

The Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-9

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I want you to look at 2 Timothy 3:1. Paul says, “This know also, that in the last days,” there’s our term, “perilous,” or savage or difficult, “times shall come.” Paul, as you know, is writing from prison expecting to be executed, but his mind was not on himself, it was on his young protege, Timothy, who was in the city of Ephesus pastoring during very difficult times there. The future of the church and the preaching and truth of the gospel that Paul wanted Timothy to be able to carry on was on Paul’s heart and mind. He was actually passing the torch to young Timothy. Paul gives these words to Timothy to fortify and to give him what I call a prophecy of the coming apostasy in verses 1-9, and in verses 10-17 (we’ll get it in two weeks, actually), Paul helps him to stand strong and know how to stand against the coming apostasy that is coming into the world.

The Bible teaches that in the days just before the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, in what we’re going to call the rapture (I’ll talk about that more in just a moment), that the world is going to get darker. It’s not going to get lighter. It’s not going to get better, it’s going to get worse. The Bible wants us to be conditioned and prepared and understand. Now, we’re not to be pessimists and we’re not to be just full-blown optimists, we’re supposed to be realists. We’re optimistic because we know the Lord is coming again, but we’re also realists because we know that the world is going to get darker and darker and darker until Jesus Christ returns.

Paul does these four things I want you to note in this passage. From verses 1-9, he first warns us there’ll be perilous times (verse 1), then he tells us that there will be a time of perverted love, and we’ll look at it in verses 2-4, he gives us an understanding of the profession of godliness that’s false (verse 5), and then he breaks down the practices of the apostate false teachers in the last days. Let’s look first of all at verse 1. Paul says, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” Stop right there. Paul wanted Timothy to know something. Notice in verse 1, “This know,” and in the Greek it’s kind of in the present tense. It’s like, “I want you to constantly, continually, ongoingly, know something, Timothy, and I want you to remember this,” “that in the last days,” they are going to be marked by, “perilous times.” Two things, “last days” and “perilous times.” We hear that title a lot today, “It’s the last days,” or “It’s the end of time,” but I want you to understand something that’s very important. In the New Testament, the Bible describes the last days as actually from the time of Christ’s first coming and advent, some say more specifically His public ministry, and until the end of the tribulation period, the Second Coming. Actually, the last days have been going on for almost two thousand years now.

Write down Hebrews 1, where the writer of Hebrews says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners,” in different times and in different ways, God “spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,” then he made this statement, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by,” in, by, or through, “his Son.” Notice he said, “...in these last days,” so way back when the book of Hebrews was being written and penned, these were actually the last days. Paul is

actually saying that the last days began with the first advent and will be finished or conclude with the second advent. You might say, "Well, gee, John, that really disappoints me. I thought we were really living in the end of time," and my answer is that we are living in the end of time. You need to understand something. You need to understand that God has a plan and a purpose for the church, God has a plan and a purpose for the nation of Israel, and God has a plan and a purpose for the world, the Gentile world. I don't have time to get technical or go off into this, and I've taught on it before, but if you're going to understand Bible prophecy (the scholars call it eschatology, the study of future things), you're going to have to keep those categories in mind—the program for the church, the program for the Jewish people, the nation of Israel, and God's program for the Gentiles or for the world.

What is happening right now is we are living in the Church Age. It's called the dispensation or the period of time of the church. This began, I believe, on the day of Pentecost, that when the Holy Spirit fell in Acts 2, the church was born. That was the formation of the church, and they were baptized into Christ and became one body, of Christ being the head. From that day until today, everyone who is saved is actually put into the church, the body of Christ, and we're united to Christ, our living head. When will this Age, that started at Pentecost, come to an end? It comes to an end when the church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air at what we know as the rapture of the church.

There's kind of a move today in a lot of circles to deny this doctrine called the rapture, but I want to give you a few verses (if you're taking notes, you can write them down) where this is disclosed. It's first disclosed by Jesus in John 14. When Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions," in the King James, some have abiding places. He's describing heaven. He said, "I go to prepare a place for you," heaven, My Father's house, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." No signs of the moon turning to blood or the temple being built in Jerusalem or earthquakes or famines or pestilence, none of that, just "I will come again." I believe that Jesus was revealing that He would come to take the church to heaven, that that would be the rapture.

