

Perilous Last Days

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2nd Timothy chapter 3. 2nd Timothy chapter 3, verses 1-9. 2nd Timothy chapter 3, verses 1-9. There's a lot going on here.

So I'll have a few more sermons as I go through these verses. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God. 2nd Timothy chapter 3, but know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away. For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captive of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now as Janice and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith. But they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all as theirs also was. Amen.

Let us pray. Father God above, continue to enlighten our hearts and minds as we go through the text here to see that we are indeed in the last days and shall be until that very last day when Christ Jesus shall return and bring and usher in a new heaven and a new earth. Meanwhile God we see both glorious things, the expansion of your kingdom from a small sliver of land in the Middle East to the four corners of the earth in various ascended countries and peoples and groups.

This is a glorious and wonderful positive truth and happening over several centuries, two thousand years. At the same time, in parallel, simultaneously we see perilous times, difficult times, times in which men love themselves, love the things of this world rather than God. Thereby God we are seen here to be warned, to be protected and to prepare ourselves as we live in this world to look on the one hand at the glorious strength and power of the gospel and the spread of the gospel in our own lives, but also protect and preserve ourselves and our churches and our families from those who wish to carry us away into captivity down towards more and more corruptness and sin.

Father God protect us, we pray. Amen. We come to an interesting set of verses here, at least to me, because they've captured the imagination of millions of Americans.

You may not have grown up in this kind of way of doing things. I did. Some of you have certainly probably seen it, heard about it.

It's part of my experience. I was part of the 20th century's, one of their biggest movements amongst evangelicals and Christendom that spawned books and movies that centered on the return of Christ and that under dire conditions and circumstances. You know what that is? That's pre-millennialism dispensationalism.

We were constantly told to look for signs and amazing happenings as evidence that Christ is about to return. I thought it was going to happen in my lifetime. 88 Reasons Why Christ is Coming in 1988.

It's one of the big books. We were also told that Christ would come even sooner after there were signs like wars and rumors of wars. And there's been lots of wars and rumors of wars my entire life, unfortunately.

I no longer believe this approach to the end times, this kind of teaching. My view of the future, as described in the Bible, what we call eschatology or end times studies, is that we are all in the last days or the last times until the return of Jesus, which is the last day. There's a couple of texts that use the singular as opposed to the plural you'll see here.

This is known as amillennialism. Amillennialism meaning without the millennialism that we typically think of as the golden age like post-mills. They're expecting something in the future, there's great time and age, and in fact both the pre-mills and the post-mills think of something in the future of a thousand year reign.

Under different conditions, yes, but they both look to the future and expect something along the lines of a thousand, give or take, or a very long period of time. There's disagreements to be sure. Those two share that.

It's called chi-ism about the millennium there and revelation, whereas the amill is like, no, we're in the millennium now. You're misunderstanding. It's not the future.

We're in it now. Until Christ returns, he ends that millennial reign. So all means against those two positions.

That's all it means. We're not denying that there is a millennial. The point of what the Word of God teaches us about the future is to bring comfort and joy, brothers and sisters, even in the here and now.

It is not about idle speculation of what this or that nation, leader or even stock market will do. It's not showing the future in that sense. Rather, it's about the grand theme of paradise lost and paradise regained.

Revelation 22.1 paints this glorious picture for us to understand these passages, not just this one. And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the lamb. In the middle of the streets and on either side of the river was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. That's our glorious future.

And we have a taste of that being in God's kingdom right now in his church. It is not, of course, reliving the Garden of Eden in this picture of Revelation, nor even here and now, wherein we can fall again like Adam and Eve, but it's a new heaven and a new earth wherein

dwells righteousness forevermore, and there is no more tempter. Elsewhere in Revelation, heaven is described as a new Jerusalem, as a reminder.

A whole new world wherein righteousness dwells and Jesus, our Deliverer and King, is at the center of it all. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it. That is in the center of this kingdom, pictured elsewhere in Revelation as Jerusalem coming down from heaven.

Thus, what happens between now and the return of our Lord and our Savior is a time of growth, as well as a time of struggle. Growth of the kingdom from a small strip of land, as I said in my prayer of the Middle East, to a body across the face of the world is dumbfounding, if you think about it. Other religions have not spread so far and so wide the way Christianity has, and given its history back into the Jewish age of the church of old.

