

The Last Days

II Timothy 3:1-9

By [Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III](#)

Amen. If you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to II Timothy, chapter three. As we work our way through the letters of Paul, called the Pastoral Letters, we have most recently been in II Timothy 2, where Paul speaks of his own suffering serving the interests of the church, as we were moved as we considered Paul's words there.

In this passage today, Paul is reminding Timothy and the Ephesian Christians, and you and me, of the context in which we live and minister as Christians. You'll notice that in the very first verse in this passage, Paul speaks about "the last days." He is not speaking about those times which are future from us now, immediately prior to the coming again of our Lord; he is speaking, of course, these words initially to Timothy, who has himself been dead for some 1850 years or more; he is speaking these to Christians who were living in his own time in the first century, and so he is using the term "the last days" the way it is predominantly used in the New Testament and in the Old, to refer to the days after the coming of the Messiah.

The "last days" is a term by which he refers to that whole course of time between the ascension of Christ and His bodily return in His second coming. These days are referred to repeatedly in the Scriptures as the last days, and Paul is speaking to Timothy about these last days because he wants Timothy (and he wants the Ephesian Christians, and he wants you and me) to understand the character of those days; because the character of those days tells us much about the context in which we live and minister.

In fact, before we read this passage, if you'd look at verses 1-5, you will see in those words Paul's description of precisely the kind of context in which Timothy is going to minister, and he's telling Timothy what to expect and what to prepare for. You might have imagined Timothy to look for the Christian church to go from strength to strength unhindered, unbothered by internal turmoil and false teaching, and Paul here reminds him of what he must expect: difficult days, and difficult people.

Then if you look at verses 6 and 7, Paul reminds Timothy of the importance of our spiritual discernment. If we are going to live and minister in difficult days, then surely it will require spiritual discernment. And he gives us an outline of what is

required in terms of spiritual discernment in verses 6 and 7.

And then, finally, thirdly, in verses 8 and 9 you'll see the Apostle Paul give a word of encouragement to Timothy. Though things are dire, though things are difficult, though there are false prophets troubling the church, yet the Lord's church will not fail. The false prophets will not prevail. Indeed, their folly will be obvious to all. And so those are the three parts of this passage that we're going to consider today. Let's look to God in prayer before we hear His word read and proclaimed.

O Lord, You never fail to help and govern those whom You are discipling in Your steadfast fear and love through Jesus Christ. So keep us, we pray, under the protection of Your good providence even in these difficult days; and by this means of grace, the reading and proclamation of Your word, show us Yourself and our need, and the Savior. Through Jesus Christ our Lord we ask it. Amen.

Hear the word of God.

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those two came to be.

Amen. Thus ends this reading of God's holy, inspired and inerrant word. May He write its eternal truth upon our hearts.

Because we live and minister in dire days, we must simultaneously be discerning and confident that Christ will build His church. That's what Paul is saying to Timothy in this passage: 'Timothy, you are going to live and minister in difficult days—dire days. Don't expect it to be easy going. Don't expect to see the world stay out of the church. Don't expect to see the church unhindered by false teaching, even in her pales. No, you expect difficult days, Timothy; but as you expect that difficulty, not only make sure that your congregation has the right attitude of what they are and what they're about in the kind of circumstance that they're in, but you make sure that your congregation is spiritually discerning, so that that congregation can tell a false prophet from a true preacher of God's word. And remember, Timothy: no matter how bad it looks, the gates of hell will not prevail against Christ's church. The false prophets' folly will be uncovered

and revealed. They will not have the last word.'

You see, those are the things that Paul is saying today to you and to me, and I want to look at those things in three parts today.

I. The character of the people/circumstances of the Last Days

First, I want to look at the context of our life and ministry. And Paul describes it in verses 1-5. What are we to expect? What are we to prepare for, in terms of the context of our life and ministry? And Paul speaks to Timothy about the character and circumstances of the last day, and the character of people in the last day. Listen again to his words: "Realize this—that in the last days difficult times will come."

Now, you understand that Paul is not simply speaking to Timothy about how it is going to be in the world around him. True enough, that as society looks more and more like this, society more and more has little chance of survival. When a society looks like the description that Paul gives us in verses 2-5, you can be sure that collapse is on the way, unless there is revival and reformation.

