

DEDICATED SERVANTS FOR DANGEROUS TIMES

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By the Book™ A Chapter by
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Let's Begin

In the spring of 1988, the evening news reported on a skydiving photographer who fell to his death. He made his jump together with other skydivers and filmed the group as each opened his parachute. Immediately after the final skydiver pulled his cord, the video went berserk. Apparently, the cameraman was so excited about the film; he jumped out of the plane without his parachute. Not until he reached for the ripcord did he realize he was free falling without a parachute. As one commentator noted, "Until that point, the jump probably seemed exciting—perhaps even fun. However, carelessness struck its deadly blow. Trust remained in a parachute he had never buckled on."

In 2 Timothy 3, the Apostle Paul speaks of perilous times yet to be—a moral free-fall, so to speak—and the question we must ask is, "Are we fully prepared for these dangerous times ahead?" Paul's key verse sums up his concern, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (v. 14). Knowing the danger ahead, what are believers to do?

As we make our way through chapter three, let's turn attention to the outline below as our guide:

- I. The Prediction of Dangerous Times (vv. 1-9)**
- II. The Preparation for Dedicated Servants (vv. 10-17)**

I. The Prediction of Dangerous Times (vv. 1-9)

The Bible offers the believer help in preparing for the perilous times which he or she must face. However, before we note what Divine assistance we are promised, pay close attention to Paul as he rehearses precisely what we face, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

In a sense, what Paul records here is true in every age. However, as the world presses onward to its ultimate end, the moral, social, and spiritual conditions Paul describes will snowball and become almost unbearable.

First, note how the last days are predicted (v. 1). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the days about which the Apostle writes are definite days; that is, no matter how we attempt to avoid it, the trouble Paul predicts will come. From the beginning of Christ's birth until He comes again to set up His millennial reign on earth can technically be described as the "last days" (Heb. 1:1-2). Clearly the latter days Paul describes are the days just before the rapture of the church, and days when the world will be under satanic siege (1 Thess. 4:17; 2 Thess. 2:1-11). Hence, the days about which Paul speaks are not only definite days, but difficult days believers must endure—at least for the time prior to the rapture (cp. Matt. 8:28; 24:12; 1 Tim. 4:1; Acts 20:29-30).

Second, observe how the days are specifically pictured (vv. 2-5). According to Paul, "men shall be" pictured in various destructive ways:

- Personally destructive: self-lovers, money lovers, boasters, and proud. The focus centers on a highly developed narcissistic life which counts all others as less than themselves.
- Domestically destructive: blasphemy, parental disobedience, ingratitude, un-holiness, and unnatural affection. The basic institution of marriage and family crumbles, and people develop a radical thankless spirit for anything holy or reverent.



- Socially destructive: increased inability to get along, false accusations, discontent, brutality, despite, treachery, un-teachableness, and high-mindedness. Love for neighbor as one's self has lost all meaning.
- Religiously destructive: hedonism and godless power. While people are extremely religious, they are no more than pagans masquerading as believers. They retain an outward form of godliness only to deny the Biblical Gospel.

Hence, Paul not only predicts the last days but also pictures the last days in horrifying ways. Finally, the Apostle exposes how people will promote the coming persecution. He writes, "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was" (2 Tim. 3:6-9).

Reflection Connection

Do you often think about the last days? Explain what usually comes to your mind (e.g. fear, avoidance).

First, see the *intrusion* of the people (vv. 6-7). They "creep into houses," working, as it were, as spies within the church of God, preying on "silly women" and leading them "captive." Paul refers not to a lack of brains but an absent stability. When the social institution of marriage and home crumble, each family member—especially certain women as Paul illustrates—will be vulnerable. Next, notice the *opposition* of them (v. 8). They "resist truth" even when they are "ever learning." When tested by God's Word, they are exposed as counterfeits. Third, observe the *manifestation* of them (v. 9). While Jannes and Jambres fooled the Egyptians for a long time, they were finally exposed. The days ahead are dangerous, and therefore we must seek deliverance from something or Someone.

II. The Preparation for Dedicated Servants (vv. 10-17)

The last days are dangerous times, and dangerous times call for dedicated servants. Indeed it will be through the dedicated servants God prepares that his church will be guarded in the final hour.

Note the *trials* Paul records. He writes, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, 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. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. 3:10-12). As Paul's companion, Timothy had experienced the Apostle's own trials. And, the difficulties of the trials Paul encountered could not be overestimated. All of it happened while being obedient to the Lord Jesus.

Even so, the Lord *delivered* the Apostle "out of them all"! (v. 11; cp. 4:17-18). The Greek term translated "delivered" is *rhuomai*, which means "to rescue" and often has the connotation of rescuing one's self. However, Paul makes it clear that he did not and could not deliver himself. Instead God delivered the Apostle! God always comes to the rescue of His servants, and He always comes on time. As the



old Gospel number says, “He’s an on-time God!” Indicative of God’s deliverance is His promise that persecution will never thwart His ultimate purposes. Yet while God cannot be defeated, the believer must understand an important spiritual reality: “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (v. 12). The Psalmist was right, “many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

More significantly, observe the *teachers* Paul described, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 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” (2 Tim. 3:13-15). On the one hand, there exist those who would *pervert* the truth (v. 13). According to the Apostle, these teachers are both “evil” and “deceiving,” and therefore are “seducers” who will “wax worse and worse.”

