

## 2 Timothy

### Chapter Three

Leon L. Combs, Ph.D.

#### **2Tim 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.**

Paul is very emphatic that Timothy must clearly understand that opposition to the gospel had already come and would continue until the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Timothy to stand firm for the gospel he must know that he will face severe opposition as Paul had already faced. Many in Asia had already left Paul and he was in chains in a horrible dungeon because of his stand for the truth brought to the world by Christ Jesus. Many today try to state that the last days means the End Times but that is not the meaning. The New Testament authors clearly contend that the new age arrived with the work of Jesus as the Son of God and so the old age had passed and the new age or last days began. At Pentecost Peter stated this clearly:

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. <sup>15</sup>"For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; <sup>16</sup>but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; (Acts 2:14-17)

We are living in the last days that were inaugurated by Jesus Christ and great opposition to the body of Christ has continued for 2000 years. This chapter then is about the present and not the future as some teach. Paul describes the situation that exists between the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The following then were already active when Paul was writing: *1Tim 4:1-3 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, <sup>2</sup>by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, <sup>3</sup>men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods, which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth.*

*2Peter 3:3-4 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup>and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."*

*Jude 1:17-19 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>18</sup>that they were saying to you, "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." <sup>19</sup>These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.*

The times for the church may be worse in the future but they have been full of difficulty since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even a brief look at church history through the last 2000 years clearly shows the ravages of sin and the protection of God: *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.* (Matt 16:18) Paul is thus warning Timothy to be ready to face such difficult times.

**2Tim 3:2-4 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup>treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;**

Paul then tells Timothy why these difficult times will come. The problem is based upon the evil of men who are godless, self-centered, and hostile to all things of God. Paul describes their moral conduct (2-4), their religious observance (5), and their proselytizing zeal (6-9). Paul uses nineteen expressions to describe these evil men! Seventeen of these descriptions are bracketed between the two expressions: lovers of self rather than lovers of God. The primary cause of their sinful actions then is their misdirection of love. Since they are primarily lovers of themselves they will certainly have a love of money and it is this love that motivates their actions against the true gospel message. They also would certainly be boastful of themselves and arrogant in flaunting their overestimation of their knowledge and power. A reviler is a person who uses abusive language to denounce something and, in this context, he will revile the true gospel message.

Since this person primarily loves himself, he will want to be totally autonomous and thus will be disobedient to his parents. This familial disobedience will also spread to all who have authority over him. A true lover of self will also be totally ungrateful for anything anyone else has done for him for he wants to take total credit for his accomplishments. The word “unholy” can either mean in relation to the holiness of God or in a family aspect and context probably means that the person will reject any familial respect. “Unloving” is sometimes translated as “inhuman” or totally lacking in normal human affections. “Irreconcilable” can also be translated “implacable” and describes young people in revolt to the extent that they are not willing to negotiate peace between parties. These words seem to be describing a sociopath.

The remaining seven words extend beyond the family. A malicious gossip or slanderer is a person who is guilty of speaking evil against people behind their back. They are lacking in self-control so that they do whatever pleases them regardless of the cost to others. They are brutal in their actions toward others so that they are unconcerned about damaging anyone’s reputation or life. They not only have no desire to do good to others but they even hate what others do good unless it is toward them. They are treacherous so they cannot be trusted in any matters involving other people or events. They are reckless and so engage in risky behavior with the only goal being pleasing themselves. It is probably obvious that they are also conceited about their self-importance and constantly will be lifting themselves up around other people. They are also

lovers of pleasure as that is the goal of their existence: to provide the most pleasure for themselves out of life with no regard for the welfare of other people. All of these characteristics are totally opposite to God's command to love him totally as well as neighbors: *And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."* (Luke 10:27)

Paul is then telling Timothy that the root of all the troubles that he will encounter is the evil heart of many people as stated by Jesus:

*Mark 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, <sup>22</sup>deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. <sup>23</sup>"All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."*

**2Tim 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.**

It may seem shocking that these ungodly people are religious! However this behavior has been true for many years before the time of Paul. The Bible is quite clear that religious doctrine and actions must be melded as one or else the religion is meaningless. Amos told of worshippers whose immorality invaded their worship services as they used garments and wine that did not belong to them:

*Amos 2:7-8 "These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name. <sup>8</sup>"And on garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.*

*Isaiah also wrote of such false worship and how the worshipers should change:*

*Isaiah 1:14-17 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. <sup>15</sup>"So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. <sup>16</sup>"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup>Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless; Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.*

Jesus also made the same claim against the Pharisees:

