

II TIMOTHY 3:1-9
COMING APOSTASY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that this is Paul's last letter that he wrote before he was martyred for his faith in Christ by Ceaser Nero. And he wrote this letter as he sat in the Mamertine prison there in Rome.

So his words are important. You don't just put fluff in a letter when it is your last, but you put all that is in your heart, what is important. And Paul is passing this on to Timothy to help him continue on in the faith and overseeing the church there in Ephesus!

You may have heard this story about the pastor who went to the ICU of a local hospital to visit a church member who was on life support. His prognosis was not very good!

So the pastor stood there at the man's bedside and spoke to him for several minutes.

As he did the patient grew very disturbed, he was very agitated.

Finally, he reached for his pad and wrote the pastor a note.

Well, the pastor did not want to disturb the man any longer, so he prayed for him and then left the hospital. And as he left, he slipped the note into his jacket pocket.

A few hours later the pastor received a call from a relative of this man saying that he had sadly passed away.

At the funeral service, about halfway through the service, the pastor remembered the note that this man had written. He had forgotten all about it until now!

So he reached into his jacket, pulled out the note and held it up to the people at the funeral service for this man. And he told them, ***“I have in my hand a piece of paper that contains the last words of our brother.”***

But the pastor never read it out loud to the people.

You see, the dead man had written on that piece of paper, ***“You’re standing on my oxygen tube!”***

I guess those were important last words and that is what we see here with Paul and what he is writing to Timothy! Remember in II Timothy chapter 2, we spent some three studies looking at our Christian character.

In other words, in the midst of living in this world, which we are all in this world, how are we to live out our faith? What are we to be like? What should be manifested in our lives?

And Paul gave us some nine points in what we are to be like, how we are to live out our faith, what people should see in our lives as Christians. He told Timothy and the Lord is telling us, that . . .

The soldier who is to be ***FOCUSED!***

The athlete who is to be ***OBEDIENT!***

The farmer who must be ***PATIENT!***

The message is about ***JESUS!***

The results of living for Christ is ***PERSECUTION!***

The way we stay focused is ***OUR HOPE OF GLORY!***

The Diligent Worker who ***RIGHTLY DIVIDES THE WORD OF TRUTH!***

The Sanctified Vessel who is ***SANCTIFIED FOR OUR MASTERS USE!***

The Gentle Servant who is ***HUMBLE, GENTLE IN HIS CORRECTION!***

Now you may be thinking, *“Pastor Joe, why is this so important? What is the big deal about the days we are living in?”*

This is a big deal because Paul is going to now speak of the coming apostasy and when he is speaking of apostasy he is speaking of the church, not the world and what they look like.

You see, Paul wanted Timothy to be prepared for what he was going to face, and the Holy Spirit wants us to be prepared as well.

In other words, things are going to get tough, it is not going to be easy and thus, we need to be prepared for what is coming.

I think that is important and I realize that some have criticized me for warning you of what is going on not only in the world but also in the church. But how do you avoid what God is saying in the Scriptures? I can't and I am sorry, I won't. If this is what the Holy Spirit gave to Paul to write, then it is important for us to know and understand.

Now what is an apostate?

Noah Webster defines apostasy like this.

An abandonment of what one has professed; a total desertion, or departure from one's faith or religion.

- American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster 1828

That is pretty simple, and it is just a withdrawal from faith and trust in the God of the Bible. Many people believe in the Bible. They believe in God. They even believe in Jesus. But they don't believe all that the Bible teaches. They don't believe the God of the Bible. And they don't believe in the Jesus of the Bible. They have fallen away from the truths of God found in the Word of God!

And this is how it looks.

- *They will twist Scripture or pervert the truth to fit an agenda.*
- *They live a life counter to the ideals set in place for Christianity.*
- *They're often marked by pride, flattery, cause division, and are more focused on things of this world than things from above.*

And Paul is going to explain that those who have fallen away, departed from the faith, will have various things manifested in their lives and they go contrary to what God has said in His Word, the Bible!

And in the church today, apostasy is like a cancer, and it is spreading quickly, and Christians seem to be more interested in their feelings, what they feel is right or wrong, rather than what the Word of God has to say!

Let me show you how we got to this place of apostasy, and it is really pretty simple. You begin to sow doubt with the Word of God, *“Has God indeed said?”* and then you teach seminary students, and they teach their congregations, and here we are today, departing from the faith that has been entrusted to us.

