

## 2 Timothy 3:1-9

### "Living In The Last Days"

There are those who believe that through converting the world, the church will usher in Christ's Millennial Kingdom... That as you & I are busy about our heavenly Father's business of going into all the world & making disciples of all nations; that the day will come whereby the world comes to know J.C. & thereby we will open the door for Jesus to come back & reign upon the earth for 1,000 yrs.

I say to you that those are they who are sincerely, scripturally confused. As we've noted before, by the very fact that Paul exhorts us to "rightly divide" the word of truth, that implies that there is a way to "wrongly divide" the word of truth.

While it's true that we're to be doing the work of evangelists, that we're to be salt & light, that we're to be making disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe everything that Jesus commanded us; it's also true that Jesus *did not* (& *would not*) leave the responsibility of His return upon us! **The bible teaches that God has appointed a day & an hour upon which Christ will return & there's nothing we can do to delay it & there's nothing we can do to accelerate it. Jesus will come for His bride at precisely the time preordained of His Father.**

It's also true that being ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us we're to implore mankind on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God; yet for all that the bible is very clear that as time goes by & the return of Jesus grows closer & closer, things will not get better & better. But rather things will go from bad, to worse, to much-much worse.

One day Jesus' disciples just straight up asked Him what things would be like before He returned to the earth & He began to say things like, "...there will be deceivers that come in My name saying 'I am the Christ' & will deceive many." He said, "There will be wars, rumors of wars, nation will rise against nation, kingdom against kingdom, there will be famines, pestilences, earthquakes in various places." Then He said that those things were only the *beginning* of sorrows. He went on to say, "**And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.**"<sup>1</sup> In Luke's gospel He said, "**...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?**"<sup>2</sup> So let's not deceive ourselves and think that times will only get better as time goes by. The global climate will get worse, be harder & more difficult as the time of Jesus' return draws close.

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 24:10-12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Lk 18:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& Here's the encouraging part. God put *you* here! You say, "How does that encourage me?" He could've ordained that Paul lived in our day, or Peter lived in our day, but He didn't, He's ordained that *you* should live in this day; that *you* would be called to a time such as this.

Think of it like this, in a relay race you would typically place your strongest runners at the beginning & at the end. *Oh, you'll have strong steppers throughout the course, but at the sound of the gun & on the final lap you want people who are going to press toward the goal in "never back down, never give up, never give in" kind of fashion. God has placed you in the race on the final lap. Now you run hard, press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God, which is in Christ Jesus.*

### Vs 1

Notice, it's not the "Things will eventually get better" philosophy, he doesn't paint a false picture prophetically, but like our Lord he says that *perilous* times will earmark (be the tell tale sign) of the "last days". He says, "But know this". That is, "Timothy, I need you to understand something & that is this, in the last days, *perilous* times will come."

*Now we could spend some time developing the principle of "the last days" but suffice it to say for now that Paul is in reference to the time just preceding the return of J.C. for His church. Yes, these were characteristics that were appearing in Paul's day, they've appeared since the fall of man, it's a detailed description of the depravity of man.* Having said that we realize that these characteristics are appearing w/greater intensity & they're being accepted & promoted by society today unlike ever before. It's not small pockets of rebellion here & there, it's a fermenting & rebelling of society/humanity at large.

*Paul says that in the last days, "perilous" times will come. The idea behind the word "perilous" is that of "stressful, difficult to deal with, dangerous & savage". It's the same Greek word used to describe the two violent demoniacs in Matt Ch 8. There we read that when Jesus came to the Gadarenes that 2 demon possessed men came out of the tombs to meet Him & it says that they were "exceedingly fierce" so that no one could pass that way.* It was dangerous, it was demonic, it was unsafe to be around them. The word translated "fierce" in that passage, is our word "perilous" in this passage. The last days will be dangerous, demonic, & unsafe. There will be a radical deterioration of human civilization, a moral declension & ethical corruption. (What do you think, sound like today? & We haven't even made it to Vs 2).

But understand that Paul doesn't say these things so that we might be depressed or made afraid. He's seeking to equip us for the ministry in the midst of a degenerative society, how we might stand firm in the downward spiral of humanity.

