

## GANGRENE

**“Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.” (2 Timothy 2:14-19)**

- Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from prison. It was Paul’s last inspired letter. Paul knew he was going to be executed and wrote: **“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:6-8)**
- Earlier, Paul had left Timothy at Ephesus: **“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.” (1 Timothy 1:3-7)**
- Paul had previously warned the elders of Ephesus about false teachers: **“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31)**
- In this last letter Paul told Timothy to temporarily leave Ephesus and come to Rome: **“Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.” (2 Timothy 4:9-13)**
- After Paul was executed Timothy apparently returned to Ephesus and according to Fox’s Book of Martyrs was clubbed to death in A.D. 97.
- Some at Ephesus were apparently teaching a doctrine that was like gangrene. Timothy was to correctly handle the word of truth and avoid godless chatter.

WHAT IS GANGRENE?

Medical experts tell us that *“Gangrene is when part of your body dies. It can occur when your tissue is not receiving enough blood or from a serious bacterial infection. Gangrene usually affects your extremities — the areas farthest from your heart, such as your toes and fingers. However, it can affect other parts of your body as well. Gangrene can even affect your internal organs.”*

The Greek word for “gangrene” is “gangraina”. It is only found one time in the Bible (2 Timothy 2:17). Just as physical gangrene can attack your physical body, spiritual gangrene can attack the Body of Christ. Paul warned Timothy that gangrene “spreads”. This is a translation of two Greek words: “nomen echo” which refers to the way that a “fire spreads” or an “ulcer grows”. False teaching can “spread” like gangrene in the Body of Christ.

So Paul urged Timothy to correctly handle the word of truth because quarreling about words can ruin those who listen and unless corrected, godless chatter will only become more ungodly. In fact: **“Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place and they destroy the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:17-18)**

#### GANGRENE CAN BE FATAL

- Gangrene is an infection that spreads throughout your body. If it is not cured, it will kill you!
- Cambyses II was the son and successor of Cyrus the Great (550 B.C. - 530 B.C.). In the spring of 522 he received a wound in his thigh that became gangrenous. He died three weeks later at a location called Agbatana.
- Louis XIV was the king of France from 1643 until his death in 1715. His reign lasted 72 years and 110 days which was the longest reign of any sovereign in Europe. Louis died of gangrene at Versailles on September 1, 1715, just four days before his 77<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Juan José Navarro was a Spanish military officer who served as the first Captain general of the Navy from 1750 – 1772. He died of gangrene on February 5, 1772 at the age of 84.
- Louis XVIII was the king of France from 1814 – 1824. He died of gangrene on September 16, 1824 surrounded by the extended royal family and some government officials.
- William McKinley was the 25<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. On September 6, 1901 he was shot two times in the stomach by an assassin named Leon Czolgosz. McKinley was a devout Christian and publicly forgave his assassin before dying of gangrene eight days later.
- On July 25, 1911 Bobby Leach became the second person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. He sustained serious injuries from the experience and spent six months in the hospital. In 1926, while on a publicity tour in New Zealand, he injured his leg when he slipped on an orange peel. The leg became infected, gangrene set in, and his leg had to be amputated. Leach died of complications two months later.
- Ignacio Sánchez Mejías was a famous Spanish matador. He appeared in 100 bull fights in 1920. In August 1934 he was gored by a bull in his right thigh and died of gangrene two days later.
- Yes! Gangrene in your physical body can be fatal!
- Yes! Gangrene can also be fatal in the Body of Christ!
- If the church at Ephesus, for example, didn’t repent God promised to “remove their lamp stand from its place” (Revelation 2:5) This meant they would no longer be considered a church by God. Sadly, this happened! At some time after receiving this letter the church at Ephesus ceased to exist.

## GANGRENE, HOWEVER, CAN OFTEN BE CURED

Treatment for gangrene involves removing the affected tissue, treating any existing infection, and treating the problem that led to gangrene developing. For example, if gangrene is caused by a poor blood supply, surgery may be used to repair damaged blood vessels. One study at the Skåne University Hospital, for example, traced the progress of 476 patients with gangrene in their feet. 66 % of these patients survived without the need of having to have their legs amputated.