Listen to what we are told,

How have we reached this crisis point in the Church? It is rooted in the German School of Higher Criticism which invaded this country big-time in the 1920's. According to the *“scientific approach”* of this school of skeptics, the Bible is not the revealed Word of God. Rather, it is Man's search for God, and therefore it is filled with myth, legend and superstition.

Today this viewpoint dominates the seminaries of America. The Bible is studied not to be believed and obeyed but to be analyzed, dissected, and criticized. The result is that the Scriptures have lost their authority.

John Spong, Episcopal Bishop of New Jersey, has written books in which he denies the virgin birth, denies the miracles of Jesus, denies the resurrection, denies the Second Coming, and argues that Paul and Timothy were homosexual lovers. Bishop Spong has become so enamored with other religions that he has announced he will no longer witness to those caught up in the spiritual darkness of pagan faiths!

Similar apostate thoughts were mouthed by Norman Vincent Peale in 1984 on the Phil Donahue program. Peale announced, ***“It’s not necessary to be born-again. You have your way to God; I have mine. I found eternal peace in a Shinto shrine . . . I’ve been to Shinto shrines, and God is everywhere.”***

Phil Donahue was so shocked that he actually came to the defense of Christianity. ***“But you’re a Christian minister,”*** he retorted, ***“and you’re supposed to tell me that Christ is the way and the truth and the life, aren’t you?”***

Peale replied, ***“Christ is one of the ways. God is everywhere.”***

Look again at Peale’s incredible statement: ***“It’s not necessary to be born-again.”*** What did Jesus say? ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”*** (John 3:3). Who are we to believe?

- <https://bit.ly/3aT1fuk>

Here we are and I wonder how many Americans understand the Bible as ***“the literal word of God”***?

That depends on what you mean by ***“the literal word of God.”***

If you mean that the Bible is actually the very words of God, then, yes, the Bible is ***“the literal word of God.”***

But if by that you mean that we are always to interpret the Bible in a literal sense, then no. As I say to people, we need to take the Bible naturally, according to the type of literature, the grammar, etc. The Bible is written in a variety of genres (e.g., history, poetry, parable, prophecy, epistle) and should be interpreted according to genre in a historical-grammatical sense. . . .

[A] record-low 20% of Americans now say the Bible is the literal word of God, down from 24% the last time the question was asked in 2017, and half of what it was at its high points in 1980 and 1984.

Meanwhile, a new high of 29% say the Bible is a collection of “*fables, legends, history and moral precepts recorded by man.*” This marks the first time significantly more Americans have viewed the Bible as not divinely inspired than as the literal word of God.

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You see, as you move away from the truths of God, found in the Word of God, you open yourself up to any kind of false teaching. Thus, the church begins to bring in worldly philosophies, worldly teaching, worldly beliefs.

Jesus is not the only way. There was no virgin birth. Jesus is not God. The blood atonement is not true, God would never do something like that. We are basically good people. And the list goes on and Satan loves religion because he uses it to keep people away from God!

Again, why is this such a big deal?

It is simple. If you move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God, then your lifestyle, the things you do, the things you say, the things you believe regarding sin are going to be based upon your feelings and those are always changing. God's Word is not changing, and it will never change!

And what we will see here this morning in our study, is what is happening in the church today because, again, Paul is speaking of those who are in the church, who claim to be Christians but as you look at their life, it is hard to believe that they have ever come to saving faith!

So in our study this morning on the – **COMING APOSTASY!** - I have broken down these verses into the following main points and they are,

DIFFICULT TIMES – II TIMOTHY 3:1

THE PROBLEM – II TIMOTHY 3:2a

THE RESULT – II TIMOTHY 3:2-5

APOSTATES – II TIMOTHY 3:6-9

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in II Timothy chapter 3, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic –

COMING APOSTASY!

II TIMOTHY 3

VERSE 1

Notice how Paul opens up here.

He says, “**But know this . . .**”

And in the Greek, it is speaking of this. To “*constantly know, remember and understand so that you always will be on guard and respond properly.*”

He is speaking of how to know what to do which is based on the knowledge or based upon the Word of God is the idea.

Think about it. How do we, as Christians know what to do if we don't know what we are to be on guard against?

That is why I take the time to warn you of what is out there and obviously I can't warn you about everything, but there are things that are very important to be on guard against.

Paul is warning Timothy and I believe that the Holy Spirit is warning us to be on guard, to pay attention so that we may walk properly in the days we are living in!

