

SECOND TIMOTHY CHAPTER THREE

Human Behavior in the Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-6

2 Timothy 3:1-17:

¹ *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.*

² *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,*

³ *unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,*

⁴ *treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*

⁵ *holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.*

⁶ *For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses,*

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

⁸ *Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.*

⁹ *But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also.*

¹⁰ *Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance,*

¹¹ *persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!*

¹² *Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

¹³ *But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

¹⁴ *You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,*

¹⁵ *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁶ *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

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

“In 1923 a group of the world’s most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago.

“Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the United States Treasury, and for years newspapers and magazines had been printing their success stories and urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples.

“Twenty-seven years later, let’s see what happened to them. (1) CHARLES SCHWAB—the president of the largest independent steel company—lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life, and died penniless. (2) ARTHUR CUTTEN—the greatest wheat speculator—died abroad insolvent. (3) RICHARD WHITNEY—the president of the New York Stock Exchange—was released some time ago from Sing Sing. (4) ALBERT FALL—the member of the President’s Cabinet—was pardoned from prison so he could die at home. (5) JESSE LIVERMORE—the greatest bear in Wall Street—committed suicide. (6) LEON FRASER—the president of the Bank of International Settlement—committed suicide. (7) IVAR KRUEGER—the head of the world’s greatest monopoly—committed suicide.

“All of these men had learned how to make money, but not one of them had learned how to live.”¹

“In the first part of this chapter Paul reminds Timothy of the great apostasy [desertion] which was to be expected in the church, and states some of the characteristics of it. . . . In 2 Timothy 3:10, 11, he [encourages . . .] Timothy to bear the trials which might be

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

expected to occur to him. "*Perilous times*" (2 Timothy 3:1) were to come, and Timothy might be expected to be called to pass through trials similar to those which Paul himself had experienced. . . . In 2 Timothy 3:12,13, [Paul] assures Timothy that **persecutions and trials** were to be expected by all who aimed to lead holy lives, and that . . . evil men would become worse and worse. And in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, he [strongly urges] him to be steadfast in maintaining the truth; and to encourage him to do this, reminds him of his early training in the Holy Scriptures, and of the value of those Scriptures.”²

The Divine promises in the Scriptures will comfort and guide him in times of trial.³

Now let us go back to 2 Timothy 3:1 and begin our customary review of each verse in this chapter.

2 Timothy 3:1:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

Paul had also addressed this concern in his first epistle to Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:1-5 (TLB):

² Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical*, WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Timothy 3". Brackets and emphases added.

³ Ibid.

¹ *But the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some in the church will turn away from Christ and become eager followers of teachers with devil-inspired ideas.*

² *These teachers will tell lies with straight faces and do it so often that their consciences won't even bother them.*

³ *They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat meat, even though God gave these things to well-taught Christians to enjoy and be thankful for.*

⁴ *For everything God made is good, and we may eat it gladly if we are thankful for it,*

⁵ *and if we ask God to bless it, for it is made good by the Word of God and prayer.*

“*In the last times*” refers to that period during which the affairs of the world will come to an end. Paul spoke of this in:

“*Difficult times shall come*” (2 Timothy 3:1) predicts times of danger, of persecution, and of trial.

2 Timothy 3:2-4:

² *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy.*

³ *unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal,*

haters of good,

⁴ *treacherous, reckless, conceited, **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God.*

Does that sound to you like a description of our current culture? It certainly does to us. People will be lovers of themselves. We note what the danger will be in those **last** days. In Paul's view it will not come from war, famine, disease, or any of the other disasters that happen to physical bodies, but it will come from the wickedness of **corrupt people**.⁴

In verses 2-4 of **2 Timothy 3**, Paul lists the characteristics of evil people living “*in the last days.*” These “*people will be lovers of themselves and lovers of money,⁵ boastful, proud or arrogant, revilers, and disobedient to their parents.*”

“*Boastful*” and “*arrogant*” emphasize bragging (feeling of **pride**) and haughtiness (a feeling of superiority), **which are** attitudes and actions characteristic of the false teachers, **as Paul had written to Timothy in his first letter:**

1 Timothy 1:5-7:

⁵ *But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*

⁴ *The Classic Bible Commentary: An Essential Collection of History's Finest Commentaries in One Volume*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Timothy 3:1-7".

