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Sermon Notes

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Boldness & Faithfulness in the Gospel, pt. 6:
Trouble in the Last Days
2 Timothy 3:1-13

I. Introduction

A. Paul in his cell... thoughts about future of the gospel

1. Evil of the times, weakness of Timothy
2. How can Timothy overcome the power of the opposition?
3. Paul doesn't hide truth from Timothy... like Christ, he paints true picture

B. Illus. Bedtime stories for children... designed to give ease... sometimes they lie

C. Today's division

1. facing times of stress (vs. 1-2)
2. careful description of evil men Timothy faced (vs. 2-9)
 - a. their moral conduct (vs. 2-4)
 - b. their religious observance (vs. 5)
 - c. their proselytizing zeal (vs. 6-9)
3. standing firm in the faith (vs. 10-13)
 - a. the past (vs. 10-13)
 - b. the future (vs. 14-15)

D. Read text

II. Facing These Violent Last Days (vs. 1)

A. Paul starts: “Understand this...”

1. Timothy already knew all these things
2. Paul wanted to underscore the gravity of the situation

B. The situation

1. Paul had been arrested and was in chains
2. Everyone in Asia had deserted Paul
3. Paul had warned Timothy to
 - a. fan his gift into flame so he could preach boldly (1:6)
 - b. not to be ashamed of Christ or of the gospel (1:8)
 - c. be as dedicated and zealous as a soldier, an athlete, a farmer (2:3-6)
 - d. endure with Christ if he wanted to reign with him (2:13)
 - e. be an approved craftsman, a clean vessel, the Lord’s servant (2:14-26)

C. The “Last Days”

1. speculation causes excitement
2. “last days” began with 1st coming of Christ, end with the 2nd coming of Christ
 - a. Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-17)
 - b. Other verses... Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 John 2:18
3. Martin Luther: last days a certain message... & opposition to that message
4. Paul warned Timothy NOT FROM SPECULATION

D. “Times of stress”

1. Church history—persecution and false teaching... no easy passage to heaven
2. “perilous”, “stressful”, “violent”:
 - a. demon-possessed man of Gadarenes in Matt. 8:28... fierce, violent days

b. open aggression against God revealed by gospel... “increase of wickedness” (Matt. 24)

3. therefore, gospel can only be advanced by forceful men and women (Matt. 11)

4. violence of days FROM sinfulness of opposition (next 8 verses)... Romans 8:7 (sinful mind is hostile to God)

E. Summary of Paul’s introduction

1. we are living in the last days... Christ ushered this final era in when he came & he will end it when he returns
2. these days include times of peril and stress
3. this peril and stress is the direct result of bad men who hate God
4. we must understand this and be prepared for it

III. **The Ungodly & Their Teachers** (vs. 2-9)

A. Their moral conduct (vs. 2-4)

What they love and what they hate

B. Their religious life (vs. 5)

Form, not power

C. Their Teachers’ Zeal (vs. 6-9)

Sneaky, aggressive, but ultimately futile

A. Their moral conduct (vs. 2-4)

1. nineteen descriptions of these evil people
2. key: 1st and last expressions used: “lovers of self” not “lovers of God”
3. “love” a key feature... what you love shows who you are!!

Illus. Edwards: God has built inside our souls the ability not just to assess and understand things, but to be attracted or repelled by them

- a. lovers of self
 - b. lovers of money
 - c. lovers of pleasure
 - d. NOT lovers of God
4. Fifteen other expressions, almost exclusively a depiction of breakdown in relations with other people
- a. first three enlarge on self-love... “**proud**”, “**arrogant**”, “**abusive**”... prideful people crush others
 - b. next five words seem to relate to family life... how these people treat those closest to them... series of words with “un-” or “dis-”... a negation of what should have been expected
 - c. it all begins with **disobedience to parents**... children come from the womb totally self-centered... ME, ME, ME!!!

Illus. Infant thinks only of itself!!

- d. naturally following: **ungrateful**... with natural gratitude
 - e. **unholy** = lacking in natural respect and piety
 - f. **without love** = lacking normal affections, heartless (Rom. 1:31), cold, pitiless
 - g. **irreconciliable** = NEVER YIELDING TO ANYONE
 - h. last seven words indicate widespread breakdown of morals... total lack of self-control leading to open debauchery
5. Summary: all this selfish, evil, antisocial behavior begins and ends with the bracketing expression: lovers of self, not lovers of God
- a. when you are your own God, you will yield to no one and seek to dominate everyone
 - b. cycle of sin and frustration leads to ever-increasing guilt, restlessness and anger
 - c. God’s clear order: love God first, others second, self last
 - d. sinful man’s order: love self first, others second, God last

e. ONLY THE GOSPEL OFFERS A SOLUTION!!

