bought name written in the Lamb's book of life believer can lose his salvation, it also teaches that salvation once lost can never be regained.

[7 : 30] I mean, that's a scary part even for my Armenian brothers because it says you cannot be renewed again to repentance.

And so I point that out and they want to look for other passages. But the reason this passage is not speaking of conditional salvation is the fact conditional salvation doesn't exist.

I mean, John 3, 16, for God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed in him would not perish, but have life until he screws up. You know? You know? I mean, come on, fellas.

And, you know, I like to tell my brothers in the Armenian world, do we agree on this? If you can truly lose your salvation, is it a major sin?

I mean, you're not talking about spitting on the sidewalk, are you? Oh, no, no, no, no, no. It's huge. It's got to be huge. Well, what about violating the greatest commandment 24 hours a day for your whole life?

[8 : 39] Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. All. No one has ever lived up to that. No one. We live in continual violation of that command.

You know what that means? We live in continual need for a Savior who lived up to that command. Amen. That's the message there. Listen to why this is not talking about conditional salvation.

The writer says, almost said Paul. The writer says, once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God.

Those really sound good. I mean, those are good words. But never anywhere in the New Testament, or old for that matter, are those salvation terms.

You never hear those in the Gospels. You never talk about salvation. You never hear them in Paul's 13 books, John. Nowhere else in the Bible is salvation spoken of using those phrases.

[9 : 55] I would submit that any unbeliever visiting Highland Park will experience those things. If a guy's an unbeliever and he's sitting in our congregation, we teach the word of God.

You come here on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, you're going to be enlightened. You will taste the heavenly gift. You will even be partakers of the Holy Spirit while you're here because you're going to be sitting next to a spirit-filled brother or sister in Christ.

And you will most definitely be exposed to the good word of God. But if there's any doubt when you read that Hebrews passage, all you've got to do is look over a couple verses to verse 9.

Now, let me explain this. And I'll be brief because this isn't our lesson. I'm not going to our lesson yet. In Hebrews, Hebrews picture the pendulum of a grandfather clock.

And it swings. And when it's over here, the writer is talking about people in the church that have made no commitment to Christ.

[11 : 03] They're onlookers or they're people that are getting their ticket punched because the corporation they work for expects you to go to church on Sunday. Or there's any number of reasons why they're there. And the writer talks about them a lot.

And then the pendulum swings over here to true believers in this Hebrew church. People that have made a commitment to Christ. So that they're probably babes in Christ. When you're reading Hebrews, you've got to know where the pendulum is to understand it.

I would submit the verses I just read are not about a true believer. And then you go over to verse 9. Just a couple verses more. And it says, But beloved, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you.

Things that accompany salvation. Well, what happened? The pendulum swung. And now the writer's gone back to believers. We can identify you because when you're saved, things happen.

What happens? Good works. You've been saved by grace through faith for good works. For good works. And so the writer says there's things that accompany true salvation.

[12 : 22] Doesn't accompany apostates, though. The author has been writing about unbelievers in the Hebrew church. And now he returns to these comments about the true believer.

Now, where am I ahead with all this? There are unbelievers probably in every church. Jesus referred to the wheat and tares. You remember that. The head of the list of unbelievers in the church are apostates.

Apostates. It is our duty to stand against apostasy. It was Timothy's duty because he had them. And some of them were teachers in the church, false teachers.

And it was Timothy's duty to stand against apostasy. And he had a great instructor on how to do that in the Apostle Paul.

Listen, 2 Timothy 3, verse 10 to 14. And Paul's writing to Timothy. Now you followed my teaching.

[13 : 25] Conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings. Such as happened to me at Antioch and Iconium and Lystra. What persecutions I endured.

And out of them all the Lord rescued me. Then this classic statement. Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

How many does that say are going to be persecuted? All. And if you haven't been persecuted yet, be more godly. It will come. But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse.

Deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them. If we wanted to characterize the life of Paul, we could do it this way.

And by the way, we've been called to these same standards. He wanted to know Christ. And I mean know Him intimately. Know Him for real. He was a defender of Christ's truth, which we call the Scriptures.

