

The Holy Spirit through Paul is faithfully warning that in the last days perilous times shall come. Times that disrupt the attempts at preserving the orderly conduct and government in the House of God he so richly set out for us in 1Timothy. He has already cited signs of approaching conditions that would beset them. Satan's best efforts, his whole arsenal of weapons spiritual and carnal, have been rolled out. He hates the Lord Jesus Christ. Since He is no longer within reach he attacks the beloved Bride, the Church, seeking to destroy or corrupt her testimony on earth. Paul is in prison in Rome about to be martyred. All saints in the province of Asia (including his beloved Ephesians) have forsaken him and the specially given truth he suffered so much to bring them. Some prominent men have been teaching error as to the Lord's return. They were discrediting the fundamental hope given every believer to encourage and sustain through the darkness and oppression of the world. Some assemblies (perhaps his beloved Ephesians) had failed to maintain purity and did not eject those who persisted in sin. He had to give Timothy, and the faithful with him, authority to actually leave such an assembly and gather with others who have done the same thing. But he warns of youthful lusts taking over a person's soul while seeking to obey the command to depart from unrighteousness. He urges kindness and gentle patience in seeking to instruct any who oppose. They are overtaken by Satan in what ever sin it is that is triggering one's ultimate departure from that assembly. In the epistle he presents this counsel to avoid strife (verses 24-26) after describing and authorizing the action to be taken. But seeking souls is to be carried out **before** such action finally becomes necessary. The aim is to prevent dissolution not finalize it. Hasty or acrimonious departure will only offend some otherwise reachable souls. Better to wait too long than to rush things.

Despite the crucial nature of the situation and the trauma and emotion of the moment, godly love will generate the utmost respect and courtesy toward one another. Even if one must make a decision between following Christ or unrighteousness, railing denunciations dishonor Him and wound the spirits of the victims. Note the faithful pleas of Jehovah with His erring people Israel documented in the Old Testament. How many centuries did He plead? Sometimes tender sometimes stern. How many times forgive? How many times? Yet He never compromised His holiness or failed in His love. Note the obvious reluctance and grief in His final departure from the Temple as described by Ezekiel. But He did leave, not to return again till the Lord returns to reign. (Jesus visited it. He was brought to the temple to be circumcised after His birth to Mary. He twice cast out the money changers as a grown man but he was not received by His own and

never occupied the Temple as Lord while a Man on earth.)

So now Paul prophesies of the last days. And what times they are. We live in them. Perhaps we have become numb, lulled by Satan's soothing tones. Wake up!

What a list of prideful rebellion. Sound familiar? Check out Romans 1. As Jeremiah says

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The descriptions of the ungodly men of Noah's day, that brought on the Flood, and later again after the Flood that brought about the universal confusion of languages, are remarkably similar to this description of the last days in Christendom. I once thought this list described the world, (and it does) but here it describes what is seen in the great house of Christendom. How awful!

"From such turn away." Simply turn away! Look around with eyes that see things as God sees and turn away from what displeases or dishonors Him. What does He see in the world? Do we love the world and the things in it? Are we taken up with leaders or celebrities of the world? From such turn away! Are we taken up with leaders, celebrities and attractions in Christendom? The "Christian world? (An oxymoron.) From such turn away! From such turn away.

But the wicked are not content to simply practice evil among themselves, they reach out to deceive and attract others, vulnerable souls with empty, hurting hearts who will willingly go with them to their doom. These false "theologians," false prophets, false evangelists offer error in place of truth, teach works instead of grace, contrive finely tuned religious services that offer pleasurable feelings but end in hell. Theologians whose lust for something new leads them to "discover" or invent new teaching more acceptable for today's thinking person, but blasphemes Christ. Men mimic God and His true servants but offer mere platitudes that cater to the pride and selfish yearning of the human heart. Some offer exciting signs and "miracles" and entertaining charismatic services. Among less charismatic circles modern Christian music mimicking the world's music is common, but generally lacks the rich truth and deep godly sentiments once expressed in Christian congregational singing.