But the growth, as it happens with all other human growth, still has struggles. There's still difficulties both within the kingdom of God, with our own sins, and without. In this passage, we have the struggling part depicted here, of living in this age in which we find ourselves, emphasized to better prepare young Timothy for the trials ahead and therefore for us as well, brothers and sisters.

Although Timothy, of course, can tackle these things a little differently as a pastor, to be sure, there is much overlap and therefore application for the rest of us here in this text.

Last Days

So the first point I want to describe here and explain what he means by the last days. But know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come.

You read this as I read it for so many years as a young dispensationalist. Will come. It's pretty easy, Pastor.

Hasn't come yet. It's a future tense. And that's true.

That is true. But I'll give you a little hint already. The verb changes by verse 5 and 6, and he's keeping the same topic.

He moves from the future to the present. So it is applicable. What are the last days? The resurrection and ascension of Christ Jesus to a second coming.

And I'm not going to go to the book of Revelation. We went over eschatology on Wednesday night at what a year and a half ago or so through Venema's book, *The Promise of the Future*. And the book of Revelation there on that one passage that mentions a millennium, a thousand years, we believe we're in it right now.

But it's a relative term, the last days or the latter days or in these ages. It's a relative term compared to the Old Testament. Them and us.

Things have changed so much that we can speak of ourselves as a new era. If you remember, the prophecies came from the Old Testament, before the New Testament, painting the New Testament, and thus they were looking forward to what we were already experiencing and the apostles and the early church were experiencing in real time. It was new to them.

The Old Testament prophecies recognized as being fulfilled in Christ Jesus from Simeon to Mary to Zechariah to Jairus. The Old Testament saints look forward, even there in the New Testament era here, that is up to the time of Christ and the Gospels, they were still in the Old Testament for dispensational purposes, that is dispensation or the economy of Moses. They were still in that.

That's all dispensation means. That's what we mean by it. Now, we look back upon it, of course, and they look forward upon it, but it's the same period of the last days compared to them.

And as many of the Old Testament passages we read will describe it this way. And I want to, as before I go to those passages, there's three prominent ones, to remind us when it comes to reading the Old Testament prophecies, I know it can be confusing at times. I was very much confused.

I had studied and read this stuff. I was trying to figure out, am I a post mill? Because I'm not a dispensational pre-mill anymore. I knew that.

Am I a post mill? Am I a mall mill? Or am I a historical pre-mill? Make it even more complicated. They're a little, they're different than the dispensationalists. This helped me.

I believe I got it from Dr. Coppice. He described often the picture, them looking forward, Isaiah, Micah, Daniel of the future, like looking at two mountaintops. You look at two mountaintops, right? It looks like one mountaintop from this perspective, doesn't it? It just, telescopes is the language they use in some books, all into one picture it looks like.

When you look at it sideways, you realize it telescopes out as opposed to compressing in, and you see much is going on actually. Two major events, the first coming and the second coming. And they got, they conflated them.

They thought it would be a glorious second coming of Christ. We'll be kings, we'll be in God's kingdom, right? The disciples. I'm going to stand on Christ's left hand.

I'm going to stand on Christ's right hand. And Christ's like, no, it's the first coming, not the second. Because they were seeing this compressed in the texts that we're going to read some of.

When you realize now that we have the hindsight of the New Testament, oh, it's really stretched out and telescoped out further across a thousand years, metaphorically, this long age before Christ comes. So that's what helps me understand this, Pat. I hope it helps you.

Daniel 10.14. Now I've come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, plural, for the vision refers to many days yet to come. And as you know, Daniel is a future fulfillment of his time, from his time period up to the time of Christ. It's a picture of Christ in many of these passages of his death and resurrection of the Roman empire during his day and age.

And it's fulfilled so accurately that the liberals for a long time, and today they probably just ignored the book of Daniel, but when they kind of took it seriously, like in the late 1800s, they're like, well, clearly the book of Daniel was written after these events happened, after the rise of the Roman empire. I didn't know that. When I learned that, I was just dumbfounded because dispensationalists take the book of Daniel as completely different than the rest of us do.

To them, it's way in the future, just before the millennium, the seven year tribulation and then the millennium. So this says the latter days, to him, it's Jesus' time forward, right? Isaiah 2.2, you'll recognize this passage. Now, it shall come to pass in the latter days, the same phrase that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow to it.