[14 : 46] And he desired to minister in the name of Christ. We've been called for the same. To know Christ, to defend Christ's word, and minister in Christ's name.

And you may be thinking, wait a minute, I'm not a minister. Told you when we started this lesson, if you're saved, you are a minister at some level. You're ministering to somebody.

And you may say, I'm not ministering to anybody right now. Well, people are watching you. And they know you claim a relationship with Christ. And they may be watching to learn, or they may be watching so you mess up.

But they're watching. In our day, many in the church and many churches have walked away from the true faith.

Churches and entire denominations have abandoned doctrine. Many label doctrine as boring, unintelligible, or divisive.

[15 : 46] That's the three labels. I've told you before, doctrine is the glue that holds us all together. It's the binding agent. We are what we believe, and doctrine is what we believe, whether accurate or inaccurate.

Because we can have people believing incorrect doctrine. This abandoning of the faith is not something new. Jude had to deal with it in the very early church.

Verses 3 and 4. He wanted to write about salvation.

And the Holy Spirit said, nope, Jude, that's not your message. Your message is they better start contending before faith disappears. What did they have to contend with?

False teachers had crept in unnoticed to spread satanic lies within the flock. They woke up one morning, and they were in the flock.

[17 : 16] Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, is focusing on his service to the Lord as a defender of the faith. Like Jude, Timothy was facing attack by false teachers.

Paul was going to point out that Timothy needed two things to be a defender that God had called him to be. And if you've ever heard of an apologist, that's a defender of the faith.

Ravi Zachariah is probably the greatest living. We're trying to get him to OWU. And it's two years out. They don't even consider it for two years. He's probably the greatest apologist alive today.

He's not someone that apologizes for the faith. Timothy, defend the faith. Timothy needed to do two things. Same thing we need. He needed a strong mentor to lead him through the minefields of false teaching.

And he needed a strong spiritual foundation to lead the church. Two things. Mentor and a firm foundation.

[18:27] That's what all of us need. Well, what about this strong spiritual mentor? Verse 10. But you followed my teaching. That's Paul talking.

The great apostle Paul. You followed my teaching. You saw my conduct. You knew my purpose, my faith, patience, love, perseverance. You were there when we were being persecuted and suffering. Such as happened to me at Antioch and Iconium and Lystra. What persecutions I endured and out of them all that the Lord Jesus rescued me. All who desire to live godly in Christ will be persecuted. But evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. And let me tell you, we live in a time when it's gone from bad to worse. I'm telling you, we live in a time when it's gone from bad to worse.

A lot of you don't know the name Steve Lawson. Some of you do. Jonathan does. I do. Maybe some others. But great, great guy. Probably the heir apparent to John MacArthur if the Lord takes John home before the rapture.

[19:30] And he was doing a critique at Master's Seminary on Joel Osteen. When Larry King asked him, he said, are you saying that to go to heaven you have to believe in Christ?

Of course, this is Steve Lawson who's really firm and he's mimicking Joel Osteen. And Joel says, well, I don't know if I could articulate it that strongly.

Oh, he was a hoot. He's only about five minutes long, eight minutes long YouTube, Steve Lawson discussing Joel Osteen. You'll get there.

Paul is making a contrast here. Others have followed false teachers. Timothy has wisely followed the character and ministry of Paul.

The apostle is instructing Timothy to continue in the things he has learned. Timothy had the best possible instruction by spending years with Paul.

[20:34] And now Paul's in prison and this isn't the time for him to fail. And you may be saying, yeah, but Timothy had Paul. That was 2,000 years ago. We don't have Paul. Hey, we got 13 books.

Maybe 14. But I know for sure 13 books he wrote the blueprint for our lives as Christians. Now, the greatest mentor that ever walked on the earth was the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he taught the disciples. I think following him, the greatest was Paul. As he instructed Timothy, it was Paul's intent for Timothy to pattern his life and ministry after the apostles.

This was supposed to continue even after Paul's death. And just as he had previously told the Corinthians, Timothy was to be an imitator of Paul.