Another place you'll find the rapture is in 1 Corinthians 15, and at the end of that chapter (about verse 51) a whole chapter on the resurrection of the dead, Paul actually says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep," it's a metaphor for die, "but we shall all be changed," and listen to what he said, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...this mortal," referring to our body, "must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Then, he went on to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Paul was talking about the rapture. When we get raptured, we who are alive when the rapture happens, our bodies will be changed in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. That word "moment" we get our word atom from it. It's just a quick, little millisecond,"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," we will be metamorphosized, we'll be changed—my corruptible body will be an incorruptible body, and my mortal body will become

an immortal body—and we'll be caught up to meet the Lord.

We haven't gotten to the classic passage yet, it's in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-19. That is the classic passage from which we get the word "rapture" from. Paul's writing to the believers in Thessalonica and said, "But I would not have you to...sorrow...even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you...that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." That metaphor, "fallen asleep" is only used of Christians and only in reference to the physical body. It's never referenced to the soul. The soul does not sleep. There's no doctrine of soul sleep in the Bible. The moment a Christian dies at this time, he goes immediately to be with the Lord, but your physical body is either cremated, dumped in the ocean, or buried in the grave and it decays, and it's going to be resurrected just as Christ's body was resurrected.

When Paul says, "...the dead in Christ shall rise first," a Christian who has died has already gone to heaven—they're with the Lord—but their body will be resurrected. That's one of the most common questions asked about that passage, "Well, what do you mean the dead are raised first? I thought when you died you went to heaven?" You do, but your body will be resurrected. The rapture involves first the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the translation of the living in Christ, so Paul says, "...we which are alive and remain shall be," listen to me carefully, "caught up." If you were reading from a Latin Vulgate translation, it would have the word *raptus* there from which we get our word rapture. It's the Greek word *harpazo*. It means to snatch up or to take up or to be caught up by force, and I believe that's a reference to the rapture. Now, the rapture is not the same as the Second Coming. The Second Coming will happen at least seven years later after a time of tribulation when God is dealing with Israel—remember I said you gotta have the church, Israel, and the world—God's going to be dealing with Israel to prepare them for the coming of their Messiah. So, we will be caught up to meet the Lord. That will be the end of the Church Age.

You say, "Are we close to the rapture?" We don't know, but what we're beginning to see in the world is the stage set for the tribulation, which will precede the Second Coming. Now, if the stage is being set for the tribulation in the world, how much more imminent is the rapture of the church. The doctrine of the rapture is taught as an imminent hope. It means nothing has to happen. We're not looking for any signs for the rapture. Do you know that it could actually happen before the Bible study is over tonight? It's not because I'm going to go long, either. You can get raptured in your sleep tonight. That would be awesome! You don't have to get up and go to work tomorrow. If you're on your way to school and you have to take a test or an exam, it's like, "Lord, send the rapture right now," you know. If you have a bill to pay, "Lord, just take me home." It could happen at any moment. There are no signs that have to be fulfilled. Everything's ready for the church.

Now, who will go up in the rapture? Every Christian. If you're saved, you're going up. If you're not saved, you're not going up. The rapture is not a reward for the super saints. It's not for the Deeper Life Club. "If you're a carnal Christian, you won't get caught up." No, that's not true.

Every child of God will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

After the church is caught up, the Bible says that there's going to come a man of sin. He's called the "son of perdition." We most commonly hear him referred to as the antichrist. That means two things. It means he is against Christ, and it means he takes the place of Christ. This antichrist, in brief, is going to be a world-ruling dictator, and the world is going to be unified. All the talk today and all the buzz today about a global issue, a global community, a need for global warming and we need global this and global that, it's all the stage being set for a unified world and a one-world leader.

It amazes me today how crazy people can become leaders of nations, how politicians that are just insane can get voted for. I'm not referring to Donald Trump, by the way, in case you're wondering. If you want to put him in that category, you can go ahead, but I'm just saying there's a lot of crazy politicians out there. I sometimes think, I can't believe that person can get elected! This is just insane! What are we thinking? It's going to be very easy for this wicked world ruler who's going to be empowered by satan, and in a sense Jesus was God in the flesh, he's going to be satan incarnate. He's going to be satan in the flesh. He's going to be empowered by satan, and he's going to bring the world under his power. The world becomes one. He actually has a sidekick known as the false prophet. You can read all about him in the book of Revelation, specifically chapter 13 describes quite graphically this man of sin who will come on the scene. He's also talked about by Daniel and in Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica.

