2 Timothy 3A

• As we move into Chapter 3 of 2 Timothy, Paul’s letter remains on the topic of bad teaching or false teachers
  ○ But he’s also beginning to transition from Timothy’s circumstances to the circumstances of the church generally
    • Timothy, as we know, was a young pastor contending for the faith in a pagan city
    • And he did so during a time of increasing hostility toward Christians and the message of the truth
    • Not only was he contending with false teaching in various forms, but now he was fighting his own flesh in its desire to avoid persecution
  ○ Because of these challenges, Paul wrote to shore up Timothy’s courage to continue preaching the truth
    • In Chapter 1 Paul told Timothy not to neglect the gift he received knowing God granted it for an eternal purpose
    • Paul pointed to his own example of suffering for Christ, as inspiration for Timothy to continue the fight
    • And he mentioned a few contemporaries who failed in that regard as a warning to Timothy
  ○ Then in Chapter 2, Paul choose to use a series of comparisons to explain the importance of holding to the mission
    • Over the chapter, Paul compared Timothy’s Christian service in ministry to seven roles
    • A son, a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, a laborer, a vessel and a bond-servant
    • Paul’s point in this chapter was that life as a servant of the Living God involves no less commitment, sacrifice, patience, dedication and reward than do these other walks of life
    • In fact, serving God will require all the more in these areas
• And so if we’re willing to do what’s necessary to fulfill these other roles, why would we be less willing for the sake of serving Christ?

• Finally, as Paul ended Chapter 2, he gave Timothy the exhortation to strive to be a pastor who handles the Word of God properly
  ◦ Make your goal in ministry to handle the Word of God accurately
    • As I said in the last lesson, this should be the highest (and maybe only goal) of every man in pastoral ministry
  ◦ Paul said that being an approved workman includes the responsibility to avoid being dragged into worldly and empty talk
    • Pursuing holiness in your own life is a prerequisite for teaching others about the holiness of God from the word
    • Moreover, Timothy must avoid getting dragged into unhelpful, useless and foolish speculations about words
    • Finally, he must work to correct those caught up in such things
  ◦ On that final point, Paul said the goal was to avoid being quarrelsome, showing love and patience as he worked to bring repentance among those in opposition
    • Those who are consumed by false teaching are not the enemy necessarily
    • Often they are victims and so they may be the focus of our ministry, should the Lord grant them repentance
    • So although Timothy was to stay out of the mud himself, he should also seek to pull others out as well
  
• But we can’t save everyone, so there are times when it’s best to leave the fight

  ◦ That leads us into Chapter 3 where Paul moves to proving his point regarding false teachers, by drawing a comparison to the nature of the last days
    • In fact, let’s begin Chapter 3 by re-reading the final two verses of Chapter 2
    • This will give us the full context for Paul’s teaching in this chapter

\textbf{2Tim. 2:25} with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,
2Tim. 2:26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

2Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

2Tim. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,

2Tim. 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,

2Tim. 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

2Tim. 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

- Reading the end of Chapter 2 with the beginning of Chapter 3 makes clear that Paul wasn’t unrealistic about the degree of success Timothy might achieve
  - In fact, Paul’s tone is decidedly pessimistic
    - He says things like “if perhaps God may grant repentance”
    - They are caught in a snare of the devil
    - They are held captive, doing his will
  - And then in Chapter 3, Paul opens with “realize this Timothy, in the last days difficult times will come…”
    - Paul is about to set Timothy straight about the nature of the days in which he ministers
    - When Paul says last days, he refers to the days of the church prior to the Lord’s return
    - “Last” days doesn’t necessarily refer to a short time, though the longer this age lasts, the less of the “last days” remains (obviously)
    - You should hear last days as referring to the final period of history before the Lord sets up the Kingdom
- And in the last days, Paul says difficult times will come
  - Why did Paul want Timothy to know about the future?
    - Because Timothy needed to understand that his situation in Ephesus wasn’t unexpected nor was it unprecedented
• The Lord had revealed to Paul that other pastors in other cities would face similar and even worse circumstances during the time the church exists on earth

• Young and often untrained men like Timothy would be required to stand firm contending for the faith against false and ungodly adversaries

• As bad as life may be for Timothy, and as hard as the work may be at times, Timothy wasn’t alone and God wasn’t surprised
  ○ Therefore, there could be no self-pity or making excuses, or avoiding of persecution or confrontation
    • Instead, Paul expected Timothy to set an example for the church to follow
    • To teach and preach the truth of scripture, unadulterated by foolish speculations and unafraid of opposition