But Paul's concern is not so much to turn Timothy's eyes out there to the pagan Greco-Roman world around him, nor is his concern to turn our eyes out there as to what is happening in the larger society and culture: his concern is to say that these things are encroaching even on the life of the church. You'll notice, for instance, in verse 6, Paul, after describing these horrible characteristics of the people that Timothy is going to confront in the course of his ministry, will say, "For among them"—the people that he's just described in verses 2-5—"For among them are those who enter into households...."

In other words, Paul is talking about false teaching that is encroaching on the church, in this passage! He's telling Timothy that he is going to live and minister in a context when this kind of gross, immoral behavior characterizes false teachers and the teaching which they are trying to sneak in to the Christian church. Paul is trying to build a ministry mindset, a life mindset, in Timothy and in his congregation, and in you and me—to not expect life and ministry in the Christian church in our world and culture to be easy, but, rather, to be difficult; not to be safe, but, rather, to be dangerous. We're being called to warfare, not to ease and rest, and entertainment and relaxation!

Paul is developing a ministry mindset in Timothy that says, 'Timothy, you're at war, and the war isn't just out there. It's being brought to you. It's being sneaked into the very churches, and therefore your people need to be aware that there's a war going on, a war for their souls. There are people that are trying to delude them with false teaching, there are people that are trying to give them just enough truth mixed with error to deceive them; and, Timothy, you need to be

aware that ministry in the last days will be difficult, and the character of many, even within the church, Timothy, will be one of the greatest difficulties.'

And then you get this list of characteristics in verses 2-5. Now, you may have already counted them. Paul gives eighteen characteristics there in verses 2-5 of the kind of people and teaching that is being intruded upon the Christian church in Timothy's day and in our day. And, you know, we could spend a whole sermon just looking at those eighteen characteristics. They are richly suggestive. For instance, just look at the one word—that these people are characterized by being *irreconcilable*. They are people that are not given to forgiveness. They don't have the spirit of mercy that characterizes a person who has encountered the mercy of God. If God has saved you by grace, if God has shown you your sins, and then shown you your Savior, and He's shown His mercy to you in Jesus Christ, one of the first things that happens is that you tend to be a merciful person because of the mercy that God has shown you, and Paul characterizes these people as being strangers to mercy in their own experience. They don't know how to forgive. They don't know how to show mercy, because they've never really encountered the saving mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

We could explore each one of these, and it would be rich for our own benefit, but I want to draw your attention to just a few of these descriptions. (By the way, most of these phrases here are just one word in Paul's original letter. This whole passage reminds you so much, doesn't it, of the end of Romans, chapter one?)

In fact, there are many words that are found in both of those lists—that dire list that Paul gives at the end of Romans, chapter one, but let me draw your attention to just a few things.

First of all, notice the very first thing that Paul says about these: They will be "lovers of self." Now, my friends, if ever there was a narcissistic age, if ever there was an age that was self-preoccupied and thought God and the world exist for our own personal benefit, it's ours! But, you know, the sad thing is that there are people who, in the name of Jesus Christ, are preaching the message of sinful self-love in the churches. They're teaching the churches that God exists for our satisfaction and our pleasure, and for our accomplishments. And we see Paul speaking, warning Timothy, that there will be people proclaiming the love of self in the churches, and we see it in our own day and time.

And then he goes on, doesn't he? They will be "lovers of money." Well, where are we, friends, nineteen hundred and forty years or so after Paul writes these words and Timothy reads them to his congregation? And where are we?

We have seen in the last decade an exponential growth of the false doctrine of "the prosperity gospel." It's all over the place...all over the place in the evangelical church! The two largest congregations of professing Christians in America today are both solidly committed to the prosperity gospel of health and wealth: 'God

doesn't want you to be ever unhealthy, ever unhappy, ever unwealthy. If you only have enough faith, you'll have everything you want.' One man advertises a book, *How to Be Rich and Have Everything You Ever Wanted*. That's the Christian gospel? Oh, no, my friends! But thousands upon thousands—more than are gathered in faithful Bible-believing churches on a given Lord's Day morning—thousands upon thousands in the United States of America and in our own state, and in our own county, and in our own city have bought into that false doctrine because they are lovers of money. But it doesn't stop there.

