

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: May 6, 2018

Sermon Title: The Apostasy of our Age

Sermon Series: Second Timothy

Text: 2 Tim. 3:1-9

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

Date: May 6, 2018

Title: The Apostasy of our Age

Text: 2 Tim. 3:1-9

Theme: Those who deny Jesus and reject the Gospel are apostates the Church is to avoid.

Introduction:

“The exhortations of ch. 2 to endure hardship, be diligent, rightly divide the Word, and be a vessel fit for the Master’s use are given in the context of difficult, even perilous times. Last days includes the whole time from the writing of this letter until the return of Christ.”¹

The Picture	The Promise
A Single-minded Soldier	We will PLEASE him.
A Rule Abiding Athlete	We will be CROWNED .
A Hard Working Farmer	We will SHARE in the crop.
A Careful Cutting Surgeon	We will not be ASHAMED
A Ceremonially Clean Vessel	We will be USEFUL to the Master
If We Endure	We will REIGN with him (v. 12 [i.e. Adam and Eve])

This is the context in which the appeal to guard the gospel exists. There is nothing easy about the task.

This text describes for us the historical context of our text. Friends, the times in which we live push against the passion to keep the main thing, the main thing.

The Holy Spirit has pressed me to see how guarding the gospel is not only about

theological posturing [i.e. orthodoxy], but also moral/ethical practice [i.e. orthopraxy]. It is possible to have a form or appearance of godliness and to deny the gospel. It is possible to always be learning, but never able to settle on what is true or even know the truth. It is possible to profess godliness but by our works deny the very thing we claim to love!

Friends, this is the threat to the Church.

The Holy Spirit prompted me to think about what I value most. This came in the form of a question or desire. The question is this, “What do I want my children and grandchildren to know or have?” This led me to ask, “What do I love the most?” Because whatever it is I love will be what I want them to have. What is the legacy you wish to leave those who follow in your track? How do you want to be remembered? If this is about you, then “you” is what you love.

This text describes that threat.

Another question confronting us in this text is whether those in our text are the deniers noted earlier in chapters 1 and 2? And is the denier an apostate? Someone can be a denier who never claimed to have faith and another denier can claim to have had faith, but now rejects the gospel and this person is an apostate. Every apostate is a denier, but not every denier is an apostate.

The New Testament speaks often of this “falling away” [APOSTASY]. 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18

- “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” (1 Tim. 4:1).
- “But false prophets also arose among the people, **just as there will also be false teachers among you**, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Pet. 2:1).
- ² “Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and **in their greed they will exploit you with false words**; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep” (2 Pet. 2:2, 3).
- “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” (Acts 20:28).
- 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” (Acts 20:29, 30).
- “**Therefore be on the alert**, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears” (Acts 20:31).
- “Children, **it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared**; from this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18).
- “**They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out**, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19).

APOSTATE

Every apostate is a denier, but not every denier is an apostate.

Every apostate began “**in the church.**”

Not every Christian who leaves the church is an apostate, but in the New Testament every apostate “**leaves the Church.**”

One of the questions always confronting the church is where does our greatest threat arise? The text always teaches that our greatest challenge will come from those within the church. The wolves in sheep’s clothing. Persecution is not our greatest challenge. Apostasy and apostates are our greatest challenge. I am not worried about the world out there, I am worried about the world in here. I am not worried about the failure of marriage out there, but the failed marriage in here. I am not worried about the moral collapse of our society. I am worried about the moral collapse within this church. I am not worried about the false teaching out there. I am worried about the false teaching in here. I am not worried about failed leadership out there. I am worried about the failed leadership in here.

The threat within is always our greatest challenge.

How do we meet this challenge? Do we raise our walls and burn our bridges and dig deeper moats? Friend, we meet the challenge by keeping the main thing, the main thing. What we need and the world around us needs is the gospel. We must be passionate and persistent in preaching Christ crucified. Our text speaks of the danger within. Our next paragraph (3:10-16) speaks of

the antidote to this apostasy. What is the answer to this most perplexing question? This Letter tells us. However, we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let us consider our text.