*Matt 23:25-18 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup>"You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. <sup>27</sup>"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup>"Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

These evil people evidently attended the church services, sang the hymns, participated in the communion services, and put money into the offering plate. They would look and sound pious but their worship was only in form and not in power or substance. This is faith without works and religion without ethical behavior and is a false faith as clearly stated by James:

*James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?*

*James 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*

*James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?*

*James 2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.*

Paul urges Timothy to avoid these people for evil will transfer to good just as heat flows from hot to cold. He is not telling Timothy to avoid these people everywhere for Jesus associated with sinners and publicans. He is telling Timothy to avoid these people within the church for they are participating and leading a heathen Christianity. Paul was very clear on this subject in another letter:

*1Cor 5:10-12 I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?*

**2Tim 3:6-7 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

Paul now describes their proselytizing zeal for their false Christianity. Approaching women to lead them astray has been the method of Satan since the Garden of Eden when he approached Eve. This approach was also used by the Gnostics and today is used by Jehovah's Witnesses. The Greek word translated "captivate" implies the use of devious methods to snare the women. The term "weak women" translates a Greek word meaning weak of character. They were burdened with sins and easily led astray from ethical behavior by very weak self-control. These evil men would come to the households while the men were at work and teach their false doctrines designed to prey upon the guilt feelings of the women. They were constantly learning various teachings but never coming to knowledge of the truth. Many women today are similarly involved in reading many books and hearing teachings about Christianity but not studying properly the Bible with prayer for God to reveal the truth to them from the Bible. They were like boats tossed around by waves as described by Paul in Eph 4:14 "*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*" These women were prime targets for door-to-door religious salesmen and the same situation exists today.

**2 Tim 3:8-9 And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. <sup>9</sup>But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those two came to be.**

Paul then gives an example of two men who were two chief magicians in Pharaoh's court. Their names do not appear in the Old Testament but exist in Jewish tradition. Such people are referred in Exodus 7:11 "*Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts.*" Jannes and Jambres were magicians who opposed Moses centuries before. Paul draws a historical analogue between those men and the false teachers in the church. Moses was the greatest figure of the Old Testament who spoke for God and those magicians opposed him with false teachings and acts. Similarly the false teachers in the church were opposing the gospel message taught by Paul. Moses taught the law and Paul taught the gospel. Both truths were being opposed by false teachers. Paul rejects these false teachers as men with corrupt minds who were not only teaching false doctrines but doing so with all the corruption clearly stated in verses 2-4. These men were rejected by God and Paul since their teachings were opposed to the faith. Paul promises that the men will not make further progress in the church because their false teaching paired with their evil ways will become obvious to those who are of the faith. Thus Paul is saying that the same result that happens with those opposing Moses will occur with those opposing Paul's teaching of the gospel.

Many heresies have been exposed during church history for 2000 years and more is being exposed today. God has indeed preserved His church and will continue to do so. The devil has been busy sowing weeds during the same time that God has been sowing seeds:

Matt 13:24-30 He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup>"But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup>"But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. <sup>27</sup>"And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' <sup>28</sup>"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup>"But he said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup>'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'" "

The devil has his "fifth column" inside the church as he has lost some people from his kingdom but he is still trying to destroy the church. There are people inside the visible church who have immoral character and conduct and prey upon weak-minded people to try to tear apart the church, causing divisions and strife. The world has a very permissive attitude and teaches a tolerance that says all have to accept the ways of anyone else as acceptable behavior. However such people are very intolerant toward true Christian doctrines. Timothy is urged to strive against

such teachings and not become embroiled in profitless discussions with the false teachers. We also have to be on guard and properly disciple and teach the people with whom we interact: *Matt 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "*

**2Tim 3:10-11 But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup>persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord delivered me!**

Timothy had the advantage of having witnessed many of Paul's activities as a great apostle and teacher. Paul's meaning as he used the word "followed" has a deep meaning that Timothy has not just heard these aspects of Paul's ministry but he has also embraced them as his own. The meaning is that Timothy has been mentored by Paul during this time and is a trusted disciple of Paul. He has imitated the life of Paul and made it one with his own. Paul invited others to imitate him because he imitated Jesus Christ:

