

# *Love Letters*

## Lesson 20: 2 Timothy 3

If you knew you were living in the last days, how would it motivate you to prepare for the future? The very term “last days” conjures up mental images of apocalypse, catastrophe, end of the world, and Judgment Day. But the Bible teaches that the last days actually began with the ascension of Christ and continue up through today and until the time of Christ’s return.

In these concluding chapters of 2 Timothy, Paul discusses the behavioral characteristics of people in the last days and the coming apostasy. The exact date of the end is unknown but a look at history from a biblical perspective along with a social inventory of our culture reveals to us that we are rapidly approaching Christ’s imminent return.

Read 2 Timothy 3:1–17.

### Day One: Perilous Times Ahead

The apostle Peter spoke of the last days in 2 Peter 3:11–12, saying, “Therefore since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?” Paul’s remarks over the next two chapters are an encouragement to persevere through hard times and remain faithful to Christ by focusing on Him and serving Him, whatever the circumstances.

Paul uses explicit terms to describe for Timothy and all his readers what the last days will entail.

1. Life will continue as it always has, but what does Paul say is coming (verse 1)? What do you think he means by this?
  
2. What ungodly characteristics will be evident as man’s character continues to digress on a downward spiral? Write them out in the verses indicated below . . .
  - a. Verse 2
  
  - b. Verse 3
  
  - c. Verse 4

- d. What does Paul say we should do when encountering such individuals (verse 5)?  
(Consider and jot down the potential consequences if you don't.)

We recognize from the descriptions given in these verses that increasing ungodliness will exist on a broad scale—even in the church! In verse 5, Paul summarizes the real issue: people will have a *form of godliness but will deny its power*. In other words, it is possible to know the word of God without knowing the God of the Word! People may very well profess with their mouths, yet deny Him with their lifestyle. True righteousness is evident in the heart and life that has been *reborn*—renewed by the power of God. The outward behavior reflects the inward transformation that has taken place.

*Memory verse:* 2 Timothy 3:16 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Day Two: Counterfeit Individuals

Reread 2 Timothy 3:6–9.

Paul clearly had the false teachers in mind in verses 6–9. He likens them to being utterly corrupt. As far as the faith is concerned, they are “rejected after testing.” They cannot be trusted to teach the truth, and they will not get far; their “folly” will be clearly visible soon.

1. What was their method of operation (verse 6)? (Consider the implications here.)
2. Whom were they targeting? Why were these individuals so vulnerable?

Paul describes these women as “always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (verse 7). They must have been familiar with the Old Testament scriptures and adept at discovering and discussing theological matters, but they had not made personal application of the truth to their daily lives. The fact that these women were “loaded down with sins” probably means they were not cleansed from them, which in turn, blinded them to the truths of God’s Word.

Two men, Jannes and Jambres, are mentioned as examples of men in opposition to the truth. Jewish tradition depicts these men as sorcerers of Pharaoh’s court in Egypt, who opposed God’s authority by resisting Moses. They succeeded to a point, but because they were counterfeits, they could not withstand the power of God!

3. How does Paul compare these two men with the false teachers of his day (verses 8–9)?
  - a. What does Paul say regarding their faith?
  - b. Regarding their progress?

### *Selah ~*

Think about it—a counterfeit is a substitute that is based on lies; it cannot stand up to the light of truth. Eventually it will be exposed for what it is. As a follower of Jesus Christ, your attitudes and actions should emanate from your relationship with Him—from the Holy Spirit within you. If not, something is wrong. It isn’t the occasional sin or failure you should be concerned about, but rather old habit patterns still present, continual destructive behavior—ongoing bad choices that are a warning sign you should heed. Has God put His finger on something in your life He considers a red flag? Note it here and then use Paul’s words in Colossians 1:9–14 as your prayer. Continue to pray it through until the Holy Spirit changes your mind about it and *you change* your behavior.

