



“DIFFICULT TIMES HAVE COME”

2 Timothy 3:1-9

Theme: *Satan schemes to infiltrate the church to captivate Christians through false teaching.*

Introduction: Recently, a member of our former church in Michigan posted a picture of a “dog” that she had stopped to help alongside the road near her home. It had been injured and she sought to help it. She commented that it was ornery and “nippy.” She took it into her home, and it was restless and pacing like it was caged. The picture was of a fox!

In our passage, we discover what happens when our enemy can find his way into our churches through false teaching. It produces havoc, chaos, and a mere masquerade of godliness but perpetuates ungodliness. Satan seeks to “creep in” to our churches through individuals who are biblically negligent, spiritually weak, and doctrinally apathetic. Once inside, people doing the will of the Devil cause what Scripture describes as “difficult times.” These times will become increasingly frequent and intense throughout the last days.

Read the text ... Our text demonstrates how *“Satan schemes to infiltrate the church to captivate Christians through false teaching.”* We have three points to consider: 1) The Certainty of Difficult Times, 2) The Corruption in Difficult Times, and 3) The Concern in Difficult Times. Let’s begin ...

I. THE CERTAINTY OF DIFFICULT TIMES – 3:1

A. The Timing of Difficult Times

1. Paul’s concern for the church in Ephesus under Timothy’s ministry is the *“difficult times”* ahead as false teachers continue to exert influences and obstacles to the Gospel.
2. He provides an admonition – a command that Timothy *“realize”* [γινώσκω] – a pres. Act. Imperative indicating a perpetual and constant understanding that the church will face *“difficult times.”*
3. He clearly states that these *“times” “will come” “... in the last days ...”*
4. In the New Testament, *“the last days”* is a phrase that generally refers to the period between the ascension of Christ Jesus and the Second Advent of Christ to judge the Gentiles – *Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 3:3.*
5. That means that we are currently *“in the last days”* during which these *“difficult times”* of the church being assaulted by false teaching is happening.
6. Throughout the Church Age, various periods will come and go when multiple waves of error threaten the Gospel—growing more frequent and intense as we approach Christ’s return.

B. The Tension of Difficult Times

1. **“times”** [καιρός] refers not to chronological unfolding but rather to seasons that come and go, periods during which certain errors flood into the church.
2. **“difficult”** [χαλεπός] – describes what is troublesome or hard to bear.
3. In this context, it addresses the problem of false teachers – the very people who are in opposition, in the snare of the devil to do his will in ravaging the church – cp. ***Jude 4; Galatians 2:4; Acts 20:28-30.***
4. These men will advocate doctrines that pervert the Gospel through legalism, externalism, rationalism, politicism, ecumenism, pragmatism, libertarianism, individualism, materialism, and so on - ***1 Timothy 4:1-2.***
5. Essentially, the tension is when such matters are offered as the basis for our faith and conduct instead of the constant devotion to the authority of Scripture through sound doctrine, exegetical handling of Scripture, and the expositional preaching of God’s Word – ***2 Timothy 4:1-4.***
6. Once again, Paul commands that we remain vigilant to these dangers – ***“realize this.”***

II. **THE CORRUPTION IN DIFFICULT TIMES – 3:2-5A**

A. **Corrupt Affections – vv. 2-3a**

1. These **“men”** who are being used by Satan to ravage the church through false teaching will be recognized not by what they say about God, truth, sin, righteousness, and Scripture but based on the fruit of their lives – cp. ***Matthew 7:15-17.***
2. The testimony of these false teachers will provide discernment concerning their teaching being devoid of truth.
3. They will be characterized by corrupt affections springing from their foremost love—***“For men will be lovers of self ...”***
 - a) **“Lover of self”** [φιλάυτος] describes the idolatry of self, in which loving oneself is the foremost virtue, springing from a humanistic tenet that self-actualization is the highest good.
 - b) It describes an infatuation with oneself resulting in selfish ambition, ego-centric values, and personal happiness as an entitlement.
4. Out of this “self-love” flow a host of corrupt affections:
 - a) **“lovers of money”** – [φιλάργυρος] - loving oneself causes a person to pursue that which will bring satisfaction to one’s cravings or greedy indulgence.
 - b) **“boastful”** [άλαζών] – the desire for others to love you the way you love yourself – to see you as important as you see yourself.
 - c) **“arrogant”** [ύπερήφανος] means elevating oneself above those around you, imposing one’s perspective as the singularly legitimate perspective, and dismissing any disagreement.

- d) **“revilers”** [βλάσφημος]—in this context, it is the denigrating or demeaning of those who disagree with you because of your arrogance and boastfulness about your value.
 - e) **“disobedient to parents”** [ἀπειθής] – because of one’s vaunted view of themselves, even their parents’ authority and perspective is belittled and disregarded.
 - f) **“ungrateful”** [ἀχάριστος] – this demonstrates the corrupt affection of ingratitude – when a person elevates their significance so high, they believe that anything they receive is only appropriate and deserved, eliminating a sense of indebtedness or gratitude.
 - g) **“unholy”** [ἀνόσιος] – describes an even greater vice than ungratefulness; it is to be set in opposition to God or what is sacred; it is to be so selfishly motivated that one completely rejects any restrictions of sanctity or propriety.
 - h) **“unloving”** [ἄστοργος] – it describes being without regard for how others around you are affected – hardhearted.
 - i) **“irreconcilable”** [ἄσπονδος] – unwilling to negotiate a solution to a disagreement – stubborn and obstinate.
5. These corrupting affections streaming out of self-love demonstrate that the presence of the Holy Spirit is missing, and thus, the message is corrupt – cp. [Galatians 5:22-26](#).

