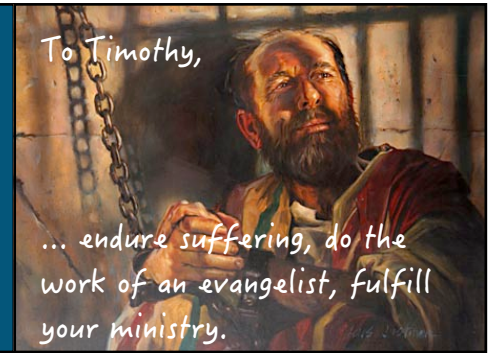


2 Timothy

Fulfill Your Ministry

Lesson 8



In lesson 8 Paul gave instructions about how to live in a way that is useful to the Lord's service. Usefulness comes through holy living, purity of heart, pursuing godly characteristics, and being a peacemaker. In chapter 3, Paul shifts emphasis from what Timothy may be facing in the church to the general character of life in the Last Days.

There Will Be Terrible Times in the Last Days 3:1-9

Paul's description of life in the last days is a terrible list of moral and spiritual decay. The first question we must answer is: "When are the last days?"

Including 2 Timothy 3:1, the phrase "last days" is used five times in the New Testament. When we look at the way the phrase is used we see that it is not some mysterious unknown future period of time. The phrase simply means the last period of time. The last days began when Jesus the Messiah came to this earth, lived, died, and rose again. He ascended back to heaven and we are in the last days now waiting for his return.

1. Acts 2:16-17 records what happened on the Day of Pentecost was what was prophesied to happen in the last days. So even though that was nearly 2,000 years ago it was still in the "last days."
2. Hebrews 1:1,2 tells us that in the past God spoke to our forefathers through prophets, but in these "last days" he has spoken to us through His son.
3. James 5:3 speaks of the error of laying up treasure in the "last days."
4. Peter says in 2 Peter 3:3 that scoffers will come in the "last days."

None of the verses above describing the last days are difficult to understand. It is true that some periods in history have been worse than others and it is possible that life will get even worse, perhaps much worse, prior to the Lord's return.



We cannot predict when the Lord will return, but it is possible that we are today living in the last hours of the last days. What we do know is that every evil behaviour spoken about by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-9 is prevalent in today's world and has been common since the first century. We must always remember the Lord could return at any time.

1. What did Paul mean by the phrase “times of difficulty” in 3:1?

The *last days* are described as terrible because of the way people live. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:2-4, they are “*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.*”

What a terrible description is painted of the awful behaviour of people in the “*last days*.” When we read this list of ungodly actions we must admit that it describes the lifestyle of many in today’s society. Everyone of us know people who fit these characteristics. Paul says that life will be difficult in the last days.

2. How can recalling the prayer of Jesus in John 17:14-16 help Christians who live in a difficult and corrupt society?

We do not have time in this lesson to define every word and phrase that Paul uses, but we can divide them into three basic categories.

1. Misdirected Love. These people love themselves and money. They do not love good. They love pleasure instead of loving God.
2. Misdirected Attitudes. They are proud, arrogant, ungrateful, heartless, unappeasable, swollen with conceit.
3. Misdirected Actions. These difficult people are abusive, disobedient to their parents, slanderous, brutal, treacherous, and reckless.



3. Describe some ways in which we see misdirected love demonstrated in our world today.

4. How are some of the misdirected attitudes around us exhibited?

5. Give examples of misdirected attitudes in today’s society.

6. Contrast the example of the attitude of Christ Jesus in Philippians 2:5-8 with misdirected love, attitudes, and actions outlined in 2 Timothy 3:2-4.

Those who are involved in all of these treacherous behaviours may have “*the appearance of godliness*,” but they deny its power. This shows their religion to be empty and futile. They may even go through the motions of appearing to be a Christian, but there is no reality in it for them. In fact, they even deny the power of godly living.

For those who give a pretense of godliness, but who deny its power and live completely contrary to the gospel, Paul gives this instruction: “*Avoid such people!*” The word which is translated avoid is a strong one which mean to avoid them like the plague. The tense of the word means to avoid and to continue to avoid.¹ It is possible that some of these reprobate characters wanted to be a part of the church or had become a part of the church for some reason. Whatever the case, Paul says “*Avoid such people.*”



Some of these corrupt individuals “*creep into households and capture weak women.*” The idea is that by some form of stealth and by concealing their true intentions these wicked men enter homes and capture and corrupt certain women. The word translated as capture means “*to take captive at spear point, to make a prisoner of war, to capture.*”²

7. These men are much like some cult leaders of today. Describe the methods cults use to capture certain people.

The target for these men who creep into households were “*weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions.*” Paul is not uttering some sexist comment meant to demean the entire female gender. In the first century it was common for women to be uneducated and to be left alone at home. Smooth talking men, making promises they had no intention of keeping were able to entice some. The description of these women tells us they were already involved in sin and that they allowed their passions to rule over their minds.

A further description of the women who were enticed is that they were “*always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.*” The wicked teachers told them what they wanted to hear and while they listened and took in what was taught, it brought them no closer to the truth. It is impossible to find truth through a study of that which is false.

8. Define truth and describe what is required to gain a knowledge of the truth.

¹ Smith, James E. Exhortation Epistles, p. 238.

² Ibid. p. 239.

Next Paul gives an illustration of two men who opposed the truth. We do not read of Jannes and Jambres anywhere else in the Bible, but this verse tells us that they opposed Moses. Tradition holds that these men were two of the sorcerers of Pharaoh who stood against Moses during the pronouncement of the plagues. If this is the case, they stood opposed to Moses, but were shown to be powerless in the face of what God decided to do.



Verse eight gives us three characteristics of Jannes and Jambres who are illustrations of the corrupt men in Timothy's day. These men 1) Opposed the truth, 2) Were corrupted in mind, and 3) Were disqualified regarding the faith.

Because of their utter rejection of the truth and opposition to God these men faced ultimate failure. Paul says they *"will not get very far"* which may not sound like a strong statement at first reading, but it really is because it means they will find no ultimate success. Yes, they may entice a few weak willed women, but they will not destroy the church, and they themselves will be eternally separated from God.

Their failure will be seen shortly because *"their folly will be plain to all"* just like Jannes and Jambres. The magicians of Pharaoh they were able to produce some impressive illusions in the beginning, but it soon became clear to all who watched that what God did through Moses was what was truly amazing.

The last days, in which we live, are filled with some terrible people who engage in some terrible activities. Simply because we live in this world, we are faced with many difficulties. Some of the actions of others make us uncomfortable while others may threaten our health and safety, and finally some may tempt us to abandon the truth.

9. How can it help us, as Christians, to know that difficult times will come?

How thankful we should be that we can overcome the temptations found in this world while we look for the end of these "last days" and the return of our Lord and Saviour.