⁵ Love of money is also listed as a trait of false teachers in 1 Timothy 6:5-10, see especially verse 10; cf. 1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7, 11),

⁶ *For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion,*

⁷ *wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.*

Such people will be “*revilers.*” Alternate translations of the Greek word here include “*blasphemers,*” and “*evil speaking.*” English synonyms for the word include: “to hate and criticize something or someone very much; to insult or abuse.”⁶ Therefore, some translations use the word *abusers* for *revilers*. Certainly that kind of language is tantamount to verbal abuse.

We also read that in the last times many will be “*disobedient to their parents.*”⁷ You probably remember that one of the Ten Commandments calls God’s people to “*honor your father and mother*” (Exodus 20:12). A young person could be executed for disobedience to parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-22). Yet, in the last days such disobedience will be rampant, with no consequences.

You will notice an emphasis in verses 2-4 on love or the lack of love. For instance, people will love themselves, money, and pleasure and will not love parents, people in general (as indicated by the terms “*unloving*” or “*heartless,*” “*irreconcilable,*” and “*malicious*”

⁶ Encarta Dictionary.

⁷ C. Michael Moss, Ph.D., *The College Press NIV Commentary – 1, 2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. Jack Cottrell, Ph.D. and Tony Ash, Ph.D. (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Co., 1994), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 225.

gossips”). They will not love good or God, even though they may claim a form of religion.⁸

The first two words of verse 4, “*treacherous*” and “*reckless*” have the same Greek prefix (pro-) and seem to function together: “*Treacherous*” (prodotai, a “*readiness to betray*”) can also be translated “*traitor*.” It is a word used of Judas Iscariot in:⁹

Luke 6:16:

¹⁶ *Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*

The word “*reckless*” [propeteis], indicates “*a man who stops at nothing to gain his ends,*” a person who betrays friends and everyone else. These people will also be “*conceited*” or “*high-minded.*” The Greek gives the sense of being puffed up with pride.¹⁰

“A certain tribe in Africa elects a new king every seven years but it invariably kills its old king. For seven years the member of the tribe enjoying this high honor is provided with every luxury known to savage life. During these years his authority is absolute, even to the power of life and death. For seven years he rules, is honored and surfeited with possessions, but at the end he dies.

“Every member of the tribe is aware of this, for it is a custom of long standing; but there is never lacking an applicant for the post.

⁸ *The Bible Exposition Commentary* © 2001 by Warren W. Wiersbe. All rights reserved. First printing 2003
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⁹ Op. cit., Moss.

¹⁰ Op. cit., Barnes

For seven years of luxury and power men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of life's expectation.

“Scores and hundreds and thousands are willing to be bankrupts through eternity if they may only win their millions here.”¹¹

The phrase, “*lovers of pleasure*,” in verse 4 indicates that these people put having a good time before God, much as those tribe members in Africa thought having seven years of luxury was more important than having a long life. If people have to choose between going to a party or to a prayer meeting, they will choose the party every time. “Living the good life,” “grabbing all the gusto you can get,” having every convenience and electronic toy, going to the latest movies, all these phrases describe the lover of pleasure. They rarely, if ever, spend private time reading the Bible or praying. Bible studies are not their first choice of activities. Yet, as we move to verse 5, we see these folks may well put up a front of religiosity.

2 Timothy 3:5:

⁵ *holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;*

Avoid such men as these.

Satan is known as the master deceiver and he has a way of making evil look respectable. In fact, those who lust after a variety of sins in their hearts often appear to be very

¹¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.

religious, using godliness as a cloak of respectability. But they will refuse to accept the power that God would provide if He were only asked; they deny God's power over their lives. This mask they wear could include attending church, knowing Christian doctrine, quoting passages from the Bible, and following Christian traditions. Such an act can make a person look godly, but in actuality they are without love, faith, and commitment to God. If these qualities are not the inner motivation of a person, their public image does not mean a thing. Paul cautioned Timothy not to be taken advantage of by people who initially appear to be Christians. It may take some time observing their behavior and relationships with other people, but after a while their behavior will reveal what they really are. The false teachers who were trying to take over the Ephesian church probably had any number of these characteristics. Paul again warns Timothy to stay away from such men. This was not, by the way, the first time that Paul had warned Timothy to stay away from such phonies (2Timothy 2:23).¹²

2 Timothy 3:6:

⁶ For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses.

