

Leaving a Legacy of Faith (Week 6) 2 Timothy 3:1-9 "The Deceivers"

Introduction

Satan has always been, and forever will be, a deceiver. He's been doing it since way back in the Garden of Eden. He's always in search of a naive and gullible victim, who will fall for his schemes. The Bible tells us that he is systematically stalking his unsuspecting prey like a **"roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8)"**. Every Child of God should beware of him, for even though he cannot take away your salvation (**John 10:28**), he can render you ineffective as a soldier of the gospel of Christ. As we all have seen far too often, a fallen preacher can take down an entire congregation with him. The devil would like nothing more than to destroy the fellowship of believers here at Freedom, or any other church that is boldly proclaiming the truth of God's Word. We MUST be on guard, for only by knowing the TRUTH will we be able to recognize Satan's deceptions. This is why it is so important for all believers to know The Word of God and make it a part of their daily lives. If the devil can distract you from The Word, then he will have you at his mercy. Don't give him a foothold in your life (**Ephesians 4:27**), but rather resist him by submitting yourself to God, and he will flee from you (**James 4:7**).

Satan has at his command a myriad of false teachers to do his bidding. Some have been deceived even to the point that they actually believe that they are doing God's work! Even Paul himself was convinced that he was serving God as he persecuted Christians, in his younger days as a Pharisee. But, Christ met him on the Damascus road and opened his eyes to the truth (**Acts 9:1-20**). Truth will always set the captives free, that is, if they only have the ears to hear it. Knowing and believing the Truth is a powerful weapon in the hands of the child of God. That being said, just how well can you spot a phony? There are lots of "smooth talking" deceivers out there. And, believe it or not, some sound really spiritual. They take the gospel of Christ and stand it on its head, yet all the while sounding like they know Him intimately. Paul warned Timothy that in the "last days" (**2 Timothy 3:1**) these deceivers would have a field day in the Church, leading astray as many as they possible could. Some, like Paul in his early years, have even grown to believe their own lies, but they are destined to destruction, for apart from God there can be no truth! Jesus is The Way, THE TRUTH, and The Life. Only His teaching will stand the test of time. If a message doesn't line up with the teaching of Christ, then rest assured, it is a lie, no matter how marvelously it appeals to the desperate and deceitful hearts of men. We must learn to recognize truth when we hear it.

When Paul warned Timothy of the deceivers that would come in the "last days", it can be assumed that these days began with The Church Age and will end when Jesus Christ returns for His bride. He cannot only be referring to the very end of The Church Age, or it would have been pointless to warn Timothy of the peril that they would bring. No, from the moment that Jesus ascended into heaven and The Holy Spirit began His redemptive work upon the earth, Satan has called his own disciples to confuse and obfuscate (*to make obscure*) the truth of the gospel message. We, like Timothy, are living in "the last days", and the deceivers have infiltrated the ranks of The Church at an increasingly alarming rate since Paul penned his letter to the young pastor in Ephesus. We live in an age where deception is not only prevalent, but celebrated. Masses are being led astray. It is past time that we, the body of Christ, take a stand for His TRUTH.

Let us look to the words of Paul, so that we will be able to recognize and rebuke the deceiving spirits in our midst. According to the old apostle, these false teachers have some common characteristics, that make them readily identifiable. They are PRIDEFUL, full of PHONY PIETY, are PREDATORY, and finally, they are PREDESTINED for destruction. Every false teacher has these same telling tendencies, and if you know what to look for, you will never find yourself held captive to their blasphemous teaching.

Prideful (Lovers of Self vs.2-4)

We must remember that Paul is not specifically referring to "the world" in general here. He is warning Timothy about the type of people that the devil will use to infiltrate The Church in order to destroy

it. We are to be on guard for these agents of Satan who's purpose is to strive against the work of The Holy Spirit. These people may not even realize that they are even pawns of the devil, but they *are* none the less. They will all have one thing in common. They will be "lovers of self". To become a Christian requires that an individual recognize that they are a sinner and in desperate need of a Savior to change them from the inside out. It's called "repentance", and no one seems to want to talk about it these days. To be repentant is to be so ashamed of one's self that they are compelled to cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy. Repentance is the exact opposite of "self-promoting"; to be repentant is to look upon one's self with disgust, not admiration. After all, if you were really that good, then The Cross of Christ was pretty much a waste of time, was it not? That being said, there has and will always be a "movement" within the Church to glorify self over God. And where does this attitude originate? From Satan himself. The devil was thrown out of heaven because of his sickening desire to exalt himself over God (**Isaiah 14:12-15**).

