

WHAT'S THIS WORLD COMING TO?

2 Timothy 3

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Increasing violence, perversion, political turmoil, physical disasters, materialism, self-centeredness, anger!

People have plenty to worry about! It's not going to get better!

Where will it all end?

Fear that evil is rising grips the heart of many people.

Ultimate fear of the godly: evil will overpower God's people.

Swindoll: "The lens of fear magnifies the size of the uncertainty.

When fear takes over, our imagination runs wild!"

Scripture affirms the validity of an apocalyptic view:

2 Tim. 3:1-5, 12-13

Peanuts: It's raining. Lucy tells Linus she's afraid it'll rain so much there'll be a terrible flood and everyone will drown. Linus responds: "It can't happen. God promised never again to flood the earth. He gave the rainbow as a sign." Lucy says: "I'm relieved." Linus responds, "Sound theology has a way of doing that."

As we watch news and hear tragic reports of mayhem and the growth of evil in the world, good theology has a way of putting our minds at ease.

Jesus promised that in the world there would be affliction,

But He has overcome the world.

Jesus promised the opposition of the evil one,

But He prayed that God would protect us from the evil one.

Same passages that promise things will get worse, also promise that those who follow Him will triumph with Him in the end.

Things aren't out of control, however bad they may seem.

It's in darkness that light is of greatest value.

We know how the story ends. *God wins!* The faithful win with Him.

Whose team do WE want to be on when the game's over!

GODLESSNESS IN THE LAST DAYS 3:1-9

Their lifestyle 1-4 *"But mark this: There will be **terrible times** in the last days. ² People will be **lovers of themselves, lovers of money**, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, **not lovers of the good**, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, **lovers of pleasure** rather than **lovers of God**"*

Treacherous times lie ahead.

Can you think of a more accurate description of people today?

Ironside: [1947!] "These are the great outstanding features of the 'last days' ... Can any believer in Holy Writ doubt our being now in the midst of them?"

People pursue personal satisfaction, rather than God.

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|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| * materialistic | * proud | * ego-centric |
| * unsubmitive | * gossips | * pleasure-seeking |
| * lacking self-discipline | * ungrateful | * angry |

"Lovers of ..." describes things they're *committed to*; ***what they live for.***

Wiersbe: "We should worship God, love people and use things. If we start worshiping ourselves, we will ignore God, love things and use people." That's what the world looks like today!

If, as Ironside thought, this was true in 1947, how much more today?

Their doctrine 5-9 *“...having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”⁶ They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,⁷ always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.⁹ But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.*

They try to be “religious,”

without accepting the power to accomplish it.

They want to be religious without God!—on THEIR terms!
Tony Evans walked into hotel lobby; saw bowl of fruit set out for guests. He grabbed an apple. As he bit into it, he discovered that it was wax. What do you do with it? Put it back in bowl—with teeth marks? Steal it, so people won’t see? He’d mistaken something artificial for something real. That’s what religious people do. They try to follow religious ritual, without accepting essence of true religion: trusting Christ and receiving the power of God in your life.

They sneak in and take captives.

Their target: “weak, silly women”

Paul is NOT saying women are weak-willed and troubled.

These are women burdened with guilt and vulnerable

Such women easy prey for shysters and persuasive cult leaders!

They get into homes, offering appeal to religious experience.

They appeal to people struggling with guilt.

They want to learn more without accepting the Truth.

They don't discover truth, because they never come to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

They are perverted and disqualified.

Their minds are corrupt.

As far as the faith is concerned, they are rejected.

Their folly will be evident to all.

Swindoll: "Could Paul have really lived in the first century? Sounds like the 20th [21st?] to me. ... Abortions. Carjacking. Kidnapping. Robberies. Graffiti. Rape. Senseless murders. Child molestation. Wife battering. Preachers and priests who deceive.... Financial experts who secretly rip people off and never lose sleep. Deadbeat dads. Homosexuals on parade.... Multicultural prejudices. Construction workers who cut corners. Insurance frauds. Porno shops. Crack cocaine. Greedy athletes, The ugly list doesn't end. ... Paul was right; difficult times *have* come."

EXAMPLE OF GODLINESS 3:10-11 *"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,¹¹ per-secutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Ico-nium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*

Paul refuses to follow the popular lifestyle.

Paul remains an example of one who pursues godliness.

In doctrine In lifestyle & much more.

Because of his chosen lifestyle, Paul suffers persecution.

God consistently rescues Paul from persecution.

Timothy watched example of Paul's lifestyle, his character, his suffering.

Now it's *HIS* turn to imitate Paul's example.

