

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Danger in the Church, Part 3

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:5-9

Code: 55-14

Let's open our Bibles then to 2 Timothy chapter 3...2 Timothy chapter 3. This is the third message in a series entitled "Danger in the Church...Danger in the Church." We're looking at the first nine verses here. The beginning verse really sets the tone for the passage.

Paul writes, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult, or dangerous times, will come." Now you'll remember last time that we went over the fact that the last days refers to the whole period of time from the first to the second coming of Christ. The last days is the age in which we live. When the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, He initiated the last days. We are living in the last days.

And in these last days dangerous or difficult times will come. Will come where? To the church, in the church. The word "times" means epochs, seasons or eras. So the point that we established was that through the duration of the church age, from the Christ came until He returns, there will be epochs and seasons and times and eras and ages of grave difficulty, peril and danger to the church. And verse 13 indicates that they will proceed from bad to worse. They will be generated by evil men and impostors.

So you will have through the history of the church the true church moving along under the direction of Christ and constantly coming against that church evil men, spiritual impostors who will bring about times and seasons and epochs and eras of grave danger to the life, power, testimony of the church.

Now I want you to understand this a little bit not only from a biblical viewpoint but from a historical one. So this morning I want to just wait before we look to the text and I want to digress long enough to give you a sense of what's been happening in the history of the church so that you can get a feeling for the reality of the fulfillment of the prophecy of verse 1.

I was reading this week a book published in 1970 by John Warwick Montgomery entitled Damned Through the Church. It's an interesting little book and in it Montgomery chronicles what he calls "the damnable epochs of church history," or the times when the church was sending people to hell instead of sending people to heaven. And the church has done that. And by the way, still does that under the name of Christianity, certainly not under its reality.

There have been damnable epochs in the life of the church. Now these can be identified, says Montgomery, at least starting from the Dark Ages. And I want you to follow the flow because I think it

will give you an understanding of where we are today.

The first dangerous episode in church history he calls "sacramentalism." The era of sacramentalism. From about 500 A.D. until about 1500 A.D., a full thousand years, the church was engulfed in sacramentalism. What we mean by that is a religion of ritual and ceremony without reality. What we mean by that is a church that has become Christ so that the focal point is not to worship Christ but to worship the church, not to be right with God but to be right with the church, not to have a personal and intimate relationship with the living God, but to function through the ritual, ceremony and rites of the church. As I said, this was known as the Dark Ages.

It was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. There was also the existence of the Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church. The Church prescribed certain sacraments, certain ceremonies, certain forms of religion, rituals involving candles and beads and penance and all kinds of external functions by which through some automatic operation in outward form, a person could be made right with God. These prescribed religious acts and duties and functions and ceremonies really made a person right with the church, not God but the church had become Christ. And the issue was to worship the church and not Christ.

Martin Luther came along in the 1500's, as you know, and attacked the heretical and blasphemous institution and its sacramentalism successfully. And what prompted his heart was what he said to the Diet at Worms when he had to defend himself, when he said, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God." He found that the Word of God ran contrary to sacramentalism. But during that one thousand years, the Word of God was taken out of the hands of the people and they were subject to whatever interpretation to the Word of God the church gave. It was only when Luther discovered the reality that the Bible taught the just shall live by faith that he realized the tremendous error of the church. A thousand years had gone by, a thousand years of great danger to the souls of men as the church propagated sacramentalism instead of true Christianity.

So much was Luther devoted to the Scripture that he was compelled to denounce sacramentalism. He said, "Neither sacrament nor priest but faith in the Word of God justifies you. What concern of yours would it be if the Lord spoke through an ass, as long as you hear His Word in which you may hope and believe." And then he said, "I recognize neither the father, the mother, the relative, the government nor the Christian church that wants to prevent me from listening to God's Word," end quote. And, of course, one of the things the church did, as I said during that time of the Dark Ages, was keep the Word of God out of the hands of the people so they might not interpret it for themselves. Luther recognized that ritual and sacrament had substituted the church for the Lord of the church. And the church of Luther's day was in bondage to its sacramental idol. It had a ritual without a relationship. It had penance without forgiveness. It had ceremony without Christ. A disastrous dangerous time in which the hearts and souls of men were kept in bondage and the church was more aggressive in sending people to hell than it was in sending them to heaven.

