

2 Timothy 3 May 8, 2022

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: The Bible warns us that there are people in sheep's clothing. The Enemy is always at work! We are going to run into a descriptor in today's text that will be used to sum up a laundry list of negative traits. The descriptor is: people who have a "form of godliness, but denying its power." That's pretty loaded. What do you think that means? [Let people struggle with this, engage this]

Transition: You have tagged many of the things Paul will tell Timothy in this chapter. What's interesting is that these characteristics started to appear in Paul's day, and here we are in 2022, and these characteristics are thriving with increased intensity. It's not necessarily because we have more people in the world, or better news coverage with social media. It appears that evil is deeper and of greater intensity, and we see it more and more each day. The moral fabric of our society seems to be deteriorating with the help of people who have a "form of godliness, but who also deny its power." Let's see what Paul has to say about this and see what we can learn from him. Let's begin.

BOOK:

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

⁶ They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, ⁷ always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. ⁹ But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

¹⁰ You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹ persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹² In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

The purpose of Bible study is *not* just to understand doctrines or to be able to defend the faith, as important as these things are. The ultimate purpose is the equipping of the believers who read it. It is the Word of God that equips God's people to do the work of God. We must separate ourselves from that which is false, devote ourselves to that which is true, and continue in our study of the Word of God. Then God can equip us for ministry in these difficult days, and we will have the joy of seeing others come to a knowledge of the truth.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 249–253). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

The emphasis in this chapter is on *knowledge* and *responsibility*. Paul informed Timothy about the character of the last days, and then instructed him how to respond. Action must be based on knowledge. Too many Christians are like the pilot who informed his passengers, "We are lost, but we are making very good time."

"These last days" began with the ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1–2) and will continue until He returns. They are called the "last days" because in them God is completing His purposes for His people. Because our Lord has delayed His return, some people scoff at the promise of His coming (2 Peter 3:3ff); but He will come as He promised.

Within this period of "last days" there will be "times" (seasons) of different kinds; but as the "times" draw to a close, they will become perilous. This word means "dangerous, hard to deal with, savage." This is the same Greek word that is used to describe the two violent demoniacs of Gadara (Matt. 8:28). This suggests that the violence of the last times will be energized by demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

There is no doubt that these characteristics started to appear in Paul's day, and now they have increased in intensity. It is not simply that we have more people in the world, or better news coverage. It appears that evil is deeper and of greater intensity, and that it is being accepted and promoted by society in a bolder way. It is not that we have small pockets of rebellion here and there. All of society seems to be in ferment and rebellion. We are indeed in "terrible times" (2 Tim. 3:1, NIV).

Paul gave Timothy three instructions to obey in order that his ministry might be effective during perilous times.

Turn Away from the False (2 Tim. 3:1–9)

"From such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5b). A faithful believer should have nothing to do with the people Paul described in this section. It is important to note that these people operate *under the guise of religion*: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). They are "religious" but rebellious! Paul discussed three facts about these people.

Their characteristics (vv. 2–5). At least eighteen different characteristics are listed here, and Paul probably could have listed more. There is an emphasis on *love*: "lovers of their own selves," lovers of money ("covetous"), "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. God commands us to love Him supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:34–40); but if we love ourselves supremely, we will not love God *or* our neighbors.

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.

Of course, if someone loves and worships himself, the result will be *pride*. "Ye shall be as gods" was Satan's offer to Eve (Gen. 3:5), and the result was that people "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than [rather than] the Creator" (Rom. 1:25). Man became his own god! The creature is now the creator! "Boasters, proud [arrogant], blasphemers [given to contemptuous and bitter words]" (2 Tim. 3:2).

"Disobedient to parents" suggests that this apostasy reaches into the family. Children are "unthankful" and do not appreciate what their parents have done for them. They are "unholy" in their attitude toward their parents. "Honor thy father and thy mother" is not widely taught or respected.

The phrase "without natural affection" is the translation of one word that describes "family love." The family is under attack these days, and, as go its families, so goes the nation.

In place of the natural love that God has put into men and women and families, today we have a good deal of *unnatural* love which God has condemned (see Rom. 1:18–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–10). It is confusion, and God will judge it (Rom. 1:28–32).

Not only in homes, but out in society and the business world, the characteristics of these perilous times may be seen. "Trucebreakers" (2 Tim. 3:3) describes people who will not try to agree. They are unyielding and irreconcilable and must have their own way.

