

## “You However, ...”

### 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8

The last two Sundays we were in Daniel 9 showing you from biblical prophecy, when understood plainly as God literally instructs us, that we have been living in a period of unknown time – a gap – between the fulfilled 483 years of prophecy that Daniel was told started at a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem [given by Artaxerxes King of Persia in 444 BC to Nehemiah] and ended at Jesus’ triumphal entry, until the final seven years begins, initiated by a 7 year covenant of peace for Israel. A covenant that a powerful world leader will have persuaded hard-core enemies to agree on, and he will be hailed as a ‘messiah’. Except that he will be the false messiah who will break that covenant at the midway point, revealing his true intentions to force the world to worship him. His end will come 3 ½ years later when the true Messiah, Jesus returns.

But what about us who live in the gap? Are there any indicators of when this gap of time will be almost finished? After all it’s been 2000 years. What’s God waiting for? Part of that answer is grace. We’re told that in 2 Pet. 3:9

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

And when we pair that up with Paul’s words about this time frame and God’s plans for Israel in Rom. 11:25

<sup>25</sup> *I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.*

So God is delaying the last 7 years so that more people will be saved. And I think Peter grasped that because only two verses later in 2 Pet. 3:11 he wrote to his ‘gap’ believers

<sup>11</sup> *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives <sup>12</sup> as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.*

The only way I can see how we speed God’s plan along is to reach others with the gospel, increasing the number of Gentiles who will come in (not that we don’t share with Jews; obviously we do). But as those who still live in this gap period, our focus should primarily be on ‘what kind of people ought we to be’? And Paul had the same perspective as we see here in 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8.

Paul is in a dungeon in the Mamertine prison in Rome. It is a hole in the ground from what we know. This is not the house arrest situation he was in in Acts 28. He was eventually released from that but later arrested under Nero’s rule for telling people there is another Lord, the true Lord, Jesus Christ. Paul writes his last words to his disciple (‘son in the faith’) Timothy, pastor of the church in Ephesus and warns him about what’s to come. And how to live as ‘the last days’ are upon us.

We have always been in the last days, since Jesus ascended to heaven until He returns. On the day of Pentecost Peter, explaining the phenomenon of the Spirit’s outpouring and the people’s ability to hear the gospel in their own language, quoted Joel 2 saying,

*“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”*

So now Paul, about 30 years later tells Timothy to know what the last days will be like. What the world will be like the closer we are to Jesus' return. Paul's words are somewhat alarming but they are also tempered with balance. So as we live our life knowing Jesus will return and seeing our world get worse and worse,

## **Let's be Aware but Not Alarmed by Humanity's Increasing Depravity (3:1-9)**

*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

The word 'mark' means 'know'. Be aware, understand, know that it's going to get worse before it gets better. The word 'terrible' is a unique word in the New Testament. The only other place this word is found is used to describe demon possessed people in Matt. 8:28,

*<sup>28</sup> When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so **violent** that no one could pass that way.*

Most translations use violent or extremely fierce to describe their character. This is what Paul is saying and then he lists a few things showing us that our world will become

### ***Increasingly selfish and unapologetically divisive (vv.1-4)***

"Lovers of themselves, lovers of money". Neither of which are new nor startling revelations but isn't it interesting how Paul pairs those together. When self is the focus boasting, pride and abuse are evident because everything is about them. And this is the world we find ourselves in. Self is glorified to the point where redefining yourself is applauded and people are vilified if they even politely disagree. And if we do they become abusive. Are you aware that the present federal government is allowing federal employees who desire to change their identity up to \$75,000 to cover any expenses that provincial health plans won't cover? And whose money is that anyway? Taxpayers.

We are aware of a Renfrew high school student that was arrested and removed from his Catholic high school for stating Catholic principles of human identity. And if we think this is still far from home, two weeks ago in the Review Mirror there appeared a picture of a girls' high school wrestling team, only three of which were biological females.

We live in a day that self is the center and you can redefine yourself into anything you'd like and our governments and general populace will celebrate your uniqueness. Meanwhile, God who already created them uniquely must weep at their rejection of His gift of life.

Notice what follows after 'disobedient to parents'; ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, etc. I believe Paul means for us to see what happens in a world where parents are disrespected and rejected. Parents are our first authority figures in our life. If we reject them, we'll reject any and all authority.

"Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God". The focus is on pleasing oneself, not living selflessly to please God. And yet, one day when this life ends living for oneself will result in just that,

an eternity in darkness and pain without God or any semblance of love or kindness. And yet people are still ...

### **'Spiritual' yet without God (v.5a)**

'Having a form of godliness yet denying its power'. There is no shortage of spiritual pursuits in the world. But any spiritual pursuit that rejects Jesus as Saviour and Lord and God as Creator, Sustainer and Judge are devoid of spiritual life. There is only one true God and one Lord and everything else is a false god. And one day, Paul tells us

### **People's sinfulness will be obvious (vv.6-9)**

Who are Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses? These are the names tradition gives to the two court magicians who imitated a few of Moses' miracles in Pharaoh's court; powers that could only come from Satan. Paul uses them as an example of those who 'worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women'. Before you get offended by that the word 'weak-willed' implies, sinful, foolish, gullible. And history has given us lots of examples of cult leaders who usually gather around them those who are vulnerable and looking for affirmation and care. And initially it appears this way but after awhile it is a form of imprisonment and brain-washing.