• And critical to Timothy’s success was having realistic expectations while knowing his enemy
  ○ A man of God must steer clear of the traps and pitfalls set by the enemy
    • In these last days, the world is going to be marked by extreme ungodliness
    • And so we must be ready to note and avoid the negative influence of men under Satan’s control
  ○ Before we look at Paul’s description of these times, let’s understand that the very notion of a bad-to-worse progression would have been news in itself
    • Paul is saying that the age of the church on the earth will not progress to greater godliness or enlightenment, prior to Christ’s return
    • Certainly, those who come to faith in Jesus during this time will be sanctified by their faith
    • But the world at large will not get better during these days
    • Rather, Paul says the condition of men on earth goes in the opposite direction
- For those of us living 2,000 years after Paul with the benefit of hindsight, this truth doesn’t shock us
  - We see it fulfilled before our eyes
  - We see clearly the growth in evil over the past centuries…even just in the past few decades
- But for the early church, Paul’s words were probably surprising
  - They were enjoying Pax Romana, a worldwide Roman peace
  - And though life was difficult in many ways, it seemed to be getting better
  - So to learn that the Messiah’s appearing was not to result in Pax Christos, a worldwide peace of Christ, was news probably
  - Therefore, if Timothy held such an expectation, then it’s no mystery why he might have been disturbed by the arrival of persecution
- Even today, there is a certain view of eschatology that believes the world is marching toward greater holiness in preparation for the Lord’s return
  - Those who hold to this view are likely to find their faith in God’s word shaken when these expectations aren’t met
    - As the world descends deeper into ungodliness, they struggle to make sense of it
    - Because they had the wrong expectation, despite Paul’s counsel
  - Therein lies one of the key problems with bad eschatology; a wrong view of the Bible’s teaching of the end times
    - An over-realized view of end times can undermine a believer’s confidence and interest in prophecy
    - They’ve been told one thing, but the world points in a different direction
    - And so they question whether prophecy can even be understood at all
  - Which is why Paul tells Timothy “realize this”
• The church needs to understand that the days of the church – the last days – are a period of difficult times

• The Greek word for difficult can be translated fierce or harsh
  ○ We must be prepared to undergo harsh and difficult circumstances at the hands of ungodly people
  ○ Persecution and difficulty isn’t proof that you’re doing something wrong
  ○ It may be proof you’re serving God well

• Paul moves now to listing 19 vices that mark the nature of these days
  ○ Paul gives us this list for at least a couple of reasons
  • First, here’s our proof that the world is not going to become more holy during the church age
    ■ Each time you watch a news story about some episode of depraved indifference to human life...
    ■ Or hear about a YouTube video of reckless or boastful behavior going viral...
    ■ Or culture normalizing behaviors that used to be scandalous and worthy of condemnation...
  • You can remember Paul’s words and understand this is what we were told to expect
    ■ Don’t get discouraged
    ■ Don’t doubt the Lord or His promises, as if the world’s descent into ungodliness is cause to question your faith or your Bible
    ■ Recognize that the Lord warned you to expect such things during these days
  • Secondly, I think Paul wants Timothy and the church to understand these things, because to be forewarned is to be forearmed
    ■ Paul told Timothy to flee these things and to stand apart from the world
To protect the word and to be willing to suffer when enemies try to silence him

So knowing that the pressure against godly believers will only get worse, is key to preparing to stand up to that pressure

