

SECOND TIMOTHY

Chapter 3

Godlessness in the Last Days

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. 6 For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, 7 always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. 9 But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

3:1 *last days*. The Messianic era, the time beginning with Christ's first coming. That "the last days" in this passage does not refer only to the time just prior to Christ's return is apparent from Paul's command to Timothy to have nothing to do with the unbelieving and unfaithful people who characterize this time (v. 5). (CSB)

The days immediately before Christ's return. Every day between Christ's ascension and His return is part of the Last Days. See note, Ac 2:17. (TLSB)

3:2–5 Paul describes people who have lived in every era of history, right up to this day. (TLSB)

3:3 *unappeasable*. Having wrathful anger and demanding punishment rather than showing mercy. (TLSB)

3:4 *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*. Turning self-indulgence and entertainment into idols. (TLSB)

3:5 *appearance of godliness*. People who look holy, but inwardly are unbelievers (cf Mt 23:27–28). (TLSB)

Avoid. Do not allow them to influence your thoughts and behavior. See note, Rm 16:17. (TLSB)

3:6 While the husband was away, religious charlatans would visit homes and try to persuade the women to accept their false teachings.

weak women. Unstable women who are guilt-ridden because of their sins, torn by lust, and victims of various false teachers ("always learning," v. 7, but never coming to a saving knowledge of Christ). (CSB)

Religious quackery was widely received by women in the Roman Empire during this time. (TLSB)

3:7 When truth is a matter of human opinion rather than divine revelation, people will have their own version. God’s Word, by contrast, speaks the eternal truth simply and plainly. (TLSB)

3:8 *Jannes and Jambres*. Neither of these men is mentioned in the OT, but according to Jewish tradition they were the Egyptian court magicians who opposed Moses. (CSB)

Not mentioned in the OT. Rabbinic tradition held that these men were magicians in Pharaoh’s court when Moses came to ask for Israel’s release from Egypt. (TLSB)

these men. Cf v 6. (TLSB)

disqualified. Thrown out of the “contest.” Paul returns to his earlier comparison of the faithful pastor to an athlete who must compete by the rules (2:5). (TLSB)

3:1–9 Although Paul writes these words specifically about temptations that attack the pastoral office, they clearly apply to all Christians. Men like Jannes and Jambres allowed themselves to be enticed, and in so doing they disqualified themselves regarding the faith. God’s baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit creates within us an ongoing desire for repentance and forgiveness. Although we may regularly fall into sin (such falls are easy for all Christians), God calls us to faith again through His Word, reminding us of the forgiveness and cleansing that are ours in Christ Jesus. • Lord, it is exceedingly easy to be deceived and so fall into sin. Guard me against all temptation. Amen. (TLSB)

All Scripture Is Breathed Out by God

10 You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, **11** my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. **12** Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, **13** while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. **14** But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it **15** and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

3:10 *my*. In Gk, “my” appears only once. Paul’s motivations have been rooted in the Gospel, not in subverting the Gospel. (TLSB)

3:11 *Antioch, Iconium and Lystra*.† Three cities in the Roman province of Galatia, which Paul visited on his first, second and third missionary journeys (Ac 13:14–14:23; 16:1–6; 18:23). Since Timothy was from Lystra, he would have known firsthand of Paul’s sufferings in that region. (CSB)

the Lord rescued me. Even from execution by stoning (Ac 14:19–20). (CSB)

During his missionary journeys, Paul regularly suffered bodily punishment for his preaching. He names these three Galatian provinces in particular, perhaps because Timothy was a native of Lystra and would have already been familiar with Paul’s persecutions in that region. (TLSB)

3:12 A principle repeated elsewhere in the NT (see Mt 10:22; Ac 14:22; Php 1:29; 1Pe 4:12). (CSB)

Persecution includes not only physical beatings such as Paul's but also derision and exclusion. (TLSB)

3:13 *from bad to worse*. Just as an addict's habit grows worse, so sin grows worse in the thoughts, actions, or teachings of those who willingly pursue it. (TLSB)

