

2 Timothy 3:1-5 “Sunday Saints”

I. Introduction

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III. Vs. 5 Form without power

I. Introduction

With all the events that are happening globally, no wonder people are becoming increasingly convinced that the world is coming to end. According to a 2013 Omni Poll 4 in 10 or 41% of Americans believe that we are in the “Last Days” and an October News Week Poll suggests that the vast majority of Christians think that it will play out like the Bible said it would. Paul too thought that the end of the world was at hand, as he describes the conditions that will be upon humanity at the end of the world. If we want to take a closer look at what predicated the end of the world we need only go to God’s word prior to the destruction of the world by flood in Genesis chapter 6 verse 5 where we are told that, *“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **EVERY** intent of the thoughts of his heart was **ONLY** evil **CONTINUALLY**.”* Prior to the flood wickedness had increased to a point where the people’s only thought and action was rebellion and sin. I’m not sure that we have risen to this level yet but there is little doubt that we are increasing towards it. In this section Paul describes the condition of humanity in the last days, and surprisingly they are very religious. Paul mentions three facts about the religious:

1. Vs. 2-5 Their Characteristics
2. Vs. 6-7 Their Converts
3. Vs. 8-9 Their Captains

We will only look at the “18 characteristics” of the religious this morning.

II. Vs. 1-4 18 characteristics of the religious

Vs. 1-4 As I watched the riots break out in Ferguson after hearing the Grand Jury's decision not to indict the police officer in the Michael Brown shooting, this passage came to mind. I mean clearly this describes the "*perilous times*" but it can describe many times from many different era's. What is interesting is that the phrase "***Last Days***" doesn't refer to a specific time just prior to Jesus's return but rather biblically it refers to a whole time period between the first coming and His 2nd coming, so in truth ***we have been living in the "LAST DAYS" for 2000 years!*** Peter described this as well in Acts chapter 2:17 at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in which 3000 got saved, he quoted the event as what was spoken by the prophet Joel saying, "*And it shall come to pass in **THE LAST DAYS**, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh....*" Clearly according to the Word of God the "LAST DAYS" started at Pentecost and has continued until today. When Paul wrote to the believers in Rome in the 11 chapter verse 25 he said, "*I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*" We are currently living in a time of the Gentiles until the last of us becomes a believer than we will move into the great tribulation that deals with Israel and judgment upon the Christ rejecting world. Finally in Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1-2 the author again says, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has **in these days spoken to us by His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds..*" Again the "LAST DAYS" are the days in which Jesus become the fulfilment of the prophet's words.

That gives us a great back drop as to what the “LAST DAYS” that Paul characterizes a repetitive cycles of distress and perilous times that he will give an outline of the human heart. These words are not a prediction of the last days for the Church but rather the cycle of days that will keep coming and at some point in time will culminate in THE LAST DAY, of which is best described! What Paul wanted Timothy to know and understand is the “*Times must not dictate the character and attitude of the believer*”. That’s why Paul starts with the phrase, “But know this....” There will be times and have been times for 2000 years where we will witness the worst in humanity, they will be dangerous times, times of great suffering, times when our trust in Christ and His word will be pushed to the limit, times when we the Church will be under constant threat. Times in which people will be noted for these **18 characteristics**. One of the things I notice is that the chief characteristic of the religious is “love” but in the religious their love is directed at themselves instead of God and others. As one has said, “*The heart of every problem is a problem of the heart.*” They are as Isaiah described in chapter 5 verse 20 “*calling evil good and good evil*”.

Those that study high-school aged academics globally tell us that American students are dropping globally in Math, Science, as well as other subjects at a rapid rate but there is one area that these experts have said that U.S. students are the at the Top of the Class globally while their studies are failing. They are number 1 in the category of “Self-Esteem” in other words we are failing but we feel great about ourselves while doing so! Our education system has done an outstanding job in telling our students that they need to love themselves and be proud of doing so but obviously such instruction has done

nothing to raise the level education standards. Going back up to the awful list of 18 characteristics you can see that they are put into four groups:

1. **Lovers of themselves**: That is the basic sin of humanity “self-love”! In the church this “self-love” is exhibited in a “*me centered*” society that focuses only on its rights, needs and views. Its only concern is “*What am I going to get out of this?*” Christians, aren’t to be “lovers of self” living a self-centered existence. When people are lovers of themselves is it any wonder that we find them to be Lovers of money, materialist in their expression? Instead of using what God has blessed them with to respond to human suffering we will use it to indulge ourselves in a more luxurious lifestyle. **Saints it’s never persecution that destroys the believer its prosperity!** Paul says that this will lead to people being boasters, proud or arrogant people. The church will equate its health of its prosperity and even boast upon its abundance of nickels and noses. It is contemptible how the Church brags and glories in everything thing but Jesus! The self-righteous display of contempt for those who are trapped by the same sins that the church as enslaved too. By their actions they have become blasphemers and abusive.
2. **Disobedient to parents**: Insultive to parents, the breakdown of the home, rebellion against parental authority which finds its way into all of society. Paul describes these characteristics of the breakdown of the family as the UN: Thankful, holy, loving and forgiving. They manifest a sense of entitlement, and say that there is no need to be thankful as they deserve better and demand more of everything they want. This progresses to a lack of common decency, where people not only engage in immorality they flaunt it and demand that you participate in it.

- Unloving means that they lack civility to a point that they become inhumane, no longer have the normal affections for their loved ones and become cruel west beast like behavior. Finally they become unforgiving and the word means beyond reason, unappeasable so bitter and unrelenting that they cannot soften in any way.
3. **Slanderer's**: This third group moves to interpersonal relationships. The word slanders in the Greek is "Devils" those people who are ungovernable, who only want to satisfy their on lusts and passions and become fierce and savage people, lacking self-control they are brutal and haters of anything good. They are reckless people, who are treacherous and impulsive without fear of consequences, swollen with conceit who not only think only of themselves they think highly of themselves.
4. **Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God**: It is this last grouping that Paul indicates in verse 5 have a form of godliness but deny its power. **Sunday saints, but weekday sinners**, exposed to the Bible but also exposed by the Bible they hear on Sunday's. How is this possible? Well it's because they deny the power thereof! Jesus said in Matthew 16:24 that "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*" **How tragic it is to see the church only wear the cross of Christ instead of die daily upon it!** Until we Christians are willing to say "No" to what the cross has denied, what it has put to death within us, we cannot enter into that eternal life that is available to us now. Unwilling to deny self means that we are unable to experience life from God.

III. Vs. 5 Form without power

Vs. 5 As awful as those 18 character traits, the worst part of them is that according to verse 5 they will at times make up the church of Christ as well as they will “*have the form of godliness but deny its power.*” They will have made a ruin of faith in Christ and reduced it to:

- Form without power
- Outward show without inward reality
- Religion without morals
- Faith without works

The reason for such cyclical behavior in society is that the Church of Christ remains unchanged in their lives. They will not “WALK THEIR TALK”. Jesus warned in Matthew 5:13 “*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*” If the church will no longer be an antiseptic, a preservative, then its only usefulness in society will be for something the world uses to get a better footing to keep going in the wrong direction. The prophet Amos said in chapter 8 verse 11 that “*the days are coming,*” says the Lord GOD, “*That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water; But of hearing the words of the LORD.*” There is a growing ignorance of the word of God where folks no longer want to hear and apply the word of God in their lives and this willful ignorance has led to and increased immorality and hardening of the heart that manifests its self in ungodly behaviors. We are prone to think that only the secular, atheistic society is out to get Christians but Jesus said that most of our opposition will come from the religious, as religion has always be at war against relationship!