



## **“Surviving Dark Days”**

### **Part II**

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The apostle Paul draws a startling and stark picture of some dark days ahead for the church when he writes to the young preacher Timothy in **II Timothy 3**. The conditions he describes could well apply to the pagan world in any given point in time, but here, Paul is warning of something even more concerning. That is, a turning away from the faith, an apostasy arising from within the church. Let’s take another look at our text from Part I of our study.

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

In our last study, we learned about the conditions that Paul said would exist at various times within the church. He does not paint a rosy picture of the Christian age, but says that *perilous* or *exceeding fierce* times will come. He reminds Timothy of that fact so that he will be prepared and know how to weather the storm.

One could argue that we live in the kind of days that Paul describes and the faith of many has certainly been shaken. So what are we to do? How should we react? How does the church survive in dark days? As we noted in the first part of our study, the term *the last days* simply refers to *the entirety of the Christian dispensation*, beginning with the last days of the Jewish state and spanning forward. Not necessarily the immediate and literal days preceding the end of time, as many people usually take the phrase.

## Hebrews 1:2 “{God} Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...”

The Lord Jesus lived on earth and was revealed to man 2,000 years ago in the final days of the Jewish temple and the Mosaic sacrificial and legal system. Jerusalem of course fell and the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. When Jesus died upon the cross, all of the things pertaining to the Jewish system ceased to be of force and a new covenant was ratified by the blood of Jesus. So, the last days are this last dispensation of time. These *perilous times* that Paul warned of were going to occur even in Timothy’s lifetime, for Paul told Timothy to turn away from those who would apostatize from the truth. The point is that despite the reign of Christ in His kingdom, despite the ultimate defeat of the devil at Calvary, as long as the church remains on earth, times of difficulty and digression will arise. And we need to be prepared for them. To recap last week’s study, Paul listed twenty marks of apostasy that we can categorize these three ways:

- I. Moral Wickedness
- II. Carnal Worldliness
- III. Doctrinal Waywardness

Those three things always eventually go hand in hand. Paul shows that to be the case when he describes the perilous times that will come upon the people of God. Why did Paul so emphatically warn Timothy? Because we need to prepare. The church not only CAN survive dark times, such as the ones we seem to be living in now, but it WILL survive them if it does the things that Paul tells Timothy to do in our text.

### I. Recognize perilous times.

We need to understand how and when men depart from the faith. We must be familiar with the hallmarks of digression and apostasy, to recognize the times for what they are. There are those who want to paint a bright and rosy picture when one doesn’t necessarily exist. It does no good to mischaracterize the times and to gloss over the sins of our day.

The church is without a doubt the most glorious institution in the world, but that doesn’t mean that she doesn’t face serious challenges and issues. We’re facing a moral crisis, not just in the world but in the church today. Sins that just a few years ago were startling to hear about are now more commonplace and even, sadly, accepted by some who profess Christianity. You used to rarely hear of infidelity and divorce within the church. Today, it’s rather widespread. Homosexuality was once almost universally seen as a sinful practice, but today many churches and preachers openly embrace the changes that we’ve seen in our culture, to the point of performing homosexual or same-sex marriages and endorsing such.

We’re facing a crisis of indifference and lack of spiritual interest. Paul said that people would *love pleasures more than God and that they would have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof* (**II Timothy 3:4-5**). Statistics show that the number of people who regularly attend public worship is steadily declining. But their busy lives don’t keep them away from a college football game or the lake or the golf course.

We’re facing a doctrinal crisis. Truths that were once held sacred are being thrown aside. The inspiration and authority of the scriptures is being openly challenged and dismissed. Bible preaching and theology is being replaced by entertainment, special effects, emotion-driven experiences, testimonials, psychology

and so forth. Friends, when ‘good times’ replace the gospel, when hype replaces holiness, when rock music replaces the Rock of Ages, we’re in perilous times.

## II. Reject apostasy and false doctrine.

So, when we recognize perilous times, what are we to do? Do we go along to get along? Are we to throw up our hands and set aside our convictions? Grow weak and go the way of others? Not at all! Paul also tells Timothy how to react to these perilous times.

### II Timothy 3:5 “...from such turn away.”

The way the church survives apostasy is to reject it. To refuse to go along with it. To stand in stark contrast to the sin and error that surrounds her. To stand in the gap, as it were. The church is to be a thermostat, not a thermometer. The church is to influence others to believe and to follow the truth, not be a reflection of those who don’t.

When sin and ungodliness seem to rule the day, resolve that you are going to remain pure and be a light to those in darkness. When apathy and indifference take over a church, you be the spark of revival and life. You keep the flame burning, regardless of what others do.

### Revelation 3:4 “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”

When false doctrine is tolerated, taught and practiced—and that’s going to happen—stand up to that. Let your voice be heard for the truth. You may even have to take a very difficult step and get out of that situation.

### Romans 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.”

Look at the next portion of our text passage.

