

The Characteristics Of The Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-7

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Just a little review to kind of introduce us to our text. We've looked first of all in marriage how God created it in the book of Genesis. It's so foundational. Moses' commentary on the narrative of Genesis, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." We saw that the foundation of marriage is severance, leave father and mother; cleave, permanence, one-flesh intimacy; and that one-flesh relationship of they were both naked and not ashamed, the intimacy and the oneness they had. In Ephesians, we saw the mystery of marriage. Paul said, "This...I speak concerning Christ and the church." Marriage without a doubt is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and the church, and even the unity of the two in marriage is a reflection of the triunity found in God—one God, three Persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Marriage is a divine institution.

Then we looked at how Satan corrupted it. We went from Genesis 2 to Genesis 3 where we saw the fall of man—how God created it, how Satan corrupted it. Now, in that fall, we see actually the corruption of Satan, we see the curse of God, and we see the characteristics tonight of the last days. Actually, the study tonight is the third part of last week's message of the corruption of Satan and the curse of God. The third element of difficulty in the last days in marriage is the characteristics of these last days, and here we're going to have it in 2 Timothy 3:1-7. Let's read it. Follow with me beginning in verse 1. Paul says, "This know also,"—a very strong affirmation in the Greek, it's actually, "I want you to know this." I think that if Paul wanted Timothy to know this, he wants us to know this as well, the characteristics of the last days. This is a section, where a lot of even prophecy buffs skip over and miss, that describes the kind of world we'll live in before the Lord returns for His church. "This know also, that in the,"—here's the term—"last days perilous times shall come." I'm going to come back to that phrase "perilous."

Verse 2, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,"—or ungrateful and unholy, the negative prefix unthankful, they won't be thankful; unholy, they won't be holy toward God and toward others. Verse 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; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,"—and Paul tells Timothy—"from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,"—or desires—"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Marriage is hard because in the last days in which we live right now, "...perilous times shall come." That's the theme. Look at it, verse 1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." That word "perilous" appears only one other time in the New Testament,

Matthew 8:28, and is translated exceeding fierce. It's used to describe the two demoniacs of Gadara. We will only focus on one demoniac that spoke with the Lord and was healed, but remember when Jesus was in the area around the Sea of Galilee known as Gadara. If you look at the map of Galilee, which is at the north end of the land of Israel, where the water of the Jordan River flows in and out. On the northeast corner of the Lake Galilee (the lake is kind of pear-shaped), it's 13 miles long and about 8 miles wide, is the only place around Lake Galilee where there are cliffs right up to the water's edge. Everything else is flat.

This is significant in light of this Bible story. Jesus encountered a demon possessed man. The Bible describes him as very fierce, which is the same word translated here "perilous." I believe that the end of times will be demonically energized. Remember, Jesus asked, "Who are you?" "We are Legion for we are many. Don't cast us out. Let us go into the herd of swine," the pigs. They went into the pigs, the pigs ran violently down a cliff, which as I said is the only place by the Lake Galilee where there's a cliff, and into the water and were all destroyed. The point I want to make is that's describing the "perilous" times.

I myself, in my lifetime of ministry, have never seen the world more demonically energized. Satan is going overtime right now. I believe he knows his days are short, so the world gets more demonically energized and becomes more difficult to live a holy life in marriage, and marriage is under attack. "Perilous" literally means difficult or dangerous. Some translate that savage or fierce. The last days are difficult and dangerous. They are demonically energized times. Satan will promote a perverted love.

I cannot spend much time on these points tonight, and I'm only going to take four out of this long list. If you get time, I want to give every one of you some homework. Go back to this passage, get your commentaries out, and look up each one of these words. You'll see a picture of the world that we live in at the end of time. Biblically speaking, the end of time started with the first coming of Christ and will end with the Second Coming of Christ. I believe that we're at the end of the end of time. This whole period that we call the Church Age between the two advents is the end of time, biblically speaking, but I believe that we're seeing the world get darker and darker and darker.