EXHORTATION TO GODLINESS 3:12-17

Paul urges Timothy to follow in his footsteps—to imitate his example.

Promise of persecution 3:12-13 *"In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,"¹³ while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

People who seek to live a godly life

WILL suffer persecution.

**If Timothy follows Paul's example,
he can be assured of persecution.**

Not way to attract a crowd: "Follow me and suffer!"

If we go month after month with no negative repercussions for our faith, maybe we're part of the spiritual "CIA;" we're "covert operatives."

If we were on trial for being Christians, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

Tozer: "If you are willing to lower the temperature of your testimony, the world will turn off the heat it has been applying. But if you are faithful to God and His Word, consistent and sincere in your testimony to what Christ means to you, you can expect both heat and pressure."

People who persist in evil will go from bad to worse.

People who persist in evil will deceive and be deceived.

What does that say about how people measure a church's success?

Is drawing a crowd evidence of God's blessing?

Persecution is inevitable for those who remain faithful to God!

If we're not suffering—if we *thrive* in the world—could it be we're

NOT living godly life that makes evident that we live IN Christ?

Perseverance in godliness 3:14-15 *"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

Paul counsels Timothy: persist in godly living.

Hang in there! Persist in it!

Continue to pursue the path you learned from childhood.

He learned it at home from mother and grandmother.

Remember that the Word he received was only the O.T.

Peter indicates N.T. is included in references to "Holy Scriptures."

Emphasis points us toward value of understanding O.T. *and* N.T.

We'll never *fully* understand N.T., unless we understand O.T.

Roots of N.T. go deeply into O.T.

Timothy was familiar with prophecies of Messiah's coming, so that when Jesus is presented, he's prepared to trust Him.

3:15 *"From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."*

He also learned the truth from Paul.

His “seminary training” was obtained

by *mentoring* by a godly follower of Christ.

Imagine what a strong argument it would be to say to those who come along behind us: “Continue in what you’ve learned, because you know those from whom you learned it. You know your pastors, your Sunday school teachers, your fathers and mothers, and grandparents. You know what they taught you and you’ve watched their lives. Their lives match what their lips say. So you continue in what you’ve learned from them!”

Importance of Scripture 3:16-17 *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*

Scripture is our guide to a godly lifestyle.

It’s all profitable—though we may not see much profit in some parts—

It’s ALL profitable for teaching.

1000s of books have been written to explain God’s Word.

But Bible itself is our *final* authority.

It’s profitable for rebuking.

It shows us where we’re wrong—in lives and thoughts.

It’s profitable for correcting.

It shows us how to make things right.

It’s profitable for training in righteousness.

Shows us God’s will for our lives—leads us in path of righteousness.

Scripture is God-produced [$\leq$ “breathed out by God”]

2 Peter 1 tells us that men didn't just decide to make this up! Holy Spirit spoke through them as He moved them along –like wind drives a sailboat.

Scripture makes godly people competent/complete.

It provides all we need to guide our path in way God wants us to go, so we can become all God wants us to be.

Scripture equips godly people for every good work.

God considers *nothing* to be a good work, if it's contrary to His Word!

If people aren't taught, rebuked, corrected, trained in righteousness, we must not be preaching the Holy Scriptures!

WHERE DOES THIS APOSTASY END?

Whether we're talking about immediate future, or the end of the story, we can face fear of uncertain days and rise of evil, by focusing on the One who overcame it all.

We focus on the God who gives us the ultimate victory.

Popular expressions: "It's not over til it's over!"

"He who laughs last, laughs best."

There are lots of things we don't know about the future.

When you study Revelation, with all the questions that remain unanswered, one is clearly answered with absolutely no doubt: God wins!

We triumph with Him. We don't have to be afraid—just faithful.

How do we live in a world headed in this direction?

Knute Larson: Tells about his first big distance race. He's running out of steam and about to throw in the towel—in the face of

discouraging circumstances. Another runner comes alongside, passing him. He turns to him and says, “Come on, run with me. You can do it!” He coached him along the way. The last few miles they ran stride for stride. At end of race both stretched it out together; Larson finished beside him, with fabulous kick at end. They finished strong. Together. They encouraged one another—through the adversity.

That’s how God wants US to run in a world gone astray!

Despite persecution. Despite hardship we come up against.

The appropriate response isn’t to calculate dates, hide in a cave, or give up.

Paul urges us to stay at it. Keep living godly lives; keep sharing the faith; keep teaching about righteous living.

Stay in God’s Word; it’s the *breath of life!*

Persevere—don’t retreat! Finish the race. Finish *WELL!*