

## 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Well folks, as most every Christian has noticed the moral grip on society continues to get weaker and weaker. What used to be seen as sin by the majority, is now just seen as normal. You know, hours of mindless scrolling on social media. Nudity, sexual immorality, and foul language paraded on television. Blasphemy in our schools and news outlets. Drug use, drunkenness, the complete disregard and outright opposition to law enforcement. Calling good evil, and evil good. Folks, we've even gotten so bad that there are people who have talked about normalizing Pedophilia!

And the time in which these sins, along with others, are prevalent and prevailing in the world is what Paul refers to in 2 Timothy chapter 3 as "the last days". And in verse 1 he uses this word "perilous" – lets go ahead and read together verse 1 of chapter 3.

READ V 1

Now this word "perilous" translated from the classical Greek, was used to describe wild animals and the raging sea. So you get this picture of what times will

be like in the last days, they're going to be fearful, and fierce, and dangerous.

That's the type of world people will be living in, or, are living in, in the last days.

Now, you'll notice that this phrase "the last days" is used throughout scripture.

And many people wonder about this phrase, and what it means exactly, and when

"the last days" will be. And ya know, as much as we would like for God to give us a

date and time as to when the end of all time will be, He doesn't. He does however

give us multiple "signs of the times" to be watchful for throughout scripture. I'm

gonna take a little play out of Pastor Jeff's playbook here and tell you guys to write

these down, and look them up later if you'd like to read more on those "signs of

the times" Matthew ch. 24, Mark ch. 13, and 1 Tim ch 4, v 1-5.

Now, the term is especially appropriate to the season immediately before the return of Jesus and the consummation of all things. And there's a sense in which the last days began, or at least were ready to begin, as soon as Jesus finished his work and ascended to Heaven. Now I'm going to give you guys a little illustration here:

Let's say that the edge of the stage represents the end all time. There's a sense in which, instead of running toward the end of all time, it's more like up until the

time of Christ and His completed work, the work of God and the plan of God came up towards the edge, and once Jesus finished His work on the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended to Heaven, we now run along side the edge, ready to go off at anytime of God's choosing.

Now, here's the important part: Never forget that scripture warns us over and over again that Jesus' return will be like a "thief in the night", and we are to be ready.

Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

1 Thessalonians 5:2 "For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night."

2 Peter 3:10 "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..."

Matthew 24:43 “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.”

The idea is that, just as you never know when a thief may come and break into your home, we never really know when Jesus will return. However, we are to be prepared. Meaning, the followers of Jesus are to continue on diligently doing His work. Preaching the gospel, serving God, serving others, loving God and one another as God has called us to do, praying, teaching truth.

Just as Jesus told us to do in Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:44-46 “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.”

Don't grow weary in doing good family. When Jesus returns, we want to be found as the faithful and wise servants. It can be so easy for us to slip into a habit of relaxation – here we are on the brink of possible WW3, and you might be thinking

“eh, I’m not going to get too excited about Jesus returning this time. Because I got excited at Y2K and He didn’t come. Then when 9/11 happened I thought He would come then, but then He didn’t”

And when things don’t pan out the way we anticipate them to, It’s so easy for us to sort of lose that expectation. But lets not forget what God tells us in 2 Peter.

II Peter 3:8-9 “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

It’s not that God is failing to fulfill His promises. He’s being patient, and holding the door open for us that He might save as many as possible. Stay alert, and don’t mistake God’s patience for God’s approval.

Now lets pickup in verse 2.

READ “for men will be lovers of themselves”

You can just pencil in “2023” right next to that.

It's not a coincidence that the love of self is listed first here. That's because everything else we read following this stems from the love of self. And I think it's pretty safe to say that we live in a time that we don't need encouragement to love ourselves. As good ol' pastor Chuck Smith used to say, if we were to take a picture of the congregation this morning, and post it on the wall for everyone to see, who would be the first person you'd look for? **However** it's not like the love of self is something new, all you have to do is read the old testament and you'll quickly realize that people have been loving themselves pretty much since the beginning of time. **But** what's so strange about our current generation is that I don't know if there's ever been another generation that has been so deliberate and laser focused about educating and training people to be lovers of themselves as we've seen in the western world the past 50 or so years. I mean entire curriculums in our school systems teaching people to love themselves. Now I don't know about you guys but I don't need any special training in this regard. Most of us do a pretty good job of loving ourselves even without special training on how to do so.

With that being said, there does need to be a balance. While the love of self is sin and leads to more sin, the hatred of ourselves is no better. God doesn't want us to hate ourselves. I mean after all, God does consider our lives so precious that

He sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross for us, that if we believe in Him we might have eternal life through Him. I think our best approach to this topic is to follow what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 12:

Romans 12:3 "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith."