Again, it's not really my subject tonight, but I wanted to mention it, there are those that think the world is going to get better and better and better and better until Jesus comes, that we have to get the world really good for Jesus to come back. That's kind of a hopeless cause for sure. The Bible actually says the world will get darker and darker and darker before the dawning of the new age when Christ comes and sets up His Kingdom on earth for one thousand years and reigns in righteousness, and the darkness will culminate in seven years of great tribulation just prior to the Second Coming. It will get very, very dark, so we're seeing the darkness of our culture today.

As you look around at what we see in the world, there's only one thing that you can conclude—it's demonically energized. These people are being influenced by demons, they obviously have reprobate minds, and they're not thinking correctly. To live a marriage that's sanctified and

reflecting God's glory is becoming more of a challenge all of the time.

What I want to do is point out the four perverted loves found in this text. Years ago I discovered this and it's really challenged and blessed me to see this for many, many years. I want to point out just the four perverted loves that will be prevalent at the end of time. These four sins, which are a perversion of love, are a danger and a threat to you as an individual believer and to marriage.

We have recently had on television, government-funded ads about promoting the LGBTQ+ lifestyle, and they hone in on this theme that "love is love." Have you ever seen that? It doesn't matter who loves as long as love is there. I think about that and think that they have no comprehension of God's love. They have no comprehension of a holy love of God, and this is really a lust, it's a perverted love. In the Greek language they had more than one word for "love." They had the word *érōs*, which is erotic, and knew that meant a sexual, sinful, lustful desire. The love that we're talking about tonight in this text is a perverted love, not an agape love from God. It's not the fruit of the Holy Spirit, it's lustful desires of fallen, unregenerated man, a man that's living in rebellion against God.

The points will appear on the screen, but I want you to see them in your Bibles. The first one is the love of self. How's that for the top of the list? Narcissism. Perilous times will be narcissistic, "...lovers of their own selves." We see that right there in verse 2, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves," self-centered, self-conceited, egotistical. If you want to destroy your life and you want to destroy your marriage, if you're married you know what I'm talking about. I believe that marriage is actually used by God to domesticate young men, and I believe a lot of young men need to get married to be domesticated. They need all the help they can get. All the women are saying, "Amen! Preach it, brother."

I think when I got married at 25, I don't know how we survived, how my wife put up with me—I can't believe that—and I'm still just trying to be domesticated after all these years of marriage. Do you want to destroy your marriage? Think about yourself. Love yourself more than anyone else, want to do whatever you want to do, when you want to do it, and how you want to do it. Be self-centered, self-absorbed, narcissistic, and you will actually destroy your marriage. That's the danger of being self-centered in marriage.

We hear so much today in our culture about love yourself and before you can love others you have to love yourself. No, the problem is not that we have to learn to love ourselves, the problem is we do love ourselves—that's all taken care of—but we don't love others the way we love ourselves. The Bible says, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." The problem isn't loving yourself, the problem is loving others the way you already do love yourself.

I think that God uses marriage as a tool to deliver us from self because the two become one. No longer is it, "Well, it's mine," and "I want to do what I want with mine, and I want to go where I want," my time, my things, my money, whatever it might be. It's ours, right? We're one, the two become one. Remember the two tributaries flow together and become one river. It doesn't

mean we lose our distinction, our personality, our individuality, but diversity within unity, that unity that comes from dying to ourselves. The best way to destroy your marriage is to love yourself and forget others.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him,"—what?—"deny himself." You didn't quote that very enthusiastically. I love that where Jesus said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it," God's Kingdom is different than the world's. If you want to find your life, you lose it; but "...he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Getting married is dying to self and putting others' needs before your own.

Turn real quickly to Philippians 2:3-5. I'm going to come right back to 2 Timothy, so hold your place there. In Philippians 2 Paul says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind,"—that phrase means humility of mind or heart—"let each esteem other better than themselves." Highlight that, "...other better than themselves." That literally means others more important than you are in the Greek. Your wife is more important than you, your husband is more important than you, others are more important than you. I know that's hard to absorb—our carnal, sinful, selfish heart—but, "...let each esteem other better than themselves." Look at verse 4, "Look not every,"—person—"on his own things,"—or own interests or concerns, they're not to be self-absorbed—"but every,"—person—"also on the things of others." Don't be self-absorbed, be others absorbed.