What he does is makes a covenant with the nation of Israel for seven years. That seven-year covenant, which brings peace to the Middle East, which no one has been able to accomplish nor will until the antichrist comes, is going to be the last seven-year period of Israel's existence. It's not an accident that they're back in Jerusalem. It's not an accident that they have moved back to the holy land and have taken the capital of Jerusalem. It's not an accident that they've become a nation, they're born again out of the past. God has a purpose and a plan for Israel. One of the primary purposes for that last seven years known as the tribulation, and the last three-and-a-half God's great tribulation of His wrath being poured out, is to bring Israel to repentance and to bring them to faith in Jesus as their Messiah. Paul says, "So all Israel will be saved." God is going to restore Israel and bring them back during that time. He is going to also pour out His wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world and punish the unbelieving world for rejecting Christ. It's going to be a horrible time.

I don't know if you saw on the news these big tanks that are burning there blowing toward Houston, Texas, but that black billowing smoke and I thought during the tribulation just the fires, the earthquakes, and all the devastation that's going to happen. It's going to be crazy. Jesus said it'll be a time of tribulation like there never has been on planet earth. All of this is God's purpose and plan for the church, we're living in the last day but they'll be caught up; for the nation of Israel, this covenant will be signed at that seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, that last seven-year period that clicks off on God's time calendar; and for the world to be judged and brought to judgment for their rejection of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will then return in His

Second Coming with power and glory and establish His Kingdom on earth for a thousand years. What happens at the end of the tribulation is the Second Coming, then there will be a thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth, and then there'll be a new heaven and a new earth. That was just kind of a quick overview all based on verse 1 of this verse, "...in the last days perilous times shall come." Right now we're living in these perilous times which I think will intensify up till the rapture and escalate into the time of the great tribulation.

Now, that word "perilous times" is found in only one other place in the Bible. It's in Matthew 8:28, and guess how it's used there? It's used for the two demoniacs of Gadara. These two men who were demon possessed—cutting themselves with knives, living in the caves, that no one could control—it says that they were very savage and very wicked. Many believe, in light of that, that this last-days scenario will be demonically energized and empowered by satan. Obviously, we see so much demonic stuff that is going on in our world and in the culture around us today, so we should expect this. Basically, the Bible is a realistic book. There's a future and there's a hope. There's a new world coming, but it's only going to get darker. You know, the Jewish day started at sundown and got darker and darker and darker until the sun came up. Our day starts at sunrise, so in God's economy, the world's going to get darker and darker and darker until Christ comes and brings in the new Kingdom, so we should expect these perilous times.

The second thing Paul makes mention of (verses 2-4), and this is quite detailed, is that there will be perverted love in the world. I say "perverted love," though there's many different descriptive terms here. They all come out of a perverted love. Let's read verses 2-4, and then we'll unpack each phrase. He says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves," notice the word "for" in verse 2. Perilous, savage, or demonic times are going to come. They were starting in Timothy's day and they continue and intensify in our day. Here's the reason, "For men," you know, if it weren't for men, there wouldn't be any evil in the world. Sometimes people ask me, "Pastor John, why is there so much evil in the world? Why does God let evil in the world?" I absolutely sometimes tell them if God were to get rid of evil, He'd have to get rid of you and me. "Why does God allow wickedness in the world?" Well, He'd have to start with getting rid of you right now because the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it. "Well, I don't want Him to get rid of me. I just want Him to get rid of other really bad people. I'm just bad but not super bad." So many of the atrocities in the world today man brings upon himself, and for God to bring peace to the world, He would have to eliminate mankind altogether. By the way, the word "men" there is mankind, so if you ladies feel pretty good about yourselves right there...sorry. It's everybody, mankind.

