

II Timothy, Sermon #17

II Timothy 3

We are making a dramatic shift in this book today.

The last two chapters of II Timothy are the last writings we have by the Apostle Paul.

Vs. 1-9 gives us the description of the last days and the answer to how we live in these days is found in the last four verses.

I've entitled this next series of messages "Living in This World"

I ask you not to miss a one.

It is important that we understand not just the society we live in, but also the church environment.

II Timothy 3:1

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word

II Timothy 3:1-5

Let us pray

You may be seated.

Living in This World

Look at verse 1.

This phrase, “the Last Days” occurs five times in the New Testament.

Now one of those occurrences defines the phrase for us.

Hebrews 1:1-2 – two times.

One time in the past, that is the Old Testament and the second time through the Son,
that is the New Testament era.

So when did the last days begin?

They began with the ministry of Jesus Christ, some 2,000 years ago.

That’s right—we are living in the last days.

The expression is being used relative to all human history; the human race is at least
6,000 years old.

We are dealing with a period of time that comes at the end.

We are literally living in the last section of time allotted to the human race.

Now, in this entire period of time (vs. 3)—there will be perilous seasons—dangerous
and difficult times—fierce.

We are not talking about historical events such as the French Revolution – World War II
where millions lost their lives – or terrorism

So, how would we know if we are living during one of these savage or fierce seasons?

We would know because God described such a season beginning in vs. 2 and ending in
vs. 9.

Men shall be “26” different things—that’s how we will know.

We are talking about their character.

26 characteristics of people in a society that make for a perilous season, difficult,
dangerous—hard to deal with and savage.

When we talk about—what a man does, that's his actions.

What a man says, that's his speech

What a man is, that's his character—that will tell us if we are in perilous times.

Are we talking in this section about church people or non-church people?

Church people—the character of church people

Verse 5 suggests an outward appearance of religion, not true Christian faith; for they have never experienced the power of God in their lives.

Religion without reality

We are talking about Christianity/Church.

Listen, people, we are in a perilous time in the American Church.

“From such turn away” (3:5b).

What shall we do? Having nothing to do with them

A faithful believer should have nothing to do with the people God described in this section.

It is important to note that these people operated *under the guise of religion*. (3:5)

★ They are “religious” but rebellious!

★ They may look right in church, but their lifestyle tells on them.

“Perilous times shall come”

- This doesn't look like the conversion of the world, does it?
- It doesn't appear that the Church is going to bring in the Millennium or is going to convert the world.
- The Bible doesn't teach that it will – vs. 13 – says it's going to get worse and worse.

The common belief and teaching that the church is going to bring Utopia—that is the pipe dream of a great many idealists and a great many folk who have lived with their heads in the sand and have never faced reality.

Vs.2-9, this is an ugly picture, but we need to look at these verses because they present the best Scriptural picture of what is happening today.

Let me remind you of this: There is one coming that will help the world be a better place and will bring real hope—but he will be the greatest deceiver of all—the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the puppet of Satan

Now, what will be coming in the last days?

We have descriptions given us in the next few verses.

There is an emphasis on *love*—five of these characteristics deal with love.

The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.

How shall we know if we are in one of these perilous seasons?

I. First – Men shall be lovers of their own selves – vs. 2 – self-lovers

- Self-love is the sewer out of which the rest of these ugly sins come.
- Whenever love for self is raised, love for God and the things of God is lowered.

Most frightening development within the contemporary church is the wide acceptance and enthusiastic proclamation of self-love, not only as being allowable but as being the basic virtue.

Self-love is called self-esteem or self-worth, self-fulfillment, and positive self-image . . .

It is widely claimed that a person cannot love God and other people rightly unless and until he loves himself rightly.

That is completely opposite to what the Bible teaches.

Matthew 22:37-39, “Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’”

God commands us to love Him supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves but if we love ourselves supremely, we will not love God or our neighbors.

The roots of the modern infatuation with self-love can be traced to the humanism of the nineteenth century.

Each man is captain of his own ship and master of his own fate and cannot allow his self-will to be hindered or he does harm to his well-being.

Listen folks: “He that overvalues himself will undervalue others.

And he that undervalues others will oppose them.”