And then Montgomery points out that a few hundred years after the Reformation, in the eighteenth century there came a second dangerous epoch in the church which he calls "rationalism...rationalism." By the time of the eighteenth century, the time of Napoleon in the 1700's, the enlightenment had come and men were beginning to come out of the Dark Ages and they were beginning to look at the creativity and the ability and the genius of the human species and they followed that path until they determined that man was ultimate and the mind of man was the ultimate determiner of truth and reason superseded revelation and the mind of man sat in judgment on the Word of God. It was the time of the rise to power of Napoleon.

Interestingly enough, when Napoleon came to the end of his life and was in exile on St. Helena, he told Count Montathalon(?) these words, and I quote, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love." Napoleon said, "Jesus Christ was more than a man, He asks for the human heart. He demands it unconditionally. And all who sincerely believe in Him experience that remarkable supernatural love toward Him. Time, the great destroyer, is powerless to extinguish this sacred flame. This is it which proves to me quite convincingly the divinity of Jesus Christ," so said Napoleon. And we can only regret that he didn't come to that conclusion much earlier in his life.

But while Napoleon was coming to the conclusion of the supernatural character of Christ, his age was coming to the conclusion that reason prevailed and anything supernatural didn't quite fit in. And the age of rationalism was born and Germany was engulfed in rationalism and France was engulfed in rationalism. And reason became God. And some went so far as to say there is no God. And others took the Bible and stripped out of it all the miracles. And others, known as the Critical Theorists attacked the Bible and said if it doesn't make sense to us, if it doesn't fit our understanding of history, it didn't happen that way. And they denuded the Scripture of its authority, of its truthfulness. You had to be able to understand everything rationally and reason said whether revelation was true or not. The Bible had to bow to the mind of man.

Certainly the most well-known and influential book during that time as far as Americans are concerned was one written by Thomas Paine, a patriot of note, who lived from about 1737 to 1809. The title of His book, The Age of Reason. And in the book by Paine, he basically split his book into two parts. The first part of the book was advocating rationalism, was the supremacy of human logic, the mind is the ultimate determiner of truth. The second part of his book was an attempt to debunk and discredit everything about the Bible...the ethics, the morality, the historicity and everything else of the Bible was denied. And Thomas Paine set upon a course to postulate reason as supreme and the Bible as unreliable. In fact, he said it had blasphemous conceits in it that masqueraded as if they were the truths of God.

Now during the Age of Reason people went so far as to deny God altogether and what we know today as modern atheism was born out of that. In France and Germany atheists began to arrive on the scene. And atheism became acceptable. On one occasion in Paris in an act against believing in God, there was a veiled female brought before a group of leaders. One of the leaders of France taking this veiled female by the hand said, and I quote, "Mortals, cease to tremble before the powerless thunders of a God whom your fears have created. Henceforth acknowledge no divinity but reason. And I offer you its noblest and purest image. If you must have idols, sacrifice only to such as this." And he pulled off a veil and there was a woman. They took that woman, mounted her on some kind of carriage down to Notre Dame and put her on the altar there as the reigning deity to be adored. And maybe we shouldn't wonder why French morality has been what it's been. And this certainly illustrates Luther's contention that reason was the devil's whore and that reason could corrupt the Christian faith at its very center because it always sets itself against the mind of God.

They failed to recognize what Isaiah understood when he said in chapter 55 verses 8 and 9 of God, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." But man said not so. Our thoughts are higher, our ways are higher. We'll sit on judgment of you. And reason became the new deity and instead of Jesus Christ, they worshiped the mind. And out of it came theological liberalism and higher criticism, denying Scripture and its miraculous reality. This was a deadly time in church history. This was a time of grave peril to the life of the church.

And what made it even worse was that sacramentalism wasn't dead either. And so you have sacramentalism and rationalism. And now there are two reigning dangers in the church...the existence of rationalism only adds to the already existing sacramentalism. And western civilization and the church is now engulfed in a two-fold danger, sacramentalism on the one hand and rationalism on the other.

Montgomery likes to point out that there was a third epoch of danger in the life of the church, he calls it orthodoxism. A hundred years later by the time you get into the nineteenth century in the 1800's, mass printing has arrived. And for the first time in the history of the church, everybody has a Bible. The Bibles are being mass produced, even to the extent that they have been reduced in size and that a person could carry with him a New Testament. Heretofore that had not been the case.

The printing press was only around in the time of Martin Luther. And now finally there's a way to get Bibles in the hands of people. And so people had the Bible. But according to an analysis of the time, they had a Bible personally but had very little interest in what it contained. The legacy of sacramentalism and rationalism was a lack of confidence in the Bible which was now available but treated with shallowness and indifference, a lack of depth, a lack of zeal.