It's important that we know this stuff... There are some people who view the study of the "last days" or Biblical prophecy is a frivolous (sorta pointless) endeavor. "Hey what do I care? As long as I know Jesus that's good enough for me." But if God didn't think it was important for you to know, He wouldn't have placed it in His word! Jesus *rebuked* the religious leaders of His day because they would not discern the times in which they lived (the time of Christ's 1<sup>st</sup> coming). He said, *"When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times."*<sup>3</sup> Jesus would have us to be *wise* concerning the times to which we've been called.

#### Vs 2-5

Notice that Paul doesn't emphasize bad *times*, but bad *people*. He doesn't speak of famine or disease or calamities that befall the body, but of the depravity man.

Here's the root of it all, "For men will be lovers of themselves," self becomes the center of gravity for the natural man rather than God. The love of self is the basic sin (if you will) from which all others flow. One commentator (Barclay) said this, "The moment a man makes his own will the center of life, divine and human relationships are destroyed, obedience to God and charity to men both become impossible. The essence of Christianity is not the *enthronement* but the *obliteration* of self."

But the chief characteristic of man in the last days is "love of self", narcissism, "self centered". "You've got to learn to love yourself." Countless millions of dollars are spent on beautifying self, go ahead, splurge a little, you deserve it, you're worth it, love yourself.

Listen, we don't need to be encouraged to love ourselves; often times the primary problem is that we already think too highly of ourselves. Now I'm not saying that we should hate ourselves either. The bible simply says that we should think soberly of ourselves (Rom 12). Both the bad of what we are in the flesh, & the glory of what we are in Christ.

As for whom we need to learn to love it's not self, it's God. What does the bible say?

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 16:2-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"*<sup>4</sup> But the moment I place myself as the chief object of my love, then I'm no longer loving God & I'm *certainly* not loving my neighbor.

Warren Wiersbe said this, "In this universe there is God, and there are people and things. We should worship God, love people, and use things. But if we start worshiping ourselves, we will ignore God and start loving things and using people. This is the formula for a miserable life; yet it characterizes many people today. The worldwide craving for things is just one evidence that people's hearts have turned away from God."

*"Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money..."* I'm not sure this even needs developing, the insatiable appetite for more money. & It's not that money is bad, it can be used for incredible good, but the *love of it* will destroy your life.

"Boasters, proud, blasphemers," the idea behind "boasters" is that of "swagger", a presentation of arrogance. Pride & blasphemy, these things are everywhere but perhaps held up for all to see most prominently in the world of celebrities idolized by our culture. *Many people gain their riches today through calculated boasting/pride/blasphemy, singing, rhyming about how great they are, they're boasters, filled w/pride... Each of these things, "Boasting, pride, blasphemy" say, "You don't matter, & God doesn't matter, I'm all that matters."*

"Disobedient to parents", again it's this age that has seen the degeneration of respect for authority in the home from the children toward the parents. Since about the mid 1960s there has been a radical departure & breakdown in what would seem to be the natural role of authority from the parent toward the child. *A disregard that children have for their parents. "Honor your mother & your father" is like a fantasy depicted on "Leave it to Beaver" as opposed to real life... So we're seeing this "last days" apostasy reach into & breakdown the moral fiber of the family.*

People will be "unthankful, unholy" a sense of entitlement abounds... When Paul says that people will be unthankful, it seems to me that, that would apply not only toward man, but toward God. People feel entitled, take things for granted, unappreciative, unthankful. We are to give God thanks, yet so often we fail.

The word "unloving" in Vs 3 means "w/out natural affection."

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 22:37-39). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It goes back into that lack of love in the family. The epidemic of child abuse is unconscionable to me, where there should be a natural compulsion to protect, and provide & safeguard innocence, that someone would exploit the weakness and dependence of a child, I can't comprehend it. (Another earmark of the last days in which we live).

"Unforgiving" means "irreconcilable", it's a word stamped on divorce certificates all over this country.

Men will be "slanderers", liars "devils" is the word. Lying about you to somehow benefit me. It's modern day media/politics, it's big business, big money.

"W/out self control", you could tag this phrase over almost everything today. Sex, drugs, alcohol, food, work, whatever, it's got to be better, more outlandish, crazier than before.

"Brutal", crimes of brutality are common place news today. We like to think of our culture as more advanced than previous generations, yet undoubtedly more people have been murdered in our century than ever before. We live in violent/brutal times.

"Despisers of good, traitors", this is the word used to describe Judas Iscariot, a *betrayed*. One who seems to be on your side but betrays you when it benefits their agenda.

"Headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." Every one of these things are rooted in "self". Men are traitors because of self, they're headstrong & haughty because of self, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God because of self...

Now, I want to point out that pleasure is not bad. God has no problem w/you experiencing pleasure, He's the One Who's created the capacity for pleasure in you. The problem comes in when I elevate my drive for pleasure at the expense of loving God. Believe me when I tell you that God & pleasure are not at odds w/one another. The psalmist said, *"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*<sup>5</sup> The problem is that people are loving the pleasures of sin & abandoning their love for God, again it's all rooted in the love of self. Vs 5 is the clincher, notice.

## Vs 5

You might think that Paul was in reference to the world around us, yet he's describing a people that would consider themselves "religious", yet they are *rebellious*! They have a "form" of godliness, the outward shape, they go through religious motions, but they know nothing of the power of God... It's religion w/out reality, form w/out force.

<sup>5</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 16:11]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You see, if the power of God were at work in their lives, than these things wouldn't be their character traits. They may seem "spiritual" but there's no sense of obligation to be Biblical. Of course it this is the ebb & flow of the religious how much more the blatant unbeliever?

So Paul says that when you find yourself around someone who claims to be religious but they're unbridled by God's Word, the power of God isn't present in their lives keeping them in check, working as authority over them... have nothing to do w/them. Listen, apart from the presence & power of God, all you've got is at best, empty formality. You don't need that, you need to be as far away from that as possible, you need, I need, we need the Person & power of J.C. ruling in our lives.

### Vs 6-7

Notice again the invasion of the home. They "creep in" to households in order to enslave you. Paul mentions women because quite frankly women were at home & men would be out working. It's not that only women are gullible, yet many times people will try to navigate their way into people's lives through the woman more so than the man.

But notice the plea is to the "gullible", the one who will pay attention to anything if it's packaged right. They're loaded down w/sins, false religious leaders are looking to take advantage of people w/problems, offering quick simple solutions that ultimately take advantage of them, gain their loyalty, their money & whatever else may serve their agenda. "Led away by various lusts" again it could be sexual lusts, lusts for money, power, influence, whatever.

"Always learning," trying this approach & that approach, never satisfied, easy game for the cultist or religious racketeer, why? Because rather than seeking the Lord, they're consumed w/self, so if I will just appeal to things that are all about *you*, what works for *you*, what's truth to *you*, than I can woo you to be loyal to me...

### Vs 8-9

Now in order to see the battle between Moses & the magicians of Pharaohs court you'll need to look it up later (Ex 7-8). Though we're not told there Paul tells us here that their names were Jannes & Jambres.

Moses would perform a miracle & these magicians would perform the same miracle through cultic, satanic powers. They were resisting God's work by producing something counterfeit.

But the time came when they simply couldn't produce the miraculous on the same level as could Moses. The truth of God prevailed & they were reluctantly forced to confess that. Their folly was made manifest.

But Paul is saying that even as they resisted the *power* of God, in the last days many will resist the *truth* of God. But eventually/ultimately everyone will see that what *you* stand for is of God.

So don't be discouraged, you've been called to a time such as this, to live your life for J.C. in these last days. Hey, it's heat and pressure that remove the wrinkles from your shirt. It's heat and pressure that turn a lump of coal into a diamond, you might be under the heat & pressure financially, spiritually, relationally; that means God is smoothing out the wrinkles in your life, bringing you to a place whereby you'll shine bright in this dark world. The darker the times, the brighter your light will shine. So let your light so shine (in these last days) that men might see your good works, your love for God, & your love for them, that they might glorify your Father who is in heaven. Amen? Amen.

#### Prayer Points:

God as we read Your word we're readily reminded that we are undoubtedly in the last days. We thank You that You have ordained that we should be called to a time such as this, that You would hand us the "Baton" of the gospel that we might run this race to win w/all of our hearts. Help us God to keep focused upon the prize of Your upward call in Christ Jesus. Strengthen us, pour out Your Spirit & be glorified in us.

God desires that you would be a light in this dark world. Jesus is the light of the world & He wants to live in you. He shed His blood & laid down His life upon the cross that you might be forgiven of all your sin & made new in Him. He wants to fill you w/His love, His forgiveness & give you everlasting life. Turn from your sin & trust in Him...