Man, this applies so well to our generation today. I did a little bit of research on this topic, and found the following statistics.

- In a survey of engineers at one company, 42% thought their work ranked in the top 5% among their peers.
- Elderly people tend to believe they are "above average" drivers
- A survey of college professors revealed that 94% thought they do "above average" work
- In another study, 90% of teachers think they are more skilled than their peers.

The point is this: when God says that we're precious beings created in His image, we should believe that. And when God also says that we're twisted sinners from

the womb and in need of the salvation only found in Jesus, we should believe that as well. Think of yourself soberly before God, and believe what He says about you is true. After all, He is our *creator*.

Ok moving on...

READ V 2-4

Listen guys, there has always been, since the beginning of time, evil in the world. I mean Cane killed his brother Abel. Sodom and Gomorrah. But folks, you look around at our generation today, and it's appalling at how good we think we are. I mean, generally, for the most part, we think we're pretty good. Much better than generations past. We think we've come so far, and made leaps and bounds in terms of morality. How past generations were just so much more racist, so much more sexist, and they weren't inclusive. And ya know, one major problem is that we've forgotten. We've forgotten about genocide. We've forgotten about the millions of innocent lives we've taken in the form of abortion. We've forgotten about the fact that over 600,000 children are victims of some form of child abuse every single year. We've forgotten that over the last 15 years, the number of human trafficking cases have QUADRUPLED.



But here's the thing... I really don't believe that our failure to remember these things is the main problem. I truly believe, the main problem is, we live in a generation that calls evil good. And here's the kicker... people believe it. People actually believe that their evil doings, are good. **They** don't agree with God that their sin, is sin. I believe that's the core issue.

Ya know I remember about 10 years ago, my wife and I used to drive to Wyandott a lot. And there was this billboard between Seneca and Wyandott, and maybe its still there, but there was this billboard between Seneca and Wyandott that read **"there's only one thing that's going to save this country... and that's an awakening to God"**. The times and problems may change, but the cure never does. The only thing that is going to save this country, and every other country on the planet, is turning from their wicked ways, and trusting in Jesus Christ.

Family, when we read this list of sins, and we see how it directly applies to our generation today, we should have at least three realizations...

- 1) That we're living in the last days. Listen I believe God gives every generation some reason to believe that they're living in the last days, and God has given us plenty of reason for us to believe that. So, we should believe that

we're living in the last days, therefore we should be ready for the return of Jesus Christ.

2) That humanity is not getting any better. Just because technology is getting better, doesn't mean that humanity is getting better.

3) The field is ripe for harvest. In John chapter 4 Jesus talked about the fields being ripe for harvest, and man do we ever live in a time in which the fields are ready to be harvested. Go, and sow the seed of the gospel, that people might see their wicked ways, turn from them, and trust in Jesus.

Now... as time allows, we're going to break down a few of these sins and talk about them in some detail.

The love for money - It's just one book prior to this one in 1 Timothy that we learn that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. The Bible doesn't teach that money in and of itself is not a bad thing. As a matter of fact, it can be a very good thing. It's a problem of the heart and the mind. It's our hearts towards money that's the problem. Jesus said where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Meaning, if you take a look at a persons bank account and see where they're spending the majority of their money, that's where their heart lies. It's the

age old saying, money makes a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. So if your highest priority in life is to grow your stock portfolio, or if you're a business owner and you're increasing your profit margin solely out of greed, or if you're racking up thousands of dollars in credit card debt from shopping sprees, you need to take a very serious look at your priorities. Because that's what the Bible considers having a love for money.

Boasters/pride/blaspheming – Three words that, unfortunately, very accurately describe the culture we live in today. We have an excessive amount of boasting and pride in our generation, and it seems to just continue growing worse and worse. And pride is that mindset of thinking that your better than someone else.

We see that all over our society today.

- I'm better than you because I make more money than you.
- I'm better than you because I've got a more prestigious job title than you do.
- I'm better than you because I have more authority than you.
- I'm better than you because I'm gay. I really know what equity and inclusion mean.
- I'm better than you because of the color of my skin.

- Here's one for ya... I'm better than you because I'm a Christian.
- And a generation that feels like they are entitled to everything!
  - o I'm entitled to a comfortable life style
  - o I'm entitled to more time off work
  - o I'm entitled to a larger salary
  - o I'm entitled to a nicer car
  - o I'm entitled to a bigger house
  - o I'm entitled to that promotion
- We even have a pride month! A whole month dedicated to gay pride.
  - o And people spend, literally, millions of dollars to support pride month. From all over the country.