In order to defend their position, they become "slanderers" ["false accusers," KJV] and try to tear down the reputations of others. Unfortunately, some of this activity goes on even among professed Christians. "Christian leaders" accuse one another in the pages of their publications.

“Incontinent” means “without self-control.” The motto of our society today is “Do your own thing and enjoy it!” Sad to say, some of the children born to these people do not always enjoy it because they are deformed or handicapped as the result of drugs, alcohol, or venereal diseases.

This lack of self-control reveals itself in a number of ways. “Fierce” means “untamed, brutal.” When these people cannot have their way, they become much like savage beasts. Instead of honoring what is good, they despise what is good and honor what is evil. In society today the standards of right and wrong have been twisted, if not destroyed. “Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil,” cried Isaiah the prophet (Isa. 5:20).

“Traitors” (2 Tim. 3:4) describes people who betray others and cannot be trusted. Neither friendship nor partnership makes any difference to them; they lie and break their promises whenever doing so helps them get their own way.

“Heady” means “reckless, rash, acting without careful thought.” Paul did not condemn honest adventure, but foolish endeavor.

“High-minded” does not describe a person with lofty thoughts. Rather, it means a person who is “puffed up” with his importance. “Conceited” is a good synonym.

“Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” does not suggest that we must choose between pleasure and God; for when we live for God, we enjoy the greatest pleasures (Ps. 16:11). The choice is between *loving* pleasure or loving God. If we love God, we will also enjoy fullness of life here and forever; but the pleasures of sin can only last for a brief time (Heb. 11:25). No one can deny that we live in a pleasure-mad world; but these pleasures too often are just shallow entertainment and escape; they are not enrichment and true enjoyment.

Paul stated that these people he has just described would consider themselves religious! “Having a form of godliness” (2 Tim. 3:5) suggests an outward appearance of religion, not true Christian faith; for they have never experienced the power of God in their lives. Form without force. Religion without reality.

Their converts (vv. 6–7). The fact that Paul described “silly [‘weak-willed,’ NIV] women” does not suggest that all women are like this, or that men are not vulnerable to the wiles of false teachers. In Paul’s day, women were especially susceptible to this kind of experience since they had a low status in society. Whether men or women, people who fall for this false religious system have the same characteristics.

They are *burdened with guilt* and looking for some escape from bondage and fear. They find themselves unable to control their various desires (“divers lusts,” KJV). The emphasis here may be on sexual problems. Finally, they are always searching for truth, trying this approach and that; yet they are never able to be satisfied. This kind of person is fair game for the cultists and the religious racketeers.

These false religious leaders take advantage of the problems people have, and promise them quick and easy solutions. They “worm their way in” and soon control people’s lives. It is not long before these leaders grab their followers’ loyalty, money, and service. And their “converts” are worse off than they were before. They still have their problems, but they have been duped into thinking that all is well.

And, remember: All of this underhanded activity is done in the name of religion! No wonder Paul told Timothy, “From such turn away.”

Their religious leaders (vv. 8–9). Read Exodus 7–9 for the record of the contest between Moses and the Egyptian magicians. Tradition says that the magicians were Jannes and Jambres, two men mentioned by Paul (2 Tim. 3:8). These men opposed Moses *by imitating what he did*. When Aaron’s rod turned into a serpent, the magicians cast down their rods and they turned into

serpents. Moses turned the water into blood, and the magicians followed with the same miracle. When Moses brought up all the frogs, the magicians duplicated the miracle. But when it came to the miracle of the lice, the magicians could not imitate it (Ex. 8:16–19).

Satan is an imitator; what God does, Satan counterfeits. The religious leaders in the last days will have a counterfeit faith, and their purpose is to promote a lie and resist the truth of God's Word. They deny the authority of the Bible and substitute human wisdom and philosophy. In their attempt to be "modern," they deny the reality of sin and people's need for salvation.

"Reprobate" is the word Paul used to describe them. This means "tested and found counterfeit."

Jannes and Jambres were finally exposed and made fools of by the judgments of God. This will also happen to the leaders of false religions in the last days. When God's judgments fall, the true character of these counterfeits will be revealed to everyone.