Jannes and Jambres, who remain unnamed in the Old Testament, apparently were magi in Pharaoh's court. At first they mimicked the miracles God gave Moses the power to do before Pharaoh. By their fakery they enticed him into hardening his heart to the reality of what Moses was doing and saying and Who Jehovah is. Their motive was probably pride in their "profession." They would not be outdone for they would lose their following, their notoriety, reputation, income and possibly even their heads.

Except for the latter, the same things, fame and fortune, motivate religious charlatans of every ilk today. "These also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate (opposite of approved) concerning the faith." Not a particularly gentle statement but a true one that opens our eyes to see them as they really are.

But they can only go so far. God says so here. All in Asia may have forsaken Paul and his teaching, but the doctrine and a testimony to it will be preserved. Those with corrupt and reprobate minds merely provide a contrasting backdrop for the truth. God allows such to test men's hearts. The opposition will seem invincible and the deception overwhelming and the true testimony among Christian profession seemingly doomed to complete obliteration. But Paul assures us the light will not be extinguished despite Satan's power and best efforts. Rather Paul again cites our need to know :

his teaching,
his manner of life,
his purpose,
his faith,
his longsuffering,
his love,
his patience.

(Surely Paul's words to the Corinthians apply here.

1Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.)

But he includes, in the same breath, "persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Paul was stoned at Lystra, Acts

14:19, and thought to be dead, but he rose up and proceeded on his mission. Timothy witnessed this persecution.* Paul's deliverance from the dead is here given as a sign that the testimony of Paul's ministry can not and will not be stamped out. The Lord delivers Paul and would deliver Timothy, and continues to deliver Paul's gospel, the unique truth as preserved in his epistles. There will always be a remnant. You and I are called to be custodians today of this heritage, this gospel, this truth. To maintain a faithful witness to Christ despite the overall failure of that which was originally outwardly the House of God which is the Church of the Living God, 1Tim 3:14. Each believer on the earth has this privilege and responsibility. Each congregation has this privilege and responsibility. Are we gathered on scriptural ground and in a scriptural manner? Have we departed from iniquity? Are we following righteousness, faith, love, peace with a pure heart? With those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart? Have No Pride if we should be found to be so! Only credit God's grace!

2Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Don't we yearn to be pleasing to Him who died for us? Died for me personally. Died for us collectively.

By Ron Canner, July 19,2006

C Timothy was a native of Lystra and was probably saved during Paul's first visit there. He left there and traveled on with Paul when he passed through the area on his second missionary journey. This Antioch was in central Turkey, not that in Syria which was Paul's home base. See Acts 13:14, 50-51; 14:5,19-20.

A Chilling Comparison

Romans 1:28-32 (KJV)

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,
God gave them over to a reprobate mind,
to do those things which are not convenient;
being filled with
C all unrighteousness,
C fornication,
C wickedness,
C covetousness,
C maliciousness;
C full of envy, murder,
C debate,
C deceit,
C malignity;
C whisperers,
C backbiters,
C haters of God,
C despiteful,
C proud,
C boasters,
C inventors of evil things,
C disobedient to parents,
C without understanding,
C covenantbreakers,
C without natural affection,
C implacable,
C unmerciful:

Who knowing the judgment of God, that **they which commit such things are worthy of death,**
not only do the same,
but have pleasure in them that do them.

2Timothy 3:1 (KJV)

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

1. For men shall be lovers of their own selves
2. covetous,
3. boasters,
4. proud,
5. blasphemers,
6. disobedient to parents,
7. unthankful,
8. unholy,
9. without natural affection,
10. trucebreakers,
11. false accusers,
12. incontinent,
13. fierce,
14. despisers of those that are good,
15. traitors,
16. heady,
17. highminded,
18. lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
19. having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:

from such turn away.