But that's just the boisterous pride. What can be even scarier, is the subtle pride.

"Well I'm an important man in the community. People come to me when they have problems and I always have the right answer. I'm dependable, and you can always count on me to steer you down the right path."

Listen, it's all pride and it's all bad. We, as a nation, need to repent and turn to God.

Here's what the Bible says about pride...

James 4:6 "...God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

Humility is a beautiful thing. Repentance is a beautiful thing. And if we would just turn from our pride and humble ourselves, that would be a big step in the right direction.

Unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving – Now In the Greek, there are several different words to express the different types of love. You've got Eros which is like a physical love. Phileo which is an emotional love (that's the word we see used just earlier in the passage when talking about the love of self and the love of money). Agape, that's a sacrificial love and therefore it's used to describe God's love for us. And then you've got Storge (store-jay) which is the word used here in this section, and it means natural family love. Like the love a parent has for their child. What I've learned is that in the Greek, if you put an "a" in front of a word, it becomes a negative. And the word unloving here is translated astorge, which is means "without family love".

And so what Paul is writing here is that there will be a lot of people not having the natural family love, like the love a parent has for a child, in the last days. Unfortunately we see this growing in our culture. Thousands of kids being abused by their parents, more and more fathers abandoning their children, and a very large push from a lot of adults today to abandon the idea of family all together. I wish we had more time to cover this topic, because it really is a growing problem. But I'll just say this... to no surprise, the statistics show in overwhelming favor towards the nuclear family being a very good thing. As a matter of fact they show that the nuclear family is the ideal. In every category. If you have a loving family, if you have loving parents, if you are a loving parent, you're blessed. BIG time blessed.

Slanderers – People have always told hurtful lies about one another; but today, this is the majority of media and politics. It's because slander has been elevated to big business and big money.

without self-control – Now this can apply to almost any category in life.

Money, food, sex, drugs, alcohol, social media. But I'm going to take a minute and hone in on one particular category that, if you live in SW

Missouri, applies to you more than you might realize. Drugs. Family, whether you know it or not, we have a very serious drug problem right here in little SW Missouri. One of the worst in the country. Our biggest issue over the last 20 years or so being methamphetamine. Urban dictionary, which is an online dictionary for slang words and phrases if you didn't know, and I don't recommend anyone getting on their website by the way, defines "417" which is the area code for SW Missouri, as a slang phrase. Here's what "417" is slang for according to urban dictionary:

1<sup>st</sup> definition: "The area code for the area of the country with the highest number of meth busts, located in southwest Missouri"

2<sup>nd</sup> definition: "someone who looks like they do meth"

3<sup>rd</sup> definition: "slang for crystal meth"

Now guys I don't know if we're highest in the country anymore when it comes to meth busts, but I know we're still up there. Chances are, you either know someone who is a drug addict, or know someone who knows a drug addict. Here's my point: God placed you here for a reason. **God** has called you to such a time as this. What an opportunity we have, as the church, the body of Christ, to make an impact on our community. Now don't get me wrong, every community has sin in it, but this is the

community God has placed us in, let us go and do our part in going out and sowing His seed. Now lets continue reading in V 5

READ V 5

What the Bible is saying here is that, in the last days, there will be many people who seem like good Godly people on the surface. They'll attend church, watch their P's and Q's, in other words they'll be religious. But they'll deny the power of God in their life. Meaning, God will have no power in guiding their life, no power in the sense of rightful authority.

And if you know of anyone who fits in the categories of verses 2-5, from such people, stay away. Share the gospel with them? Love them? Absolutely. But don't be hanging out with them on the weekends. Don't be listening to their podcasts. Don't be watching their TV shows. Because as it says in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:33 "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits.""

Whoever's closing can make their way up.



As we've taken a day to reflect on how perilous most of humanity is today, I pray that we never forget, that in Jesus Christ, we find freedom from this dark world. We find peace that surpasses all understanding. We find unexplainable powerful love that can't be found anywhere else or in anyone else. We find the richest grace that we do not deserve, but He gives it to us anyway. We find gentle mercy, and true forgiveness from all of our sin. If we just trust in Him. This world is a dark place. But praise God there's a way out, that He provided for us, in the person of Jesus Christ.

And family, is that not the best news in the world? We know the cure! And He's willing to cure any and all who come to Him. No matter who you are, no matter where you've been, and no matter what you've done. He WANTS to save you.

And because I can't say it any better than Ephesians chapter 2, lets quickly turn there together to close out this study. Starting in verse 1.

READ Ephesians 2:1-7

Closing prayer.