Follow Those Who Are True (2 Tim. 3:10–12)

Paul turned from the false leaders to remind Timothy that he (Paul) had been a faithful servant of God. It is important in these difficult days that we follow the right spiritual leaders. What are their characteristics?

Their lives are open for all to see (v. 10a). Paul had nothing to hide. Like his Master, he could say, "In secret have I said nothing" (John 18:20). "My manner of life from my youth ... know all the Jews," Paul had told Agrippa (Acts 26:4). Timothy had lived and labored with Paul and knew the man well. Paul had not hidden behind extravagant claims or religious propaganda.

They teach true doctrine (v. 10b). "My doctrine" in Paul's case meant the true faith, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter how appealing a preacher may be, if he does not preach the truth of God's Word, he does not deserve our support. On radio and TV today, we have a great deal of "pseudo-Christianity" which is a mixture of psychology, success motivation, and personality cults, with a little bit of Bible thrown in to make it look religious. Beware!

They practice what they preach (v. 10c). Paul's "manner of life" backed up his messages. He did not preach sacrifice and live in luxury. He gave to others far more than he received from them. He stood up for the truth even when it meant losing friends and, in the end, losing his life. Paul was a servant, not a celebrity.

Their purpose is to glorify God (v. 10d). There was never a question about Paul's "purpose" in ministry: He wanted to do God's will and finish the work God gave him to do (Acts 20:24; Phil. 1:21). The Apostle Paul was a man of "faith" who trusted God to meet his needs. He was a man of "long-suffering" who bore up under people's attacks. He was a man of *love* ("charity") who willingly gave himself to serve others.

The word *patience* at the end of 2 Timothy 3:10 means "endurance, the ability to stick with it when the going gets tough."

They are willing to suffer (vv. 11–12). Paul did not ask others to suffer for him; *he suffered for others*. The fact that he was persecuted from city to city was proof that he was living a godly life. Some people today have the idea that godliness means *escaping* persecution, when just the opposite is true.

I wonder how Paul would match up with today's concept of a Christian leader. He would probably fail miserably. If he applied for service with a modern mission board, would he be accepted? He had a prison record; he had a physical affliction; he stirred up problems in just about every place he visited. He was poor, and he did not cater to the rich. Yet God used him, and we are being blessed today because Paul was faithful.

Continue in God's Word (2 Tim. 3:13–17)

The only way to defeat Satan's lies is with God's truth. "Thus saith the Lord!" is the final answer to every question. Evil men and deceivers are going to get worse and worse. They will deceive more and more. Why? Because they are being deceived by Satan! In these last days, there will be more deception and imitation; and the only way a believer will be able to tell the true from the false is by knowing the Word of God.

Timothy had been taught the Word of God from the time he was a child. Some people are prone to say, "Well, I needed the Bible when I was younger; but I can do without it now that I'm older." How wrong they are! Adults need the guidance of the Word far more than children do because adults face more temptations and make more decisions. Timothy's grandmother and mother had faithfully taught him the Old Testament Scriptures. (The word *whom* in 2 Tim. 3:14 is plural, referring to these women; see 2 Tim. 1:5.) Timothy was to continue in what he had been taught. We never outgrow the Word of God.

This is a good place to admonish Christian parents to teach their children the Bible. In our home, my wife and I used Kenneth Taylor's *Bible Stories with Pictures for Little Eyes*; in fact, we wore out two copies! What a joy it was to see our older children who had learned to read share the stories with the younger ones and help them answer the questions. Little by little, the children graduated to older Bible storybooks and then to Bibles of their own. We were fortunate that our Sunday School included a Bible memory program. As soon as your child is born, surround him with the Word of God and prayer. You will not have this opportunity after he grows up.

In this paragraph, Paul made some important statements about the Scriptures:

They are the Holy Scriptures (v. 15a). "The sacred letters" is a literal translation. The suggestion is that young Timothy learned his Hebrew alphabet by spelling his way through the Old Testament Scriptures. The word for *holy* means "consecrated for sacred use." The Bible is different from every other book—even books about the Bible—because it has been set apart by God for special sacred uses. We must treat the Bible as the special book it is.

The way we treat the Bible shows others how much or how little we respect it. While I don't want to become a crank in this matter, I must confess that I hate to see a Bible on the floor. When we are carrying a Bible and other books, the Bible should be on the top. There is a difference between properly marking a Bible as we study and defacing it by careless marking. I have seen people put a cup of coffee on a Bible! Paul gives us the right attitude toward the Word of God (1 Thes. 2:13).

