

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 9.3.2023

PART 26 - THE CHURCH IN PERILOUS TIMES

I. INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 3:1-9

1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

II. TIMES OF DIFFICULTY

- 1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.
- What he wants him to understand is what will characterize the time Scripture calls the last days.
- Depending on your view of the end times, you will come away with a different understanding of when that time is.
- As we looked at extensively in our study through Revelation, the last days as prophesied in the OT, were inaugurated at the first coming of Jesus Christ.
- All of the apostolic writers see the dawning of the last days with the first arrival of Christ.
- Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17).
- Hebrews 1:1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,
- 1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,
- The apostle is reminding Timothy that he is already living in that period of time.

- So why does he bring this up? Because of what marks the period of the last days, "times of difficulty."
 - When Timothy faces opposition, hostility, and suffers for the sake of the gospel, he must remember that these are times of difficulty.
 - The entirety of the church age, the last days, will be marked by peril, stressful times, and difficulty for Christ's people.
 - Timothy must not think that he can avoid it.
 - Times of difficulty is a permanent characteristic of the last days.
 - Notice he writes, "in the last days there WILL come times of difficulty." It's guaranteed.
 - If we take a stand with Jesus Christ we also must understand that we will face peril and troubles.
 - We are in the last days. That's why these letters are as much for us as they were for those to whom they were written in the first century.
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- The word for difficulty in the Greek means "violent, dangerous, and hard."
 - These are not times of ease and comfort.
 - John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
 - You will have tribulation. But in Christ we have peace. We don't need to fear the perilous times, we take heart knowing that Christ has overcome.
 - The last days have an expiration date on God's calendar.
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- This is why we should not be surprised when the church is persecuted or we are persecuted.
 - You will not be loved by the world if you are faithful to Christ. You will be hated.
 - John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.
 - Be encouraged saints, this is not doom and gloom for us, Christ has overcome the world.

III. THE TROUBLEMAKERS

1. THEIR MORAL CHARACTER

- What does Paul list as the cause of that trouble?
- V2 "For people...", people are the problem, they are the troublemakers.
- The activities of wicked and evil men are the cause of the perilous seasons in the last days for the church.
- V2-4 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
- Nineteen different expressions are used in those three verses to describe the moral conduct and disposition of these troublemakers.
- Paul is not trying to present an exhaustive list of the conduct of those causing trouble for the church, but he is giving a representation of the

conduct of these people that will create times of difficulty for the church.

- Four of the expressions are compounded by the word 'love' and the opening and closing expressions have to do with 'love.'
- For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, they love what is not good, lovers of pleasure, but what they should love they do not love, they do not love God.
- At the core of the rotten conduct of these people is a misdirected, misapplied, and misplaced love.
- Love of self has replaced love of God.
- The Great Commandment, which Jesus said all of the Law and the Prophets depend on, is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matthew 22:36-40).
- A failure to love God as a matter of first things inevitably leads to a love of other things in its place. This is idolatry.
- When you look at this list you see things that our world openly celebrates and encourages.
- This is a tragic representation of the people who inhabit the last days.

2. THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION

- V5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.
- Paul's not just talking about those outside of the church, the pagans and unbelievers who will make trouble for God's people.
- He is talking about religious people. These people are inside the church.
- They look like the real thing on the outside. They have an outward appearance of piety, but they deny the power of godliness.
- They have the form but they have no substance. Godliness is not the aim of their religious engagement.
- 1 Timothy 4:1-3 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, 3 who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.
- This was the last day's reality for Timothy and for the church at Ephesus.
- But not just for then, but even for us today.

- It is cause for us to evaluate our own hearts.
- It's always easy to look at things like this and point to those out there.
- Just as it was possible to be a member of the church at Ephesus, and maybe be recognized as a teacher in the church, and still be lost, that same reality exists today.
- Only the gospel offers the antidote to the sinful wicked heart, to self-righteousness, and spiritual deadness.
- The Gospel message and what it offers in Christ is that we get a new heart, experience a new birth, a fundamental change from the inside out.
- A total transformation that reorients our affections from self to God.
- 2 Peter 1:3-12 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and

brotherly affection with love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 12 Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.

3. THEIR UNWITTING PREY

- Paul's command to Timothy in dealing with these individuals was to "avoid such people."
- That is Paul's only imperative in this passage.
- Romans 16:17-18 I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.
- Why is that important to do? Because of the devastating impact and trouble they will cause the church.
- 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.
- These types of people will prey on the spiritually weak. They will exert an ungodly influence on them.
- They creep into households, they use stealth tactics. They operate under false pretenses.

- Who's their target? Weak women.
- The term in the Greek literally means "little women." It was a derisive term for immature and childish women.
- Weak women are those who are easily influenced by these smooth-talkers.
- They are "burdened with sin and swayed by various passions" and would gladly give an ear to anyone who promised to alleviate their guilt.
- Intellectually, they were gullible and easily duped.
- V7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.
- They were mentally confused, morally compromised, undiscerning, and they were easy prey for these false teachers.

- Now it's not just women who can be deceived this way. There are a lot of gullible men out there who are also easily deceived.
- But there is something about the makeup of a woman that makes them easier targets.
- Women are generally more easily manipulated by emotional appeals.

- To our women, be extremely discerning about the content you take in. Not everything that is sold in the Christianity section of your favorite bookstore is safe for consumption.
- It's why we continually point you to God's Word. Don't let your guard down.

- Husbands, you have a responsibility before God to protect your spouse and children from error.
- You need to know God's Word. You need to be firm in the truth.

- The world, and what is false under the banner of Christianity, is trying to catechize your family.
- If you're not leading spiritually in the home, who are they going to follow?
- Your church needs you in this battle to hold fast to the truth.
- Be a man of prayer, lifting holy hands in the Church gathering and the home, be men of the Word.
- If you're single, it's important that you are connected to your spiritual family.
- We need one another. We must protect one another. We must look out for one another.

4. THEIR INEVITABLE DOOM

- The passage closes with the outcome of those who trouble the church and cause times of difficulty.
- Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.
- Jannes and Jambres are not names you will see in the Exodus narrative that Paul is referring to. They come from Jewish tradition which ascribes these names to the two chief magicians in Pharaoh's court.
- The false teachers were imposters and deceivers like those magicians in Pharaoh's court.
- Just like Moses and Paul and the other apostles were opposed for preaching the truth, Timothy would also be opposed.
- Paul is using this story to illustrate what will happen to these individuals who are opposing the truth, who are corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. Their end will be the same as that of the chief magicians who opposed Moses.
- For a time, their gangrenous false teaching may spread. It will look like they have succeeded.
- But they will not get very far. They will be exposed. Their folly will become evident to all.
- We have no need to fear. We should not be distressed by the proliferation of false teaching, even if some were to slip away into error.
- In the end the truth will be vindicated. We have seen this time and time again through Church history.
- Stand firm in the faith! Hold fast to your confession.
- Matthew 24:9-14 Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.
- By God's preserving grace, we will endure to the end.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?