3:14 *continue in what you have learned* – Timothy had learned well. He had acquired strong convictions. He should stand by them and not let himself be shaken from them. This is also the only way to resist and overcome the evil men. (PBC)

from whom you learned it. Perhaps a reference to Paul as well as to Timothy's mother and grandmother (1:5). (CSB)

Timothy's mother, grandmother (1:5), and Paul (vv 10–11). (TLSB)

Timothy had had reliable teachers. Paul himself. Earlier Paul had referred to "the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses" (2:2). There were also Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. (PBC)

3:15 *from childhood you have been acquainted with sacred writings*. A Jewish boy formally began to study the OT when he was five years old. Timothy was taught at home by his mother and grandmother even before he reached this age. (CSB)

make you wise for salvation – Through the Scriptures (OT) Timothy had been brought to faith in the Christ, the promised Messiah. What makes the Holy Scriptures so important is that they and they alone reveal the way of salvation, which is through faith in Jesus Christ. (PBC)

Knowledge is often used as a synonym for faith in the Scriptures. Cf Ti 1:1. (TLSB)

3:16 *All Scripture*. The primary reference is to the OT, since some of the NT books had not even been written at this time. (See 1Ti 5:18; 2Pe 3:15–16 for indications that some NT books—or material ultimately included in the NT—were already considered equal in authority to the OT Scriptures.) (CSB)

breathed out by God. Paul affirms God's active involvement in the writing of Scripture, an involvement so powerful and pervasive that what is written is the infallible and authoritative word of God. (CSB)

An allusion to creation. Words are formed by breath, and breath is synonymous with life. Aphrahat: "If the days of a man should be many as all the days of the world from Adam to the end of the ages, and he should sit and meditate upon the Holy Scriptures, he would not comprehend all the force of the depth of the words. And man cannot rise up to the wisdom of God" (NPNF 2 13:411). (TLSB)

profitable – They are useful in that they thoroughly equip "the man of God," the pastor, teacher and every Christian. (PBC)

teaching – When Jesus gave his disciples the great commission to “make disciples of all nations,” He said they should do this by “baptizing them” and by “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). This “everything” is what God has given us in the Holy Scriptures. (PBC)

Imparting of knowledge/doctrine. (TLSB)

reproof – That is, to expose, to reprove, to convict of sin. (PBC)

The call to repentance over sin. (TLSB)

correction – That is, for restoring or improving those who fall. They need to be brought back to the straight and narrow way. (PBC)

Through the Word. (TLSB)

training in righteousness – Training raises the picture of a child that need to be disciplined and corrected, guided and encouraged if it is to grow up as well-manner useful citizen. Similarly the Christian during his life on earth needs ongoing training to attain to the righteous life (sanctification) that is part of being a Christian in this world of sin. (PBC)

Made righteous by God’s grace, we live out righteous behavior. (TLSB).

training. Gk *paidea*, childhood discipline and instruction. (TLSB)

3:17 *man of God*. The pastor or other called servant of the Word. (TLSB)

complete, equipped. Possessing both the personal aptitude and the proper training needed for the pastoral office. See p 2080. “We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and norm according to which all teachings, together with <all> teachers, should be evaluated and judged [2 Timothy 3:15–17] are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testament alone” (FC Ep Sum 1). “Faithful shepherds, as Luther says, should do both things: (1) feed or nourish the lambs and (2) resist the wolves. Then the sheep may flee from strange voices (John 10:5–12) and may separate the precious from the worthless (Jeremiah 15:19)” (FC SD Sum 14). (TLSB)

3:10–17 Paul points to himself as an example for Timothy. He speaks about the great work the Gospel has produced within him. Our fellow Christians want to learn the faith from us, and they watch us in the same way that Timothy watched Paul. God speaks His Gospel of forgiveness and peace to us, not only through His preached Word, but also through the example and teaching of our fellow Christians. Luther called this the consolation of the brethren. • O Lord, allow me to be an example for those who believe, as was Paul to Timothy. Through Your powerful Word, train me in righteousness, that I may be equipped for every good work. Amen. (TLSB)