The Scriptures lead us to salvation (v. 15b). We are not saved by believing the Bible (see John 5:39), but by trusting the Christ who is revealed in the Bible. Satan knows the Bible but he is not saved. Timothy was raised on the Holy Scriptures in a godly home. Yet it was not until Paul led him to Christ that he was saved.

What is the relationship of the Bible to salvation? To begin with, the Bible reveals our need for salvation. It is a mirror that shows us how filthy we are in God's sight. The Bible explains that every lost sinner is condemned *now* (John 3:18–21) and needs a Saviour *now*. It also makes it clear that a lost sinner cannot save himself.

But the Bible also reveals God's wonderful plan of salvation: Christ died for our sins! If we trust Him, He will save us (John 3:16–18). The Bible also helps give us the assurance of our salvation (see 1 John 5:9–13). Then the Bible becomes our spiritual food to nourish us that we might grow in grace and serve Christ. It is our sword for fighting Satan and overcoming temptation.

The Scriptures are true and dependable (v. 16a). “All Scripture is God-breathed” (NIV). The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is vitally important, and a doctrine that Satan has attacked from the beginning (“Yea, hath God said?” [Gen. 3:1]). It is inconceivable that God would give His people a book they could not trust. He is the God of truth (Deut. 32:4); Jesus is “the truth” (John 14:6); and the “Spirit is truth” (1 John 5:6). Jesus said of the Scriptures, “Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17).

The Holy Spirit of God used men of God to write the Word of God (2 Peter 1:20–21). The Spirit did not erase the natural characteristics of the writers. In fact, God in His providence prepared the writers for the task of writing the Scriptures. Each writer has his own distinctive style and vocabulary. Each book of the Bible grew out of a special set of circumstances. In His preparation of men, in His guiding of history, and in His working through the Spirit, God brought about the miracle of the Scriptures.

We must not think of “inspiration” the way the world thinks when it says, “Shakespeare was certainly an inspired writer.” What we mean by biblical *inspiration* is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Bible’s writers, which guaranteed that what they wrote was accurate and trustworthy. *Revelation* means the communicating of truth to man by God; *inspiration* has to do with the *recording* of this communication in a way that is dependable.

Whatever the Bible says about itself, man, God, life, death, history, science, and every other subject is true. This does not mean that every statement in the Bible is true, because the Bible records the lies of men and of Satan. *But the record is true.*

The Scriptures are profitable (v. 16b). They are profitable for *doctrine* (what is right), for *reproof* (what is not right), for *correction* (how to get right), and for *instruction in righteousness* (how to stay right). A Christian who studies the Bible and applies what he learns will grow in holiness and avoid many pitfalls in this world.

The Scriptures equip us for service (v. 17). Earlier Paul had called Timothy a “man of God” (1 Tim. 6:11); but here Paul states that *any* Christian can become a person “of God.” How? By studying the Word of God, obeying it, and letting it control his life. It is worth noting that all of the “men of God” named in Scripture—including Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, David, and Timothy—were men who were devoted to God’s Word.

Two words in this verse are especially important: “perfect” and “furnished.” The word translated “perfect” means “complete, in fit shape, in fit condition.” It does not begin to suggest sinless perfection. Rather, it implies being fitted for use.

“Furnished” has a similar meaning: “equipped for service.” In other words, the Word of God furnishes and equips a believer so that he can live a life that pleases God and do the work God wants him to do. The better we know the Word, the better we are able to live and work for God.

The purpose of Bible study is *not* just to understand doctrines or to be able to defend the faith, as important as these things are. The ultimate purpose is the equipping of the believers who read it. It is the Word of God that equips God’s people to do the work of God.

The times are not going to get better, but we Christians can become better people, even in bad times. We must separate ourselves from that which is false, devote ourselves to that which is true, and continue in our study of the Word of God. Then God can equip us for ministry in these difficult days, and we will have the joy of seeing others come to a knowledge of the truth.

