

## Mid Week • 2 Timothy 3

### INTRODUCTION

Tonight's chapter is only 17 verses long, but buckle your seat belt because what we're going to take a look at tonight, though written 2000 years ago, sounds like it was lifted off today's newspaper! We have before us some incredibly potent words that absolutely *nail* the day in which we live.

As Paul often does in his letters, the first part of the chapter is information – and the second part is a call to action.

In vs. 1-9, he describes what the tail end of the last days will look like,

Then in vs. 10-17 he tells Timothy what he ought to do in light of that.

### CHAPTER 3

**1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:**

Let's stop right there.

Though it's subtle, Paul mentions not one but TWO periods here – one is contained inside the other.

He speaks of the last days, *and* of perilous times.

In Hebrews 1:1-2 we read this . . .

**1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;**

A careful review of all the passages in the NT which refer to the last days shows that the last days began with the Day of Pentecost and will proceed right up to the Second Coming.

This is now the Church Age, in which God has opened the doors of salvation to Jew and Gentile alike, regardless of their ethnic origin.

All come equally through faith in Jesus Christ.

It's not that God has forsaken the nation of Israel, it's just that she is not His main agent in the world.

The nation of Israel is no longer His elect as she was in the OT. But when the church age is finished, and the Church is raptured, God will once again turn His attention to the nation of Israel and she will regain her place as His agent on earth.

By the "last days," the NT writers mean the last phase of God's redemptive plan before the New Age of Christ's rule is inaugurated.

But here Paul says there will come a time "IN the last days" that will be *perilous*.

The language he uses conveys the idea that as the last days move toward their climax, things will get increasingly worse until finally, just before the end, they are marked by the 18 characteristics he lists here.

His use of the word "perilous" is interesting and provocative.

The word means dangerous, something hard to deal with, savage!

The word is used in Matthew 8 to describe the two demon-possessed men who met Jesus on the shore at Gadara.

These men lived in tombs and were so fierce, so savage, no one could pass through that area for fear of being beaten up.

Jesus cast the demons out of these two men –the demons went into a herd of pigs grazing on a nearby hill, and they rushed down the slope and in to the Sea of Galilee and drowned – it's history's first case of deviled ham.

What's provocative about Paul's use of the word here is that since the other time it's used in scripture it speaks of the demonically inspired violence of the Gadarene demoniacs, there's the suggestion the perilous nature of the last days may be energized by demons.

Paul says as much in 1 Tim. 4:1 when he writes,

**Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**

Now in vs. 2-5, Paul quickly lists a string of things that will mark the

last days . . .

## **2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money,**

Love will abound in the last days – problem it, it will be a love of all the wrong things.

Misplaced affection and zeal will be just one of many harbingers of the last days.

Added to the love of self and the love of money, at the end of v. 4 Paul says people will be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Love of self, money and pleasure – but no love of God.

Jesus made it clear – the most important command, the highest obligation placed on human beings is to love God and one's neighbor as one's self.

God first, Others Second, Me last!

The order ought to be –

Worship God

Love People

Use Things

But the peril of the end times will be that people will –

Ignore God

Worship Self

Love Things

Use People

We live in what sociologists call the Post-modern Age.

The Modern Age, which began in the mid 1800's and stretched to the 50's was marked by a mindset that threw off the idea of absolute truth.

The rise of modern science and naturalism, went far to undercut many people's belief in the importance of believing in God.

It was thought that science would explain *everything* and no longer would modern man need to explain things by attributing them to some unseen supernatural being.

Without God as the source and origin of the universe. There was no longer any fixed point from which truth could be determined.

There was no more voice from on high being the ultimate

authority.

Truth became determined by the last theory.

Truth became relative and adaptable to whatever situation you were in.

Truth became whatever worked!

Without a secure center from which to judge things, people began to break free from the moral rules and guidelines that had held society in check for hundreds of years.

It all came to a head in the social upheaval of the 60's when rebellion against the old traditions and ways of thinking based in a belief in God and absolute truth were challenged by hundreds of thousands of young people.

The drug and free-sex movements were born.

In fact, it's hard to think of a single fixture of life that wasn't somehow affected by the radical movements of the 60's.

People were encouraged to *tune in* by taking drugs and *drop out* of the narrow boundaries of the establishment into an alternate lifestyle governed by the rule – “live and let live.”

Many of the social demonstrations were called “love-ins”.

Yes, there was a whole lotta' love going round in the 60's – problem is, it was the wrong kind of love.

It was a love of self, a love of pleasure.