Verse 5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and that's where we're going to go Sunday morning, looking at the kenosis, the mind of Christ, how He emptied Himself, "and took upon him the form of a servant," and became humble and went to the cross. The picture is great for a marriage relationship, "...other better than themselves. Look not..on his own things,"—or interests—"but every man also on the things,"—or interests—"of others,"—and have, verse 5, the mind of Christ.

Turn with me to Ephesians 5:28. We're going to be doing an in-depth study in this portion of Ephesians for husbands. Paul says, "So ought men to love their wives,"—he's addressing only the husband in this passage, but it also applies to the wives. Wives are to love their husbands. "...as their own bodies,"—notice that—"He that loveth his wife loveth himself."

Years ago there was a book on marriage for men, Do Yourself a Favor: Love Your Wife. I like that. Paul says, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." The word "nourish" and "cherish" mean to warm with body heat. It was used of a mother bird putting her feathers over her little birds in the nest, so husbands, love your wives; wives, love your husbands. Deny yourself.

Go back with me to 2 Timothy 3:2, "...lovers of their own selves," is a very prominent thing in the world today. We must die to self to be able to survive in a marriage relationship. Ask yourself, "Do I love myself more than my spouse?"

Here's the second sin, perverted love, it's the love of money. Look at verse 2, right after, "...

lovers of their own selves, covetous.” In the English translation you don’t see the word “love” there, but it is actually a love of money. That’s the definition of covetousness, the love of money. Where do we start? We love self and we love money. Does that not describe the world we live in today? Self-absorbed, money, money, money, money. We want more, we want more, we want more—covetous—so we go to materialism. We started first of all with narcissism, now we have materialism. This is totally prevalent in our culture today—the problem that many couples have with money. We can guarantee that one of the problems that you can go through in marriage relationship is money issues—who gets to spend what, when you spend money and who doesn’t, and where the money goes, how much money do we need, and money, money, money.

One of the leading problems in the marriage relationship many times are finances, and if we’re Christians and we’re trusting and serving the Lord and we’re seeking first (Matthew 6:33) the kingdom of God, we shouldn’t be self-absorbed and we shouldn’t be focusing on money or loving money and having that as a problem in our marriage relationships. Remember the Ten Commandments ends with “Thou shalt not covet.” Don’t covet anything that belongs to your neighbor, it also includes your neighbor’s wife, but covetousness is a sin that can lead to other sins. This is the love of money in this text.

Turn with me again (this is one of the last places I’ll have you turn) to 1 Timothy 6:6-12. Follow me in your Bibles. This is really good instruction for us as married couples about our perspective on wealth or about money. Remember in Matthew 6 Jesus said not to worry, not to be anxious, not to be fretting over what we’re going to eat, what we’re going to drink, or what we’re going to wear. He said, “For after all these things do the Gentiles,”—the nonbelievers —“seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things,”—and He will take care of you.

Look at 1 Timothy 6, and follow with me. He says, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” I love that. Remember that in your marriage. Verse 9, “But they that will be rich,”—that desire to be rich, covetous, love money —“fall into temptation,”—has ruined lives, marriages, and families—“and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Here it is, verse 10, “For the love of money is the root of all evil,”—that is, covetousness—“which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith,”—notice the damage it does—“erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” What we should do, verses 11-12, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

Let me lay out for you four things we learn about the dangers of wealth. First, wealth does not bring contentment. Remember that. Look at verse 6, “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” What you need to make as the priority of your life in your marriage relationship is godliness and contentment, that’s great gain, not getting more money, buying more things,

having more toys, keeping up with the Joneses, right?—buying things you don't need, with money you don't have, to impress people you don't like—keeping up with the Joneses. It's that rat race. God, deliver us.