One Danish philosopher well known to theologians and philosophy students by the name of Soren Kierkegaard who lived about 1813 to 1855 wrote the following assessment of contemporary orthodoxy. He said, "A young girl of 16 summers, it is her confirmation day. And among the many tasteful and beautiful gifts, she also receives the New Testament in a very pretty binding. Now that is what one may call Christianity. To tell the truth, no one expects and probably rightly that she anymore than anybody else will read it, or at any rate not as originally intended. This book was given her as a potential consolation in life. Here should you need it you will find consolation. Of course, it is assumed that she will never read it anymore than any other young girls. If she does, however, it will not be read as originally intended or she would discover that right here in that book you find such terrors that in comparison other terrible things that occur in the world are almost a joke. Yet that is supposed to be Christianity.

"No...he says...I would be tempted to make Christianity another proposition. Let us gather in every single copy of the New Testament, let us cart the whole collection out to an open place or up a mountain top and then while all of us kneel down, let someone speak to God saying, `Take it back, this book. We humans the way we are should not get involved with such a book, it only makes us unhappy,'" end quote.

Kierkegaard said if you're going to treat the Bible that way, then take it up on a mountain and tell God to take it back and send you one that is more accord...in accord with the way you want to live. Orthodoxy...having a correct theology of which you are ignorant and to which you are indifferent. His perception was that people were possessing but not willing to live by the Bible. This too was deadly to the church in Europe. The church in Europe was still buried under the pile of sacramentalism and rationalism and now it gets the Bible and it has orthodoxy in its hand but it is a dead cold orthodoxy.

A hundred years later came another dangerous epoch. And it almost seems as though the longer the church age goes the faster the new epochs come. They started out maybe coming a little bit slowly and now they're coming about every hundred years, if we follow this analysis. And you come into the twentieth century and what do you see? You see the danger to the church from politicism, politics. And it comes in a curious way, according to Montgomery. He says it shows up in Nazi Germany under Hitler. Realize this that when Hitler rises to power the legacy of Germany is a religious heritage...Martin Luther, the Reformation. Europe is engulfed in a sacramental and rationalistic and somewhat cold dead orthodoxy but it is nonetheless historically and traditionally Christian. If Hitler is going to conquer the world and massacre millions of people, if Hitler is going to murder six million Jews, if Satan is to effect his plan, somehow he's got to lay the church low because surely the church even at its worst would stand against such a massacre. How then is Hitler going to succeed with what he wants to do under the inspiration of Satan unless he gets the church out of the picture? He can't. And so he has to act against the church. And maybe you don't know it but the first line of

attack that Hitler made was against the theology of historic Christianity. The church had to be politicized. And so he sucked the church into national socialism. And then began to alter its theology.

The church was politicized. There was a movement within the Nazi Party to change the character of Christian theology. At first it was as simple as the movement being called "Deutsch Christin(?)." If you were a German Christian, which that means, you were a Nazi. All Nazis were true German Christians. It was even called the German Christian Faith Movement. Swallow up the church. The second thing was to eliminate the Old Testament because the Old Testament celebrated Jewishness. It talked too much about the Jews and their relation to God so they eliminated the Old Testament. The critics, the higher critics, the rationalists helped them with that somewhat. And then they eliminated the parts of the New Testament that speak of the Jewishness of Jesus. What they were left with was an emasculated message, what was left was their Deutsch Christianity, tolerated by national socialism.

Typical of the German Christian Faith Movement was Hans Kurl(?) who gave a speech in 1937. He had been appointed by Hitler as the minister of church affairs. He was in charge of the church in Germany. This is what he said in 1937. "Positive Christianity is national socialism. National socialism is the doing of God's will. God's will reveals itself in German blood. Christianity is not dependent on the Apostles' Creed. True Christianity represented by the Party and the German people are now called by the Party and especially the Furer to a real Christianity. The church has not been able to generate the faith that moves mountains but the Furer has, the Furer is the herald of the new revelation," end quote. It was essential to them to engulf the church in a new theology that allowed for a Hitler to massacre the world.

In spite of great opposition from true believers who as you know were many of them put in prison, many of them lost their lives, the church got involved, was sucked in. The church confused, the gospel disappeared and Hitler went on his merry way.

