

2Timothy 24-11-10b

Let's pick up our study here in 2 Timothy chapter 3, and there are a plethora of descriptions here of what men will be like in the latter days, but we're focusing on what is most applicable and helpful for us, because certainly as believers in the Lord Jesus and as representatives of Him on this earth, every waking moment that we are in contact with fellow believers, with our neighbors, with those who are outside, some cases even in opposition, those who are our enemies, we are commanded to express love. The worst thing that can happen for us is to lose track of that mandate, the greatest of all commandments in Scripture, to love the Lord our God. That makes us into people who know how to love, and that character of the person doing the loving is essential.

That's what defines the quality, the extent, the enduring nature of whatever love there is. How durable is our love for God? Remember Jesus said that in the latter days the love of many will grow cold? He didn't say love of what? It's the ability to express quality love, love that is sourced in God, the love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. So to describe what it is to be unthankful, unholy, unloving, and unforgiving, these are pretty self-evident.

What underlies it? What makes these things bubble to the surface and characterize people in the last days? It tells us beginning and end, lovers of themselves, and secondly, lovers of money. Lovers of money. Why do people love money? The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.

You cannot serve God and mammon. We have a lot of principles in Scripture regarding money. Why is this? It's fairly self-evident that in the secular world, in the world of the material, money is power.

I can change things with money. If my washing machine is broken, and I have money, I can buy a new one. If my car is old and unreliable, and I have money, I can get a new one.

If I want to upgrade my circumstances in almost any area, whether it is meeting the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, whether it is the niceties and the amenities that make life easier, I can use a manual can opener, but isn't it great to buy an electric one? I can watch a small TV, but isn't it more fun and more interesting to look at a big one? Money is power in the material world, primarily the power to acquire. We can acquire goods, we can acquire services, and so it then becomes a matter of what is the motivation for those acquisitions. Why am I doing this? Why am I exercising this option? Why am I allowing this expenditure of funds, allocating resources? Where does it fit in my goals, my priorities, and my values? And for a believer, is it good stewardship? We have been given control over what basically belongs to God, and as servants and as stewards, we have a responsibility to use it wisely.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with spending money for pleasurable experiences, take a vacation, get something nice, not just the bare necessities. We don't have to be ascetic. We don't have to scrape by with the bare minimum, live in a hovel, wear old clothes, resurrect a black and white TV and put an adapter on it for digital so that we can get the news.

When you look at the Lord Jesus, he had nice clothes, he had nice meals, he went out to eat, he was invited to sumptuous banquets, and he went. He didn't say, let's take this money and give it to the poor and I'm just going to have a piece of unleavened bread. It isn't godly to be poor or to impoverish ourselves.

In many cases, this is asceticism and Gandhi can sit by the side of the road, skin and bones, enduring the weather and eating pabulum and whatnot. We are not called to be ascetic. At the same time, we should be good stewards and balance.

Our moderation should be known to all. There is nothing wrong with creature comforts, with having nice things, with enjoying the fruits of our labors when we have a form of entertainment or a form of experience where we take a trip or we take a vacation. There are people who believe that asceticism is godliness, and that's not true.

But do we love experiences? Are we seeking them out and dependent upon them? Do we seek out the next new pair of shoes or the next nice article of clothing or the next appliance or piece of technology and we crave it, we need it, we want to not only enjoy it but sort of show it off to others and there is an unhealthy need to impress or to compete or to be perceived as belonging to a certain class or a certain economic status. It isn't what we do, it is why we do it. And this gets back to the idea of love.

Men will be lovers of themselves, meaning the only sacrifice I want to make is to gratify myself. Lovers of money, I want to acquire that which makes me happy. I have known people who look at the acquisition of money as an opportunity for ministry.

They love money, they love getting donations, they love creating endowments, they love finding donors and fundraising activities. They love money because of what it can do in ministry to print Bibles, to finance the training of indigenous pastors, to print materials such as the Foundations book which is an excellent source of basic Bible understanding. And you can love money for positive reasons.

I would love to have the funding to spread the word of God, to put it on the airwaves, to make it more available via the internet or television or radio or whatever it might be. Obviously, to love money for its own sake, for what it can do for me is an extension of lovers of self. I love myself, I want to make myself as comfortable, as enjoyable, stimulation, and so on.