That is why Paul is giving Timothy and us this warning.

And the period of time he is focusing on is “**the last days.**”

Now the \$100,000 question is, “*When did the last days begin or have the last days even begun yet?*”

People have all kinds of ideas of when the last days take place, but I think it is important not to go by feelings, not to go by what we think, but to let the Word of God speak for itself because God knows what He is speaking about.

I believe that the last days have started!

Please understand that I am not saying that the Tribulation Period has started, but the last days and I will show you why. I just want you to understand that there is a difference between the start of the Tribulation Period and the last days as you will see.

In Hebrews 1:1-2 we are told, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.”**

So the last days started with the ministry of Jesus, the incarnation as God became flesh and dwelt among us and they continue on until His Second Coming.

Now let’s think about this for a minute.

If the last days began with the ministry of Jesus, that means Paul was living in the last days.

So what is the point?

I think Paul is speaking about the last part of the last days or the time period prior to the Rapture of the Church and the start of the Tribulation Period and the coming forth of the Antichrist!

I think we can clearly see that as we move closer to the Rapture, things in our society and really in the world have deteriorated tremendously. Right is wrong and wrong is right and you can’t say that sin is bad, in fact, sin is flaunted in the face of God today!

Now, as we will see as we read verses 2-5 of II Timothy chapter 3, there are 19 general characteristics of man, a time of social deterioration, the wickedness of man’s heart manifested in his actions.

Paul calls them **“perilous times”** or times of stress because the evil of man is rampant!

The Greek word that Paul used for “**perilous**” speaks of being “*dangerous, hard to deal with, savage.*”

And, like I have said, what Paul warned Timothy about, that violent times will come prior to the return of Christ, there will also be an increase of demonic activity that will influence the lives of many!

That is what Paul warned Timothy about in I Timothy 4:1, “**Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.**”

And like I have said, what I believe Paul is saying, that these perilous times will become more and more frequent and intense the closer we get to Christ’s return.

With that I also believe the true church, believers, not just one church or denomination, will experience more and more persecution, not just from the world, but the apostate church as well. And that persecution may even be more intense from the apostate church!

Along these lines, one pastor talks about a book written by John Warwick Montgomery called “*Damned through the Church*” in which Montgomery discusses the perilous times as he offers a list of what he calls “*the damnable epochs of church history.*”

This is what was written,

He (Montgomery) identifies and discusses seven specific movements or theological Orientations - from the sacramentalism of the Middle Ages (Also called the Dark Ages) to the subjectivism that is so rampant in our own day - that are clearly unbiblical, ungodly, and destructive of the body of Christ.

As the title of the book implies, these false gospels are damning to their adherents.

In each of those perilous times, men's ideas were substituted for God's truth and therefore for God Himself.

Under sacramentalism, the church replaced God; under rationalism, reason was god; under orthodoxism, god was sterile, impersonal orthodoxy; under politicism, god was the state; under ecumenism, god was uncritical fellowship and cooperation among nominal Christians; under experientialism, god became personal experience; and under subjectivism self has become god.

The writer goes on to say,

It would be appropriate to add to Montgomery's list the current emphases on mysticism, which seeks to determine truth about God by intuition and feeling, and on pragmatism, which attempts to determine what is true by what produces desired effects.

These movements do not come and go but come to stay, so that as the years go on, the church accumulates them, and the battles continue.

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 3

And that is exactly why Paul says these times become more and more dangerous and savage the closer we get to Jesus' return. These false teachings don't just come and go, they come and stay as each new age is added to the others having an accumulative effect.

Now, keep in mind who Paul is speaking about here.

Yes, we see these characteristics in the unsaved, but Paul is speaking of leaders in the church, so-called believers. And in the end, what the leaders, what the pastors are teaching their people, the people will manifest these false teachings as well and it will affect their very lives and more importantly, their eternal destiny!

And folks, as I look at some leaders today, they are nothing more than wolves in sheep's clothing as they lead people away from God.

Their heresy does not lead to holiness but as Paul told Timothy, and again, the Holy Spirit is warning us, **“But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.”** II Timothy 2:16-18.

These men that Paul speaks of manifest these ungodly characteristics in their lives, and they are nothing more than apostate leaders in apostate churches! And tragically, they are getting people to follow their immoral ways, their apostate teachings, as I have said!