Litfin, A. D. (1985). 1 Timothy. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 756-757) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

V. Predictions of Faithlessness (3:1–9).

3:1–5. As in his previous letter, Paul warned Timothy about the collapse predicted for **the last days** (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–3), a term which includes the entire period between the first century and Christ’s return. During this interim, according to the prediction, the world will see **terrible times** of societal degeneration. Paul gave an extraordinary list (cf. Rom. 1:28–32) of 19 general characteristics believers should expect. **People will be:** (1) **lovers of themselves** (*philautoi*, “self-centered, narcissistic”); (2) **lovers of money** (*philargyroi*; cf. 1 Tim. 6:9–10); (3) **boastful**—the outward manifestation of the fact that inwardly they are (4) **proud** (“arrogant”); (5) **abusive** toward others, which translates *blasphēmoi* (“blasphemers”). Several of the words which follow begin in the Greek with the prefix *a=*, meaning “without” (as in moral-amoral, theist-atheist), signifying absence of the designated virtue. Thus, people will be (6) **disobedient** (*apeitheis*) **to their parents**; (7) **ungrateful** (*acharistoi*); (8) **unholy** (*anosioi*); (9) **without love** (*astorgoi*, translated “heartless” in Rom. 1:31, the only other place it is used in the NT); (10) **unforgiving** (*aspondoi*). *Diaboloι*, a word usually translated “devil” (cf. 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:26), is used here with the root meaning (11) **slandering**; (12) **without self-control** (*akrateis*); (13) **brutal** (*anēmeroi*, lit., “untamed,” the opposite of civilized); (14) **not lovers of the good** (*aphilagathoi*; cf. Titus 1:8; Pss. 15:4; 19:8). The next two characteristics begin in the Greek with the prefix *pro-*, indicating an aggressive inclination toward vice: (15) **treacherous** (*prodotai*, “disposed toward betrayal”); (16) **rash** (*propeteis*, “disposed toward recklessness”). The final three characteristics are (17) **conceited** (lit., “puffed up”; cf. 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4); (18) **lovers of pleasure** (*philēdonoi*) **rather than lovers of God** (*philotheoi*; the Gr. prefix *phil=* here and in characteristics 1, 2, and 14 above signifies “lovers of ...”); (19) **having a form** (*morphōsin*, “outward shape,” used only here and in Rom. 2:20) **of godliness but denying its power** (cf. Titus 1:16). Though these characteristics are cataloged under the auspices of a prediction about “the last days,” it is clear that Paul considered them to be already present in Ephesus. Though they would intensify with time, Timothy had to beware of such people and **have nothing to do with them**. No doubt Paul had in mind here Timothy’s official associations, since he had already instructed Timothy to be kind to everyone (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24).

3:6–7. Paul focused on the specific situation in Ephesus. It was from the increasingly large group in society who displayed the preceding characteristics that the false teachers had emerged to plague the church. Their methods were insidious. They would **worm their way into homes and gain control over** those they knew were vulnerable and gullible. In the case of Ephesus, the false teachers had crept in via a group of **weak-willed women who** were, literally, “heaped with sin and fed by various lusts.” Once more Paul connected false teaching with moral deficiency. Their carnality and immaturity rendered them easy targets for the false teachers (cf. Eph. 4:14). Out of a so-called “openness to learn” they evidently embraced as a fad whatever new heresy came along. Their problem was that they could not recognize the truth when they saw it. (**To acknowledge the truth** is, lit., “to come to a full knowledge of the truth”; cf. 2 Tim. 2:25.)

3:8–9. The reference to **Jannes and Jambres** and their opposition to **Moses** draws not on the Old Testament but on a widespread Jewish legend about two of Pharaoh’s magicians who competed against Moses and lost (cf. Ex. 7:11; 9:11). The comparison between the false teachers and the Egyptians, and implicitly therefore Timothy and Moses, must have encouraged the young minister. The opponents were **men of depraved** (lit., “corrupt”; cf. 1 Tim. 6:5) **minds who oppose the truth** and were therefore **rejected** (*adokimoi*, “disapproved”) by God in regard to any claim to be teaching **the faith** (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). Consequently, while their influence was temporarily a serious matter in the church, in the long run **they would not get very far**. Like

Jannes and Jambres, eventually **their folly would be clear to everyone** (cf. 1 Tim. 4:15; 5:24–25).

