

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/9/92  
II Timothy 3:6-12 "The Church Under Attack"

**Introduction:** I received a letter this week from the American Center for Law and Justice. It started with these words... "Dear friend, I know that you share my sense of outrage at the latest legal absurdity of the radical Planned Parenthood. This time their target is teenage chastity...They say sexual abstinence is a religious teaching which violates the separation of church and state..."

The following words are certainly true of our age...

3:1 "This know that in the last days perilous times shall come."

We've come along way. Our nation was founded by men who had a strong faith in God, and on biblical principles. Listen to these declarations...

Quote: William Penn said in 1681, "If you are not governed by God, you will be ruled by tyrants."

Quote: The Constitution of the New England Confederation in 1643, "Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely to advance the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the Liberties of the Gospel in purity and peace."

Quote: Mayflower Compact of 1620, "In the name of God, Amen, having undertaken for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith...do...solemnly and mutually in the presence of God covenant and combine ourselves together..."

Quote: George Washington made this Thanksgiving Day Proclamation in 1789, "Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection, aid and favors...Now therefore, do I assign and recommend Thursday, the 26th day of November next...that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country, and for all the great and various favors which he has been pleased to confer upon us."

What's happened?

Exactly what Paul told Timothy in his last inspired letter. There he was sitting in a Roman dungeon, awaiting his execution because of his service to Jesus Christ. Timothy was far away in Ephesus. He too was under the heat of Christian antagonism.

So Paul told him in 3:1-5, "Don't be surprised Timothy. Don't be blown away by the hostility the world vents at Christians. That's the way men will be in this period of time, between the first and second coming of our Lord Jesus. The problem with the world is people, Timothy. And the problem with people is that they have a misdirected love: They love themselves (2), money (2), pleasure (4), instead of loving God (4).

You say, "Wow, that's bad! The church of Jesus Christ is under attack by the world."

Listen. That's not all. The characteristics Paul described in vv 2-5 are true not only of secular people "out there," but also people who wear the cloak of religion.

Q: What is "friendly fire"?

When you're in a war, you have an enemy. You fight your enemy. But there are times when you may be endangered by blasts from your own troops. Friendly fire.

With that in mind look at v 5.

V 5 "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it..."

What enemy plagues the church of Christ? One enemy is the world system (I Jn 2:14). But another, even more subtle enemy is religion. Paul warned Tim that the church would be under attack by religious people.

Q: So how do we defend ourselves against that enemy? What's our defense strategy?

**Proposition: In II Timothy 3:6-12, Paul lays out the defense strategy for the church. There are 2 things of which we need to be aware.**

I. We must be aware of the Enemy (6-9).

A. Their Tactics (6-8)

1. They creep.
2. They capture.
3. They confuse.
4. They corrupt.

B. Their Termination (9)

II. We must be aware of the Expectations (10-12).

A. The Standard of the Christian Life (10)

B. The Suffering of the Christian Life (11-12)

**I. We must be aware of the Enemy (6-9).**

V 6 "For of this sort"

There are people just like those described in vv 2-5 that haunt the church. They plague the church. Though religious, they undermine the church. How do they do it? Look at their tactics.

A. Their Tactics (6-8)

1. They creep.

V 6 "For of this sort are they who creep into houses..."

"creep" = worm their way into; This enemy is subtle.

2. They capture.

V 6 "...lead captive silly women..."

Watch carefully. When Paul describes "silly women," he's not being a chauvenist. He's not suggesting that all women are like this, or that men are not vulnerable to the wiles of false teachers (Wiersbe). Remember. In Paul's day, women had a very low status in society. That made them especially susceptible to smooth-talking, cunning, and persuasive teachers who wormed their way into the house.

What's Paul describing? Apparently there were religious charlatans in Ephesus. They were frauds. They tried to proselytize church members. Their aim was to

"capture" unsuspecting and vulnerable people (capture = to take prisoner in war). Their methods were sneaky. They came in the back door. They were secretive. Their strategy was to go to the house when the men were gone. Who did they target?

--"silly women laden with sins" = morally weak (sexual sin?)

