

“Perilous Times – Part 1”
2 Timothy 3:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, July 31, 2022)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In the previous chapter Paul has been talking about the great danger of false doctrine. In **Verse 14** he warned that it is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. In **Verse 16** he warned that it would lead to further ungodliness. In **Verse 17** he warned that it would spread like gangrene. In **Verse 18** he warned that it would upset the faith of some. In the final verses Paul admonished Timothy to continue to teach with patience and gentleness that God might grant repentance to those in opposition to the truth and deliver them from Satan’s captivity.
2. Those were certainly dangerous times for the early church. But the church was young. They did not have the completed Word of God. They did not have the benefit of the great councils that resulted in great statements of doctrinal truth that would help protect the church from many of the heresies that had plagued it. Surely these dangerous times would be only a temporary difficulty for the early church. Surely as the church grew and matured these difficulties would fade away.
3. But as we enter into **chapter 3** these hopes are crushed. Paul says in **Verse 1**, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come."
 - A. When are these last days?
 1. There is a lot of talk about the last days. Because of the influence of Dispensationalism with a secret Rapture and a Great Tribulation most people see the “last days” as a brief period before Jesus comes to establish His thousand-year Millennial reign. It would be a period marked by various signs that would point to second coming of Christ. But this is not the Biblical teaching regarding the last days.
 2. The last days is the period time that would mark the entire age of the church.

Hebrews 1:1-2 NAU - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, ² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."
 3. The last days mark the days of the New Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 NAU - "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

4. The last days mark that period of time between our Lord's two comings – the entire age of the church. These include the days in which we live. When I hear people today say, “With everything happening we must be living in the last days.”
On one hand, they are exactly correct. These are the last days. But on the other hand, we have been in the last days since the ascension of Christ.
 5. Paul also mentioned these days in his first letter to Timothy
1 Timothy 4:1 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"
 6. The fact that Paul places it in the future tense tells us that he is describing difficulties that will continue. In other words, instead of things growing better for the church, things for the church would grow worse and worse.
2 Timothy 3:13 NAU - "But evil men and impostors will proceed *from bad to worse*, deceiving and being deceived."
- B. Paul uses the word *χαλεπός* – fierce, perilous, savage, dangerous
These would be dangerous days for the church—days that would last for the entire existence of the church.
4. We must be clear. Paul is not talking about conditions with the world in general, although a fallen world is certainly a dangerous place. Paul is talking about conditions within the church.
 - A. Jesus made it clear that the net of the gospel would bring in both good fish and bad.
Matthew 13:47-50 NAU - "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering *fish* of every kind; ⁴⁸ and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good *fish* into containers, but the bad they threw away. ⁴⁹ "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."
 - B. At the end of the previous Paul described the church metaphorically as having both vessels of honor as well as vessels of dishonor.
One of the greatest dangers to the church has been corruption from within rather than persecutions from without.
 5. In the next several verses Paul describes conditions that will bring great difficulty upon the church. All of these dangers involve people who trouble the church.
 - A. **Verses 1-5** describe church members whose lives are ungodly – counterfeit Christians.
 - B. **Verse 6** describes false teachers that would prey upon the weak.
 - C. In **Verse 7** Paul describes church members lacking spiritual discernment – never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - D. **Verse 8** describes church members who stand in opposition to the truth.
 6. Paul calls the existence of these people a great danger to the church. These people bring great harm to the church. They weaken the ministry of the church. They lower the church's standard of holiness. They cause her to forfeit the presence of Christ.
 7. It is important that we understand these dangers so that we can protect ourselves.
 - A. We need to heed the warning: "in the last days difficult times will come."
It is so relevant for today – We can see it before our eyes.