• Let’s look briefly at each item of the list
  ○ The list begins with lovers of self
    • The phrase means narcissism
    • I think it’s appropriate that the list begins with this vice, since it has become the defining characteristic of our time
    • Technologies like social media and the cell phone camera have only served to give society’s narcissism an easier outlet
    • But the instinct to love one’s self has always been in humanity’s heart. We just see it on display all the more today
  ○ In a way, this vice explains most of the rest of the list
    • In our self-deception, we have been taught and have come to accept love of self is a virtue
    • We have changed the term slightly to make it sound more appropriate
    • We call it self-esteem today, but it’s the same idea
    • And so we say that raising kids with “healthy self-esteem” should be a goal
  ○ The Bible says that mankind has all the self-love (or self-esteem) we need
    • The Bible calls it pride, and it says we have way too much of it
    • Ironically, when the world won’t affirm our love for ourselves, we pout or rage or get depressed or work all the harder for attention
    • We call these bad behaviors a lack of self-esteem
    • When in reality, they are actually the consequence of someone realizing they weren’t as lovable as they thought
- The word of God says love of self is a mark of the sinful hearts in the last days
  - The last thing anyone truly needs is more self-esteem
  - Instead, we need less self-esteem and more Christ-esteem
  - Fearing our sinfulness brought into the presence of a holy God is the beginning of wisdom
- Paul uses the term “loving” numerous times in this list, including with the second item
  - In the last days, mankind will be lovers of money
    - This means being avaricious
    - Having an insatiable appetite for money and what money may possess
    - Beyond being greedy, this sin also involves a dissipation of time as people spend countless hours earning the money they desire
    - So it’s a sin of consumption made possible by an investing of time and energy in selfish pursuits
- Next Paul says men in these days are boastful and arrogant
  - Both these words are ways in which we display pride
  - Being boastful means speaking pridefully
  - Arrogant means acting pridefully
  - Both are the outward displays of self-love
- The fifth and sixth items are revilers and disobedient to parents
  - These too are related sins
  - Reviling is acting against proper authority
  - While disobedient to parents is acting against parental authority
- The Greek word for disobedient could also be translated unresponsive
  - So imagine a child sitting by as a parent gives an order, yet the child doesn’t even acknowledge the parent’s instructions much less obeys
• In the culture of Paul’s day, this was the height of insubordination

• In fact, it was almost unimaginable that a child would respond to a parent’s authority in that way

  ○ Yet today many families know the experience of children ignoring a parent’s authority, which is the highest form of rebellion

  • Disobedience among children is so prevalent in our culture today that restaurants bar children

  • Families decline to fellowship with other families, knowing they can’t expect their children to behave

  ○ When a child has so little respect for a parent’s authority that they ignore instructions, the child is in full rebellion

     • Even if the child hasn’t yet begun to act out in the worst ways, it’s only a matter of time

     • Paul says this is a mark of ungodliness in the last days

     • So certainly Christian parents must do their best to guard against raising children who have this attitude

     • We can’t guarantee our children become believers, but we must set an expectation of respect and obedience in the home

• The seventh item is ungrateful, which means to carry an unthankful, unappreciative heart

  ○ We can see this sinful attitude growing in our culture and world

     • Increasingly, our culture is unfazed by the conveniences and blessings of our modern life

     • What satisfied yesterday is suddenly not good enough today

  ○ Imagine how grateful our ancestors would have reacted if they could see into the future to understand the things we possess today

     • For example, in 1950 the size of the average American home was under 1,000 sq. ft. (93 sq. m)

     • Today it’s about 2,700 sq. ft (252 sq. m)

  ○ But are we happier today than Americans of 1950?
• Our houses may be bigger, but we’re working harder to pay for them
• The added expense leaves us more stressed
• And we have to fill all that space with things which we must pay for, and dust and protect and replace
  ◦ Having an ungrateful heart inevitably leads to avarice and greed, which explains why this sin exists alongside the others on this list
  • We judge what we have against what our greedy heart desires
  • Which leads to discontent and ungratefulness
  • Every year’s iPhone leaves me ungrateful for the one I have
  • Another person’s success leaves us discontent with our situation in life
  • The pursuit of more drives a sinful lifestyle, which leads us to the next item on the list
  ◦ Eighth: people will be unholy
  • To be unholy means, simply, to be unlike God
  • This one term summarizes the entire list, but in light of the other items around it, I think Paul means it more specifically
  • It means impure as in a sexual sense
  • People will be unholy in their bodies, which should require no further explanation
• Impurity in our bodies leads to the next two items on the list in v.3: unloving and irreconcilable
  ◦ The Greek word for unloving means to be heartless, callous
  • It means to be without love in the true sense of the word
  • So in this age, people will use their bodies in increasingly impure ways with one another
  • And yet at the same time, show less true love for one another
  ◦ Seeing these two side by side in Paul’s list makes perfect sense
• Our culture is oversexed and unloving because sex is not love
• In fact, it’s the opposite of love when practiced in ungodly ways
• Yet in these days Paul says immorality becomes the norm, and so people will be unloving
  ○ And as we would expect, such relationships don’t last
  • Marriages based in selfish love fail
  • Friendships involving fornication end without marriage
  • And other illegitimate relationships give rise to all manner of abuse
  ○ So Paul adds that people won’t be reconcilable
  • The word in Greek includes the notion of unforgiving
  • Looking beyond immoral relationships, we can see this quality in every area of life
  • People are quick to take offense and no one has reason to forgive