Maybe you are thinking that I am making much to do about nothing, but I would find it hard to believe that you don't see that we are living in – ***DIFFICULT TIMES!***

But if you are not seeing the problem, if you don't think there is a problem, then the next point is for you to see – ***THE PROBLEM!***

VERSE 2a

As we will see as we read on, there are some 19 points that Paul speaks of regarding what life in these last days will be like!

And I have included this first one, the one that is at the top of this list, **“lovers of themselves”** or self-love!

And please keep in mind that this list here in II Timothy chapter 3 does not describe the unbelieving world, although they obviously fit the picture. But again, that is not what Paul is speaking of!

He is speaking of the last day's church and in particular, its leaders that will influence and infect its listeners with its deadly poison!

This is the apostate church of the last days!

And as we will see as we read on, these apostates will be **“lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God”** and they will **“have a form of godliness but deny its power.”** (II Timothy 3:4, 5)

And the thing that has infected the church today, one of the things, and it is deadly, is this self-love or self-esteem.

Can you please show me a verse in the Bible where it tells us to build up our self-esteem, that we are to love ourselves more?

You won't be able to but there are plenty of verses that speak of crucifying the flesh, dying to self.

Paul, in Romans 12:3 wrote, **“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“For by the grace (unmerited favor of God) given to me I warn everyone among you not to estimate and think of himself more highly than he ought [not to have an exaggerated opinion of his own importance], but to rate his ability with sober judgment, each according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to him.”**

And in Galatians 5:24 Paul wrote, **“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”**

The whole teaching on self-love or self-esteem goes against everything the New Testament tells us to do with self and it was brought into the church when psychology was brought into the church!

Think about this for a minute. The word “*esteem*” means, “*To regard highly; to value greatly, to have a high opinion of.*”

That means that self-esteem would then be “*to regard self highly and to value self greatly, to have a high opinion of yourself.*”

We don’t need to be encouraged to love ourselves; we naturally have such a love. Now we are not to hate ourselves either, but we love ourselves plenty because I see how you all combed your hair, those of you who have hair, you got dressed up. If we truly hated ourselves, we would not care what people think of us, but we do because we love ourselves.

Again, it is not bad or evil, unless that is the focus of your life, that unholy trinity of – ***ME, MYSELF AND I!***

Do you know what self-esteem or self-love was once called? It was called – ***PRIDE!***

By changing the wording, we have made it more acceptable and brought pride right into the church! And we not only brought it into the church, but we have brought in all that goes with this monster as well.

And this is important because I think many don’t see this.

This self-love, self-esteem, pride is the foundation for all these other depravities.

Calvin put it like this, “But readers should note that *lovers of themselves*, which comes first, can be regarded as the source from which all the others that follow spring.”

And that is what we will be looking at, what flows from this self-love and as you will see, it is not pretty and yet, it is what we are seeing not only in the world today, but in the church as well – ***THE RESULT!***

VERSES 2-5

Again, let me start with this first one, because I believe all these other manifestations are the result of being a lover of self!

LOVERS OF SELF

Are people really self-centered today?

You bet they are, and this idea of self-love is also being promoted by apostate pastors who believe that self is not the problem, that self should be exalted.

I like how Barclay put it, ***“It is no accident that the first of these qualities will be a life that is centered in self. The adjective used is philautos, which means self-loving. Love of self is the basic sin, from which all others flow. The moment a man makes his own will the center of life, divine and human relationships are destroyed, obedience to God and charity to men both become impossible. The essence of Christianity is not the enthronement but the obliteration of self.”***

How true that is. The Bible tells us to crucify the flesh not feed it or build it up, as I have already said. (Matthew 16:24; Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:24)

Now, out of this self-love we see that we become . . .

LOVERS OF MONEY

We talked about this back in I Timothy chapter 6 where people are greedy for money and they will sacrifice anything just to make it rich, to have a little bit more!

If you are not content in what God has given you, then you will not be content in anything.

Paul warned Timothy in I Timothy 6:9-10, **“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”**

We then move on to . . .

BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS

Think about it, if self is controlling your life, then you will manifest these characteristics in your life.

You see, it all stems from the person believing ***“I am the center of my universe!”***

So you boast about what you have done.

You are proud thinking you are the greatest.

And blasphemers, in which the Greek word literally means ***“to injure with speech.”***

We think of blasphemy as something always directed at God, like words that slander and revile the character of God. Which is true, but it could also be used in terms of hurtful words directed at other people. In other words, they can be words intended to slander, revile and to destroy their character or reputation of another person.

