



Godliness Without Power

“THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come, ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient, to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” 2 Timothy 3:1-5

The Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation are the best antidote and defense against the corruptions of the times in which we live.

Paul begins his warning to Timothy by saying, *“THIS know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” 2 Tim 3:1.* The **ungodly characters of men** reveal that we are living in the last days, reveal the signs of the times, and that “perilous” – difficult, dangerous, fierce times (or seasons) are upon us. The coming of perilous times gives evidence that the Scripture predictions are true, and Paul wants us to have **knowledge of, be aware, understand, and believe** this prophecy so we will not be surprised when we see these perilous times. Jesus said, *“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.” John 14:29*

The perilous times in which Paul is referring to here are not so much on account of persecution from without but on account of corruptions within. His warning states that there will be seen a departure from the faith by those who were once on fire for the Lord. Those who accept Christ into their life for

the first time do so by dying to self, giving up their own opinions, practices and desires, and surrendering all to Christ. But when self resurrects itself, men begin to drift, until a full departure from the faith results. Perilous times shall come due to those *“having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof...”* shall be corrupt, and wicked, and do a great deal of damage to the church (2 Tim. 3:5). As *“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor...” Eccl. 10:1,* so can two traitors within the camp do more hurt to it than two thousand besiegers without.

Perilous times shall come, for men shall be wicked. Sin makes the times perilous. When there is a general corruption of manners, and of the tempers of men, this makes the times dangerous to live in, for it makes it hard to keep our integrity in the midst of general corruption.

What Brings on these Perilous Times?

Paul tells Timothy what would be the occasion of making these times perilous, and what would be the signs whereby we may know these times. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves” 2 Tim. 3:2.* Love of self will make the times perilous. We were created by God to love ourselves and Christ

tells where our love is to be centered and what type of self-love we are to have. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37, 39 *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* *“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”*. However in the last days we will see the opposite of this taking place in the church.

The love of self referred to in 2 Timothy 3:2 is talking about an irregular sinful self-love. Men love their carnal selves better than their spiritual selves. A departure from God starts with loving self too much to where self is worshipped and placed upon the throne in place of God. The Bible says, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* Ex. 20:3. This is defined as apostasy; apostasy from God and the truth. The dictionary defines it as: A total desertion of or departure from one’s religion, or principles. The primary goal of life becomes self, pleasure, and satisfaction.

When self is on the throne there is seen a lack of respect not only for authority, but for others, be they parents or spouses. Self love leads one to live without gratitude as he thinks the world owes him something. The one who places self on the throne does not know how to love, but is proficient in hurting and destroying others around them. Instead of Christian charity, which takes pains and puts forth the effort to care for the good of others, they will mind themselves only, and put their needs before the needs of others or before the church.

When apostasy enters the church, religion takes on more of a form than power. Do’s and don’ts become the rule of the day, the externals become elevated far above the internal adorning as if they are the gospel and the power of salvation.

When God rules on the throne a train of blessings flow forth from Him to His followers. When self rules on the throne a long train of sins and troubles follow him and nothing good can be expected from him; while good can be expected from those who love God with all their hearts.

What can be expected from one who has a sinful self-love? Covetousness, *“which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5), will prevail, where every man is for what he can get and for keeping what he has. This makes men dangerous to one another, and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbor. Perilous times have come when men are being proud of themselves, are boasters and blasphemers, boasting before men whom they despise and look upon with scorn, and blasphemers of God and of His name. When men do not fear God they will not regard man. Covetousness, boasting and pride are sisters. Psalms 10:3 says, *“Fro the wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.”*

Perilous times have come when children are disobedient to their parents; disregard the obligations which they are to perform to them both in duty and gratitude, in frequency and interest. When children are abusive to their parents and rebel against them, calling the authorities on them because of the discipline they receive; know that perilous times have come.

Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous and dangerous, and these two commonly go together. What is the reason that men are unholy and without the fear of God? They are unthankful for the mercies that God shows them every day, and every moment of the day. Ingratitude and impiety

go together. They are unthankful and impure, abusers of his gifts, defiled with fleshly lusts, which testify of their great ingratitude of God's provisions.

Unnatural affection makes the times perilous, when there is natural "brotherly-love" due to all. Humanity is to help humanity. But today you see parents without natural affection to their children, and children to their parents. Those without natural affection are hard-hearted towards their own family and church family. Those without natural affection are trucebreakers and are not bound to even the most solemn covenants. They are without a good conscience of the commitments they have made with other. Psalms 15 tells us of those who will abide in God's tabernacle and the last part of verse 4 tells us, "*He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*"

Perilous times have come when men are false accusers of one another, having no regard for the good name of others, or to their religious obligations of an oath, but feeling at liberty to say and do as they please. When men have no government of themselves or their own appetites because they are incontinent; or of their own passions because they are fierce; when they have no rule over their own spirits, and therefore are like a city that is broken down, and has no walls, they are soon stirred up by the least provocation, know that perilous times have come.

When men are generally treacherous, willful, and haughty, traitors, heady, high-minded, the times are perilous. Our Savior has foretold us in Matthew 10:21 "*And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children*

shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." Family and unsanctified brethren are the worst kind of traitors. When men are petulant and puffed up, behaving scornfully to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous.

The Bible says that men will be "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*" When there are more epicures in the church than true Christians, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all. That is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against Him, and prefers anything above Him.

Having all of this, they have a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. These are they which are called by the Christian name, baptized into the Christian faith and make a show of religion. But how plausible their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. When they take upon them the form which should and would bring along with it the power thereof, they will put asunder what God hath joined together. They will assume the form of godliness to take away their reproach, but they will not submit to the power of it to take away their sin. Men may be very bad and wicked under a profession of religion; they may be lovers of themselves and yet have a form of godliness. A form of godliness is very different thing from the power of it. Men may have the one and be wholly destitute of the other. They may appear to have it spiritually but deny it practically in their lives. Timothy was told "*from such turn away.*"

May the Lord help us to examine ourselves, and cleanse our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, that we be not contributors of these perilous times.