Now the frightening result when you look at history of the danger of sacramentalism, the danger of rationalism, the danger of orthodoxism, the danger of politicism, the frightening thing, beloved, is that the church continues to accumulate all of this so that today we have in the church we have sacramentalism, we have Christianity quote/unquote where the church is an end in itself and there is ritual without a relationship. We have rationalism. We still have elements within quote/unquote Christianity where mind is over the Bible, where reason is over revelation. And we have plenty of dead orthodoxy, correct theology connected to unholy living. And we have politicism where the church has been blended with the state and the state is supreme. We've accumulated all of it. And therefore this is the most dangerous of all times.

Sacramentalism still abounds in Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, some Anglican areas and in many other kinds of churches where a less sophisticated kind of ceremonialism reigns supreme.

Rationalism abounds in liberal theology being espoused in all kinds of places, in neo-orthodox theology, in the new redaction criticism theology, denying Scripture inerrancy. Orthodoxy abounds in churches with the right theology who spend their time defending their dogma while ignoring holiness, love, and compassion and Christ's likeness. And politicism is still here with the social gospel, the gospel of politics and all the rest. These are dangerous times.

And you can drive from this part of town to the end of the San Fernando Valley down Roscoe Boulevard and you could probably put one of those labels on most of the churches you pass. Some of them are dangerous. Some of them are in to sacramentalism. Some of them are in to rationalism. They're just giving book reviews and saying the mind is what matters and making the Bible subject to their own minds. Some of them are in to dead, cold, unloving, ungracious, unchristlike orthodoxy. Some of them are in to political action and social gospel. The danger is all around us. And I might even go a step further and tell you that there's another epoch danger that's come even in the last life time, that is ecumenism. Go back to the fifties and in the fifties was spawned the mentality...let's not talk about theology, let's talk about love, let's all get together. And giving birth to the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, the Cooperative Evangelism Efforts, everybody get together, don't talk doctrine, let's not make that an issue, a sentimentalistic attitude called love became the reigning principle of the Christian life. It tolerates sin, it tolerates error, it tolerates everything, let's all get together. And ecumenism is a danger to the church because it sucks its strength, it sucks its doctrine, it pulls out its conviction. It makes it compromise. That came in the fifties.

And now they're coming faster than ever. In the sixties came what I like to call "experientialism." The new Charismatic Movement which says that that which reigns supreme is my experience, not the Bible. But have I seen God, touched God, seen Jesus, heard angels, gotten a revelation from heaven, had an experience...experientialism is a danger to the church. It came like a wave in the sixties. It's still with us, we just keep accumulating them.

And what is it in the seventies, folks? We've got another in the seventies, subjectivism...subjectivism. Montgomery says this, "Our time is possibly the most subjective period in all of church history. Today everybody talks in psychological terms. We enjoy nothing better than to probe our inner life and its real or imagined frustrations. We wallow in our own misery. We go to psychologists. We go to psychiatrists. We go to counselors. The predelection(?) has been called 'navel watching' That is to say we enjoy nothing better than to sit down narcissistically and look at our own psyche navels. This delightful activity allows us to become completely involved in ourselves. We enjoy our problems. Someone has called our epoch the age of analysis. And it is that for we want to solve all our problems by subjective concentration on them. Luther in diametric opposition to hyper subjectivism says, 'Christianity in its entirety lies outside us in the righteousness of Christ and in the mercy of God. The man who has spiritual problems will never solve those problems by looking in upon himself. There is no solution inside, rather the solution is outside. The solution lies in what God did for us on the cross

and that depends not upon ourselves but only upon the Christ who while we were yet sinners died for us," end quote.

Subjectivism, experientialism, ecumenism to add to all the rest. We have accumulated all of this and we live in a dangerous time.

Now how we going to recognize it? How we going to recognize the impostors and the false teachers? How can we be discerning? First of all, and there are four ways, first of all, they will be lovers of self, verses 2 through 4, "For men will be lovers of self." And then you remember over the last two weeks we've gone through all of those results of loving yourself. Lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Now that's a dangerous group, folks. Now remember, they're in the church. But the sewer pipe is called "love of self," the rest of the stuff flows down the pipe...lovers of self.

There's a second point of recognition. The people who are bringing about this danger, who are fostering these false systems are not only lovers of self but notice number two, they are charlatans of religion, verse 5. Follow closely now we're going to go through this pretty quick. They are charlatans of religion, verse 5, "Holding to a form, morphosis, a structure, a shape of godliness or true religion, spiritual virtue, although they have denied its power and avoid such men as these."

