

NEVER COMING TO KNOW THE TRUTH

(How Sad to Know Some Truth and Miss the Heart of the Gospel)
New Year's Message-- II Timothy 3: 5-9 – Pastor Richard Carlson

Paul began this message about godlessness in the last days with strong words, “Know this!” “But understand this!” This is Paul’s way to begin his warnings to us in II Timothy 3: 1-9. His admonition is, “Believers, guard your hearts and guard your homes.” Then Paul blurts out his warning, “Difficult days are coming.” When? Paul says, “In the last days!” We are living in these days Paul warned us were coming. Then Paul went on to tell us that there will be counterfeit teachers, religious imposters and their chief feature is their misplaced love. In verse 2, they love themselves, in verse 3, they love money, in verse 4, they are heartless, unloving, and later in verse 4, they are lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God. As Paul told the church in Ephesus in Revelation 2: 3, “You have left your first love,” or as the ESV puts it, “You have abandoned the love you had at first.”

Most of us remember Tim Treadwell. He was called “The Bear Man.” He did much research and invested much time in close proximity to grizzly bears. Sometimes, he walked up to them and petted them. He studied them for 13 summers in Alaska. Tim said he had gained their trust. Park rangers and animal specialists warned him many times. In 2003, Tim and his girlfriend Annie for the first time, remained late into the fall season in Katmai National Park. Katmai is on a peninsula in southern Alaska, just northwest of Kodiak Island. The park is known for its thousands of brown bears, grizzlies, that are drawn to the abundant salmon in Brooks Falls. Lookout platforms at adjacent Brooks Camp offer close-up views of the bears. The Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes is an area of lava flows and ash formed by a massive volcanic eruption. Tim Treadwell should have known bears are desperate for food in the fall, and totally unpredictable before hibernation. That fall, Tim was torn to shreds and eaten alive in a filled video of conscious terror. His girlfriend successfully beat off a grizzly with a frying pan, but he came back and killed Annie. Paul is trying in II Timothy to tell us about frightening animal like false teachers in the church, that he tells us are more dangerous than a grizzly in the wild. False teachers have ravaged the church for the last 20+centuries,

After I graduated from seminary, one of our professors at Trinity, wrote a book in 1970 warning his readers against counterfeit teachers and teachings, heretical, false teachings. His book is titled “Damned Through the Church.” He spoke of seven false teachings that each one, deny the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (1) **Sacramentalism** was popular during the Dark Ages or Middle Ages. This teaching kept the Bible away from the common people, but stressed salvation came by observing the outward sacraments or ordinances—baptism and the Lord’s Supper and other sacraments were the means of salvation, not the Gospel of Jesus. (2) Then came **Rationalism**, and reason replaced God as the means of salvation. (3) Then came **Orthodoxism**, making God sterile and impersonal, denying a personal relationship with Jesus. (4) **Politicism** came next, making the state God, but the

government is not ever God. Some of this has come back in the last few years. I warn us against believing any politician can ever be our Savior. (5) Then came **Ecumenism** which makes cooperation and undiscerning fellowship, even among nominal Christians in the name of love, their God. (6) Next came **Experientialism** which makes a person's own subjective personal experience, truth, or God. Then, (7) **Subjectivism**, the Gospel of **meism**, our self, becoming God. Out of this subjectivism came the false gospel of healthy=wealthy. God wants none of us sick, so God is said to heal all diseases always, and no true believer is poor—but we are rich. Thirty-five years later, John McArthur added two more periods. (8) **Mysticism** which means truth is not based on the Word of God, but it is based on feelings and intuitions. This includes the New Age Movement. (9) **Pragmatism** is based on a false gospel saying truth is what produces results, so the end justifies the means. This pragmatism has led to millions believing in universalism—that everyone who dies goes to heaven, regardless of our being born-again or not. That's a false gospel. (10) I offer a tenth counterfeit gospel called **Postmodernism**, which says truth has no absolutes, no boundaries, and that includes the Word of God. Truth is thus whatever I make truth to be. This post-modernism says we can pick our gender and change our gender. It says we can live together before marriage, which is fornication/adultery, as if God doesn't see, and postmodernism also says God's Word embraces living and loving in a homosexual marriage.

Paul is telling us in II Timothy 3: 5-9 that we must guard our hearts and our homes. To protect our own brothers and sisters and to clarify to lost sinners what a genuine Christian is, we need to know the evil patterns of counterfeit teachers and religious, but lost heretics, so we can point out to others, the living truth of Christ. What are the distinguishing marks of false teachers, religious frauds, and heretics?

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS HAVE A GODLY APPEARANCE BUT THEY DENY GOD'S POWER AND AUTHORITY. (I.)

