

# Jesus Is Worth It

## Part 9 - "Preparation for troubling times"

### Text | 2 Timothy 3:1-9

Delivered at Central Baptist Church on July 7, 2019, by Pastor Steven Edelman

#### Baptism (SLIDE 1)

**Are you protecting what is good? Who is influencing you? Are you influencing the world with the gospel or is the world influencing you?**

**STORY:** When I was 17 years old, I got my first job as a camp counselor at a camp called Madge Lake. Every week we played a game called counselor hunt. All the counsellors would have to hide throughout the grounds of the camp, and the kids would have to find us. The premise is that the last counselor to be found wins the game. For example, many of the counselors would hide up a tree, lay down in the grass, or go under the building. After a couple of weeks, I was getting bored with the game and decided to switch it up. I happened to have a dark-haired wig in my suitcase that fit perfectly. I added some ripped jeans and old work boots to the outfit. I also grabbed a bottle of Dad's Root Beer and tore off the label, so it looked like a real beer bottle. To finish off my costume, I also smudged some dirt on my face.

As the game was starting, I walked over to one of the ditches near the entrance of the camp. I lay down in the ditch with the Root Beer bottle in sight pretending to be passed out. When the kids got within 10 feet of me, they ran away because they were afraid to get any closer. One boy got a little braver and was poking me with a stick. So, I let out a grunt and started muttering a few words like "what are you doing?!?" In that moment the word started to get out, (that there was a creepy drunk guy on site) causing mass panic to set in. The Camp Director rang the camp bell to end the game and gather the group to ensure protection. While everyone was gathering and whispering about the events of the day, I snuck quietly behind the platform proceeding to jump up so everyone could see me. When they saw my face, I saw expressions of terror and panic (like they were going to die) looking right back at me. One kid starts hitting me because he wasn't able to discern who I was. Pulling off my wig, I yelled out, "it's just me! It's just me!" AND you can hear a collective sigh of relief as they figured out who I really was. The Camp Director turned to me and said, "by the way... the police are on their way!"

In my younger years, I admit, I did some foolish things, and this was one of them. However, if I were the Camp Director, I would have called off the game to guard and protect the camp until I could discern who this strange person was!

Just like in this story, **we need to guard and discern what comes into our lives and our community.** There may be something or someone that needs to be stopped before it causes harm. We need to discern **who is from God and who is not.** We need to be careful of false teaching (meaning teaching that is inconsistent with the Bible). We need to be equipped to recognize the subtle influences that break down what is good. Do you know what evil looks like when it's knocking at your door?

**(SLIDE 2)** We are in the middle of a series in 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy called, “Jesus Is Worth It” and today is “Part 9: Preparing for troubling times.” This sermon will help us prepare and discern truth for troubling times.

In 2nd Timothy, Paul is equipping a young pastor named Timothy to prepare for difficulty. Paul is telling him; life is only going to get more difficult because of sinful behavior. So, pay attention. Make sure that you properly diagnose the problem and prepare for difficult things. He is saying, don't let people bring their sinful behavior into the heart and mechanics of the church. Why is Paul saying this? Because evil had infiltrated the Ephesian church through false teachers, and Paul is coaching Timothy to do something about it.

How do we determine when evil is affecting our relationship with God, others, and our ministry? In today's scripture, Paul reminds us about the importance of loving God. He is coaching Timothy by giving him indicators or marks to look for when he is working with others.

**In the next few minutes, I want to focus on three parts:**

- 1. THE MARKS OF EVIL**
- 2. THE CREEP OF EVIL**
- 3. THE LIMIT OF EVIL**

**(SLIDE 3)** First, as genuine lovers of God, we must know the marks of evil, so we are not destroyed by it.

### **1. THE MARKS OF EVIL (3:1-5)**

Look with me at 2 Timothy 3:1 which says, “*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.*”

Paul begins the chapter, “Understand this.” Or literally: “Know this:” difficulty is coming. Paul gives some essential information that we will need to **discern good from evil** in the last days because “terrible times are coming!” He gives a long list of things to look for.

The expression “in the last days” comes from the Old Testament (Isaiah 2:2; Mic 4:1). It's referring to the period of time between Jesus' ascension and His return which is marked by an extensive increase of evil before the end comes. As we get closer to Jesus' return there will be increasing sinful behaviour. So, what is Paul saying, “know this” awful times will come because of evil and you need to understand this and make wise decisions.