Spiritual fakes, phony religionists masquerading as representatives of God's truth when in fact they are not. May I say theirs is a paganized Christianity. Theirs is a paganized Christianity. It is a form of Christianity. It is an outside silhouette. It is the shape of Christianity and that's all. There's no power. There's no power. This, by the way, isn't new. Isaiah spoke against it. Ezekiel spoke against it. Paul spoke against it in Romans chapter 2. Paul spoke against it in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy in several places. In Titus 1 and verse 16 Paul says, "They profess to know God but their deeds give evidence that they deny Him. They are detestable, disobedient and worthless." They profess to know God, that's the key you want to understand.

Satan is subtle. He never tells you the truth about who he really is and his emissaries never tell you the truth about who they are either. They come in with a paganized form of Christianity to deceive, to lull people, to sucker people. They are charlatans of religion.

Listen, beloved, the enemy of the church is not the man standing on the outside speaking against religion. The enemy that threatens the life of the church is the man on the inside who says he's religion and lies. That's the subtlety.

And so he says, "They are men and women with a form of godliness," eusebeia, form of reverence, a form of commitment to the true religion...although they have denied its power. That is they have

positively rejected its reality. They have the form without the reality. The structure without the life. The Holy Spirit is not in them, the life of God is not in them, they are hypocrites. They have no love for God, they have no love for His truth, they have no love for His people. They love themselves. We saw that and they want to feed themselves, aggrandize themselves, indulge themselves and reach their own goals. So he says keep on...present tense imperative...turning away from such men as these. Keep on avoiding. Very strong verb, very strong verb, apotrepo, trepis the little thing from which we get intrepidation, which means fear. The idea is strongly fear them, avoid them with terror, avoid them with horror, avoid them because you're afraid of them. Don't have anything to do with these kinds of people. Spiritual phonies, false teachers, hypocrites, liars and they appear on the scene of Christianity from season to season, they come in sacramental robes. They come in rationalistic attire with their intellectual mindset and all their degrees, their academic garb. They come in the form of orthodoxy but they are dead and without life. They come with their political goals and dreams and ends. They come with their ecumenical agenda, they come with their experiential approach to everything. They come with their over-riding subjectivism. Whatever it is, they are spiritual phonies. They lead the church away from the truth and they accumulate, they get worse and worse as time goes on.

Now how do you recognize these so you can avoid them? Just three little things can help. Number one, check the character...check their character. Put it simply, folks, truth and virtue are two sides of the same coin...truth and virtue go together. You don't have truth without virtue. You don't have virtue without truth. If some...you look at their life...if you see virtue there, if you see genuine godliness there, if you see holiness there...then they're connected to that which produces that which is truth. If you look at the life and you see all the ungodliness and the unholiness and the things that are not honoring to God, you can be sure that that is born out of a lack of the truth. Truth and virtue go together, they're twins. They go back to back, so check their character.

Secondly, check their creed...what do they teach? Does it consistently square with the Word of God? Are they saturated with the Scripture? Do they open their mouth and speak the truth of God? Or are you getting their opinion and their whims and their fancies and their perspectives? And is it contrary to Scripture? Or is it subtly deviated from Scripture? Or does it misinterpret Scripture? Check their creed.

Thirdly, check their converts. Boy, what a telling thing this is. Find out what the people who follow them are like. Are they justifying their sin by the sin of their leader? Are they in to the same materialism that their leader is in to? Or are they walking in a godly way, exalting Jesus Christ, loving God's Word, holding it high? If they are, that's because somebody is leading them that way.

You can tell by their character. Look at their life. By their creed, are they biblical to the core? You can also tell by their converts. Take a look at who is following them, what kind of people do they attract? The kind of people who will hold high the banner of truth and integrity and virtue and

holiness?

Grave danger to the church from the charlatans of religion. Watch out then for the lovers of self and the charlatans of religion. And, beloved, I confess to you that it's hard to avoid them because they're everywhere. And with media the way it is today you can't escape if you wanted to escape. They have ways...radio, television, printed page.

That lead us to the third identifying mark, they are called captors of the weak...captors of the weak in verses 6 and 7. Verse 6 says, "For among them are those, or literally, out from them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins led on by various impulses or lusts." That's an interesting verse. They're captors of the weak. From among them, or out from them, out of this group come the wolves...and here's their strategy...they enter into households. That's where they want to get. They want to get into the family, they want to get into the household. The word "enter," endunomeans to creep, to worm, to wiggle your way in insidiously. They don't come with honesty, they sneak in. It's the same thing you see in Jude verse 4, you remember that little verse, "certain persons have crept in unnoticed, ungodly persons who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ." They creep in unawares, they sneak in suddenly masked and the whole agenda is to capture you. You have to be on guard for that.

