

SECOND TIMOTHY CHAPTER THREE

Human Behavior In The Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-17:

¹ *But realize this, that in the last days [when the world will come to an end] ¹ 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[Satan misleads people making sin look respectable by maintaining Christian traditions without totally committing to God and Jesus]², 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 [misled by doctrine of tolerance; spiritually dead, weak, immature, unstable]³,*

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

Women were following false pastors in Ephesus, however the warning here applies to all of us. People can be easily misled by satisfying their lusts and desires. Many people want the kind of god that allows them to satisfy their desires. Those who accept false teaching usually move from one false teacher to another and then combine many of them, being locked into a collection of lies and locked out from the truth. People like to believe the things that appeal to them, not those things that challenge them. Hell was made for the people who love to worship lies.

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,*

¹ Brackets mine.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

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 [expect this]⁴.

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 [Promises in Scripture will comfort you and guide you]⁵.

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.

As I read through this chapter for about the five hundredth time it kind of jumped out at me. I do not accept, as the greatest majority of commentators do, the doctrine of a pre-tribulation Rapture, nor do I believe the Rapture will come at the middle or the end of the Tribulation. I believe that the Rapture will occur at the sounding of the seventh trumpet when the bowl judgments are unleashed. I guess you could call that a pre-wrath Rapture.

My point here is that I wonder why Paul would preach this message to the Church if the Church was not going to be around during the Tribulation. This is additional evidence that the opinions regarding a pre-tribulation Rapture might not be what they're cracked up to be.

“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 [bankrupt, broke, penniless]⁶. (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

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

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.”⁷

In the first part of this chapter Paul reminds Timothy of the great apostasy (desertion)⁸ which was to be expected in the church and states some of the behavioral patterns that will exist at the time. In 2 Timothy 3:10-11, he encourages Timothy to bear the trials which might be expected to occur to him. "*Difficult 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 Timothy to be faithful 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. **The Divine promises in the Scriptures will comfort and guide him in times of trial.**⁹

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:

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):

¹ *But the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that **in the last** [end]¹⁰ **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.*

⁷ 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.

⁸ Parentheses mine.

⁹ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical*, WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "2 Timothy 3".

¹⁰ In some translations.

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. 2 Timothy 3.1 predicts times of danger, of persecution, and of trial.

2 TIMOTHY 3:2:

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

This verse describes a narcissistic (selfish, conceited, self-admiring) and materialistic society. People will be lovers of themselves and that attitude will produce a world of evil and corruption.

2 TIMOTHY 3:3:

³ *unloving, irreconcilable [unwilling to compromise]¹¹ malicious [wanting to cause harm or pain to another]¹² gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,*

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

In verses 2-4, Paul lists the characteristics of evil people living “*in the last days.*” These “*people will be lovers of themselves and lovers of money*” (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), boastful, proud, abusive, ungrateful, unholy, and disobedient to their parents.

“*Boastful*” and “*arrogant*” emphasize haughty (a feeling of superiority) attitudes and actions characteristic of the false teachers:

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.***

⁶ *For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless [useless]¹³ 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*

¹¹ Brackets mine.

¹² Ibid..

¹³ Ibid.

assertions [statements]¹⁴.

Such people will exhibit the behavioral patterns mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:2-4.

Then in Romans 1:28-32, Paul writes:

²⁸ *And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved [evil, immoral]¹⁵ mind, to do those things which are not proper,*

²⁹ *being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife [conflict, fighting]¹⁶, deceit [dishonesty, cheating]¹⁷, malice [hatred, cruelty]¹⁸; they are gossips,*

³⁰ *slanderers, haters of God, insolent [rude]¹⁹, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,*

³¹ *without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;*

³² *and although they know the ordinance [law, dictates]²⁰ of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*

“The next two words in verse 4 have the same Greek prefix (pro-) and seem to function together: ‘*Treacherous* [(prodotai, a ‘readiness to betray’); 2 Timothy 3:4 NAS]²¹ a word used of Judas Iscariot in:”²²

Luke 6:16:

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

“and ‘*reckless*’ [(propeteis), ‘a man who stops at nothing to gain his ends’). These people will also be ‘*conceited*.’”

“A certain tribe in Africa elects a new king every seven years but it invariably [always or almost always]²³ 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,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

even to the power of life and death. For seven years he rules, is honored and surfeited²⁴ 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. For seven years of luxury and power men are willing to sacrifice the remainder of life’s expectation [their lives]²⁵.