Likewise, Paul had great confidence in his ability, Timothy's ability to minister to the church at Ephesus in spite of the spiritual dangers and battles he faced there.

[21:47] What we need in our day, and here we are in the 21st century, are courageous men who are sound in the faith and living a moral lifestyle so they can be on the front lines of defending the faith.

That's what we need. These are men who should follow the Lord into battle in these dangerous times. I like the motto of Master Seminary which says, We train men as if lives depended on it. Pretty to the point. So by inspiration, Paul next gives nine leadership qualities that will mark out the man of God.

Mark them out in the first century, mark them out in the 21st century, and everything in between. The Holy Spirit has not withdrawn these qualities for our day.

They're still operating. And they can be divided into three groups here. Ministerial duties, personal values, and life's difficulties.

[22:51] Under ministerial duties, Paul's going to talk to us about teaching, conduct, and purpose. Under personal values, he's going to talk to us about the first of these. Under personal values, he's going to talk about faith, patience, love, and perseverance.

And under life's difficulties, he's going to talk about persecutions and sufferings. And the very first of these we're going to look at are the ministerial duties of teaching, conduct, and purpose.

Teaching refers to instruction in doctrine. Timothy had received the very best in apostolic instruction from Paul, his mentor.

Timothy was to take in this information. Then he was to entrust it to faithful men who would be able to teach others.

And once those guys were taught, they were going to teach others. And this was to be replicated down through time to our present day.

[23:54] I always told Dr. McBride to be interested to know his connections all the way back to Paul. How he was connected. Don, you used the same thing.

How you connected. I once saw the salvation, what do we say, the salvation highway of Billy Graham. It was amazing the people that were in that line as they tried to trace that back.

Billy Sunday was in there. Dwight L. Moody was in there. I mean, you keep going back and Whitfield and those guys. I mean, you know, that's what we're replicating ourselves.

We're replicating ourselves. The teaching that Timothy received had a divine origin. Paul spoke with the authority of the Holy Spirit who was the one speaking through him.

Now, that's going to come to an end once the New Testament was completed. Once the New Testament was completed, men no longer need apostles to teach them.

[24:57] Why? They go to the Word of God. Go to your bookshelf. I'm sad to report. I think I've got 32 Bibles at home. That's atrocious, but I think I do.

Don't have to seek out an apostle because they don't exist anymore on earth. You go right to the Word of God. There are some of our charismatic brothers in our day that either do not understand that principle or reject it.

They believe that God is still giving revelation apart from the completed Scriptures and more specifically that He is speaking through them. Let me tell you, if a guy comes to you with that claim, reject that as a false teaching.

If a man's message does not line up perfectly with the Word of God, it is not from the Lord. It cannot conflict with the Word of God.

Timothy had spent years with Paul and had been a firsthand observer of his conduct. He was to pattern his daily life after the model of Paul.

[26:07] And Timothy, like Paul, needed to live what he preached. I heard John MacArthur from the pulpit one time talking about his wife, Patricia, and he said, she's unreasonable. She thinks I should live up to everything I preach.

You know, and she expects me to live up to that. That's all true for all of us, right? Live up to what the Word of God says, but it's not easy. We know it's not easy.

The third area of his ministerial duties dealt with purpose. What drives a preacher? There should be only one thing, and Paul summed that up in these words in 1 Corinthians 9.16.

Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. The gospel is everything. The gospel is everything. Paul was driven by the gospel of Christ, and he knew to be successful in God's eyes, Timothy would have to be so driven.

Paul was so driven when he wrote Galatians. He said in that first chapter, if anyone comes to you with a teaching, with a gospel that is different from the one I'm giving, let him be anathema.

[27:20] And then he repeated it, as I said before, so saying again, if anyone teaches any other gospel, let him be anathema. Anathema is a word that means eternally damned.

Pretty serious to teach another gospel. Pretty serious. We should be driven by handling accurately the Word of God, and particularly as it deals with the gospel of Christ, because that creates in us a life of integrity and faithfulness.