--"led away with various lusts" = lit. "many colored lusts"

A person who has not dealt with sin in his or her life, and who wrestles with guilt is fair game for a cultist or religious racketeer. Do you know why? When some smooth-talker comes into the house, he flowers a few words of flattery. Then he plays on a person's guilt. Then he offers a quick and easy solution. It's not long before he grabs his new followers loyalty, money, and service.

Remember, all this is done in the name of religion! (Wiersbe)

Illust: Irenaeus tells of a heretic Marcus... (Barclay, 192)

Illust: Today, heretics worm their way into homes via TV

### 3. They confuse.

V 7 "Ever learning and never able..."

I want you to notice what the enemy does with the truth:

a) The creepers pervert the truth (6-7).

b) The creepers resist the truth (8).

Q: What are we supposed to do with the truth?

A: 2:25 "acknowledge the truth" (truth = sacred deposit from God)

God's Word is the Truth. What are you doing with the truth right now? Some people, like the false teachers in v 7, are constantly learning truth, but never really coming to grips with the truth.

Key: Learning truth is not enough. I must let God's truth impact my life.

If I'm a business owner, I must let the principles of God's truth impact the way I run my business. If I punch the clock, I must allow God's truth to impact my attitude towards my boss and fellowworkers. I must choose to let God's truth impact every facet of my life--my thought life, my hobbies, the way I relate to people.

If I don't, I have a serious, fundamental, spiritual problem. Just like...

Illust:

### 4. They corrupt.

V 8 "Now as Jannes and Jambres..."

Who were they? You won't find their names in the Bible. Paul and Tim knew about them because there was a widespread Jewish legend in their day that said they were 2 of Pharaoh's magicians. You remember the story.

Exodus 7--Moses went to Pharaoh and said, "God said, Let my people go!" Pharaoh said, "NO!" So what happened next? A contest. Between Moses and the Egyptian magicians. Tradition says 2 of them were Jannes and Jambres.

What did they do? As Wiersbe points out, "These men opposed Moses by imitating what he did." When Moses cast Aaron's rod down so it turned into a serpent, the magicians did likewise. When Moses turned water into blood, the magicians followed suit. When Moses brought up all the frogs, so did the magicians. They

resisted God's man Moses by imitating him (until the miracle of the lice which they could not imitate).

Be aware of this. Satan's strategy is to corrupt the truth by imitating it. They put on an attractive front. They can talk religion. But in their heart they resist the truth. Do you know what God says about them?

"reprobate" = lit. "not" + "pleasing"; not standing the test; counterfeit

A person who is reprobate in the faith is one who may have made a profession of faith, but it was inauthentic. The test of time revealed his faith was not genuine.

Objection: You may say, "Wait. Are you insinuating that some people who say they are Christians are not?" Look at what Paul told the Corinthians (same word).

See: II Cor 13:5-7 "Examine yourselves whether you're in the faith..."

Tran: The church is under attack. From within. In the name of religion. We have a defense strategy. First we must know our enemy. Their tactics, and...

### B. Their Termination (9)

V 9 "But they shall proceed no further..."

There have been times throughout history when it seemed that heretics would win. You must admit it is discouraging to hear the statistics of the massive growth of cults like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses. But remember, falsehood may be fashionable... for a season. Error may spread and be popular for a time. But in the end, v 9 holds true--"their folly shall be manifest." "Be sure your sin will find you out." The termination of evil is certain.

God will preserve His truth in His true Church.

Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation"

Illust: The Russian church was under attack for decades by an atheistic system known as Communism. The church not only survived, but grew. Today it faces perhaps an even greater threat. I talked with John Bettig, from Ukraine 3 weeks ago. Greatest danger now--cults and false religious teachers--corruption from within

Tran: We must be aware of the Enemy. Secondly...

## **II. We must be aware of the Expectations (10-12).**

After thinking about the threat of the enemy for awhile, you may be overwhelmed! We need not be. Our focus must not be on the Enemy, but on the Savior. We must consider His expectations. What are they? His expectations involve 2 ingredients. Paul modeled both.

### A. The Standard of the Christian Life (10)

Notice the strong contrast.

V 10 "But thou"

Tim, there are dangerous religious people who are a threat to the church. They creep, capture, confuse, and corrupt. But as for you Tim! You are called by God to be different. You have a God-given standard Timothy. You know it because you saw me model it for you.

