

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

August 30, 2009

“Having the Appearance of Godliness”

2 Timothy 3:1-5 says: **“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.”**

In the context the apostle Paul is warning Timothy about false teachers. The Bible refers to the whole Christian age as the “last days.” Some have said that Paul’s “last days” refer to the time just before the second coming of Christ. I do not see how that can fit as Timothy was told to avoid the people described. Timothy is not alive to do that any longer and the second coming has not yet happened. The truth is that you and I are in the last days right now and false teachers are here and they are rampant.

Growing up the son of a preacher, I have known many people like the one’s Paul warned Timothy about in this passage. In this context he is not referring to the one who is honestly and sincerely mistaken about a particular point. Just read over those traits again and it becomes very evident what type of person Paul is describing.

I hope that you noticed verse 5 in which Paul said of these people, **“having the appearance of godliness...”** After all that he said about them in the first 4 verses he goes on to tell us that these are religious people! From an outward perspective these people seem to be quite religious and spiritual. Indeed, that is how they manage to get a hearing from faithful brethren whom they seek to win to their cause.

There are a few observations a person is able to make after meeting and talking to folks like this. Generally they will present themselves as very advanced and enlightened Christians. When their teaching is disputed and disagreed with, they will use phrases such as “reaching for maturity” and “striving for perfection” to show you that they are doing this, and consequently have been able to gain a better and more “spiritual” understanding of the Scriptures. The implication is that if you do not understand things the way that they do then you are not making an effort at maturity or perfection and thus are not able to understand them at their more advanced and enlightened state.

Most of the time you will also notice an arrogance there that they themselves are entirely incapable of noticing or are just unwilling to admit. It will usually be masked beneath a film of piousness and humility. They will claim a deep reverence and respect for God’s Word, yet if you take them to a passage that contradicts what they are saying it will be ignored, met with anger, or a condescending smile.

You also learn that folks like this absolutely detest being opposed, especially by the preacher or elders. Experience has taught that people like this will begin to “pick” at everything the preacher or elder says and they will work very hard to be “offended” by them so that they will always have a point of contention, even if it is one entirely of their own devising.

People like this will stir up a great deal of trouble within a church, if not divide it altogether. If they can, they will plant their poisonous seeds among the members of a congregation in the hopes to win some to their side. If they find that there are those sympathetic to them, they will then begin their campaign to claim control of the congregation in earnest. However, these people are also your classic “church hoppers.” If they are not able to gain control of a particular congregation they will generally pull out their martyr card and go to the next congregation, eagerly informing all who will listen that the previous congregation forced them to leave when all they wanted to do was help those poor people to a better understanding of God’s Word.

So, what is the best way to deal with them? Paul said to avoid them. Ignore people like this. Have nothing to do with them. However, sometimes they are very hard to avoid. Usually they will claim that all they want to do is study with you. If that is the case and you find yourself compelled to study with them, don’t go alone. Take a Christian that you trust with you, preferably one with good Bible knowledge. Inform them that you agreed to a Bible study and that is all that you are going to do. You are not there to here any grievances they may have. You are not there to listen to a litany of “offenses” done against them. You are there to study the Bible and nothing more. With that limitation placed upon them, very soon they will no longer be able to hide what they are. At that point, “**avoid such people.**”

In Need of Prayers	In Need of Prayers
<p>Sharon Tirey continues her cancer treatments.</p> <p>Remember Kristen Osterling’s unborn baby.</p> <p>Remember David Blakeman.</p> <p>Rachel Knollman’s surgery is this Wednesday.</p> <p>Wayne Galloway has gone home from the hospital.</p> <p>Robin Miller’s surgery will be this Thursday.</p> <p>Lilly Fitzwater (Bill Morelan’s mother) is recovering in a care facility in Ohio. The contact information is posted on the bulletin board in the hall.</p> <p>Charles Abbot is fighting lung cancer.</p>	<p>Chuck McDavitt is suffering with diabetes and an infection in his foot.</p> <p>Ron Catchen had open heart surgery earlier in the year but recently had to have stints put in.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University Height Church of Christ 445 Columbia Avenue Lexington, Ky 40508 859-255-6257 www.uheightschurch.com</p>

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