

THE COUSE OF THIS PRESENT CHURCH AGE

Date: 2-15-09

PURPOSE: We are able to rejoice because “Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world! Our God-given faith guarantees us personal victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil! We also keep our minds focused upon the soon return of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

INTRODUCTION:

Do you know the legend of the Cherokee Indian youth's rite of Passage?

His father takes him into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a stump the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shine through it.

He cannot cry out for help to anyone. Once he survives the night, he is a MAN. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience, because each lad must come into manhood on his own.

The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some human might do him harm. The wind blew the grass and earth, and shook his stump, but he sat stoically, never removing the blindfold. It would be the only way he could become a man!

Finally, after a horrific night the sun appeared and he removed his blindfold.

It was then that he discovered his father sitting on the stump next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.

We, too, are never alone. Even when we don't know it, God is watching over us, sitting on the stump beside us.

When trouble comes, all we have to do is reach out to Him.

Moral of the story: Just because you can't see God, Doesn't mean He is not there. 'For we walk by faith, not by sight.'

Indeed, faith is the victory that overcomes the world! Now let us consider

1. AN AGE OF LAWLESSNESS AND APOSTASY [2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Timothy 4:1-4]

A. An Age of Lawlessness [2 Thessalonians 2:7]

1. The age of *lawlessness* has been in vogue for many centuries. As we near the end of the Church Age, this *spirit of lawlessness* will become more entrenched in the total world system. This is a spirit of lawlessness against

the Triune Godhead and the Scriptures and the Body of Christ. This spirit of lawlessness will become more evident and serious against the Nation of Israel.

2. That which *restrains* is not identified in the text in verse 6 or verse 7. The spirit of lawlessness in the present age in which we now live is being restrained by:
 - a. The Greek text in verse 6 – “and [και] now [νυν] which [το] hold [κατεχον] know [οιδατε]...” -- “hold” is a verb, participle, accusative, singular, and neuter, present, active. We do not have to make any reference to the Holy Spirit in this phrase. Paul simply does make any identification here.
 - b. Neither does the 7th verse clearly identify that which holds back the spirit of lawlessness 1: ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but *the* [masculine] *one who* [not in the original] *now holds it back* [masculine] *will continue to do so till he* [not in original] *is taken out of the way.* ⁱ
 - c. I must admit, this is a very difficult passage to interpret. I lean to the interpretation that which restrains is the Body of Christ, the Church through whom the Holy Spirit works the will of God and Christ in this present age of lawlessness.

B. An Age of Apostasy [1 Timothy 4:1-4]

1. The Holy Spirit *explicitly, in very explicit words* makes this declaration that in the *latter times, last days*, there will be a marked time of apostasy.
2. Please note the areas of apostasy --~~αποστησονται~~– is a verb, finite, third person, plural, future, indicative, deponent. They themselves will depart.
 - a. A falling away from *the faith* – 4:1 - *abandons the faith* – all Biblical Truth.
 - b. Becoming involved in spiritism and demonism – 4:1b *follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.* ⁱⁱ
 - c. Hypocrisy, liars, and having seared consciences – 4:2 - *Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.* ⁱⁱⁱ 2 Cor. 11:13-15
 - d. The dissolution of marriage – 4:3 *They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.* ^{iv}
 - e. An unhealthy focus on dietary programs – 4:4 *For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,* ⁵ *because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.* ^v ⁸ *For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.* ^{vi}

Illustration:

Life Principles:

1. In this age of lawlessness – against the Law of God, no matter how sever it may become, the Church will be victorious!
2. There may be many that are attempting to suppress the truth through legalities initiated in our national Government and many other groups that have gained ground is restricting religious freedoms. The Gideons are not permitted to go into some schools and hand out bibles. There are those that advocate any facility and or educational facility that receives government aid cannot have religious activities in that area of financial aid.
3. Let us rejoice that Jesus said in Matthew 16: ¹⁸ **And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.**^{vii}
4. Today we have an unhealthy focus of issues of spiritism, demonism, hypocrisy, liars, seared consciences, the continuing attempt to dissolves marriage between a man and woman, and an unhealthy approach to all sorts of dietary programs.

