

Title: Avoid False Teachers – Part 1

Scripture: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Series: The Pastoral Epistles

1. Introduction:

- a. The whole counsel of God has been displeasing to self-centered humanity throughout the ages. But even in the professing church today, there is greater confusion, apostasy, moral decay, and tolerance for clearly unscriptural things than ever before.
 - i. As long as the people of God have existed, they have faced this problem.
 1. Ungodly teachers and their destructive heresies have always plagued the people of God.
 - ii. In our passage today, Paul recognized that false teachers cause significant harm to the church.
- b. Because of this, there were two things that Paul wanted Timothy (and all ministers) to do.
 - i. Timothy must constantly realize that in the last days, grievous seasons will set in.
 1. The battle for the truth would not be an exception but the norm of ministry.
 - ii. He must constantly turn away from the kind of people who will make these seasons so grievous.
 1. The people of God cannot entertain the messengers of Satan.

- a. **Ephesians 5:11** Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.
 - c. These two commands are connected by the conjunction “and.” If we read the first command and omit what is between, we are left with the following: “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty; for people will be lovers of self...therefore avoid such people.”
 - i. The verses in between describe the specific sins that are evident in those that are lovers of self.
2. Verse 1: Seasons of Evil: But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.
- a. **But understand this that in the last days:**
 - i. If you remember, in the previous chapter, Paul had contrasted the false teacher with the faithful minister. A true minister is characterized by kindness, patience, and gentleness. He is to be a protector of the sheep from false doctrine and immoral living.
 - ii. In our passage today, we take a glimpse into the heart of the false teacher and the evil that comes from it.
 - iii. Paul warns the faithful minister about the dangers the church faces in the **last days**.
 1. The **last days** refer to the messianic time between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. We can call this the church

age. Timothy, like all of us today, was living in these times.

b. Paul tells us that this time will be categorized by **times of difficulty**:

- i. **Times (kairos)**: periods or seasons
- ii. **Difficulty (chelepos)**: perilous or grievous.
- iii. Paul is stating that these **difficult times (perilous seasons)** will become more and more frequent and intense as the church moves closer and closer to the second coming of Christ. The intervening periods of relative peace will become less frequent. In other words, the church will come under increasing pressure from the false teachers until the final return of Christ.

1. The church will face the twin dangers of ungodly teaching and ungodly living. Each gives rise to the other.

2. Our Lord warns us also about these twin dangers in **Matthew 24:11-12** And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

c. We are aware that the devastating impact of these two evils can be seen throughout church history. The church has faced many grievous seasons throughout its existence and has battled against the false teachers and false living on numerous occasions:

- i. Sacramentalism – the belief that the church is as important or more important than God. During this period leading to the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church and its leaders seized authority that rightfully belonged to God.
- ii. Rationalism – the belief that actions should be based on reason and knowledge rather than on faith. Man’s intellect superceeded God and His Word.
- iii. Orthodoxism – theology replaced God. The knowledge of theology without love for God produced a sterile environment.
- iv. Politiscism – the belief that the state superceeded all authoirty including the authority of God.
- v. Ecumenism – The belief that harmony between churches is more important than orthodoxy and right theology.
- vi. Experientialism – The belief that experience is more important than God’s Word or teaching. Experience is the source of all knowledge.
- vii. Subjectivism – The belief that knowledge and God is merely sujective and that there is no external or objective truth. Each person has their truth.
- viii. Mysticism – intuition, and feeling replaces God
- ix. Pragmatism – the belief that assesses the truth of meaning or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application. If it produces the desired effect, then it must be God.

- d. As the years have gone by, these false doctrines have accumulated, and the battle for biblical Christianity has become more intense.
 - e. However, beloved, we cannot despair. Amid these perilous and intensifying seasons, God is the protector of the His true church. How do we know this? His sovereignty warned Timothy, and His sovereignty continues to warn His people today.
 - i. **Matthew 16:18-19** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (19) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
 - 1. Christ promises that the church will be militant. The church marches forward invictus.
 - a. **The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.** This is our hope.
3. Verse 2(A): The Root of all False Teaching: For people will be lovers of self,
 - a. **For people:** (masculine) members of the human race usually translated men. Here the word does not refer to humanity in general or to the unsaved world but to members, especially leaders in Christ’s church, **men** who not only claim the name of Christ but claim to be his ministers. As we will see later, they have **a form**

of godliness and yet deny its power. What we have before us are the false teachers. The overriding characteristic of a false teacher is that he is a **lover of self.**

b. **Self-love** is the sewer out of which the rest of the ugly sins enumerated in this passage flow from

i. Love is not evil, but the elevation of self is.

Whenever love for self is raised, love for God and the things of God are lowered. For this reason, self-love always breeds evil and sin.

1. Self-love is Lucifer's sin:

a. **Isaiah 14:12-14** “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (13) You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”

2. Self-love was the sin of Adam and Eve. We note that both of these individual elevated themselves and desires above God.

a. Every sinner's problem is not a lack of self-esteem but rather too much self-love. This is what flows from us naturally.