Paul says, "For men," mankind, "shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and we're going to see in a moment they'll have, "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Charles R. Swindoll in his commentary on this section actually calls this a "Depravity on Parade." I like that. What Paul is doing is describing the characteristics and the characters of

people who live in these times. We actually see this, it's so prevalent today.

I want to go over these so you need to buckle your seatbelt. I'll try not to tarry too long on any of them because there are eighteen characteristics of people living in the last days. The first one in verse 2 is "lovers of their own selves." Now, we could just stop right there. Do you know anybody that loves themselves? Do you know anybody that's really into themselves, that's narcissistic and every time they go by a mirror they've gotta check themselves out for awhile and go, "Man, I'm looking good! I'm awesome! I'm incredible. I'm amazing." They're just filled with self love. It heads the list since it is the essence of all other sin. Sinful man apart from God loves himself more than God. It's actually going to end with "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." I want you to note how often the word "love" appears in these verses.

The problem in the world today is that we know the price of everything and the value of nothing. You know, there are people and there are things, and we should love people and use things but instead we love things and use people. We don't understand what is really valuable. We love ourselves. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The problem isn't that we need to learn to love ourselves, the problem is we do love ourselves. The problem is we don't love others as much as we love ourselves. It starts with self love, and I believe that all the sinful characteristics of these people kind of flow out of this horrible self love. We have Self Magazine and Me Magazine, we're so absorbed with ourselves.

The second characteristic is covetous. The word "covetous" actually carries the idea of lovers of money. It's a phileo of money. They love money. They are materialistic. Note the first two that we're living in the last days, people are going to love self and love money. The reason they love money is because money helps them get what they want, right? Money, money, money, money, money. I need money to get what I want because I love myself, and I want to do what I want. They're covetous. The Pharisees were referred to as covetous, the love and the desire for money and more things.

The third is in verse 2, "boasters." They brag about themselves. So, they love themselves, they love money, and they're braggers and boastful, and they brag about themselves. Fourthly, they're "proud." The word can be translated arrogant. They're proud. They're haughty. They're arrogant. Then, they're "blasphemers." In other words, they speak slanderously against God and man. Some translations have revilers. Have you ever heard somebody put down the idea of God, mock or laugh at God, laugh at the idea of God, call God names, or speak blasphemously?

Notice sixthly, "disobedient to parents." They rebel against parental authority. Parents are ordained of God as His authority in the home. "Children, obey your parents...(which is the first commandment with promise)." I believe, by the way, if you put the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone, the first tablet is relating to my relationship to God. I believe, "Honour thy father and thy mother," belongs on that first tablet of stone which is commandment number five, by the way. It indicates that God's authority in a person's life is their parents, but we see a rebellion

against that established authority. I'm convinced of this is true, that if a child doesn't learn to respect authority in the home, they won't respect authority in society—they won't respect authority on the job, they won't respect authority at school, they won't respect authority in the community—so they must learn authority that God has placed over them in their parents.

It also has to do with rejecting God's authority overall as a principle, but they are disobedient to parents. We see juvenile delinquency and juvenile rebellion going on like never before in our culture. When politicians are bemoaning the problems of our culture, it's so frustrating to me that they don't realize that it can be traced back to the breakdown in the family. It's so simple. We don't support God's design for the family and we do all we can socially and politically to weaken marriage and the institution of marriage in the home, and then we reap the results in our culture today with juvenile delinquency and the crime rate going up and all the evils of our society that can be traced back to the lack of discipline and showing respect to authority in the home.

Here's number seven. Let's move through this list, it's still in verse 2; that is, they are "unthankful," or ungrateful. They love themselves, they love money, they're boasters, they're proud, they're blasphemers, they're disobedient to parents, they're unthankful, and ungrateful. It's a spirit of entitlement. Man, isn't that the truth today! We have a whole generation that thinks that they have a right—everyone wants to know their rights. No one is talking about their responsibilities. Everyone wants to know what their rights are.

Here's number eight. Look at it with me (verse 2), "unholy." What that means is that to them there is nothing sacred. They are what we call secularists. Everything is secular, and nothing is to be sanctified by God—there is no God, there is nothing that is sanctified by God, life is not sacred, marriage is not sacred, human life is not sacred. They are totally secular.