*1Cor 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.*

*1Thess 1:6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,*

*Phil 3:17 Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*

Paul had previously displayed the conduct of the false teachers and now he is telling Timothy the correct standards for his behavior. It may seem that he is boasting but such would be a characteristic of the false teachers and not of Paul as seen in all his writings. The false teachers lived lives of self-indulgencies and Paul lived a life of self-sacrifice modeled after the life of His Lord Jesus Christ. He first mentions his teachings and then listed behaviors that validated his teachings as being genuine for nobody would go through all that Paul endured if his teachings were not true and formed the basis for all his life. His conduct has been based upon the ethics of his teachings. His entire purpose in life was to bring glory to God and particularly to Jesus Christ. His faith is truly from God and he lives it in all of his activities. He has patiently ministered to people in many areas of the world as he always depends upon God for the harvest. His love has reached out to those who love him and to those who hate him. His perseverance is preserved by God as he continues to embrace the gospel and preach it despite many very adverse conditions. He has endured many persecutions and sufferings for the gospel message and such have never diminished his zeal to carry the message to whomever God directed.

Paul references three cities because Timothy was a citizen of Lystra and had possibly witnessed the apostle being stoned by a mob and dragged out of the city and left for dead:

*Acts 14:19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.*

This was not the only time Paul suffered beatings:

*2Cor 11:25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.*

**2Tim 3:12-13 And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. <sup>13</sup>But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.**

Paul then tells Timothy that his persecutions were not unique for anyone living a godly life in Christ Jesus should expect persecutions. Note he does not end with “godly life” for people are not likely to be severely persecuted unless they base their godly life upon Jesus Christ:

*John 15:18-21 "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup>"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup>"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup>"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.*

The persecution comes because Christians are to live in the world but not be of the world. If one lives a life outside of the world then they will not be persecuted. If one lives in the world and as the world then they will not be persecuted. But if one lives in the world but not according to the standards of the world then persecution is promised. In contrast Paul says that evil men and impostors will have their personal conduct and moral behavior go from bad to worse. They began as deceivers and as they progress in this deception they become more deceived. Those duping others become the dupes!

**2Tim 3:14-15 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; <sup>15</sup>and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

In contrast to this behavior by the false teachers Timothy is to persevere in the teachings and actions of Paul. He has learned well from Paul and has based his life upon those teachings so he must continue to live a life imitating Paul. He reminds Timothy that he has also heard the correct Christian teachings from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. Paul states that all of those teachings and examples were true as they all led to wisdom and salvation that is available only in Christ Jesus. The sacred writings would be the Old Testament writings as they all point to Christ as Paul had testified at his trial before King Agrippa:

*Acts 26:22-23 "And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; <sup>23</sup>that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."*

So Paul is saying that Timothy has the truth based upon the Old Testament and the teachings of Paul and other apostles.

**2Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

Paul is ascribing two truths about Scripture: it is inspired by God and it is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and for training in righteousness. By "all Scripture" Paul is probably continuing his previous statement concerning both the Old Testament and his apostolic teachings learned by Timothy. Although Paul never calls his teachings Scripture, he does state its divine origins in several places:

*2Cor 2:17 For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*

*2Cor 13:3 since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.*

*Gal 4:14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.*

*1Thess 2:13 And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.*

*1Cor 2:13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.*

Peter also alluded to Paul's teachings as Scripture:

*2Peter 3:16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

Paul says that all Scripture is inspired by God and the meaning of the Greek word translated "inspired" can be rendered "God-breathed". It seems that 'spiration' or 'expiration' might convey the meaning of the adjective better than inspired. All of it came from the mind of God Who used human secondary sources to record it for humanity. Thus all Scripture is 'the word of God'.

Paul then states the purpose of Scripture. First it is profitable for teaching. This teaching must be understood to be the truth about God for that is the only teaching that is profitable:



*John 6:63 "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

The world's knowledge is only of little value but real knowledge comes from and about God:  
*Phil 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,*

*1Tim 6:20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"--*

Paul has elsewhere stated that the people of God should grow in wisdom and understanding:  
*Col 1:9-10 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,<sup>10</sup> so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;*

The Scripture is profitable for training in righteousness as he stated elsewhere also:

*Col 2:2-3 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,<sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

*Col 3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him*

The Scripture can also be used to reproof and correct false teachers:

*2Tim 2:25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,*

All of the uses of Scripture will then ensure that a man of God will be adequate, being equipped for every good work. Of course the adequacy of a person is judged by the standards of God as are the good works that God prepared for us before creation:

*Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

In this permissive society where we see many churches caving into temptations to make the church acceptable to the world all Christians must stand firm and let the Word of God make us men of God. We must not capitulate to the demands of the world to make our visible churches attuned to worldly standards of fun and excitement. The Biblical standards must be the standards of the church and of each individual Christian in worship, work, family life, and entertainment.