Let's go back to the Garden of Eden shall we? How did Satan tempt Eve to rebel against God? By convincing her that she could be just as good as God (**Genesis 3:5**). The elevation of "self" has always been the deception of Satan. Sadly, many "Christians" have bought into his lies, believing that godliness is somehow a means to financial gain (**1 Timothy 6:5**), not realizing that "GODliness" is actually about living a life that glorifies God, and NOT self! We were created by God to bring glory to God. Being selfish will never bring glory to God. Jesus plainly stated the requirements to follow Him: **"Whoever wants to be My disciple MUST deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)**. The Apostle Paul was so familiar with this concept of discipleship, that he was constantly submitting his own "fleshly desires" to the Spirit's control to see to it that they would never interfere with the work which God had called him to accomplish. In **Galatians 5:13-16** he writes:

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge in the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, walk by The Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
Galatians 5:13-16

Now some false teachers would read that and say, "You see, in order to love your neighbor as yourself, you first have to LOVE yourself! But, this is NOT what that verse means. It means that in order to serve Christ, we must have our hearts forever changed, so that we love others with the same kind of zeal that we USED to love ourselves. A child of God must crucify their own flesh (selfish desires) in order to follow after The Spirit of God (**Galatians 2:20**). This is why Jesus says, **"Deny YOURSELF, and take up your cross and follow me"**. You simply CANNOT follow after Him while continuing to love yourself, because **"no man can serve two masters"** (**Matthew 6:24**).

Paul gives Timothy a list of seventeen characteristics of people who love themselves. Think of these as "symptoms" of the "self-loving disease" that is plaguing our churches in these last days. Let us briefly examine each of these symptoms. When we see these, we are instructed to place ourselves in a "spiritual quarantine" avoiding any contact with the infected... **"have nothing to do with such people." (vs.5)**.

1. **Lovers of money:** **"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."** (**1 Timothy 6:10**). We should not be surprised when people who love themselves above all else are greedy.
2. **Boastful:** The man who loves himself will naturally sing his own praises, for he has become his own God.
3. **Proud:** Those who love themselves will naturally come to believe that they are superior to others in every way.
4. **Abusive:** ("**Blasphemos**" in the Greek, meaning *blasphemous*) They will be contemptuous, and slanderous of others. They love good juicy gossip!

5. Disobedient to parents: It is the parents who create these little “monsters” by raising them to believe that the world somehow “owes them” something. Should it come as a surprise when they show little respect or gratitude for those who “spoiled them” in the first place, by giving them everything their selfish hearts desired?
6. Ungrateful: Goes with the last one. Why would you be thankful for something that you felt was “owed” to you in the first place? Lovers-of-self have no place in their hearts for “thanksgiving”.
7. Unholy: (*Anosios* in the Greek) They disdain holy living, as well as, the people who try to live in holiness, for to be holy is to deny one’s fleshly impulses. Those who love themselves haven’t the slightest desire to deny themselves anything. Therefore, they will indulge in any sin that entices them, all the while claiming to be children of God.
8. Without love: (*Astorgos* in the Greek) This is not talking about agape love, which comes only from knowing God, but rather the natural affections such as a mother should instinctively have for her child, or how a person should normally love their family. Paul is saying that a person who is a true lover-of-self will even be devoid of the basic instinct to love that should come naturally. A lover-of-self, will sacrifice anyone for their own personal gain. For example, approximately 650,000 abortions are performed every year in the U.S., because so many mothers have lost the natural affection that they should have for their own children. They are willing to sacrifice the needs of others, to meet their own selfish desires.
9. Unforgiving: When you are in love with self, anyone who would dare go against you has committed, in your mind, the unpardonable sin.
10. Slandorous: (*Diabolos* in the Greek, which is used to describe Satan) The self loving person has no problem being maliciously slanderous of others. These people build themselves up by tearing others down.
11. Without self control: (*Akrates* in the Greek, meaning *incontinent*) They have absolutely no control over their passions for self indulgence. The Fruit of The Spirit is self-control. These charlatans are devoid of The Spirit.
12. Brutal: (The Greek here means “savage”.) They have no problem running over any who would get in the way of what they think should be theirs.
13. Not lovers of good: (Should actually read “haters of good”) They actually prefer darkness to light.
14. Treacherous: Like Judas Iscariot, they will betray anyone to their own advantage.
15. Rash: They are not prayerful, nor deliberate. They will quickly pounce on any opportunity they feel is of benefit to them. Not caring whom they hurt or any other consequence.
16. Conceited: (*tuphoo* in The Greek) The word actually means to be enveloped in a fog that prevents them from seeing what is outside of their own little world.
17. Lovers of Pleasure above God: Though they may claim to love God, their true devotion is to their own selfish desires. They have no desire for sacrifice, and they love preaching that tells them that it is all about what God can do for them and nothing to do with what they must do for Him. They have no interest whatsoever in any kind of suffering for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Phony Piety (Having a form of godliness vs. 5)