Notice ninthly (verse 3), "Without natural affection," this is the one I've for years found quite fascinating. That term "without natural affection" has a couple different connotations. It means that which is considered to be normal affection and love. Now, normally you would consider that parents would love their children, children would love parents, husband would love his wife, and a wife would love her husband, brothers and sisters would love each other, families would love one another, but basically it's saying there's no natural affection. There's no natural love. There's no storge—no family love. I believe you can almost translate it that way—no love for family.

In the last days, we will see a breakdown in the family. When we legalized same sex marriage, it was a horrible step toward breaking down God's institution of marriage in our nation. When you look at Romans 1, which is a very similar kind of list as what we find here in this text, how it ends with reprobate minds that can't discern right from wrong, we're at the bottom of that list. We're at the end of that list. It starts with the knowledge of God and ends with a reprobate mind that doesn't work properly. We have a whole nation that have minds that can't discern good and evil or right and wrong or don't work properly. Basically, what it's saying is that there is no love of family.

I recently saw on a news program a young college-aged girl being interviewed. There's a whole movement right now of millennials of, "I'm not going to get married, and I'm not going to have kids. The world is only going to last for another twelve years, you know, global warming, so why would I want to get married? Why would I have kids, and if I get married..." it's this whole movement of not having children. The Bible says children are a gift from God, "...the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man...Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." They are given to us from the Lord, and I think it's part of an important responsibility to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Now, I'm not telling you that you have to have kids or how many kids you have to have, but it is part of God's plan that you get married and you have children. They are blessings from God. You train them to love God, serve God, and be a blessing to others. Should the Lord tarry and I die, I pray that my kids and my grandkids would go on to serve others and be a blessing to others, but they're going to be without natural affection. They don't want to get married. They don't want to have kids.

Notice number 10 (verse 3), "...trucebreakers," that means they're always breaking their commitments. They're always arguing, always fighting, you basically could say they don't get along with anyone—trucebreakers. The eleventh characteristic is, "false accusers," we get our word slanderers from that which is actually the word devils which means malicious gossip. They are human diabolos. They are devils. They gossip and slander and attack people maliciously. The twelfth (verse 3) is "incontinent," in my King James translation or literally means without self control. There are no self restraints. They live as they please. If it feels good, do it. Right? No right, no wrong, just indulge yourself, have a good time, and do whatever you want. Notice the thirteenth, "fierce," or savage or brutal. This is used of a wild animal, so we have people living like wild animals. They are so savage and brutal. Our culture today has become more brutal. The murders are becoming more savage and more brutal. The fourteenth characteristic (verse 3), "despisers of those that are good," this is actually, again, tied in with the word love. It means there is no love for virtue. They have no love for virtue. They don't love anything that's good or wholesome. They love evil. They love wickedness. They despise good people and moral virtue.

The fifteenth is in verse 4, "Traitors," or some translate it treacherous. It's that they have betrayed confidence and trust that's been put into them. Somebody's trusted them and they have violated that trust. The sixteenth (verse 4) is "heady," or reckless. It literally means falling forward. It's an interesting word. It literally means to fall forward. It was used of the expression headstrong or they would rush on recklessly. Do you know anybody like that? They'll drink anything, they'll smoke anything, they'll eat anything, they'll drop anything, they'll drive fast, they'll party, they'll go crazy. They're just wild people, and they just rush head-on. They do and ask questions later. I remember when I was in high school I had friends like that, and it was like, "You're going to die before you get to be 19. You're just crazy." They're just headstrong and headlong rush into all kinds of wild, sinful, reckless behavior.

The seventeenth is in verse 4, "highminded," in the King James, which means conceited or puffed up. The word has literally the idea of wrapped in smoke. We use our word there, "head in the clouds." They think they're really something special. They're better than other people.

Lastly (verse 4), this is eighteenth, “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.” That’s one statement. They love pleasure more than they love God. Now, I want you to notice the perverted love. Look at the text with me. First, they love self and they love money. Then, jump down to verse 4, they love pleasures. Here’s a picture of the last days—loving self, loving money, and loving pleasure. If that doesn’t nail it, I don’t know what does. That’s so descriptive of the world we live in today—they love self, love money, and they love pleasure.