From there we move on to . . .

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS

In our society today I see this as an epidemic where children are out of control, they are in charge and the parents have no rights in the matter.

In the school that my youngest son attended, many years ago, in grade school, he was told that if we did something that he didn't like, if we punished him, he could report us to the authorities!

And you know what, in our society today we are now reaping what we have sown with our children. If they don't respect those in authority, starting with their parents, then they will respect no one and that is exactly what we are seeing!

Some years ago, the *MINNESOTA CRIME COMMISSION* released a statement more in line with what the Bible teaches about man's basic nature.

This is what the report said and its conclusions, and I believe this was done in 1926, nail it. The problem is that no one was listening. We are told,

“Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish, and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it - his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncles' watch.

Deny him these once, and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness, which would be murderous were he not so helpless.

He is, in fact, dirty. He has no morals, no knowledge, no skills.

This means that all children - not just certain children - are born delinquent.

If permitted to continue in the self-centered world of his infancy, given free rein to his impulsive actions, to satisfy his wants, every child would grow up a criminal - a thief, a killer, or a rapist.”

And look at where we are today! We did not listen to God, and we did not listen to this report!

From there we moved to . . .

UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY, UNLOVING, UNFORGIVING

Here is one that we need to think about, are we thankful to God for all that He has given to us? Think about it, eternal life given to us through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. If we are not thankful for that, then we will not be thankful for anything!

We also see here that a man lacking any appreciation for what he has, he is unholy, or he doesn't hold anything sacred, just turn on the TV and see what these shows are saying.

He is unloving or without natural affection.

The love today is self-love and when I don't get what I want, I will move on!

They are unforgiving or they refuse to make peace, they refuse to reconcile their differences and I have seen this growing in the churches today, which saddens me greatly!

One writer put it like this,

[These] . . . are those who refuse to change, no matter how desperate even their own situation becomes, much less the situations of those they should care about. They are determined to have their own way regardless of the consequences, even to the point of knowingly destroying their own lives and the lives of their families. They do not forgive and do not want to be forgiven.

They are implacable, beyond reasoning, and inevitably self-destructive. As far as they are concerned, there is no compromise, no reconciliation, no court of appeal.

Their self-love is so extreme and their egoism so massive that absolutely nothing matters except doing as they please.

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 3

Next, we see . . .

SLANDERERS

The idea here is the spreading of false and malicious reports.

Let me give you this perspective of this word. The word “slanderers” could also be translated “*malicious gossips*”, and it is the Greek word diabolos from which we get the English word “*diabolical*” from.

Now look at what we see here. Diabolos means “*accuser*” and is used thirty-four times in the New Testament as a title for Satan.

What’s my point?

My point is that if you are blinded by self-love, you can easily travel down this road of being a malicious gossip and in doing so you are doing the very work of Satan.

Well, that is not a very pretty picture!

No, it is not because it is not intended to be!

Then there is . . .

WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL

The idea here is that their passions are out of control, the need to satisfy self is outweighing what is right.

Look at the problems people have today as they are without self-control: Sex, Drinking, Drugs, Lying, Eating, and-so-on.

We now even have therapies for these so-called addictions, we don’t like to call them sins, but they are!

What is the big motto for our day?

One is, “*No rules!*”

Another is, *“Live outside the lines!”*

And there is, *“Do whatever seems right in your eyes!”*

And what happens is that the lover of self eventually becomes a slave to self and will ultimately be destroyed through the excesses he calls *“freedom”*, but which only leads to bondage and destruction.

Interestingly enough, *“Self-control”* is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed by Paul in Galatians 5:23.

We move on to . . .

BRUTAL

Why will man be brutal?

Because, if he is self-centered, it will be all about him no matter what. And what we see is that man will be like a wild animal, savage in his actions.

Just turn on the news and you can see how brutal, how cruel man is!

As we continue on here, we see that . . .

DESPISERS OF GOOD

How true this is as many today call good evil and evil good. They can protest for having gay marriages, but we are arrested when we protest against gay marriages. They can protest for abortion rights, but we are arrested when we protest against abortion.

People are opposed to good because it exposes their evil!

And as we continue here, we see a few things lumped together. They are . . .

***TRAITORS, HEADSTRONG, HAUGHTY, LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER
THAN LOVERS OF GOD***

There is that desire to move towards betrayal, recklessness, being puffed up, loving pleasure rather than loving God.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

It should be noted that pleasure, especially in this context, is not limited to the desire for comfort, fine food, sexual satisfaction, and other indulgences normally associated with hedonism.