**In verses 1-9 we see marks of evil in the last days.** To help us understand, we need to define evil. I have noticed in my lifetime that what was once evil, is no longer called evil. The categories for evil have changed; the boundaries have become increasingly smaller. Our culture is constantly trying to redefine what is wrong and make it right. That way we can do whatever they want. Until someone impedes on someone else's rights to get what they want. The problem that our society is running into is a battle of rights which is not freedom at all. In the end, it's just a new hierarchy of rights. Someone's rights are declared more important than someone else's. Some say that there is no evil at all.

A scholar says, “Evil is something bad in nature or condition, corrupt, displeasing, undesirable, or inadequate. **Evil can describe people** (Prov 11:21; Ezek 30:12), **the**

**distress common to humankind in this life** (Gen 47:9; Ps 90:15), **the trouble of the age** (Eccl 9:12; Jer 17:17–18; Amos 5:13), **physical harm** (Gen 26:28–29; 2 Sam 12:18), **speech** (Ps 34:13), **intentions** (1 Sam 20:7), **and situations** (Exod 5:19)”<sup>1</sup> Evil needs to be understood so we can keep it out of our lives and out of the church. God is the standard for who determines what is good and evil.

Paul gives Timothy the warnings signs or marks that he needs to pay attention to so that he can lead well. Let’s look at the characteristics we need to look out for, so we are not destroyed by sin and sinful people. **The list is large, so as I list them, I will unpack only a couple.**

**(SLIDE 4) The first mark of evil that he identifies is:**

- a) **Lovers of self** “lovers of themselves” is self-centeredness; when the spotlight shifts from God to ourselves; a plethora of sins can spring up. Self-love leads to materialism (“greedy for money,” Phillips). The accumulation of things becomes a means of gratifying self. “Paul’s brutal description springs from the inversion that had taken place in the false teachers’ hearts, where the love of God had been replaced by the love of self. When the love of God is replaced with the love of self, all sorts of vices inevitably follow.”<sup>2</sup>

**The next mark of evil that he identifies is:**

- b) **Lovers of money.** (SLIDE 5) “The false teachers were a narcissistic bunch. Having switched their souls’ gravity from God to themselves, they in effect wrapped their arms around themselves in a loving embrace. Their passion for self was matched with a love for money, which Paul had already described as “a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). Love of money is a by-product of self-love. Both serve self.
- c) **Proud, arrogant.** (SLIDE 6) One of the worst sins is pride. Follow me (the leader), rather than Christ.
- d) **Abusive, disobedient to their parents.** They were also “*abusive, disobedient to their parents*”. We now see blatant abuse at the highest levels of leadership in our world. Especially in politics. We are also seeing an increase of disrespect and disobedience in our schools which has been normalized according to some of our teachers.
- e) **Ungrateful, unholy.**
- f) **Heartless, unappeasable.** The false teachers were “*without love, unforgiving.*” They violated their most intimate relationships. They lacked family affection. They were unforgiving because they were relentless when offended.

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<sup>1</sup> Watson, D. F. (1992). [Evil](#). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 2, p. 678). New York: Doubleday.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). [1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: to guard the deposit](#) (p. 222). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

- g) **Slandering, without self-control.** Their slandering tongues resided in bodies that could not control themselves.
- h) **Brutal, not loving good.**
- i) **Treacherous, reckless.** They were “*treacherous, reckless with relationships*”. In fact, the same Greek word was used to describe that supposed Judas as a traitor (Luke 6:16). The second adjective, “reckless,” fits well, for false teachers will stop at nothing to get what they want.
- j) **Swollen with conceit.** They were “*conceited.*”
- k) **Lovers of pleasures rather than God. (SLIDE 7)** They were “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*”. **(SLIDE 8)** The words “lovers of pleasure” are a translation of the Greek word *philodonos*, **which is a compound of two words**, *phileo* and *hedonos*. The first word, *phileo*, is a well-known word that conveys the ideas of affection and love. It can be expressed as affection so deep that it even embraces the idea of romance and is from the same root word that means to kiss.

The word *hedonos* is only used five times in the New Testament, and each time, it conjures up the picture of people **completely preoccupied with pleasure and who live for the gratification of their flesh and their own personal happiness.** The English Dictionary says “hedonism” is the addiction to an obsession for pleasure as a way of life. Paul is saying, that society in the last days will become “lovers of pleasure” or that they will become preoccupied and obsessed with the pursuit of their own comfort, pleasure, and happiness.

The truth is, there has never been a generation in history with physical pleasure without boundaries, material goods or comfort than this present generation. Yet despite this excess of goods and pursuit of pleasure, **the worldwide happiness index is the lowest on record.** Paul is saying be careful of those who are controlled by pleasure, as are many in today’s brave new world.