- ii. Beloved, compare this sinful self-serving love with the self-sacrificial character of Christ's love:
 - 1. Jesus teaches us in **John 15:13** Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.
- c. Beloved, it is frightening how many churches and self-professed Christians are preaching a gospel of self-love. This is to turn truth entirely on its head. This idea that I cannot love God if I do not love myself is satanic. The life and work of Jesus teach us that self-love is anathema to Christ.
 - i. We read in **Matthew 22:37-40** And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (38) This is the great and first commandment. (39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

4. Verse 2(B)-4: Sins that follow Self-Love: lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, (4) treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

- a. **Lovers of money**: Naturally flowing out of self-love is a love for money or materialism (the craving for earthly possession). The world is too important to the

false teacher. They imagine that godliness is a means of gain. (Consider the prosperity gospel). So-called converts who think only about themselves have no problem expecting that God must provide for their necessities and luxuries. Beloved, greed leads to false teaching, and false teaching leads to greed.

i. Christ had nowhere to lay His head.

b. **Proud:** a braggart or boastful person. The need to exaggerate abilities, accomplishments, talents, reputations, and self-value. These people want to be teachers of the law even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions (1 Timothy 1:7).

i. Christ did not seek fame.

c. **Arrogant:** Boastfulness leads to arrogance. Arrogance is placing oneself above others, the air of superiority.

i. Christ serves humanity.

d. **Abusive:** slanderous and reviling. In elevating yourself, you automatically lower others. When they speak, they hurt or injure. They use disrespectful language, insulting God and man.

i. Christ would not quench a smoking reed.

e. **Disobedient to their parents:** These people lack submissiveness, thankfulness, holiness, affection for their own families, and a forgiving attitude. They live in disobedience to the common decency that most parents want to instill in their children.

- i. Christ condemned the Pharisees for invalidating the fourth command through their traditions.
- f. **Ungrateful:** Not grateful for the many acts of kindness their parents have given them, and not grateful toward other people either, nor toward God.
 - i. Christ was subject to the Father.
- g. **Unholy:** no genuine respect for the divine. They do not reverence God. They have not been separated unto Him.
 - i. Jesus purposely separated Himself to do the Father's will.
- h. **Heartless:** Without affection to anyone, including their own family. The false teacher uses people but does not love them.
 - i. Jesus had compassion for the people because they were like sheep that were scattered without a shepherd. He fed them in His compassion.
- i. **Unappeasable:** The unappeasable person is constantly at war and refuses to lay aside his enmity or listen to reconciliation terms. An uncorrectable spirit.
 - i. The bible tells us that the Holy Spirit taught Christ.
- j. **Slanderous (diábolos):** A false accuser, this term is used for the devil. One who falsely accuses and divides people without any biblical reason but to gain power.
 - i. Christ only spoke the truth.
- k. **Without self-control:** Unable to govern one's appetite.

- i. Christ would not turn rocks into bread to appease His hunger.
- l. **Brutal:** refers to savagery, like wild beasts, whose nature is to attack enemies and tear them into pieces.
 - i. Christ called the enemies of God to repent.
- m. **Not loving good:** Hating what should be loved and loving what should be hated.
 - i. Christ calls the Father good and seeks to please Him.
- n. **Treacherous:** they eventually turn against God and His people.
 - i. Christ came to save people, not destroy them.
- o. **Reckless:** negligent and rash. The character of someone who rushes headlong or out of control into matters.
 - i. Christ was methodical about the Father's will.
- p. **Swollen with conceit:** To swell or inflate with pride. The idea is of something filled with smoke and puffed up.
 - i. Christ would not jump off the temple pinnacle.
- q. **Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God:** Hedonism. Loving earthly things and taking pleasure in the destruction caused by gossip, brutality, and betrayal. He has no room for God in the heart. This person cannot obey the first and second great commands of Jesus Christ.
 - i. Christ refused to receive the kingdoms and pleasures of the world from the hand of Satan.

5. Verse 5: Purity demands separation from Evil: having the appearance of godliness but denying its power. Avoid such people.
- a. These types of people are spiritually excommunicated, and yet they will still pretend to be eminent Christians. They are described as having a form, a mere semblance or appearance of godliness), but they deny (literally, “having once for all denied”) its power.
 - i. This makes them all the more dangerous because immature members in the church will accept their paganized Christianity as the true faith.
 1. Speaking of such men, Paul warns **Titus 1:16** They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.
 - b. They have no love for God the Father, Jesus Christ, or for God’s people. Hence, since they are not Spirit-filled men, it is not surprising that they lack the power of the Holy Spirit operating in their lives.
 - c. The command for every Christian is to **avoid such people**. Regardless of how convincing a false idea may appear or how sincere a false teacher may seem to be, we are to avoid them. We are not to place friendship or a mistaken notion of brotherliness before God’s commands.
 - i. Remember, we measure a faithful minister by the following three traits:
 1. Orthodoxy

2. Orthopraxy
3. Orthopathy

6. Summary:

- a. Beloved, do not ignore the importance of what we have discussed today. We are to have nothing to do with the false.
- b. A minister looks like Christ, follows Christ, and obeys Christ. The false teacher never looks like Christ.
- c. What comes out of the false is wretched self-love and never self-sacrifice.
- d. The false teacher's message and/or their manner of living will always negate the First and Second Great Commandments.
 - i. They will not love God genuinely.
 - ii. They will not love God's people.
- e. The beauty of God's Gospel is the self-sacrificial nature of our Christ. Consider the **Gospel** when evaluating those who are called ministers. Do their lives mirror the Master and His work?
- f. Beloved, be discerning!

7. Benediction:

- a. **Philippians 2:3-4** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Public Reading of Scripture
Philippians 2:1-11