- B. Many churches choose to deal with the problem by lowering the standard – They have declared carnality normal Christianity – THE BIBLE DOES NOT!!! WE MUST NOT!!!
- C. Paul gives us our only proper response: “Avoid such men as these.”
8. Let us begin to look at these dangerous conditions. Paul is not giving us an exhaustive analysis, but that doesn’t mean these things are insignificant. We might be tempted to race by these characteristics as generic problems but it is important that we have a clear grasp of each one because they are so dangerous to the church. Paul is describing counterfeit Christians - **Verses 1-5**. Although the division isn’t absolute the first group seems to follow fleshly lusts while the latter deals more with the impact upon relationships.
- I. They are intoxicated with self. Paul calls them “lovers of self.”
- A. From the single Greek word φίλαυτος from φίλω and αὐτός
1. This is the chief of sins – the sin from which all others flow
 2. Self is elevated above all else
 3. The Bible commands love for God above all else. True obedience is based upon loving God supremely and loving our neighbor as much as ourselves.
 4. The natural man loves himself above all others.
- B. This marks those who come into the church for purely selfish reasons.
1. They are not usually very faithful – they don’t like being inconvenienced. They avoid sacrifice. They seldom consider whether their actions will glorify Christ, whether it will edify others or strengthen the church.
 2. We need to continually ask ourselves, "Am I motivated chiefly by what pleases me?"
 3. Self-love is the greatest hindrance to fellowship within the church
Everyone is serving themselves above all else.
- C. Self-love is so dangerous because few see it as their problem – because they think so highly of themselves.
The Bible gives the solution – we must have the mind of Christ
Philippians 2:3-5 NAU - "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,"
- II. They are greedy, lovers of money. From a compound Greek word literally meaning a lover of silver or a lover of shiny things – it is a term that represents materialism – covetousness is an excellent word to describe it.
- A. These people are never content with what they have
1. This too is a great danger to the church
1 Timothy 6:9-10 NAU - "But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
 2. Because of their love of money they set up their lives so that they have no time for the ministry of the church – this is dangerous for the church.

3. Because of their love of money most never tithe of their income 10% give 90% of church funds.
4. It is easy for us to excuse ourselves because we think too concretely. You say you don't love money. But do you love things and want more – always something new?
5. Paul says that because of their love for material things many have even wandered away from the faith
 In Chapter 4 Paul writes that love for this world caused Demas to abandon the work of the Kingdom.
 2 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me."

- B. The Bible gives us the solution for this love of money
1. We must find contentment in Christ. Are you continually seeking to add to your stuff. If everything you had was taken away would you still be content.
 2. We must be Kingdom seekers
 Matthew 6:33 NAU - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

III. They have little control over their tongue. They bring great trouble upon the church with the things they speak. This problem is a significant element of this passage.

- A. "Boastful and arrogant" –
1. Pride is the outward evidence of self-love.
 They have a high view of themselves – "Hey look at me"
 2. Pride renders preaching ineffective –The proud man seldom applies preaching to himself.
 3. Pride filled ministers give Satan license to create havoc in the church
 1 Timothy 3:6 NAU - "*and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil."
 1 Timothy 6:4 NAU - "he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,"
 4. Pride is dangerous to a church because of God's attitude concerning pride.
 God hates pride
 Proverbs 6:16-17 NAU - "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ Haughty eyes . . ."
 1 Peter 5:5 NAU - "and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
- B. "Revilers" – From the Greek word βλάσφημος – They are blasphemers.
1. This also flows forth from the proud, boastful view the person has of himself. He thinks nothing of expressing his irreverence.
 2. It can be directed towards God or man

3. The proud man looks with contempt towards others
William Barclay – "He might even seem to be humble; he might even seem to be quiet and inoffensive; but in his secret heart there is contempt for everyone else."
 4. Blasphemy is a sin of the tongue – speaking against others or of God. But we must also remember that the tongue is a window to the heart.
Matthew 15:18-19 NAU - "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. ¹⁹ "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." - βλασφημία
 5. The tongue can be used for great good or great evil, it can build up or tear down.
- C. Paul adds regarding further abuses of the tongue they are “malicious gossips.” This is from the word διάβολος
1. This involves using the tongue to spread slander towards others.
 2. It may not be false information but it is information we have no right to share—and that others do not have the right to know.
 3. There is a certain power that comes from knowing some information someone else may not know.
The wagging of the tongue is great evil. The word for gossip is a word that refers to the devil – diabolos.
Matthew 4:1 NAU - "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

Conclusion:

1. These are heart issues. And they are issues that plague the church.
2. Paul isn't talking about those who are outside the church, those who have no interest in religion. Paul is talking about those inside the church. Those having a form of godliness, always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.
3. The church must always be on the alert. Paul says, “Avoid such men as these.”
Do we have the discernment to recognize these things in ourselves?