Notice what they don’t love (verse 3). They don’t love family (verse 3), they don’t love virtue (verse 3), and they don’t love God (verse 4). If you put it together, they love self, love money, love pleasure; they don’t love family, they don’t love virtue, and they don’t love God. They love pleasure more than they actually love God. That’s the problem in our world today. Now, you’re saying, “I’m glad I came tonight.” You come out on a rainy night to find out how messed up the world is. This is a sign of the times, and if we’re not aware of what the conditions will be, we can be thrown off our base. We need to realize the world is going to get darker.

Now, notice in verse 5 the profession of their godliness. These people that we just read about in verses 2-4, they have “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” what are we to do about them? “...from such turn away.” Don’t hang out with them. Don’t fellowship with them. Don’t spend time with them. Get away from them. Now, the thing that’s quite striking in verse 5 is they have “a form of godliness, but denying the power,” or the reality, “thereof.” Guess what? This is going to blow your mind, maybe it won’t blow your mind, everything that we just read about these people in the last days, they go to church. They profess to know God. They are religious, or you might say in today’s terminology, they’re spiritual. They have “a form of godliness,” they have their religion, but they don’t have any reality—no relationship with God. This is a professing group of individuals. I believe that we’re seeing this quite common today, people that say, “Well, I’m a Christian. I go to church,” but they live no differently than the world. “Well, I’m a Christian. I believe in God. I believe in Jesus,” but they live no differently than the world. Their words are not consistent with their works. Their profession isn’t consistent with their practice, so they have this outward form of godliness but deny the inner reality of a relationship with God.

Notice in verses 6-9, in closing, the practice of these apostates. This is what the Bible says will happen just before the rapture. The church, professing church not the real, true church, is going to get corrupt. It’s going to be invaded by apostates. Now, what apostasy means is someone who has professed to be a Christian, held belief in Christian doctrine, and then turns from that and falls away and denies that. In verse 6, “For of this sort,” that we just read about, those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, “are they which creep,” they are sly and sneaky, “into houses, and lead captive silly,” or weak, “women laden with sins,” or burdened down with guilt, “led away with divers lusts,” or different kinds of sinful desires, who are “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” In verses 6-7 you have the description of the victims of these apostates. They creep into families’ homes and find people that are weak-willed. Here, specifically, it refers to, in the King James, “silly women,” but it says that they actually have an influence over these women that are under the guilt of their sins, and they bring them after them. They follow them.

It is interesting, quite often, when you find false teachers in cults that they have quite a following of women that are weak-willed and that are subject to temptation because of their guilt and their sins. It says (verse 7), "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." That phrase, "knowledge of the truth" indicates that they won't really be saved. They're always studying the Bible, always going to church, get involved in their groups and activities, but never come to a saving knowledge. You know, there's a large chunk of professing Christianity that is completely apostate. I know this is what you might call a negative message, but I think it's based clearly on what's going to happen in the last days in what the Bible is saying. Do you know there's a lot of mainline denominations that don't believe that Jesus was God, they don't believe in the virgin birth, they don't believe that marriage is between a man and a woman, they don't believe in the resurrection, they don't believe the Bible is the inerrant, infallible, Word of God. You can't just say, "Well, that's a church. It's got a cross on it. The pastor's a clergyman, he's speaking from the Bible. That must be a Christian church." Not necessarily so.

There's a lot of churches today that have turned away from orthodox Christianity. This is why in the book of Jude it's written about last days apostasy. It says we must earnestly contend for the faith which is once and for all delivered to the saints. I believe every Christian should know what the Bible teaches about God, about Jesus, about the Trinity, about salvation, about the resurrection, about the Bible, about how to be saved, about the Lord's coming. You need to know those basic Bible doctrines. You need to study the Bible, the Word of God, so when something that's not true or false comes along, you'll be able to detect the lie and won't be led astray.

Then, notice Paul moves from the victims of apostasy to the apostates' character in verses 8-9, in closing. He says, "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds," here it is, "reprobate concerning the faith." Like I said in Romans 1, they started with the knowledge of God, but they didn't want to retain God, so God gave them over to a reprobate mind. It's down at the end of man's degeneration, and here these people are "reprobate concerning the faith." Notice it ends on a good note, and it'll take a turn when we get to verse 10, some very, very great verses that teaches how to stand against this apostasy. He says, "But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was," he's referring to Jannes and Jambres.

