

*1But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 9But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. 2 Tim 3:1-9*

As we begin this chapter we find Paul warning Timothy about the last Days. Paul states *in the last days difficult times will come*. We don't think much about the last days even though we are much closer to them than when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. As Christians we believe Christ is back but somewhere in the distant future. Peter predicted when the last days came there would be mockers saying where is this intervention of God. *3Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" 2 Pet 3:3,4* We may not consider ourselves mockers but, in many ways, we live as Deists, believing God made the universe and its natural laws, and then stood back. Like the mockers we think, *"Where is the promise of His coming?"*

But then there is this year, 2020, the year that has been so different. We have had a pandemic, a worldwide lock-down and quarantines. This year is different. Businesses being ordered to stay closed, even churches being told not to meet. I used to wonder what could cause, musicians to stop making music, craftsmen to stop working in their trades and millers, bakers and restaurants to halt what has been their livelihood. In America we have virtually shut down our whole economy because of this virus.

In addition to this we have continuing riots in our major cities and attacks on the police (law enforcement) and calls for their defunding. News of child porn and sex trafficking and the blurring of gender identity. Could it be that we have reached a point, as a culture, where God has found it necessary to tell His angels *"Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."* Rev 16:1 I don't want to be overly melodramatic here but have we honestly considered how our moral standards are eroding? At this point we must agree with the late David Wilkerson, *"If God doesn't judge America, he owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology."* Could it be that many of the natural disasters our country is experiencing are judgements from God?

*21Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. 22" And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer. Rev 18:21,22*

In the book of Acts Peter quoted the OT prophet Joel on what would take place in the last days. There are plenty of encouraging prophecies in this passage, *The pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh; sons and daughters shall prophesying and old men having dreams*, this is

all good but then Joel writes of, *blood and fire and vapor of smoke and the sun being turned into darkness*. Let's read this passage,

*17'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'* Acts 2:17-21, Joel 2:28

This last few weeks we have experienced *fire, vapor of smoke and the sun being turned into darkness*. It is pretty eerie to have the sky filled with smoke from vast acres of forests burning along the whole west coast. We are facing the fact that it is dangerous to breathe the air. The fact that much of this waste of natural resources could be avoided if people were allowed to manage the forests, "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule (have dominion) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.*" Gen 1:28

In first Timothy Paul writes about Christians falling away from the faith. He writes that the Spirit says this is going to happen, *some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. 1But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 1 Tim 4:1,2* This is to be a falling away from the faith and what was to cause this slide away from the truth? *Deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons*. This means believers are going to be tempted by lying spirits and the teachings (false teachings) by demons. Things that come against Christians that attempt to dislodge them from the solid footing of the Church, the truth of Christ are teaching right out of the pit. Remember we are in a spiritual battle.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. NASV — but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. KJV Eph 6:12*

Many Christians are naïve to this battle, being easily deceived they *pay attention to deceitful spirits* and as a result we get derailed, *falling away from the faith*. Bunyon describes this condition as the *Slough of Despond (the swamp of despair)*, failing to *keep faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. 1 Tim 1:19.*

*3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6*

We, as Christians are to *keep faith and (hold to) a good conscience*. We to engage in spiritual warfare, being *divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*. Paul describes that there will be foolish men, not only in the world but also, within the church. Paul, in this passage, was describing those who think themselves to be Christians, *holding to a form of godliness,*

*although they have denied its power.* These men are those who claim to be Christians but continue walking, living, in the flesh and thus condemnation, judgement—the just punishment for sin, remains on them, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom 8:1 KJV*

Paul gives a long list of what walking in the flesh looks like. Paul tells Timothy to avoid these foolish fellows, *they love pleasure more than they love God.* Claiming to be Christians they are living as children of wrath. *1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.* Look at this list the qualities of those living in the last days and remember that many of these will be in churches as wolves in sheep's clothing.

*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. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 2 Tim 3:2-7*

Again these are claiming to be religious but not dependent on the blood of Christ that makes men able to, *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* These men are immoral. Paul writes *enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses.* They continue living in the flesh. Paul makes the comparison that these false believers are like the Egyptian wizards who duplicated Moses' miracles.

*8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. 2 Tim 3:8*

*Names of two legendary wizards of Pharaoh "who withstood Moses" (II Tim. iii. 8) by imitating "with their enchantments" the works of Moses and Aaron, though they were defeated (Ex. vii. 11, viii. 7). According to rabbinical tradition they were the two chiefs of the magicians at the court of Pharaoh who foretold the birth of Moses, "the destroyer of the land of Egypt,*

As believers, living in the last days, we must be careful and mindful that everything that glitters is not gold, there are false teachers afoot. *1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, 1 Tim 4:1, 2* As believers we must hold fast to the truth and pray diligently and study. Don't follow every wind of doctrine.

*15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 2 Tim 2:15*