**We Live in Perilous Times**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Timothy 3:1-5**

**Wednesday Evening**

**May 30, 2018**

**1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:**

Saints, this reference to the last days reveals Paul’s sense of urgency. But warnings about the last days were certainly not unique to Paul. It was a common theme among the leaders of the early church (see Acts 2:17; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3; Jude 1:18). Very difficult times means “hard to bear, dangerous, troublesome.”

**Acts 2:17**

17'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

**James 5:3**

“Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days”

**2 Peter 3:3**

“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts”

Saints, Paul’s warning deserves our full attention.

The “last days” began after Jesus’ resurrection, when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost. The last days will continue until Christ’s second coming.

Paul could speak about the last days as a future event (emphasizing conditions present at the close of the last days), or as a present reality (emphasizing the truth that the state of depravity in the world is always ripe for harvest).

This means that we are living in the last days. It should not surprise us, then, to see the moral degeneration of society around us. Paul warned us that it would happen, as did Jesus (see Matthew 24).

**2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,**

Saints, when people misdirect their love—toward themselves and money—there can be no love left to direct toward others. Then moral corruption naturally results, as noted in the following characteristics.

**To be boastful and proud pictures a heart full of pride that manifests itself in outward boastfulness.**

Such characteristics reveal a person’s inflated self-importance and necessarily leads them to looking down on others.

**Scoffing at God means speaking disrespectfully of him.**

Not only are these people guilty of an overinflated sense of their own importance, they also verbally abuse God himself.

The extent of moral degeneration can be seen in the rejection of the most intimate human ties with many blatantly disobedient to their parents. This behavior willfully breaks the fifth commandment to honor one’s father and mother (see Exodus 20:12).

**Exodus 20:12**

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you”

The commandment was given because God understood the importance of strong families. To “honor” parents means speaking well of them and politely to them.

It also means:

**Acting in a way that shows them courtesy and respect.**

It means following their teaching and example of putting God first. Parents have a special place in God’s sight. Even children who find it difficult to get along with their parents are still commanded to honor them.

When parents are not respected and honored, disobedience naturally results, and the breakdown of the family easily follows. Paul understood that when families fall apart,

**“very difficult times follow”**

People are in a sad state when they are ungrateful and cannot appreciate anything. In Romans 1:21, Paul noted that ingratitude was second only to dishonoring God as a just cause for God’s judgment on humanity.

**Romans 1:18-23**

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,

Saints, this leads them to consider nothing sacred. People who set aside God in order to live only to please themselves can only go one direction—toward wickedness. They instinctively resist anyone or any ideas that would force them to measure themselves by God’s standards.

**3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,**

Saints, people will be unloving. The same word is used in only one other place in the New Testament (Romans 1:31), in a passage where Paul listed the characteristics of people who refuse God and follow their own inclinations.

**Romans 1:18-23, 31**

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**Romans 1:31-32**

31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Saints, indeed, because these people love only themselves and their money (possessions), as Paul noted in verse 2, they are unloving toward everyone and everything else.

Unforgiving people cannot allow for other people’s mistakes or weaknesses. They are unyielding, unrelenting, and often are filled with extreme bitterness and anger over their own hurts.

They simply refuse to forgive, even if presented with the opportunity.

Eventually, they become unable to forgive, even when they might acknowledge the need to do so.

That’s when a powerful spirit that takes over called in the Bible the Leviathan Spirit!

People who slander others are quick to spread falsehoods. Slanderers enjoy spreading gossip and malicious reports about others. Destroying another’s good reputation gives them perverse pleasure.

Without self-control, they cannot restrain their actions, their feelings, or their words. Cruel people (“brutes”) are like untamed animals, or “uncivilized” people. They are insensitive and crude, even savage. People will be so evil that they actually have no interest in what is good.

**4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

**Traitors** - This word is used in the New Testament only here and in Luke 6:16; Acts 7:52. It means any one who betrays - whether it be a friend or his country. Treason has been in all ages regarded as one of the worst crimes that man can commit.

**Luke 6:16**

“Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor”

**Acts 7:52**

“Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers”

**Heady** - The same word in Acts 19:36, is rendered rashly. It occurs only there and in this place in the New Testament.

**Acts 19:36**

“Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly”

Saints, it properly means "falling forwards; prone, inclined, ready to do anything; then precipitate, headlong, rash." It is opposed to that which is deliberate and calm, and here means that men would be ready to do anything without deliberation, or concern for the consequences. They would engage in enterprises which would only disturb society, or prove their own ruin.

**High-minded** - Literally, "puffed up;" compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:6, where the same word is rendered "lifted up with pride." The meaning is, that they would be inflated with pride or self-conceit.

**Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God**

That is, of sensual pleasures, or vain amusements. This has been, and is, the characteristic of a great part of the world, and has often distinguished even many who profess religion.

Of a large portion of mankind it may be said that this is their characteristic, that they live for pleasure; they have no serious pursuits; they brook no restraints which interfere with their amusements, and they greatly prefer the pleasures to be found in the gay assembly, in the ball-room, or in the place of low dissipation, to the friendship of their Creator.

**Philippians 3:17-19**

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things.

**5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!**

Saints, often these evil characteristics appear in a context of respectability. Religion is not gone; in fact, these character qualities are frequently exhibited by people known for their “religiousness.”

However, as Paul wrote, they act as if they are religious, using godliness as a cloak of respectability. But they will reject the power that could make them godly, denying God’s power over their lives.

The “act” could include going to church, knowing Christian doctrine, using Christian clichés, and following a community’s Christian traditions. Such practices can make a person outwardly look good, but if the inner attitudes of belief, love, and worship are lacking, the public appearance is hollow, meaningless.

Paul warned Timothy not to be deceived by people who only appear to be Christians. It may be difficult to distinguish them from true Christians at first, but their daily behavior will give them away. The characteristics described in 3:2-4 are unmistakable. In fact, the false teachers plaguing the Ephesian church most likely exemplified many of those characteristics that Paul listed above.

Paul had already advised Timothy to stay away from these troublemakers (2:23)—which probably meant excommunication.

**John 3:1-8**

1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**