• Next comes malicious gossips
  ○ A malicious gossip is someone who spreads false rumors for the purpose of hurting someone
    • In Paul’s day, this usually involved men spreading rumors in the workplace or women gossiping house to house
    • Those in the early church who spoke against Paul were malicious gossips
  ○ Paul says this behavior will be the way of ungodly people in the last days
    • The Greek word for malicious gossip is diabolos
    • From which we get the word devil – who is the father of lies
  ○ In our day, we see how this is being fulfilled in ever-more powerful ways
    • The internet and the anonymity of modern communication has made malicious rumors a fact of life
• We now have a new name for it: fake news
  ○ This is probably one of the clearest examples of fulfillment on the list
    • Never before in history has it been so easy to do what Paul says here would become typical for the age
    • You can certainly expect this to get worse, not better
  • Items 12-18 on the list are very closely aligned, so we will look at them as a group
    ○ You can see a cause-and-effect relationship building in this part of Paul's list beginning with lacking self-control, then brutal and then haters of good
      • To lack self-control means to lack the ability to restrain the evil nature of our flesh
      • No one needs self control when acting in the Spirit, for the Spirit naturally brings control
      • Self-control is always a matter of controlling our sin nature
    ○ But in these days, people stop trying to control (or never gain control) over their flesh
      • They are like animals living according to instinct
      • And so they are brutal
      • Brutal literally means uncivilized
      • So the world lives increasingly without regard for societal norms, or the dignity of others or even their own bodies
      • Even a casual look around the world confirms this progression
    ○ Brutality leads to people becoming haters of good
      • In this context, a hater of good is someone who is antagonistic toward anything that seeks to counter their brutality
      • Anything in life that convicts them or prevents them from acting out as they please is attacked
      • Much like a wild animal kept in a cage, they rage at the zookeeper and bite at the bars
• This pattern is easy to see today, as anyone or anything that dares to call out sin will be attacked.

• In v.4 the chain of behavior continues to items 15 and 16, treacherous and reckless.
  o The first word means seeking to betray or depose those in control.
    • Naturally, as the world becomes brutal and haters of good, they will seek to overturn the establishment.
    • Paul says ruling authorities are in place for our good, but since the world hates good, it will hate the establishment.
    • Once again, it’s easy to see the world’s desire to rebel against authority and disrupt order.
  o This leads to reckless living.
    • The word in Greek is better translated “falling headlong”.
    • The word carries both the sense of jumping before you look and of being stubborn.
    • As in the case of someone who has been warned not to jump off a cliff, so they decide to jump anyway.
  o We can see the progression continuing from treachery to recklessness.
    • As the world seeks to throw off the shackles of social norms and authority, they begin to act in increasingly headstrong, reckless ways.
    • They are not under counsel or authority.
    • So they are living without restraint.
    • Browsing through the most popular videos on YouTube reveals a world of increasing recklessness.
  o In extreme cases, the world is reckless with life itself, seeking increasingly dangerous daredevil stunts.
    • This comes from hating good also, since it shows contempt for life itself and the opportunity to understand the meaning of life.
    • They have made life an empty pursuit of cheating death.
• For an unbeliever to play with death is the absolutely epitome of recklessness since they are risking an eternity in the Lake of Fire

• This cause-and-effect chain concludes in v.4 with items 17, 18 and 19: conceited, lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God
  ○ To be conceited means to be proud, but in the sense of wrapping one’s self in a veil of self-delusion
    • Such a person has supposed themselves to be someone other than they truly are
    • To imagine they live a life of importance or substance
  ○ Conceit is a necessity in a narcissistic, reckless culture
    • We must compete with everyone else’s narcissistic achievements while maintaining our sense of self-worth
    • As social norms dissolve and forgiveness and reconciliation disappear, we must defend our ego
    • Else we risk being run over and rendered irrelevant in a culture that loves only self
  ○ Conceit leads to a society in which everyone is seeking personal pleasure at everyone else’s expense
    • From where we live, what we drive, what we eat, what we wear, what toys we possess and hobbies fill our time, our culture is obsessed with self-gratification
    • This is simply the natural outworking of all the other sins, which lead to uncontrolled selfishness

• Ultimately, the narcissism, ungrateful hearts, lack of self control, brutality and conceit add up to a failure to love God
  ○ The world has no regard for God
    • But more than that, the world hates God
    • And as Paul says, love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposed
    • We can only do one at a time
  ○ Of course the unbelieving world has always been opposed to God
• But what changes in the last days is the focused hatred of the world against Christ, the true manifestation of God

• Prior to Christ, the world’s opposition to God was diffused, lacking focus (beyond hating God’s people)

• But today, the Messiah has been revealed so the world knows Who to hate now

  ○ Have you noticed that movies like to use the name of Jesus Christ in vain, but you never hear Muhammed or Buddha used in vain?
  
