

Theme: We live in the last days, which are terrible times marked by moral decay and deception, but the Gospel and Spirit provide power to deliver us from the dominance of sin and error.

## I. Intro - Missed Warnings Before WWII

- A. Western democracies were not prepared for Hitler
- B. They did not understand what he was trying to do, and they missed all the signs of his intentions
- C. He had told everyone in Mein Kampf!
- D. God has told us what to expect in our age
- E. What will it be like? How do we live?

## II. Terrible Times In the Last Days

- A. Terrible times in the last days  
But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 Timothy 3:1
  - 1. Paul reminds him the last days will be terrible times
  - 2. This is a common teaching in the NT  
The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. <sup>2</sup> Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. 1 Timothy 4:1-2
    - a. Spirit clearly says it will be bad in later times
    - b. Deceiving spirits, hypocritical liars, seared conscience - false teachings, unholy living

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 2 Peter 3:3 (also see Jude 1:17-18)

- c. 'in the last days' - the same exact phrase
  - d. Scoffers come; follow their own evil desires
  - e. The context is a call to holiness as we look forward to the return of Christ
- B. The 'last days' are not future - the whole age between the 1st and 2nd coming of Christ  
having a form of godliness but denying its power. **Have nothing to do with them.** 2 Timothy 3:5
    - 1. The last days people Paul is describing are in Ephesus with Timothy!
    - 2. He must separate from last days false prophets
    - 3. The NT ALWAYS uses the phrase 'the last days' to refer to the entire period from the first coming of Christ until His 2nd coming - NEVER the days and years just before the 2nd coming.
    - 4. This means that all Christians live in the last days, and the things Paul describes will be evident throughout the age - including our time.
    - 5. I will talk more about 'the last days' in AfterHours

## III. Moral Decay In The Last Days

- A. People will give in to sin and moral decay  
People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — 2 Timothy 3:2-4
  - 1. A 'vice list' to describe people's lack of character
    - a. Also in Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-9; 1 Tim 1:9-10

- b. Some sins are unique to each list, but many are common to several of them

## 2. A few key ideas to note:

### a. The root problem is disordered love

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, ...<sup>4</sup> lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — 2 Timothy 3:2, 4

1. The first and last items are the key items in the list
2. People will love themselves, and live for their own pleasure, rather than loving God.
3. They will love money because it can give them the pleasure that is their god.
4. The root of sin is ALWAYS disordered love, desiring something or someone more than we love and desire God Himself.

### b. The next step down is pride, arrogance, conceit

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, **boastful, proud**, ...<sup>4</sup> **conceited**, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God 2 Timothy 3:2, 4

1. When we love ourselves rather than God we are deluded with pride
2. Those who place themselves at the center of the universe make themselves to be the determiner of truth - deep deception and pride.

### c. This leads to a breakdown in relationships

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, **abusive, disobedient to their parents**, ungrateful, unholy,<sup>3</sup> **without love, unforgiving, slanderous**, without self-control, **brutal**, not lovers of the good,<sup>4</sup> **treacherous, rash**, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — 2 Timothy 3:2–4

1. These terms describe a social breakdown - abusive, family breakdown, unloving, unforgiving, slandering, brutal, and treacherous

2. When two people think they are the center of the universe, relational friction is sure to follow!
3. Disordered love and pride will ALWAYS lead to interpersonal conflict - this is true in marriage, friendships, a church, or society at large.

### d. These are people who are full of moral decay

People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful, unholy**,<sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, **without self-control**, brutal, **not lovers of the good**,<sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — 2 Timothy 3:2–4

1. Because they have placed themselves at the center rather than God, they are ungrateful and find reasons to complain rather than be grateful.
2. Their moral compass is broken so that they are unholy in their conduct, loving evil rather than good.
3. Because they love themselves and pleasure more than God, they lack any ability to say no to their own desires - no self-control.

## B. They will still claim to know God

having a form of godliness but denying its power. 2 Timothy 3:5

1. Having a form of godliness but denying its power - a summary description of these other vices
2. These people want to claim to follow God while keeping themselves and their desires on the throne.
3. They claim a form of godliness: key word in the PE
  - a. εὐσέβεια 'godliness' - 10x in PE out of 15 in the NT
  - b. 1 Timothy 2:2; 3:16; 4:7-8; 6:3, 5, 6, 11; 2 Timothy 3:5; and Titus 1:1
  - c. Godliness is the true faith, including holiness - they claim to be part of God's holy people

4. Godliness requires believers to do the strenuous work of turning from our sinful desires and pursuing the growth of godly character.

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be **godly**.<sup>8</sup> For physical training is of some value, but **godliness** has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. 1 Timothy 4:7–8

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11

- a. All words in red are 'godliness'
  - b. Godliness is like physical training - it requires training to put down sinful desires and embrace righteousness.
5. These people claim a form of godliness, but they deny the power of God to root out sin.

having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:5

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of **power**, of love and of self-discipline.<sup>8</sup> So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the **power** of God, 2 Timothy 1:7–8

- a. Every Christian has been given the Holy Spirit, God's empowering Presence, Who enables us to recognize sinful desires and to try and turn from them rather than embrace them.
- b. Those who have truly embraced the Gospel and received the Spirit will not be lovers of themselves and pleasure, but will even be willing to suffer to be faithful to Christ and the Gospel.

- c. These people claim that they can be godly without putting their sins to death by the power of the Spirit and that they can be faithful to God without having to suffer in the midst of an ungodly culture - but this is false!

## IV. Applying the Word

### A. A reminder of the glorious Gospel

1. Paul repeatedly reminded Timothy of the Gospel
2. He stressed speaking the positive truth
3. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone - not by our works or efforts!
4. Each week we sing, pray, and teach this glorious Gospel - and then "see" it at the Table!
5. Do not be deceived: our works can NEVER save us!
6. If you have never looked to Christ by faith do it now
7. Believers - remind yourself of the Gospel daily

### B. A reminder of the power of the Gospel & Spirit

1. The Gospel takes us as we are - but it also changes us! It is powerful to save from sins penalty & power!
2. Those who are part of God's people are regenerated - born again
3. This is why we no longer make peace with sin - the Spirit is working to change us and set us free  
Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders<sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers

nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11

- a. Quite a list of vices - many are celebrated in our day
  - b. That is what you WERE - but are no longer
  - c. When we come to Christ our identity is made new
  - d. We no longer live at peace with such sins, but by the power of the Spirit and Gospel we strive to kill them, flee vice, and pursue godliness
4. Sometimes we can get weary, feeling that the struggle against our particular sins will never cease
  5. But we must never give in to the heresy that we are defined and identified by our sin rather than Christ!
  6. During Lent - continue to ask the Spirit to cut the roots of vice and produce the fruit of godliness
  7. As we come to the Table, let's celebrate the Gospel, and ask the Spirit to empower us to be free from the moral decay of this age.

### C. The Lord's Table

## Moral Decay In The Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-5

April 3, 2022

Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Sin; sanctification; character; godliness; eschatology; LGBTQ+; sexual sin

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5