



“...Perilous Times”

- 2 Timothy 3:1-9

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at JF Believers Church
in Menomonie, Wis
on July 21, 2024

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers,

disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Chapter 3

3:1

The Word of God is clear, here and elsewhere, that as we approach the return of Christ, the world...and further, the greater church, will advance further and further into self and into worldliness. We need to remember that while much of the warning of this chapter is true of the world at large, Paul's greater concern and warning herein was as it will play out in the church...how it will affect the faith community.

The text reads “*know this.*” Not “probably” or “maybe” or “I think”, but the absolute of “thus sayeth the Lord.” And yet corporately, the greater church seems surprised today...shocked and incredulous even, when the finger is pointed at them through public opinion, the political tide, the criticism of the compromise and acquiescence of the church biblical stance, the weak commitments, and the back seat priority of King and kingdom.

Individually, we also live in denial of such a personal responsibility. The further we travel...the closer to the end, the more of those who once walked with God and with us, depart the faith, most never to return. Still we seem mostly indifferent and dispassionate.

The “last days” speaks clearly of the period of time preceding and leading up to the return of Christ; In those days, we are told that “perilous” times will come. “Perilous”; (gr) means “hard, dangerous, difficult, grievous.” This is the same Greek word that is used to describe the two violent demoniacs of Gadara (Matt. 8:28). This suggests that the violence of the last times will be energized by demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

By that definition, we are ...there. For these are indeed perilous times for the individual believer, crisis times for mankind in general, and certainly treacherous for our particular, individual church. While those last days are for many filled with anxiety, fear, violence, and mental crisis, many of the rest of us will be brought down by our apathy, our concessions, and our distracted lifestyle. For Jesus Himself warned in Matthew 24:37-39

“When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days before the flood, the people were enjoying banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered

his boat. People didn't realize what was going to happen until the flood came and swept them all away. That is the way it will be when the Son of Man comes...

And again, in these last days, the church...the believers...are falling in droves. For those that remain, there is less and less difference between us and the world, as we embrace the doctrine of liberal theology, the doctrine of compromise...the doctrine of self!

Forgetting the cross and what it means to us as a community and as individuals, we drift away...sometime physically and sometimes just mentally, in pursuit of 'personal fulfillment.' And things are not going to get better. They are not going to end nicely for most of mankind, nor for most of those who grace the pews of America each Sunday morning. Most of us always *meant* to do great things for Jesus, but while we delayed, Satan just ran out the clock...

In the following verses, Paul presents in greater detail some of the character and actions of the "last days" individual. The sort that Paul warned us about in the Romans 16:17

"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them."

In our day, the fact is so many of us are into this Jesus thing for what we can get. We exchange discipline, service, and obedience for comfort, security, health, and peace of mind. But we 'ebb and flow' on our performance according to how badly we want the sin, or how much we are suffering and need intervention by deity. Yet Jesus had a whole other relationship in mind when He spoke of salvation and living faith. Speaking of what it means to be a steward ...of what has been entrusted to us, and the dynamic of caring for it all, Jesus said "*Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.*"

Perilous times. There is no 'plan B' ...no alternative. It's either 'man up' or fold our hand.

3:2

The hallmark of these last days is "self-love". One of the signs that we have "arrived" is that now the church is often just as guilty as the world in surrendering to such thinking. The other-centered dynamic of Christ love has been sidelined for the me-centric paradigm wherein I am the most important consideration and everyone is to form a line behind me.

In the list which follows, Paul seems to emphasize the common denominator of love: "lovers of their own selves," lovers of money ("covetous"), "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. God commands us to love Him supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:34-40), but if we love ourselves supremely, we will not love God or our neighbors.

It seems today that the great motivation of life, consuming our thoughts, time, desires and money, is the drive to satisfy our inward desires and pursuits. The insatiable thirst to satisfy our lust for excitement, thrills, R and R, and our "own best interests." We shop for a church that caters to the "me" and fits "me."

Even while we side-step overt and blatant sins, we do so carrying all the weights that Paul spoke about; slowing us down, wearing us out, and consuming our energy. These things ultimately do not matter to the eternal, but we just can't seem to discipline ourselves to say no. So we are running as fast as we can from one thing to another, trying to live the Christian life while embracing so many other things too. We want it all, but we can't

have it. Not with any success anyway. And many are essentially beyond hope...having become so callused to it, that our consciences are past feeling... now “seared” with a hot iron.