The tactics of these self-loving religious phonies...they want to get converts. They want to get converts. They want to mislead people. You say, "Why do they want converts?" They want power. They want money. They want converts. They want to deceive and mislead to gain power and money. And who is their primary target? Look at it in verse 6, they sneak in to households and they take captive weak women. Now that is not a...that is not a characterization of women on a general basis. Not all women are weak women. But the women that are susceptible to these people are the weak among the women. They're unprotected women. They're women with a unique vulnerability.

Now given the biblical definition of the role of a woman, we understand to some degree that women need protection. They are, as Peter says, the weaker vessel. And they need the care and protection of a husband. That's why in Ephesians 5 a husband is to love, protect, cherish, nurture his wife, to be her savior literally, her deliverer from harm and danger. Women are to be protected. Men are to be protectors.

And when women are out from their protection, they have a high degree of vulnerability. Satan got Eve apart from Adam, tempted Eve in her vulnerability and the whole human race fell. Women need to be cared for and protected. Women need when they're young and before they're married to be under the protection of a father. When they're married, they're to be under the protection of a husband. When they're widowed they're to be under the protection of other men in the family, as 1 Timothy 5 says, or under the church's protection. Women need that especially women who might be weak in virtue and weak in truth. And that's the issue here. Women are easy prey to false teachers if

they're weak in virtue and weak in truth and these women are weak in both, they're weighed down with sins led on by lusts and always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They're not strong in the truth and they're not strong in virtue. And they are very susceptible to false teachers.

I want to tell you something. The false cults and isms of today are no different than this, they go after weak defenseless women. That's their target audience. Why do you think they go door to door all day long and not at night? Who do you think they're after? Weak women who are vulnerable because they're out from some protection and who are captivated by these people because they promise them deliverance from the burden of sin and guilt and they promise them a system of truth. Those are the kinds of victims they pick on. They come from all kinds of angles. They come at them on the radio during the day. They come at them on the television. They come at them through the printed page. They come at them door to door. The word "weak women" is one word, it's used in contempt here, feeble women, easy prey, literally means little women. But it's the idea that they're just defenseless. Just as Satan's strategy was to deceive Eve, so heretical false teachers have frequently chosen to spread their falsehoods by the same method. It doesn't mean that they don't approach men also, it's just that Scripture's telling us this is their target very often. Women not strong in virtue, weighed down by sins and driven by impulse and lust, women not strong in truth, women who want to know the truth, who are always learning but have never come to the epignosis, the deep knowledge of the truth are the victims.

You show me a woman at home during the day who is weighed down by guilts, anxiety, depression over her sin and who has been trying to find answers to life and you send a couple of people there who say, "Hey, we've got the answer to your sin and we've got all the answers to the questions of your life," and I'll show you a weak woman who is vulnerable. That's their target, easily victimized with their more receptive nature because they are, first of all, look at that thought, weighed down with sins. That means they're wicked. They're afraid of the consequence of their sin. They're guilty. It's a perfect passive, they're in a state of being loaded with hamartias, loaded with sin. They feel the guilt. They feel the anxiety.

And even a legalistic cult can appeal to them because they can then live a self-righteous, self-justifying kind of life and hopefully wash away the past. So women who are loaded with guilt, may be neurotically depressed, vulnerable, are captured by religious quacks because they're so led on by their various lusts and evil desires they look for relief.

And then in verse 7 it says they probably are the kind of women who have a curiosity about religion. They're attracted to easy solutions that don't really call for a radical change and don't deal with the real issue, the issue of sin before a holy God and salvation in Jesus Christ. They're interested in a cheap gospel. They're the kind of women who maybe are always learning, taking it all in, attracted to some kind of religious teaching. But they're never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

They're devoid of truth. They don't have the epignosis, that's the deep understanding of truth. They don't know either salvation or sanctification.

So into this person loaded with guilt and loaded with anxiety and wanting to know truth and wanting to understand life and reality and religion comes a false teacher through the television, through the radio, through printed page, knocking on the door, whatever it is. And they're easy prey...easy prey, captors of the weak.