And there is a self-interest in the love of money that is at its definitional heart. So, Paul

doesn't just say, in the latter days men will be. How does he begin this list? Know this, understand this, remember this, keep this in mind.

In the latter days, he doesn't just jump straight to the list. He says, in the latter days, the times will be perilous. There is a danger in letting love of self creep in unawares.

There is a danger in beginning to rely on bank balance or how much funding, what is my sense of financial security? Do I have enough to keep myself living in the manner to which I have become accustomed? And to worry about money, to measure success in terms of money, is to love money. If we depend on it, if its sudden loss undermines our entire world, one gut check is if I lost everything I have and people have done in hurricanes, in natural disasters, in riots, in unforeseen circumstances. One day you have a comfortable dwelling with your knickknacks and your mementos and your possessions, and 24 hours later it is all gone.

Maybe you have insurance, maybe you don't. There are things that insurance can't replace because of their sentimental value, their memory value. But where do we stand in terms of our investment in that which is material? Money is representative, mammon is representative of the material world.

Am I so invested in the material world that its loss would really devastate me? Hopefully this is just a thought experiment for us and not an actual experience, not a reality that comes up in the future. But to be unhealthy and unreasonable in our reliance upon and confidence in wealth or money is perilous. That's the point.

Paul says perilous times are characterized by people that are invested in themselves and relying on their material resources for life and happiness. And without the material resources and without self-gratification, life is just not worth living. Boasters.

What does it say in Ephesians 2, 8 and 9? You know this. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Lest any man should boast. I did it. I helped.

I contributed. God really kind of needed to save me because I kind of deserve it. I'm one of the good people.

God wouldn't go into the eternal future without me. It's my righteous living. It's my gifts and my intellect and my loquacity and my ability to do this, that or the other.

God needs me. I have somehow merited salvation. It is not of works.

Works cause people to boast. So if men are boasters, what are they going to boast in? And we have people in great notoriety in the public sphere, people who are running for

office and so on, who will boast. What is the turnoff when someone begins to boast? There is a noticeable and obvious lack of appreciation for contributions made by others.

I did this. I did that instead of we. We together.

It's a team victory. It was a team effort. We together can make a difference.

We together. This is the perspective of loving one another is appreciating one another and the support, the encouragement, the blessing that comes from association with fellow believers. If we begin to be impressed with ourselves and what we individually have accomplished or endured, nobody knows the trouble I've seen.

There are people who can boast in their infirmities. And this is a mark of self-centeredness. And inevitably, whatever space is taken up by looking at ourselves is a space that should have been occupied by someone else.

Primarily our father in heaven, his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the wonderful patient, enduring and empowering Holy Spirit, those that have preserved and interpreted the word of God for us in the past. And to the extent that we think it's all about me boasting and even unregenerate humanity has an instinct against those who boast, who overrate themselves, who make much of themselves, who take too much credit to themselves when it was very obviously involved a lot more people. Boasters, proud.

You can see the progress from this. If you are self-interested and you love money and you have money and now you can boast about yourself and your money, how you got it, what you've done with it, it's always impressive to find out that someone who is well off in the past without letting anyone know has helped families or individuals or causes and made sure that no one knew about it. And it comes out later.

And why are we impressed by that? Because we know that it wasn't done for boasting. It wasn't done out of self-interest. There was a genuine concern and a genuine recognition.

Here is a way that I can be of material benefit to someone or something. And I don't want credit. I don't want notoriety.

I just think this is a worthy cause and I've contributed to it. And it is done without fanfare and without publicity. And when we find that out later, we tend to believe that there is some integrity and it isn't love of self and it isn't love of money and they're not boasting.

And that sets them in a different category of appreciation. And so they're evidently not proud. If they were proud, these other things would pertain.

Blasphemers. What is it to blaspheme? What is blasphemy? Blasphemy is blaming God, discrediting God, denying God, refusing to acknowledge God. It isn't so much bad language as it is an attitude toward God and the things of God to be arrogantly

dismissive of what God has done and is doing, to discredit, discredit, to refuse to recognize his character, his plan, his purpose, his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's blasphemy. And it is to be arrogantly dismissive. You have pride here or arrogance.

That pride can be boastful toward men and it will be blasphemous toward God. I'm dismissive of people and I'm dismissive of God or the concept of God or anything that reminds me of God or any notion that there is a God. So blasphemy is pride expressed in the direction of God, where boasting is pride expressed in the direction of people.

Disobedient to parents. This is emblematic. We've seen so often that there will be one thing put for a whole category.

If there's disobedience to parents, this is disrespect for authority. This is rejection of authority or the concept that there ought to even be authority. And if children are disobedient to parents, what does that tell you about the parents? They are disobedient and rejecters of governmental authority, biblical authority, certainly laws.

I will get ahead by whatever means. And disobedience to parents. By the time that happens and children are running wild and rampant, the parents don't understand the concept of authority.

That's why they are not ensuring that their children are obedient. One of the characteristics of an elder we saw in 1 Timothy and in Titus is that he rules well his household. His children are obedient.

And disobedience to parents is symptomatic of the rot of the fabric of authority that holds societies and nations together. Then because of these things, if you're dismissive, if you're blasphemous toward God, you're going to be unthankful. If you're a proud boaster, you're going to be unthankful to those who have pitched in and put a shoulder under the load, those who are instrumental in getting you started or getting you further down the road or helping you bring something across the finish line.

And lack of gratitude goes both toward God and toward fellow man. Sacrificial work is done and you don't notice. You're not appreciative.

There is the unspoken assumption that, well, I'm sure glad you did that because I sort of deserve it. And what took you so long? And why didn't you do it better? Unthankful, unholy, with all the rest of it, there is no need for personal righteousness, personal sanctification, having moral and ethical standards. I will do what gratifies me.

But right in the middle, remember we circled in verse two and we circled in verse four, lovers of themselves, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, not lovers of God, right in the middle, unloving, first word in verse three. All of these others basically are either

symptoms of unlovingness or are misdirected love. There's either a lack of love or it is a misdirected love where there ought to be love for God.

It's not there. So by focusing on love, these other characteristics are either present or absent. Unloving, without love, there is no forgiveness.

Slander, it's somebody else's fault, shifting blame, assigning shame. You hear this in the post-election discussions, the post-mortem on why some people lost and others won and talking about there being something wrong with people who voted differently than I did. It isn't that they have different priorities, different values, that they disagree on which policies work the best.

No, there is something wrong with you. You are some kind of an ist. You're a racist.

You're a misogynist. You are embodiment of evil in some way, shape or form. That's why you voted the way you did.

There's something wrong with you. What's the matter with you? That you didn't vote the way I did. That you don't agree with my take on social policies and priorities and so on.

Slanderers, it's somebody else's fault. Anything that goes wrong, it's their fault. The Pharisees blamed Jesus for unrest among the people because they were waking up to the genuine characteristics of righteousness and of faithfulness and of being pleasing in God's sight.

And so they blamed Jesus for the social unrest that they were fomenting. Well, it's His fault. We wouldn't have to stir up the people if it wasn't for Him.

And this kind of blindness is perilous. Perilous times will come without self-control. What is the last of the list in the fruit of the Spirit? Self-control.

No self-control, no Holy Spirit. It's a fruit of the Spirit. So, brutal.

This is cruelty. This is insensitivity and callousness to the suffering of others, to the evil that is involved in certain practices and policies, the harm that it does to others. It's brutal.

It is conscience seared with a hot iron. Brutality. This can be conversational brutality.

This can be emotional brutality. You inflict suffering in a callous way on someone else. Despisers of good.

You don't just fail to practice good or fail to appreciate good. You despise good. You assign it to weakness.

You are dismissive, judgmental of what is actually good. Your conscience doesn't work

anymore. And you assign good to yourself and you assign evil to those who are actually doing good.

The Lord Jesus, no greater example. Those who despise He who was perfect. Never sinned.

Was God's fullest expression of divine love. And they despised Him. Traitors.

Willing to sell out. Willing to undercut. Willing to betray someone for out of self-interest.

I will climb over you and leave cleat marks in your back to get my objective accomplished. This is the flip side of brutality. Insensitivity to what it is costing someone else for you to pursue your agenda.

Headstrong. Haughty. Lack of self-control and headstrong is a recipe for disaster.

Perilous times will come. Haughty is another aspect of arrogance, of pride, of boastfulness. Haughty is like class warfare.

You're down below. I'm above. I belong to a group and that makes me better than you.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And you can see Paul looking at these perilous times of the latter days and just circling it and looking at it from different perspectives. These overlap.

One partakes of the other. But the central characteristic is completely obviating the first great commandment and the second that is like unto it. If you have love, we read 1 Corinthians 13, you can't do these things.

