

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 TIMOTHY 3 (PART 1)

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5 - SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS

PAUL DESCRIBES THE DIFFICULT DAYS THAT WILL COME BEFORE CHRIST'S COMING BY MENTIONING THE MORAL, CHARACTER AND BEHAVIORAL DEPRAVITY THAT WILL BE PRESENT. WHEN READING THIS LIST IN THE CURRENT DAY, IT'S HARD TO NOT CONCLUDE WE'RE LIVING IN DIFFICULT TIMES AND NEAR THE JUDGMENT DAY.

LOVERS OF SELF

LOVERS OF MONEY

BOASTFUL - VAGABOND (AN IMPOSTER)

ARROGANT - SHOWING ONESELF ABOVE ANOTHER

REVILERS - *BLASPHEMOUS*, EVIL SPEAKING, SLANDERERS

DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS

UNGRATEFUL

UNHOLY

UNLOVING - WITHOUT AFFECTION, WITHOUT FAMILY AFFECTION

IRRECONCILABLE - *WITHOUT TRUCE*

MALICIOUS GOSSIPS - *DIABOLOS*

WITHOUT SELF-CONTROL - WITHOUT POWER

BRUTAL - NOT TAME, HARSH, LACKING COMPASSION OR SENSITIVITY, TYPICAL OF BEASTS

HATERS OF GOOD - WITHOUT THE LOVE OF GOOD

TREACHEROUS - BETRAYERS, TRAITORS, UNRELIABLE

RECKLESS - *FALLING HEADLONG*, MARKED BY LACK OF PROPER CAUTION, CARELESS OF CONSEQUENCES

CONCEITED - TO BE CONCEITED, FOOLISH

LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD

HOLDING TO A FORM OF GODLINESS, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE DENIED ITS POWER

THERE ARE 19 THINGS LISTED HERE. 4 OF THE 19 RELATE TO MISPLACED LOVE - LOVERS OF SELF, MONEY, UNLOVING AND LOVERS OF PLEASURE - RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD. SO MANY OF THESE CHARACTERISTICS ARE ALLOWABLE AND COMMON WHEN SOMEONE LOVES THEMSELVES (OR ANYTHING ELSE) RATHER THAN GOD

THE SECOND GROUPING ABOVE MAKES SENSE TO FOLLOW AFTER "DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS", FOR AS WE LEAVE, REJECT OR USURP THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURES THAT GOD HAS PLACED IN OUR LIVES, WE BECOME UNGRATEFUL, UNHOLY, UNLOVING AND UNWILLING TO RECONCILE.

V. 5 - AVOID SUCH MEN AS THESE - "TURN AWAY"

WE NEED TO AVOID PEOPLE LIKE THIS AS PART OF THE CIRCLE OF PEOPLE THAT IS INFLUENTIAL IN OUR LIVES. WE WORK WITH PEOPLE LIKE THIS, WE LIVE NEAR PEOPLE LIKE THIS AND PASS PEOPLE LIKE THIS IN EVERY WALK OF LIFE. THIS DOESN'T MEAN ISOLATE COMPLETELY FROM SINNERS - BUT IT DOES MEAN NOT MAKING IT COMMON TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TOWARDS THEM. WHAT WE GIVE OUR ATTENTION TO WE GIVE OUR HEARTS TO AND WHAT WE GIVE OUR HEARTS TO WE GIVE OUR LIVES TO.

WE JUST READ IN 2 TIMOTHY 2 THE FOLLOWING:

2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26 - THE LORD'S BOND-SERVANT MUST NOT BE QUARRELSOME, BUT BE KIND TO ALL, ABLE TO TEACH, PATIENT WHEN WRONGED, 25 WITH GENTLENESS CORRECTING THOSE WHO ARE IN OPPOSITION, IF PERHAPS GOD MAY GRANT THEM REPENTANCE LEADING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, 26 AND THEY MAY COME TO THEIR SENSES AND ESCAPE FROM THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL, HAVING BEEN HELD CAPTIVE BY HIM TO DO HIS WILL.

SO IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT PAUL IS REFERRING TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO INSIST IN THEIR SINFUL BEHAVIOR - ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE CHRISTIANS AND HABITUALLY PRACTICE SUCH THINGS. FOR THE LIST IN V. 1-5 TO INCLUDE "HOLDING A FORM OF GODLINESS" IMPLIES THAT SOME OF THESE PEOPLE CLAIM OR APPEAR TO BE GODLY AND YET REJECT GOD'S POWER. SUCH BEHAVIOR SHOULD NOT BE IN THE CHURCH OF GOD. HAVING RELIGIOUS DEVOTION OR EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF PIETY IS NOT A GUARANTEE THAT ONE IS A CHRISTIAN.

2 TIMOTHY 3:6-7 - WHAT THEY DO

WE HAVE A VERY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE GIVEN HERE ABOUT HOW SUCH PEOPLE, WHO APPEAR GODLY BUT ARE NOT, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHER PEOPLE. PAUL CITES THESE EVIL PEOPLE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WOMEN WHO ARE "WEIGHED DOWN WITH SINS" - EITHER GUILTY FROM PAST SIN OR CURRENTLY STRUGGLING WITH SIN - BEING "CAPTIVATED" BY NEW TEACHINGS OR DIFFERENT TAKES ON SCRIPTURE. YET, THEY NEVER COME TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH BUT INSTEAD ARE JUST LOOKING FOR THE NEXT NEW OR DIFFERENT THING.

2 TIMOTHY 3:8-9 - AN EXAMPLE FROM EXODUS

JANNES AND JAMBRES WERE THE NAMES GIVEN BY JEWISH WRITERS TO THE TWO MAGICIANS IN PHARAOH'S COURT WHO OPPOSED MOSES AND AARON AND WHO REPLICATE THE FIRST THREE PLAGUES. THEIR STORY IS FOUND IN EXODUS 7 (THOUGH THEIR NAMES ARE NOT GIVEN IN THE TEXT)

EXODUS 7:8-13 - NOW THE LORD SPOKE TO MOSES AND AARON, SAYING, 9 "WHEN PHARAOH SPEAKS TO YOU, SAYING, 'WORK A MIRACLE,' THEN YOU SHALL SAY TO AARON, 'TAKE YOUR STAFF AND THROW IT DOWN BEFORE PHARAOH, THAT IT MAY BECOME A SERPENT.'" 10 SO MOSES AND AARON CAME TO PHARAOH, AND THUS THEY DID JUST AS THE LORD HAD COMMANDED; AND AARON THREW HIS STAFF DOWN BEFORE PHARAOH AND HIS SERVANTS, AND IT BECAME A SERPENT.

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. 12 FOR EACH ONE THREW DOWN HIS STAFF AND THEY TURNED INTO SERPENTS. BUT AARON'S STAFF SWALLOWED UP THEIR STAFFS. 13 YET PHARAOH'S HEART WAS HARDENED, AND HE DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM, AS THE LORD HAD SAID.

THEY APPEAR AGAIN IN EXODUS 7:14-25 WITH THE WATER TURNING TO BLOOD WHICH CONCLUDES THE FOLLOWING

EXODUS 7:20-23 - SO MOSES AND AARON DID EVEN AS THE LORD HAD COMMANDED. AND HE LIFTED UP THE STAFF AND STRUCK THE WATER THAT WAS IN THE NILE, IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH AND IN THE SIGHT OF HIS SERVANTS, AND ALL THE WATER THAT WAS IN THE NILE WAS

TURNED TO BLOOD. 21 THE FISH THAT WERE IN THE NILE DIED, AND THE NILE BECAME FOUL, SO THAT THE EGYPTIANS COULD NOT DRINK WATER FROM THE NILE. AND THE BLOOD WAS THROUGH ALL THE LAND OF EGYPT.

22 BUT THE MAGICIANS OF EGYPT DID THE SAME WITH THEIR SECRET ARTS; AND PHARAOH'S HEART WAS HARDENED, AND HE DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM, AS THE LORD HAD SAID. 23 THEN PHARAOH TURNED AND WENT INTO HIS HOUSE WITH NO CONCERN EVEN FOR THIS.

Q - HOW DID THE MAGICIAN'S ACTIONS AFFECT MOSES AND AARON? WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE MAGICIAN'S MAGIC ON THE HEART OF PHARAOH?