Notice II Timothy 3: 5a where Paul describes these heretics as “having the appearance of godliness, but (they are) denying its power.” These people at first appear to talk the talk, but observe—they do not walk the Christian walk. These false gospel teachers have had no born-again experience in their lives. Yet, they, like the devil, know how to quote scripture to prove they must be right. They appear on radio, television, on our phones, and all forms of media, preaching their souped up “healthy wealthy” doctrine. They know how to pick and choose their biblical appeals, as they aim to use the Word of God to deceive us. When do you know you have just met another Jannes or Jambres? You know because at first, their theology sounds palatable and appears to be biblical, but these teachers leave out part of the heart of the true Gospel of Jesus in the Word. They ignore Scriptures that silence their errors. One of the counterfeit messages is “What you confess is what you get,” or “All sickness is the result of sin, and Jesus doesn't want you sick,” is soon obvious to a true believer who knows the Word. This popular, slick, medicine man Christianity God hates. It is as off base from the Bible as voodoo. The aim of such false teachers is to make Christianity palatable to nominal believers who are not interested in following the truth of the Word of God and its life-giving power and authority. Only God's truth in His Word has spiritual power and authority. Secondly,

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS HAVE A LURING APPEAL, BUT THEY ARE TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS, (II.) Notice II Timothy 3: 5b says it very bluntly and succinctly, “Avoid such people.” They show a godly appearance without character and godly words without true content. They have the form but not the power. These teachers may claim to be saved, but they are not. Hypocrites seldom recognize their own hypocrisy. Alexander Maclaren said, “The worse we are, the less we know it...Many of us substitute outward connection with the church for inward union with Jesus Christ. We may claim the title of being a Christian, because we wear a uniform that looks Christian, but when our lives dishonor Christ’s Name, we do the gravest injury to the cause of Jesus.” Charles John Ellicott, in his 1897 commentary says, on this verse, “This is only paganism, a new paganism, posing under the name of Christianity.” Ellicott said that we must witness to pagans, and even to heretics who have been seduced by counterfeit teachers, but he adds, “But those who, while pretending to belong to Jesus, live a degraded life like the heathen, these we must shun.” Just as Eve and Adam should have walked away from the serpent in the Garden of Eden, there are times when we do not need to engage in a doctrinal issue with a false teacher. False teachers will try to teach us to have high self-esteem, so we must all first love ourselves properly. The teaching goes, “If you don’t love yourself properly, you can’t love God and others. Yet, although we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, (Mt. 22: 39), the Word tells us in Mark 8: 34 that “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.” Paul adds in Romans 12: 3, “For by the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.” These false teachers focus most often on physical healing, and “send money and you will be healed.” Don’t be roped into the Jannes and Jambres corral. When the primary emphasis is to send money, and not asking God to change lives that are born again, avoid that corral. Thirdly,

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS SEEK TO CAPTURE THOSE CAUGHT UP IN LUSTFUL PASSIONS (III.) Notice II Timothy 3: 6 which says, “For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions.” II Timothy 3: 2 tells us they are “lovers of money.” In Paul’s day, he saw these men exploiting and molesting and targeting weak or frail women. Both the false teachers who are apostates, as well as some of these women they targeted, were perfect targets for these false teachers. These women are not spoken of as noble, or keepers at home. No, they were willing to allow these counterfeit teachers to enter their homes, apparently while their husbands were out making a living. These teachers used and still use stealth to enter or creep into households where the women were led astray by various lusts and passions. The picture is of a false teacher capturing these women by their teaching, and then fulfilling their lusts and the women’s lusts by breaking up their marriages. It is easy to see how Eve was Satan’s first target, but the serpent got both Adam and Eve in the process. Adam should have been a refuge and covering for Eve that day, and said “No, to talking to the serpent,” but he too, was a weak man who never protected her. I know a lady some years ago who got talked into

sending her expensive wedding ring in, to a man's counterfeit ministry. The preacher then told the woman to lock her husband out of his own home, remove all his personal belongings to one room downstairs, and lock them up, and then get new locks on the house. Then she was told to separate from her husband and divorce him, and he was a strong minister of the Gospel. God forbid it! Fourthly,

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS PRODUCE FOLLOWERS WHO ARE EVER LEARNING, BUT NEVER COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF TRUTH.