Whatever your calling is, fulfill its purpose with a passion. Whatever God's called you to do, do it with a passion.

Next we shall look at the personal values of faith, patience, love, and perseverance. Paul obviously wanted Timothy to continue in the faith.

He says that repeatedly. In fact, Paul and the other writers of the New Testament said, he who continues to the end will be saved. And that's not teaching salvation by continuance.

[28:28] What it's teaching is that if you're truly saved, you will continue to the end. There are no dropouts. There are no dropouts, guys. If you're ready to drop out, go reexamine, go back to the beginning and take a fresh look.

The reference here is not to saving faith. It speaks of the faithfulness of the already saved. That's a good distinction.

The concept here is living a life of faithfulness in a very hostile world. And as hostile as Timothy's world was in the Roman Empire, it may not compare with the hostility that is increasing toward Christians in our world.

God, before we end here tonight, there's believers in Syria, in Iraq, and in other parts of this world that are going to lose their lives for the faith, for their faith in Christ.

Before we walk out that door, people are going to die for their faith. Paul also told Timothy to have the virtue of patience. This could be translated steadfastness or longsuffering.

[29:43] Christians are never to give up and never to give in when it comes to faith. We are to be patient, and we should be. God wins. Read the end of the book.

God wins. We should have a steadfastness, even longsuffering, patient, that's just the way we should be wired.

We should have this. Paul also stresses the value of love. Love is what identifies us as believers. We're to have love for God, love for each other, love for the lost, and love for our enemies. I can't think of anybody else that would fit in there.

Love was the first fruit mentioned by the Holy Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. Love, joy, peace, patience. Love is the first one.

[30:42] We are commanded many times in the word of God to walk in love. Love comes from God.

God says, God says, God says, those who do not love do not know God. John always saw things in black and white.

He didn't have any gray. God says, the mark of the Christian is love. And it is so utterly important. So utterly important. By this, by the demonstrable love that we have for one another, the world can look inside the church and make a judgment, God allows them to do that, whether or not we're genuine.

And the scriptures tell us that if the world looks in and sees us loving one another, the world will know that we belong to Christ.

[31:53] But there are times when the world looks in and what do they see? Baptists arguing over color of carpet. We had that here.

Remember the red carpet up in the office, Mike? Arguing over trivial things. Splitting. I don't know how many times we split. I don't know how many, two or three that I'm aware of.

Not recently. If the world sees us fussing and fighting, then the world says, I don't believe those guys belong to Christ. Christ said they were going to love each other.

And they're not loving each other. But it gets worse. Jesus said, when the world sees the church loving each other, loving the lost, loving even their enemies, they conclude Jesus is legitimate.

He really is the Messiah. He really did come from God. And some will say, I want some of that. Conversely, if the world doesn't see it, they can say, I don't think Christ is legitimate.

[33:04] He said His people would love each other. They don't. He must not be real. He must not have come from the Father. We don't want to take that burden to heaven over the color of carpet or something.

We argued over the color of this building. Believe it or not. The people that are upset have already lived. We are also to exercise the virtue of perseverance.

In context, Paul is telling Timothy that he is to persevere through the difficult circumstances he finds himself in. Now, the word used for perseverance can also be translated endurance.

He's to endure those things. Here's one of the greatest examples of endurance. 2 Corinthians, I have no idea what chapter, but it's verse 23 and 28.

I need to write down the chapter. I was in far more labors. This is Paul. I was in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death.

[34:16] Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned.

Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I've spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.

I have been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. When you remember this, the next time we feel sorry for ourselves because things aren't going our way.

That described Paul's life. Now, one time the heater broke one winter and I stayed in church, so I felt like I really suffered for Jesus, you know, on that Sunday morning.

[35 : 31] And then I read this. And I said, oh my goodness. Chapter 11. 11. Paul also mentions the difficult circumstances of persecution and suffering.

This made him a stronger and better preacher. Now, remember, he's already said, if you're going to live godly in Christ Jesus, you're going to be persecuted. His great hope was it would do the same thing for Timothy.

