

2nd Timothy
Chapter 3:1-9
“Difficult Times”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Lifelong, spiritual, fruitfulness ... that’s been Paul’s theme **for several verses now**. And that sets the stage for this morning.

Paul knew that he was very near his own death. He knew that Nero was about to take his head and he was concerned about Timothy and his ministry after he was gone.

He knew that things would get very difficult for him and he worried ...

Q. How would Timothy respond to those difficulties? And that’s the reason for what Paul says beginning in ...

Verse 1:

Q. Difficult times will come when Paul? – In the “**last days**”.

The language here is very specific and interesting because Paul penned his reference to the “**last days**” in the present tense, but when he referred to the difficulties that would accompany those last days ... he wrote that in the future tense.

Speaking to the men and women of his day, Paul said, “The last days are upon us, but the pain and difficulty is yet to come.”

Think back with me to the day of Pentecost in **Acts chapter 2**. The disciples were speaking in tongues and the crowd was accusing them of being drunk. And that’s when Peter took his stand and explained that they were witnessing the fulfillment of what **Joel** prophesied ...

Q. And do you remember when Joel said that fulfillment would take place? – He said ...

Acts 2:17 '... IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS ...

So according to Peter, “**the last days**” had already begun on the day of Pentecost and according to Paul, “**the last days**” were still unfolding in his day ... both men speaking under the inspiration of God. And as we look at what Paul says will be happening in the last days ... we can’t help but see a reflection of the days in which we live ...

Q. So how do we interpret this then? – “Last days” is a term that describes the period between the Lord’s ascension in Acts **chapter 1** and His return to receive His church in **1 Thessalonians 4:17**.

And you will find that in every place the Bible speaks of “**the last days**” it always speaks of difficult times. And it always puts the difficulty of those times on a continuum that shows progression. From bad to worse!

So ... let’s see what’s in store for us ...

Verses 2-4: Oh my ... what a list!

Q. You know how preachers will preach three point sermons on Sunday mornings?
– Well not here! Three little points ... that’s for Christianettes, but you all are full grown Christians ... so, I’ve prepared ... count ‘em ... TWENTY-THREE points for you!

Silly Baptists!

Twenty-three human traits between **verses 1 and 9**, that Paul says will get worse and worse and that will be evidence that the end is drawing nigh. Starting with ...

- 1.** People will love themselves more and more (**verse 2**). It’s a word that means to be selfish or actively fond of yourself.

Dr. Riggio, a social psychologist from a non-profit called “Cutting-Edge Leadership” concluded a four-year study last year looking at selfishness on four continents.

Q. His conclusions? – In the 100 years between 1900 and 2000, selfishness in general, increased a staggering, 22%, but in the 18 years between 2000 and 2018, selfishness skyrocketed by an additional 41%!

The same study showed that the incidence of narcissism has risen by some 60% so far this century.

So, we’re a generation of people totally in love with ourselves. Which totally contradicts all the psychobabble about national self-esteem problems.

If we have a self-esteem problem ... it’s not a problem with low self-esteem.

But we already knew that ... remember that in **Matthew 22** Jesus commanded ...

39 YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

A commandment made without reservation or qualification. There was no need for Jesus to say, “Now those of you who already love yourself ... I want you to

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR [that same way].”

He didn't need to encourage us to learn to love ourselves ... He knew very well that we always have ... but we love ourselves now more than any prior generation and Paul says that's a sign that the last days are upon us.

2. People will increasingly love money (**verse 2**). The word literally means an active fondness of shiny things.

Q. Honestly ... how dumb does that sound? – That's what monkeys and parrots do! But so, do we ... we love our shiny objects ... and that love's going to continue to grow societally.

3. And we're increasingly boastful (**verse 2**). We're always talking about the one we love ... us! And here's a mind-boggling statistic to prove the point ... over a lifetime, the average millennial will take 25,700 selfies! 25,700!!!

4. And on top of that ... we're increasingly arrogant (**verse 2**). Not just boastful which means we're always talking about how wonderful we are ... but arrogant ... meaning that we consider ourselves to be of greater worth than others.

5. Revilers (**verse 2**) or if you read the Old King James it says blasphemers ... meaning to be one who defames. One who cuts down both God and man ... which relates right back to the elevation of ourselves in all it's forms.

It's worse than ever according to Paul and it isn't going to get better until the Lord returns.

6. Disobedient to parents (**verse 2**). But again, the original language here is specific. It means, just as it says, that generation after generation, children will become more and more, disobedient, but that's qualified by the Greek word, apeithes (ap-i-thace), which tells us that the disobedience of the children is the fault of the parents.

The word means to pacify, conciliate or assent. So, the growing problem is that parents cave into the whims of their children instead of making them do what's right.

