

# **THE DANGER OF PROGRESSIVE TEACHING**

## **GOLDEN TEXT**

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days”. (2 Timothy 3:1)

## **USEFUL PRACTICE**

Progressive teachings seek to deconstruct the Christian faith from within and distance people from true biblical Christianity, making them mere militants of social causes.

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

### **2 Timothy 3:1-9**

- 1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.
- 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,
- 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,
- 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God
- 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.
- 6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,
- 7 always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.

9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

I) **To list** the elements that mischaracterize biblical Christianity;

II) **To explain** the main progressive theories;

III) **To apply** elements that refute progressive teaching.

## INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will see that progressive teachings undermine the authority of the Bible. Their heresies propagate that the Scriptures contain errors, that God is not sovereign and that the supernatural is a myth. They are indifferent to the biblical doctrine of sin, relativize moral values and defend the need to “reframe” the Christian faith. Consequently, their progressive teachings result in the mischaracterization of biblical Christianity. On this occasion, we will verify some of its heretical concepts and the spiritual means by which the Church must resist their evil effects (Jude 1:3).

### I - THE MISCHARACTERIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

**1. Moral deterioration.** The biblical expression “last days” alludes to the period before the return of Christ, being described as “terrible times” (2 Tim. 3:1). The apostle Paul warns that human behavior will be associated with impiety, characterized by profound moral degradation (2 Tim. 3:2-4). Therefore, Paul’s list is a description of the escalation of sins in society. And the weakening of biblical doctrine, and relativism, which does not accept an absolute moral norm, instigate the bad conduct of humanity. Today’s alarming growth of sin is an indication that we are already living in these last days. However, despite the heretical advances, the Bible warns us to live in holiness at any time of the Christian journey (1 Pet. 1:15, 23-25).

**2. The erosion of orthodoxy.** Progressive teaching represents a theological attack on biblical orthodoxy. Its theses reduce the biblical text

to a mere record of religious experiences. In this way, the foundation of the Christian faith is called into question, that is, biblical authority is rejected and its truths neglected; the doctrinal content gives way to culture, entertainment and results at any cost; Christians become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4); church life is devoid of the power of the Spirit, being unable to be an instrument of transformation of people's character (2 Tim. 3:5; 2 Cor. 4:2, 3). Therefore, we cannot negotiate the truth that the Bible is the only written revelation of God, given by the Holy Spirit, capable of compelling the conscience of sinners (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

**3. The corruption of faith.** With the tainted human character and the corrosion of orthodoxy, promoted by progressivism in teaching, Christianity and biblical faith are mischaracterized. It is not by chance that the apostle Paul adds the practices of false Christians (2 Tim. 3:2-4) to the repulsive conduct of lasciviousness and various lusts (2 Tim. 3:6). Heretics captivate people through seduction and deceit. Slaves to passions, they believe that the pleasures of the body cannot contaminate the soul. Therefore, moral sins, licentiousness and abuse of the body are tolerated, such as: prostitution, gender ideology, drugs, abortion, moral relativism, etc. Rebellion and the absence of genuine conversion prevent them from coming to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). Finally, the deceit of these teachers and their followers will be the object of divine judgment (2 Tim. 3:8).

## **II - PROGRESSIVE THEORIES**

**1. The deconstruction of the Bible.** Progressive teaching is the result of theological liberalism. Its main characteristic is the rejection of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16). The emphasis of Progressivism is on anthropocentrism (man as center). This teaching produces self-centered people and removes the conviction of sin (2 Tim. 3:2). The progressive parameter is the reinterpretation of the Scriptures to satisfy human lust (2 Tim. 4:3). Then, a “gospel” is propagated in which man's salvation occurs through social reforms with the relativization of sin, morality and biblical faith (Gal. 1:7-10). Thus, the term “progressive” refers to theories that distance themselves from biblical Christianity, especially in the misrepresentation of Christian doctrines and values (Phil. 3:18, 19; 2 Pet. 2:19).