Many people will come and say, come and let us go into the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways and we shall walk in his paths. Who are these people? What is he talking about? This mountain be established.

Obviously, it's metaphorical language, but to have a mountain, it should be exalted above all. That's the picture here. The greatest of all is God's future kingdom under Christ, the mountain of the Lord.

Another picture of the kingdom of God or Jerusalem, all of these different words or images of the same idea. And it be exalted above all the nations and all the nations shall flow to it. What's another word for nation? If you anglicize the Hebrew, you're not a Jew, you're a goyim.

That's what that is. This is the picture of the future. And I'll say it again, because it's amazing.

We're fulfilling it right now. We are the goyim coming to the nations to the mountain of God in the new Jerusalem here and now, which is beyond the boundaries of Israel. It's not the Jewish state anymore.

It never really was. It was the church and the skin of the Jewish state, as it were. This is fulfilled right here and not right now, and it's called the latter days.

I mean, we are literally coming to the temple saying, teach us God and he will teach us his ways and we shall what? Walk in his paths. And that's clearly a picture of being saved, of being under the covenant of grace, of being in his kingdom, but using the Old Testament imagery of the mountains and of Jerusalem and God's Old Testament kingdom language to reflect and explain what was beyond the Jewish mind at the time, that all this is going to disappear. No more temple, no more holy land, right? No more biological connection the

way it was connected this way, which is just Jewishness, although it wasn't purely that, as we know.

Non-Jews could join the church, and they did, of the Old Testament, but it was predominantly Jewish. It's no longer that. And of course, we know during the time of Christ and Paul, they really struggled with that.

They were very, very arrogant by that time. Micah 4.1. Micah 4.1. I will not read it. It's almost word for word like Isaiah 2.2. The mountain of the Lord, it says the latter days, describes it that way as well.

And again, in Micah 4, just like in Isaiah 2, you can see the strong language of Christ, a picture of the New Testament era in which the nations shall come and join because they don't have to be Jewish anymore. Everyone rejoices and can be saved and doesn't have to go down that route. It's all changed.

That's the picture. That's the latter days. That's us.

New Testament, however, uses similar language. Last days, latter days, or end of the ages. So on all three of those are plurals, days, days, and ages.

Acts 2.17. Peter says, and it shall come to pass in the last days, as he's quoting Joel, says God that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions.

Your old men shall dream dreams. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, on that sermon, that great sermon, quotes Joel, an Old Testament prophet, painting a picture of the future. And what does he say? And it shall come to pass in the last days.

And he says elsewhere, a couple of verses earlier, this, I'm only quoting part of this, this of Joel is now that which you see, which you think is confusing. You think they're drunk in the middle of the day, but they're not. They're filled with the Holy Spirit.

And I'm telling you why. Because Joel prophesied it. And Joel says it shall come to pass when? A thousand years from now, just before the millennium, before the seven year tribulation.

He's saying the last days is now right here at Pentecost. That's what he says. And again, I read that as a dispensationalist, I couldn't get around it.

I mean, he's literally arguing. Peter says, this passage in Joel is being fulfilled right before your face and uses the phrase latter days. I was always taught latter days is a thousand, you know, sometime in the future from now.

No, it's then and there. Hebrews 9.26, he then would have to have suffered often since the foundation of the world. But now once at the end of the ages, he has appeared to put away sin by sacrificing of himself.

So clearly that's a picture of the time Christ comes is described as the end of the ages. In that case, the end of the Old Testament ages. So that similar language, although the reference different, I'm saying we're in the ages now, the future ages of the latter ages before Christ comes.

Here, Christ had come the first time he sacrificed himself and appeared to put away all these things at the end of the ages. That is, the Old Testament mosaic era is now gone. 1 Corinthians 10.11. Now, all these things have happened to them as examples.

This is Paul quoting the Old Testament and they were written for our admonition. They weren't just written for the Jews or written for all of us today who are believers, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. There's that similar idea there.

Ages is often another way of saying time or seasons or years. It's just a way of them speaking. We like to be very precise in our scientific society.

They weren't like that. They just simply weren't. And so I'm contending with you in these verses that latter days, last days, even end of the ages is the same idea of a collection of multiple years of grand events that we find ourselves in in both these latter two passages, the end of the mosaic era or ages, and then the rest is we are in the last days as Peter argues in Acts 2.17, and of course this text.