Q. And isn't it amazing how the establishment promotes the very things that Paul says here will mark the end times? – Spanking and other forms of effective correction are out, and compromise is in. We're told to pacify, conciliate and assent for the sake of their fragile self-esteem!

I don't know if you can call a group “A bunch of idiots”, and make it sound loving, but that's about the nicest word I can think of for 'em!

7. Ungrateful (verse 2). Another trait you don't have to search very hard for today!

It's always been there, but never to this extent! Everyone's entitled anymore! Convinced that they deserve good things just for breathing.

And Paul says it's only gonna get worse ... which explains the socialist agenda's of so many politicians these days and even more ... the otherwise inexplicable popularity of those politicians.

8. Unholy (verse 2). In English the best you can do with this is "unright". It's improper, but accurate. The opposite of right ... it speaks specifically of being unright on the divine level. As the difficult times of the last days progress, people will grow increasingly unright before God.

9. Unloving (verse 3). The Old King James says, "**without natural affection**". It's a Greek word that means the care that one family member would naturally have for another. So, Paul's saying that there will be a lack of love for parents and children and siblings.

Imagine that ... parents not caring for, loving and sacrificing for their children!

10. Irreconcilable (verse 3). The word means covenant breaker ... and it describes someone who makes an agreement or signs a contract but keeping that agreement or fulfilling that contract means very little to them.

An agreement to pay. An agreement to remain loyal or remain married. An agreement to do a certain job or keep a certain trust or meet a certain deadline.

So, we'll know when the days are upon us we'll know it because there will be a lawyer on every corner.

11. Malicious gossips (verse 3) or diabolos (dee-ab'-ol-os).

Q. Sound familiar? -- Diabolos (dee-ab'-ol-os) ... it's where we get the English word, devil or literally, one who causes humiliation and disgrace.

I don't know that people gossip any more than they every have, but we sure have better mediums and mechanisms for spreading that gossip than ever before. And it's devilish Paul says.

12. Without self-control (verse 3). It's a word that means powerless in self-control or self-control that lacks vigor. So, what Paul's getting at is that in the last days people will put less and less effort into trying to control themselves.

And addictions will run rampant!

13. Brutal (**verse 3**). Not just the Islamic groups in Muslims countries cutting off heads with dull hacksaws, but the ever-increasing consumption of brutal entertainment on TV and in movies and games. The more brutal it is ... the more we love it!

14. And ... people will increasingly hate what is good (**verse 3**). The word means to be hostile toward virtue and those who are virtuous. Society will grow more and more hostile toward good and those who do good.

Q. Again ... how far do we really have to look to see this? – As **Isaiah** said ...

5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil ...

15. Treacherous (**verse 4**). It means a willingness to betray an ally or surrender a friend to an enemy.

I'm sure this has a very broad application, but I think of our Christian example and how we betray those we care about every time we follow the enemy's ways and others see it.

16. Reckless (**verse 4**). This is an interesting one. The word is propetes (prop-et-ace) and it specifically means to fall forward and can't be used to describe a fall in any other direction or for any other reason. It's someone who carelessly falls forward.

It's what a toddler does when they learn how to move fast before they learn how to move with care. So, they'll get to running and before long, they fall headlong, or they carelessly turn around to look behind them and veer into a wall.

But in this case, it's talking about adults becoming increasingly careless in that same way.

17. Conceited (**verse 4**). It means to inflate or envelop with smoke. So, it's like putting up a smoke screen, but not to hide behind ... it's to make yourself appear bigger than you really are. And, of course, that's not limited to physical size.

Q. And WOW ... hasn't social media fulfilled this? – So easy for people to inflate their life with a smokescreen of deceptive pictures and comments!

18. And people will increasingly prefer fleshly pleasures over pleasing God (**verse 4**). Dr. Zodiates explains this as treating your flesh like a dear friend or close associate ... someone you desire, or feel obligated, to please.

So, the flesh becomes an idol as it usurps God.

Verses 5-9:

19. People will become increasingly pseudo-religious (**verse 5**). Meaning they will increasingly follow after various mutations of Christianity.

People will make some verbal profession of faith, but then deny the power of what they've placed their faith in.

For us ... Christ and the power of His blood and His faithfulness to forgive and to save ... those are the cornerstones of our faith and really of our sanity. But for those following some pseudo-religion ... those are just nice thoughts or intellectual principles. They're not something you can't really depend on.

You need the PLUS ... whatever snake oil of legalism or membership the gurus are selling that year.

Their religion is hand-cranked, human power and Paul compares it to that of Jannes and Jambres ... two men, identified in early Christian writings, but not the Bible, as the magicians in Pharaoh's court at the time of the Exodus (**Exodus 7:11-22**).

That means these were the characters who tried to emulate the miraculous power of God when He brought the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt.

God turned a stick into a snake ... so they did too.

God turned water to blood ... so they faked it and turned some more water into blood.

God brought frogs up out of the water ... so they called more frogs up out of the water.

God created life (gnats or lice) out of thin air ... and these magicians turned to Pharaoh and said, "Those other things we did were tricks, but we can't create life ... this is indeed the hand of God."

They came to the end of their own strength as will everyone who denies the power of God and relies on themselves or others.

20. And there will be an ever-increasing number of users who take advantage of weak women (**verses 6-7**). Let me read this to you from the Amplified Bible ...

2nd Timothy 3:6 For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate silly and weak-natured and spiritually dwarfed women, loaded down with [the burden of their] sins [and easily] swayed and led away by various evil desires and seductive impulses. 7 [These weak women will listen to anybody who will teach them]; they are forever inquiring and getting information, but are never able to arrive at a recognition and knowledge of the Truth. AMP

So, a couple things, in particular, to note here ...

Q. First ... what do these men do? – They “worm” their way into the homes of the gullible ... the susceptible.

Q. And for what purpose? – To take them captive. Not physically ... the word means to captivate them by their own desires and emotions.

Women who have allowed themselves to become susceptible to such predators by, as Paul lists it, three things ...

a. Becoming weighed down with sin. Not that they’re especially sinful ... but rather that they’re particularly burdened with the guilt of their sin.

Not receiving the complete forgiveness and restoration of Christ is a dangerous mistake. It makes you needy, when in reality, what Christ has already given you is all you need.

b. By allowing themselves to be led by their fleshly and emotional impulses rather than led by the scriptures and the Holy Spirit of God.

c. By looking to other sources for knowledge and never accepting the unadulterated truth of Jesus.

Things for all of us, but particularly, you ladies to be aware of.

21. Opposers of truth (**verse 8**) or standing against the truth. The word describes someone putting a steady pressure against a stationary object. We live in a day and age when all truth has become a matter of opinion. We can’t even figure out what it means to be a man or a woman. Makes you wonder ... what’s next!

22. Depraved of mind (**verse 8**). The word used here means having learned depravity. So, in the later days, people will be increasingly trained in depravity.

If you’re not paying attention to what’s happening in our learning institutions ... you need to be. Elementary children are being taught about deviant sexuality and by the time they get to college they’re being tested on basic facts like:

- 1.** The fact that God doesn’t exist.
- 2.** The fact that it’s okay to have sex with anyone or anything you want ... anytime you want.
- 3.** The fact that marijuana is a good medicine.
- 4.** And ... the fact that the population of earth is going to choke to death on bad air from climate change when the Bible very clearly says ... no, it will

be destroyed when God, not man, burns it up (**2nd Peter 3:12**).

23. Rejected in regard to the faith (**verse 8**). Literally ... to be unapproved or worthless with regard to the Christian faith.

Fruit inspection. As Jesus said in **Matthew 7:16** ... **you will know them by their fruits**. It's what you do secondary to what you say you believe.

And Paul says in the last days, people will offer God a lot of lip service.

Q. And Paul's concluding counsel? – Avoid such men as these (**verse 5**). Trust that God will identify them (**verse 9**) and make their folly evident to everyone who's paying attention.

Conclusion: It's interesting, how each of these traits categorizes so neatly into one of three categories of love; love of self, love of money and love of pleasure.

It's also interesting to consider how these traits line up with current church trends:

- 1.** "If you wanna grow your church" the fliers say ... promise the people a 100-fold return on their giving.
- 2.** Give them some pleasurable physical experience like slaying in the Spirit or make them laugh or just feed them free food.
- 3.** And always send them away feeling good about themselves. Tell them repeatedly how wonderful they are.

That's what too many people want today; physical pleasure, money and affirmation ... but not because they've earned any of those things.

Now I know ... on some level, that's what people have always wanted.

The difference being that, up until a hundred-years ago, the church generally stood against those things ... today, the church promotes and feeds them.

Think about the popular ministries today.

- 1.** They either appeal to man's greed, like the name it and claim it, health, wealth and prosperity movement.
- 2.** Or they appeal to man's ego; the feel, good, I'm okay, you're okay, God loves you because you're a wonderful person Sunday-morning, motivational speeches.
- 3.** Or they offer some experienced based dog and pony shows.

Makes me think ... we're living in the last days!

Paul lived expectantly. Peter and John lived expectantly. And throughout the ages, great

men and women of God have lived their lives expecting the Lord's return at any moment.

Now it's my turn ... now it's your turn ... now it's our turn! Not only are we living in the last days, as Paul defines them, but we're seeing the difficult times of this passage increasingly unfold every day! So, it really is our turn!