Literary Context:

- 2 Tim. 2:14-26 Our Separation from dishonorable vessels / unapproved workers
- There is a tension between the patient reproving of those who reject the gospel and the persistent avoiding of those who reject the gospel. There is a need to discern between the hardened apostate and the one who appears to be pointed in the wrong direction.
- OUR TEXT The Apostasy of our Age
- 2 Tim. 3:10-17 The Antidote to our Age

Historical Context:

- The Church in Ephesus is under siege by false teachers/teaching.
- Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to perpetuate, protect, and proclaim the gospel.
- Paul is about to die and seeks to encourage Timothy to stay the course and thus suffer for the sake of the gospel.

Biblical Context:

- Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39 - The Old Testament Scripture leads His people to Salvation through Jesus Christ.

“The last days is the era inaugurated by Christ’s First Advent and completed by his second (1 Tim. 4:1).”² “This is not a period just prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Rather, in keeping with the overall New Testament perspective, it is the era inaugurated by Christ’s First Advent and completed at his second (Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 John 2:18).”³

1. What is the **author’s structure** of this passage? Please a) show *sections with verse references*, b) state the *author’s emphasis*, and c) explain what *strategies* you used to see this structure.

There are four statements made concerning the Apostate. We will begin where the text begins with the description of the Apostate.

I. The description of Apostates (vv. 2-5a)

- ¹“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these” (2 Tim. 3:1-5a).

Apostasy is not simply a disembodied idea. Apostasy is a person. Apostasy is not in the abstract. Paul names people because people are apostates.

- The word “difficult” occurs twice in the New Testament.

“And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, **exceeding fierce**, so that no man might pass by that way” (Matt. 8:28).

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1).

Or perhaps, “dangerous,” “fierce.”⁴

- Notice the description is life-based, not mind-based. Compare with 2:14ff.

The descriptive is not on their orthodoxy, but on their orthopraxy. It isn't focused on their poor theology, but on their self-centered life style and choices. They have made everything about them. It is not Christ-centered, but me-centered.

Or “self-centered.” The first two traits in 2 Tim 3:2 and the last two in 3:4 are Greek words beginning with the root “lovers of,” and so bracket the list at beginning and end.⁵

- If we are mishandling the word (2:15) and have swerved from truth (2:18), it looks like this.
- This is the fruit of apostasy.

Wrong thinking leads to wrong acting.

II. The danger with Apostates (vv. 5a, 6, 7).

- ⁵ “holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:5a-7).

A. The appearance of the Apostate

1. They have a form of godliness, although they have denied its power (v. 5)

Outward appearance. Paul's contrast with power in 3:5b shows that he regards this “form” to be outward, one of *appearance* rather than reality (cf. 1 Cor 4:19-20; 1 Thess 1:5).⁶

“What makes the false teachers so dangerous is that they appear to be Christians (Mat. 7:15, 21-23).”⁷

2. They are always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (v. 7).

Grk “always learning,” continuing the description of the women from v. 6. Because of the length and complexity of the Greek sentence, a new sentence was started here in the translation.⁸

The Net Bible identifies the “weak women” as those who are always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.

“Pathetic picture of these hypnotized women without intellectual power to cut through the fog of words.”⁹

“Paul’s point is not that all women are this way, but that some have been especially vulnerable to deception. The false teachers at Ephesus had been especially successful in deceiving women (1 Tim. 2:14; 5:13-15).”¹⁰

“Evidently the false teachers at Ephesus had made significant inroads among a group of women in that church (1 Tim. 5:13-15). Here is the danger of ignorance. Hence, Paul instructs Timothy to ‘let a woman learn’ (1 Tim. 2:11).”¹¹

It is important to put this statement in the context of the local church as it was found in the home. The home is where the first church met. Such is neither normative nor prescriptive. It is simply descriptive of the early church.

3. They profess they know God, but by their works they deny him (Titus 1:16).

Colossians 2 describes these people as very religious and ritualistic in their “worship” but are empty and powerless (Col. 2:16-23).

A tension or problem we have as readers of this text is attempting to apply this text to ourselves. We are not deniers or apostates. We are confessors who love Jesus and his Church. Yet, this is a real threat and our old nature is fully capable of having those who confess Jesus pretend to be deniers or apostates. If this is what the apostate looks like, then may we flee such intangibles when they rear their ugly head!