But now these last days, in the last days, perilous times will come. The last day, so lastly here, I'm going to remind us that there is a last day, singular, the last day of all days. John 6.40, and this is the will of him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day, singular, the day of all days.

Matthew 13.39, the enemy who sowed them is the devil. Christ is explaining the parable. The harvest is the end of the age that we find ourselves in now, clearly, and the reapers are the angels.

This is when he separates the chaff from the wheat in the parable. And so, we are in the last days of the latter days, plural, looking for the coming singular day of the Lord. It's as simple as that, and I think it makes the most sense of all the texts.

It's both the good and the bad. We'll talk a little bit about the good in a bit, and these descriptions here of the last days is us. We are in it.

The description here of the last days then of deliverance and suffering, not just the name, the last days, but what does it describe as well? The Old Testament picture of deliverance and of great gain, as we saw in Isaiah 2.2, is that in the latter days, the going, the nation, so come and gather the God's kingdom in a way that had never happened before. It was just little spurts and little, you know, going here and there, becoming Jews and joining the Jews, or they had proselytes, maybe a few hundred at a time. Well, you have millions of Jews, but now you've got millions and tens of millions of Christians.

They're outnumbered, 101 maybe, I don't know. That's being fulfilled right now. That's a good thing.

That's a wonderful news. The latter days, in other words, isn't all about bad things. The last days isn't, this is the end of the world.

It's a glorious time in many ways, because I don't want to be under the priesthood anymore. I don't want to be under the temple anymore, and I don't want to have to deal with smelly animals and killing them. John 16.33, which records the words of Jesus to his disciples, in the world you have tribulation, but take courage.

I have overcome the world, and so we can persevere, even in spite of all this perilous time. And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, is the other half of the picture here. And this is in 2 Timothy 3.12, shortly after these verses, reminding us there is good news as well as bad news.

That is a bad news in the sense of, it's a reminder that there's going to be struggle. There's going to be hardship, even in the midst of growth of the church of God. Both are true.

What you have in the pre-mill schema, it seems to me, is so much emphasis on the bad. The church is just completely wiped out. Are there anyone who believes in the earth anymore? I don't know.

On the other hand, you have this, it seems almost like a Pollyannish optimistic, overly optimistic is probably a better word for it, picture of the future, that everything is just coming up roses, and the church wins everything, and what's persecution for a thousand years? I don't think so. It's going to be glorious. I think it's both, like it is in the human individual condition.

We have goods and we have bad at the same time in our life, don't we? And I think it's the same for the church collectively, until Christ returns. So, that's what I mean by description or the characteristic of the last days we find ourselves in. James 1, 2-4, My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience, and let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

The kingdom of God does indeed grow, but does not grow without birth pains and struggling. As the gospel grows beyond the boundaries of the Old Testament Israel, there is still much joy to be had, but also, of course, much resistance. Matthew 13, 36 and following, you read here in another parable, And Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house.

And his disciples came to him, saying, Explain to us the parable of the tares in the field. And he answered and said to them, He who sows the good seed is the son of man, and the field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom. Those are good things.

Those are positive things. That's the growth of the church. And Christ is expanding his kingdom since his resurrection in 33 A.D., so over 2,000 years ago.

But he continues here, But the tares are the sons of the wicked one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

You will have both the wheat and the tares, and it's a good summary of my position that we are in the millennium. We are in the last times, and it's both good and bad, depending on what you're looking at.

Evidence of the Last Days

Evidence of the last days, verses 2 through 5. So it is future tense.

I'm not going to argue with that, the last days, but I think that's because he's saying of the future and of now, it's all the same piece, basically. Perilous times. What kind of perilous times? Amazing perilous times? Many, again, at least it used to be for a long time in many circles, looking for shocking signs of the end times.

Wars and rumors of wars is one of the famous passages I still remember from Christ's words, of course. But forget the ordinary things. The description on the negative side of the sins and wickedness here, there's nothing miraculous per se.

In fact, you look at some of this and go, well, yeah, I kind of struggle with that. I'm kind of selfish. Yeah, they're just, as it were, ordinary sins, for lack of a better term.

They're just a collection of sins, all kinds of sins, problematic in their own way. I'm sure there are enough of a problem that he highlighted them because he didn't highlight other sins. Perhaps there were problems in the church that Timothy was dealing with.