You can't be these things if you embody love, the love of God. And that is a measure of the presence and the effective function of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The last element of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

What is the first? The fruit of the Spirit is love. Love is also turned in different perspectives. We had a good question and comment on the break about the vocabulary of love.

In 1 Corinthians 13, it's agape. This is John 3, 16 love, God so loved and he gave. Agape is in the fullest sense, sacrificial towards self, beneficial toward others.

It is the active love that a husband is to have for his wife, that Christ had for the church. That's agape, agapao as the verb. Here we have philos.

And Paul intentionally says people aren't sacrificially and beneficially loving themselves. Sacrificially, beneficially with a blessing action in boasting and being proud and arrogant and haughty and dismissive of others and being traitors and brutal and despisers of

good. So the highest level of affection that people in this category can come to is phileo.

This is Philadelphia, brotherly love. Unbelievers can attempt brotherly love. It's not the brotherhood of faith.

It's not brothers and sisters in Christ. It's my fellow man. And there's this abstraction of social action and charity that wraps itself in the flag of phileos for others.

But it is in fact self-interested, self-gratifying and eventually goes down all of these roads of callousness and brutality and self-interest because it is not divinely enabled and empowered love. The love of God in Romans 5.5 that is shed abroad in our hearts is agape. So lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Having a form of godliness. This is the scary part. It is wrapped in a semblance.

There is a facade. There is a hypocritical appearance of godliness. I'm a good person.

I will say Lord, Lord as I go about doing good works. Nothing scarier in scripture. Nothing frightens me more than that picture of someone coming to the door when the Lord is seated at the banquet table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and those that have come from the northeast, south and west to sit down with the Lord Jesus in the kingdom.

And coming up to the door and knocking and saying, I'm ready to come in and take my seat. And the Lord looks back and says, I never knew you, but Lord in your name, I did these works. I expended these efforts.

I put your name on it. I branded it. I called it godly.

I didn't know you. I don't know you. Depart from me workers of iniquity.

It's not just not good. It's iniquity to fly a false flag of godliness, having a form of godliness, but the power is not there. Where is the power? How does the power of God come into the life of a believer? You know this well from such people turn away.

This is back to curating our relationships, cultivating association with those who love God, who love one another, who understand first Corinthians 13, who are actively pursuing faith, hope and love and separating from people who don't. We have a responsibility to touch not the unclean thing, to hate the garment spotted by the flesh. You can't be in a sack race with somebody that has fallen to the ground and isn't moving.

From such turn away. Look at the list. If this is the description of someone in our periphery, if they are trying to drag us down that same road in their conversations, in their efforts, in their associations, in their influence on us, the word of God says people like this turn away.

Cut the cord. I would submit that in the world of social media stop following such people. Don't try to turn them.

Don't try to answer them. Don't try to counter them. Don't try to argue the other way.

Remember the guidance we just had in the preceding chapter. We can correct in humility. Those who are in opposition up in verse 25 of chapter two, humility, soft answer.

We saw this in Proverbs, soft answer that turns away wrath, offer a thought. But if it is rejected and if people are intent on going in this direction, if they are unrepentant, if they're uninterested in the love of God and love of one another, brotherly love in Christ from such turn away. It's a command of scripture.

It's self-preservation. Why? Have you ever heard stories? Patty and I have been to the Grand Canyon and people want to get a selfie. And so they go out on the ledge.

They lose 10 or 12 people a year of people trying to, it is so apt an illustration. I want a selfie. I want a great picture of myself with this beautiful background.

And so I'm standing here and I want to get just the right beautiful picture of myself that I can show other people. One step too far back, they go over and they are killed. High school girls wanting an impressive picture.

And so they sit on a tiger for their yearbook photo and something happens. They screech. It startles the tiger.

It turns around, bites him in the neck and they are dead. This has literally happened. And there are these freak accidents where people are so intent on pursuing something that is impressive about themselves.

And it's perilous. It is a perilous situation. Why imperil yourself? Why risk getting too close to the edge, too close to a danger? Paul precedes this entire description.

Know this. Pay attention to this. Have this in the front of your brain.

Don't tuck it away in a note on a page in a book stuck on a shelf. Know this. This ought to circulate in your mind all the time.

Perilous times are coming and they are characterized by these things. And if there are people who partake of these characteristics from such turn away, it's perilous. Do you want to go over the side? Do you want to get bit in the neck and become completely neutralized? Do you want to lose your effectiveness? Do you want to lose your inheritance? Do you want to sell it for the mess of pottage of going along to get along? Compromise? Well, I've just got reasons.

I can't separate. I can't touch not the unclean thing. I've got reasons.

What did the Lord Jesus say? You go back to Matthew 24 and 25. I've not come to bring peace but a sword and it will divide people. And it needs to divide us in some cases.

This is something to be done prayerfully, to be done wisely, to be done in humility, not in rancor, bitterness, condemnation. We do our best to unite, to heal, to come together, but it has to be done in Christ and it has to be done without compromise. From such turn away.

Of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins. We'll save this description. This is such an unusual illustration.

Of such are, of all of the things you could pick as an illustration, why are the victims unsuspecting women in their houses? Why is there creeping into the household? It tells us that this isn't something done in the public square. This is not done in the forum. This is done personally, an individual within the house.

This gets past the front door. This gets across the threshold and it is surreptitious. You don't see it coming.

The creeping into a household, this insinuates itself. This ambiguates itself. Think about how useless a door is when it comes to social media.

Your door doesn't stop anything that comes across Facebook or X or Rumble or any of these other things that people use, Instagram and whatnot, Tumblr. All of the areas in which ideas come in and they get past the door, they get past the husband and there are people, women are used, but again, like all of the other things we've seen in the past orals, the women are put for anyone who is impressionable and their guard is down. Their protection is not present and this can be our own soul.

This can be the emotion in a man's soul and get carried away, get led by the emotional appeal. Loaded down with sins, guilt is used as a weapon. Guilt you into staying, guilt you into doing, guilt you into enduring, guilt you into participating.

Loaded down with sins, our sins have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. If you're loaded down with sins, what's the problem? Someone is using guilt as a lever. It shouldn't be guilt.

There ought to be confession, there ought to be cleansing, there ought to be moving forward, there ought to be a positive move toward sanctification, toward the positive expressions of love, motivated by hope, by means of faith, not consciousness of sins. Loaded down means these are past sins. To have a load, you have to acquire it over time.

You've got to stack it, you've got to collect it and pile it. Loaded down with, oh, how can you? I remember when you, this is what you always do. Loaded down with sins.

No believer in the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be loaded down with sins. If they're unconfessed sins, confess them. If there are ongoing sins, depart from them, break the pattern.

It's the power of God that does it. It's the presence of the Holy Spirit. It's the truth of God's word.

Remember the hymn that says, he breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoners free. He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoners free.

There's no reason to be loaded down with sins. But these people leverage and exploit past failures. They dredge them up and use them as a guilt lever.

From such turn away. This is the sort that does that. They are guilty in some way, shape or form of many of these other descriptions.

And what do they do? Always learning, never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Their distraction, their deflection, their interference prevents believers from coming to a knowledge of the truth. What did he say in verse one? Know this.

Well, you can't know this if someone keeps deflecting you into navel gazing and guilt, shame, blame. It's all about the problem and not about the solution. It's all about you and not about the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's all about your life and your actions and your thoughts and your words and not getting with the program of the fruit of the spirit and outward looking love toward one another, toward neighbors, toward those who are outside and even toward enemies. Can't do love if you're loaded down with sins. If you're distracted, you can learn all you want, but you never come to a knowledge of the truth.

How tragic. Always learning, but never arriving at the destination. It's always a process.

You never get, you never get it done. Janice and Jambers, we'll talk about them next time. So a lot of fruitful reflection in this passage.

Latter days, yes. End time, eschatology, prophecy, hockey stick, the end is near is all good. But this is written for our instruction.

The perilous times are in our souls. The influences are around us and from such turn away. He doesn't say in the latter days, turn away.

He says, turn away now. That's a present imperative from such turn away. Now, turn away.

Now it won't be perilous times. If we turn away, if we express and cultivate love, the love of God, love of one another, obviates, neutralizes, expunges all of these influences. Love permeates this list and the lack thereof is at the heart of these failures.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully it warns and rebukes and corrects us, leads us and guides us, help us to see clearly its application in our own lives, in our immediate circumstances, so that we can turn away from that which hinders and deflects us from being effective as representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. We want to be those who reflect your glory, who express a hope that draws others to you.

Through the Lord Jesus, we pray these things in his name. Amen.