

"Preying Upon the Weak"
2 Timothy 3:6
(Preached at Trinity, September 4, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For several weeks we've been looking at Paul's description of difficulties that would plague the church for its entire history. While the church will always face difficulties from without, in this passage Paul is describing difficulties from within. Paul divides these difficulties into four categories:
 - A. Church members whose lives are ungodly – counterfeit Christians – **Verses 1-5**
Paul says they only possess a form of godliness.
 - B. False teachers that would prey upon the weak – **Verse 6**
 - C. Church members without spiritual discernment – **Verse 7**
 - D. Church members who stand in opposition to the truth – **Verses 8-9**
2. So far, our focus has been upon the Paul's description of the counterfeit Christian.
 - A. Paul says these people are dangerous to have in the church.
 - B. They will weaken the church by corrupting its purity.
 - C. They will hinder the ministry of the church rendering it irrelevant in the world.
 - D. We must beware of those that resemble these characteristics. Paul commands us to turn away from these pretenders.
We must give particular attention to our own hearts.
3. We now turn to the second great danger which Paul describes in **Verse 6**. Paul warns of *false teachers that prey upon the weak*. It is intimately connected to **Verses 1-5** – "For among them . . ." This is a topic Paul returns to over and over. It is the main theme of both 1 & 2 Timothy. Paul approaches the subject from every possible angle so the church might remain pure and above reproach.
4. False teachers are of a particular sort of the unholy pretenders. They pose an even greater danger because they are in a greater position to influence others.
 - A. In the Book of Acts we read that Paul had spoken earlier to the elders of the Ephesian church concerning this great danger so that they would be constantly vigilant. **Acts 20:28-31 NAU** - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ "Therefore be on the alert"

- B. The Bible teaches us that these false teachers will increase in their number and in their heresy as the church age progresses.
2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."
1 Timothy 4:1 NAU - "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,"
5. It is essential that we recognize the danger and be on a constant state of high alert lest we be guilty of being drawn into their deception. A city under siege remains on high alert. The church must recognize that the enemy is always at the door.
6. The church must protect its most vulnerable. A good shepherd always watches for the stealthy approach of wolves. False teachers will usually have limited impact upon the mature, but the weak can become easy prey.
7. **Verse 6** warns of the encroachment of these false teachers. We must not be ignorant of their presence. Remember, Paul is saying that these “difficult times” describe the entire history of the church.
- I. The character of the false teachers
- A. They are unholy
1. They are marked by the characteristics of **Verses 2-5**
"For among them are those who enter into households"
 2. They are counterfeit Christians having only a form of godliness.
- B. They are shrewd and cunning – Just like their master the devil.
John 8:44 NAU - "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."
1. It is Satan's nature to lie and deceive. From the time of Satan's fall he has been in a state of unredeemable enmity with God.
 2. From the beginning of creation Satan has sought to deceive by distorting the Word of God.
 He deceived Eve and then Adam into distrusting God.
 The Bible tells us that Satan is the most cunning creature ever created.
Genesis 3:1 NAU - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."
 “Crafty” - עָרִים {aw-room'} - shrewd, sly
3. Satan is the force behind all false doctrine and false teachers
- C. They are filled with pride – **Verse 2** – “boasters, arrogant”
1 Timothy 6:3-4 NAU - "If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, ⁴ he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,"

1. The false teacher is most concerned about his image before men – They love the praise of men.
The false teacher tickles itching ears because he is a man-pleaser.
2 Timothy 4:2-3 NAU - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,"
2. The immature are often ignorant of what they need. Strong meat is often difficult to digest. A child would much rather have ice cream or donuts than broccoli.
Left unprotected the immature will sometimes gravitate towards the smooth words of the false teacher. And Satan can make a lie seem like true wisdom from God.
3. It is a weighty thing to teach God's Word. It must always be done in fear and trembling.
James 3:1 NAU - "Let not many *of you* become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment."