Now, who is that Jannes and Jambres in verse 8? It's kind of an interesting reference there. This "Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses." It's believed that Paul is making a reference here to the two magicians that were in Pharaoh's court when Moses came to Pharaoh and said, "God wants the people of Israel to be let go." Moses had to do the miracles to convince Pharaoh that God was with him and let God's people go. One of those miracles...that's what these Jannes and Jambres was, which is interesting, they're not named in the book of Exodus. There's no reference to it. Jewish tradition named them Jannes and Jambres, and here we have Paul giving us their names.

Remember when Moses took his rod in the court of Pharaoh, if nothing else, didn't you see the movie The Ten Commandments? Come on, hang with me. When Charlton Heston threw his

rod down and it became a snake? And everyone freaked, "Ahhhh!" He reached out and picked it up, and the Pharaoh goes, "Aw, that's just a cheap magician's trick, no biggie. Come on Jannes and Jambres," he didn't call them that but said, "Come on in here," and these two magicians come in and throw down their rods, and their rods become serpents as well. You say, "Wow!" A couple of interesting things, by the way there, and; that is, satan can perform miracles. Satan is real, and satan has power, so if the table levitates, the room kind of shakes, there's a voice, and the curtains move in the room, you know, it's not necessarily God. It could be demonic activity, so satan has power. The cool thing is, is that Moses' rod, as a serpent, went over and swallowed and ate up their two rods, and then he picked up his rod and said, "Anyone else want to mess with me?" (Kind of like swipe-clapping hands together) I'm sure Jannes and Jambres were saying, "Man, I paid good money at the fun store for that," you know. "I just lost my magic wand." The idea there is that it was an occultic, demonic practice, and satan has power, but they withstood Moses. The point of the passage is that they stood up against Moses, so these false teachers that Paul is describing in this passage, they stand against the true teachers of the Word. That's taken, by the way, from Exodus 7. Satan has power, satan has a counterfeit, but he withstands the true preaching of the truth.

Notice the description of them, they "resist the truth," they have "corrupt minds," it means they are morally depraved. By the way, that's in the present tense which means they are ongoingly depraved in their minds, and it's in what's called the passive voice which means that it's the influence of the devil in their heart, in their lives, and in their mind. They are also, "reprobate," their minds don't work. They can't discern right from wrong, and it's all "concerning the faith," the end of verse 8. "The faith" is a reference to the doctrine of orthodoxy that we hold to and we believe.

Now, the turn happens in verse 9. I so want to continue through this chapter, but I'm going to save it so we can go into more depth. Look with me at verse 10 for just a moment. Paul says, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." This is what we're to do (verse 14) in light of these last days apostasy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Now, go back with me to verse 9. "But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men," or to all, "as theirs also was." It's going to be evident, it's going to be manifest that they are false teachers, that they are apostates. What are we supposed to do? Two things, (verse 1) know perilous times shall come and verses 14-17, (that's why I wanted to read it with you) we are to continue in the Word of God that we've known (verse 15) and, "All

Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for," what is right, what is wrong, for how to get right, and how to stay right, that we as believers may be mature and "thoroughly furnished," and equipped for every good work. So, it comes back to this book, the B-I-B-L-E, the Bible. Amen?

You might cover what we did tonight and say, "Wow, that's really scary. Oh, man, that's pretty scary. The world's going to get really dark." (Holding up Bible) This is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. The darker the world gets, the more you need the light of God's Word. It's the only way for you to be discerning and wise. Hide God's Word in your heart that you might not sin against Him. How are you going to know truth from error? How will you know truth from error? God's Word. It's the plumbline. It's the standard. It's the measuring rod. So, we want to be individuals who are in the Word, we want to be a church that's in the Word. Would to God we were a nation that honored this book, the Word of God. We've fallen away from God's Word, and we're reaping what we've sown. As I look at the culture that we live in, I don't really have any hope other than Jesus Christ, and I'm not a pessimist. I'm a realist. I believe Jesus Christ is coming back; and if He doesn't, we're going to go to heaven just the same. We need to pull as many people as we can out of the fires of hell by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen?