

Living Aware

The current situation worldwide that we are now so familiar with has led to much discussion regarding the return of the Lord and what is known as “End Times Theology.”

There are as many opinions regarding the area of prophecy as there are people, or so it seems at times. One thing we have learned, I believe, is that regardless of where this fits prophetically (again, that depends on our interpretation of certain passages in the Bible), is that we see how someone could control the world who fits the bill of what the Bible calls the antichrist.

It is not our goal in this devotional to tackle all the issues regarding where we are at on the prophetic calendar. We will address those on a couple of Sundays in the future, but this short study in the Word is to see how desperately, as we have seen, our world, and in some cases, the church, is in need of concrete truth and direction when it comes to beliefs and morality.

Let us note just a few examples. Within the church, there has been a continuing drift away from the view that the Bible is the Inerrant Word of God. Though many still hold to the Scriptures as God’s Word, there is a growing number, it seems from what I have seen, who question, for various reasons, whether the book we hold in our hand is the trustworthy Word of God.

There is a questioning of historical events. There is the rise of Theistic evolution, the view that teaches that God used evolution to carry out His creative plan. There are doubts about certain historic doctrines of the faith. There is the view that Christianity is not the only way to get to God. In fact, many paths lead to God.

There are churches and groups that are teaching these destructive beliefs, and the church that desires to stay true to the Word at times recognizes what they face in our world today.

And culture, as we know, holds to views that the church does not. Abortion is supported and allowed. Even during these “stay at home” orders in many states that are currently in place, abortion clinics are allowed to stay open. Biblically, and let us be direct, abortion is murder. There is no other way to say it.

Some churches waver on this issue which is sad. In addition, there are those in the culture who misrepresent historic Christianity and push back against any moral compass that would go against their secular beliefs.

We share this to get to our devotion this morning, which is found in **2 Timothy 3:1-9**. Here, in Paul’s letter to his protégé, Timothy, he reminds Timothy that in the “last days” there would be times of difficulty. Isn’t it interesting that Paul uses the phrase “last days”?

When did those days begin? The 1400’s? Or the 1500’s with the Protestant Reformation? Did he mean the current century we are living in? Even the Apostle John spoke of being in the “last hour” (**1 Jn. 2:18**).

I believe that when Paul used this phrase and the events that he speaks about, it was a reference to the time between Christ's first coming to earth and His future Second Coming.

Some believe that since we now have the complete canon of Scripture, we can see the connection between the prophetic events laid out in Scripture from a view of the overall teachings of the Bible on that topic. I understand that thinking.

We are not saying Paul, Timothy, and John were ignorant of the Lord's return. In fact, they had a firm grasp on Christ's future dealings with the church and the world around us (see **1 Thessalonians 4** and the **Book of Revelation**, as examples). Like us, they longed for Jesus to return for His church, but they also recognized that He would return when He chose to do so.

In **2 Timothy 3**, there are a few things worth noting as it relates to the world in which we live. Paul says that in these last days there will be "times of difficulty." The word "difficulty" means "hard to bear, troublesome, dangerous." Paul is telling us to know that there will be difficult and dangerous times that will occur in our world and that we need to be alert to this.

What Paul shares in **vs. 2-9** are descriptive of attitudes that we have seen throughout history. As you read the passage, be aware of what the Word of God says and what we see in our world around us.

We are not going to dive into the meaning behind each word or phrase Paul uses. Some are familiar to us because we encounter these attitudes as we deal with people. Those would include, to name a few – arrogance (**vs. 2**); slanderers (**vs. 3**); heartless (**vs. 3**).

All the descriptive phrases leading up to **vs. 5** are finalized by a warning from Paul that there will be some people who will appear to be God-followers who are not genuine believers. Their lives, instead of reflecting Christ, are marked by what Paul notes in **vs. 2-4**. Paul wants Timothy to be aware of that. False teachers may appear to be godly but the "proof is in the pudding."

As you read **2 Timothy 3**, there are a couple of things to note. These are already known by us, but a reminder is not a bad thing. First, we are to be aware and alert of what is going on around us. We are to be people of discernment and the Scriptures are to be our guide to help us in discerning truth from error. There are those whose false teachings may sound good at first, but on closer inspection, the red flags go up.

When this happens, dive into the Word and compare what was said with the Scriptures. That means seeing the passages in its context. It means spending time understanding the meaning of words and background to the text. It takes work but it also helps us not to be caught off guard by what someone says.

As we continue, we are reminded that Paul does not tell Timothy to withdraw from people and simply live in a Christian bubble where he has no interaction with people who do not know Christ. If he, or we, do that, we are unable to fulfill God's Great Commission of reaching people with the Gospel.

He does, though, want Timothy to be aware of the fact that attitudes and behavior that we see in the world around us we must guard against so that they do not infect our spiritual lives.

We must also be aware of the fact that there are people within the “Christian” community who deny basic fundamental truths as taught in Scripture which leads to a second point which is found in **2 Timothy 3:10-16** – what we believe guides the decisions we make.

We know that to be true, but it is a reminder that as we come up against false teaching, etc., the Word of God must be our foundation. Paul tells Timothy to continue in what he had learned and believed from the Scriptures, which are inspired by God (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

Our life as followers of Christ is guided by the Bible, God’s “owner’s manual” for us who know Him personally. Life is full of good times but there are times that we must deal with “time of difficulty” because we live in a fallen world. And when we do, it is great to know that we have God’s perfect, infallible Word to guide us.