II. Their M.O. – Modus Operandi

- A. They are sneaky – They sneak into the lives of people posing as great men of God
2 Timothy 3:6 NAU - "those who enter into households and captivate weak women"
ἐνδύνω slip in, enter secretly, worm one's way in
KJV: – "For of this sort are they which creep into houses
Jude 1:4 NAU - "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."
Matthew 7:15 NAU - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."
Ephesians 4:14 NAU - "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming"
 1. They are seldom openly deceitful – they creep into houses.
 2. They deal with people on a personal level, one by one.
- B. They can be very convincing – "who enter into households and captivate weak women" - The immature are easily swayed by their captivating words.
Mark 13:22 NAU - "for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order to lead astray, if possible, the elect."
2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NAU - "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds."
 1. False teachers often have charismatic personalities – they are popular.
 2. They speak enough truth to seem entirely credible.
 3. They will most often appeal to human wisdom and human reason.

- C. They are often very intelligent and speak convincingly.
1. They are usually very forceful in holding forth their positions.
1 Timothy 1:6-7 NAU - "For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, ⁷ wanting 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."
 2. But again, they seldom clearly defend their position from the Bible.
- D. They often seek after personal gain –
- 2 Timothy 3:2 NAU** - "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money"
1. They are usually most concerned for themselves.
1 Timothy 6:10 NAU - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
 2. This is also a warning to Pastors
1 Peter 5:2 NAU - "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;"
1 Timothy 3:1-3 NAU - "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires *to do.* ² An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money."

III. Their Victims

- A. They prey upon the weak
 "weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,"
1. The J.W's and Mormons are continually marching through our neighborhoods seeking victims.
 2. They focus upon religious people void of understanding.
- B. They prey upon those with carnal desires –
 "and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,"
1. "weighed down with sins" – the unholy leading the unholy
 - a. They tend to make people comfortable in their sins – they tickle itching ears.
 - b. Matthew Henry – "A foolish head and a filthy heart make persons, especially women, an easy prey to seducers."¹

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2363.

- c. Sinful people desire smooth talking preachers
Isaiah 30:9-10 NAU - "For this is a rebellious people, false sons, Sons who refuse to listen To the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰ Who say to the seers, "You must not see *visions*"; And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right, Speak to us pleasant words, Prophecy illusions."
- 2. The weak do not want to hear the "right things"
 - a. They want smooth doctrine to satisfy their corrupt hearts. Where truth is rejected, falsehood will always fill the void.
 - b. They often reject the clear application of the Word of God. Abortion is murder, homosexuality is sin, Sabbath breaking is against God's Law, Fornication is sin.
- 3. The false teacher tickles the sinful desires of sinful men
 - a. They are moved by the sensational – some new idea or doctrine.
 - b. They are intoxicated by a desire for personal gain.
 - c. They are deceived into believing that eternal life is possible without holiness.

IV. How can we recognize them? We can ask a parallel question. How do you select a church? How do you know a genuine pastor—a true teacher from a false teacher?
Matthew 7:18-20 NAU - "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "So then, you will know them by their fruits."

- A. We shall recognize him by his doctrine
Verse 10 – "Now you followed my teaching,"
 "followed" - παρακολουθέω - to follow closely, to investigate
 In other words, Paul's teaching stood up under careful scrutiny.
 - 1. The best way to recognize false doctrine is that it does not match the real thing.
 - 2. Every true teacher knows the Word of God must be the basis of all doctrine – this is the source of Christian growth.
2 Timothy 3:16-4:1 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. "
Acts 20:32 NAU - "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified."
1 Peter 2:2 NAU - "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,"
 - 3. The false teacher diminishes the importance of Scripture. The true teacher carefully studies that his doctrine might be consistent with Scripture.
- B. We shall recognize him by his personal character - **See Verses 2-5**
 "For among them are those who enter into households"
 You can't separate doctrine and character
1 Timothy 4:16 NAU - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

- C. We shall recognize him by his followers.
1. Are his followers weak, confused, unconcerned about doctrine?
 2. Do they reflect biblical standards
 - a. The false teacher's doctrine does not lead to holiness.
 - b. The true test of doctrine is whether it produces godliness.
 - c. False teaching leads men away from Christ and the source of life.
 3. Religious charlatans will produce converts after their own image

Conclusion:

1. Only true doctrine will build up a church
Ephesians 4:13-14 NAU - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;"
Acts 2:42 NAU - "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
2. We must beware of those who do not hold to sound doctrine.
Galatians 1:9 NAU - "As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!"
2 Timothy 3:5 NAU - "Avoid such men as these."