

Title: Grievous times

Text: 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Man's inhumanity to his fellow man is one of the most common elements of history, but ever since WW I it has reached gigantic proportions. At no time in world history has there been so much worldwide grief, affecting so many people, as has existed since 1914. More wars, revolutions, insurrections, and plagues have beset us than in any other period of history. More people are fearful, "up tight," and filled with heartache than ever before, and that is exactly what the Bible predicted would happen in the last days (or the days just prior to the coming of Christ).

The phrases "times of stress" of this passage has been translated "grievous times" by some scholars. The Greek word actually means ~~ψυτρη~~ "outrageous" times. If you examine the 18 characteristics of the times given here in our Scripture, I think you will agree that we are living in evil days. Further, you will discover that every one of these characteristics is a common part of our national and international life, proving again that we are in the last days before the ~~xxx~~ return of Christ. Let us consider these characteristics.

SELFISH MEN

"For men will be lovers of self," This is certainly a characteristic of our day. The "dog eat dog" concept of the pagan world ~~is~~ in marked contrast to the Spirit of Christian compassion built on the gospel. In America there is a spirit of detachment that causes people to say, "I don't want to get involved." I am sure you all read about a recent case of rape in New York City. This story was in the Recorder a couple of weeks ago. A woman was attacked by a man while 6 or 7 men on a construction crew watched. One of the workers, in explaining why he did not go to

aid of the woman, said, "I/~~thought~~/~~they~~ thought they were just having sex." Similar accounts appear in the papers across the country, indicating ~~that~~ New Yorkers do not have a corner on non-involvement.

This national spirit of self-love is not limited to relationships outside the home. As a counselor I have observed tragic signs of this sin creeping into the most significant relationship on earth - the family. Certainly the rise in the divorce rate can be traced to the common problem of selfishness. Tim LaHaye in his book, HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED, writes, "Everyone who has come to me with a marital problem has it because one or both of the partners is selfish. Unselfish people do not develop marital problems."

This increaing selfishness is also turning many children away from their parents. God has given children a natural love for their parents. But ~~if~~ selfish parents reject and neglect their children that a wall of bitterness and hate builds within the child. A just read case about a selfish father who describe his intense jealousy of his son because of the attention shown by his wife to the boy. An equally selfish wife ~~confesses~~ confesses her resentment of the affection showered by her husband on their little girls. Silly - but true and tragic.

A generation ago parents whould preserve the marriage for the children's sake and usually would find a way to resove their differences. Today they are usually wrapped up so tightly in their own selfish desires they don't care about the children, or at least not as much about the children as they do themselves. "Don't I deserve some enjoyment out of life?" is the self-pitying cry I hear all the time from selfish parents who "want out." What they don't realize is that a change of partners doesn't change the cause of marital disharmony, -- which is selfishness.

Have you ever wondered why this selfish spirit prevails today and where it comes from? The answer is very simple. When the philosophy of education in our country was *based* on Christian principles, children were taught responsibility to God and others for their behavior -- no man was a self-contained island. The false concept of evolution, which provided atheistic humanists with their man philosophical foundation, produced the false conclusion that man is a high-level animal -- an animals by the way are naturally selfish. It is just that simple. Until we wake up to the fact that we have been fed a gigantic lie in the name of education, we will continue down hill in our self-pity and selfishness.

LOVERS OF MONEY

KJV says covetousness which is a love of money or material possessions. This characteristic of the last days is also a result of selfishness. The crime wave we are experiencing today includes fraud, embezzlement, and deceit employed to amass material gains. What other reason than love of money could motivate people to print sexually inflammatory materials that stimulate crime and tragedy? What other motive caused dope pushers to destroy the minds and lives of today's youth? Our selfish, materialistic philosophy has developed a society of greedy monsters who frequently sell their souls for "a mess of pottage."

PROUD, ARROGANT

Pride, one of the sins God hates according to Proverbs 16, is a hallmark of our day. The spirit of humility in leaders is rare anymore. Instead we brag about our possessions and accomplishments. The spirit of keeping up with the *Neibauer* Joneses is so strong that it is used by all as an excuse to buy. The sin of pride today is not limited to individuals, but seems to be the attitude of government and nations as well. Humble honesty is no longer a sign of a real man. But God's word is still true. "pride leadeth to destruction."

Abusive (Blasphemers)

The use of the Lord's name in vain knows no bounds. In spite of the fact that the Word of God pointedly condemns those who take the name of God in Vain (Ex. 20:7), profane blasphemy has become a part of everyday vocabulary. Prior to WW I it was never approved in mixed company or before children, even by the hardest of men. There are even cases on record where men were challenged to duels for swearing in front of women. I shall never forget an instance that happened when I was in high school. Two ~~pl~~/ football players beat up a student in the hall one day for swearing in front of a girl.

Today our abusive tendencies are not limited to speech. It has invaded the fields of art, music, literature, education, and sad to say, religion. From nude pictures of "love" in major magazines to the desecration of altars dedicated to God. The use of abusiveness will not get any better as we approach the last days.

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS

Twenty years ago a writer declared, "Since WW I juvenile delinquency has exceeded anything ever known to civilization. Thousands of children in the roving bands of America have left home or live in defiance of home authority. Modern life, geared to interests and attractions outside the home, facilitates this."