There's so many young couples where the wife gets out of the home and gets working making more money. Sometimes you need to do that, and that's understandable, but if it's not needed or necessary, God help you to be careful. The husband gets self-absorbed in his job making more money and gets more independent, the wife's making her money, and they just go different directions, "Well, I don't need him anymore." "I don't need her anymore. I can buy my own house. I can do my own thing," and they go their different directions. Instead of that unity and harmony in the marriage, they get so self-absorbed and not only narcissistic, but they get so materialistic. In the end of times, this is going to be so prevalent. Don't let materialism destroy you.

When Jesus gave the parable of the sower and the seed, the one seed fell on thorns which choked the seed out, the Word of God, and it became unfruitful. Jesus described it as the cares and the deceitfulness of riches. As you're here right now tonight, ask yourself, "Have I let my desire for money affect my marriage? Am I working way too much neglecting my wife and my family? Am I neglecting my husband and my children to try to make more money to keep up with the Joneses? It's so important that you evaluate your life. A God-centered life brings godliness.

Secondly, wealth is not lasting, verse 7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Do you notice that when you come into the world, you come in naked, right? We use the term "birthday suit." "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither,"—from whence I came. Why do we need to accumulate all these things? It's so sad.

Thirdly, notice the basic needs of life are easily met, verse 8. "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." That's in the Bible. If you've got food and clothes, be content. Now, it doesn't mean you shouldn't be motivated and desire to excel, but your passion shouldn't be just to acquire wealth for wealth's sake.

Fourthly, the love of money leads to sin. This is the grave warning and we should take this as husbands and wives to heart, verses 9-10. "But they that will be rich,"—the phrase there means those that desire to be rich. It's not a sin to be rich, but if you have a desire to be rich, that's your passion, your goal, your driving force, then you will—"fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." The reason, verse 10, "For the love of money is the root of all,"—kinds of—"evil." That's how that verse should read in the Greek, not, "...the root of all evil," but all kinds of evil spring out of a love for money, so many sorrows.

What should we do as married couples? I want you to note three things. In verse 11, "flee," that's the key word, also "follow," and verse 12, "fight." "...flee these things; and follow after

righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” That’s what we should be pursuing in our marriage relationship and in our Christian walk, and we should be fighting, “the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Flee covetousness, follow righteousness, and “Fight the good fight of faith,” keeping your eyes on Jesus.

Love of self, love of money, and here’s the third perverted love that is detrimental to a marriage relationship. This is the real one that ties into marriage, verse 3, it’s actually translated, “Without natural affection.” In the Greek, that phrase literally means, and you can check me if you think I’m wrong, do your own homework and research, the phrase actually conveys the idea of without family love, “Without natural affection,” no love of family. This is so prevalent in our culture today. We are actually looking down and despising what we call the traditional marriage relationship. We’re trying to throw that institution away, which is the divine institution given for the good of man, I might also add procreation of planet earth, and we’re throwing it away. It’s the foundation of our whole society—as goes marriage, goes the family; as goes the family, goes the country; as goes the country, so goes the world.

Destroy marriage and you destroy mankind. I don’t know how people cannot see that so clearly. It is the bedrock of our society—marriage relationships. Children need their biological father and biological mother in a relationship of the home—the love, the discipline, the nurturing, the training—nurturing your children in the way of the Lord. Satan hates Christian families. He hates families. He hates marriages, especially Christian marriages and Christian families that reflect the glory of God. Anything that reflects the glory of God, Satan is all out trying to destroy it.

In 1 Timothy 4:3, we find a reference that in the last days false teachers will be, “Forbidding to marry,” how sad and how tragic that is. It also says in our text, 2 Timothy 3:3, they will be, “...trucebreakers,”—unforgiving. As I said, all these other facets at the end of time apply also to marriage. “Trucebreakers” means that they’ll have no commitment to the covenant of marriage. They’ll break it down.