VI. Challenge to Faithful Preaching (3:10–3:17).

A. *Faithfulness in the face of opposition (3:10–13).*

3:10–11. Paul returned (cf. 1:8, 12; 2:10) to his own example of endurance and faithfulness in another of his direct exhortations to Timothy (cf. 2:1). The contrast with the false teachers is a strong one: **You, however....** Timothy knew intimately of Paul’s **teaching** (*didaskalia*, “content”) **way of life ... purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance** (cf. 2:10, 12), **persecutions, sufferings** (cf. 1 Tim. 6:11), along with his various missionary experiences and deliverances, and the elderly apostle was not ashamed to lift them up before his young disciple as exemplary. The references to **Antioch** (of Pisidia), **Iconium, and Lystra** must have stirred Timothy’s earliest memories of Paul (cf. Acts 13:14, 51; 14:6, 21; 16:1).

3:12–13. It was important for Timothy, as for all Christians, to realize that persecution awaits **everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ** (cf. John 15:18–21)—hence Paul’s reminder of his own past experience. Yet with the last days again in mind Paul wrote that Timothy could actually expect the situation to get worse and the pressure to intensify. False teaching would increase as **evil men and impostors** (lit., “magicians,” but here with the connotation of “charlatans”) **go from bad to worse** (lit., “advance further”), **deceiving and being deceived**. Error feeds on itself.

B. *Faithfulness to God’s Word (3:14–4:5).*

3:14–15. Again the strong direct address, **But as for you....** begins this section (cf. 2:1; 3:10; 4:5). The exhortation is to **continue in** the things Timothy had **learned and become convinced of** (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–2). These things had come from two sources, which Paul set side by side as of equal importance: his own testimony, and **the Holy Scriptures**, which at that time of course consisted of the Old Testament. Timothy’s complete confidence in both sources would be enough to prevent any slippage in his commitment to the truth. Again these verses seem to imply that Timothy’s salvation occurred prior to his acquaintance with Paul (cf. 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2, 5; Acts 16:1). The Scriptures bring **salvation** only when one places his **faith in Christ Jesus**.

3:16–17. Paul had just noted that the Scriptures are able to make one wise with regard to salvation, a lesson Timothy had learned long before. But now Paul wanted to reemphasize to Timothy the crucial role of God’s in-scripturated revelation in his present ministry. Thus Paul reminded Timothy that **all Scripture is God-breathed** (*theopneustos*, “inspired”), that is, God’s words were given through men superintended by the Holy Spirit so that their writings are without error. This fact was virtually taken for granted by the Jews. Then Paul asserted the “usefulness” of the Word. For each aspect of Timothy’s ministry, whatever it might be—**teaching** (instructing believers in God’s truths), **rebuking** those in sin (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 4:2), **correcting** those in error (cf. 2 Tim. 2:25; 4:2), **and training** (*paideian*, lit., “child-training”) **in righteousness** (guiding new believers in God’s ways)—for all of these and more the written Word of God is profitable. With it **the man of God** (one who must provide spiritual leadership to others) is *artios*—“complete, capable, proficient in the sense of being able to meet all demands.” To drive home his point still more emphatically Paul added **equipped** (*exērtismenos*, “furnished”) **for every good work** (cf. 2:21). Paul placed heavy burdens of

ministry on his young disciple in this letter, but he did not do so irresponsibly. He was confident of Timothy's commitment to and dependence on the Scriptures, and he was even more confident of God's ability to supply all Timothy's needs through the Word.

Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 609). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

LAST DAYS (3:1–9)

Like his remarks in the first letter (see 1 Tim. 4:1), Paul predicted the moral decline that would come in the last days. This does not at all deny that these conditions have been and will be present throughout the church age. It does say that the characteristics enumerated here will be more intensive and extensive as the end approaches.

In verses 2–4 Paul listed almost twenty different vices that will characterize people in the last days. Generally, they all describe those who place self in the place of God as the center of their affections. These people are to be avoided, even though they have “a form of godliness.”

Paul began the chapter by pointing out the characteristics of those who love money and pleasure. Then he focused on their depraved living and thinking. These false teachers preyed on “weak-willed women.” Such women were apparently easy prey because they wanted to pose as learned people. They were “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Paul compared the false teachers to “Jannes and Jambres.” Neither of these men is mentioned in the Old Testament, but according to Jewish tradition they were the Egyptian court magicians who opposed Moses (see Exod. 7:11).

