

March 26, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Peace in Chaos
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 2 Timothy 3:1-9;
Galatians 5:10-21.

1. What or when are the “last days”?
2. How are the sinful characteristics listed in 2 Timothy 3 connected to the first one listed – self love?
3. Do you ever sense that some of those sinful traits actually pop up in your own life?
4. Do the sins of the flesh listed in Galatians five ever plague you?
5. So what is the difference between a person who is controlled by the flesh and one who fights with the flesh?
6. How could toleration of these sins lead to chaos in your life?

THE CHAOS OF DIFFICULT TIMES **2 Timothy 3:1-9; Galatians 5:19-21**

In my quiet, secure, protected world of childhood, I really didn't experience any chaos. In fact, my life was so tranquil that most people would call it boring. It seems like the most troublesome issues were things like whether Aunt Snooty was ever going to get her kitchen painted or if Uncle Snodgrass would get comfortable with his new dentures.

Okay, some things about my country culture were more important than that and could result in chaos. For example, in a farming community one would just expect farmers to be concerned about a drought that would ruin the crops. More of a concern where I grew up was too much rain so that the hay would be ruined, or the ground would be too wet to harvest the oats, wheat, or corn before they rotted. And those who weren't farmers generally talked about if or when the plant was going to lay off and the workers would have to draw unemployment.

Some fellows handled such stress quite well. The Johnson brothers from up the road got the system figured out to their liking. They worked in the same packing plant for years because they knew that every year it was going to shut down for at least three months. That layoff just happened to be during hunting season, and the Johnson boys loved to hunt. So they would gladly welcome a few months when they could collect unemployment and spend the days in the woods. That life didn't look too stressful in the eyes of a ten year old.

Most of us don't live in those idyllic conditions anymore. I told someone the other day that it seems like whenever I hear the news anymore, I'm glad I am as old as I am. However, while I don't have that many more years to live, I have sons, daughters-in-laws, and grandchildren who will be around for quite awhile. What kind of world will they live in? I am absolutely certain it will not be the kind of world in which I spent my childhood.

How did life get so chaotic? Do we blame it on modern technology or computers or the industrialism of America? Do we blame it on higher education? Did our appliances and education bring us to the point in the American culture where it is difficult to find people who will sign up to do manual labor? A news article the other day stated that if the new administration in the White House rounds up the illegal immigrants and sends them home, the large corporate farms in the mid-west may have to shut down. Why? The only people who are willing to do the strenuous work required of farmers is the immigrants. Why don't American's want to work?

A few weeks ago, I stopped to get some gas at a station in the Los Angeles area. When I went into the store to pay, I overheard a couple of guys in their twenties talking about how robots are

replacing people in the work place. One fellow said, “I’ve heard that when robots take all the jobs, we will not have to work, and because robots don’t need to be paid, the government will pay us for not working.” The other guy said, “Great. That can’t happen soon enough for me.” That is not a healthy situation because it leads to greater chaos.

There is an old saying that goes like this: “The idle mind is the devil’s playground.” God ordains work, industry, creativity, accomplishments. He approves of such things because that is His own character and He made us in His image. He also approves of us being busy and accomplishing things, because when we are not busy we are prone to yield to the desires of our flesh. The whole Bible story from Genesis to Revelation reveals over and over how people who yield to the governing of their fleshly desires will plunge a culture into chaos.

That connection is only too obvious in our own culture. The abundance of free time we have is directly connected to the abundance of trouble we have caused. For example, where do today’s college students get enough time to protest? When I was in college, I worked between thirty and forty hours a week in addition to doing class work. I didn’t have time to protest. Of course, where I went to college, if I did decide to protest, it would have been the shortest protest in history.

In our text from the Bible, we discover that God has clearly warned us that as the age wears on and as people reject Him and His principles, times will become more and more chaotic. That happens because of the flaws in our natural condition. Our flesh, left to rule, will think things and do things that lead to chaos.