As already mentioned, a self-centered person also derives perverse pleasure from such things as malicious gossip, brutality, and treachery.

His satisfaction comes, in part, from the pain and misery he sadistically inflicts on others, including parents and supposed friends.

This depraved pleasure is not loved more than God, but rather than . . . God. In other words, the true God has no place at all in the thinking and living of a false teacher or of anyone who is self-centered.

Jesus told Nicodemus, “And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 3

As we continue on, we see that they have . . .

A FORM OF GODLINESS

False teachers are phonies who “*morph*” into their “*Christian form*” when they’re with Christians and come across all holy and spiritual but in reality, it’s nothing more than a façade.

Here is the reality and here is what we are seeing today in the church. Their outward shape is religious but inwardly they are ravenous wolves! And the people catch this attitude as they have developed a “*salad bar*” religion, picking and choosing what they like, being religious but not Biblical!

They lack the power to live because they lack the Spirit of God, and they lack the Spirit of God because they are not saved!

Let me show you what I mean.

Several years ago, when Julie and I were on vacation in Fort Lauderdale, I went and sat down by the ocean, they had some benches there.

And someone who was homeless came up to me asking for money. He was swearing and cussing, and I couldn’t believe the way he was talking but for him, it was just natural.

Well, it was natural until I started sharing Jesus with him and then his vocabulary changed as well. I knew he was playing me, giving to me what I wanted to hear so he could get some money from me. It didn’t happen.

What was interesting is how his speech changed because his audience changed!

Now, what do these 18 characteristics stem from?

Remember what I said and remember where we started.

It all started out with ***SELF-LOVE!***

That is why we are to deny self, crucify the flesh because if you don’t, you open yourself up to these other characteristics being manifested in your life.

Now, as you read through these things, are they an indication that we are living in the last days, that the Lord’s return is getting closer?

I believe they are!

Thus, Paul's warning to Timothy is that true believers are to turn away from these people who put forth this false faith because to associate yourself with them not only condones their actions, but it is dangerous for your faith!

Heibert warns, ***“It is the fearful portrayal of an apostate Christendom, a new paganism masquerading under the name of Christianity.”***

One more point here and that is what J. C. Ryle wrote over 100 years ago. He understood what was happening and now it is growing by leaps and bounds.

He wrote,

Look in another direction at those hundreds of people whose whole religion seems to consist in talk and high profession. They know the theory of the gospel intellectually and profess to delight in evangelical doctrine. They can say much about the “soundness” of their own views, and the “darkness” of all who disagree with them, but they never get any further!

When you examine their inner lives, you find that they know nothing of practical godliness. They are neither truthful, nor charitable, nor humble, nor honest, nor kind-tempered, nor gentle, nor unselfish, nor honorable.

What shall we say of these people? They are Christians, no doubt, in name and yet there is neither substance nor fruit in their Christianity. There is but one thing to be said – they are formal Christians. Their religion is an empty form.

- R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, 1-2 Timothy and Titus, To Guard the Deposit, p. 244

In other words, they have **“... a form of godliness but deny its power. . . .”** II Timothy 3:5.

It reminds me of a story I heard years ago but truly speaks of Christianity today. It went like this,

“I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk, or a snooze in the sunshine. I don’t want enough of Him to make me love a man of a different color or pick beets with a migrant worker.

I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.

I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please.”

One day soon the world we live in will all realize that the Almighty doesn’t come in \$3 portions. Jesus is either Lord of all, or He’s not Lord at all!

As we read on, Paul is going to be speaking of – ***APOSTATES!***

VERSES 6-9

Paul says that these false teachers, with their false doctrine creep in, slither in you might say like a serpent, they worm their way into homes, and churches as well, and they lead people away from the true and living God!

And the focus here is women, because they were home most of the time and these men were hitting them with their false teaching.

Men are also taken in by false teachers with their false doctrine!

And isn’t it amazing that they are always learning and yet not able to come to the truth.

Why is that?

Because they are not interested in the truths of God found in the Word of God. They have their own ideas, and they will run with these ideas until new ones come along and then they will run with that!

Also, the things of God are spiritually discerned and thus, if they are not saved, they can't come to the knowledge of the truth apart from God.