- l) **(SLIDE 9) The appearance of godliness but denying its power.** It is so easy to acquire “a form of godliness,” to subscribe to all the right subcultural expressions and customs and yet be “denying its power” by the way they live their lives.

We could summarize most of these characteristics under the heading of self-love. Paul is telling us, that self-love is one of the dominant marks of people who don’t genuinely love God or they are imposters who claim to be of Christ. These are the marks that keep us from being in close relationship with God and His children.

**Just because something presents as good; it doesn’t mean that it is good at all. Just because someone presents as godly, doesn’t mean they are godly at all. Look at the marks of their life. What does Paul say to Timothy? Flee those leaders whose lives are contradictory to the gospel. Have nothing to do with them. How you live matters.**

Another pastor said, “**We live in a culture of self-love, to put it simply, a culture that is consumed with self-love, ego-building, self-esteem, feeling good**

about yourself, thinking you're important, thinking you're valuable, thinking you're a hero, thinking you've achieved something, thinking you're worthy of honor. We're drowning in awards for everything imaginable and unimaginable. Parents are consumed with boosting the egos of their children with every imaginable means, as well as boosting their own sense of self-value. This is the generation of self-lovers. Sinners are consumed with pride. They're consumed with themselves. We have made that into THE prominent, dominant virtue in our society."

You are going to see these marks of evil. If you are not careful, you will be marked by evil if you let it into your life. A lover of God sees evil for what it is, because they pursue a life of Christ-likeness. This is why Paul is telling us to use godly discernment in a culture that embraces evil. Think deeply about what you watch and see. About what you do. Mourn. Pray. Be Alert. Treasure the gospel that saves you because Jesus is worth it. We must know the marks of evil. So that we can guard the door of our lives and ministry.

**(SLIDE 10) Secondly, as genuine lovers of God, we must know the creep of evil.**

## **2. THE CREEP OF EVIL (3:6-7)**

Look with me at verse 6 which says, *"For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions."*

### **a) Evil creeps towards the vulnerable (SLIDE 11)**

The word "creep" means that something moves slowly and carefully to avoid being heard or noticed. Paul is describing individuals who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. The point is not intended for women in general but describes a situation involving particular women and suggests immature, childish women.

**(SLIDE 12) Piper says, "This vulnerability may have been the case in Timothy's setting, but the point of this text is not to encourage it. The point is that evil is insidious. It creeps toward the weak: weak women, weak men, weak children. And the task of the church is to make women, men, and children mighty in the word of God — saturated with the word of God, so that women and men can stand against the wiles of the devil, so that women and men will not be dabblers who are always sampling new trends and never landing on anything firm."**

Evil will not simply be ugly to watch and grievous to the godly mind, it will be aggressive at times. Sin doesn't always present itself as so obvious or dangerous. Pay attention.

**STORY:** Listening to a song on the radio. (Tell the story.) What you listen to and watch influences you. This is why **we need to guard the entrance of our lives and community!**

**(SLIDE 13) Augustine says, "Shut out the evil love of the world so that you may be filled with the love of God. You are a vessel, but you are still full. Pour out what you have that you may receive what you have not.... The mainstay of salvation is**

**to have the root of love, to have the power of godliness, not the external form alone.”**

We see the creep of evil in our school system across North America. We live in a day and age in which school shootings and lock-down drills are just part of the school calendar. Our children have become students of the threat by doing drills for school shooting so they can be prepared. Teachers have forewarned our children of what could happen if evil knocks on their door.

On May 8, 2019, CNN reports on a school shooting in an elementary school in Denver and says, “Children burst into tears in sixth-grader Nate Holley’s classroom as gunfire erupted at his school Tuesday. Two people believed to be students at STEM School Highlands Ranch had opened fire in two classrooms in the suburban Denver school. “It was really chaotic,” the 12-year-old said. **“Most of the kids didn’t know what to do,”** Nate said he froze as gunshots shattered a window. A siren rang and someone in his classroom cracked a joke. His teacher shushed the student and moved them behind a desk and then to the closet. “I had my hand on a metal baseball bat just in case,” Nate told CNN’s Brooke Baldwin. “Cause I was gonna go down fighting if I was gonna go down. Nate’s wrenching account is a tragic reminder of what it’s like to be a child in the age of school shootings.”

The news story is a good reminder that we need to be careful who and what we let in the door of our life. Do you have your hand on the Word of God so you can go down fighting? Are you prepared for evil? We need to anticipate the sin that tries to make its way into our lives and our community of believers.

