

Text: 2 Timothy 3:1-9

Title: Dangerous Times

Truth: The future of our world is not bright.

Date/Location: September 4, 2016 at FBC

I. Outline of the Passage

- A. In verses 1-9, the Bible talks about unbelieving people. In verses 10-17, it speaks to the Christian minister and Christian people as to how they can handle the dangerous times that will increasingly come by adherence to Scripture.
- B. At the end of chapter 2, we are left with the hopeful idea that some of those who oppose Christ will repent, become sane instead of insane, come to their senses, and escape the devil's trap. But that hope will grow increasingly dim as the days wear on into the final period of terrible apostasy that will overtake the world.
- C. Then in 3:1, Paul gives the prophecy that dangerous times will come upon the entire world. We know it is the world instead of some subset of the world (like Christians) because he next talks about mankind in general terms. While these evil men will certainly persecute Christians, the out-and-out depravity of the people will undoubtedly affect everyone alike. Just like a righteous world positively impacts those who do not believe in righteousness, so a world in which the intent of men's hearts is only evil continually will be a very unpleasant place for everyone (Gen. 6:5).
- D. This is followed in verses 2-5a with a description of the character of the people who will populate the world during this evil time. There are 19 descriptive words or phrases that express how bad their character will be. Read them slowly and let them sink in for a minute.
- E. The end of verse 5 records Paul's instruction to Timothy: keep away from such people. This admonition is probably not just for one's moral purity—but for one's safety too!
- F. The evil character of mankind during this time will most certainly spill out into bad behavior. Verses 6-9 further describe the evil character of people during those days by explaining two activities they will engage in, and then the ultimate outcome of their evil.

II. The Reasons for the Danger of the Coming Days, v. 1

Paul is talking about truly dangerous times. Caution! Peligroso! What makes these times dangerous? How do they get so bad?

By the way, we should note that Paul wrote during the time of Nero. That was no walk in the park for Christians. He is describing a time which will be even worse than his own!

Paul does not directly say here what happens to make things get so bad. But we can glean a couple of facts from other Bible passages.

A. First and foremost, depravity and sin do not remain static. They grow and develop over time into a larger and worse monster. They never lessen by themselves. See verse 13 in this same chapter of 2 Timothy.

Important Sidebar: Your life, if you are not a Christian, is in some ways just like what we are describing. This is why the message of Christianity is so needed. It describes how God can forgive you of your own sins and deliver you from the sinful tendency that resides in your innermost person. It takes a powerful fix to get things straightened out in your life—the death and subsequent bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the medicine. The question is whether you will have it or not? Will you turn to Jesus Christ from your sin and trust Him as your God and Savior? He is the only one who can deliver you from being one of these people we are talking about in 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

This good news about Jesus is the reason that a charge of pessimism against Christians is ultimately false. We admit the charge as far as human means are concerned. The world is getting and will get worse, not better. That's because the world has rejected the only HOPE that there is—in God. But we have not abandoned that hope. We will see God come to judge the world in righteousness; we will live in the kingdom of God; we will experience a new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13). With God, there is optimism. If all you have is man's sinful nature, there is only pessimism.

B. The second reason that the times will be so dangerous is that the devil is active, and increasingly so as the time of the end draws near. We can see that especially during the Tribulation in Revelation 12:9 and 13. Even now he is working his evil plans (1 Peter 5:8).

C. Third, in a local sense in our corner of the world, we have experienced a great restraining effect against sin by the work of the Holy Spirit generally, through the church and its preaching specifically. 2 Thess. 2:7 speaks of this restraining power. That restraint will be removed and any residual effects trampled by the upcoming generations of mankind.

D. Fourth, the ever-growing situation is a judgment of God. People will get what they want, with all of its terrible consequences. As God completes

the final world-wide implementation of "handing over" people to their depravity, the results are what we see described (Romans 1:24, 26, 28).

The dangerous times will not necessarily be short, but much time will pass while growing the nations to such frightful conditions. We are experiencing some measure of this today. Commentator D. Edmund Hiebert wrote this: "Every informed believer is painfully aware of the fearful apostasy that is sweeping over Christendom in our own times." He wrote that in 1958—58 years ago!

III. Application

- A. Some of us tend toward depression and fear about these sorts of things. The charge of pessimism in our lives sticks. These things are a lot of what we talk about. But talking about these things is like talking about the weather—when are you going to stop talking about it and instead start doing something about it?!
- B. Another tendency could be to cheer Paul on and say, "That's right Paul. Couldn't have said it better myself! Tell it like it is, and let those evil people have it!"
- C. Pastorally, my advice to you is to forget how bad it is in the world, or how happy you are that the wicked will be judged. Be more concerned for the people who do not know God. Tell them of Him. Do something to help brighten the situation locally around you.
- D. Certainly this piece of advice applies: Don't be "that guy." Don't be like those evil people described here. The characteristics and actions must not mark our lives at all. Kill those sins in your life.

IV. The Idolatry of Self-Worship

- A. Many study Bibles and outlines express that this passage is a description of the last great apostasy. Generally the word "apostasy" refers to a standing away from faith in God that one once held, at least loosely. But how is it that what we see here is an apostasy? In the most generic sense, at least in our own land, many people profess Christianity as their religion (unbelievably many, about 70-80%). That number is decreasing in recent years and will continue to do so as common traditions are ignored and actively undermined. But note that verse 5 says these folks have "a form of godliness." These people will profess religion. They will, as they do today, claim the moral high ground for themselves and criticize Christians for being intolerant, unloving, bigoted, hate-filled people, when in fact the exact reverse is the case. Some of them may

wear vestments, have religious titles like bishop and priest, live in beautiful residences, have "church" ministries, preach on television in their speeches and skits, etc. But notice what their morals are. A recent poll that came across my desk said that 68% of people believe fornication is morally acceptable. 71% said divorce is. LGBT relations, 63%. **Immoral.**

- B. Another way to describe this state of the world will be one of self-worship, which because it replaces God with the "god" of self, is idolatry. This idolatry is forbidden by the true God—your Creator— from the very earliest pages of Scripture. Consider Exodus 20:3-5. Anything that replaces God as the object of your highest affection is an idol. That idol can be yourself; or it can be the state government; or it can be education; or it can be money, power, or pleasure; or it can be your ancestors; or it can be the pantheon of Buddhist or Hindu deities, the Mormon multi-god, any strictly monotheistic god as opposed to the Triune God of the Bible; or any other religious construct. All of these are idols which are forbidden not only to Christians—but for every single person on the face of the planet.
- C. Look at this idolatry: The people will love themselves and what money can do to please them (Luke 16:14). They put themselves on a pedestal and worship themselves rather than God. This causes them to treat others with disrespect and abuse. They reject all authority over them, including their parents. They may even try to get children out from under their parent's authority by getting them into all day-daycare and preschool and school! They are self-centered, seeing no need to offer thanks to anyone, much less God. They feel entitled! By the way, when was the last thank-you note you got from a welfare recipient? Nothing is sacred to these people. Robbing a church is no big deal. Killing in a church is the same. They feel they have no duty to God. They don't even love their family members. Divorce is rampant, as is child abuse and human trafficking. They are never satisfied at their enemies, never forgive, etc. They resist reconciliation at every possibility (like current politics). They falsely accuse others because it makes them happy to do so. In this, they are little devils. They have no self-governance, no restraint. They are like wild animals, savages (ISIS). Nothing virtuous attracts their appreciation. They are know-it-alls, betray people to persecutors, have big heads, and love pleasure rather than God.

Conclusion

And we haven't even gotten into the details, which are awful. But God reigns! Our hope must be in Him!