  • And Christians are mocked on television, movies or elsewhere but rarely other faiths?

  • This is no coincidence

  • Satan focuses the world’s hatred at his true enemy, God

  • This too is a sign of the last days

• True to form, our conceited world likes to think of itself as close to God, even as they hate Him

  ○ Item 19 in v.5: Paul says the world will hold to a form of godliness though they deny its power

  • They make a show of being religious, because it feeds their conceited view of self as worthy of God’s love

  • The word in Greek for form literally means an outward form, as in making a show or pretense

  • There is no substance to their piety

  ○ Today we see this superficial form of godliness evident in those who describe themselves as “spiritual”

  • If you ask them if they are Christian (or any other religion), they will say no to distance themselves from any authority

  • Remember, our culture is treacherous, they reject authority

  • So instead, they claim a higher status of being “spiritual”

  • Much like they enjoy having sexual relationships without the constraints of commitment or self-sacrifice

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○ This is not godliness at all, of course, which fits with the whole pattern of an arrogant, boastful, depraved society
  • They have denied the true power of God, Paul says
  • The true power of God is found through faith in Jesus Christ alone
  • That power being the power of His blood to save us from sin and the power of the Holy Spirit to teach us true godliness
○ For all their forms of godliness, the one form they categorically reject is that of faith in Jesus Christ
  • And so they possess neither the form nor the substance of true godliness
  • They have no truth nor sincerity in anything
○ Paul’s list is so powerful because it is such a vivid portrayal of the effects of sin when left unchecked in the human heart
  • As the natural constraints God has placed in the world erode, sin abounds all the more
  • God gave mankind marriage, government, societal norms and even our own conscience to contain the sin of man’s heart
  • Even barriers like communication, distance and language are being eliminated
  • It’s a repeating of the Tower of Babel
  • Mankind, united by their sin nature, achieves even greater heights of depravity, even as they declare they are seeking to reach God
• At the end of v.5 Paul says to Timothy, avoid such men as these
  ○ Paul’s command serves as an interesting counter to his earlier call to correct and counsel men who teach in error
  • Sometimes Timothy was to engage with those causing trouble in the church
  • And in other cases he should avoid such men, Paul says
○ The difference is a matter of the heart
• In the first case, those engaged in foolish and useless talk were believers who were caught in the trap of the enemy

• But perhaps they might be rescued, Paul said

• So Timothy was to engage with believers to correct and perhaps rehabilitate

• But he wasn’t to participate with them in their idle talk

○ But in the case of those here in Chapter 3, we’re talking about unbelievers who stand in the way of the church

• These men will be the source of persecution – the difficult times that will come upon the church

• In general, Timothy is to avoid such men as these

• Perhaps they too may be reached with the Gospel

• But that decision lies with the Lord, and in the meantime Timothy should use discretion and wisdom

○ Paul is coaching Timothy on the balance between reaching the culture and remaining apart from the culture

• Like a shepherd who leads his flock into pastures but away from wolves

• We must understand the threats that we face even as we try to convert them

• Jesus expressed it as being wise as serpents and innocent as doves

• Never giving cause for accusation yet being smart in how we handle ourselves, knowing we are operating behind enemy lines

• Paul is trying to give Timothy wisdom on how to defeat his enemies even as he is ordering Timothy forward into battle

○ Including naming more examples from Timothy’s past experience

2Tim. 3:6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,

2Tim. 3:7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
2Tim. 3:8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.

2Tim. 3:9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes’s and Jambres’s folly was also.