It would have a strengthening factor. And I've known guys that were imprisoned. I've met with families whose pastor, husband and father was executed even in the pulpit.

The word used here for persecution means put to flight. Often Paul and Timothy had to flee their persecutors or face death. Remember Paul going down in the basket?

Ironically, before his conversion, Paul was the greatest persecutor of the church. He was the leading participant in the martyrdom of Stephen.

[36 : 37] He who was the persecutor became the persecuted after his conversion. The Jewish leadership wanted him dead at all costs.

They were continually plotting against him. As Timothy traveled with Paul, he too suffered persecution. These persecutions occurred in Antioch, Iconium, and Lysa.

There's a pastor to name but a few. Both Timothy and Paul faced suffering of many types. This is the promise of Scripture.

Again, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. If we are faithful, we should expect persecution and suffering, particularly as the lights appear to be going out for in our nation from our heritage, from our roots.

Now, many of our brothers and sisters around the world know firsthand about persecution. I personally, having been with them on six of the seven continents, I do not believe that the church in America is prepared for persecution.

[37 : 47] I just don't think we're prepared for it. Now, the people in Asia and Africa, they think we're already being persecuted. And I ask them why, and they said, because you have to battle materialism.

How do you battle the God, little g, of materialism, where a guy can buy a boat and a lake house, and God blesses him with those things, and you never see him again?

How do you guys survive that? I've had persecuted brothers tell me that. Why is there persecution of Christians?

The Spirit of God, working through Paul, gives us the answer. It is because evil men and imposters, and who are they?

They're apostates, will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. And an imposter is anyone who perverts the truth of God.

[38 : 49] And then Paul gives some great advice to his protege. In fact, he says that strong convictions build strong, solid foundations.

Your foundation is going to be as strong or as weak as your spiritual convictions are relative to the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3, verse 14.

You, however, continue in the things you have learned, and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them. See, there was a link there.

Timothy's getting it from Paul. Paul's getting it from the Spirit of God. Timothy wasn't too far. And he had an inerrant source in Paul.

Many of those who have strong foundations experienced that foundation being built when they were still children.

[39 : 49] There were a lot of you saved as kids. I know that. I wasn't. I was 30 years old. And not a very nice person. Although I was an FBI agent.

Of course, they're all nice. Sorry, brother. I forgot. You worked around them. I just realized that. But a lot of you guys got saved when you were young.

That was true of Timothy. Now, we don't know at what age. But Paul wrote about the sincere faith within Timothy, which was a result of the work done for him by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice.

Good name, right, Jerry? His mother Eunice. Because of their work, God was now doing the work in their son and grandson. There are men in this room who could give the same testimony concerning

parents and grandparents.

Thank God for mothers and grandmothers that are strong in the faith. I taught over in Missouri a couple months ago at Rob's church.

[41:00] We were out in a Baptist camp. And I think I've told you this, but I read a letter written 146 years ago from a man writing a letter to his brother, his blood relationship, and said, I was visiting with our other brother.

He named him. And he said, they don't have time to discuss the things of Christ. They say they want to put it off to another day. And they continually put it off.

And I fear for their soul. And I so want them to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there was 30 of us in the room.

I turned to my youngest son, Rob, and I said, Rob, that letter was written 145 years ago by your great, great, great, great, great grandfather. And here we are, 146 years later, and we're still talking about it.

What an impact he had. What an impact. We opened the Bible 25 years after my grandmother died.

[42:07] And there was a note in there, and it said, I hope my sons and grandchildren will read this book. And she used a very interesting word, Pastor. She said, I hope some will be saved.

Paul used that language. But she said, I hope some will be saved as a result. And she said, I have put my faith in the blood atonement of Jesus Christ.

And we found that note 25 years after she had died. Quite a testimony. Paul says, when we remember the strength and encouragement we receive from family, our faith is increased.

And by the way, we're all family in here, right? So we can have our faith increased, strengthened through this family. Timothy heard truth from his mother and grandmother.

And then more importantly, he lived out that truth that had been given to him by his mother and his grandmother. He lived that out. He lived that out.