Gangrene can also be cured in the Body of Christ. Just as Jesus can heal your physical body, He can also heal the church. Jesus can help us meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. With His help we can: **“Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet. So that the lame may not be disabled but rather healed.”** (Hebrews 12:12)

- We are to: **“Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”** (1 Thessalonians 5:13-15)
- We are to help brethren with all sorts of problems. **“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves.”** (Galatians 6:1-3)
- It is the love of Christ that binds us together and brings healing. **“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”** (Colossians 3:12-14)
- Timothy was told: **“Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.”** (2 Timothy 2:14)
- Timothy was to be kind and gentle in helping those who were quarreling. **“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.”** (2 Timothy 2:23-26) We are also to be kind and gentle.
- Sadly, however, not everyone wants to be healed: **“Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”** (1 John 2:18-19)

## LOVE IS THE ANSWER

- All spiritual gifts are important, but the greatest spiritual gift is love! **“And now, these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”** (1 Corinthians 13:13)
- We are to eagerly desire spiritual gifts, but the most excellent of these gifts is love (1 Corinthians 12:31- 13:13).
- **“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”** (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)
- Jesus said: **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.** (John 13:34-35)
- Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to teach them to love: **“As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God’s work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have departed from these and have turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.”** (1 Timothy 1:3-7)
- Paul’s second letter to Timothy was probably written around A.D. 67-68. The book of Revelation was probably written around A.D. 96, almost 30 years later. Revelation 2:1-7 contains this letter to the church at Ephesus. Please note that they had forsaken the love they had at first: **“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands. I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”** (Revelation 2:1-7) As we have already pointed out, some time after receiving this letter from the Lord the

church at Ephesus ceased to exist. The ruins of ancient Ephesus are a popular tourist attraction and are visited by approximately three million people every year.

- It is love that causes us to discipline those who teach false doctrine: **“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. ‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.” (Hebrews 12:5-13)

#### QUALIFICATIONS TO BE A LEADER IN THE CHURCH

The shepherds of the Lord’s sheep must do everything they can to save the sheep!

- **“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”** (1 Timothy 3:1-7)
- **“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”** (Titus 1:5-9)
- **“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. In the same way, you who are younger, submit**

**yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’” (I Peter 5:1-5)**

### SOUND DOCTRINE

We are to teach “sound” doctrine (Titus 2:1). The word translated “sound” is “hugiaino” from which we get the word “hygiene”. As preachers and teachers of the Word we must promote health, both physically and spiritually.

■ Paul pointed out the obvious to Timothy that murder, adultery, perverts,. lying, slave trading, and perjury are contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

■ Paul also told Timothy: **“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”** (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

■ Paul warned: **“All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God’s name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters should not show them disrespect just because they are fellow believers. Instead, they should serve them even better because their masters are dear to them as fellow believers and are devoted to the welfare of their slaves. These are the things you are to teach and insist on. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”** (1 Timothy 6:1-5)

■ **“What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.”** (2 Timothy 1:13)

■ Here is Paul’s inspired advice to Titus: **“You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.”** (Titus 2:1-10)

■ “Sound” doctrine is “healthy” and helps us to avoid gangrene in the Body of Christ!

## GOD WANTS BOTH YOU AND THE CHURCH TO BE HEALTHY

- “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. It gave me great joy to have some brothers come and tell about your faithfulness to the truth and how you continue to walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” (3 John 1:2-4)
- “Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:28-32)
- “So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:9-14)
- “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-8)
- “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” (2 Peter 3:10-14)

■ Jude, the brother of our blessed Lord, wrote this beautiful doxology at the conclusion of the book that bears his name: **“To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forever more! Amen.”** (Jude 1:24-25)

COME TO JESUS!

Everyone has problems, but not everyone comes to Jesus for healing! John lamented: **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”** (John 1:11). Jesus himself said: **“I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not accept me; but if someone comes in his own name, you will accept him. How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?”** (John 5:43-44)

If you are weary and burdened, Jesus offers to you this special invitation. Please note it is for “all”. **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”** (Matthew 11:28-30)

**“Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene.”** (2 Timothy 2:17)