

**I OVERVIEW OF II TIMOTHY**

**Purpose:** To give final instructions and encouragement to Timothy, an elder at the Church of Ephesus.

**Author:** Paul.

**Audience:** Timothy, young church leaders and believers everywhere.

**Date/Setting:** About 66-67 A.D from a Roman prison, soon before Paul's martyrdom at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero.

**Blueprint:**

- 1) Foundations for Christian Service (1:1-2:26)
- 2) **Difficult Times for Christian Service (3:1-4:22)**

**Megathemes**

Theme	Importance
Boldness	The Holy Spirit helps us to be wise and strong. God honors our confident testimony even when we suffer. To overcome our fear of what people may say or do, we must take our eyes off of people and look only to God.
Faithfulness	We can count on opposition, suffering and hardship when we serve Christ. But this shows that our faithfulness is having an effect on others. As we trust Christ, he counts us worthy to suffer and will give us the strength we need to be steadfast.
Preaching & Teaching	We must prepare people to transmit God's Word to others so that they may pass it on. We must constantly train others to teach.
Error	Because of the deception and false teaching, we must be disciplined and ready to reject error by knowing God's Word. Knowledge of the Word is a sure defense against error and confusion.

**II BACKGROUND**

When Paul wrote this letter, he was in prison under a death sentence, yet his thoughts were not on himself, but on the spiritual leaders he had trained. He had encouraged Timothy not to experience shame because of the apostle's imprisonment and not to side with false teachers in Ephesus who had abandoned Paul's teachings on Jesus. Last week Paul encouraged Timothy to diligently persevere in serving the Lord.

Paul reminded Timothy that the time following Jesus' ascension and before His Second Coming would be difficult. Many would claim to have religious faith, but would not measure up to God's standards. Instead, their lives would be characterized by godless behavior (**II Timothy 3:9**).

Paul challenged Timothy to remember the example that the apostle had set through the suffering that Timothy had witnessed and encouraged him to remain faithful even while enduring the persecution that would inevitably come to all who desired to live a godly life in Jesus Christ. Because Timothy had the teachings of Scripture in addition to positive models of Paul, he could establish a positive example for members of the Church in Ephesus who were encountering false teaching.

## III SCRIPTURE

## BE GUIDED BY GOD'S WORD (3:1-5)

## II Timothy 3 - Perilous Times and Precious Truth

The reference to the last days by Paul indicated the urgency of the situation for the church at Ephesus. These last days, present during the early Christian church era, are still active, stretching from the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and continuing to the Second Coming of Christ (II Peter 3:1-9, Jude 18). Satan's #1 mission during this Age of Grace is to confuse, neutralize and defeat the Bride of Christ, making it as difficult as possible for Christians to evangelize the lost and edify the saints.

Perseverance of the saints through total dependency on Jesus Christ is of utmost importance in any generation during the Age of Grace. We are challenged to avoid the comfort of being lukewarm (Revelation 3:15).

**(1) Perilous times in the last days:** The word translated perilous has the idea of troubles, difficulty, and stressful situations. This atmosphere will mark the last days.

The characteristics Paul will describe speak not of bad times, but of bad people. "We should note what the hardness or danger of this time is in Paul's view to be, not war, not famine or diseases, nor any of the other calamities or ills that befall the body, but the wicked and depraved ways of men." (Calvin)

**Last days:** A broad term in the New Testament that began with the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:17**) and continues on today, 1984 years later. This term is especially appropriate to the season immediately before Jesus' return and consummation of all things. It is important that we can be able to discern when the last days are; or at least when world conditions line up with Biblical prophecy.

"There are sanguine brethren who are looking forward to everything growing better and better and better, until, at last, this present age ripens into a millennium. They will not be able to sustain their hopes, for Scripture gives them no solid basis to rest upon. . . . Apart from the second Advent of our Lord, the world is more likely to sink into a pandemonium than to rise into a millennium." (Spurgeon)

**(2-5) Description of human condition in the last days:** The human condition described in these 4 verses is certainly characteristic of our present age, when men and women are **encouraged to love themselves** unconditionally; and are fed the lie that such narcissistic self-love is the foundation for a healthy human personality.

We don't need to be encouraged to love ourselves as we naturally have such a love. Neither should we be taught to hate ourselves, but as Paul said in Romans 12:3: *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.* As 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians, we must see ourselves as we really are; both depraved in the flesh and the glory of what we are in Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:17).

"It is no accident that the first of these qualities will be a life that is centered in self. The adjective used is *philautos*, which means self-loving. Love of self is the basic sin, from which all others flow. The moment a man makes his own will the centre of life, divine and human relationships are destroyed, obedience to God and charity to men both become impossible. The essence of Christianity is not the enthronement but the obliteration of self." (Barclay)

**Human condition II: Lovers of Money:** The second human condition is that men will be **lovers of money (I Timothy 6:10)**, which is nothing new, but with today's global financial system and electronic trading, people have the ability to pursue their love of money on a scale like never before.

**Human condition III: Boasters, proud, and blasphemers:** Boasting, pride, and blasphemy have been around since Adam's fall; but today, they appear to be far more prominent than ever. These characteristics reflect the attitude that "I am the most important person. You don't matter and God does not matter. All that matters is me."

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, these characteristics are apparent everywhere, especially among the celebrities that our cultures idolizes. Many people today become (temporarily) wealthy by their boasting, pride, and blasphemy.

**Human condition IV: Disobedient to parents:** Since the mid-1960s there has been a frightening breakdown in the authority once assumed by a child towards their parents.

Years ago, a judge in Orlando, Florida ruled that an 11-year-old boy had the right to seek a "divorce" from his parents so that he could be adopted by a foster family. But though there are few legal divorces from parents by children, it is far more common that young people simply disregard the counsel and training from their parents.

**Human condition V: Unthankful, unholy, unloving, and unforgiving:** Ever since man's fall, humankind has been marked by these four characteristics to one degree or another. Paul stated that these things will be especially prevalent in the last days.

Unloving (translated without natural affection in the KJV) literally means, "without family love." Paul said that the end times would be marked by an attitude of growing disregard of normal family love and obligation.

**Human condition VI: Slanderers:** Men have always told hurtful lies about other men; but today, in media and in politics, slander has been elevated to both big business and big money.

In politics, candidates routinely and knowingly distort their opponent's positions, just to make their competition look bad – and they don't feel bad at all about the lying if it helps them get elected. In media, editors and news directors serve as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner to innocents who are wrongly suspected – and usually refuse to apologize when they are proven to be wrong.

**Human condition VII: Without self-control:** The story of lack of self-control can be written across almost everything today, whether it is sex, drugs, alcohol, food, work, etc. Whatever we do as a society, we often do it out of control and to great excesses.

**Human condition VIII: Cruel and brutal.** Cruelty and brutality are nothing new in the world since the Fall resulted in man's depravity; but Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the last days would be marked by a particular brutality. We like to think of ourselves as more advanced than previous generations; but surely more people have been murdered in our century than ever before. These are violent, brutal times.

Oxnard, CA: A man was accused of murdering his roommate after the two disagreed over the brand of beer the man had brought home. The accused man brought home Natural Light, and the murdered man wanted him to bring home Michelob. As he poured the Natural Light down the kitchen sink, he was stabbed to death.

In 2012, there were at least nine instances of mass murder by cruel and brutal people, topped off by the murder of 20 innocent 6-year old children in Newtown, CT.

**Human condition IX: Despisers of good.** There just seem to be too many examples of this in modern society to pick out examples. For one example, there was a time when most people thought letting people live was a good thing and killing them was generally a bad thing. Today, we live in a culture when the simple good of life is now despised and attacked, through abortion, the glorifying of violence and murder, and euthanasia.

On March 6, 1996, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals declared the United States Constitution gives every American the right to kill someone else. Essentially, the court said that if you think someone might want to die – even if they have never said so – you can kill them and no law can stop you. You can kill someone if you are a doctor, a nurse, a pharmacist, a family member, or a “significant other” to a person you think wants to die. From the Judge’s ruling: “When patients are no longer able to pursue liberty or happiness and do not wish to pursue life,” they can be killed. The Federal Judge directly tied his decision to the right to abortion on demand. The reasoning seems to be that if the state must allow us to kill humans in the womb, it must also allow them to kill them later.

**Human condition X: Traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God:** These characteristics are all about one thing, which is self. Men are traitors, are headstrong, are haughty, and are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God because of exaltation of self. The message is the same: (1) You make your own rules; (2) You answer to no one; (3) You are the one that matters; and, (4) Your universe revolves around you.

We don’t have to choose between pleasure and God. Serving God is the ultimate pleasure; Psalm 16:11 says, “*At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*” But we do have to choose between the love of pleasure and the love of God. Living for God will give you many pleasures, but they only come as you love God first and refuse to love the pleasures themselves (Matthew 6:33).

**Human condition XI: Having a form of godliness but denying its power:** In our self-obsessed world, people feel very free to have a “salad bar” religion; picking and choosing what they want (i.e., syncretism). They feel free to be very “spiritual,” but sense no obligation to be Biblical.

