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# THEME:

# PERILOUS TIMES

# (OVERVIEW)

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9

ADEOYE, EMMANUEL (EVANG.)

In the Apostle Paul's last letter to Timothy, he instructed him to "know this, that in the last days perilous times will come" (**2 Tim. 3:1**). The "last days" Paul had in mind were not the "last days" Joel prophesied of (**Joel 2:28-32**) or the "last days" Jesus taught His disciples about (**Matt. 24**). Paul spoke of the last days of this present dispensation of grace.

The word "PERILOUS" typically means DANGEROUS, however, it also speaks of that which is difficult or hard to bear, even fierce or savage. Paul wanted to impress upon Timothy how crucial it was to understand the increasing dangers and difficulties believers would face in the last days of this present church age.

With increasing crime rates, new strains of disease, and growing terrorist threats, it is clear we are certainly living in "perilous times" today, but is this what Paul had in mind? When we continue reading in **2 Timothy**, chapter 3, we find a different type of peril. "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!" (2 Tim. 3:2-5).*

The physical dangers associated with crime and terrorism are simply a reflection of a deeper problem, a spiritual problem. Spiritual decline in the world has an adverse effect upon the hearts and lives of men leading to selfishness, pride, inability to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with other people (even family members), and a lack of self-control. People can become so out of control.

Paul warned Timothy to "shun profane and idle babblings for they will increase to more ungodliness, and their message will spread like

cancer (literally ‘gangrene’) (**2 Tim. 2:16-17**). The word “*profane*” speaks of that which is common, unholy, or ungodly. As believers, we are to avoid such useless discussions for they only promote more ungodliness and their destructive message will eat away at men’s hearts like a vicious disease.

Paul specifically names two men who engaged in such “*babblings*”: Hymenaeus and Philetus. Their problem began when they “*strayed concerning the truth*” (**2 Tim. 2:18**). To “*stray*” means to deviate from, to err, or to miss the mark. Their “*straying*” was caused by a dispensational error, “*saying that the resurrection is already past*.” This is a dangerous error for it can result in the “*overthrow*” of the “*faith of some*.”

When Paul warns about those who have “*a form of godliness*” but “*deny the truth of it*,” he describes them as “*ever learning but Never Able to Come to the Knowledge of the Truth*” (**2 Tim. 3:7**). Learning and education has been highly valued by men throughout history. Paul said of the Greeks of his day that they “*seek after wisdom*” (**1 Cor. 1:22**). The people of the city of Athens “*spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing*” (**Acts 17:21**).

*“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep (guard) by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”* (**2 Tim. 1:13-14**). The “*sound words*” Paul refers to here include all Scripture, but they refer specifically to the truth of the mystery, that message given by revelation to

the Apostle Paul for this present dispensation.

### **THE WICKEDNESS OF THE LAST DAYS**

This generally characterized the end time as one of turmoil, apostasy, and increased sin and oppression. This view was widespread despite the common expectation that all Israel would return to greater standards of holiness, ushering in the end and the restoration of Israel; others, believed that only the righteous Israelites would remain after these judgments. Paul does not anticipate a complete renewal of righteousness in the world until the day of God.

- 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**). In "last days" Paul includes the time in which he is living A period of great suffering preceding the end of the age.

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**). 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 he 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**).

"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. The choice is between loving pleasure or loving God. If we love God, we will 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.

**CONCLUSION - HYMN 690 BY J.H. STANLEY**