PHARAOH WAS EMBOLDENED IN HIS RESISTANCE TO GOD BECAUSE OF THE MAGICIANS. THEY STOOD AGAINST GOD'S PROPHET AND THE COMMAND OF GOD AND PHARAOH DIDN'T SEE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE BECAUSE THE MAGICIANS SEEMED TO MATCH MOSES AND AARON. SIMILARLY, THE EVIL PEOPLE AND EVIL/FALSE TEACHERS ARE OPPOSING GOD AND HIS WORD AND TRYING TO DISCOURAGE OTHERS FROM BELIEVING WHAT IS TRUE AND DOING THINGS TO TRY AND INVALIDATE GOD'S WORD

BUT, AS WE SEE FROM EXODUS, EVENTUALLY THE MAGICIANS WERE NOT ABLE TO MATCH THE POWER OF GOD, THEY ALSO EVEN WERE FORCED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE GOD OF MOSES!

EXODUS 8:18-19 - THE MAGICIANS TRIED WITH THEIR SECRET ARTS TO BRING FORTH GNATS, BUT THEY COULD NOT; SO THERE WERE GNATS ON MAN AND BEAST. 19 THEN THE MAGICIANS SAID TO PHARAOH, "THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD." BUT PHARAOH'S HEART WAS HARDENED, AND HE DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM, AS THE LORD HAD SAID.

EXODUS 9:11 - THE MAGICIANS COULD NOT STAND BEFORE MOSES BECAUSE OF THE BOILS, FOR THE BOILS WERE ON THE MAGICIANS AS WELL AS ON ALL THE EGYPTIANS.

THOSE FOLLOWING IN JANNES AND JAMBRES' FOOTSTEPS WILL MEET THEIR SAME FATE: "THEY WILL NOT MAKE FURTHER PROGRESS" AND "THEIR FOLLY WILL BECOME OBVIOUS TO ALL..."

WE'RE LEFT WITH THE PROMISE THAT THE EVIL PEOPLE AND THE FALSE TEACHERS AND FALSE WAYS OF THIS AGE WILL EVENTUALLY BE EXPOSED AND EXTINGUISHED.

PAUL IS WRITING IN A DAY WHEN HE HAS NO HOPE OF WIDESPREAD MORAL IMPROVEMENT BY ANY OTHER MEANS THAN THE KINGDOM OF GOD COMING. PAUL HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT INDIVIDUAL HEARTS ARE WHERE THE BATTLEFIELD IS - AND THAT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND LOVE OF GOD IS WHAT WILL TURN THINGS AROUND IN THAT WAR.

IN THE WESTERN WORLD, IT'S EASY AND COMMON FOR US TO RESPOND TO THIS LIST BY COMPLAINING, BEING DISCOURAGED AND LAMENTING THE DECLINE OF OUR SOCIETY. IT IS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE IN HISTORY TO LIVE IN A NATION THAT ACKNOWLEDGES THE CREATOR GOD OF THE BIBLE AND WHO HAS BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND REFERENCES IN ITS FOUNDING. AND AS WE LOOK BACK AT HOW THINGS "USED TO BE" IN THE 1700'S OR 1950'S COMPARED TO HOW THEY ARE NOW, WE ARE SADDENED ABOUT THE DECLINE OF DEPENDANCE ON AND INTEREST IN GOD ALMIGHTY.

IN 1864, PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN SAID THIS ABOUT THE BIBLE: "IN REGARD TO THIS GREAT BOOK, I HAVE BUT TO SAY, IT IS THE BEST GIFT GOD HAS GIVEN TO MAN. ALL THE GOOD THE SAVIOR GAVE TO THE WORLD WAS COMMUNICATED THROUGH THIS BOOK. BUT FOR IT WE COULD NOT KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG. ALL THINGS MOST DESIRABLE FOR MAN'S WELFARE, HERE AND HEREAFTER, ARE TO BE FOUND PORTRAYED IN IT."

HARD TO IMAGINE SUCH A STATEMENT BEING SAID TODAY. WE ARE LIVING IN DIFFICULT TIMES.