In Romans 1 where Paul talks about those who suppress the truth turn from God, God gives, “...them over to a reprobate mind,” women with women, men with men doing, “...that which is unseemly,” and the condemnation and the wrath of God is poured out upon them. It says, “...not only do the same,” but at the end of Romans 1, the most amazing statement, give their hearty approval to those that do this. The Bible says they will be, “...despisers of...good.” Isn’t it funny that we literally applaud and parade homosexuality and a “gay pride month” in our nation. Think about that—that which is an abomination to God, the God that we say we believe in and trust yet God says it’s an abomination—we’re applauding what we should be mourning and weeping over and repenting of. They will be without family love.

It’s very popular today to just co-habit, just live together. Why get married? Who needs a contract of marriage? Who needs the commitment of marriage? We have a consumer mentality for marriage, and we see people despising what is good, what is God ordained, what

is God designed. "...trucebreakers," would also apply (we'll look at it when we look at Matthew 19) to the subject of divorce. You take a vow, you pledge your love, you break the covenant, you're a "trucebreaker." Jesus actually said in Matthew 19 about divorce, "...because of the hardness of your hearts suffered,"—God allowed—"you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." It's all about the hardness of hearts, but it wasn't God's design. Divorce is a divine concession to human sin and the hardness of the heart.

Verse 3, as I mentioned, "...despisers of those that are good," they applaud and they applaud wickedness, and they oppose the goodness of God's ordained institution of marriage, so we will see a culture that is without family love.

Here's the fourth and last, verse 4, "...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." So, loving self, loving money, not loving family, and loving pleasure are the four perverted loves in this passage that describe the dangerous, perilous, demonically-energized days in which we live.

Now we come to what's called hedonism. Hedonism is the philosophy that pleasure is the chief good of life. We have bought that hook, line, and sinker in our culture today, "If you're not happy in your marriage, then just dump your spouse, divorce them, just be free, be happy. God wants you to be happy and be free and seek pleasure." That's the problem that we have in our hedonistic culture today. Personal pleasure is prominent in our lives. It's preeminent and the prominent motivation, "I want to be happy." If you seek pleasure by direct pursuit, you will end up in emptiness. If you die to yourself—remember, if you want to find your life, you lose it—you will then find it and actually experience pleasure.

Christians can have pleasure. Christians have great joy, but they find it in God, amen?, in knowing God, in walking with God, in glorifying God. Our world today is seeking personal pleasure above commitment to other people.

Notice the sad thing about these pleasure seekers which live in the world today, people that want to seek pleasure, verse 5, they profess to be religious. They profess to have, "...a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Many of these perverted loves that I just described here are being promoted and celebrated in "Christian churches." We have so-called churches today that promote the LGBTQ+ lifestyle, and it's so sad that we live in a culture that's so far from God. When you think about how important it is for us to hold God's standard so high and have that great commitment to our spouses, to our marriage, to raising our children in godly homes, "Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." We need to have strong marriages to have strong churches to have a strong nation and to be able to reach the world for Christ in the light of the gospel. They profess that they know God, "...but denying the power thereof," they're not real, genuine, authentic Christians.

Ask yourself, "Is your Christianity real? Are you just kind of going through the motions?" You come to church and say you're a Christian, but you really love yourself more than God and others, you really love money the most, you really love pleasure more than you love God, you're

self-seeking, you've not really died to yourself, so you're not really a true believer.

I want to quote at length Warren Wiersbe. He says, "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 of people's hearts have turned away from God." The problem of the culture around us is the problem of the heart—it's deceitful and desperately wicked.

In closing, ask yourself tonight, "Do I love self more than God? Do I love myself more than my spouse? Do I love things and use people? Do I love my family? Do I love my spouse? Do I love my children? Am I committed to keeping the covenant that I've made before God and man? Do I love pleasure more than I love God?" These perverted loves can so easily come into your heart, destroy your walk and relationship to God, and your relationship in your marriage.

What is the counter to all this? The counter to that is the Holy Spirit—coming to know Christ personally, repenting of your sin, being born again, and having the Holy Spirit fill you and empower you to live Christ in your daily life. Amen? Let's pray.