

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Perilous Times

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Introduction

When Paul wrote to Timothy instructing him about ministry and how to conduct himself in the things of God, he also gave this prophetic warning:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 NASB But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

In these verses there are eighteen characteristics of moral issues—character problems that will characterize people during the last days. Verse two begins with “for”, which means that these eighteen character defects are the reason for the difficult times coming.

The NASB translation of “difficult” is rather weak. The King James Bible translates it as “perilous times”. According to Thayer's Greek Definitions, the original word not only means difficult, hard, and perilous; it also means harsh, fierce, savage, troublesome, and dangerous. Yes, the last days will be difficult, tough to bear because of the deterioration of human character in the people.

Three Evil Loves

The difficult times are the result of three evil loves:

1. love of self;
2. love of money; and
3. love of pleasure

These begin and end this set of Scriptures. Love of self is first, which leads to a love of money, which ends with love of pleasure. These three evil loves corrupt human nature completely. Today, we live in a culture that is given over to these and is possibly unparalleled in its embrace of self love, money, and pleasure. In a society where majority rules it is inevitable that the majority will support and vote for anything that feeds self desires.

Powerless Godliness

Notice that Paul tells Timothy that these people hold to “a form of godliness” but have denied its power. He is not talking about pagans here. He is talking about those who profess Christ; they are believers. They practice a form of godliness; that is, an outward piety, but without the inward reality. They have denied the Lord His right to change them and their lifestyle. They are religious. They sing hymns; they go to church; but the object of their affection is themselves.

It is the word of the cross that is the enemy of self. Jesus made it very clear that to follow Him we had to do two things: 1) deny ourselves; 2) take up our cross daily.

Luke 9:23-24 NASB And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. (24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

We have to deny self to even take up the cross. Once we take it up, we are doing the same thing that Jesus did—we are going to a place to die. We can't know resurrection life until we have died on the cross. The cross is the power of God for us that are being saved, sanctified, and conformed to the image of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:18 NASB For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Those who hold to “a form of godliness” but deny its power are those who are denying the word of the cross and its application to their life with the result that they are unchanged. They remain lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure. [*For further study of the difference in the Blood of Jesus and the Cross of Jesus and their application to us see [Ministry Basics Lesson 11. The Foundation of Ministry](#) on the website.*]

Twisted Scriptures

As a whole our churches have quietly quit teaching the power of the cross and the need to change, to be conformed to the image of Christ. Instead there has been an insidious twisting of the Scriptures by principles of psychology to support maintaining the three evil loves. For example, the scriptures say “love your neighbor as yourself”. I have heard this twisted in this way: you can't love your neighbor until you have learned to love yourself first. Now, does that sound even remotely like anything that Jesus would say? I think not. As a matter of fact, it contradicts things that Jesus did say. Yet, in many churches there is much teaching about loving self in order to increase your self-esteem.

The televangelists blatantly preach a gospel of greed promoting the love of money by twisting the Scriptures about giving, planting financial seeds and releasing a financial harvest. Yet Jesus said,

Matthew 6:24 NASB "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The seeker friendly preachers build their empires on the idea of “success”, a “christianized version of course, but still success as the world knows it. They twist the Scriptures about us being sons of God, King's kids that have the right to be always be blessed. They preach that God intends for all of us to be successful, to enjoy a life full of all that the world has to offer. Success and its lifestyle are our due and nothing can stand in the way of our achieving it. Our life should be free from problems so that we can be happy for that is God's will. How utterly alien to the Scriptures is this twisted version of God's purpose. Paul spoke plainly about the necessity of persecution and suffering:

2 Timothy 3:12 NASB Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 NASB (4) therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure. (5) *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering.

This is what Jesus said:

John 16:33 NASB "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

This is what Peter said:

1 Peter 5:9-10 NASB But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. (10) After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

This small sampling of verses make it very clear that God did not promise us a trouble free, pain free, problem free successful life full of the pleasures of this world. As a matter of fact, John tells us clearly of the problem with all of this:

1 John 2:15 NASB Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

So, we have the churches who have quit preaching the word of the cross, the power of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of believers and substituted psychology based, feel good, messages on success, money and a trouble free life. The result is the moral decay of the character of the believer that brings us into perilous times during the last days.

We need to remember that the Man of Lawlessness who operates in the spirit of Antichrist is a religious person—outwardly pious. While the words that he speaks are blasphemous toward God, they will stir the hearts and minds of those who follow the three evil loves of self, money and pleasure. They will sound like godly words to them and will appeal to their love of

themselves in a way that appears godly.

The falling away that occurs before the appearance of the man of lawlessness is the falling away from the love of God and into the fullness of the love of self. It is this that creates the perilous times for those who love God and want to walk godly in His ways.

Brethren, the times are upon us. There is something more important than “me” or “us”. It is God's people, His spiritual house. Are we going to live our lives to please ourselves; to seek our own good pleasure and pursue our own ambitions? Or, are we going to live our lives for the glory of God, His house, and the people of God?

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