“Scores and hundreds and thousands are willing to be bankrupts through eternity if they may only win their millions here.”²⁶

Today it would be more like hundreds of millions or perhaps several billion. Money is Satan’s favorite motivator, or perhaps I should say deception.

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 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, denying 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 (2 Timothy 2:23).²⁷

²⁴ An excessive number or quantity of something, especially so much of it that people become sickened, repelled, or bored by it.

²⁵ Brackets mine.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Barton B. Bruce et al., *Life Application New Testament Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), *WORDsearch* CROSS e-book, 973.

2 TIMOTHY 3:6-7:

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.*

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 pastors to lead those folks into sin because they preach a doctrine of **tolerance** [acceptance]²⁸ 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**, weak, immature, and unstable." Men are just as easily led, like a burrow with a ring through its nose. Both men and women can be equally weak, immature, and unstable. The passage here in 2 Timothy 3:6 is addressed to women because of the situation which existed in the city of Ephesus; some of the women in the church were following corrupt pastors (teaching false doctrine). But the bottom line is that Paul's warning applies to all of us.²⁹

The corrupt minister often stalks people who are burdened down with sins and guilt; that are easily convinced and easily led by their individual desires and lusts. Then there are also those that can be led astray because they are genuinely seeking after truth; who want to learn all they can from anybody who claims to know the truth. They can get involved with the wrong church and it can be all downhill from there. How can you keep from being caught in such a situation? I'll be glad to recommend or evaluate a church for you if you e-mail me at ronteed@aol.com

These people can be vulnerable to the kind of false teaching that will make them feel quite comfortable with themselves, a god that allows them to live their lives pretty much the way they want, and who only winks at their lifestyle rather than judge it. True Godliness is found in Christ alone and nowhere else. Those who accept any other false teaching will spend their **eternity in Hell** suffering a torment that will never give them a moment's peace.³⁰

Often moving from one false teacher or group to another, such women are **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth**. If they have been brought up in the church, they may be attracted to new ideas that claim to be Christian. But their sinful living and ignorance of Scripture make them utterly unable to recognize unbiblical and ungodly teaching, and they are thereby defenseless against it. They are continually learning about everything that appeals to them, but they avoid gaining **knowledge of the real truth**. Appearing to be good and do good things is appealing to them because they can imagine themselves pleasing God by outward behavior. If they're taught by a pastor or teacher that coming to church a couple of times a month, participating in work days, singing in the choir, belonging to a committee, or any other kind of volunteer work to help others makes you acceptable in God's eyes and guarantees them

²⁸ Brackets mine.

²⁹ *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "II. THE PREDICTIONS OF THE LAST DAYS, 3:1-17".

³⁰ Ibid.

entrance to Heaven, they may be in store for a very big surprise. This kind of teaching is very attractive, but the cost to those who go along with it will force you into bankruptcy for eternity. Many such women and men as well are glad to find a way that promises to make them right with God simply by conforming to certain outward behavioral standards.

The Greek word, *Epignōsis* (knowledge) refers to deep understanding and sound judgment, not merely awareness of facts. It is **knowledge of the truth** that God wants us all to have and is willing to provide if we just ask Him.” *Our Father, I don’t understand what you want of me; please show me.*” Ask that every night and every morning and just see what God is going to do for you.

John 17:17 (TLB):

¹⁷ *Make them pure and holy **through teaching them your words of truth.***

1 Timothy 2:3-4:

³ *This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,*

⁴ *who **desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

2 Timothy 2:23-26 (TLB):

²³ *Again I say, don’t get involved in foolish arguments, which only upset people and make them angry.*

²⁴ *God’s people must not be quarrelsome; they must be gentle, patient teachers of those who are wrong.*

²⁵ *Be humble when you are trying to teach those who are mixed up concerning the truth. For if you talk meekly and courteously to them, they are more likely, with God’s help, to turn away from their wrong ideas and believe what is true.*

²⁶ *Then they will come to their senses and escape from Satan’s trap of slavery to sin, which he uses to catch them whenever he likes, and then they can begin doing the will of God.*

2 Peter 3:9 (TLB):

⁹ *He isn’t really being slow about his promised return, even though it sometimes seems that way. But he is waiting, for the good reason that he is not willing that any should perish, and he is giving more time for sinners to repent*

Paul wanted salvation even for those who would not accept the Gospel. He prayed that God might draw them to the place where they would request God to reveal knowledge of the truth to them.