When we talk about the power of godliness, we often mean it in the sense of “power to give me what I want.” But this is exactly opposite of what Paul meant here. The power of godliness that men will despise in the last days is the power it should have to guide their lives; power in the sense of rightful authority, and many, many, today deny that God has the power to tell them what to do through His Word.

**The Christians’ Response: From such people turn away:** The command to turn away from people described by the characteristics in this list is especially difficult in our present day. People who do the things on this rather lengthy list are not only common today but they are often also our cultural heroes. The simple responsibility of Christians is to turn away not only these attitudes in our daily living, but also from the people who do these things.

**Recap:** During these last days, people will take on the following 13 characteristics:

- (1) **Covetous:** money-loving and desiring the things of other people;
- (2) **Boasters:** boasting of having what they have not, taking false credit;
- (3) **Proud:** showing themselves above their fellows, better than anyone;
- (4) **Blasphemous:** evil-speakers, revilers, haters of God;
- (5) **Disobedient to parents:** poor manners of the youth to parents;
- (6) **Unthankful:** gratitude is viewed as an obligation; and,
- (7) **Unholy:** irreligious, inobservant of piety, serving the wrong master.
- (8) **Truce-breakers:** implacable, dishonoring commitments and oaths (**Romans 1:31**);
- (9) **False accusers:** slanderers, liars (**I Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3**);
- (10) **Incontinent, fierce:** incontinently indulging themselves, inhuman to others;

- (11) **Despisers:** no lovers of good, class envy (**Titus 1:8**);
- (12) **Heady:** high-minded, puffed up with pride; and,
- (13) **Lovers of pleasure:** love of pleasure destroys the love and sense of God.

Outwardly, these people will project a form of godliness, such as going to church, knowing Christian doctrine, and following a community's Christian traditions. However, inner attitudes of belief, love, and worship are absent.

Paul warns that we should take extra steps to avoid being deceived by people with these characteristics, as they are really non-ambassadors for Jesus Christ. Measure these people by who they consider most important: themselves or Jesus Christ.

### DISTINGUISH TRUTH FROM LIES (3:6-9)

**(6-7) Strategy of the corrupt in the last days:** The gullible women in the Ephesian church were sitting ducks for this type of false teaching since they will believe or pay attention to most anything if it is packaged the right way. Moreover, they had no formal training in the oracles of God and were likely burdened with their own sins. They enjoyed their new freedom to study Christian truths, but this eagerness made them a target for false teachers, and thus vulnerable to deception. A bad conscience leads easily to a shipwreck of faith (**I Timothy 1:19**).

Paul singled out gullible women simply because in that day, women spent far more time at home than the men, and were far more exposed to any corruption that would infiltrate the household. "Also he speaks here of women rather than men, for they are more liable to be taken in by such impostors." (Calvin)

The false teaching of Gnosticism had a large grip on the female sex, as well as Roman Jesuitism. Timothy was challenged to ground them strongly in the Word as a safeguard against false teaching they would encounter.

**Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth:** The spirit of the last days has a certain intellect about it. The high priests of the spirit of the last days know how to make things work and how to lead us away by various lusts, yet for all their skill, marketing brilliance and knowledge, **they never come to truth.**

The spirit of the last days has a problem with the idea of "true truth" altogether, because it believes that we each are the center of our own universe and each creates our own truth. According to the spirit of the last days there is no truth outside of ourselves, so we can learn and learn, but will never come to God's eternal Truth (**Matthew 18:37**).

**(8-9) Example of a corrupt human condition: Jannes and Jambres who resisted Moses:** The ability to do miracles by the power of darkness and the willingness to receive them as authentic will characterize the end times.

Jannes (trickster) and Jambres (juggler) were two of the magicians who counterfeited Moses' miracles before Pharaoh (**Exodus 7:11-12**), yet Moses exposed and defeated them (**Exodus 8:18-19**); just as God will overthrow the many false teachers plaguing the Ephesian church. Moreover, false teachers shall exhibit lying wonders in the last days (**Matthew 24:24, II Thessalonians 2:9, Revelation 13:14, 15**).

Jannes and Jambres were able to work real miracles by the power of darkness and not the power of God. When Moses cast down his rod and it turned into a serpent, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. When he turned water into blood, they could do the same. When Moses brought forth a plague of frogs, Jannes and Jambres could do the same. Yet eventually they could not match God miracle-for-miracle, and their occult powers were shown to be inferior to God's power.

Some of us are amazed by any spiritual power that is real, without carefully thinking that real power may have a demonic source instead of a Godly source. And even if a psychic or new age power seems to feel right, we must not be seduced by it because demonic powers can come masquerading as angels of light (II Corinthians 11:15).