And when the hippies realized their weed and munchies were running out because mom and dad were no longer going to support their crazy rebellion, they went to work and started earning their own paychecks.

And they found they liked having money!

So they bought cars, and homes and cut their hair.

They traded in their tie-dyed t's for blue Oxford dress shirts, their Birkenstocks for wing-tips, their hot-pants for dress suits and went to work in Corporate America.

In fact, many of them started their own businesses and became wildly successful millionaires!

They simply added the love of money to the love of pleasure.

And now we're told we live in the *Post-modern* age where the rejection of absolute truth has been taken even farther.

In the Modern age, while people rejected the idea of only One

Truth, they still thought that finding a truth that worked for you was important.

Be true to yourself was a common axiom and rule.

But now young people have jettisoned the whole idea of truth – truth doesn't matter any more.

Reality is what you chose to make it – it is more *perception* than something objective.

This is why it seems anything goes today and why we are being told the chief virtue a person can possess is to be tolerant and accepting of everything.

Young people are actually feeling compelled to do and try things unthinkable when we were their age.

From drugs to sex, teenagers and college age young people live in an environment in which truth is never at issue – never discussed.

There is no God in heaven above – so all things on earth are not only permissible, but advisable, because to do them is to experience the fullness of what life has to offer – and living is the thing – the only thing, that matters.

For those who *do* believe in God – His existence has nothing to do with how they live.

You see, because truth makes no claim on them, they can live lives that are completely contradictory.

There is no contradiction because there is no standard, no truth that stands to the side to judge them.

Paul even speaks of this in v. 5 when he says they “have a form of godliness but denying its power.”

In the perilous times of the last days, people will be *religious*, they will believe in God, but that belief will lack any kind of power to restrain their evil and sensual lives.

I ask you, does what Paul says here describe our time in a way previous generations could NOT claim?

Indeed – yes!

According to recent polls taken in the US, nearly 90% of people say they believe in the God of the Bible.

Do 90% *live* as though they believe that?

**For men will be lovers of themselves,**

I take it as a sign that we live in perilous times when in our public schools, new educational and sports programs are weighed on the basis of whether or not they will enhance children's self-esteem.

I take it as a sign we live in the last days when classes are given to teach children to love themselves and when the shelves of the self-help section of the bookstore contain dozens of titles all saying – “how to love yourself beautiful self more!”

### **lovers of money**

I take it as a sign we live in perilous times when people will elect a men they know are immoral lying lechers to the highest offices of the land simply because they promise to make them richer.

When growing prosperity doesn't also lead to a rise in charitable giving – but instead, the rate slips from year to year and decade to decade it's a sign the love of money has grown.

### **boasters, proud, blasphemers,**

These words chart a progression of pride.

*Boaster* refers to someone who brags but his bragging is empty.

*Proud* refers to those who seek to elevate themselves over others.

*Blasphemers* are those who speak evilly of God.

Do you see the progression?

“Hey – Look at me – ain't I cool?!”

“In fact, I'm way cooler than you.”

“I'm as cool as God.”

Today's preoccupation with image, with outdoing everyone else and now the growing popularity of the idea that we are gods is evidence we've reached the height of pride as a society.

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But it's the next couple of characteristics which make us sit up and say, “Oh my!”

### **disobedient to parents,**

Paul now begins a list of 8 things that are all *negations* of good things.

These words all begin with the prefix “a” which mean “not” then they are followed by a virtue or a positive word.

In other words, the peril of the last of the last days will be that they are *without virtue!*

The normal moral glue that makes it possible for a civilization to exist will dry up and break down.

A society is made up of people who share common values and who all agree to live by the same set of rules.

If there is no agreement – then society turns into chaos as each does what is right in his or her own eyes.

And where do we learn the rules that govern social intercourse – where do we learn, as human beings, to be *civil*?

IN OUR HOMES - IN OUR FAMILIES!

And first, from our parents as they inculcate in us the values that govern life.

One of the first has to be obedience and respect for them as the law-givers in our home and life.

One of the dangerous realities of the last days is that they will be marked by disobedience to parents.

The first lessons human need to learn if they are to be civil will not be taught or caught.

The Greek word “disobedient” literally means “without assent.”

It takes the prefix “not” and puts it before the word for compliance.

For the Greeks the word meant to stubbornly refuse to submit to the rightful authorities.

Oh – how I would love to launch in to a long investigation of this, and in fact, we will when we commence our parenting series in the not too distant future.

But for now, let me just say this . . .

