

"Void of Understanding"
2 Timothy 3:6-9
(Preached at Trinity, September 11, 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. As we've seen this first part of **Chapter 3** deals with Paul's warning of difficult days ahead for the church. These difficulties will exist for the entire life of the church. Paul divides these difficulties into four categories:
 - A. Church members whose lives are ungodly – counterfeit Christians – **Verses 1-5**
 - B. False teachers that would prey upon the weak – **Verse 6**
 - C. Church members without spiritual discernment – **Verse 7**
 - D. Church members that oppose the truth – **Verses 8-9**
 2. We've looked at Paul's description of the counterfeit Christians. They do not bear the marks of holiness.
Last week we examined Paul's warning of *false teachers that prey upon the weak*.
 3. This morning I want us to look at the final two great perils that Paul warns will threaten the Church of Christ – *Church members without spiritual discernment* and *Church members that oppose the truth*. I will link these two perils together this morning because they both stem from the same cause – the spiritual death caused by the fall. In our fallen condition we do not possess spiritual understanding. This often puts us in opposition to the truth.
 4. This is why truth is under such vicious attack today. The lost fear absolutes. They want absolute autonomy. Truth demands submission to God.
- I. **Verses 6-7** describes those lacking in spiritual discernment
"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- A. In his Epistle to the Ephesians describes it using the metaphors of blindness and darkness
Ephesians 4:18 NAU - "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;"
 1. Divine light shines upon all men - yet they are unable to comprehend it - Why? - Because they are blind
John 1:4-5 NAU - "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it."
John 3:19-20 NAU - "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

2. This is accomplished through the instrumentality of Satan who blinds the eyes of lost humanity
2 Corinthians 4:3-4 NAU - "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
- B. Lost men are void of spiritual intelligence.
1. They cannot know God properly
 - a. His holiness, His infinite perfection - Most see God as being like us—like a powerful man. They often refer to Him as “The Man Upstairs.”
 - b. If you fail to see the infinite goodness of God you won’t fully comprehend the depth of your corruption.
 - c. They also fail to comprehend His perfect justice – that all have sinned and all are justly condemned.
 - d. They cannot comprehend His all-encompassing sovereignty.
 2. They cannot understand the biblical Christ.
 3. They cannot understand the spiritual truths of the Bible
They are incomprehensible.
- C. They are ever growing in knowledge but never able to come to proper conclusions. In other words, there is a continuous flow of input but they lack the ability to rightly process it.
2 Timothy 3:7 NAU - "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
1. This is seen vividly with modern man.
 - a. Technology has exploded in the last 200 years (Industrialization, transportation, electricity, electronics, petro-chemical/ synthetics/plastics, medicine, agriculture)
 - b. Yet, we are no closer to God – Men are still ignorant of His will and way. They continue to demonstrate that God has given them over to a depraved mind.
 2. Education has actually driven men further from God.
"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- D. This has been most destructive to the church – Paul warned that these people in the church would create great difficulty for the church.
1. Too many churches today are lost in arguments over whether the Bible is true, whether women should be pastors, and whether homosexuality or gender fluidity are legitimate choices.
 2. Multitudes of religious people are deluded into thinking they can merit God's pleasure by their actions.
 3. Liberty, Tolerance and Pragmatism have become the new triune god.
 - a. Liberty – they glory in their independence—denominationalism is under suspicion. Many churches do not even have a membership roll. There is no accountability. The ministry is despised, preaching is ignored. The cry is, "I will be ruled by none!"