That seems to be often the case. But it's nothing miraculous as such. There's not a picture here of demon possession, for example.

In the end times, there should be lots of demon possessions or something like that. No, it's just, there it is, bad things. We're in a fallen world.

And on the flip side, however, of course, is a good thing. You have the picture of the Old Testament prophecies of those being saved and being born again, of preaching the gospel. Those are signs of the times as well, not just a widespread growth of sin.

Isaiah 11, 11 and 9, Isaiah 11, 11 and 9. And they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people, for the Gentiles shall seek him, and his resting place shall be glorious. Clearly, that is the first coming of Christ.

It's quoted in the New Testament, the root of Jesse. He had come 2,000 years ago, and in fulfillment of that, there's also a picture of the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth, or going to start covering the earth with a great commission. We have knowledge in Alaska.

The North Pole is probably some Christians. I bet the guy who discovered it was a Christian. I mean, everyone was a Christian back then.

Can you imagine the Jews thinking there's the gospel, there's the good news, and the Messiah, and North Pole, and Alaska, and Russia, and China? That's the picture of the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. It's spreading more and more everywhere, and it starts with Christ coming as the root of Jesse. And of course, he shall be a banner to the people for what? The Gentiles shall seek him.

We are seeking him. This is being fulfilled right now, and that's one of the signs of the last days, is the preaching of the gospel, is what I'm saying. That's a good sign, not a bad sign.

That's a wonderful sign. Matthew 24, 14, and this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto the nations, and then shall the end come. Well, there you go.

So don't look on the bad things all the time. It's always looking for bad signs. It's a good sign.

It's wonderful signs. Evangelism, both at home and abroad. That's where we are.

Now, the ongoing wickedness here, Paul thought it was important enough, wrote it down for Timothy to deal with in his church. We have a general description here, perilous times, both externally, which seems, I think, to be perhaps the emphasis in the text, but internally as well, because we find out at the end, he's talking about false teachers within the church deceiving people. So maybe it's a little bit of both.

Maybe it's mostly within the church, because he certainly is writing to Timothy, but pastors still have to deal with people outside the church causing problems as well. The details here, let me go through this list. I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it, although I will drill into some of these, both the negative and the positive, right? Wherever a sin is, what is forbidden implies what is commanded, and what is commanded implies what is forbidden.

Clearly, these are all forbidden, and there's a positive side of these things that we should follow and eschew or flee these sins that are around us, and I will cover some of those in a future sermon. So for now, I'll give you a top level. For men will be lovers of themselves.

What do you notice about that phrase? What's the main verb there? It's lovers, isn't it? Lovers of themselves. And then you realize, wait, there's also lovers of money. Well, there's also people who are unloving, and then there are those who love all kinds of things in this world when they shouldn't, and so that is lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

That is used four or five times there, isn't it, in this text? It's not a constant theme, but it's certainly highlighted. This is something that concerns Paul in, I guess I'll just say in the church that Timothy's dealing with. Love of themselves, love of pleasure, love of money.

Negatively, no love or devotion to God because it's not agape here, it's phileia. You get Philadelphia from, right, that love. And then verse three, you'll know this word, estorgi, without natural affection, is in this list.

Lovers of money, that's obvious because we're surrounded by it, brothers and sisters. We are surrounded by it. I talked about that last week on the eighth commandment of coveting and greed and manipulating the economy and laws and businesses to their advantage to make more and more money because making a billion dollars a day just isn't enough anymore.

It's appalling, some of the stuff. I found out even more stuff I could have put in as examples. I was like, I think we know, we live in it, we're just swimming in it.

Boasters and proud, those two words seem to go together, go hand in hand it seems to me, and that's pretty obvious. If you have lots of money, you boast about it perhaps, you love yourself, you boast about yourself, you're proud of yourself. Look at me, look how wonderful I am and how inferior you are.

Blasphemers, not taking anything sacred, more and more of that of course we know in our society and entertainment and the like. Politicians misusing God's name left and right, they're blasphemers. Disobedience of parents, that's interesting.

That was also listed in Romans 1, there at the end of chapter 1. It's that long list of sins and it also mentions disobedience to parents. So kids aren't off the hook in other words, but of course it's worse when you're an adult acting like a kid towards your parents, which is probably what the picture is here. Unthankful, that probably goes hand in hand with disobedience to parents.

