

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy – Part 9

I. Exposition of Chapter Three.

A. Verse 1 – “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:...”

1. “But know this...” – Kenneth Wuest translates this as; “be keeping this in your mind.”¹

2. “...in the last days...” – As in Paul’s first letter to Timothy (4:1-2), he warns him about the last days.

According to Scripture, we are living in the last days because they began at Jesus’ first coming and will continue until His second coming. Martin Manser defines the last days as:

“The final epoch of history which is marked by the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of God’s kingdom. In the NT it is portrayed as the period between Jesus Christ’s first coming and the consummation of all things at his return, and is marked by godlessness and the persecution of God’s people.”²

3. “...perilous times will come...” – The word “perilous” means; “pertaining to that which causes trouble and hardship, with an implication of violence”³

“But understand this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times of great stress *and* trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear].” – II Timothy 3:1 – Amplified Bible

B. Verses 2-5– “For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” – A. Duane Litfin sums up all these characteristics well (*edited*):

“Paul gave an extraordinary list...of 19 general characteristics believers should expect. People will be: (1) lovers of themselves (...‘self-centered, narcissistic’); (2) lovers of money (...cf. 1 Tim. 6:9–10); (3) boastful—the outward manifestation of the fact that inwardly they are (4) proud (‘arrogant’); (5) abusive toward others, (‘blasphemers’). ... Thus people will be (6) disobedient to their parents; (7) ungrateful; (8) unholy; (9) without love, ‘heartless’ in Rom. 1:31, the only other place it is used in the NT); (10) unforgiving. *Diaboloi*, a word usually translated ‘devil’ (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:26), is used here with the root meaning (11) slanderous; (12) without self-control; (13) brutal lit., ‘untamed,’ the opposite of civilized); (14) not lovers of the good; cf. Titus 1:8; Pss. 15:4; 19:8)... (15) treacherous (‘disposed toward betrayal’); (16) rash (‘disposed toward recklessness’). The final three characteristics are (17) conceited (lit., ‘puffed up’; cf. 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4); (18) lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; (19) having a form (‘outward shape,...’) of godliness but denying its power (cf. Titus 1:16).”⁴

1. “...having a form of godliness but denying its power...” – Additionally, the word “form” means; “the mere form, semblance.” The word “godliness” means; “In the NT use, we find the thought that the godly person has restructured his life around Jesus and is living that life as a disciple, worshiping the Lord and doing good works”⁵ Regarding this, Gordon Fee asserts:

“They liked the visible expressions, the ascetic practices and the endless discussions of religious trivia, thinking themselves to be obviously righteous because they were obviously religious. But they thereby denied the essential power of the Christian *eusebeia*, since they engaged in so many of the ‘irreligious’ attitudes and practices that characterized the pagan world.”⁶

2. “And from such people turn away.” – The words “turn away” are one word in the Greek and mean; “purposely to avoid association with someone—‘to shun, to avoid, to keep away from, to have nothing to do with’”⁷ The Holy Spirit through Paul is telling Timothy, and all believers, to stay away, and to not associate with these kinds of people and false teachers. It’s also understood by many that

¹ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 143.

² Martin H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London: Martin Manser, 2009).

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 244.

⁴ A. Duane Litfin, “2 Timothy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 756.

⁵ Lawrence O. Richards, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words: Based on the NIV and the NASB*, Zondervan’s Understand the Bible Reference Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 315.

⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988)

⁷ Louw and Nida, 450.

these kinds of people will increase the closer we get to the coming of the Lord. Dr. Ron Rhodes gives some examples of paganism mixed in today's church:

"Today's church has plummeted into various forms of mysticism. The big emphasis is on feelings and affections, not on rational thought. People have rejected an evidential and facts-based faith in favor of an experience-based faith.

Within the church, we are now witnessing such things as deep breathing and proper posture, yoga, chanting (like Benedictine monks), the use of mantras (holy words repeated over and over to help one go into a deep meditative state), and contemplative prayer (a mystical form of prayer whereby one experiences a sense of union with God). Such mysticism is a veritable fast-track to apostasy."⁸

C. Verse 6 – "For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,"

1. "...of this sort are those who creep into households..." – To "creep" means; "to enter secretly and with ulterior motives"⁹ The word "households" refers to a residence or home.
2. "...makes captives of gullible women..." – "captives" means; "to lead away captive: fig. to subjugate, bring under control"¹⁰ The word "gullible" means; "foolish woman, a weak-willed"¹¹
3. "...loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts" – The words "loaded down" means; "to load one with the consciousness of many sins"¹² A. Duane Litfin writes:

"They would worm their way into homes and gain control over those they knew were vulnerable and gullible. In the case of Ephesus the false teachers had crept in via a group of weak-willed women who were, literally, 'heaped with sin and fed by various lusts.' Once more Paul connected false teaching with moral deficiency. Their carnality and immaturity rendered them easy targets for the false teachers"¹³

D. Verse 7 – "...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." – Appealing to Duane Litfin again, he states; "Out of a so-called 'openness to learn' they evidently embraced as a fad whatever new heresy came along. Their problem was that they could not recognize the truth when they saw it. (To acknowledge the truth is, lit., 'to come to a full knowledge of the truth'; cf. 2 Tim. 2:25.)"¹⁴ This statement is reminiscent of "...the Athenians and foreigners..." who did "...nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (Acts 17:21). Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

"Paul further described these women as dominated by various sins, responsive to their sinful impulses, and seemingly always learning, but never really able to comprehend the truth of God. They cannot learn the truth because what they are learning is falsehood. The false teachers captivated such women with their teaching. Women were probably more susceptible to the influence of false teachers than men because in Paul's culture women occupied a lower status in society. Furthermore they did not usually have as much education as their husbands."¹⁵

E. Verses 8-9 – "Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was." – Paul gives Timothy encouragement by stating that these false teachers are like the magicians of Pharaoh who opposed Moses (See Exodus 7:8-25; 8:1-19). Their names are never mentioned elsewhere in Scripture but in Jewish writings. Again, Liftin writes;

"The comparison between the false teachers and the Egyptians, and implicitly therefore Timothy and Moses, must have encouraged the young minister. The opponents were men of depraved (lit., "corrupt"; cf. 1 Tim. 6:5) minds who oppose the truth and were therefore rejected (*adokimoī*, "disapproved") by God in regard to any claim to be teaching the faith (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). Consequently, while their influence was temporarily a serious matter in the church, in the long run they would not get very far. Like Jannes and Jambres, eventually their folly would be clear to everyone (cf. 1 Tim. 4:15; 5:24–25)."¹⁶

⁸ Ron Rhodes, *End-Times Super Trends* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2017)

⁹ Louw and Nida, 194.

¹⁰ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm's Wilke's Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1889), 18.

¹¹ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

¹² Thayer, 612.

¹³ Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 756.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 2 Timothy* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2023), 44-45.

¹⁶ Litfin, "2 Timothy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 756.