And, yes, if they are seeking God, He will reveal Himself to them, but they are not seeking God, but their own lustful ideas and they are spreading them like a cancer!

Keep in mind that in the last days deception will play a big role and we are seeing deception growing like weeds in the church today!

And it is easy to get people to believe a lie because it will feed their ego, it will build up self and make them feel so good, and yet, they do not have the knowledge of the truth, so the deception is deadly.

Why do people fall prey to these false teachings, these false doctrines, these doctrines of demons?

It is simple, ***PRIDE!***

They think they know better, and no one is going to show them in the Word that they are wrong. That is dangerous and it is sad to see. Today it seems like people are not interested in the truth, but they just want to experience life the way they want and no one is going to tell them that they are wrong, not even God!

And in the end, it is as Paul said, “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” II Timothy 3:7.

And for these false teachers that are promoting this garbage, they are religious, but they lack the power because they don't have the relationship with the true and living God and ungodliness grows!

And as Paul goes on, he gives us an example. Keep in mind that Paul is speaking of these false teachers and here we see that he compares them to Jannes and Jambres, ones that resisted Moses!

Who are these guys?

Jannes and Jambres seem to be the Egyptian men who opposed Moses before Pharaoh in Exodus. (Exodus 7:8-13, 19-23; 8:5-7, 16-19)

Now these may be symbolic names given to them, not their real names for Jannes means "*he who seduces*" and Jambres means "*he who makes rebellion.*"

Not a big deal, but I do believe that these are probably their names.

Now when God did a miracle through Moses, these men, by the power of darkness were able to copy it, but only up to a point.

Of this, listen to what one commentator had to say. He wrote,

These were able to work *real miracles* – not mere parlor tricks – but by the power of darkness and not the power of God. When Moses cast down his rod and it turned into a serpent, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. When he turned water into blood, they could do the same. When Moses brought forth a plague of frogs, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. Yet eventually they could not match God miracle-for-miracle, and their occult powers were shown to be inferior to God's power.

- David Guzik

I find it interesting today that many are running to and fro seeking after miracles and not even realizing that what they are seeking, these miracles, may not be of God, but they may be demonic in nature!

In II Thessalonians 2:9-10 Paul warns us, **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”**

Not real miracles, not that they did not happen, but they are not of God and thus, people will believe all kinds of lies because they don't want to receive the truth, and like Jannes and Jambres, *“their minds are rotten to the core.”*

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

Satan is an imitator; what God does, Satan counterfeits. The religious leaders in the last days will have a counterfeit faith, and their purpose is to promote a lie and resist the truth of God's Word. They deny the authority of the Bible and substitute human wisdom and philosophy. In their attempt to be “modern,” they deny the reality of sin and people's need for salvation.

- Warren Wiersbe

The thing I want you to notice is that Satan's power is limited, God is still in control. You see, no matter how dark things may seem, the light of Christ will dispel that darkness because the spirit of the last days is not stronger than the power of Jesus!

Amen to that!

Our hope is in Him, He will help us stand strong in the last days – don't fall asleep, don't become complacent!

Now I want to deal with this just for another few minutes, I think this is important for us to understand.

Notice that these false teachers have “**corrupt minds.**” And the idea here is that their mind is rotten through and through. Not a good thing and yet, people are listening to them and following them.

And please understand that these false teachers are “**disapproved concerning the faith.**”

What is the point?

The Greek word for “**disapproved**” speaks of being rejected. It was a word that was used of metals that did not pass the test of purity and thus, were discarded. Their teachings need to be discarded!

It was also used for counterfeits of various sorts. Not a good thing. They are not giving to you the truths of God found in the Word of God, their message is a counterfeit message!

Thus, Paul is speaking of people in the church who claimed to be Christians, but by their actions, by their words, they were not, they were counterfeits, they were apostates!

And that can be discouraging as we look at the church today and we see all the false teaching, all the false doctrine that has infiltrated it.

But listen again to what Paul said in II Timothy 3:9, “**but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.**”

Yes, they can cause great damage within the church, they came harm lots of people, but in the end, like Jannes and Jambres were exposed and their power was shown not to be from the true and living God, so too will they be exposed.

They will not be able to stand, these false teachers, on the day of God's judgment!

The warning is there about this – *COMING APOSTASY!* And I believe that it is here.

Now that we are aware, what are we going to do about it?

That truly is our next study – *CONFRONTING APOSTASY!*

Remember what Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “. . . ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

May we take heed to those words of Jesus!