

2nd Timothy Ch 3:1-9

“No Regard For God”

Hours before the crucifixion; Jesus spoke very candidly and quite clearly regarding the things that were going come down following His departure from them. and He told them that the time would soon come that they would be put out of the synagogues, that is, excommunicated, that they would face certain and even violent *persecution*, even to the point of *execution*.

In the 16th ch of the gospel of John He said to them, *“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.”* John 16:1 If you read that in the OKJV the words, “Be made to stumble” was translated as the single word, “Offended”. “These things I’ve spoken to you that you be not offended”, it’s the Greek word, “skandalizo” (skan-dal-id'-zo) from which comes our word (as you may assume) to “Scandalize.” So that Jesus is saying in essence to His disciples in that upper room just hours before His crucifixion, (and as you know when someone is confronted with certain death, they don’t generally joke around, if there’s something they want you to know they consider it of “grave” importance in all sincerity.) and So He says to them, “Boys, I don’t want you to be scandalized after you see what happens to Me, and I’m no longer here to encourage you physically, so I’m going to tell you the truth about what’s coming down the tracks for you, so be careful to tune in, and listen up.” “The religious community is going to come after you. The political authorities are going to lobby, and cast their votes in on your execution; tough times are certainly ahead of you.” But earlier on in that conversation He would say to them, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* John 14:1-3

The point being that, Yeah, tough times are ahead, brutal even; but I’m encouraging you to hang in there, to maintain the eternal perspective because this life is at best a vapor and, *“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* 2 Cor 4:17 and Again, *“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* Rom 8:18 So though it’s going to turn bad, and you’re going to see it turn *real bad*. Be careful to maintain eternal perspective because better to be afflicted (if need be) temporally and yet spend eternity in ecstasy, in the very presence of the Living God surrounded in all His glory, than to enjoy temporal comfort and be subjected to eternal affliction having been separated from God for all eternity where the fire is not quenched, and the worm never dies where there’ll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now here in 2nd Timothy ch 3 we’re experiencing a sort of similar tone in the writings Paul the apostle as he sits on death row facing eminent death himself. and Even as Jesus just hours before His crucifixion would speak very soberingly to His disciples about the things that were about to happen and yet the need to stay on course.

Even so here Paul the apostle just shortly before his execution takes the time to write to his disciple, his “son” in the faith concerning the things that would face the church in the latter days. How that difficult days are coming, but how we need to stay on course and continue in the things which we’ve learned.

As for our outline of ch 3 we’re going to break it down into just 2 very simple phrases, #1 Vs 1-9, “Things you should know” and then #2 being the remainder of the ch Vs 10-17, “The way you should go.” #1 Things you should know, he begins this segment of his letter in vs 1 with these words, “But know this.” Or to put it another way, “Here’s some things you need to be aware of and understand. Don’t be ignorant of these things.”

But then as Paul reaches vs 10 he draws a very distinct dividing line that stands to contrast what he’s stated previously and then he makes it quite clear that this is where our focus is to abide and remain. So that this ch sort of summarizes itself by saying, “Here’s some things you need to know and be aware of. Don’t be naïve as to the reality of these things, but don’t allow those things to become the overwhelming focus of your time, *this* is the way you should go.” Notice vs 14a (read).

Remember that Paul didn’t write this letter with chapter and vs divisions, those things were inserted at a later date for our convenience. But Paul is still following the flow and coming out of the context of ch 2 whereby he’s been illustrating the various vessels of a great house. and In a great house there will be vessels and honor, and vessels of dishonor, gold and silver, and wood and clay. Jesus spoke of wheat and tares, leaven in the church, good fish and bad, those who were kept and useful, and those who were thrown out. and Not everyone, or every organization is who they appear to be on the surface, so lets not be ignorant regarding the fact that the birds of the air, and vessels of dishonor will find their way into the branches of the mustard tree, or the great house. To keep it simple, bad company will find its way into the organization of the church, and we need to know that. So that we’re not intimidated to examine people’s lives in order that we might see the type of fruit they produce, so that we don’t automatically accept everything that anyone says as long as they’re behind a pulpit. John would tell us like this, “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*” 1 John 4:1

So we’re to be a discerning people, weighing the words, and the agendas of people’s lives in the balance of God’s Word and if they’re found wanting, then we’re to reject them. If they strike the balance then we can receive them, (again in regards to people who claim to be believers, worldly people are going to act like worldly people). and So in this 1st portion of ch 3 Paul tells us what’s going to happen, things we should be on the look out for and on guard against. But then he makes it real clear as he progresses that our focus shouldn’t be on the negative, but on the positive, being careful to maintain the godly direction that we’ve received through the study of God’s Word, looking to those who love God as our examples in order to follow after them. So, “These are the things you should know, but this is the way you should go.”