God gives children to parents and calls them to be good stewards with their lives.

It is the duty of a mother and father to represent God to the young child and to teach that child how to show reverence, respect, and obedience to the God-ordained authorities in his or her life.

Parents ought to make it their aim to produce a God-loving and obedient adult who is prepared to follow God’s plan and direction for their life.

Parents teach such obedience by being examples of it and then demanding it from their children toward themselves.

But when people cast off the relevance of God to their lives, then they have no model for raising their children.

Parents don’t see themselves as stewards today – they want to be friends with their children.

But young children don't need friends, they need parents – godly mothers and father who show good examples of what it means to obey and honor God, and who expect their children to honor and obey them.

And when they don't they are disciplined, just as God the Father disciplines His children.

One of the most dangerous men of modern history was Dr. Spock. Spock wrote a book that vied with the Bible as the manual for parenting.

Coming from a supposed scientific perspective, he put children under the microscope and turned them into nothing more than soulless machines.

Parenting became a task of simply applying the right ingredients. But it all looked so convincing because it was backed by the scientific research of the day.

And now we know that many of Spock's ideas and conclusions, much of his research data was misinterpreted.

It's time to get back to the Bible – the Owner's manual – the Manufacturer's handbook for life and living.

Look – today, rebellion and disrespect of adults is epidemic!

In 1940, school teachers were asked to describe the top disciplinary problems they faced in the classroom. They listed:

- talking
- chewing gum
- making noise
- running in the halls
- wearing improper clothing
- not putting wastepaper in the wastebasket

In the 1980's, educators were asked the same question by college researchers. The top disciplinary problems faced by teachers today are:

- rape
- robbery
- assault
- burglary
- arson
- bombings



- murder

On most high school campuses in Southern CA there are full-time security guards roving around campus to make sure students and faculty are not set on by teenage thugs.

From the dawn of creation, children have been disobedient to parents, and parents have sought to correct it- realizing such rebellion is a cancer that can spread with age and bring great harm, not only to the individual rebel but to the wider society.

But what Paul means here is that in the end times, disobedience is *accepted*, it becomes seen as normal.

Isn't it sad that in our day teenage rebellion is something that's become *expected*?

When we see a teenager who has a *good* relationship with his or her parents and is willingly and cheerfully compliant, honoring father and mother, we're surprised and remark how unusual that is.

### **unthankful, unholy,**

Again, we have two words which are negations of virtue.

Unthankful is just that – to be *without* gratitude.

Unholy means to be *impious*.

When people reject God and conclude they live in a closed system governed only by natural laws, then there is not need to be thankful because everything is ultimately governed by chance.

Why should the child at the dinner table be thankful for the plate of food before her face?

She is only a random collection of chemicals, animated by a minimal amount of bioelectrical energy.

And the food before her was prepared by another such collection of chemicals called mom who only prepared them because nerve cells fired off in her brain that she needed to make dinner.

It's all a matter of chemistry and everything is hardwired into our physical bodies.

There is no room for thankfulness – only an expression that the combination of *these* particular chemicals called *meatloaf* is yucky.

And what need is there to be pious, to live by some strict moral code,

when there is no one to answer to but my own chemical stirrings?

The next collection of characteristics Paul gives are frightening as I think you'll agree.

### **3 unloving,**

The word means to be without natural affection.

When speaking of the different kinds of love, we often say that in the bible there are 3 different words for love:

- Eros – sexual love
- Philos – the bond of friendship
- Agape – God's kind of love that seeks for the highest good of the one loved without concern for reward.

Actually, there is another word the Greeks used for love but is only used in a negative fashion, as it is here.

It's the word for family love – "*storge*."

This word *unloving* is literally "*without family love*" and the Greeks used it to picture a bizarre, twisted affection that was just plain strange!

Our world abounds with people with unnatural affections.

Perversion is epidemic.

Fetishes are coming out of hiding and forming open clubs and associations.

In fact, "coming out" is now seen as a praiseworthy thing.

Homosexuality – understood for millennia to be a reality but nothing to be embraced as a viable or legitimate lifestyle, is now being elevated to the status of normalcy, in fact, in some places, it's *preferred*.

### **unforgiving,**

The word is much deeper than the English translation implies.

Literally it means *without libation* and referred to a truce-breaker.

Today when we make a legal agreement with someone, we sign our names on a contract.

In the ancient world, people would usually go to a temple and to the altar of a god, and repeat the words of their oath.

Then they would pour a glass of wine, each take a sip, and pour the rest out at the side of the altar.