Transitional Sentence: We are now living in an age of lawlessness and apostasy. The natural result of such a sinful mindset leads to **————**

2. AN AGE OF DIFFICULT TIMES [2 Tim. 3:1-14]

A. **Difficult times determined:** – *χαλεποι* -- hard to take, very difficult, savage beastly times, violent and harsh times.

B. Difficult times characterized:

1. Meistic -- “lovers of themselves” [4:2] The Greek word “lovers – *φιλαυτοι* means loving one’s self; too intent on one’s own interests; selfish. Philanthropic – charitable, generous, showing kindness, charitable concern, and generosity toward other people; helping other people -- devoted to helping other people, especially through giving charitable aid
2. Materialistic - “lovers of money” [4:2] The Greek word *φιλαργυροι* can be translated “covetous.”
3. Self-sufficient – “boastful” –[4:2]
4. Prejudice -- “proud” –[4:2]
5. Slanderous and evil speaking -- “abusive” – [4:2]
6. Loss of Parental respect – “disobedient to parents” –[4:2]
7. Ungrateful -- “ungrateful” –[4:2]
8. Unholy – “unholy” –[4:2]
9. Unloving – “without love” - [4:3]
10. Irreconcilable – “unforgiving” - [4:3]
11. Malicious gossips – “slanderous” - [4:3]
12. No self-control – without self control” - [4:3]
13. Brutal – “brutal” - [4:3]

14. Haters of good -- “not lovers of the good” - [4:3]
15. Treacherous – “treacherous” - [4:4]
16. Reckless – “rash” – [4:4]
17. Conceited -- “conceited” – [4:4]
18. Wrong priorities – “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” – [4:4]
19. Religious hypocrisy and superficiality – “having a form of godliness but denying its power” – [4:5]

C. Difficult Times are Bearable for the Believer

1. Our Personal Salvation - 2 Thessalonians 2: ¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.
2. Our Personal Realization - ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings^b we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.
3. Our Personal Encouragement ¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. ^{viii}

Illustration:

Life Principles:

1. We are being confronted with the reality that we are in very difficult times economically, socially, educationally, and religiously - in the Church.
2. It is sad to realize that many believers are involved in some of the characteristics of these difficult times such seen in 2 Timothy 3: ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. ^{ix} The fifth verse is quite sobering! Have nothing to do with them!
3. The believer that is in step with the Holy Spirit and is continually yielding to the Holy Spirit will not have these sinful characteristics, but rather the characteristics of the Holy Spirit and Christ as seen in Galatians 5: ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. ^x

Transitional Sentence: We are now living in an age of lawlessness and apostasy. The natural result of such a sinful mindset leads to an age of difficult times. I do not want us to become discouraged or depressed as we are going through these perilous and beastly days. Let us now consider ■■■■

HOW CAN THIS MESSAGE ENCOURAGE US TODAY?

1. Let us rejoice in our *position* in Christ – Gal. 5: ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
2. Let us rejoice in our *possession* in Christ – the indwelling Holy Spirit. Gal. 5: ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.
3. Let us *give permission* for the Holy Spirit to control our minds – Gal. 5: ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. ^{xi}
4. Let us rejoice in the *promise of His coming!* 1 Thess. 4: ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage each other with these words. ^{xii}

ⁱ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 2 Th 2:6-7

ⁱⁱ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Ti 4:1

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Ti 4:2

^{iv} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Ti 4:3

^v *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Ti 4:4-5

^{vi} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Ti 4:8

^{vii} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Mt 16:18

^b Or traditions

^{viii} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 2 Th 2:13-17

^{ix} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 2 Ti 3:2-5

^x *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Ga 5:22-26

^{xi} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Ga 5:23-26

^{xii} *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. electronic ed. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 1 Th 4:16-18