To some degree all of us are weak-willed; full of sin and gullible to Satan's tactics to manipulate and say what is good is evil and what is evil is good. The lie in the Garden of Eden still works; 'God is holding out on you. His words and ways limit you, they don't protect or help you.'

Enough negativity. While it's important to 'know' these things we must not be alarmed by them or surprised that the world is the way it is. If you have no hope outside of your own existence, you will live any way you want. But v.10 says 'You, however ...' The believe is to live counter cultural as we await Jesus' return. Because we know God has a plan. We know a lot about the future that most people do not. We know where the world is going. So while Paul tells Timothy to avoid and be aware of the sinful negativity around him, he exhorts him and us to

## **Continue to Grow in Godliness** **(3:10-4:5)**

We all shake our heads at the sinfulness of our world, just as Paul did at his, and ask God 'Well, what can I do?' Our response, grow in godliness. Show the world what a satisfied-in-God, living-sacrificially-for-others life looks like. They'll see our joy and contentment while it eludes them, and we model that what you're really looking for can be found in a relationship with God through his Son Jesus as you submit and allow the Spirit to grow God's fruit in you.

"You, however" ... Paul changes gears and possibly reads Timothy's weary mind after hearing all this negative worldliness,

*<sup>10</sup> You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. <sup>12</sup> In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup> while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. <sup>14</sup> But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is*

*useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Paul doesn't deny the cost of godliness; rejection by the world resulting in persecution. Yes, Paul says, if we're going to live counter culturally for the glory of God,

### ***Anticipate persecution (vv.10-13)***

'Count the cost' Jesus said, 'Deny yourself' Jesus said. 'Be My witnesses' Jesus said. Paul did and look what happened. He reminds Timothy of these things that happened in Acts 13-14, the worst of which was in Iconium when they beat Paul up, leaving him for dead. If you want to be godly, it will mean suffering for the Lord. But that's the right response to living in a culture getting darker. Be the light. Stand out. It doesn't take much anymore. So don't be surprised by it, expect rejection by the world.

The means of growing in godliness has never changed.

### ***Remain strong through the Word (vv.14-17; 4:1-5)***

Paul shows us two ways we do that. First

#### ***By taking it in (vv.14-17)***

Paul reminds Timothy of his spiritual heritage, how his grandmother and mother shared God's Word with him early in life giving Timothy the opportunity to one day become convinced for himself that; 1) he was a sinner in need of forgiveness; and 2) that God's Word shows him how to be reconciled with God by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross; and 3) that he needs to stay in the Word so that God's Word can teach him things he needs to learn, correct him on those things he needs to unlearn, reprove him when he disobeys God and train him so he can be better equipped to serve God. And those things have never changed. If you and I are not in the Word consistently we will not grow and won't serve God with our life, because we are ill-equipped to do so.

But only taking it in. That's one part. We also need to

#### ***Reach out with the Word of God (4:1-5)***

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: <sup>2</sup> Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup> They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

While you may think this verse is only for those in ministry, the application for all of us is to share the Word that we are taking in and growing in. We need to give out what we take in. A sponge can only hold so much. It has to put out before it can take more in. Timothy was told to speak God's Word to correct, rebuke and encourage God's people (by the way almost the same words in v.16 for why we take it in for ourselves) and v.5, share it with unbelievers. Why should he do this? Because the closer this gap of time shrinks towards the last 7 years, Paul says people will be less inclined to hear truth speakers from the Word and more inclined to hear people use God's Word incorrectly to

make them feel good and happy all the time. People have been and are turning away from the truth. The only way we can help them is by communicating it gracefully yet truthfully. Because God's Word is God's very words and have the power to teach, reprove, correct and equip. Take in God's Word, trust God's Word, share God's Word. This is the best way to respond to the godlessness of our day.

And as Paul gives Timothy some last words of encouragement, he reminds all of us that, if we're discouraged by the increasing godlessness around us

## **Remember our Hope as We Wait for Jesus** **(4:1. 6-8)**

Paul's words to Timothy are his last. He senses this imprisonment will end in his eternal release.

*<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

Using an Old Testament sacrificial analogy, Paul says to Timothy I have given my life as an offering to God; a thank offering for how He has blessed me, even to the point of death. But that's okay because of what's in store for me and you.

### ***There are indescribable rewards awaiting faith-keepers (vv.6-8)***

It's interesting that Paul says there is a crown of righteousness to those who have been looking for Jesus' return. What does that say about studying prophecy? I think it's a thing we should do. I don't know what this crown looks like or if we cast it at Jesus' feet once we're in glory but whatever it is, its good. And sinless eternity sounds really good. Don't forget when we get down about the godlessness of our culture, that we have a great future waiting for us when Jesus returns and makes all things right. No one can take that away from us. Do not fear those who harm the body. And with that in mind I want to return to 4:1 where Paul says.

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,*

### ***God knows and sees everything (v.1)***

God will judge the living and the dead because as God He can see everything that the living have done and that the dead did. No one will get away with any sin especially those done to the people of God. This is encouraging but also sobering. Listen to this tough verse in Scripture.

*<sup>6</sup> God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power <sup>10</sup> on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

Paul encouraged Timothy not to let the culture bring him down, but keep growing in godliness for there is your strength, your hope and your reward. The people who hurt you and live godless and thankless lives will lose the most. They don't know what awaits them. We need to warn them. The gap is shrinking. We have always been in the last days but are perilously getting closer to the last day. It can and probably will get darker but how much brighter will we appear to our communities and culture that live for self-glory, when we live for God's glory and show them where true hope and joy are.

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