B. Corrupting Affiliations – vv. 3b-5a

1. These vices of self-love also impact those around us, resulting in corrupting affiliations and treating others with contempt and arrogance.
2. We see the characteristics getting even more intense in its corrupting influences:
 - a) **“malicious gossips”** [διάβολος] – refers to being slanderous or diabolical – making accusations against people who fail to “measure up.”
 - b) **“without self-control”** [ἀκρατής] – a person who has dropped any concern about shame and is thus, without inhibition, willing to do anything regardless of how it affects others or even themselves.
 - c) **“brutal”** [ἀνήμερος] – a person untamed and brutal, like a savage beast, attacking and abusing those around them.
 - d) **“haters of good”** [ἀφιλάγαθος] – this describes the perversion of loving what ought to be hated and hating what ought to be loved.
 - e) **“treacherous”** [προδότης] – the betrayal of those who ought to be safe – the turning against those who ought to rely on you for support and safety.
 - f) **“reckless”** [προπετής] – impetuous and rash conduct, Lit: “to fall

forward,” conveying that there is no inhibition or caution.

- g) **“conceited” [τυφώω]** – lit. describes a person whose head is in a cloud – who cannot see anything beyond their priorities.
 - h) **“lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” [φιλήδονος]** – from *philos* + *hēdonē* (pleasure) – hedonism believes that attaining pleasure is the highest good and proper aim of life, **not** the glory of God.
3. Such professing Christians are a great danger to the church as they erode the testimony and unity of the Spirit, which protects the truth that transforms sinners into saints.
 4. As a result, Paul describes these people as **“holding to a form of godliness”** – through their assertions, self-promotion, and usurpation of Christian claims, but in reality, **“they have denied its power.”**
 5. Since life change comes through the power of God’s Word transforming us, these people are basing their faith on something other than God’s Word—cp. **John 17:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.**
 6. There is no ability to rise above the shackles of sin and defilement by a message that abandons a commitment to the exceeding sinfulness of sin – cp. **Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:4.**

III. **THE CONCERN IN DIFFICULT TIMES – 3:5B-9**

A. **The Concern about Influences – vv. 5b-7**

1. We now come to the second imperative in our text – the first was to “realize” these times of defilement and difficulty would come.
2. Paul instructs Timothy – **“Avoid such men as these.”**
3. **“avoid” [ἀποτρέπω]** – means to choose to stand away from **“such men”** – **1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.**
4. Our awareness is that tolerating men like this in the church will corrupt like a leaven – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:33.**
5. Their intention is to influence men and draw them away from reliance on and faithfulness to Christ—the work of the devil who has ensnared them. **“For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses ...”**
 - a) **“weak women” [γυναικάριον]** – does not describe all women, merely the women these prowling false teachers seek out to **“captivate”** them to serve Satan’s purposes alongside them – cp. **2 Timothy 2:26.**
 - b) **“weighed down with sins”** describes why these women are **“weak”** – describing piled-up sins that have not been cleansed through repentance and confession.
6. They are impressive as they continually devise innovations, novel

approaches to solving our struggles that never provide resolution – “... ***always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.***”

7. They cannot “***come to the knowledge of the truth***” because their solution eliminates repentance, which leads to the knowledge of the truth.

B. The Concern about Interference – vv. 8-9

1. Paul then provides an illustration from Jewish history – “***Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, ...***”
 - a) *Whether these men are actual persons or merely personifications of the general opposition that Moses faced through the Egyptian magicians who sought to negate the power of God through the plagues is not the point of their mention.*
 - b) “***Jannes***” [Ἰάννης] – Lit. means “he who seduces,” and “***Jambres***” [Ἰαμβρῆς] – means “he who makes rebellion.”
 - c) *They represent those who “oppose” [ἀνθίστημι] – to set oneself against “the truth.”*
2. Such men are “***men of depraved mind***” – meaning that there is nothing they can offer to overcome sin because the source of their ideas is a sinful mind.
3. Hence, their teaching does not offer a relationship with God—it is “***rejected in regard to the faith.***”
4. They fail the test of God’s evaluation – yet they set themselves up as the standard by which all others are to be judged, only to be judged themselves by the Lord.

So What?

1. Why should God’s Word be so important to me with reference to the “last days?”
2. How does my love of self make me vulnerable to corruption?
3. How can I know whether I am holding merely to “a form of godliness?”
4. What must I do to avoid being rejected in regard to the faith?

Satan schemes to infiltrate the church to captivate Christians through false teaching.