These people will appear to be very spiritual. They know all the right “Christian sounding phrases, but they do not know Christ, nor do they possess the Holy Spirit. If you observe them closely, in the light of sound doctrine, **by their “fruits” you will know them (Matthew 17:15-20)**. They are CHURCH KILLERS! Avoid them at all cost. This is the reason that it is imperative that believers know their scriptures, for the truth of scripture will enable you to “test the spirits” and prove if they are genuine or false (**1 John 4:1**). The true believer, that is dead to self and alive to Christ, will walk in the power and truth of Almighty God. Their labor will produce results, and they will leave behind a legacy of faith, and not one of destruction!

Predators (Worm their way into homes vs. 6-7)

The false teacher is a “super predator”, who operates in much the same way as Satan did to deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden. They take advantage of those that they perceive to be weak. Paul’s statement about “gullible women” is by no means an indictment upon the “fairer sex”, but rather, an example of the kind of people that a false prophet will manipulate to his own gain. The false teacher needs a following in order to thrive. So, he will seek out people who have been compromised, both spiritually and morally, and convince those people that they are just fine the way they are. There’s no real need for repentance, for God loves them unconditionally, and therefore, He is pleased with them. While God DOES in fact love us unconditionally, He most certainly requires that we turn from our sins, and surrender our lives to the Lordship of His only begotten Son. We are wretched in our own selves and are in desperate need to be made holy, for **“without holiness no one will see the LORD” (Hebrews 12:14)**. Anyone who waters down this truth in the name of “unconditional love” has no earthly idea what real love is. Real love is found in The Son of God, who died upon a cross to SET US FREE FROM SIN. Why then, would we respond to such great love by embracing the sin that He paid so much to deliver us from. Again I say, without holiness no one will see The LORD!

Predestined for Destruction (Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses vs. 8-9)

According to Jewish tradition, Jannes and Jambres (pronounced *ee-an-ace* and *ee-am-brace*) were the two magicians that attempted to reproduce the miracles of Moses, when he stood before Pharaoh (**Exodus 7**). According to the scriptures, when Moses commanded his brother Aaron to throw his staff upon the ground, God caused it to turn into a serpent. Jannes and Jambres performed a similar counterfeit miracle and caused their rods to become serpents as well. They thought that they had defeated Moses, but God caused the serpent of Moses to swallow up the serpents of Pharaoh’s magicians. The point that Paul is making here is simple. Counterfeit teachers who infiltrate the Church with their false doctrines may very well appear to be the “real thing”, but God will not allow them to prevail. One day, every man’s work will be shown in the light of day. It will be tested in the fire, and only the things of God will remain (**1 Corinthians 3:13**). God is not fooled for a moment by the false. Jesus said that many will stand before Him on the day of Judgment and say, **“But we did many works in your name”**. But He will say, **“Depart from me, I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:22-23)**. The false teachers that Satan has raised up to infiltrate The Church of Jesus Christ are predestined for destruction. Only the faithful who have repented of sin and surrendered to Christ will inherit eternal life. Without holiness, no one will see The LORD!

Be on guard for the enemies of our faith. Know your scripture and live by it, so that you will be able to easily recognize the false prophet when you see him. Do not fall for the so called “prosperity gospel” that has been leading people astray for centuries. Selfishness is NOT the way of the cross. Do not allow yourself to be seduced by false doctrine. Greed and lack of self control can wreck any believers effectiveness for God. I personally have witnessed throughout the years, the lack of personal self control destroy the ministries of some very good men. Paul wanted Timothy to stay strong, finish the race, and never give the devil a foot hold in his congregation at Ephesus. The devil’s counterfeits are among us. Beware their false teachings that say that godliness is a means to financial gain. Trust God to provide all that you need. If He doesn’t provide it, then we don’t NEED it! The true child of God will be content with the provision of God.

“Godliness with CONTENTMENT is great gain! For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

1 Timothy 6:6-10

And ALL of God’s people said... TRUTH!!!