Characteristics of a Chaotic Culture (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

Difficult times are chaotic times. God’s Word warns that chaotic times will be the trait of the last days. *But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty (v.1)*. It was the Apostle Paul’s desire for Pastor Timothy to be aware of this trend. Timothy was pastor in the church in Ephesus. God revealed that Timothy’s culture was going to manifest traits of difficult times.

However, the trend was not confined to Timothy’s age or to the city of Ephesus. The truths of God’s Word are eternal and generally

applicable in any age. People in the Church today and through all the ages need to be aware that this is a promised trend, not an anomaly and not a passing fad.

The “last days” period covers a lot of time. In the Greek text there is no definite article, meaning *last days* is not so much a time as a characteristic. Last days characteristics are ages of apostasy and sin which we know will continue to increase until the final days before the Lord’s return. The Church in particular has been in last days kind of cultures from its inception and will face that kind of environment until the end.

While there have been periods of peace and prosperity in the world over the years, those are either exceptions to the norm of chaos or a closer look reveals that even those times were infected by sin and apostasy. For example, historians speak of the Pax Romana as a time of peace. That was a period of about 200 years (27 BC – AD 180) during which the Roman Empire grew, expanded, and operated without civil war or major conflicts with other nations.

But ask the Church how peaceful those years were in the Roman Empire. During those years of so-called peace, Jesus was born and lived in conflict with the religious leaders who crucified Him. He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. For the first thirty years the Church lived in the chaos of Jewish persecution which ended in 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. But even before the Jewish persecution ended, beginning in 64 with the persecution by Nero, no less than five emperors targeted the Church for persecution during the Pax Romana. During the “Peace of Rome” the Church saw mostly difficult days.

The facts of history indicate that with little exception people who love Jesus have faced chaos in the world. Eighteenth through twentieth century Great Britain and America are exceptions to the rule of difficult days for Christians. During those years, the gospel made great progress and there was a general respect for the Bible in our cultures. That has changed. Where is that spot on the globe where there is not chaos for the Church? There is little hope that the world is going to become a less difficult place for righteousness. Why is this the case? Why so much ongoing chaos? Why God’s promise of difficult days?

The chaos is rooted in self-love. *For people will be lovers of self (v.2a)*. Self-love was the original sin. Satan was so impressed with how God created him with superiority that he decided to replace God. His plan failed, and he now works diligently to cause all of God's created beings (angels and humans alike) to love themselves more than God.

As a result of the sin principle, begun by Satan, self-love is not only evident in our culture, it is the expected norm. We live in an age in which creature worship is the norm. Life in our world is about preserving the planet, preserving animals, preserving self. Any ideas that appear to be contrary to this creature worship are not tolerated. This kind of creature worship is even the norm in the so-called Christian worship. In typical, acceptable worship, people need to feel good about themselves. Modern worship is a feeling rather than a conscience decision to bow before God. Therefore, ideas like "fear of the Lord," or "humbling self" are rejected out of hand.

Even what appears to be love for others is ultimately rooted in self-love. We are encouraged to do good things for others so that peers will speak highly of us. But like the error of the Pharisees, self-love parades its good works before others for self-praise. To preach against self-love or to practice genuine love for others (i.e. desiring what is best for them according to God's standard of best) generates resistance and even persecution. Even in America, if you speak out against the self-love of sexual immorality, you will be dismissed at best or required to undergo sensitivity training. It is common for Christians in the workplace to be forced into retraining or "let go" because we point out self-love and the chaos that comes from self-love.

What does this self-love look like? Love of self expresses sin and results in futility. Paul listed the traits of chaotic people so that Timothy and we would know what the difficult day will be like. He said that people who are in love with self will be *lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power (vv.2b-5a)*.

First, such people will be materialistic, *lovers of money*. This sin is so common we expect it and to some extent almost everyone participates in it. Love of money is why people from other countries risk arrest or even death to come here. Everyone wants a piece of the American Dream. The American Dream is not love of Jesus!