This was the way they entered into treaties and alliances.

To be unforgiving meant that you refused to enter into such a treaty. You were *implacable* –and REFUSED TO make peace with another you were at odds with.

You might feign reconciliation and pretend to enter into a treaty with them, but only as a mask, a screen behind which to plot your course of opposition to the other party.

All of this is what's meant by the word unforgiving.

What's provocative about this word as it applies to the last days is that as we read on in v. 5, the people are who all these things we read about in vs. 1-9 are people who *appear* religious.

They have a form of godliness, and appearance of religion, but it's only an appearance; there's no substance.

So what Paul is saying is that there will be a lot of people in the last days who will claim to believe in God, but they are at odds with one another and REFUSE to reconcile.

Instead, as truce-breakers, they will actually work to stir up strife.

This flies in the face of what Jesus made so clear when He said that if we are unforgiving of others, it's a sure sign that we remain unforgiven by God.

This was such an important spiritual lesson, Jesus taught it again and again.

To be unforgiving of the offenses committed against us, is to seal ourselves off of God's forgiveness.

After teaching the disciples to pray, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" Jesus went on to elaborate in Matthew 6:14 – 15

**“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”**

Peter thought he was getting Jesus repeated lessons on forgiveness when he asked, “How many times shall I forgive my brother in a day if he offends me – 7 times.”

No doubt Peter thought he was being super generous and wanted to impress Jesus and the other disciples with how astute he was being with this forgiveness theme which occupied so much of

Jesus' teaching.

Jesus' reply let Peter know just off track he was.

“Not 7 times Peter – but 7 times 70!”

In other words, forgiveness is not an event so much as it is a lifestyle.

We do not go through life looking for offenses and then treasuring up hurts and plot revenge or how we are going to get back.

The law of love demands that we think no evil and keep no record of wrongs.

But the last days will be marked by people, who appear religious, yet they have no grasp on the reality of forgiveness or even of being in sincere reconciled relationships with others.

And so, because of that, they become . . .

### **slanderers,**

The word is a shocking one – *diabolos* – the root from which we get our word *diabolical*.

To the Greeks it meant to *destroy by accusing*.

And in other places in scripture where it is in the noun form, it is translated as *Satan*, the accuser of the brethren who night and day tries to bring the people of God into God's disfavor by pointing out their faults, real or imagined.

We see Satan in this role in the opening chapters of the book of Job – we find him doing the same in the book of Revelation.

And we find that humanity will be bent and twisted into the devil's image just before the end.

My friend, be very careful of playing the role of accuser.

When you accuse, slander, defame or seek to harm the reputation of a brother or sister you are doing two very dangerous things .

..

1) you are playing the role of the devil

2) you are poking a finger in God's eye, for God said that He guards His own as a man protects his own pupil

### **without self-control,**

Translates another “a” word – this one meaning to be without power.

We would translate it as incontinent – they possess no power to reign in their own passions and desires.

There is no discipline – whatever their emotions dictate is what

they do.

Is there evidence that this is a larger problem today than it has been?

### **brutal,**

Here's an interesting word – literally it's "not-lame".

It was used by the Greeks to refer to people who were brutish and savage.

*Thugish* is a good word in modern parlance and pictures perfectly the roving gangs of hoodlums and thugs that rove the streets looking for people to terrorize and bully.

When people who lack self-control and cannot reign in their passions don't get their way- they become brutish.

### **despisers of good,**

Another excellent word; more than a compound word, it's a *tripound*.

Virtue is the Greek word *agathos*.

Love of virtue is *philagathos*.

This word is *aphilagathos* – without the love of virtue.

Not only will the danger of the last days be that virtue is not valued, but that which is dishonorable will be!

People will delight in debasing what is honorable and good.

Virtue will be made into weakness and will be despised.

Marriage will be cast as *useless* and a needless institution that is only a hindrance to achieving one's potential sexually or in their career.

Fidelity to one's spouse will be considered old-fashioned and unchic.

The honorable role of a wife and mother will be degraded and made to appear limiting and backward.

The role of husband and father as servant-leader of his family will be made to look oppressive and patriarchal.

Sexual purity before marriage will be scorned.

Modesty will be called prudishness.

Abstinence will be called fear.

Good will be called evil, and evil good – in fulfillment of the word of the Prophet. [Isa. 5:20]

### **4 traitors,**

Prodotes – one who betrays a confidence.

### **headstrong,**

Propetes – to be rash.

This is the one who knows what he knows and believes what he believes, don't confuse me with facts.