Judges 21:25 speaks of the crisis in *that* day: “*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” The fact is that while many want ‘Jesus the Savior,’ we reject Jesus the Lord...Jesus the King. And when there is no ruler in our lives, in that vacuum we will therefore simply “do what is right in our own eyes.”

This first trait, “self-love,” appropriately heads this list since it is the root of all sin and the essence from which all these other acts spring. Ironically, the need today is certainly not to love ourselves more, but rather to heed the call of Christ to actually “die to ourselves.” Mark 8:34-36 says “... *whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*” We are called ...not as a mere option or a request, but as a **demand**, to die to ourselves and find our identity now in Christ. Such is the essence of Christianity.

Stemming forth from our love of self comes the love of money: This issue is sure to affect our kingdom service and involvement, our community participation, even our worship. When money and our secular employment is calling the shots, we have quite clearly allowed “another god” to rule our lives.

Boasters:

Meaning “proud”: arrogance *and again* a “me-centered” lifestyle. We allow no authority over us. What’s ‘good for me’ is therefore good for everyone.

Blasphemers:

This is more than just using “God” as a swear word, but wearing Jesus publicly while privately living a different life...one that is contrary to His. By doing so, we essentially say Christ lived and lives the way I do. That’s blasphemy. The word used in the original is “reviler” which describes those who throw harsh, denigrating, demeaning insults at others.

Disobedient to parents:

Claiming we obey the God we can’t see while rejecting the authority we can see. It’s a farce. It’s a lie. Again, we are essentially saying that “I am the final and supreme word.”

Unthankful:

Failure to acknowledge God’s blessing and care. Always wanting more. Believing we deserve more. Positioning ourselves wherein we *are* more! In doing so, we forget the meaning of the cross and our salvation. We forget what we have been given...what we have.

Americans are materially the richest people on earth. We live like kings compared to the rest of the world. Most of us throw away more food than most people ever have on their plates to begin with. Luxuries have become necessities despite having more comfort than ever before in history. And most of the time we never take time to stop and say “thank-you.” We fail to appreciate what we have, who we have, and where we are...all until such is lost. Then we complain and inevitably find someone to blame. Not *us*... but *someone*. We have become like the nine lepers healed by Jesus, who ran away in joy, never to return to say thank you and to know the one who healed them.

Unholy:

This speaks of the life not ‘sanctified’...not ‘set apart’ for God’s use before all other things. We tend rather to “push the envelope”...to see just how much we can get away with and still get to heaven. How much can I hold onto and still see the pearly gates? How close to hell can I walk while I live, and not go there when I die?

3:3

Unloving:

Lack of affection, compassion, and care for others. Such is once again, quite obviously lived out with the great “me” not only the center of my affections, but in fact generally *all* of my affections.

Unforgiving:

Still continuing to manifest the “me-centered” lifestyle, I have no room for anyone to ever treat me in anyway other than with the highest esteem and respect. If anyone fails me, it becomes the “fire in my belly” and goes on to fuel my vindictive spirit. Revenge and hurting others therefore becomes my lifestyle. “They deserve it” is my mantra. No one can make a mistake except me.

Slanderers:

To be blunt, these folks are quite simply liars. They say things to bring on the hurt to others and exalt themselves. The original word is the word used elsewhere for ‘the devil.’ This would include the gossip which we so readily indulge and speak things with the intent to hurt a third party, and by doing so, raise themselves up...

Without self-control:

Means to be “undisciplined and uncontrolled; having no self-control or no power of discipline.” It speaks of being given over to pleasure and indulgence, to passion and craving. The unwillingness to say no.”

Brutal:

Being cruel and hurting. It is the word that describes the savage beast of the wild that is unrestrained in its fierceness. It is a word that should never be true of people, yet tragically it is. Never in the history of the world have men become as fierce and savage as they are today. Violence prevails.

“despisers of those who are good”:

This refers to people despising both good people and good things. In the last days people will be embarrassed to speak up for what is right and to take a stand for what is good. Isa 5:20 *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

3:4

“Traitors”:

It seems as if few people today can be trusted. Sadly, once again, we within the greater church are just as bad about this as those outside. Loyalty and commitment are rare attributes these days. We see everyone from leaders to the common man turning against spouses, friends, God, and country. Blowing up federal buildings, selling secrets to the enemy, and denying the sacred trusts given to them. People who say they love you and are there for you will turn and become your enemy. A loyal friend is gold today! Matt 10:21 speaks of these last days saying *“Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.”*

Headstrong:

Meaning “bullheaded.” Reckless, rash and hasty—all without giving thought to the consequences. Reckless is probably the best description.