Second, as to be expected, self-lovers are self-centered. They are *proud and arrogant*. It is not bad enough that we are born with the desire to please self, exalt self, and to compete with others to prove that we are number one. But that attitude is encouraged. All through our educational years we are taught that we have rights and should be able to do whatever we want to do. Woe to the person who criticizes the proud and arrogant or who stands in their way.

Third, self-lovers are incorrigible. They will reveal that they are *abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful*. In a chaotic world, speaking down to others is the norm. That is the word *abusive*, which is the Greek word for blaspheme. It would appear that slandering, mocking, lying about others is the only way to be elected to public office and to stay there. Likewise, disobedience to parents is so expected that no one even winks at it, and there are even comic strips that highlight the trend. That disobedience is the foundation for disobedience to all authority. Along with the slanderous disobedience comes ungratefulness. Ungrateful people are never thankful for the freedoms and blessings they have but can only think of more that they need. We have plenty of evidence in our culture that proves that these attitudes lead to chaos.

Fourth, self-loving people will often be irreverent. Paul warned that they will be *unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous*. The character of being unholy begins with disregard for God and leads to the trait in which nothing is sacred. Therefore, God is mocked, churches are burned, antiquity is destroyed. Such people are heartless, having lost all natural affection including affection for family which should be expected. And so husbands and wives desert family for their own pleasures. Children kill their parents and siblings. Mothers kill their babies because they have been convinced that no one should love a lifeless blob.

People like that will often be unappeasable. They can never come to a truce or agreement. The only agreement possible is to fully concede to do their will. If you don't, they will lie about you and try

to destroy you with words. These traits perfectly describe the chaos of not only our culture but of our government.

Fifth, Paul warned that self-loving people will be out of control. They will be *without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit*. Self-control is a choice. People who do not choose self-control will be controlled by others contrary to their choice. People who love self so much refuse to control their desires, their passions, their responses. It is a learned trait. People who refuse to learn it become beasts. The brutal people are untamed like wild beasts who do not understand the difference between right and wrong; acceptable and unacceptable; ethical and unethical. They are so full of themselves that, thinking they are invincible, they become reckless.

Sixth, self-lovers are ungodly. They are *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power*. These people love pleasure instead of loving God. God our Creator expects us to love Him. Because we love self, we love what makes us feel good. Therefore, it is common to see people choose pleasure over God not only on Sunday but every day of their lives. Really! Who do you know who would choose to sit down and read their Bible for an hour over going shopping or eating a great meal or enjoying a ball game or whatever brings you pleasure?

Not only to they not know God, but they are opposed to God. The focus of this exposure is not the wicked, horrible, chaos-causing people you might be thinking about. The difficult days, the chaos is caused by people who profess to believe in and follow God! The problem comes from religious people. It includes followers of false gods and false religions. But it also includes professing Christians. Is it not true that many of the foregoing sins are the characteristics of Christians, of church attending Baptists? They talk about God, but they have no Holy Spirit conviction about sin nor do they have power to conquer sin. They just keep doing the sin and excuse it as a human weakness or redefine their preferred sin as something that is now acceptable in this age of enlightenment and understanding.

What should we do? How should God's people respond to such people? God has instructed us to avoid them. *Avoid such people (v.5b)*. We know that practically speaking it is impossible to stay away from such people completely. Paul acknowledged that to the

Corinthian believers. *I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-10)*.

It is impossible not be impacted by such people. But we should not associate with such people to be influenced by them. We should build a redemptive relationship, stand fast for truth, and they will be influenced by you or, more often than not, they will reject you.

But, now we learn that the main focus is false teachers, not just wicked people in the world. When Paul described the fact that these people's end is futility (vv.6-9), he pointed out that they are deceiving teachers. *For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions (v.6)*. Again, realize that the focus here is not on typical ungodly, pagans of the world. These are religious people, religious leaders and teachers. Because they are governed by their fleshly desires, they captivate people who are governed by their flesh.