Self-love alienates men from God and from each other.

What a contrast self-seeking love is to the self-giving love that God requires.

Philippians 2:3-8, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* Jesus was the example of this.

Jesus, “*Made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*”

Self-love

II. Secondly – covetous (vs. 2), literally, silver-loving—loving money

When men love themselves best and silver second best, there is nothing people like that may not do.

Jesus told us, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon [materialism, money]”

A natural aspect of being lovers of self is being **lovers of money**, a term which represents materialism, the craving for possessions.

God is not speaking of the rightful earning and use of **money** to feed, clothe, and otherwise provide necessities for ourselves and our families.

The Bible says, “. . . *if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” (II Thess. 3:10).

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.

Notice the third characteristic dealing with love in vs. 3

III. Vs. 3 – without natural affection, 3 words, without family love, abortion, homosexuality, wife battering, divorce, child abuse, incest

Those are all marked by an absence of normal family affection.

The phrase “without natural affection” is the translation of one word that describes “family love.”

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

Romans 1:18-27

Go back to II Timothy 3

IV. Look at the end of vs. 3—despisers of those that are good—this is one Greek word and the root of that word is love.

Without a love for good things, people

It refers to people that are missing a proper appreciation and affection for good things, like good literature, good music, good art, good culture, good manners, good dress.

Values that are so misplaced that they have no affection for things that are normal.

V. End of vs. 4, “men will be lovers of pleasure”—self-loving, silver-loving, perverted loving, and pleasure loving

By the way, the English root of the word pleasure is “please.”

- What pleases me.
- Men love what pleases them.
- They will love what pleases them more than they will love who? God.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

Never has there been a time when so much money has been spent in order to provide pleasure. Look at the athletic and entertainment events today.

People, do you recognize this society?

In our society—churches are looking to provide pleasures for people

Are we living in perilous times?

Lovers of pleasure translates a single Greek word . . . a compound of *philos* (loving) and *hedone* (**pleasure**), from which we get “hedonist.”

Pleasure, especially in this context, is not limited to the desire for comfort, fine food, sexual satisfaction and other indulgences.

A self-centered person also derives perverse pleasure from such things as malicious gossip, brutality, and treachery.

His satisfaction comes, in part, from the pain and misery he sadistically inflicts on others, including parents and supposed friends.

Those who love **pleasure rather than God** cannot possibly obey either the first or the second great commandments.

Jesus made clear that a person can have only one god, and for the self-lover, self is god.

Satan has never had a shortage of false gods with which to tempt man, and by far the most useful to his cause is the god of self.

Satan fell from his exalted and magnificent state in heaven because he became his own god, and since that time he has endeavored to entice fallen mankind into the same form of idolatry.

It is a tragic thing when a whole society misplaces its love, and especially the Church.

“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

Psalm 16:11, *“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”*

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

Remember Moses . . .

Hebrews 11:25, *“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.”*

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.

Jesus said, “If any man will come after Me—“

1. Let him deny what? Himself

How do we show our love of God? By our obedience

Every time we make the decision to obey God – we demonstrate that we love God more than our corrupt society that primarily loves itself

Vs. 10 & 14 – “but thou” – we are different; we are Bible-believing, God-loving, holy-living people

We are taking care of God’s business first, our business second.

If you are looking for a church that is all about you—you’ve come to the wrong place.

We live in perilous times – we are in contrast to our culture/churches

We will be in the minority

- I am simply saying this—the man or woman of God and the family of God and the church of God is going to live a life and lifestyle that is completely cross-grain in perilous times

Let us not fall and give in to loving ourselves first

If we indulge our children this way, it will destroy our home.

And, if we do it in the church, it will destroy our nation.

Living In This World

Let us stand for closing invitation.

We are to love our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and let us love our neighbor as ourselves.

We need to think about what we love.

We need to cultivate love of God and love of one another or we will fall victim ourselves.

The way God has provided for us to stay in the right path—is the Word of God.

Are we continuing in it?

Are we learning it?

Are we allowing the Word to affect us? Through rebuke, correction, and instruction?

We are living in perilous times.

I told you earlier the real problem is the heart of man

It is deceitful, lustful, and sinful

And the only medicine, the only cure for sin is Jesus Christ