Vs1-5

Vs1 *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.”* This vs is sort of his little compact and concise statement that spills over into the next 8 whereby he explains or expositis what he means by the statement, “Perilous times will come.” So *know this*, be alerted to this fact, that in the last days perilous times will come.

Now the 1st question that pops into my mind is what is meant by the phrase, “last days?” Well the phrase stands to include the entire spectrum of time from the 1st appearing of Christ and His ascension, till the time that He returns for His church. So that when we read, *“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.”* Heb 1:1-2 We can deduce from that the fact that scripture allows for the understanding of the last days to begin with the appearing of Jesus Christ and They will culminate with His return when He takes for Himself His bride (the church) out of the world. Then comes the time of Jacobs trouble, the 70th week of Daniel, the time that the bible also refers to as the Great Tribulation. That 7yr period of time on the earth when God’s wrath is poured out upon the Christ rejecting world and God once again pours His Spirit out on the nation of Israel (a time that I might add that I believe we’re very near to).

But I believe that we can safely assume as we read this text that though the time frame of the last days allow for the entire spectrum of time beginning with Jesus’ 1st coming, Paul is no doubt in reference to that period in time that immediately precedes the return of Christ for His church. and Of course once the church is taken out how much more will these things abound once all restraint is cast off?

The warning here is that as these days approach and come upon us we can discern them and know that we’re in them because perilous times will come. The Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle is giving us tools here to discern the day and age in which we live, and if it be true that we’re indeed in the last days, then what manner of lives ought we to be living? (That’s the 2nd ½ of this ch), Because the bible is clear that judgment begins at the house of God, and, *“If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* 1 Peter 4:18 But be that as it may, God helps us to be wise in our day so that we might run with endurance this race that’s set before us and not grow weary in doing well. Because the time is too short to lose focus, and somehow fall short of apprehending that for which we’ve been apprehended by God. You remember that Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they thought that they were all bible scholars and yet they couldn’t discern the day and age in which they lived. He said, you guys know how to look at the sky and tell if it’s going to rain tomorrow, or if it’s going to be a good day to be out on the lake. But you can’t read your bibles and see that the Son of God is staring you right in the face, and He said that’s hypocritical. Listen to His words, *“Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.”* Matt 16:3

Paul is here giving us some tools lest we be caught in that same snare, we should know the day and age in which we live, and we should lead our lives with the sense of urgency that accords such days, knowing that the time is short and that we need to be heralding the last call before it's too late.

Paul says here that the last days will be marked by "Perilous times" and that word "Perilous" speaks of tough times, or difficult days, days marked out with stress that are hard to deal with. It's speaks of grievous, and even dangerous, perhaps violent or fierce days, you recall when Jesus and His disciples crossed the Sea of Galilee and came to the area of the Gadarenes we read in Matthew's Gospel that 2 demon possessed men came out of the tombs to meet Him. and We read of these 2 men that they were "exceedingly fierce" so that no one could pass that way. and The word that's been translated as "fierce" is the same word that we have here translated "Perilous."

Straight out of the shoot, the 1st characteristic that will trademark the last days is that, "Men will be lovers of themselves." and This is the 1st in a list of 19 attributes that Paul mentions in one breath, and it's significant that he mentions this one 1st because it's out of this problem that all the other problems stem, this phrase is like one big fat pregnant lady that gives birth to 18tuplets. It's well spring from which this polluted river flows, because all of the characteristics that come after this one could be remedied if this one didn't exist, because of that we'll spend the majority of our time dealing with this single issue. and So we can see the sincerity of the problem that's wrapped up in this single phrase, "Men will be lovers of themselves."

Again we'll bring this back into a specific focus in a little bit, but if there were ever a day when people were lovers of themselves, surely we consent that it's today. We're taught as a society that the key to loving others and doing good by others is found in 1st learning to love yourself and being good to yourself. and If you learn to love yourself supremely, then you'll have a right relationship with those around you.

But that's not what the bible teaches at all, quite to the contrary the bible teaches that love for self and placing myself above others is the cornerstone of societal problems, problems in the home, problems in the marriage, or in the various other relationships or friendships that one may acquire. and That the key to true joy, and fulfillment, and contentment lies in humbling myself, not thinking more highly of myself than I ought, to love God supremely and exalt those around me as being better than myself, and serving and giving my life away for others. Not in going for the gusto, or grabbing all I can in this life, and using everyone else as mere rungs on the social or corporate ladder that I'll step right over if I have to in order to get what I want.