WHAT THEN DO WE DO ABOUT THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE TIME WE ARE IN? THERE ARE A FEW WAYS SCRIPTURE GUIDES US, BUT ONE REACTION IS WORTH HIGHLIGHTING HERE. WE OUGHT NOT TO THINK THAT WE CAN LEGISLATE MORALITY OR VOTE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD. WE CANNOT CHANGE THE HUMAN HEART BY PASSING LAWS OR ELECTING OFFICIALS OR AMENDING CONSTITUTIONS. THAT IS NOT TO SAY WE CAN'T WORK IN REDEMPTIVE WAYS TO WORK FOR JUSTICE, CARE FOR THE OPPRESSED, OR MAKE THINGS BETTER BY HAVING SPIRIT-FILLED FOLLOWERS OF JESUS INVOLVED IN EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, EDUCATION, INDUSTRY AND FINANCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AS WELL AS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AROUND US. WE ARE SALT AND LIGHT!

YET, PAUL WRITES HERE THAT THINGS ARE GOING TO GET WORSE, NOT BETTER BEFORE THE COMING OF THE KING. THAT'S NOT PAUL BEING PESSIMISTIC OR FATALISTIC - IT'S HIM BEING HONEST AND HELPING TO PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE FOR THESE TIMES. IF THE CHURCH SEES THE EVIL RISING AND RIGHTEOUSNESS DECLINING, AND NEEDS TO GO SIT IN THE CORNER WITH BINKIES IN OUR MOUTHS - WE ARE GOING TO MISS THE MOMENT WE ARE NEEDED IN THIS DARK WORLD THE MOST.

JANNES AND JAMBRES DID THEIR BEST TO DECEIVE - AND YET IN THE END THEIR FOLLY BECAME OBVIOUS TO ALL AND THEY COULDN'T STAND BEFORE MOSES, FOR MOSES TRUSTED IN THE LORD AND STOOD HIS GROUND.

JOHN STOTT WROTE THIS AS HE COMMENTED ON THIS SECTION AND THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT WE SHOULD DO AND HOW WE SHOULD RESPOND:

"ONLY THE GOSPEL OFFERS A RADICAL SOLUTION TO (THESE PROBLEMS). FOR ONLY THE GOSPEL PROMISES A NEW BIRTH OR NEW CREATION, WHICH INVOLVES BEING TURNED INSIDE OUT, FROM SELFISH TO UNSELFISH, A REAL REORIENTATION OF MIND AND BEHAVIOR, AND WHICH MAKES US ESSENTIALLY GOD-CENTERED INSTEAD OF SELF-CENTERED. THEN, WHEN GOD IS FIRST AND SELF IS LAST, WE LOVE THE WORLD GOD LOVES AND SEEK TO GIVE AND SERVE LIKE HIM." (JOHN STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF 2 TIMOTHY" PAGE 66)

WE NEED TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE GOSPEL IS POWERFUL AND THAT PRAYER IS EFFECTIVE. WE NEED TO BE CONVINCED THAT LOVE NEVER FAILS. WE NEED TO BE CONVINCED THAT WE OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD. WE AREN'T IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR FOR THE SOUL OF AMERICA OR ANY OTHER NATION - WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF A SPIRITUAL BATTLE WHICH IS BEING WAGED BY THE FORCES OF EVIL AND DARKNESS IN EVERY REALM - BUT THOUGH BATTLES REMAIN, THE WAR HAS BEEN DECIDED AND WE KNOW THE END OF THE STORY.

SO IF THERE ARE LOVERS OF SELF, WE WILL BE LOVERS OF ALL, IF THERE ARE LOVERS OF MONEY, WE WILL BE GENEROUS, IF THE BOASTFUL SHOUT, WE WILL HUMBLY SERVE. IF PEOPLE INCREASE IN ARROGANCE, REVILING, DISOBEDIENCE, AND DECREASE IN SELF CONTROL, HOLINESS AND LOVE FOR GOD - WE WILL FOLLOW JESUS OBEDIENTLY AND FAITHFULLY UNTIL HE COMES, COMMITTED TO SHARING THE NEWS OF HIS WAY, HIS VICTORY AND HIS KINGDOM WITH ALL THE WORLD.