Notice the next phrase I want to draw your attention to: “Disobedient to parents.”

That one is one of the phrases that Paul mentions at the end of Romans. Now you may think, ‘That seems fairly trivial in comparison to these other horrible things that Paul piles up about the dire circumstances of the last days.’ But think about it, my friends.

Disobedience to parents is indicative...it's symptomatic of a larger rejection of proper spiritual authority; and if there is anything in our culture, it is a rejection of proper respect for proper authority. And if you can reject the authority of your parents God has given you to be the spiritual authority in your experience while you are under their roof, under their tutelage, then you can reject the authority of everybody else in society that has been divinely put there for the sake of order, and structure and well-being. We live in a culture that says, ‘Do it your own way! Do what you want to do! Don't defer to authority: resist authority, challenge authority, suspect authority, question authority!’ And here the Apostle Paul is saying there are some that will intrude that message even in the church.

It's true in our own day and age. We see it. There are people who say, ‘Christianity isn't about obedience, do what you want to do. It's all about freedom.’

And then he goes on. Look at this phrase: “...Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.” If that doesn't characterize the culture that we live in, I don't know what does. But again, think about that in the Christian life. So, often God, even in professing Christian churches, has been molded into our image so that He is the greatest means to our greatest end, which is our own personal happiness, our own personal satisfaction, our own pleasure. In other words, God is the best way to get what I really want, even though what I really want is not God. And it's completely upside down from biblical Christianity, in which our end is God; our goal is God's glory; the thing we want to do in this life and the life to come is glorify and enjoy God. We'll seek first that kingdom and its righteousness, and we'll let the Lord handle everything else. And the message we hear in church after church today teaches that God exists for our pleasure.

And then you have this next phrase juxtaposed to it: “...Holding to a form of godliness.” Now, you're thinking, ‘How in the world can those things which are

piled up in verses 2-4 be combined with somebody professing to be godly?' Well, they were in Paul's day, and they are now.

You know, if you turn on the television at any given time during the week, eighty percent of what you see purporting to be Christianity will fall precisely into the categories that Paul is speaking about here. Nineteen hundred and fifty years ago, my friends, Paul was already talking about this: we will live and minister in the last days. Now what does this mean?

First of all, it means that as Christians we need to know what we're in the middle of —we need to know the kind of fight we're in.

We talked about Victory in Europe Day before the service this morning. Think of the paratroopers that were shot in behind the German lines on D-Day. If their commanders had said to them, 'Now, look. As we drop you in behind enemy lines today, make sure, whatever you do, that you remember that you're business men and you've got a product to sell.' Or worse, what if their commander had said, 'Look, you're going in behind enemy lines, but here's the most important thing: have a little fun! You know, life's too short not to have a little fun.' My friends, if those men had gone into battle thinking of themselves as business men with a product to sell, or think of themselves as consumers of entertainment, they would have been in dire peril! Now, they were in dire peril going in as military men, but if they had gone into that circumstance without realizing who they were and the circumstances they were going into, they would have been in mortal peril! A greater peril than they were actually put in! But because they knew who they were and the circumstances that they were going into, they could appropriately take seriously the gravity of their situation. And Paul is saying that to you and to me. He's saying, 'Realize what you're getting into. You are in the middle of a fight!'

You know, for a hundred years now, the Christian church is being told in America that we need to think more like a business. We need to think about ourselves as a business: we've got a product (the gospel); we've got consumers (customers, unsaved people out there); we need to give the gospel out like a product.

And then, there are others who say, 'No, we need to approximate our entertainment culture, because people want to be entertained. They've got a hard life, and so we need to appropriate some of the modes, the media and entertainment culture, in order to draw people to Christ.

And here's the Apostle Paul saying, 'Here's how I want the church to think: you're an army! And you're in the middle of mortal conflict! This is deadly serious stuff. People are being picked off like flies!' He's warning us, my friends, telling us the kind of attitude we need to have, the sobriety with which we need to approach this Christian life. We Presbyterians like a good laugh. We enjoy laughing with one another, and that's good, and that's appropriate. But when we come together

to worship God, we come together in deadly earnest; joyful, but sober because there's a war going on, and the war is being brought to bear in our own hearts and lives. We're here to equip men and women, and boys and girls, to love the Lord Jesus Christ and be ready to even lay down their lives for the gospel.