You're unthankful about your parents, a storgie would fit that as well. I look down upon my parents instead of having natural affection towards them. Even unbelievers often have very much strong affection towards their parents.

Unholy, that's clearly a general description, it's just they're wicked, they're dangerous wicked people. Unloving, there's that word or a storgie without natural affection, that's why I highlight that word because it's not just unloving the way you hear in English. In English we have that one word love and we have a few other words that are kind of like it but not quite.

Unforgiving, slanderers, maybe those two go hand in hand, but those are obvious words there in which people hold grudges instead of forgiving one another, slanderers and lying and backbiting. Paul has dealt with that elsewhere in Corinthians, for example. That's a problem.

Without self-control, it's the opposite of one of the fruits of the Spirit. Brutal, despisers of good, we see that more and more. It used to be there was enough peer pressure in society and the older generation would remember this in which people would be ashamed of saying

something blasphemous or cursing or to do other terrible bad things in public and now they seem to rejoice in it.

The more they can make Christians feel squeamish, the better. That's that picture of loving and being despisers of good and therefore loving wickedness. Traitors, that's interesting, not used very often in the Bible here.

Breakers of covenants and relationships, that would perhaps dovetail with the other word there, a storgie without natural affection. Headstrong and haughty, again, those would go together, hand in hand. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, verse 4. And that's pretty clear as well.

Pleasure, all kinds of pleasures we have, so much we can do in America, even the poor can have pleasurable experiences and go on vacations and spend money and get high or whatever else they do. It's so easy and in many ways you read this, you're like, okay, nothing new under the sun. How is this a particular sign that makes things stand out? Well, that's an argument in my favor, exactly.

It's just always going to be that way until Christ comes. You're going to have these problems. Now I think, of course, there are degrees of it.

Some things are worse. I'd rather not be in a war, thank you very much. But as it is in this description here, verse 5, having a form of godliness but denying its power, suggesting therefore they claim to be Christians, at least the bulk of them.

He's changing subjects and moving now more to something more practical for Timothy to deal with in the church. They have a form of godliness that is outwardly they look and sound holy, but inwardly they deny the truth and the gospel of Jesus Christ. We read of that in the prior chapter where they deny the resurrection.

They, as we read there, charge them before the Lord not to strive about words, to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers, verse 14. And they have strayed concerning the truth, saying the resurrection has already passed. They probably claim to be believers and probably leaders as I argued before in the church, but they had wrong, false doctrine and therefore deny the power of godliness or holiness.

They name themselves as Christian. To name yourself as Christian is to name yourself as publicly holy and separated by baptism. Don't forget that.

And so in this picture here of those claiming to have a form of godliness, I don't take it to mean that necessarily that they are always acting good, although it's probably part of it, but at the very least outwardly. That's the idea of form. They look like they're Christians, but they're not.

And they deny its power, the power of godliness in their lives. They are false shepherds, wicked teachers or parishioners pretending to be believers and are troublemakers otherwise. And Paul's warning is very clear.

And from such people turn away. Don't play patty cake with them. Don't try to be the best friends with them.

Now I know sometimes you can't do much. You have to be with them. They're your neighbor.

They're your family. This is true, but otherwise you simply walk away. You just cannot have a serious friendship with these people, because I know we want to make excuses sometimes, because especially if they're friends and family members, they may come over for Thanksgiving, but otherwise you don't do much with them.

You are walking away if they are dangerous and pretending to be Christians when they're not. We should heed the apostles' admonition here not to get sucked in, because often a lot of these sins kind of go together. When you see one sin in a criminal typically, I learned this in studying my book.

When I wrote my book on that research, there's all kinds of other sins that come with it as well. You just caught the big one and you put them in jail for it. The same with Christians around us or that people pretending to be Christians.

You find out a little more about them. There's a lot of other problems going on here. This takes some wisdom to be sure, but in general it's safer just to avoid.

Perilous Last Days

And then lastly here, perilous last days. Talk about the last days. Evidence of the last days or signs and pictures here.

A list of sins. Verses six through nine, for of this sort of those who creep into households and take captive people who are gullible, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. So he comes now to the present.

I mentioned it's in the future tense in verse one, the last days, perilous times will come. It's coming. It hasn't come yet, the way he's describing it here.