In this short but scathing description is displayed their blatant degeneration. They specialize in getting “worse” and “worse.” Outwardly, they may look normal. However, both morally and spiritually their inner lives are degenerating at an exponential rate. Indeed sin

always pulls us in a downward motion, for there is no such thing as standing still or remaining the same in sin. In addition, because these teachers are deceived themselves, they remain deceptive to the core. They are “deceiving...being deceived.” Deception works only temporarily. Time is deception’s enemy. God’s people who look always to Jesus cannot forever be fooled. Deceivers ultimately fool only themselves.

In addition to those who *pervert* the truth are those who *convert* through the truth (vv. 14-15). The teachers “of whom” Paul referred as positively making a difference were Eunice, Lois, and the Apostle himself. From early childhood, Timothy had been taught the Word of God. He learned his ABCs from Scripture. The first place to learn the Bible is the home. Happy is the home where parents visibly are committed to Scripture (cp. Prov. 22:6). If moral guidance is not illustrated though consistent parental practice, then it is hopeless to complain that your children have no love for the things of God. Consequently, Paul focuses on the truths about which Timothy was “assured.” In short, Timothy was confirmed in the truth which is fundamental to believers’ assurance.

Note also Paul’s conviction about the full authority of the “Holy Scriptures.” Indicative of “Holy” is the sacredness of the Word. Unlike any other book, God has set His book apart from all the rest. Our ultimate spiritual authority remains in Scripture and nowhere else (cp. 1 Cor. 9:13). Scripture is God’s unique book. Why? For the simple reason Scripture leads to the salvation only found in Jesus Christ. No other book possesses the ability to give fully accurate, firsthand information about the Lord Jesus, His life, and His teachings. And, while the Bible is a large book, written by over 30 authors during a 1,400 year

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span, it nonetheless can be said it contains just three great truths: I am a *Godless sinner*; Jesus is a *great Savior*; everyone may possess a *glorious salvation*. No other literary piece is able to deliver a sinner from death by having faith in Christ. It is the Scripture which Timothy learned from his childhood, and the Scripture through which others are converted.

Hence, the Bible is the *textbook* for faithful servants of the Lord. Paul continues, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In these words are two significant qualities of the servant’s textbook—*inspiration* and *information*.

First, observe the Bible’s *inspiration*. The English term “inspiration” comes from the Greek word *theopneustos*, which in turn comes from two other Greek words—*theos*, meaning “God” and *pneo*, meaning “to breathe.” Thus, Paul says the Bible is “God-breathed”; that is, from the very “lungs” of the Holy God Himself came the Word. Nor is the Scripture divided into those parts which are inspired—*God-breathed*—and those which are not. Instead Paul clearly indicates “all” parts of Scriptures are *God-breathed*. From Genesis 1 to Revelation 22, Scripture is His *God-breathed* Word. As the Bible unfolds, we find that *God* is truth (Deut. 32:4); *Jesus* is truth (John 14:6); *Scripture* is truth (John 17:17).

In addition, indicative of the *God-breathed* nature of Scripture is what has come to be called “verbal inspiration.” This term simply suggests that God’s Spirit guarded the words of the human authors in such a way as to protect them from all error, even errors down to the very words themselves. Hence, we have an infallible authority over which no other human authority may overturn or contest. We may be certain that whatever Scripture says, God says.

Because we have an inspired, *God-breathed* Word, the *information* we communicate from Scripture is reliable, authoritative, and sure. Paul’s way of saying this is simply that the Scripture is “profitable”; that is, the Bible is useful in every way to our lives on this earth. We learn Scripture and from learning, we become convicted. Additionally, since the Bible is trustworthy in all it affirms,

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Reflection Connection

If the Scripture is the inspired Word of God, how should a God-breathed book affect our lives every day? Be specific.



it remains the authority which corrects us and instructs us in all righteousness. Why? So every servant of the Lord Jesus may be “complete” in every good work. Through His Word, believers are “furnished” and fully equipped to face dangerous times. No persecution ultimately stands against the purpose of the Almighty.

Golden Greek Nugget

Paul insists the purpose of Scripture is specifically given for “the man of God” to be “perfect” and “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (v. 17). The Greek term translated “thoroughly furnished” is *exartizo*, and means “to bring to an end” and therefore “fully complete.” Nothing lacks in the servant’s toolbox. He or she is always equipped to do the will of the Master.

Wrap Up

Paul reveals dangerous times are inevitably on the rise. But while wickedness will continually increase, the child of God must not lose heart. God does not leave us or forsake us even in the worst of times. He has graciously promised faithful servants who will expose false teachers and feed God’s flock from the inspired, God-breathed book—the Holy Scriptures. God’s Word will remain a lighthouse during the stormy days ahead.

