

2 Timothy

I. Introduction

- A. **2 Timothy 3:1-5** . . . But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. [2] For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, [4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.
- B. Following the teaching time last week, it was pointed out that in place of the word “unloving” (vs 3), some Bibles have “without natural affection.” And in place of the words, “haters of good,” some Bibles have “no lovers of good.” This comment resulted in my deciding I should once again explain why I use the NASB. This is not a defense of the NASB, nor my use of it, because there are other translations that are good. This is simply an explanation of why I use it, and why I most often chose to use the English words it provides.
1. **First**, the NASB is one of several translations (KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV) that do their best to provide a word-for-word translation so as not to slant their translation toward a particular theology. I prefer this because it gives the reader, with the help of the Holy Spirit and godly writers from the past, the opportunity to figure out the meaning of a passage.
 2. **Second**, I have been using the NASB for 54 years. The scripture portions I have memorized and meditate on come from the NASB. In my opinion, it has served me well. Therefore, I intend to continue using it for personal use, for counseling, and for teaching.
 3. **Third**, when teaching, if I disagree with how the NAS translates a particular word or phrase, I tell you. And I tell you what I think is a better translation. I do not believe the NASB is the only Bible God uses to speak to us. It is just one of many translations that you can read, and through which God can speak to you.
 4. As for the list of descriptions in **2 Timothy 3:2-5**, it is a difficult list to translate. Seven of the Greek words in that list are used only once in the NT. Five of the Greek words are used only twice. When a Greek word is used only once or twice in the NT, and when there is minimal support from literature outside the Bible showing how best

to translate that word into English, it makes it difficult for the translators.

- a. For example, the three words *haters of good* comes from one Greek word, and it is used only **1** time in the NT. The same is true for *lovers of self, without self-control, lovers of pleasure, and lovers of God*.
 - b. The word *unloving* appears just **2** times in the NT. The same is true for *boastful, ungrateful, unholy, and reckless*.
 - c. In such cases, choosing the right English word or words to best represent the meaning of the Greek word can be challenging – which is why some Bible translations differ in their choice of words.
5. Once again, this is not a defense, just an explanation. I take no offense if you think a different translation of a specific word or verse is better and should have been used in my teaching. I am convinced God will speak to each of us through whatever translation we use.
- C. Last week we looked at **vs 3**, and continued taking about how the moral degeneration of society and the church in the last days will multiply life's woes. Today we will finish these verses by focusing on **vs 4-5**.
- D. Prayer

II. The moral degeneration of society and the church in the last days multiplies life's woes

- A. [2] For men will be...[4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...
- B. **Treacherous** – The word treacherous can also be translated, traitor. This is a strong word, and it indicates how evil and challenging the last days will be – especially for Christians who are not prepared to remain faithful to the end.
1. A treacherous person is someone who acts as a traitor, violates trust, breaks promises, ignores vows, or who in some way aids the enemy in attacking and defeating his own community.
 2. For example, Judas was a traitor to his community of disciples when he acted treacherously in helping the religious leaders arrest Jesus in a secluded place late at night. The Jewish religious leaders acted treacherously against Jesus and many of their fellow Jews who converted to Christianity.
 3. Jesus warned us of this kind of behavior – that is, violating trust and aiding the enemy – in **Matthew 10:21-22, 34-36**, “Brother will

betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. [22] You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. [34] Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. [35] For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; [36] and a man's enemies will be the members of his household (*or church*).”

4. It appears that in the last days, the difficult times will include widespread persecution of Christians. And persecution has a way of separating those willing to pay the price for their faith from those who decide the cost is too great. It is in this kind of environment that last-day Christians will turn against other Christians. Why? In order to avoid or decrease the persecution being forced on them.
 5. There is another side to treachery that is so common, few speak out against it. And hardly anyone calls it treachery. This kind of treachery includes revealing what should be kept secret, breaking vows and promises, and ignoring agreements. And though this kind of treachery is universal, it ought not be found in the church.
 - a. I am bringing this up because it is all too common for Christians to be treacherous in these more subtle ways – such as breaking their marriage vows to love, honor, and be faithful to each other.
 - b. For example, in many Christian homes, the love a husband and wife have for one another is inconsistent – being based more on feelings and circumstances than on God’s word and the definition of genuine love.
 - c. Too often, Christian spouses honor one another in public, yet in the home, they speak to each other and treat each other in disrespectful ways.
 - d. As for faithfulness, what husband in this room can say he has **fully** kept – with his eyes and mind – his vow of faithfulness? What wife can say she has faithfully sought her husband’s good, regardless of his behavior?
 6. Treachery is a great evil. Therefore, may we be on guard against it, even in its more socially acceptable or commonly overlooked forms.
- C. **Reckless** – The reckless person is rash, often because he is in a rush. The reckless person chooses to act without due consideration of the costs should his actions go wrong. Because his focus is on the immediate, he

has little or no concern about the long-term consequences of his choices and behavior.