- Paul says that among those in the world who fit this pattern of sin, there are those who “enter into households” to captivate weak women
  - This is such an intriguing statement, which some see as somewhat misogynistic
    - Paul is describing a pattern in Ephesus, we assume, though I doubt anything that happened in that city was altogether unique
    - In fact, I think we can still see this pattern today
  - In general Paul is describing what can happen in the church when unbelievers posing as religious experts get too close to the church
    - To be clear, we’re talking about unbelievers
    - Notice Paul begins with “for among them”
    - Clearly, we’re talking about people from the list above, which means they hold to a form of godliness but deny its power
    - These are false teachers, unsafe men who portray themselves as ministers of God in some form
  - Paul told Timothy to avoid such men because they hold a risk for the weak in the church
    - Paul calls out weak women at home weighed down by sin
    - Paul is speaking about a situation in his culture that is different today at least to some degree yet follows the same principle
- First, you have a captive audience
  - In Paul’s day, women were mostly found in the home
    - False teachers came into the home during the day, while the men were away in the fields
    - They sought to captivate the women with false teaching

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Secondly, they found spiritually immature Christians living un-sanctified lives

- The women were beset with sin because they were not growing in the word
- So they were suffering under the weight of the consequences of all that sin
- So naturally, such a Christian seeks for relief as the Spirit convicts them

The problem was they found “answers” in the wrong place

- Their immaturity left them vulnerable to receiving false teaching
- You may remember in our 1 Timothy study we learned that the false teaching in Ephesus was being promoted by deceived women in the church
- Now we see how those women were deceived
- They were won over by crafty false teachers while they were without the protection of their husbands

Interestingly, the same pattern repeats itself today, though it’s not necessarily limited to women

- The internet and television brings a myriad of false teaching into homes
- There, these teachers find a ready audience of weak Christians desperately seeking solutions to life’s problems
- While the real solutions are found in God’s word under proper teaching, they seek quick solutions from men selling snake oil

- Paul says immature Christians are led on by various impulses (or lusts)

- We don’t know the lusts that dominated Paul’s day

- But I doubt they were all that different from our day
- And today we see people seeking to be healed, to be rich, to experience a miraculous encounter with God
- So they succumb to any false teaching that offers what they lust after
Paul says they are always learning but never able to come to true knowledge

- This is a pattern you see commonly today
- A Christian who is always enamored with the latest fad...a book, a movie, a particular teaching or new practice
- They float from fad to fad, always learning something new but never actually growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ

That's the danger for the church who's pastor does not help their flock keep distance from these threats

- They are like wolves robbing the shepherd of stray sheep that wander too far from the flock
- If Timothy was going to hold the line in Ephesus, he had to contend with the false teachers who were undermining his mission
- He couldn't shrink back for this was the time to be alert and on guard

In vs. 8-9 Paul cites an example from Moses’ experience in Pharaoh’s court

- We know from Exodus 7 that Moses was opposed by two of Pharaoh’s magicians who performed a stunt similar to the miracle Moses performed
  - God turned Moses’ staff into a serpent
  - These two magicians, probably through slight of hand, mimicked the miracle

That’s a perfect representation of what false teachers do in general

- First they gain an audience because a true work of God is taking place around them
- False teachers rarely start their own religious movements

They almost always hijack the true church

- Mormonism begins with a man they call Jesus, though he’s not the Jesus of the Bible
• Jehovah's Witnesses do the same

• Just as the two magicians Paul names tried to hijack Moses' appearance

• Secondly, they seek to diminish the work of God into a work of man, while claiming to have that power themselves
  ○ Moses claimed God did the power but the magicians attempted to prove that such power lies within the grasp of men

  • False teachers speak of God but really put the spotlight on themselves and their audience

  • All power is within the grasp of the individual if only they follow the recipe of the false teacher
  ○ Finally, the end effect of these magicians is to oppose the truth
    • The magicians sought to discredit Moses and his testimony
    • Likewise, the false teachers in the church seek to move our minds off the Gospel and the true message of the church
    • And onto other meaningless things like prosperity
  ○ Paul says these men opposed the truth, because they have depraved minds and have been rejected by God in regard to faith
    • Paul's strong declaration lines up with Jude's statement about the same false teachers

**Jude 4** For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

• Jude says God marked such men out for condemnation beforehand

• And Paul says they were rejected in regard to faith

• Clearly they are not candidates for rehabilitation, and so Timothy and the church should avoid them altogether

• To end our teaching tonight, notice Paul says the good guys win in the end
○ In v.9 Paul says just as the magicians saw their snake eaten alive by God’s snake, so will the false teachers’ attempts to undermine the church fail
  • This is Paul’s encouragement to Timothy to stand strong against such men
  • Moses was probably afraid of what he faced in the court of the most powerful man on earth
  • Nevertheless, he stood firm and truth was vindicated by God’s power
○ Similarly, Timothy had good reason to stand firm against opposition
  • Because he was not alone
  • And God knew difficult times would come, so this wasn’t a shock or a surprise
  • The men are as evil as the days, but that’s why the church exists to proclaim the truth
  • And in the end, the Lord will win by His word