You know, every minister here wants you to enjoy the fullness of God's blessings. Every minister in this congregation, every elder, wants the blessings of God to be poured out on you and on your family; but every minister and every elder here, committed to discipling you, also knows that you are being thrown into a fight as a Christian. And it is our job to equip you to trust in the Lord all the way to the very end, and even to die well. One day...one day, I will give an account for how I have equipped you or not to die well—to die, to go to your grave resting and trusting on Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel, and persevering in that faith. And my job is not done in your life until you have gone all the way to the end in faithfulness. It's a war, my friends! And that's why we're serious about it—not because we're stuffy sticks in the mud. Because it's dangerous stuff that you're getting into!

And think of how our hymns used to remind us of this. The Christian church has lost so much of this today. But take your hymnal out and turn with me to No. 573, *Am I a Soldier of the Cross?*...great hymn from the pen of Isaac Watts, almost three hundred years old, and he asks some really good questions: “Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? Shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?”

You see, we're not out for military conquest, we're not out to establish a theocracy, we're not out to oppress every unbeliever that we can find. We're involved in a grand conspiracy of blessing: we want to bless the nation, but it's a war. It's a fight, and we're soldiers in that fight.

And we ask the question (look at stanza two), “Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?”

And then he asks, in verse three—look at the second phrase of verse three: “Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?” He's reminding you again of the context in which you are. This world is not going to help you in the walk of grace! It's not going to help you in the walk of holiness! It's not going to help you in your walk with Christ! It's not a friend to you. You're in a war, you're in a conflict, and the songs in this whole section...by the way, this is why you need to own a hymnal, have it at home, read it, study it, sing it, and memorize some of it.

Turn to the very next hymn, 574. This hymn is about one thousand three hundred years old. It was written by Andrew of Crete. And again, he's asking Christians a question:

Christian, do you see them, on the holy ground,

How the powers of darkness rage thy steps around?
Christian, up and smite them, counting gain but loss,
in the strength that cometh by the holy cross.
“Christian, do you feel them, how they work within,
Striving, tempting, luring, goading into sin?
Christian, never tremble; never be downcast;
Gird thee for the battle, watch and pray, and fast.

And then on the very next page, 575, Wesley's glorious hymn, *Soldiers of Christ, Arise*, “... and put your armor on.” You know, our Bible School children this summer will be thinking bout that the whole week long, what it means to put on the whole armor of God. This is not some cutesy little thing, this is deadly serious. And as little children who sing *I'm In the Lord's Army* with the Kipps, the three-year olds....you know what you need to do? You need to explain to them as they grow up that that is not just something that's cute to you, to see them singing *I'm in the Lord's Army*, but that they really are. And when they rest and trust in Jesus Christ alone as He's offered in the gospel, they're in the Lord's army—they're enlisted! They're His disciples, they're His followers, and their job is—until their last breath goes out of their body—to serve as His faithful follower.

These great hymns remind us of this. On 576, *Awake! My Soul, Stretch Every Nerve*; or, 578, Reginald Heber's great *The Son of God Goes Forth to War*; or, 581, *Fight the Good Fight*. All these hymns remind us that we're in a war, we're in a battle. You see, Paul's message to Timothy is not just that it's a jungle out there; it's a jungle in here, Timothy. You're going to live and minister in difficult times.

You see, the church is not in a condition of ease and rest. We're not in a condition where V-E Day has yet been accomplished. E-Day has begun! The spiritual V-E day is not yet. We're the church militant, not the church triumphant, and therefore we need to think of ourselves not as a business or as entertainment, but as a family, a body, a kingdom, an army—that's what we are.

And not only that, Paul tells you point-blank what he wants you to do, in verse 5: “Avoid such men as these.” He just tells you, here's the application. There are these kinds of people proclaiming themselves to be Christians and teachers of the Christian truth in the churches, Avoid them. Have nothing to do with them.

You remember the story of John—John the Apostle, John the beloved disciple, who, when he found himself in the bath-house in a city in Asia Minor, and he heard that the false teacher, Cerinthus, was also in that same bath-house, he fled from the bath-house saying, “Surely the roof will come in because of this heretic Cerinthus here!” He avoided him! And my friends, you need to avoid false teaching. It's not to be toyed with; it's not to be played with. You've got to be discerning, and you've got to avoid it.