Q: What is our Standard for living the Christian life?

A: Paul highlights 7 ingredients of the standard he set.

1. "my doctrine" (=instruction)

Tim was Paul's disciple. Paul was the mentor, Tim the mentoree.

1:6 "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift.. by my hand."

1:13 "Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard from me."

2:2 "...the things you have heard from me..."

Listen. Paul labored to teach the churches under his care sound doctrine. Tim knew that. He knew Paul's aim wasn't to be flashy and flamboyant. He didn't try to entertain churches, to use his charisma to get a following like false teachers do. No. He taught sound, biblical truth--doctrine.

Warning: Look out for teachers that offer a "pseudo-Christianity." A mixture of humanism and success motivation, with a few verses sprinkled on top to make it sound religious.

2. "my manner of life"

God calls every Christian to be different from the world. To be distinct. We are called to live a holy life. We are to reflect God's holy character by our lifestyle. We must verify our doctrine by our behavior. Paul could say, "Tim you know I practiced what I preached."

3. "my purpose"

I like the way Wiersbe describes Paul, "Paul was a servant, not a celebrity." Paul was a man driven by purpose.

Acts 20:24 "But none of these things move me that I might finish my course, and the ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Paul knew why he lived. When his feet hit the floor in the morning, he knew what he was to accomplish that day. His aim was simple--to know Christ, and to make Christ known.

Q: What is your purpose in life? Your aim?

As a Christian, our aim should be this--to glorify God, to make His name weighty.

4. "my faith"

Paul lived by faith, not by sight. He had a reputation as being a man of faith.

Ask yourself, "Am I known as a person of faith? Do people know that I trust God?" Do your children know you trust God? What do your kids see you do when the bills pile up? Do they see you become agitated and irritable? Or see you trust God and His provision?

5. "my longsuffering" (=long passion)

The word has to do with your response to people who hurt you. Do you have a long fuse or a short fuse?

6. "my love" (= agape) That's the standard of NT Christianity.

7. "my patience" (= endurance, the ability to stick with it when the going gets tough)

There's the standard. It's what God expects of us. It's what Paul modeled. Paul is not boasting. He would say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." But he was not ashamed to invite people to, "Follow me as I follow Christ (I Cor 11:1)."

Q: Does your life match up to that standard? Illust:

Tran: There's the Standard.

Q: Is it easy to live acc to that standard? No...

### B. The Suffering of the Christian Life (11-12)

Remember, Paul is reminding Tim of what he already knew. Especially in v 11. V 11 "Persecutions, afflictions..."

How did Tim know what Paul suffered in those cities? That was Timothy's home. The first time Tim had ever seen Paul was 15 years earlier (1st mission trip).

Do you remember what happened to Paul in Antioch? Acts 13:50 "But the Jews...raised persecution against Paul and Barn, and expelled them out.."

What happened in Iconium? Acts 14:5-6 "And there was an assault made..."

What happened in Lystra? Acts 14:19 "...stoned Paul..."

Everywhere Paul went, he suffered for Christ. Some feel it was Paul's response to suffering that God used to reach Timothy. Tim was a citizen of Lystra. He could well have been there and seen the angry mob stone Paul and leave him for dead. Perhaps it was Paul's response to persecution that played a part in Tim's conversion. After all, Stephen's bravery in martyrdom impacted Paul.

So Paul suffered. And through it all, what did he learn about God?

V 11 "...out of them all the Lord delivered me." (4:18)

Now watch what Paul does next. After reminding Tim of his suffering...

V 12 "Yea, and all that are godly...shall suffer persecution."

All, not some.

Q: When do we tell people that being a Christian involves suffering? Do we wait until after they sign the conversion card, and then spring it on them?

What did Jesus do? He told people right up front that if they were going to follow Him, it would cost them everything (Mt 10:38).

Illust: Mrs. Jones, left \$72,500 to the dogs first, then the church

Quote: Wiersbe, "I wonder how Paul would match up with today's concept of a Christian leader. He would probably fail miserably. If he applied for service with a modern mission board, would he be accepted? He had a prison record; he had a physical affliction; he stirred up problems in just about every place he visited. He was poor, and he did not cater to the rich. Yet God used him, and we are being blessed today because Paul was faithful." (251)