Today, the problem is staggering. The flames of resentment that seem most strong in youthful hearts have been exploited in the social revolution until young people by the thousands are leaving home, school, and work to "drop out."

Over and over again, Parents are heard to exclaim, "I just can't do a thing with that child." The permissive philosophy of the atheistic humanists has produced the most lawless generation of young people in all of history. Their rebellious activities are given front-page billing as they burn down banks, colleges, and anything else that is an object of their wrath.

What makes this generation so disobedient? Very simply, failure of parents to teach their children to obey in the home.

Horace Kipler's story of his uncle who was a preacher. One psychologist said that the five-year old child who stamps his foot and screams to get his own way, if indulged by his parents, will be fighting the police and society ten years later. The Bible says, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him early" (Pro 13:24). God's Word is still the best manual on human behavior.

UNTHANKFUL

Although we celebrate Thanksgiving Day every year, we seem to have lost the ability to give thanks. As a nation we have lost the thankful spirit of the pilgrims. Our society has been so spoiled that it has taken for granted the blessings of this land. Our forefathers were thankful for life, liberty, and the chance to earn their living freely. We have enjoyed more freedom, education, and material possessions than any country in history, yet we are a nation of ungrateful grippers.

This unthankful attitude extends from the cradle to the grave. Children and youth do not appreciate the sacrifices made by their parents. And parents tend to complain about the responsibilities of parenthood. Workers are more irked at the profits of their employers than they are grateful for the high economic standards of life. Even senior citizens who in other cultures rarely live to enjoy their retirement gripe about having nothing to do.

Unthankful people are never happy people. This is one area where Christians have a wonderful opportunity to witness to the truth of their faith. Spirit-filled Christians are always thankful. Ephesians 5:18: "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is part of our witness. Believers in Jesus should shine as bright lights in this ungrateful generation.

UNHOLY

You all know that our materialist society has produced an unholy, irreligious society. Only a small percentage of people today attend church, smaller percentage study the Bible, and even a smaller percentage try to live holy lives. Not that going to church every Sunday makes one a Christian, but usually what people do in relation to God on Sunday, "The Lord's Day" sets a pattern for the rest of the week.

INHUMAN (WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION * KJV)

Child abandonment violates one of the basic instincts of motherhood. Yet, abandonment of children is on the increase in this country. In recent years our shock at child neglect has given rise to complacency as we read of a beautiful little girl abandoned on the dividing strip of highway 99 just ~~at the top of~~ north of Bakersfield, or a mother who watches her second husband stomp to death her son of the first marriage, or the kidnapping of babies and selling them for a profit. We say, "They are sick." Yes, they are heart-sick, for they are "without natural affection."

We are all familiar with the trend in our day to treat the homosexual as normal.

TRUCE BREAKERS, FALSE ACCUSERS

"My word is my bond" used to be a common expression in the days when Christian principles prevailed in this country. Today, even when an agreement is established in writing, we can't be sure that some clever lawyer won't so twist things that truth is circumvented.

traitors - reckless - swollen with conceit

These all speak for themselves.

LOVERS OF PLEASURE

Like the Romans before us, we are a society of "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The enemy of man knows that one way to keep men from waking up to the disastrous days ahead is to occupy their minds with exciting nonessentials.

In recent years we have witnessed an amazing fascination for sports. Baseball season isn't over before football begins, followed by basketball, hockey, track, boxing and other sports. Now, I am not saying that sports are wrong. I like many sports as well as the next guy. HOWEVER, when we put a football game before the preaching of God's Word - then we have other gods before us. Or if we are in possession of leadership and we plan events and activities on Sunday so that we and others cannot be in worship - then we have other gods before us.

Sports for the most part are clean, whereas many forms of entertainment are downright immoral. Go-Go shops featuring topless and bottomless dancers that once shocked a community are now commonplace, and we ask ourselves, "How can it get much worse?" But it will.

POWERLESS FORMALISM

"Holding the form of religion but denying the power of it," offers a perfect description of life of many, many Christians and so called Christian denominations. Form and ceremony are stressed, but the

life has no power. How many average christians win others to Jesus Christ? Not many. We are afraid to speak for fear of offending someone. Or for the fear of judging someone. Thus we become powerless when it comes to introducing people to the transforming power of Jesus Christ. For the most part -- we deny the power. ~~Like Sampson of old,~~

CONCLUSION * CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS.

These eighteen characteristics of the "Grievous times" read like the daily newspaper. Hardly a day goes by in which we do not read or hear about some event that further illustrates the grievous times God predicted, giving further evidence that we are living in the last days and that Christ's coming cannot be delayed much longer.

It would be a mistake not to call attention to the fact that this passage of scripture closes with a challenge to Christians with regard to living in these grievous times. We are told: Avoid such people or as the KJV says: "From such turn away." It is a mistake for the Christian to think he can fellowship closely with the covetous, blasphemers, **proud**, disobedient, unthankful, **inholy**, and not be influenced by them. For that reason we are told to turn away from them. We may offer spiritual help, we must witness to them -- but we are not to partake of their sin. Keep in mind, the lowering standards of the world do not change the holy standards of God. SIN IS STILL SIN AND WE ARE RESPONSIBLY FOR OUR OWN SIN.

If you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, may I suggest that you invite him into your life iddediately. It is the answer to the problems of this age. God has a plan for your life, and it begins with your personal invitation to him to come into your life as your Lord and Savior.