II. The tactics of those who desire to infiltrate the Church.

That leads us to the second point that I want you to see in verses 6 and 7, because here Paul's going to remind us of the importance of spiritual discernment. He's telling Timothy about the tactics of those who are desiring to infiltrate the church, and he's telling Timothy and that congregation at Ephesus, and he's telling you and me as Christians today that we must be aware of the methods of deceptive teachers. And he says this: "For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins...." —(and I would get this text on Mother's Day!).

But, you understand the Apostle Paul is not making a derisive, demeaning remark about women here. Remember how he began this book. Do you remember how he began this book? He takes Timothy by the lapels, and he says, 'Timothy, I want you to know something. I knew your grandmother and I knew your mother, and I know that the faith that's in you was in them first. They were godly women. They were wise women. They were consecrated women. Timothy, you've got a lot to live up to, because you've heard the truth from the lap of your grandmother and your mother.' This is a man who loved godly women; this is a man who loved strong, biblical women. Paul's not slagging women in this passage.

What's he doing then? He's doing two things.

First of all, Paul is actually telling you the tactic that was being used by these false prophets. They were literally going into homes of (especially the wealthy, middle, upper-class) women of that Greco-Roman culture who had been introduced to faith in Christ through the preaching of faithful teachers like Timothy and Titus and Paul. They were actually going into their homes. They were actually going into their homes while their husbands were away, and they were tickling their ears with false teaching. They were making disciples out of them. They were bringing them into the fold of this false teaching.

Now, it's interesting that that very thing is one of the ways that Christianity spread in the Greco-Roman world. Christians had the opportunity to preach the word to women who were at home managing household affairs, and the gospel spread through households in that very way. But the false teachers had figured that technique out, and they were now using it for devious ends: they were sneaking in bringing division, bringing their false teaching. So Paul is telling you this for one reason because this was precisely what the false teachers are doing. He's warning another pastor, 'Watch this, Timothy. They're going to try and do this in your own church.' (By the way, my friends, I've told you this story before. I've seen this happen. I've seen it happen.)

But secondly, he's telling you this for another reason, and that is because he

wants you to look at the leverage, at the things that the false prophets try and hook into in the lives of these people.

Look at the five things that Paul tells you here—first in verse 6: He tells you that the false teachers will try and take advantage of a lack of spiritual discernment, a lack of biblical truth and knowledge. You say, ‘Well, where does that come from?’ Well, look—what does he call these women? They are “weak willed” or “weak minded.” Their minds, their hearts, their wills have not been sufficiently formed by biblical truth so that they are spiritually discerning, and therefore they are easy targets. My friends, if your mind has not been formed and shaped by the truth of the word of God, you’re an easy target.

And Paul says, ‘Timothy, look. That’s the first thing they do. They go to people who haven’t really grasped the truth that you’ve been teaching Lord’s Day after Lord’s Day, in prayer meetings, in groups all over the city. They haven’t really grasped it. So they go for those, and they grab them, they hook them.’

Secondly, notice what he says: These people are unstable in their sense of purpose and direction in life. You say, ‘Well, where does that come from?’ Well, look what it says about them. They’re led on by various impulses. They’re not led by a sense of principle that has been derived from God’s word. They don’t understand that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That’s what I’m here for.

No, they’re led on by various impulses. Their sense of purpose and direction in life is not derived from the word of God, it’s from whatever they feel drawn to at a particular time. And Paul says the false prophets are using that.

Thirdly, look at what he says: He says these people have guilty consciences.

They’ve got sin in their life that has not been dealt with. You say, ‘Where does that come from?’ Look at what he says: They are “weighed down with sins.” And not only are they objectively weighed down with sins, they’re subjectively weighed down with sins. In other words, they have a desire to get out from under that guilt complex, but they really have not fully understood the glory and the provision of God in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, for the breaking of its penalty and power. And so they’re weighed down with sins, and they’re looking for a way to get out from under that guilt complex.