B. Their actions (v. 6 – “enter/creep”)

The KJV/ESV translates the word for enter with creep. I like the word “creep” because it speaks of stealth and deception. It is more in keeping with the devil and his style.

It seems a marker of apostasy are these two qualities (vv. 5, 6). It suggests that the apostate might be “the smartest person in the room!” [Or at least think he is {wink}]. How many of these people do we encounter within our Christian circles?

- Anytime we are mishandling the text (2:15), we are leading people into bondage.
- Beware of the creepers (v. 6; 2:14, 16, 18, 26). It is as old as Moses (Exod. 7:11, 12). Nothing is new under the sun.

“The empty religious individuals of vv. 2-5 use deception to gain a hearing. Make captives is a military term for taking prisoners in war. The imagery of spiritual combat is clear in these verses.”¹²

III. The duty against Apostates (vv. 5b, 8, 9)

- ^{5b}“holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. . . ⁸Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. ⁹ But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes' and Jambres' folly was also” (2 Tim. 3:5b, 8, 9).

“Turn away is a command for Timothy to avoid the evil persons described in vv. 2-5. We are not to link up in common cause with them.”¹³

There is always a line between engaging those who are rejecting Christianity and those who are to be avoided. We like “formulas” and “sequence,” but it is never that easy. Yet there are necessary lines and there are those occasions when we must remove from our midst those who deviate from the truth and draw others to themselves and their teaching.

The paragraph leaves us with some good news.

IV. The demise of Apostates (vv. 8, 9)

- ⁸“Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. ⁹ But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes' and Jambres' folly was also” (2 Tim. 3:8, 9).

Jannes and Jambres were the traditional names of two of Pharaoh's magicians who opposed Moses at the time of the Exodus.

Grk “disapproved concerning the faith.”

Grk “for they will not progress any more.”¹⁴

There is an end to the apostate. Although it would appear they are often “winning,” they are on a short lead and have a short run.

It is interesting to note how the word “folly” is literally “no mind.” At some point in time their mindless chatter shall become evident and be wholly known and exposed and removed.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

Author's Emphasis: Those who reject the gospel/ word/ Jesus are to be avoided by the church.

They are disqualified (2:15, 20, 21; 2:5).

There is no dichotomy in Paul's view of the Christian life or the centrality of the Word in that Christian life. This picture is not present in the apostates. The apostates have broken this cycle. They do not finish what has begun.

Those who reject the gospel/ word/ Jesus are to be avoided by the church and the only antidote [cure, remedy, corrective] to the threat of this apostasy is the Word of God.

It is always easy to think and believe the threat lies out there among others, but the threat is right here in our midst. The greatest threat is found in the pulpit, the greatest threat are those you hire and those you confirm.

There is always a subjective element to the assessing, but there is also an objective element. The objective is the Word of God. The objective is known by knowing the Bible.

1. They have a form of godliness, although they have denied its power (v. 5)
2. They are always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (v. 7).
3. They profess they know God, but by their works they deny him (Titus 1:16).

Every pastor will always have those who individually accuse them of various matters and no pastor can be the object of such fickleness. But every pastor must be in subjection to the plurality of Elders who must guard the gospel by making sure those who are entrusted with it work to maintain it and proclaim it.

May God help us. Let us pray.

¹ Nelson's NKJV Study Bible on 2 Timothy 3:1.

² The Open Bible on 2 Timothy 3:1.

³ The Open Bible on 1 Timothy 4:1.

⁴ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/2+Timothy+3>

⁵ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/2+Timothy+3>

⁶ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/2+Timothy+3>

⁷ The Open Bible on 2 Timothy 3:5.

⁸ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/2+Timothy+3>

⁹ A.T. Robertson's NT Word Studies on 2 Timothy 3:7.

¹⁰ The Open Bible on 2 Timothy 3:6.

¹¹ Nelson's NKJV Study Bible on 2 Timothy 3:6.

¹² Nelson's NKJV Study Bible on 2 Timothy 3:6.

¹³ Nelson's NKJV Study Bible on 2 Timothy 3:5.

¹⁴ <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/2+Timothy+3>