

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 25TH, 2019 // 2 TIMOTHY

IN THE LAST DAYS (2 TIM. 3:1-5)

Timothy is told to understand that "in the last days, there will be times of difficulty" (vs. 1).

- **The phrase "the last days" is not in our future, it's what we're living in right now.**
- During the period between Christ's ascension and His return, the world will get progressively more evil and people will become more corrupt.
- It will be increasingly difficult to live for Christ and continue serving Him faithfully.

Where will evil in the last days manifest itself? In people (vs. 2).

- Sinful people who live corrupt lives create difficult times, and some of these people will pose as teachers and lead others astray.
- Paul spends the next few verses describing this- the practices he mentions are characteristic of sinful humanity, but particularly of false teachers he warns Timothy to stay away from.

In the days that we're living in, people will be "lovers of self" (vs. 2).

- True love is "of God" and from God, but love can be misdirected and distorted.
- Notice that Paul describes people in the last days as being: "lovers of self", "lovers of money", "not loving good", "loving pleasure", "not loving God".
- Misdirected love will characterize our society as we get closer to the return of Christ.

Everything in our culture is built on catering to three great loves: narcissism (love of self), materialism (love of money), and hedonism (love of pleasure).

- Essentially all advertising and marketing in our culture appeals to 1 of these 3 loves.
- Self-centeredness leads us away from loving God (vs. 4) and it always leads to corrupt and broken relationships.

Selfish people are typically arrogant and proud (vs. 2). They believe they are the center of the universe.

- Pride can then lead to abusive speech and behavior (vs. 2), because if you view yourself as superior and others as "less than", it becomes easy to disrespect or insult them.
- People will be "heartless" & "slandorous"- other relational sins with selfishness at its root.

They'll be "disobedient to parents"- starting in the home, there will be an increased rebellion against all forms authority.

- "Ungrateful" and "unappeasable"- there will be discontentment and entitlement.
- There will be no "self-control"- there will be a widespread lack of self-discipline and moderation that leads to addiction and excess.

Surprisingly, we're told that at the same time, people will be very religious (vs. 5).

- They'll have a "form of godliness", but "deny its power".
- There will be many who profess God, who claim spiritual or religious knowledge, but they won't actually have His power in their lives. People's religion will be self-serving and a show.
- Timothy is told to "avoid such people" (vs. 6)

OPPOSING THE TRUTH (2 TIM. 3:6-9)

There were people in Ephesus that perfectly embodied these "last days" characteristics and were active in propagating their own views. One of the ways they were doing this was by preying on the vulnerable.

- They would "creep into households" (vs. 6) maybe by holding home Bible studies or discussion groups, or maybe by going house to house with their false teaching.

They were particularly successful in targeting "weak women..." (vs. 6).

- Paul isn't saying that women in general are inherently weak-willed or prone to deception, instead he's recognizing and pointing out a pattern he observed in Ephesus.
- Most likely, these false teachers were seducing women and encouraging them to sin.

Despite the hours that these false teachers spent with their pupils "always learning" (vs. 7) and picking apart scripture to justify immorality and sin- they were "never able to arrive."

- If all we do with scripture is try to twist it, distort it, or reinterpret it to justify an ungodly lifestyle or a strange doctrine, we will also never be able to truly know truth.

Paul compares the false teachers to "Jannes & Jambres, ...who opposed Moses" (vs. 8).

- These two men are not mentioned by name in the Bible, but in Jewish literature they were known as the sorcerers who opposed Moses before Pharaoh (Ex. 7:11-12).
- Jannes and Jambres opposed God with counterfeit power, but God's power won

But like Jannes & Jambres, these false teachers won't get very far (vs. 9).

- False teaching may flourish in the last days and seem to be what most people believe, but its success will be limited and its time is temporary.
- One day, the folly of ideas that are contrary to God's Word will be "plain to all".
- Philosophies and theologies come and go- but God's truth and His Word are eternal.

EXPECT PERSECUTION (2 TIM. 3:10-13)

Our lives reveal the reality of our inner character.

- The decisions we make, how we behave under pressures, and **who we are when no-one is watching- these things reveal the beliefs we hold and the priorities we maintain.**

- Paul concluded his last paragraph by assuring Timothy that false teachers and their ideas would eventually come to ruin- he offers his own life as a testimony and example.

Paul challenges Timothy to evaluate him and his life- Timothy knows and has followed his "teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love, and steadfastness" (vs. 10).

- Paul is making a point to Timothy that a life committed to Gospel truth will bear fruit.
- Paul's purpose was to live for something greater than pleasure, money, or personal fame- it was the glory of God and the love of people.

Paul also points to the persecution and suffering he endured through his ministry.

- Timothy had traveled with Paul and witnessed this opposition to the work of the gospel.
- But he'd also seen how the Lord had rescued Paul on many occasions (vs. 11).
- Paul is giving Timothy (and all of us) an example to follow.

Persecutions are not reserved for "super saints" and apostles.

- In fact, "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (vs. 12).
- It shouldn't come as a surprise to us when a football player gets tackled or a boxer gets punched- that's the nature of the sport.
- It is the nature of Christianity for Christians to be mocked, ridiculed, or harmed for the sake of the gospel (John 15:20).

In places like North Korea, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, & Yemen Christianity is illegal and practicing it could get you imprisoned or killed.

- In 2018 more than 4,000 Christians worldwide were killed for their faith, and many more were beaten, imprisoned, or harassed.
- In our context, persecution might not look like it does in other parts of the world, but if you desire "to live a godly life", it will happen to you.

If you get serious about your faith and stop caring what people think, not everyone is going to be a fan of you and what you believe. The most common "persecution" we have to endure in our context is being mocked, ridiculed, rejected, or misunderstood.

- Sadly, there are many Americans who can't even handle that and will fall away on account of not being accepted.

"ALL SCRIPTURE IS BREATHED OUT BY GOD..." (2 TIM. 3:14-17)

Every one is susceptible to deception unless we obey & become grounded in Scripture.

- Following Jesus is more than a one-time decision or an occasional church service.
- **True Christianity involves continual dependence and obedience to Christ the king- and we only know what obedience looks like through Scripture.**

From his youth Timothy had been acquainted with "the sacred writings" (scripture), and he's told to continue in them because they're able to make him wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (vs. 14-15).

- Learning scripture is a lifelong journey- and the deeper we go the more there is to learn and to understand. Sadly, many of us give up before we get started.

Scripture is not just a good book of suggestions for how to live our best life, it is actually "breathed out by God" (vs. 16).

- The Holy Spirit of God worked through biblical writers to pen God's Word.
- Just as God spoke the universe into existence, so the Scriptures are His Words

Paul affirms the total inspiration of Scripture saying that "all Scripture" is breathed out by God.

- This means we can't simply pick and choose which parts of the Bible we like, which commands we want to obey, and what things we want to believe.
- The apostles viewed the Scriptures as authoritative, and Jesus did as well, frequently quoting them as divine and authoritative.

It's not enough to just believe in the authority of Scripture- we have to use it.

- The Scriptures are profitable for "teaching"- showing truth and how to live our lives.
- The Scriptures are profitable for "reproof" & "correction"- they confront us when we're living ungodly lives or have false beliefs. God's Word is alive (Heb. 4:12)!

But the Scriptures are also to "train us in righteousness", so we can be "complete & equipped for every good work" (vs. 17).

- If we take the Scriptures seriously, we can't just be hearers of the Word, we have to be "doers also" (James 1:22).
- Studying, reading, and discussing Scripture are great, but they're meant to equip us to actually do something!