**haughty,**

The word means to surround with smoke and pictures a person who stuck their head up into the air near the ceiling where the smoke has gathered.

The Greeks used it of people who were stupidly arrogant and could not be corrected because they knew everything.

**lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

In other words, rather than being spiritual, they are sensual.

They live for the delight of their senses rather than for the delight of God.

**5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!**

Now, Paul says that these are all characteristics of people who live during the dangerous time that marks the tail end of the last days. But here he tells Timothy to stay away from people who exhibit these qualities in *that* day.

What Paul told Tim, the Holy Spirit tells us.

But Paul isn't done describing these perilous people . . .

**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,**

**7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Paul is speaking here of people who take the *lead* in being corrupt.

They are the false teachers and apostates who lead the way in sin and lack of virtue.

They find a ready audience for their deceptive teaching among gullible women.

Now – please don't think that Paul is characterizing *all* women this way – he's not painting with a broad brush here.

But he is referring to a small group of women who are amply

described by what he says here.

Bear in mind that in the ancient world, women generally were kept in a low social place.

They were not educated and typically their world centered round the things of their own home and their women friends.

They shared a body of superstition and old-wives tales that many of them believed.

Notice what Paul says about this group of women

- They were gullible
- They felt a terrible weight of guilt for their sins
- They had little success in reining in their desires
- And because they didn't have a formal education, they were constantly on the lookout for someone to teach them about the wider world and things beyond the confines of their home and village.

Such women were ready prey for the slick false teachers who came along and made merchandise of them by making all kinds of promises to them.

These women were so hungry to learn and be empowered to overcome their sin and be free of guilt they would try anything.

But every new thing that came down the pike failed to satisfy – and that is why they were never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Sad to say, there is a whole crop of the gullible, both men and women, who are being led from one silly and harmful deception to another via the TV airwaves.

False teachers are still slipping in to households and taking people captive to their seductions.

**8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith;**

**9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.**

Jannes & Jambres were the two court magicians who stood behind Pharaoh when Moses came to demand the release of the Israelites. When Moses performed miracles in the sight of Pharaoh, to a

point, the magicians were able to reproduce the miracle – at least it appeared that way.

What they were doing may have been mere illusion.

The point is that Pharaoh was deceived and as a result refused to acknowledge God's demand on him.

In the same way, the false teachers who will abound during the last days will be able to deceive people up to a point, and the people will willingly go along with it.

But eventually, they will be unmasked.

**10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,**

**11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.**

**12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

**13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

While false teachers seem to enjoy a comfortable ride, the servants of the Lord face trial and adversity.

Paul reminds Timothy of all the hardships he had endured for the sake of Christ.

There were beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, hunger, thirst, and exposure.

Paul had felt the rod on his back as well as the metal-studded, leather lash of the cat of nine tails.

Indeed – Jesus warned the disciples – if the world hated Him, it will hate them too because they belong to Him.

This world is set in opposition to God.

The false teachers use religion to their own end, and since the world is wired in the same direction, the world has no problem with the religious, just so long as that religion is a religion of self.

To get along, you gotta go along.

But if you belong to God, you don't go along – you go the other



direction and the wind will be blowing in your face.  
All who desire to live godly lives will face opposition and persecution.

Friend if there is no opposition from the world in your life, then I'd venture to say you're heading in the wrong direction.

**14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,**

**15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

Paul encourages Timothy yet again to not grow faint but to press on in the face of opposition and persecution there in Ephesus.

From his earliest days he had been given a rich heritage of faith and training in the Word of God from his mother and grandmother.

Then, when a teenager, Paul had taken him with him on his journeys to plant churches in the Gentile world.

A huge investment had been made in Tim by his parents and Paul. It was now time for that investment to pay off.

We end the chapter with these stirring words . . .

**16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

**17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

This is one of the most important passages in all scripture describing the inspiration of the Bible and why Christians look to the Scripture as the sole authority for what to believe and how to live. If you weren't here two Sunday's ago when this was our text, I encourage you to get a copy of the tape.

## **CONCLUSION**

Paul began this chapter telling Timothy what the end of the last days will look like in terms of the morality of people.

Timothy's preparation for such a day was to give himself to the

study and application of the Word of God.  
History tells us what Paul wrote, obviously has been delayed nearly  
2000 years.

But as we look at the world scene today, we realize that what he  
writes about here is seen clearly today.

If Timothy was to prepare for such days by giving himself to the  
Word of God and trusting it completely – how much more  
ought we who live in such perilous times?