

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2016**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE FAILURES IN THE CHURCHES,
THE DEGRADATION OF THE CHURCH, THE OVERCOMERS IN THE CHURCH,
THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE STAGES OF THE CHURCH**

Message Two

The Degradation of the Church

(1)

**Teaching Things Different from the Economy of God versus
God's Economy concerning the Church and
the Inoculation against the Decline of the Church**

Scripture Reading: 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 4:6-8; 6:3, 20; 3:15; 2 Tim. 2:1-7, 15; 4:22

- I. A major aspect of the degradation of the church is teaching things different from the economy of God taught by the apostle, resulting in turning away from the apostle's teaching—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:15; Rev. 2:14-15, 20; 3:8:**
- A. According to the desire of His heart, God's eternal economy is to dispense Himself into man and make man the same as He is in life and nature but not in the Godhead and to make Himself one with man and man one with Him, thus to be enlarged and expanded in His expression, that all His divine attributes may be expressed in human virtues—John 1:12-14; 1 John 3:1a, 2; 2 Pet. 1:4.
 - B. Teachings that differ from the unique teaching of God's eternal economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-5, 20-21) and heresies (4:1-3) are the source of the church's decline, degradation, and deterioration (cf. 1:18).
- II. The subject of 1 Timothy is God's economy concerning the church; God's economy is His household administration, which is to dispense Himself in Christ into His chosen and redeemed people so that He may have a house to express Himself, which house is the church, the Body of Christ—vv. 3-6; 3:15:**
- A. God's eternal economy, which is God's plan, is His will and goal; God's dispensing, God's distributing, is the process and means whereby He accomplishes His economy; for this reason, God's dispensing is for God's economy—Eph. 3:2; 1 Tim. 4:6-8.
 - B. Christ is the center, circumference, element, sphere, means, goal, and aim of God's economy; in fact, all the contents of God's eternal economy are simply Christ; God's desire is to have a recovery purely and wholly of the person of Christ—Matt. 17:5; Luke 24:44.
 - C. Unless we know God's economy, we will not understand the Bible; the central subject of the Bible is the economy of God, and the entire Bible is concerned with the economy of God—v. 45; Job 10:13; cf. Eph. 3:9.
 - D. God's economy is to dispense Himself into our being so that our being may be constituted with His being; this can be accomplished only by God dispensing Himself into us as the divine life—vv. 16-17a; John 10:10; 14:6a; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
 - E. 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.

- F. 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, 10; 2 Tim. 4:3; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13:
1. *Healthy* implies the matter of life; the sound teaching of the apostles, the teaching of God's economy, ministers the supply of life to people, either nourishing them or healing them; in contrast, the different teachings of the dissenting ones (1 Tim. 1:3) sow the seeds of death and poison into others.
 2. Any teaching that distracts people from the center and goal of God's eternal economy is not healthy; different teachings other than God's economy separate us from the genuine appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the precious person of the Lord Jesus Christ as our life and our everything—2 Cor. 11:2-3.
 3. The different teachings of the dissenting ones, mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:3, caused envy and discord among the believers, which are contrary to love, the end (the objective and purpose) of the apostle's charge to remain in the teaching of God's economy—v. 5; John 13:34; Gal. 5:13-14.
 4. The basic factor of the decline and apostasy of the church is the turning away from Paul's ministry centered on the economy of God—2 Tim. 1:15-17; cf. 2:17-18; 4:4, 10, 14-16; Eph. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rev. 2:1-7, 14-15, 20; 3:8.
- G. In order to be preserved in the Lord's recovery, we must "guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who is indwelling us" (lit.)—2 Tim. 1:14:
1. 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. 119:11, 15, 72, 111, 162.
 2. To hold a pattern of healthy words means to live by the healthy words, being nourished with the words of the full gospel concerning God's eternal economy and the sweet words that contain and convey the riches of Christ—2 Tim. 1:13; 1 Tim. 4:6; 6:20.
 3. The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit (Rom. 8:16); hence, for us to guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit requires that we exercise our spirit (1 Tim. 4:7).
 4. 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.

III. Second Timothy is a book written for inoculators, those who would inoculate others against the decline of the church—2:1-7, 15:

- A. The inoculator is a teacher—vv. 1-2; Eph. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:22:
1. If someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord's healthy words, he should train the faithful ones that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others—1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12-14.
 2. We must shepherd the saints with the teaching of God's economy—Eph. 4:11; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16:
 - a. We should shepherd people by dispensing the divine life in the humanity of Jesus to cherish them and by teaching them the divine truths in the divinity of Christ to nourish them—Eph. 5:29.
 - b. Shepherding the flock of God by declaring to them all the counsel of God, the economy of God, protects the church from the destroyers of God's building, mingles

them with the Triune God as grace, and binds them together in His oneness—Acts 20:26-30; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 16:17; cf. Ezek. 33:1-11; 34:25; Zech. 11:7.

3. The inoculating teacher, as a good minister of Christ Jesus, is nourished with the words of life and exercises his spirit to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—1 Tim. 4:6-7; 1 John 4:17.
- B. The inoculator is a soldier—2 Tim. 2:3-4:
1. The apostle considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare—Num. 4:23, 30, 35; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 4:7.
 2. The Lord's ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go on to war; to war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God's economy according to the apostle's ministry—1 Cor. 14:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18.
 3. To fight a good fight for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must clear away all earthly entanglements and lay hold on the eternal life, not trusting in our human life—1 Tim. 4:7; 6:12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:4.
 4. We must fight the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by being full of life to reign in life—Num. 6:6-7, 9; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 5:17; 8:6, 11.
 5. Our will must be subdued and resurrected by Christ to be like the tower of David, the armory for spiritual warfare—S. S. 4:4; cf. 1 Chron. 11:22.
- C. The inoculator is an athlete—2 Tim. 2:5:
1. We must run the Christian race until we finish our course, fully accomplishing our ministry in the unique ministry of God's economy so that we may receive Christ as our prize—1 Cor. 9:24-25; Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7.
 2. We must subdue our body and make it a conquered captive to serve us as a slave for the fulfilling of our holy purpose, not by our own effort but by the Spirit—1 Cor. 9:26-27; Rom. 8:13; 6:12-14, 20-22.
 3. We must live the normal church life by pursuing Christ as righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart—2 Tim. 2:22.
- D. The inoculator is a farmer—v. 6:
1. The church is God's farm, God's cultivated land, and we are God's fellow workers, working together with Him by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6:
 - a. The word of God as a grain of wheat dispenses God as life into us to nourish us; it is also a fire and a hammer to purify us and break down our self, our natural life, our flesh, and our concepts—Jer. 23:28-29.
 - b. God has sent forth His word as rain and snow to water His people in order to sanctify them, transform them, and conform them to His image that the Body may be built up—Isa. 55:8-11; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26.
 2. In our contact with the saints, we should have just one motive—to minister Christ to them that they might grow in the Lord—1 Tim. 5:1-2.
- E. The inoculator is a workman—2 Tim. 2:15:
1. To cut straight the word of the truth means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry).
 2. There is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track—cf. Acts 26:18; Psa. 119:130.