**APPLICATION:**

**You will feel unguarded or weak because you are not living out the gospel! This is what happens when you are making compromises in your life by seeking pleasure and self-love! Have you allowed evil thoughts or actions to creep into your life? This will affect your relationship to God, to others, and your ministry at your church. If so, tell God about it. He wants your heart.**

Next,

**b) Evil people are always learning, yet miss the truth (SLIDE 14)**

Next, let’s look at verse 7 which says, *“always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”*

We live in the largest information age in history in which we have access to many tools to gain knowledge. We are the most educated people in history. The idea that Paul is getting at, is that we need to be cautious of people who know a lot about things but don’t root their lives in the knowledge of the truth. Just because we know something, doesn’t mean we live it out! That is why Paul is telling Timothy to look at the marks of their life! These imposters who claim to be of Christ may not get spotted right away. Remember they have “an appearance of godliness.” But they will be exposed because God knows who his people are.

**(SLIDE 15)** J.C. Ryle says, “**Look in another direction at people whose whole religion seems to consist in talk and high profession. They know the theory of the gospel intellectually and profess to delight in evangelical doctrine. They can say much about the “soundness” of their own views, and the “darkness” of all who disagree with them, but they never get any further! When you examine their inner lives, you find that they know nothing of practical godliness. They are neither truthful, nor charitable, nor humble, nor honest, nor kind-tempered, nor gentle, nor unselfish, nor honorable. What shall we say of these people? They are Christians, no doubt, in name and yet there is neither substance nor fruit in their Christianity. There is but one thing to be said—they are formal Christians. Their religion is an empty *form*.**” Is your life bearing fruit? Or are you just a Christian by name?

As genuine lovers of God, we must know that evil is trying to make its way in. So look carefully and discern what is good!

**(SLIDE 16)** Lastly, as genuine lovers of God, we must know the limit of evil.

### **3. THE LIMIT OF EVIL (3:8-9)**

Look with me at verse 8 and 9 which says, “*Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.*”

**Jannes and Jambres are the traditional names of the magicians who opposed Moses with their ability to do counter miracles (Exodus 7:11). But if you recall that after three miracles out of ten their power gave out (Exodus 8:18; 9:11). They were imposters who were exposed. God knows those who are His people and who is faking it.**

Look with me at the latter part of verse 9 which says, “*But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.*” This is good news for those whose lives are marked by the gospel. These words of hope and victory because evil will not win in the end. This means that the incredible joy we know as believers because of what Christ did on the cross is secure and does not depend on what is happening in our city or country. It’s not dependent on our personal safety or what we see on the evening news! It’s dependent on our acknowledgment of the truth and whether Jesus is the Lord of your life.

Knowing that evil is limited in its power we must not “**let the immorality and horrors of the last days dampen our joy in Jesus. Oh, how easy it is to slip into a morose pity-party that our little heaven on earth is becoming a hell! We were never promised that earth would be our heaven before Christ returns. And you are preparing for yourself a great disappointment if you try to make it so.**” John Piper

We have the good news of the gospel. The good news needs to be delivered to a generation of people who are not only proud, but they've turned pride into something that is so-called good. The good news is that what Jesus did on the cross is for those who are in love with themselves, seek to fulfill every whim, every desire, every ambition, every dream, and every hope. It's for those who seek to be everything that they can be by trusting in themselves.

The gospel says that loving yourself is deficient and that there is a better way. It's the way of following Jesus and denying yourself. That is why we guard what is good! We can't just learn about it. We must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven by finding His truth. You must want eternal heaven with God! Because of what Christ did on the cross, Evil is limited in every way!

## **CLOSING**

**The message for us today is to cherish and protect the gospel. Discern what is good because trouble and evil is here and now. It will only get worse. If your life is truly arranged and changed by the gospel, it shows that you are a genuine follower of Christ.** As Romans 5:2 says, "We rejoice in *hope* of the glory of God".

**As genuine lovers of God, we must know:**

- 1. THE MARKS OF EVIL**
- 2. THE CREEP OF EVIL**
- 3. THE LIMIT OF EVIL**

**The question we need to be asking ourselves is; Am I protecting what is good? Because Jesus is worth it!**

## **The Lord's Table**

Prayer: I pray that you would help us see what is evil so that we would live according to what is best because you know better than us. As we come to this table, I pray that we would face our own sin and understand the true depths of our brokenness. Thank you for showing us a differ way to live and love. Help us to fully grasp the power of God's sacrificial love in our lives – and the lives of those he longs to save.