(IV.) Notice II Timothy 3: 7 which declares, "Always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth." God wants us all to be lifelong learners from God's Word. The real substance of wisdom and learning must be the Word of God. The true will of God for every believer is to become strong in the Word of God, and to be established in sound doctrine. How do we as men and women of God compete with the imposters around us? Do we get caught trying to put on a bigger and better "dog and pony" show, attempting to perform greater signs and wonders? Jesus said, "An evil generation seeks for a sign." (Matthew 16: 4) God never asked any of us to stage a showdown, but in II Timothy 4: 2, Paul says we must, "preach the Word." Only the Word can expose false teachers. Counterfeit teachers will tell us that the teaching of the Word is boring and mundane, as one false teacher told me, "That's stinkin' thinkin." These teachers, disciple their followers to say what the Israelites said of the manna from heaven, "We loathe this manna, this worthless food." (Numbers 21: 5) When you listen to a Bible teacher that mostly preaches philosophy, psychology, and cannot be serious for God about His truth, when their stuff is not from the Book of books, run, run, run, as fast as you can! Fifthly,

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS STRONGLY OPPOSE GODLY TEACHERS AND BIBLICAL TRUTH.

(V.) Notice II Timothy 3: 8a which declares, "Just as Jannes and Jambres **opposed** Moses, so these men also **oppose** the truth." Paul was writing to Timothy about counterfeit teachers in the church Timothy pastored in Ephesus. Timothy knew the Scriptures and he knew early oral Jewish tradition about Jannes and Jambres being the magicians who opposed Moses and enabled Pharaoh to harden his heart about letting the Israelites leave Egypt. These two men are not mentioned by name in the Scripture, but their story with their names is preserved in the Targum of Israel, in the Targum of Jonathan. These two men who opposed Moses openly and strongly, not by the power of God, but by either sleight of hand, or more certainly, by demonic power, they could turn a rod into a serpent as Moses did, but Moses' rod turned serpent, swallowed up their staffs. These magicians could also turn water to blood, and Pharaoh's heart remained hardened. Moses plagued the country of Egypt with frogs, and wouldn't you know, the magicians did the same. That was the end of their "dog and pony show." When Moses stretched out his staff or rod and struck the dust of the earth, gnats covered the land of Egypt. The magicians, Jannes and Jambes stopped now and told Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God," but Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

Watch out beloved when either men or women come strongly against the Lord's anointed, opposing them and opposing Bible truth. These men or women may have performed a miracle or given a prophecy or seen a vision, or performed some other

sign, but know, opposing a man of God who is faithful to the Word is seen by God as tantamount to opposing Him. Remember Jesus' words to Saul on the Damascus Road, as Saul was out to persecute, imprison and kill God's people. Jesus said, "in Acts 9: 4, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" The word for opposed speaking of Jannes and Jambres opposing Moses is **anthistemi**. It means to stand up against another brother or sister in Jesus, to withstand them, to resist them, or to stand up to one's face and come against them and their ministry. Notice the word anthistemi is used twice in II Timothy 3: 8 as we read, "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth. The same Greek word is used in Acts 13: 8 when Paul was in Cyprus and in Paphos, he encountered a certain Jewish false prophet, a magician, named Bar-Jesus, also named Elymas, who anthistemi—opposed Barnabas and Saul and sought to turn the proconsul, Sergius Paulus from receiving Jesus. There apparently were two men in Ephesus just like Jannes and Jambres that Timothy had opposing him. Jannes in Greek means to vex and to harden while Jambres means foamy healer—it looks like healing but isn't. Apostates are people that once believed the truth, at least intellectually, but they turned away. You may not know that Joseph Smith in his first book, "Doctrines and Covenants," section Fifth, page 58 in his 1835 original writing, affirmed the Trinity. Listen as I read it to you. Counterfeit teachers often once believed in Jesus, before they fell away and drew a following to themselves and not to Jesus. Sixthly,

COUNTERFEIT TEACHERS ARE CORRUPT IN MIND, AND DISQUALIFIED IN FAITH, AND THEIR FOLLY WILL NOT GET FAR.

(VI.) Notice II Timothy 3: 8b-9 which testifies, "Men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far; for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men." Only God knows the future of any man or woman, but the picture here of Jannes and Jambres is of teachers who went too far, and Paul said, "Men corrupted or depraved in mind." The Greek word is **kataphtheiro**. This word means spoiled entirely, and to be destroyed. The Greek word for disqualified, or reprobates in the faith. The word is **adokimos**. It means worthless, unapproved, rejected, reprobate, a castaway. Paul made it clear that it takes daily discipline to keep us unspoiled and qualified for Jesus. He says in I Cor. 9: 25-27, "Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we, an imperishable. So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified, **adokimos**. Jesus knew in His day that the Pharisees and Sadducees and chief priests and scribes, for the most part were **adokimos**. Jesus took them on, in Matthew 23: 15 saying, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves." Beloved, in 2022, let's go back to the Word. Let us feed on the Word until our lives are like huge rain clouds that God uses as He opens up the floodgates of the Word of God through our lives upon those who need the true Gospel. May we be filled with God's power and authority. May we not be counterfeits. May we not prey on the weak. May we teach and mentor disciples in the truth. May we never oppose God or His servants. May we be righteous in our minds, always qualified to teach others the true Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.