Now what is it that will draw people to listen to and accept the teaching of a false teacher or preacher? Well, some people just do not like what they think the Bible says and that makes it relatively easy for corrupt ministers to lead those folks into sin because they preach a doctrine of tolerance for the opinions presented by all religions. The phrase "*weak women*" (gunaikaria^{PWS: 3563}) means "*little women*," little in the sense of being spiritually dead,

¹² Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 973.

weak, immature, and unstable. Men, by the way, are just as gullible as women, **and can be** just as spiritually dead, weak, immature, and unstable. The present passage zeros in on women because of the local situation in Ephesus. Some of the women in the Ephesian church were following corrupt ministers. But Paul's warning is applicable to all of us, both men and women, and we must guard against corrupt ministers.¹³

The corrupt minister seeks after people who are burdened down with sins and guilt, who are easily convinced and led away by all kinds of desires and lusts. **He preys on** those who are seeking after truth—who are listening and learning all they can from anybody who claims to have the truth, **and who do not have the discernment to choose to listen to pastors who have a close relationship with Jesus Christ.**

These are the people a false minister goes after and eventually convinces to believe what he is saying. When a person feels the need to seek truth about what life is all about and **realizes** that he has been living only for his own selfish desires and lusts—that person is wide open for a corrupt minister to step in and lead them astray, **just as they are ripe to hear and respond to the Gospel. The only truth** for such people can only be found in the truth that Christ provides. **But if** these people are only looking for a god that gives them a **tale** that they find to be comfortable **with** the way they want to live their lives, and who only winks at their lifestyle, **they will follow the false teacher.** True godliness is found in Christ alone and nowhere else. Those who accept any false teaching will spend their eternity in Hell suffering a torment that will never give them a moment's peace.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The false minister has the form and appearance of godliness: he is a minister and fills the position of a minister, claiming God and Christ as his authority. **Alternatively, he may include** the gods of other major religions, **and** practice the rituals and ceremonies of those religions, **all the while using** religious terms.¹⁵

These false ministers do not preach the power of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Often they emphasize a religion of works and self-effort, a religion for a new age of men and women, who are considered advanced in science and technology—a religion that recognizes how wise they are so that God will accept them. **In the simplest of terms,** a corrupt minister is a minister who preaches and teaches that a person can be good enough and do enough good **things** to make himself/herself acceptable to God; that person can secure the approval of God by doing certain works and keeping certain rules (laws); **and** that **a** person can reach such a level of growth that God will accept them.

“In Evanston, Illinois, are the ‘Missionaries of the New Truth’ who also advertise under the heading: ‘We want you to join our faith as an ORDAINED MINISTER with the rank of DOCTOR OF DIVINITY.’”

“They state: ‘We are a fast-growing faith, actively seeking new members who believe as we do that all men should seek the truth in their own way, by any means they deem right. As a minister of the faith you can: Set up your own church and apply for exemption

¹⁵ Ibid.

from property and other taxes; perform marriages and exercise all other ecclesiastical powers; seek draft exemption as one of our working missionaries. We can tell you how. Get sizeable cash grants for doing missionary work for us; some transportation companies, hotels, theaters, etc., give ministers reduced rates. GET THE WHOLE PACKAGE FOR \$100.00.’ This “ordination” is declared to be legal and valid anywhere in this country.”¹⁶

How easily fools are misled. Anyone that reads and studies the Bible would know that such teaching is from Satan, and the truth would reject any false teaching.

We should pay careful attention to the last phrase of verse 5: “*avoid such men as these.*” We are to have nothing to do with false teachers and ministers. Do not go to coffee with them, do not fellowship with them, and definitely do not let them teach or lead a Bible study in your congregation.

We will pick-up on this next week.

¹⁶ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX : Bible Communications, 1996, c1979.