SCRIPTURE (3:10–17)

Paul again appealed to his own experience and exhorted Timothy to continue the work. Paul urged Timothy not to be led astray by these imposters. Instead, Timothy should continue in what he had learned and had “become convinced of.” Timothy could be convinced of the truth taught in the Scriptures because (1) it had made him “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” and (2) the Scripture is “God-breathed.” Paul affirmed God's active involvement in the writing of Scripture. The Lord's superintending work is so powerful and complete that what is written is God's truthful and authoritative word.

Fields, W. C. (1972). 1 Timothy. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 767–768). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Last Days (2 Tim. 3:1–9)

Timothy must not be surprised at widespread evil. The struggle will go on to the end, “the last days.” Wickedness will become incarnate and show itself in many ways. Stay away from such (vv. 1–5)!

Ungodly teachers will wield strange powers over people. But like Jannes and Jambres, the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses, they shall fail. Their depraved minds will betray them (vv. 6–9).

Last Instructions (2 Tim. 3:10–4:5)

When ungodliness is on the rampage, Timothy can take courage from his firsthand acquaintance with the experience of Paul. Timothy was an eyewitness to Paul's teaching, his conduct, and his unchanging purpose (3:10). Timothy is reminded of the bitter persecution which surrounded Paul in and near Timothy's hometown of Lystra (Acts 14:8–20). But the Lord brought Paul through it (3:11).

This kind of opposition awaits all true Christians (v. 12). Trouble will mount. Evil will degenerate men more and more (v. 13). When this happens Timothy must grasp more firmly to the truth from the Scriptures which he has been taught since childhood (vv. 14–15). The Scriptures will be his mainstay. God inspired them. They will be his instrument in teaching truth, in separating error, and in equipping men for ethical, godly living (vv. 16–17).

Paul gives a solemn charge to Timothy to be aggressive in preaching the gospel in all kinds of circumstances, whether favorable or not (4:1–2). Witness will become more difficult as men turn from truth to fiction (vv. 3–4). He must keep himself under discipline, endure suffering when it comes, but continue to declare the gospel (v. 5).

Special point.—The sacred Scriptures of the early Christians were the books of the Old Testament. They were “inspired by God.” They are God-breathed. God was involved in their authorship. Time and testing had proven them. They are “profitable” or useful (3:16). Paul contrasts the Scriptures with the teachings and writings that were not God-breathed, that were sources of error and ungodliness. They were circulating in considerable abundance in Timothy's world—the Apocrypha, writings of the so-called mystery religions of the day, the records of pagan philosophers, the views of certain schools of thought like the Gnostics, etc. In the midst of all this literature, Paul counsels Timothy to make the Scriptures his guide. Time has proven them. God inspired them.

Later, in the midst of a massive outpouring of further written material of all kinds, the early churches became convinced that God had inspired numerous Christian writings—gospels, letters, and special accounts like Acts and Revelation. They now comprise our New Testament. They were proven by the tests of time and experience “so that the man who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good work” (v. 17).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith (pp. 1811–1813). Holman Bible Publishers.

3:8 Although the OT never names the Egyptian sorcerers who opposed Moses before Pharaoh (Ex 7:11–12, 22; 8:7, 16–19), Paul did not claim to quote the OT directly here. Ancient Jewish traditions (Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, Qumran scrolls, and rabbinic writings) also identify the magicians by these names. No good reason exists to question these traditions at this point.

3:12 Jesus and NT writers warned believers of impending persecution (Mt 5:10–12; 10:16–25; 1 Pt 4:12–16). The warning may seem to conflict with texts like Pr 16:7; however, both the warnings and the proverb are true. This warning must be balanced with Paul's acknowledgment that some unbelievers will respect Christians for their honesty, kindness, and wisdom, all of which produce peace when rightly received (1 Tm 2:2; 3:7; 2 Tm 2:22–26). The manner in which Christians responded to persecution, suffering, and death was one of the ways in which Christianity undermined paganism in the Roman Empire.

3:16 Some critics argue that *all* Scripture cannot be divinely inspired since a moral God could not possibly have inspired, say, the story of a horrible rape in Jdg 19:22–30. Scripture does record immoral acts. Inspiration guarantees its accuracy, not its divine approval. God’s approval or disapproval of human acts recorded in the Bible must be inferred from the comments of the biblical narrator, the divine response to the action, the purpose of the book as a whole, and biblical principles stated in other sections of Scripture.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Tim 3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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