And then, notice that these are people that take in everything, and they don’t properly question it. They’re not like the Bereans. The Bereans hear Paul teach, and they say, ‘Paul, that’s great. We’re going to go check our Bibles and we’ll get back with you.’ No, these people, they take it in. Look at what it says: “...Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

There are a lot of people that will quote the motto *Semper Reformanda* (which

means “always reforming”) today in the church, and they very often mean that to say that we need to stop believing something that the Christian church has always believed. And when they use that motto that way, I always think of II Timothy 3:7–“...always learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.”

Now Paul says, ‘Look, Timothy, at those five things that the false prophets will get ahold of, and they’ll draw someone away.’ You see, that false prophet’s going to say, ‘I’m going to get you to God. I’m going to get you to God better than the preacher can. I’m going to get you to God, and it’s not going to be through the Bible. It’s not going to be Truth with a capital “T”—that’s for fundamentalist preachers. It’s not going to be through Jesus. It’s not going to be through the cross. It’s not going to involve a life of obedience, of taking up our cross and dying daily. No, I’ve got a better way to God.’

Now you say to me, ‘Well, that’s all fine and well, preacher, but this thing happened nineteen hundred and fifty years ago! What Paul is describing in verses 1-7 does not happen today!’ ...Want to bet?

About three years ago many of you heard that a very famous and controversial actress had been led to faith in Christ through Bible studies that she was attending. Her chauffeur went on a web site and said that he had led her to Jesus Christ, and then suddenly things went very quiet for a number of years and we didn’t hear much.

Well, just a few weeks ago her biography was released, and a few days ago she did an interview about her Christian profession of faith. And here is what she said: “When we talk about God, the Almighty, or Sophia, or the greater power or whatever...”—now, let me just stop right there. We’re already down the road in a direction we don’t want to go!—she goes on to say this: she had been turned off by the Jesus that she had been taught in these fundamentalist Bible studies, but, she says, “...then I read Elaine Pagels, I read *The Gnostic Gospels*, and it really impressed me. In fact, I read it when I was first feeling God. And then I read her book, *Beyond Belief*, which is a book that came out recently, and it had a lot of references to the early Christians and to *The Gnostic Gospels*, and so I read the originals. In fact, I got the whole *Nag Hammadi Library* and started reading. And then I began to realize, ‘I’m on the right path now.’”

Gnosticism! Twenty-first century America! A woman starts off in a Bible-believing church’s Bible study—ends up in ancient Gnosticism! The Apostle Paul was nineteen hundred and fifty years ahead of time, my friends. This is precisely what he’s warning Timothy, and precisely what he’s warning you and me.

III. A word of assurance (but not of complacency) regarding the designs of the impious.

There's one last thing I want you to see, in verses 8 and 9, and that is this: false prophets will not win. No matter how bad it gets, the false prophets will not win. "Though men see the church by schisms rent asunder and by heresies distressed", yet Christ will build His church. Christ is made the sure foundation, the church will not perish. The false prophets will not prevail. Their deeds, their teaching, their lies will be uncovered. They will fail. This is vital for Timothy to know. It's vital for you and me to know.

Again, just in the last five years a very famous evangelical radio station owner has declared that the church is so corrupt now that Christians who really believe the Bible need to leave their local churches, because the church is completely corrupt. The church age has ended, the church is completely corrupted by false teaching, so you need to leave your local churches and you just need to huddle informally in small groups and listen to his radio programs.

And what's Paul saying to Timothy? 'Timothy, the Lord Jesus Christ is going to build His church, and the gates of hell are not going to prevail against it. No matter how bad it looks around you, Timothy, the Lord's church will stand.'

What's the whole point of the Book of Revelation? We win! Christ is building His church despite these false teachers, but we must recognize, my friends, we're in a war. And we need to be spiritually discerning, and that means lapping up every drop of the means of grace: the word read, the word taught, the word preached, the prayers of the saints, baptism, the Lord's Supper. God has given these things to us to grow us up, to give us spiritual discernment, to stand; and so we shall, if we stand in Him, resting and trusting in Jesus Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, we ask now that You would cause us to stand in the commitments which we first made when we professed faith in Jesus Christ. We pray that by Your Holy Spirit, by Your all-sufficient merit and mercy, You would keep us faithful and cause us to persevere to the end. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Congregational Hymn: *O Jesus, I Have Promised*]

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

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