**2. Open Theism.** Another strand of liberal/progressive theology is the teaching of open theism. In this theology, God is limited; he does not know the future in detail, does not have absolute control over the Universe or over human life. God's knowledge of things to come is said to depend on

the free actions of men. The concept of foreknowledge in which God knows all things in advance is rejected. In this heresy, God was surprised by sin in Eden and forced to redraw history (Gen. 3:8-19). This extreme emphasis on man's decisions sacrifices God's sovereignty, and divine self-limitation nullifies what the Bible teaches about the Fall and corruption of mankind, thus affecting the doctrine of Divine Providence and the presence of moral evil in the world. Therefore, although its postulants do not publicly acknowledge it, the conclusion is quite logical: If God is not sovereign, then, there is no point in praying to Him.

**3. The Theology of Demythologization.** In 1958, Rudolph Bultmann proposed a program to demythologize the biblical text. Myth is a story of a religious nature that has no basis in reality and is intended to convey a concept of faith. For this German theologian, there were myths in the Bible and it was necessary to separate them from the truth. In this thinking, Heaven and Hell, temptation, demons and demonic possession are considered to be mythological. Even the doctrine of Conception, the virgin birth, and the promise of Christ's coming are labeled as mythology. In this theology, the Bible is only credible if miracles, signs and other supernatural revelations are removed from it. In opposition to these nonsense, we ratify that the Bible is the full truth of God, attested by the Holy Spirit, sustained by history and confirmed by millions of people reached by faith in Christ (2 Pet. 1:21).

### **III - REFUTING PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION**

**1. Reasserting Biblical Authority.** In refutation of progressive teaching, it is essential to reaffirm the doctrine of divine inspiration, verbal and plenary of the inerrant Word of God (2 Tim 3:16,17) and to validate the principle of *Sola Scriptura* instituted in the Reformation, which establishes the Bible as the only infallible and ultimate authority of faith and practice. In this direction, Luther warned about the need to distinguish between what was given by God in the sacred texts and what was invented by men in the context of the heavy Roman tradition in the Middle Ages. Arminius, on the other hand, warned that the perfection of Scripture is undermined when its truth is denied or reinterpreted. Thus, biblical authority is ratified when resistance is offered to the presumption of human ideologies to add or remove something from the Scriptures (Rev. 22:18, 19).

**2. Teaching biblical doctrines.** The Great Commission entrusted to the church is to make and teach disciples (Matt. 28:19, 20). It comprises a proclaiming ordinance and an educational mandate. The task is both training and transforming individuals. It is the Church's responsibility to evangelize the world and teach biblical doctrines (2 Tim. 4:2). In view of

this, Paul urges the necessary dedication to teaching (Rom. 12:7). Such an activity is essential to instruct, expose, and correct errors (2 Tim. 3:16). This action is essential in transforming the old nature (Eph. 4:22-24), forming Christian character (Eph. 4:13), resulting in the genuine growth of a spiritually healthy and doctrinally biblical church (Eph. 4:16).

**3. Emphasizing holiness.** The strengthening of biblical authority and the learning of Christian doctrines need to be linked to a life of holiness (1 Pet. 1:16). The verb “to make holy” comes from the Greek *hagiazō*, which means “to set apart, purify, consecrate”. The adjective “holy” is a translation of the word “*hagios*”. Thus, holiness is the operation of the Holy Spirit in keeping the believer set apart from sin and consecrated to God (Rom. 12:1, 2). It is the continuation of the work started at regeneration (Eph. 1:13), when the saved person receives newness of life (2 Cor. 5:17) and it will continue until the day when the believer is glorified (Rom. 6:22). The emphasis is on obeying God's Word (James 1:22), turning away from lust (1 Peter 1:13, 14) and living a morally upright life in all you do (1 Peter 1:15).

## CONCLUSION

The Scriptures warn that human behavior in the “last days” is a repulsive misrepresentation of faith. Progressive heresy criticizes Scripture, undermines orthodoxy, encourages moral weakness, and leads people away from true Christianity. However, the Church's posture should not be one of inertia, but one of resistance to iniquity. The defense of the faith takes place when the unchanging and timeless values of the Bible are exercised by the power of God in the daily life of the saved believer (1 Cor. 2:4, 5).