B. Their religious life (vs. 5)

1. shock: such wicked people paint a veneer of religion over it all!!
2. long history of this:
 - a. Isaiah decried religious fasts that end in fist fights, also Isa. 1:14-17
 - b. Pharisees who clean outside of cup & dish (Matthew 23:25)
 - c. Roman Catholic structure before reformation
3. Form vs. power of religion... external show vs. internal transformation
 - a. the Judas syndrome... easy to fool man, impossible to fool God
 - b. true religion has BOTH form and power... external form arises from internal power
 - c. without it, external form is just a show & therefore an abomination to the Lord
4. Paul's advice to Timothy: "Convert them?" "Try your best to win them over?" NO! "STAY AWAY FROM THEM!!!"
 - a. religious sinners the worst kind, most capable of corrupting a church
 - b. 2 Peter 2, dog return to its vomit

C. The Teachers: proselytizing zeal (vs. 6-9)

vs. 6 "Of them are some that worm they way into homes..."

Verses 2-5 true of a whole group of people... like people like priests

4:3 "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead to suit their own desires they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear."

It all comes down to what you love!!! And these teachers will appeal to those with corrupted loves

1. Method: back door evangelism... working with those who are weakest

vs. 6-7 “worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women who are loaded down with sins and swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.”

- a. “worm their way” = slink around when no one can see them... slipping into a home as one would slip into a comfortable garment
- b. BUT deeply aggressive intent... a desire to take these women captive; a BATTLE FOR THE MIND...

Romans 7:23 “waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin...”

2 Cor. 10:5 “we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ...”

- c. DON'T be a prisoner of these slick salesmen of evil... but rather take their thoughts captive to make them obedient to Christ!!
- d. BUT these women can't do that because of their spiritual immaturity... MORAL WEAKNESS:

“loaded down with sins and swayed by all kinds of evil desires”

DOCTRINAL IMMATURITY

“always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth...”

Illus. Women in Japanese English Bible classes in Tokushima...

2. Like Jannes and Jambres... futile opposition!!

vs. 8 “Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth...”

- a. traditionally: Egyptian sorcerers who were able to mimic the first few signs Moses gave

Exodus 7:11... Pharaoh's sorcerers - staffs into snakes “by their secret arts”

Exodus 7:22... Nile river water into blood “by their secret arts”

Exodus 8:7... Frogs multiplied in Egypt “by their secret arts”

Exodus 8:18 BUT, they couldn't keep up with God, for they couldn't make gnats come on Egypt... "This is the finger of God!!"

b. these false teachers also oppose God's truth

vs. "men of depraved mind who as far as the faith is concerned are rejected."

* "depraved mind" = corrupted minds, given to the evil things listed above... corrupted by what they love

* "the faith" = Christian doctrine, solid food for growing disciples

As they reject the faith, the faith rejects them... they love falsehood, truth spews them out

* "rejected" = "disqualified", "tested and found wanting"

c. their outcome... FAILURE

vs. 9 "But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone."

* they make no positive progress among the Lord's disciples

John 10:4-5 "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

* Christ speaks to his sheep in two ways... by the indwelling Spirit and by the written word of God... and the two ALWAYS go together

* These false teachers make no true progress because Paul has written so openly against them, and Christ's true disciples read these words, absorb them and are able to recognize true from false doctrine

IV. Paul's Godly Contrast (vs. 10-13)

Three great contrasts: Teaching, Way of Life, Persecution

A. Contrasting teaching

1. NOT satisfying itching ears, BUT saving lost souls
2. NOT telling people to indulge their sinful passions BUT teaching them to put them to death
3. NOT preaching earthly ease & sensual pleasure BUT promising persecution now and heavenly joy later

B. Contrasting way of life

1. **purpose** = what motivated him... the salvation of God's elect
2. **faith** = what gave him power... the invisible sovereign God rules over all
3. **patience** = what kept him going day after day
4. **love** = what compelled him... "For the love of Christ constrains us"

NOT love of self love of money or love of pleasure, but the love of Christ for lost sinners

5. **endurance** = again, what kept him in the field during the entire war

C. Contrasting reception from the world

1. Paul's history of suffering

vs. 11 "persecutions, suffering—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra

- a. Antioch: expelled from the city

Acts 14:22 "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."

- b. Iconium: enemies stirred up the crowd so Paul had to run for his life
- c. Lystra: first worshipped as a god, then stoned and left for dead

2. Paul's promise of suffering

vs. 12 "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..."

WHY will we be persecuted?

“while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

*deceiving = fooling other people with false doctrine

* being deceived = they really believe it themselves

NOW... Paul’s promise is a guarantee!!

- a. not found in comforting books of God’s promises for your life
- b. YET totally in line with Christ’s teaching

John 16:33 “I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world.”

3. Ultimate comfort: Christ’s constant protection:

“Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them...”

Christ is sovereign over all our trials, and is able to rescue us from any harm... even though we suffer physically, no one can touch our true life— eternal life, hidden with Christ in heaven

IV. Summary

*Last days characterized by violent opposition to the gospel

*Opposition caused by sinful people who love only themselves and who hate anything to do with God

*Persecution is inevitable, but Christ has overcome the world and can rescue us from every evil attack

*Paul’s love for Christ and his love for sinners gave him incredible perseverance

Application:

What do you love? What are you really living for? Two choices... live for God through Christ or live for selfish pleasures

Christ died on the cross to set us free from slavery to ourselves... an infant lives only for himself, but a mature Christian soldier takes his stand on the battlefield and is willing to pay any price and bear any burden to see other come to Christ