- b. Tolerance – we must never condemn the choices of others. We all have the right to our own ideas and opinions and all must be considered equally valid.
 - c. Pragmatism – We must never argue with success. Any means or method is acceptable as long as it produces results and the church grows.
- E. Spiritual understanding demands a new birth – our heart, mind, and soul must all be renewed.
 - 1. Our Lord's words to Nicodemus
John 3:3 NAU - "Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."
 - 2. In Chapter 10 of the *1689 Confession* the work of the Holy Spirit upon believers is described as "enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh" (10:1).
 - 3. Spiritual understanding is one of the marks that identifies a believer
1 Timothy 2:4 NAU - "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
2 Timothy 2:24-26 NAU - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."
- F. Spiritual understanding demands illumination
 - 1. This is the term used to describe the Holy Spirit giving understanding. He takes His Word and gives us spiritual comprehension.
 - 2. The Apostle Paul declared in 1 Cor. 12:3
 "I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit."
 - 3. Without this illumination the lost man cannot understand spiritual things
1 Corinthians 2:14 NAU - "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised."
 - 4. All truth is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth
John 14:26 NAU - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."
John 15:26 NAU - "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is* the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,"
John 16:13 NAU - "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

4. Without this illumination, spiritual understanding is impossible
2 Timothy 3:7 NAU - "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- G. It is dangerous to have church members void of spiritual understanding making decisions that impact the church. They don't have the ability to rightly apply God's Word.
- II. The final peril Paul mentions are those within the church who resist the truth
2 Timothy 3:8 NAU - "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith."
- A. Most commentators agree that Jannes and Jambres were two of the Egyptian magicians who withstood Moses.
1. When Moses came with direct commands from God these men opposed him. Paul is using them as an example of opposition.
 2. The Greek word for "resist" is ἀντίστημι – from two words: ἀντί - Originally meaning "against" and ἵστημι – meaning "to stand" These counterfeit Christian stands against the truth.
 3. Paul describes them: " men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith."
Remember, Paul is talking about those *inside* the church - church members
- B. The lost person denies the truth about God – in essence they create God after their own image.
Romans 1:25 NAU - "For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen."
1. They create a God that overlooks their corruption. One who is all love, without judgement.
 2. They create a God who accepts all people as they are, denying the demand for repentance.
This is why we have homosexual churches.
 3. Left to themselves they will never have a right understanding about God or right thoughts towards God.
- C. Because they deny the truth about God they come to wrong conclusions. Wrong conclusions about God and about themselves.
1. The Bible presents us as alienated from God and under His just condemnation.
 2. Men naturally try to soften these truths.
They naturally try to justify their sin and try to find carnal solutions for the consequences of sin.
 3. In their darkened state the lost man is not concerned about truth.
Instead of seeing truth as universal, absolute, and enduring it becomes approximate and subjective.
If it is true for them then it must be true.
 4. They are not ultimately concerned about what the Scriptures teach
They are more interested in human wisdom, and ideas - through these things they resist the truth.
- D. Paul says in **Verse 9** – "But they will not make further progress"
Since they reject and oppose the truth they will not acquire the truth.

- IV. How are we to deal with those who have set themselves in opposition to the truth.
- A. We must be students of human nature.
1. We must recognize their true problem – you can never make those who are spiritually dead think spiritual thoughts.
He will come to false conclusions about the Bible.
 2. The true problem with humanity is sin. Because of sin we do not, cannot think on a spiritual level.
Often they cannot even think on a rational basis.
 3. We must rely solely upon the Word of God. It is the ministry of the Word that will correct men in their error
2 Timothy 2:24-26 NAU - "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵ with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will."
The Greek word is παιδεύω which is the same word often translated "chasten"
- B. We must beware of allowing those without spiritual discernment to gain position in the church
1. This is why deacons must be men full of the Spirit and of wisdom. Paul is referring to spiritual wisdom.
 2. We must always be vigilant. Paul warns us that their ignorance will bring decay upon the church like gangrene.
2 Timothy 2:17 NAU - "and their talk will spread like gangrene."
 3. We must always be ready to obey God's command in **Verse 5**
"Avoid such men as these"

Conclusion:

1. These are difficult, dangerous days.
2 Timothy 3:1 NAU - "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come."
2. Paul has given us a detailed analysis of the dangers.
 - A. There will be counterfeit Christians who will find their way into the church.
 - B. There will be false teachers who will prey upon the weak.
 - C. There will be church members lacking spiritual discernment – never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - D. And there will be those who stand in opposition to the truth.
3. All of this demands caution and discernment. We must never let down our guard.