That's why the title of the message is "No regard for God" because everyone of the things listed here couldn't be more in the face and standing in direct opposition to the Word, the priorities, and the desires and heart of God. Basically the last days will be typified by a society who as a whole has no regard for God. They're not lovers of God, they're lovers of themselves. and You see whenever love for *self* is raised, love for God and the things of God is lowered. and Again is it not at the very heart of all sin, think about it. It was Lucifer's exalting of himself, and love for himself over God that got this whole ball rolling. and Then when Eve was deceived and Adam engaged in the sin of placing their own desires, and themselves before God and His Word and His desires that we as mankind stepped into the arena of sin and transgression and from that point every other sin has issued forth.

But society tells you and me, "Learn to love yourself, then you can love others", and yet the bible teaches that self-love is the natural direction that we gravitate and is a big hang up in our relationship with others and primarily the Lord. That's why Jesus said, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,* (an instrument that equals death to oneself) *and follow Me.*" Matt 16:24

You see, on the scale of priority (not worth, we're all equal there) but the priority of our lives according to the bible is God 1st (not self), then others 2nd, and yourself on the bottom shelf. You've heard the song, "J.O.Y., J.O.Y. what does that word mean? Jesus 1st Yourself last, and others in between." and That's what the bible teaches, Jesus said, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*" Matt 22:37-39 In other words God is to be the priority of your life, then everyone else comes next, and then you're free to consider yourself. But I want you to notice in that vs that self love isn't something that Jesus sees as a quality that's to be acquired, it's a quality that's assumed. "Love your neighbor as you *already* love yourself." If we'd just extend the love and courtesy to others that we believe that we deserve, than things would go much better, but because we wait to be served rather than to serve there's real problems.

We have such a hypocritical society because we spend all this time telling people to learn to love themselves and think about themselves that when they finally start doing that we say, "Man that guy is a self-centered, egotistical jerk! He doesn't think of anyone but himself." Of course not, that's what he's been programmed to do. But what does the bible teach, what's the rule that the one who has regard for God, and His Word follows, the bible is clear, "*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself.*" Rom 15:1-3 and Even stronger still, "*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*" 2 Cor 5:14-15 and Finally, "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" Phil 2:5 and What was that mind? The previous vs unveils that to us, literally saying, "Each one looking out not for the things of himself, but for the things of others."

But in the last days men will be lovers of themselves, covetous or more literally as we have it in our NKJV “lovers of money”. This is the same word that the bible uses to indict the Pharisees regarding their greed and love of money. When Jesus was saying you can’t serve God and money, you’ll love one and hate the other, and be loyal to one and despise the other. and We read, “*Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.*” Luke 16:14

It’s not that money is bad in and of itself and that God can’t bless your life in that capacity so that you can then turn and invest into His kingdom and be a blessing to those who are in need. The bible says, “*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children.*” Prov 13:22 So God can use the resources He entrusts to you in a powerful way to His glory, so it’s not having money that’s the issue, it’s your money having you, that’s the issue. When you value your money more than you do the Lord and the things of God, building your kingdom with no regard to God’s, that’s the problem. It’s the “love” of money that’s at the root of all kinds of evil; greed is the vice we need to guard against. But all you have to do is watch about 10 seconds of a music video, or the travel channel to see the obsession that people have over money. In the last days people will be lovers of money, consumed with the here and now, stepping on whatever and ripping off whoever to get a pocketful of change.

Boasters, the idea there is “larger than life” “a legend in their own minds” empty braggart promising things they can never deliver. Raising up myself, and belittling you, and I know that this is radically prevalent in every aspect of society, be it in trash talking athletes or whatever. But I think it’s verbalized the most in RandB and rap music. Always exalting themselves and putting down others, or making empty promises about giving that gal the world, whatever you want I’ll give you. They’re empty vain promises, and proud and arrogant boasting, the health, wealth and prosperity type doctrines are full of empty promises and people who boast over the material possessions that they’ve fleeced the flock for. and Again when you compare the meek, and gentle and lowliness of heart of Jesus Christ, the fact that foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head personality of Jesus, with what you see on the vast majority of Christian broadcast television, the attitude and mentality couldn’t be in greater antithesis and it makes me sick. How can people read their bibles and yet subscribe to such junk? I’ll tell you why, because they have itching ears and it strokes their flesh, but these guys take these people and focus their eyes on the temporal things of this world rather than the things above and the eternal things that the bible says we’re to focus on.