### II Timothy 3:6-9 “For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.”

Jannes and Jambres were magicians who tried to compete with the miracles of Moses in the long ago. They were religious counterfeiters, who Paul says were *corrupt* and *reprobate*. Their folly was eventually seen by everybody, Paul says. And he says that false teachers and apostates are the same. Ultimately, they aren’t going to get away with anything. The word of God will continue to expose their error. Paul warns Timothy not to be drawn into their lair of false doctrine and sinful practice, but rather recognize them and turn away from them.

### II Thessalonians 3:14 “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.”

**II John 1:9-11** “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

**Jude 3-4** “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

All of those passages are saying the same thing that Paul said to Timothy. ***From such turn away.*** Are you part of this wayward, misguided church culture today that says *Anything goes* under the guise of God’s grace? Jude says *Contend for the faith*. Are you part of a church that is worshipping in an unscriptural way? Do they preach things the Bible doesn’t teach? Are they leading men astray? Are they following after the doctrines of men as opposed to the purity of the gospel? You see, if you know the truth, you have a responsibility to that. Don’t be swept up with the tide of digression, but stand up, speak up, and turn away from those things that are wrong. That is how we react to perilous times.

### **III. Be prepared for perilous times.**

I hate to tell you this, but it’s going to get worse before it gets better.

**II Timothy 3:12-13** “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”

If you live for Jesus Christ, there are going to be difficult times. The persecution that Paul speaks of may not mean being lit aflame or thrown into a lion’s den or crucified. We’ve become a little too sophisticated for that in our modern day. But, I’m going to tell you that if you really live as a light for Christ, if you really live out and out for the Lord Jesus, you’re going to be mocked. The world is going to come down on you like a hammer. Not only that, there are going to be false brethren who come down on you for standing for the truth. You are going to be opposed and it is not going to be easy. The temptation will always be to give in.

Paul has reminded us that such storms will come. But when they do, our souls need an anchor.

**II Timothy 3:14-17** “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (meaning *equipped, outfitted*) unto all good works.”

You see, that’s the foundation of the whole thing. In fact, this is the only foundation on which you CAN stand, that troubled times won’t sweep away and destroy. If you don’t stand upon the absolute truth and authority of the word of God, what do you have to stand on? That’s why we emphasize letting the Bible speak on this program. That is why over and over we stress how important it is to follow the scriptures. They are inspired of God. The fads of religion a) are not right, and b) will come and go. False

teachers and false churches will take you away from the safe harbor of truth, drag you out to sea and leave you there without a paddle.

But the Bible is God's battle plan for the soldier. It's God's handbook for the Christian worker. There is no other foundation that will stand in the kinds of perilous times that Paul describes. So, don't let people intimidate or dissuade you from believing and practicing what the Bible says. It's not popular and it's not always easy, but this book and the truth within it are the only things that will keep the true church of Christ from being unmoored and swept to its destruction.

Thus, Paul continues in the next chapter. Remember, in the original writing, there were no chapter divisions. So his letter to Timothy continues on.

**II Timothy 4: 1-4 "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."**

Dark days and perilous times, you see. Apostasy from within.

**II Timothy 4:5 "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."**

What must the church do to survive perilous times? Preach the word. You say, *shouldn't we rather adapt and make ourselves more palatable to the oppositions?* No! Paul said, *Preach the word.* What if people don't like it? *Preach the word.* What if people don't believe it? *Preach the word.* What if people oppose us for it? And they will. *Preach the word. Reprove, rebuke and exhort. Do the work of an evangelist. Make full proof of thy ministry.* Paul himself survived it.

**I Timothy 4:6-8 "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure (or death) is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."**

Paul is passing the baton. He is laying the mantle on Timothy, as it were. Were there difficult times for Paul? You'd better believe it. Did he find himself in the midst of perilous times? Oh yes, personally. He prophesied even with tears of apostasy that would take place from within the church when he spoke to the elders at Ephesus (**Acts 20**). But Paul weathered the storm. He *fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith.* THAT is Paul's plan for surviving dark days.

Dark days will come. It is not unexpected by God that they will come. It doesn't mean that anything is not running according to schedule. It doesn't mean that the word of God is not true. In fact, it confirms the word of God because the His word tells us repeatedly that such times WILL COME. So, don't lose faith. Don't be deterred from obeying the truth. Be prepared. Keep the faith. Stay true to Christ and to His word. And one day, the battle will finally be over.

As long as the church remains on this earth, perilous times are going to come. But there is coming a day when the last battle will be fought, when the last stand will be taken, when the last debate will be waged, and it will finally be over. We will be home, and those who prevailed will stand in victory at last on Zion's hill. I'd like to believe that we'll hang our battle-scarred armor on a nail on the jasper wall and we'll rejoice as we walk down the street of gold. Free of the dark and perilous times that Paul spoke of in **II Timothy 3**.

It is worth it. It's not easy, but it is worth it. There is a crown of righteousness for the one who finishes the course, who keeps the faith, who remains true to Jesus and His word. Who believes and practices only the things that are revealed in God's sacred book. That is how the church is to survive dark days. The faith of many is certainly being shaken. Do you have a faith that will weather the storm and survive? The only faith that will survive is a faith that is anchored in the truth of God's word. If we can help you to find that kind of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we'd love to do so. It would be our joy and our honor to sit down and study with you and show you how to turn your life around, be born again and to live for the Lord.

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