Haughty:

“Puffed up and conceited; controlled by feelings of self-importance.” It is a person who feels so educated, wealthy, talented, or positioned in society...so high in authority, ability, and gifts that he or she feels completely self-sufficient. He feels no need for God, and no need for *you*. He is above God and certainly everyone else.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God:

This fella always has time for fun but never seems to have time for God and kingdom service. He can find his fishing pole, his rifle, his atv and his skis, but rarely his Bible. “Having a good time” is his God. He lives for the moment. He lives for pleasure.

3:5

In other words, they “look good.” Through ritual, through denomination, and outward form, they have the appearance of faithful living, but it is merely a façade. They ‘play a good game.’ But it’s all form, and there is no substance! Whole churches are going through the motions these days. They act out the roll they have been assigned to play in a production called “Sunday service.”

These folks inherently lack the “power” that comes through the movement and activity of the Holy Spirit in their midst. They are lives that never change, discipleship that never happens, “dying to self” is never practiced and their souls remain lost, albeit comfortably lost!

This passage gets to the end of this sad string of traits, and then tells us that we are to “turn away” from these folks. That’s right. We are to get away from these folks and do not fellowship with them. Wow. A tough call huh? Ironically, this demand ultimately creates the last of these end times traits: the fact that we *don’t* and we *won’t*. We play with fire and cry when we get burned!

3:6

The reason to move away from these folks is not just scriptural but common sense. These folks do not remain “out there.” They come “in here”...to the church, the family, the relationships we have one with another. They will “take you captive.” No one ‘dabbles’ in their world and fails to be affected.

Notice they “creep” into these houses. They don’t go in openly and honestly. They do so quietly, slowly, and subtlety. They are apt to use spiritual terms and buzz-phrases. And they can come with the appearance of religion and godliness, but hide the doctrinal problems and inconsistencies that infect their lives and relationships. These folks can come in the obvious form of a false teacher or leader, but in fact most often appear as a pseudo-Christian brother or sister who is ultimately seeking control, absolution of past sins and, of course, self-interests.

“Gullible or silly women” is not so much meant to be a degrading statement as in reference to their lack of stability. Behind every incarcerated woman that we have ministered to over the years, we ultimately find a man who is party to leading her astray. When there is no discipline in this area, that woman will be forever stuck in the revolving world of financial, spiritual, sexual, legal and relationship collapse. When they do not love Jesus as their first love, their earthly loves will destroy them.

3:7

Inside or outside of the pulpit it is easy to find those on the perpetual quest for “spiritual truth and fulfillment” but never seem to find it. They never find it because they don’t really want to find it. They just want to search

for it! They just want to look like they are learning. They sit through countless church services, maybe even a plethora of discipleship classes but when the time comes to “pull the trigger” they resist that obedience.

The word “knowledge” here is the experiential knowledge. The kind we come to know through participation in it. Paul means to specifically deal with those who never experience the truth of Christ and faith. It all remains in the classrooms and the sanctuaries of churches, and is never lived out and exercised ‘on the streets’ of their lives.

3:8

Jannes and Jambres are understood to be two of the magicians who tried to defeat Moses in Pharaoh's court. Essentially, they were counterfeiters. They looked good on the outside, and they appeared at first to be everything that Moses was, and possessed all that he had. But in the end the truth was manifest. Often such folks can appear to be genuine ...maybe even for a long period, but time inevitably seems to illuminate the truth of the situation. Dishonesty and deception...like rust, always manifests itself in time. These are men of ‘corrupt minds,’ and corruption can be painted over but sooner or later that decay eats through into the light of day.

3:9

Eventually, the truth of all of this is made manifest. That may be found through which churches have a full house the Sunday after the rapture, or it may be sooner through the intervention of God. But in time it is seen by all. The NLT says "they won't get away with this for long."

Jannes and Jambres eventually were ‘found out’ and such occurred because they tried to manifest the power of God for which they had none. That is one thing that in the end can't be faked. Are people being saved? Are disciples being made? Are lives changing? Growing? Maturing? Is Christ pouring out His power there? If so, you are on safe ground. If not, eventually the truth comes out...