But these things will mark the last days, people will be boasters, proud, blasphemers, no regard for God, the Word of God, the name of God or anything that pertains *to* God. “Disobedient to parents” and a child who has no qualms rebelling against their parents has no problems rebelling against anyone else. As goes the family, as goes the nation and as such we find ourselves today, but again unruly children will be a trademark of the last days, the bible teaches children to honor your mother and father, but with out regard for God, it doesn’t matter what the bible says.

As parents it's our responsibility to maintain godly order and discipline in our homes, not fleshy or abusive discipline, but godly discipline that calls for godly order.

We obviously can't exhaust all of these but bearing in mind the signs of the times in which we live ask yourself as we read these if this describes our generation. Are we as a society, unthankful, unholy, unloving? Or that means with out natural affection, with out the love that's naturally innate with in a family. Mother to child, the abortion rate skyrockets in epidemic proportions. That's not natural, it's natural that mothers love their babies, homosexuality is not normal, God created them male and female, but we're a society that's with out natural affection. "Unforgiving" or irreconcilable, what's stamped on the majority of divorce certificates?

"Irreconcilable differences" or in other words, we're unable to forgive one another, and the divorce rate in the church (I believe) has superceded the divorce rate of the world. "Slanderers" or "malicious gossips" or "false accusers" it's the word that's used many times to describe the devil, which literally means "accuser." All you have to do is watch a bit of any of these talk shows, or watch the news and read the paper to realize we're a society that feeds on gossip and hearsay. "Without self-control" yet what's one of the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit? Self-control, "brutal" or untamed, desensitized and violent, "despisers of good." and Surely we live in generation who hates what should be loved and loves what should be hated, and we remember that which was spoken in Isaiah, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" Isa 5:20

Vs 4

Not to be overly redundant but again tell me this doesn't sum up the position of America as a whole today. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." We are a pleasure driven society, today is Super-Bowl Sunday, I wonder how many professing believers will alter, or set aside godly responsibilities in order to accommodate a couple of hours of pleasure? People will spend a million plus, (it's probably 2million now) for 30 seconds of your time that night because they know that if what they have to say will somehow entertain you, or give you enough pleasure, you'll more than likely purchase their product. Even in the Christian industry, I've never for the life of me figured out why booking agencies book Christian concerts on Wednesday evenings luring people from the Word of God for a couple hours of pleasure. Now you're listening to an avid music fan, but even still I've never been able to really reconcile God's Word for a little bit of adrenalin, somehow justifying the fact that sense it's a Christian band it's ok, that band ought to be in church, not encouraging people to get out of church. But we're way into pleasure aren't we? and It's not that God doesn't want us to enjoy life, He created pleasure, but it needs to be kept in it's proper arenas, it's like mammon, we can't serve them both, it's God or pleasure, but you can only have 1 Master passion, there's not room in your heart for 2. But such are signs of the last days, people (notice vs 5).

Vs 5

You say what's this? Having a form of godliness? Yeah, as much as this characterizes the world in which we live today, the fact is, these things are going on in the church. Remember, things aren't always as they seem, there are those vessels of dishonor who look like all is well, but behind the mask are the motives of hell. The Holy Spirit is not there, they've denied Him a place His rightful place their lives so there's no power in their lives. and They're given over to the lusts of the flesh, and when you see these types of characteristics in the leadership of a church, from such people turn away.

Vs6-9

We may comment a bit further on these things next time, but the point here is that despite all that's going down to the negative in the last days, and though it will seem as though things are spiraling out of control, God is still in control. and Even as God exposed reality of the folly that was there in the magicians of Egypt as they tried to imitate Moses back in Ex 7-10 or so, so to one day every eye will see the reality of these men for who they are. God still knows those who are His, and if there were no genuine article, there would be nothing to counterfeit. So be diligent to make your calling and election sure, know that these things will happen, and that they're out there, don't be ignorant to them, so that you not be persuaded in that *direction* and sucked into the *deception* of those with no regard for God. But rather in contrast, "*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" 2 Peter 1:5-8

If you're here today and you need to make your calling and election sure, you're not sure that if you were to meet your Maker today that you would go to Heaven I want to give you that chance. Maybe you feel as though your life is spinning out of control, but know that God is in control, and that if you'll just surrender your life to Him today, He'll give you beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; and rest for your weary and heavy laden soul. But it's only through Jesus Christ