



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

“MEN WILL BE...” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:2-4

COLORADO

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In our study of 2 Timothy 3, it is important to remember that Paul isn't instructing Timothy regarding the world and those who could care less about Jesus Christ but rather those people who belong to the family of God and want to be known as part of the church. So “men” does not refer to mankind in general but those “holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power”. (2 Timothy 3:5) It is these who pose a grave threat to the body of Christ and will continue until our Lord's return. They are shameless in excusing even their worst sins, biding falsely under God's name. They manage to keep the appearance of being godly just like the Pharisees in Jesus day who enjoyed a reputation for outstanding holiness and keeping of the law as though they were blameless. Hypocrites deceive people by wearing masks of godliness.¹ Their sins and the characteristics that follow are clearly spelled out by Paul in his warning. Keep in mind that it is important to recognize these people quickly and make sure that none of these sins are in your life as well. Paul warns, men “will be” sinful and deceitful in the church. Be on guard, watch constantly with vigilance and be prepared to deal with these imposters. This is the setting we find as we proceed with our study in 2 Timothy 3.

I. “MEN WILL BE...” 2 TIMOTHY 3:2-4

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. Men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” 2 Timothy 3:1-4

The first characteristic Paul reveals can be seen as the foundation for all other sin. We looked at it in our last study. It is a pride of self-love from which all other sin flows. The danger which Paul refers to regarding these “difficult times” will not be from war, famine or any other disaster, but rather from the wickedness of depraved people in the church; this errant leadership was very apparent in Timothy's day and in his church at Ephesus. It is false teaching and sinful living that continues to be rampant in our churches today.² We must be reminded that the essence of Christianity is not the enthronement of self, but rather removing of self from the throne of our life. Here, Paul is referring to one who is utterly self-centered with a self-love that leads to all sorts of sin. Whenever a love for self is raised, a love for God and others will be lowered. Thus Paul begins his list with “men will be lovers of self” and closes with 2 Timothy 3:4, “rather than lovers of God.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

You will remember that Timothy pastored the church in Ephesus. Later, the very things Paul warned against eventually infiltrated this church known for their passion and love of God. The Apostle John would later record our Lord's words in Revelation 2:4-5 about this church, “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first: or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.” This church eventually replaced their love for God with a love for self. Tragic. Yet how many churches today would be characterized by the same?

And so the list Paul gives in 2 Timothy 3:2-4 not only describes a breakdown in morals, but also human relationships from the family to social behavior, from becoming materialistic, governed by the pursuit of pleasure and prosperity.³ Again, we must keep in mind this refers to people that are actually in the church, who claim to be believers. What are these characteristics that Paul wants Timothy and all believers to be aware of that will be present in these “last days”?

A. “MEN WILL BE LOVERS OF MONEY” - 2 TIMOTHY 3:2B

Ephesus was perhaps the wealthiest market in the ancient world. Some of the greatest roads in the world met in Ephesus; from the north, south, east and west. Thus these widely used trade routes poured wealth into the lap of Ephesus and the city was known as the treasure house of the ancient world. It was a prosperous and materialistic civilization. But there is a peril when people determine prosperity by material things. Keep in mind, we may lose our souls far more easily in prosperity than in adversity.⁴ And thus, the natural tendency that flows from “lovers of self” would be “lovers of money”. Money is often the means for gratifying yourself. It refers to having a greed or craving for money, covetous, lovers of silver. For those whose chief pursuit is for personal pleasure, they will love money which can supply those desires. Paul addressed this in 1 Timothy 6:5 referring to imposters and false teachers, “who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.” For many, the appearance of “godliness” has brought great wealth but they have twisted godliness for their own means. The false gospels of self-love and material prosperity go together promoting each other and feeding on each other.⁵ But Paul writes in the next verse, “Godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.” Godliness is the gain, having a life that pleases God is of greatest gain, not material wealth.