But here in verse five onward, we have the present tense. Having a form of godliness, but denying his power and from such people turn away. Right then and there, not in the future, but turn away now.

And then from there on out, verse six, for of this sort are, present tense, those who creep into the households and make captive of gullible people. So in the future, you're going to have more and more sinners, but even now you have these people, you have to deal with them, Timothy. There you go.

The latter days, the last days are even here and now. For of this sort of those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by

various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. They are described as dissolute, selfish troublemakers, those who seek out victims.

We talk about misery loving company, but you also have the wicked who love more company, wish to make more people wicked and made in their own image. And that's their plan here. And Henry describes them as those who crept into houses to insinuate, to sneak in.

And I'm one of you guys themselves into the affections and good opinion of people. And so to draw them over to their party, their party of wickedness. We have a picture here of these people who are being drawn away.

They are described as gullible, but more than gullible because gullibility is only one part of the picture here. It's they're loaded with sins, led away by many lusts. That's the problem.

Gullibility is something we should try to overcome to some degree to be sure. But it's when you're laden down with various lusts, whatever they may be, the enemy knows. And these people creeping into the household knows what the lust is, what the inordinate desire they desire.

And they dangle it before their face and say, I can give it to you. That's what the devil does. And being gullible makes it worse because they just believe them.

They don't test them and try them and examine them. And that makes them an easier target. People with uncontrolled lusts are easier targets.

We see this with gambling. There are gambling laws in Colorado. And now the drug laws we've had for five or six years are making things even worse.

People have problems and we're making it worse, unfortunately. And the worst part, of course, is in this picture is ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. We should be ever learning, but coming more and more to more knowledge and growing in sanctification and in wisdom.

But they aren't. They're never satisfied. It's like these are men creeping in and they are playing games and using the name of liberty to say, I can learn more and more things until I eventually deny the resurrection.

Ever learning, but never coming to the truth. Now as Janus and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds disapproved concerning the faith.

They're alluding to Exodus 8 and 9 where the magicians of Egypt were standing firm against Moses and the truth. The names Janus and Jambres are not in Exodus. It's kind of interesting here, but come from ancient Jewish writers and some books of theirs.

This is the names they thought they gave them. One commentator points out the Jewish tradition also saw them as the sons of Balaam. There you go.

According to Eusebius, he's the early Christian historian. He's a member of Sunday School class who went over him in early church history. The Pythagorean philosopher Numenius also refers to them.

So it was a common understanding of that. Look at that again, Pythagorean philosopher, right? Pythagorean theorem. They're actually philosophers.

If you remember your math class, math teacher taught you that. They're Greek and the Greeks also apparently knew about Exodus 8 and 9 and gave them a name. The knowledge of the Bible is much broader than we realize today.

Quite interesting. And the text ends with encouragement, but they will progress no further. God will stop them in their tracks in his time to be sure, but they will progress no further for their folly will be made manifest to all as theirs also was.

That is the folly of these wicked men coming after gullible people, laden down with sins and drawing away from Christ. Everyone will see it and they will be caught one way or the other just as theirs also was. That is Janus and Jambres were also caught and, you know, cast down and lost against Moses.

Today we have troublemakers, men who resist the truth, men who study much but learn little. They flutter around from church to church perhaps. One tradition to another tradition.

I've seen this. It's sad. One of the latest guys was a hardcore Baptist and a hardcore Presbyterian.

Now he's a hardcore Roman Catholic. They changed their views on Christ, the Trinity, the resurrection, under the cover of freedom, as I pointed out before. We should resist, of course, such things, ever changing, ever seeking, and never learning, to rather trust and rest in Christ alone and his clear word that's here, and to be aware of deception and not to be naive.

Let us take heed of Paul's warning, brothers and sisters. Yes, it is written for the pastor here, but it's certainly good for us as well. May the spirit of truth preserve us from the evil around us and the lies growing in these last days.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus, Maranatha. Let us pray. Indeed, God continue to grant us wisdom and strength to see through lies, to see through, God, those who would pretend to be like us but are not of us, who have a form of godliness but deny its power.

May this not be true for any of us here, I pray God Almighty, but rather all of us would have the power of the spirit within us, not denying the truth of the resurrection, the truth of the spirit, the truth of Christ and the gospel, but rather embracing it more and more and having more than a form of godliness, but the substance therein. Help us to this end, we pray God, day by day this week.