## Day Three:

## Opposition from Within

Look closely again at 2 Timothy 3:8–9 (AMP): “Now just as Jannes and Jambres were hostile to, and resisted Moses, so these men also are **hostile** to, and **oppose** the Truth. They have **depraved** and **distorted** minds, are **reprobate** and **counterfeit**, and to be rejected as far as the faith is concerned.” It is worth our attention to once more familiarize ourselves with the characteristics of individuals who may try to seduce us away from the truth.

1. The adjectives used to describe these men are listed below for you. Take a moment to look them up in your dictionary or cyclopedic index (located at the front of your Bible); briefly define each one in your own words. As you do, think about how detrimental their mindset is and how destructive they could potentially be.
  - a. *Hostile*
  - b. *Oppose*
  - c. *Depraved*
  - d. *Distorted*
  - e. *Reprobate*
  - f. *Counterfeit*
  - g. Using your definitions above, compose a brief sentence describing these false teachers.

False teachers are resistant to God’s Word to expose and convict of sin; in fact, they resent the intrusion of truth. Left alone they will become reprobate, not because of God’s judgment upon them, but by their own choice. As the seeds of evil take hold, habitual sin follows, then corruption, then death. Evil may advance for a time, but only to a certain point and then “their folly will be manifest to all” (verse 9). What began as secret sin will be revealed as public shame.

In addition, those who do not have a strong foundation in God’s Word will be gullible—easily deceived. They are very susceptible to the latest trends, always seeking sensual and intellectual gratification, not seeking to be delivered from the guilt of their own sin.

2. Personal: Do *you* perhaps find that you have been led astray by false teaching? Have you allowed anyone or anything to come between the gospel and its power in your life? If so, would you take a moment now and ask the Lord to forgive you and help you get back on track? Remember to remain on guard, “lest Satan should take advantage; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

## Day Four: The Charge to Endure

Reread 2 Timothy 3:10–17.

The beliefs we hold will be evident in the lives we live. Paul had just finished telling Timothy that false teachers would be revealed but, eventually, they would come to ruin because they cannot withstand the scrutiny of Scripture. Now Paul will offer his own life as the example of one who truly knows and walks with God.

One of the best ways to remain focused in the present trial is to reflect back on God's faithfulness in the past. Paul knew that Timothy needed a refresher course in his own Christian heritage as well as a reminder of the power contained in God's Word.

1. Personal: Select one aspect of Paul's life from verse 10, and share how his life example has influenced your life as a believer. Paul's *doctrine—manner—purpose—faith—longsuffering—love—perseverance*. Please explain.

Timothy was often Paul's traveling companion throughout areas such as Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. He witnessed firsthand Paul's faithfulness to the Lord and he witnessed the Lord's faithfulness to Paul.

2. What does Paul remind Timothy about the Lord's faithfulness (verse 11)?
3. Timothy was no doubt present during Paul's trials and even shared some with him. What lasting truth does Paul remind him of in verse 12?

Everyone who desires to live godly lives will suffer persecution, but it's interesting to note that as believers we do not get to choose our times of suffering; rather, God chooses them for us according to His sovereign will. We do, however, get to choose how we will respond in our suffering. If we choose compromise the path may be easier, shorter, and more predictable for a time; but if we choose obedience, though the path is strewn with obstacles, it is safer than a known way because God is with us.

4. What does Paul say about the fate of ungodly men and women (verse 13)?
5. As a spiritual father, what personal exhortation did Paul share with Timothy (verses 14–15)?
6. At a time when being a Christian could cost your life, Paul knew the power and potential of the Scriptures to save lives: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (verse 16). Which of these areas is profitable for *you* at the present time. Share your thoughts.

Day Five:

*In Touch with Jesus ~*

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

---

---

---

---

---

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

---

---

---

---

---

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in our walk of faith this week?

---

---

---

---

---

*Prayer Requests ~*

---

---

---

---

