

2 Timothy 3 Dealing with Difficult Days

If you keep up with the news at all, you know it can be somewhat depressing to consider all the terrible things that are going on in the world. E.g., conflicts in Israel and Ukraine, other parts of the world. We seem to be on the verge of a world war; we are right on the edge. Almost any little event could plunge the world into total chaos.

And besides that, our society is becoming increasingly immoral and anti-Christian. Pornography, abortion, homosexuality, violence, and crime are becoming increasingly acceptable. We see the conflicts regarding transgenderism and racism impacting our world.

Thousands of Christians around the world face persecution, arrest, prison, torture and death simply for practicing their faith. You might say that we are living in perilous times. That's exactly what Paul warns us about in our text today.

What does he mean by "perilous"? Perilous means "difficult, hard to deal with." Paul is giving us some advice for dealing with difficult days.

Paul gives us **five basic principles** to help us endure perilous times.

- I. .1 Don't be surprised—expect things to be bad.
 - A. "Perilous times **shall** come." They seem to be inevitable in the last days.
 - B. What's the cause of these difficult days? Sinful people (. 2). "Men shall be..." That list seems to describe the modern world.

.13 *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, [lit. "advance further"] deceiving, and being deceived.*

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

People today defend all the things that God is against: abortion and euthanasia and pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, gambling, divorce, racism, etc.

Trans: Sadly, these kinds of things are normal in our fallen world. We should not be surprised when we see them. We may be very shocked and disgusted, but not surprised.

- II. Separate from the wicked. (.5c) “turn away” from such people.
- A. Paul mentions a couple of examples of wicked people and what they do:
1. .6 They creep in and lead gullible people astray.
Similar to the “simple” person in Proverbs—easily led astray, gullible, undiscerning.
 2. .7 They are “ever learning” but “never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”
Probably describes people who were always looking for new and exciting ideas; latching on to the latest fads and popular ideas.
 3. .8 Jannes and Jambres... they are corrupt and reprobate (ἀδόκιμος)—disqualified, rejected, worthless, failing the test.
According to Jewish tradition, Jannes and Jambres were two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses (and Aaron) in the book of Exodus.
 4. .13 Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. We should expect evil people to get worse; their corrupting influence will increase.
Corruption can increase and spread very easily these days. Bad ideas and lies—“fake news” – seem to get out and permeate the media very quickly.
And then when these ideas prove to be false, those who promoted them very rarely apologize.

- B. “from such [people] **turn away**” – avoid, have nothing to do with, turn away from completely.
- C. The Bible frequently commands us to avoid such people. This is an aspect of biblical separation.

Psalm 1:1 *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful*

Rom 16:17 *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*

2 Corinthians 6:17 *Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”*

Ephesians 5:11 *And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them..*

- D. It is at times necessary to break off relationships with ungodly people. You can’t allow them to influence you. God commands us to have nothing to do with them.

Trans: We often can’t stop corrupt people from acting corruptly, but we certainly do not have to join them or follow them. We must mark and avoid them.

III. Carefully follow the example of godly people .10f

- A. Paul tells Timothy to follow his example of godliness and commitment. Paul uses his own experience as a pattern to follow.
- B. .10 “*thou hast fully known*” – I.e., “You have closely followed...” Like a student follows the teaching and example of his teacher, like a disciple follows his master. Take careful note and reproduce the same lifestyle and belief.

1Co 11:1 *Be ye followers of me, even as I also [am] of Christ.*

Philippians 4:9 *The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, ...*

App: Rather than being influenced by evil people, we should follow the example of godly people.

That's another emphasis in the Bible—follow the example of good people.

Who are these people? They have the virtues Paul mentions here (vs. 10) – faith, longsuffering, charity, patience. They have the right “doctrine, manner of life, purpose.” When you see people with godly Christian virtues, you can follow them.

We should strive to be the kind of people that others can follow. If someone were following your example, what would they be doing?

IV. Prepare for persecution .12

- A. Christians around the world are facing persecution every day. Christians in Muslim countries are especially under attack. Thousands of Christians have been persecuted and killed recently in Africa.
- B. Real persecution may not be far off in the US. As soon as teaching biblical principles becomes a hate crime, we may face stronger forms of persecution.
- C. Note Paul's words: (.11b) “but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.” Not that the Lord *prevented* them, but that Paul survived them. He persevered through all this opposition and hostility.
- D. But eventually even Paul succumbed to persecution. How did he die? Decapitated in a Roman prison not long after he wrote this letter.
- E. .12 All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. We should expect it.

John 16:33 *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*”

Acts 14:22 ... *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”*

1 Peter 4:12 *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*

App: Do we suffer persecution? If you live a godly Christian life, it's likely that you will experience at least a little hostility or opposition.

We are supposed to be like salt and light. We are supposed to preserve what is good and bring light into dark places. Many people oppose what is good and “love darkness rather than light.” So we ought to expect some push back if not outright hostility and persecution if we stand up for righteousness.

V. Recommit yourself to the truth (.14-17).

A. .14 Continue in what you have learned and been assured of.

The unsaved world may accept all the wicked, corrupt ideas that ungodly people are promoting, but Christians must remain faithful to God's word. We persevere in what we have received.

Christianity is a received faith. We don't change it or update it. There is nothing new or improved in the Christian faith. We retain what we were taught, especially when we have learned them from faithful believers.

.15 “from a child thou hast known...” Children should learn these things from their parents.

Deuteronomy 6:7 *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*

Pr 22:6 *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

If you don't want your children to depart from these things—if you want them to continue in them—then you must teach these things to your children.

- B. Continue to learn from others. Timothy learned from his grandmother, mother and from Paul. Paul called him his “son in the faith.”
- C. Continue to learn from the Bible. .16 “instruction in righteousness”

We learn the Bible when we study it for ourselves, and we learn the Bible in the church. One of the primary goals of the church is to help people understand the Scriptures. So it’s in your own benefit—and in benefit of your children—to come to church.

- D. Continue to strive after spiritual growth and maturity. .17
 - 1. Spiritual maturity is the goal.
 - 2. “perfect” (αρτιος) means “suitable” or “adapted” for something
 - 3. “thoroughly furnished” – one word in Greek (εξηρτισμενος), means bring to an end, complete, finish; make/be adequate, be equipped, be furnished.
“Enabled to meet all the demands of godly ministry and righteous living” (MacArthur).
 - 4. Our commitment to and dependence on the Scriptures is what can get us safely through perilous times.

App: Are you using the Scriptures to equip yourselves? Can you say that you are “capable, having been equipped for every good work” because you know the Bible? Read, obey, memorize.

We are facing perilous times. The world is going from bad to worse. Much of this decline is due to our society turning away from the Bible and Christianity. We can expect further decline before the Lord returns.

How do we persevere through difficult days? We do just what Paul tells us here

- Expect difficult days, perilous times.

- Separate from the wicked. Don't allow corrupt, reprobate, evil people to seduce you. Turn away from such people; mark and avoid them.
- Follow the example of Godly people. Take note of virtuous people and follow their example—their lifestyle and their teaching.
- Prepare for persecution. All who live godly...
- Re-commit yourself to the truth. If you've been taught the Christian faith by godly people, then persevere in it. Continue to learn the Bible and pursue spiritual maturity.

When perilous times come, many people capitulate or compromise. They float downstream; they go with the flow.

But we can't do that. We must stand against the evil of our day; we must be salt and light; we must shine like lights in a dark and perverse world. May God give us strength to persevere through perilous times.