And I don't think that we would do any injustice to this text to say not just women, but it seems at that time and it seems to me today that that's the primary target. But there are a lot of weak men, weak in virtue and weak in understanding the truth who are just as vulnerable. That's why it's so important that we learn truth and virtue so that we're defended against this.

Finally, Paul turns from the women back to the characterization of the false teachers. And he gives us a fourth recognition. They are the opposers of truth...the opposers of truth. Verse 8, "And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind rejected as regards the faith." They are opposers of truth. They are not only lovers of self, charlatans of religion, captors of the weak but they are opposers of the truth.

In order to make his point here he uses an analogy, an illustration of Jannes and Jambres, two interesting names which, by the way, do not appear in the Old Testament. In fact, they don't appear anywhere but here and here the Holy Spirit by inspiration gives us these two names. They were two of Pharaoh's magicians. Maybe they were two of the leading magicians. They're interesting. You find them in Jewish tradition. Jewish tradition says they pretended to become converts to Judaism and therefore joined along with the children of Israel when they left Egypt and it was these two that led in the making of the golden calf. That's just tradition. It also says, I think it's in the Targum, the Jewish Targum, that they were slaughtered after the golden calf incident. In other words, the tradition says these two guys masquerading as believing proselytes, led Israel into the worship of the golden calf and they were destroyed along with others for that sin. The word Jannes, the name Jannes as best we can tell means "he who seduces," and Jambres means "he who makes rebellion." So they were seducers who made rebellion against the true God. Those are the traditional names that obviously here the Spirit of God identifies.

Paul is saying that just as Jannes and Jambres opposed God's spokesman Moses...you remember when Moses got before Pharaoh and said, "Let my people go," in Exodus chapter 5 starting in verse 1, "Let my people go," and then how is Pharaoh going to know that he is speaking for God? Well God gave him the ability to do miracles and you remember he did those miracles there...right in front of Pharaoh's eyes. But when Moses did a miracle, what did Pharaoh's magicians do? They did a miracle too, didn't they? They wanted to counteract and oppose God's prophet and so they had their own prophecy, their own miracle. And so Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses and he says, "Just as

Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men will oppose the truth and some times they'll use supernatural things to do it." Things that can't be explained normally or naturally. In fact, they'll get so good at it that it says in 2 Thessalonians 2 if it weren't for God's power and God's restraint, they would deceive the very elect while they're deceiving the whole world. Jesus even alludes to that in Matthew.

So there are going to be some pretty deceitful people who will oppose God's spokesman...these self-loving charlatans of religion who seek to capture weak souls with their deceit, oppose the truth, the truth preached by Paul, the truth preached by Timothy, the truth preached by me, by anybody, just like those who stood against Moses. Satan has constantly constantly continuously produced counterfeit preachers who claim to speak for God and do some pretty astounding things to make it convincing. We all have satanically-inspired opponents.

He describes them as men of depraved minds. That is again a perfect passive participle, it's a condition of perversion. They have been made into a perverted state, a corrupt state. Their faculties having refused the truth have become unable to receive the truth which cleanses and purifies, they're corrupt, perverted. And then, of course, when tested by the true faith they are rejected as regards the faith. They are adokimos, they are worthless metal, not gold and silver. They're unfit, unqualified, rejected, cast offs. God would never use them to speak for Him and represent Him. Cast off, rejected, depraved, perverted men who oppose the truth.

So there's a great danger, beloved, a great danger. You want to be aware of that danger. It comes in all those forms I talked to you about earlier. And the parade is always led by the lovers of self, the charlatans of religion passing themselves off as if they represent God, their target is to capture women, capture weak people who are without virtue and truth. And their purpose, to oppose that truth, to set themselves up in power.

So much more could be said about these verses, but let me just bring you to the conclusion in verse 9 and it's a positive one. It says in verse 9, "But they will not make further progress." Stop right there.

That's the promise...that's the promise of God. You want to know something? Get this now. The progress of false teachers is more apparent than real. Did you get that? It is more apparent than real because all that the Father gives the Son will come to Him and He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. They can suck the life out of the church and the joy out of the church and the power out of the church. And they can weaken the testimony of the church, but they can not damn the redeemed or the elect. Their power is more apparent than real. Their progress is more apparent than real. They'll not be capable to stop the work of God.

It's a good reminder because if this thing ended in verse 8, you could be pretty depressed. Sometimes I get depressed when I see all this and I just say, "God, why don't You send an A-bomb

down here with selectivity and just blow them all up? And then we'll just get this deal cleaned up." And the answer always comes, "Wait till the Second Coming, that's the idea. It's exactly what will happen when I set up My Kingdom."