Particularly they subtly make their way into homes (families) where they target emotional women whose feelings overrule their wisdom. Their victims are characterized by learning but never learning truth. They are *always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth (v.7)*. They move from one false teacher who has plied on their emotions to the next. If the teaching touches their hearts, they embrace it, only to discover that it doesn't have the answers. So they move on to the next one who comes along with promises of rose gardens. We can and should avoid false teachers altogether.

The false teachers are like Jannes and Jambres. *Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith (v.8)*. Whoever these men were, they were religious leaders of some sort. Jewish tradition holds that they were two magicians in Pharaoh's court who resisted Moses. The tradition says that they pretended to convert to the Jews in order to subvert Moses from within the group. It teaches that these guys were responsible for building the golden calf.

Though we don't have the details on the two false teachers, the principle is clear. There will be false teachers in this age. We know about them. Hear the general references in the news to "faith leaders"

that generally speak of religious leaders who contribute to the chaos, not resolve the chaos. Most of the time the term “faith leaders” refers to false teachers who have clearly denied the authority of the Bible.

Eventually their folly becomes plain. *But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men (v.9).* We have seen numbers of them exposed. But generally the damage has been done by the time they are exposed. They have moved their followers one or two steps further away from God’s truth. False religious teachers hold much responsibility for the chaos in our culture. They strongly influence a culture’s view and relationship with God. They often introduce fleshly living as an acceptable alternative to old fashioned, dead traditions. The “church” culture embraces the error, becomes just like the world, ceases to have a corrective impact, and finally becomes absorbed by the world and goes out of business. When the correcting element is removed from a culture, the culture is chaotic.

The Reason for Chaotic Characteristics (Galatians 5:19-21).

In his letter to the Christians in Galatia, Paul pointed out the contrast between citizens of God’s kingdom and citizens of this world. Most people are not citizens of God’s kingdom. Kingdom citizens are governed by God’s Spirit (vv.22-25). What do their lives look like? *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:22-24).*

The existence of God’s kingdom within earthly kingdoms is evident in the conflict. We who belong to King Jesus are governed by His Spirit. It is a battle for us to remember who we are and live in submission to the Spirit. As we do, we are clearly different because the citizens of the world are governed by natural desires. Paul reminded us that *the works of the flesh are evident (v.19a). I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (v.21b).* People whose lives are characterized by the natural desires of the flesh are not bound for heaven. The difference between the two groups guarantees conflict.

The difference should be obvious. Stop to consider the characteristics of the flesh. They are *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these (vv.19b-21a).* What does the life with these traits look like? Consider the traits.

They are lives with sexual “freedom,” characterized by *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, (19b).* The sexual revolution that began in the 60's and is alive and well today exclaims that any kind of sexual expression is natural and should be acceptable. The sexual revolution established new guidelines of acceptability. The result? There is chaos in the uncertainty of who is family, what constitutes gender, is anyone allowed to disagree?

Flesh-governed lives worship the creature, idols, being characterized by *idolatry, sorcery (v.20a).* We naturally create our own idols, gods made in our image. In a similar way, drug addiction is a result of creature worship. The Greek word for sorcery gives us the English word pharmaceutical.

Living according to the flesh means there will be anger when faced with deterrents to our will. It is *enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions (v.20b).* In fact, the flesh life includes all manner of sin against God and others like *envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these (v.21a).*

The result is chaos. We can observe firsthand how sin unchecked creates all manner of conflict, disruption, and chaos. People manifest these traits more as they move away from God’s standard. As the sin becomes the standard for the norm, Christians who speak against it will be dismissed, mocked, persecuted, or silenced in some manner.

What can we do? What hope do we have if we want to live a righteous life in such an unrighteous world? To people who live in that kind of world Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).* When the world is sunk in chaos, when so much of the evidence we see around us and nearly all the news reminds us of the chaos, our hope remains in Jesus. He knows what is happening. He ordains what is happening. He alone gives us peace in such turbulent days.