Moreover, sin has consequences and no one is exempt from this spiritual law. These false teachers will ultimately be limited from proceeding further (**Job 38:11, Revelation 11:7, 11**) and shall be prevented from seducing others (**II Timothy 3:13**). Jannes and Jambres were eventually put to shame and compelled to give reluctant glory to God; so also will the evil men of the last days. Satan's power is limited and our Sovereign God is still in control.

This is the message of great hope in the midst of this great darkness; the spirit of the last days has an answer to it in Jesus Christ. The spirit of the last days is not stronger than the power of Jesus. The glorious truth is that we don't have to be bound by the spirit of our times; we don't have to be slaves to self and have our universe revolve around something as puny as our selves. There is triumphant hope, in Jesus.

### BE PREPARED FOR PERSECUTION (3:10-13)

**(10-12) Persecution and following Jesus:** Paul has just described the kind of people that will threaten the earth in the last days and which Timothy must contend with in his own day. Paul drew a clear dividing line between Timothy and those ruled by the spirit of the last days with his "but you" statement.

Paul reminds Timothy that there are many good examples of Christian behavior that are available and achievable. Timothy has fully known various Christian attributes from what he has seen in Paul's daily living, and as his disciple, and from his association with his pious mother Eunice and grandmother, Lois. These attributes include:

- (1) Doctrine: The correct teaching of Christian principles and truths;
- (2) Manner of life: Good conduct and behavior in all circumstances;
- (3) Faith: Purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord;
- (4) Longsuffering: Towards adversaries, false teachers, brethren in bearing their infirmities, the unconverted, and the lapsed when penitent;
- (5) Charity: Love to all "neighbors";
- (6) Patience: Endurance; patient continuance in well-doing amidst adversities (**II Timothy 3:11; Romans 2:7**);
- (7) Persecutions; and,
- (8) Afflictions and sufferings.

Paul endured all sufferings and was delivered by the Lord from each of them (**Philippians 4:11-13**). It was not that Paul had his own power to do this, but he was constantly enabled by the supernatural power of Jesus Christ. He had to only remain focused on Jesus.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminded all of His followers (e.g., those who live godly lives in Christ) that they would suffer persecution (**Matthew 5:11-12**). That warning also is inclusive of our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These persecutions will become worse and worse as the End Times approach since the breach between light and darkness continues to widen, manifested by large movements to New Age philosophies, Wicca, Eastern religions, Gaia, kaballah, ascended masters, necromancy, and a host of other occult practices.

**There is no godliness or piety out of Christ. The world easily puts up with the mask of a religion which depends on itself. However, the piety which derives its empowerment directly from Christ is an anathema to modern Christians as it was to the ancient Jews (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21).**

Paul reminded Timothy of the specific occasions of persecution which he endured:

- At Antioch, where Paul was kicked out of the city for preaching the gospel (**Acts 13:50**);
- At Iconium, where Paul was almost executed by stoning (**Acts 14:5**); and,
- At Lystra, where they actually did stone Paul and leave him for dead (**Acts 14:19**).

Paul remembered this as he sat in prison and waited for his execution. He knew that God was completely able to deliver him again, or that He might not. Paul seemed at complete peace, leaving it in the Lord's hands. Persecution was not going to stop Paul from following hard after Jesus Christ.

**Persecution must not stop Christians today. We may not face much violent or even economic persecution in our culture; but there is a great deal of social persecution Christians must deal with. I Peter 4:4 describe the mindset of many of those who socially persecute Christians. They think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.**

### **BE EQUIPPED FOR RIGHT LIVING (3:14-17)**

**(14-15) Course of evil men and course of the godly:** Paul's reference to evil men refers to the obvious, open enemies of Jesus; while impostors refers to those who "look" fine, but they are actually destructive forces among Jesus' followers. These two kinds of people will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. Timothy was supposed to swim against the current and to continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of.

Paul exhorts Timothy to continue in the good things he has learned by good examples that others have set for him (**II Timothy 1:5, II Timothy 2:2**) and what Scripture assures for him. Timothy must resist all temptation to abandon his faith and modify his doctrine to quell societal pressures.

**Spend time every day thinking about the foundations of your faith to ensure that they are firmly rooted.**

Paul indicates the extreme importance in teaching Scripture to children at a tender age, where the most lasting impressions of faith are made. Timothy had been taught the fundamental doctrines at a very young age where he is likely to remember. The parent's work in this area is of utmost importance (**Deuteronomy 6:6-8**).