1. Therefore, the reckless person is careless in how he goes about doing what he feels driven or challenged or tempted or even dared to do. It is not that he is oblivious to the possibility of failure, he just doesn't see himself failing – which is why he confidently rushes into what he is about to do.
2. I suspect we all know people like this, and we know there can be tragic outcomes to their choices and behavior. True, they are successful many times. Yet their failures are numerous, too, and costly to themselves and those effected by their failures.
3. So imagine a church with several reckless leaders, teachers, elders, and youth workers. Imagine a church where recklessness is seen as boldness, or as the courage to try new things, or even as a means to draw a larger crowd.
4. In the last days, there will be enough recklessness in the church to make church life more difficult than it currently is – and that will be at a great cost to the integrity of the gospel, the honor of God's name, and the spiritual well-being of the people.

D. **Conceited** – The word conceit comes from the word conceive. In other words, the conceited person conceives or imagines himself to be superior to everyone else, or at least to those around him.

1. For example, the conceited person may hold the opinion that he is more important or more skilled or more intelligent than he really is.
2. But because his opinion of himself is self-conceived, he is convinced it's true – which is why he so freely speaks and acts in a manner equal to his inflated perception of himself.
3. The conceited person is often arrogant, and he believes he is always right – which leads to acting like a know it all, talking over others as if he is the only one worth listening to, correcting others as if they don't know what they are talking about – even when they do, judging others in a condescending manner, boasting as if he can do what he can't do, taking credit when he doesn't deserve it, and constantly seeking praise, though he rarely gives praise.
4. Imagine a church where at least a quarter or more of the people, and some of the leadership are conceited. That would be a painful, spiritually unhealthy environment. But it would also make life as a community of believers very difficult. Yet that is the way it will be in the last days.

E. **Lovers of pleasure rather (*more*) than lovers of God** – I want to begin talking about this phrase by acknowledging that loving God as we ought is neither natural or easily attained. We are by nature, lovers of self – and our love of self takes priority over all other loves, including whatever love we may have for God. Therefore, it should not be surprising that we are prone to love the pleasures of this world more than loving God.

1. After all, worldly pleasures are very self-satisfying, **right now**. They make us feel good. They make a bad day seem better. They lighten the weight of hard-to-bear troubles. They entertain us, alleviate boredom, and help us unwind after a stress-filled day. They make ever-present pain seem absent for a while. They lift our emotions when we feel down. And though this list could go on, the point is, worldly pleasures are very self-satisfying, **right now** – even though their effects are short-lived.
2. However, even if we Christians cannot gain the worldly pleasures we seek **right now**, experience tells us we can gain them far quicker than we can gain the kind of pleasing satisfaction that comes from knowing God, living according to God's word, being pure of heart, and engaging in intimate fellowship with God.
3. To our shame and the devil's joy, the kind of pleasing satisfaction that comes from whole-life, whole-hearted godliness loses its attraction when we can **easily and quickly** obtain some form of worldly gratifying pleasure **right now** – even though the satisfaction that comes from God is (1) far more fulfilling than any of the pleasures of this world, (2) and is independent of circumstances, (3) and is unending in nature.
4. Surely, this is what the serpent offered Eve. It's what Rebecca offered her son, Jacob. It's what Achan sought when he took booty from Jericho. It's what David wanted when he got involved with Bathsheba. And it is what you and I want when we choose the passing pleasures of sin over God and godly living.
 - a. And yet, we know from observing the outcome of Eve's, Rebecca's, Achan's, and David's choices, that the momentary pleasures of the world not only distract us from loving God and living as a Christian ought, they bring destructive side-effects into our lives and the lives of those around us.
 - b. In other words, we pay a price, and sometimes a very high price, for choosing the pleasures of this world over loving God as we ought and living a god-pleasing life.

5. Our nation and the world seem to be running after self-gratification, and they are using the pleasures of this world to obtain what they seek. According to God's word, this kind of self-seeking will infiltrate the church to such an extent that it will make church life far more difficult than if already is.
- F. [5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power;
1. The "last-days" Christians who take on the ungodly traits listed in **vs 2-4**, will continue attending church and participating in many of the ways and activities of a true Christian. In fact, to the undiscerning Christian, they will look like what a Christian ought to be.
 2. However, upon closer examination, it will become clear that their lives and the excuses or explanations they give for how they are living will show they are refusing to allow the life-changing power of God and His word to have their life-changing effect on them.
 3. In other words, though holding to a form of godliness, they want nothing to do with and therefore will not experience its regenerating and transforming power.

III. Conclusion

- A. Avoid such men as these.
1. Bad friends and friendships are bad. Good friends and friendships are enjoyable. Spiritually healthy friends and friendships are vital, especially for believers who are still growing in the faith and still in need of encouragement and help to remain sure-footed on the narrow path.
 2. Therefore, let us heed this warning to avoid socializing with those who **already are** or are **well on their way** to becoming the kind of wayward Christian talked about in **vs 2-4**.
 3. And let us put forth a proper effort now to become as godly as we can be so that in the last days we will not be among those Christians who have one or more of the sick character traits detailed on **vs 2-4**.
- B. Therefore, "As obedient [believers], do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, [15] but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior" (**1 Peter 1:14-15**).