The enemies of Christ and the enemies of truth will constantly work and increase ungodliness and their word will eat like a gangrene. And sometimes we think it's going to engulf the church and devastate the church and destroy the church. Paul even says to Timothy, "Right there in Ephesus they will not make further progress." God has a limit on them. There's a limit to what Satan can do. There's a limit to how far God will allow him to move. When he works against the purposes of almighty God, he is constrained...he is constrained. He can't lead the elect astray, as Mark 13:22 says, if possible he would but he can't. And it's such a hopeful way to close.

The ultimate defeat is guaranteed. Verse 9 says, "Their senselessness, their senselessness will be obvious to all." Very clear to what that means. Everybody is going to see it. It will be very clear...their senselessness, their folly, their foolishness, their error will be very clear to the true people of God. That's what the...I think the all has in mind. You'll see it, the true church will see their folly. The true church can't be ultimately deceived. There's also that of those two came to be and he refers back to Jannes and Jambres. God's people will see the false teachers for what they are just like God's people in the past saw Jannes and Jambres for what they were. And if the tradition is true and they were slaughtered at the time of the golden calf, and we don't know that, then they saw. Even if it was in the plagues that Jannes and Jambres suffered the plagues they would have seen what they were. The true people of God, they'll always see whether present or in the future or at the coming of Christ, sooner or later the senselessness of false teachers we'll understand.

So it's a warning but it's a warning that has a hopeful ending. Now what does it say to us practically? Can I give you just a couple of lessons to jot down in your mind? Number one, beware of a spiritual war, will you? Please do...please be aware of a spiritual war. If not for your own sake for the sake of the rest of us who have to fight it...would you be aware of it enough to pray? I mean, if you want to take a seat on the sideline and watch, at least pray for those who are in the combat. There is a spiritual war...heavy-duty stuff is going on.

Secondly, be doctrinally discerning...be doctrinally discerning so that you're not engulfed in this thing and brought in to ignorance and your power is not depleted, so that you can help other people who are trying to find the truth. Be discerning.

Thirdly, be pure and holy so that you're not susceptible to their error. You see, you're...you can be a victim of the false teachers either through the door of a lack of knowledge of truth or through the door of a lack of holiness. Either way they can come in and access you and have a negative effect on your ability to glorify God.

And in the next point, be patient in the battle. And I remind myself of that all the time...just be patient, be patient. Because I'm the kind of a person who wants instant resolution. Just wipe them out, Lord, and let just get on with this thing. Be patient.

Be aware of the spiritual battle, be doctrinally discerning, be pure and holy and be patient, we're going to win in the end. Isn't that good news? And they're going to be revealed for who they are, just like Jannes and Jambres were, sooner or later, now or later, I don't know what God's timetable is for all of them. Most of them I can discern right now and so can you. Their senselessness is manifest to the true people of God and for those who can't see it, the time may come in this life when they see it, it will surely come at the judgment...practical lessons.

We live in dangerous times, beloved. It's a time for men to be men and women to be women and take a stand. It's a time for backbone. It's a time for spiritual courage. It's a time to make your life count. It's a great time. We're all on the winning side if we love Christ, but it sure is wonderful to be on the front line of the battle so you can taste the sweetness of victory when it finally comes. And the Lord will reward His most faithful soldiers with His most glorious reward. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You again this morning for the clarity with which the Word of God speaks to our hearts. We acknowledge that we live in dangerous times. It's not a time for trivia. It's not a time for wasteful thinking, wasteful action. It's a time to make our lives count. Fill our lives with a sense of urgency. First of all, Father, for those who don't know Jesus Christ, who have not received the gift of salvation through His work on the cross and His resurrection, may this be the day by faith take hold of Christ. For those who have been spiritually lazy and not engaged in a front-line responsibility of serving You, we pray, Lord God, that You'll hear their hearts cry out to be used of You.

Father, bring us in to the kind of spiritual condition to make us useful. Trim the dead weight away, the bulk, the needless things, the sin that easily besets us so we can run the race it ought to be run, fight the battle the way it ought to be fought. And help us even now to taste the victory, the sweetness of that which is promised to us in the future. And even as we look forward to discussing heaven tonight, we long for the day of reward and glory in Your presence when all battles are over and all is victory forever and ever. To that end we pray with thanksgiving in the Savior's name. Amen.

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