**My two sons each received Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord at the tender age of 4 years. It should also be noted that 95% of the people that receive Jesus are of the age of 18 years and under. At the age of 6, the personality of a child is 90% developed.**

This wisdom comes from the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation. In and of itself, the Bible does not save us, but it is only through the Bible that we can receive God's truth about Jesus, and put faith and trust in Him.

**(16-17) Greatness of Holy Scripture:** Paul tells us the source of Scripture. It is God-breathed, and in its autographs it displays His perfection, being inerrant and absolutely reliable.

**"False doctrine cannot prevail long where the sacred Scriptures are read and studied. Error prevails only where the book of God is withheld from the people. The religion that fears the Bible is not the religion of God." (Clarke)**

**By inspiration of God:** There is a huge dividing line in our world today between those who believe that the Bible is a book from God, given through men; or if it is just a great book from men. No one can deny the greatness of the Bible; it is completely unique among all books ever written. The Bible is unique in six specific ways:

1. **In its continuity:** It was written over a 1600-year period, spanning over 60 generations, by more than 40 authors, on 3 different continents, in a multitude of different circumstances and places, in different times, different moods, in 3 languages, concerning scores of controversial subjects; but it speaks with one united voice.
2. **In its circulation:** It is the most published and popular book ever written. Far and away anything else written is a distant, distant, second.
3. **In its translation:** It was the first book translated, and has been translated into more languages than any other book in existence. As of 2008, it had been translated into 1,005 languages.
4. **In its survival:** It has survived the ravages of time, manual transcription, persecution, and criticism.
5. **In its honesty:** It deals with the sins and failures of its heroes in a manner quite unknown among any ancient literature.
6. **In its influence:** It has had, far and away, a greater influence on culture and literature than any other book in the existence.

Although the Bible is a unique book, its uniqueness does not prove that God inspired it. For greater evidence of God's special revelation, examine the phenomenon of fulfilled prophecy.

**God's ability to precisely predict future events in the Bible is His own way of building proof for the Bible right into the text. It proves that it was authored by Someone who not only can see the future, but Who can also shape the future.**

**For example, there are at least 332 distinct Old Testament predictions regarding the Messiah which Jesus fulfilled perfectly (such as His birth in Bethlehem, His emergence from Egypt, His healing of the sick, His death on the cross, and so forth). Collectively, the combination of this evidence together is absolutely overwhelming.**

**Professor Peter Stoner has calculated that the probability of any one man fulfilling eight of these prophecies is one in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (100 quadrillion or  $10^{17}$ ); that many silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Stoner says that if you consider 48 of the prophecies, the odds become one in 10 unquintillion or  $10^{157}$  (exponential notation used to save paper).**

**By inspiration of God:** One may agree that the original writings from Paul and other Bible writers were inspired by God. Yet we also need reason to believe that the copies of those original writings are remarkably accurate reproductions.

This is a matter which can be decided by science and research, and though some errors have been made in copying the Scriptures through the centuries, today we have a New Testament where not more than one-one thousandth ( $10^{-3}$ ) of the text is in question, and importantly, not one significant doctrine is in question. The numbers for the Old Testament are even more impressive.

Moreover, many things within the Bible have been verified by archaeology and scientific discovery. Go to [www.reasons.org](http://www.reasons.org).

Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. It gives us:

- Doctrine: It tells us a truth that means more than our opinions;
- Reproof and correction: It tells us when we are wrong in our thinking or conduct; and,
- Instruction in righteousness: It tells us how to live rightly before God and men.

It makes the man of God complete. When we come to the Bible and let God speak to us, it changes us; making us complete and transforming us by the renewing of our minds (**Romans 12:2**). When we let the Bible guide our thinking, our minds are renewed and transformed, so we think like God thinks, putting on the Mind of Christ (**Philippians 2:5**).

There is another level by which the Bible transforms us, which is by a spiritual work, a spiritual blessing which God works in us as we come to the Bible and let Him speak to us. This is a spiritual work that goes beyond our intellectual understanding. With great spiritual power beyond our intellect:

- The Bible gives us eternal life (**I Peter 1:23**);
- The Bible spiritually cleanses us (**Ephesians 5:26**);
- The Bible gives us power against demonic spirits (**Ephesians 6:17**);
- The Bible brings spiritual power to heal our bodies (**Matthew 8:16**);
- The Bible brings us spiritual strength (**Psalms 119:28**); and,
- The Bible has the power to spiritually build faith in us (**Romans 10:17**).

Paul began the chapter warning Timothy about dangerous times. Some Christians are swept away by these perilous times and others go into hiding. Neither option is right for us. We are to stand strong and stay on the Word of God.

Scripture is entirely trustworthy because God controlled its writing, and its words are entirely authoritative for our faith and lives.