B. “BOASTFUL, ARROGANT, REVILERS...”-2 TIMOTHY 3:2C

Next Paul reveals that people who profess to be Christians will be boastful. They will brag about things and try to bring honor to themselves when it does not rightly belong to them. Not only will they be boastful, but arrogant as well. Arrogant refers to being proud or conceited. It's having an air of superiority with a disdain for others because you think you are above others. This is the man God will resist...the proud. (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:15, Proverbs 3:34) What's

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interesting is that they can even appear to be humble, like the Pharisees (Luke 18:9), but deep down there is a contempt for everyone else. People like this nourish on all consuming, all pervading pride; and in their hearts there is a little altar where they bow down before their own image of self.⁶

And it doesn't stop there. These can be “*revilers*” which means they speak evil, scornful words with the intent of heaping injury on others through abusive language. Their speech is abusive and injurious to others and against God. Pride will always give rise to insult. It breeds a contempt for others resulting in hurtful actions and wounding words.⁷ 1 Timothy 6:4 testifies to these sad truths regarding some of those in the church.

C. “DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS, UNGRATEFUL, UNHOLY”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:2D

Disobedience to parents is next on Paul's list of evils. The disobedience of children to parents has become epidemic. And children who rebel against their parents have no problem about rebelling against any authority.⁸ Heibert writes this, “When children don't learn to be obedient to their parents who God set over them, it is likely they will not be obedient to any other authority, whether human or divine. This is a frightful characteristic of our own time.”⁹ These are not only disobedient, but rebellious. And this attitude undermines the family and the church.

Paul goes on to say that people will be “*thankless*”, they will refuse to recognize the debt they owe God and others. That ingratitude leads to a blindness. They are not appreciative towards others or towards God. By contrast we are to be as Christ said in Luke 6:35, “*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend expecting nothing in return: and you will be sons of be Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.*”

Paul writes there will be “*unholy*” people in the church. This word doesn't refer to just sinful but rather one who is driven by their self-love to gratify their flesh as much as possible with passions of whatever sort with no thought to decency or personal reputation.¹⁰

D. “UNLOVING, IRRECONCILABLE...”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:3-4

These terrible times Paul speaks of are our times. “*Unloving*” refers to one who cares nothing for the welfare of even those who are closest to him. Rather the concern is merely for what others can do for him and thus heartless. Tragically the church is not exempt from such unloving and heartless behavior. The news reminds us of that daily.

Another characteristic is that of being “*irreconcilable*”. It refers to those who won't forgive and don't want to be forgiven. Their concern is only for themselves and are determined to have their own way, end of discussion. They are all about pleasing themselves.

Paul goes on with “*malicious gossips*” who desire to hurt and harm others to promote their own self-interest even if it involves damaging reputations and destroying lives. “*Without self-control*” refers to the unwillingness to control the pursuit of passion without any shame. There's “*brutal*” referring to one who is insensitive even to the point of malicious harm towards others. “*Haters of good*” refers to those who hate what should be loved and love what should be hated. As if that wasn't enough, lovers of self can become “*treacherous*.” Matthew 10:21-22 give clear example of such treachery and betrayal, even among family. “*Reckless*” refers to careless and rash behavior without regard to others. “*Conceited*” means to have an extremely elevated view of oneself to which 1 Timothy 6:3-4 speaks to.¹¹ In case you think you've heard enough, the list doesn't stop there.

E. “LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD”- 2 TIMOTHY 3:4

These people in the church will have a love for their depraved and sinful pleasures rather than for God. (John 3:19) While claiming to be godly, they will not desire God. Rather their pursuit will be their own sinful passions to which Satan will never run out of pleasurable temptations. These are the ones Paul warns about in the “*last days*.” The enemies of God and His people will continue to thrive till the Lord's return and the alliance of false teaching and ungodly living will continue to afflict the church.¹²

But be encouraged by these words from 1 John 5:5, “*And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*” And from John 16:33, “*These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*”

¹Calvin, John, 1509-1564. *The Crossway Classic Commentaries; 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. Crossway: Wheaton, Illinois, 1998. Pg.148.

²Calvin, John, 1509-1564. *The Crossway Classic Commentaries; 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*. Crossway: Wheaton, Illinois, 1998. Pg.148.

³Williams, Peter, *Opening Up 2 Timothy*. One Day Publications: Ryelands Road, Leominster, New Zealand, 2007. Pg. 68.

⁴Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.207-208.

⁵MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.112.

⁶Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.210.

⁷Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.210.

⁸MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.113.

⁹Hiebert, D. Edmond, *Second Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1958. Pg. 85.

¹⁰MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.114.

¹¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.114-116.

¹²MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.106.