

**Letters From My Father**  
**Week 28**  
**2 Timothy 3:1-3**  
**“The Disease - Part One”**

**Introduction**

**While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”**

**Jesus replied to them, “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and they will deceive many. You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these events are the beginning of labor pains.**

**“Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of My name. Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.**

**Matthew 24:3-14**

In **2 Timothy Chapter 3**, Paul speaks of what he calls “hard times” that will come in “last days”. It is important for us to understand exactly what he meant by this term. In the book of *Daniel*. The “last days” are a reference to what he called “the times of the Gentiles”, which span from the rise of the Babylonian Empire and will culminate with the return of The Messiah when He returns to set up His eternal kingdom (**Daniel 3**).

When Jesus spoke of the “last days” or the “end of the age” in **Matthew 24**, He was speaking of the very end of time just prior to His return. He warned us that wickedness will increase all the more as the ages pass leading up to His second coming. He painted a very dark picture of just what life in this world will be like as the days grow increasingly shorter. But then He said that we must not become alarmed or discouraged, for we know that all these things must take place before He comes to cleanse this world of the filthy disease of sin.

When Paul speaks here to Timothy of “the last days”, it is most likely in reference to what is commonly known as “the Church age”, which is the time period between Christ’s first and second coming. We are living now in this age, although I personally believe that we are also living in the final days before the return of Christ. But I can only speculate to this as The Scriptures are clear that no one knows exactly when that day will come (**Matthew 24:36**).

The reason that I am convinced that Paul is not simply referring to those few years before Christ returns, but rather to the entire age of the church, is because of the wording that he used to describe these times. He said, and I quote,

**But know this: Hard times will come in the last days.**

**2 Timothy 3:1**

The Greek text is a bit more specific in its wording. The word that Paul used for “times” is (karios) refers to “time periods”, rather than a specific time. In other words, Paul is warning Timothy that during the Church age, there will be many periods of “perilous seasons”. The word that he uses to describe these time periods that will occur throughout the entire age of grace is *chalepos*, meaning *harsh or savage*. It is the exact same word that was used to describe the two demon possessed men who lived in the tombs of Gadara in **Matthew 8:28** (*exceedingly fierce* - **KJV**).

I believe that The Spirit chose this word for a reason in Paul's writing to Timothy. The reason being that what is going to take place in this world as the days grow closer and closer to Christ's return will be energized by demonic activity. The wickedness of this world will increasingly ramp up until Christ comes, for the devil will be making a full court press to do his very worst while he still can (**Revelation 12:12**). We need only to look around to see that this world is suffering from a ravaging disease. Not only are all men born with this disease, many would rather die of it than accept the cure. This world is living under a curse, and Christ, and Christ alone, is the only cure.

As Paul explains this "disease of man" he first names it and then follows up by revealing its many symptoms. The symptoms of this disease are so many, that we cannot cover them all in one sitting. So today, we will draw our attention to the disease itself, along with *only a portion* of its recurring symptoms. And then, we will learn of the cure. Please allow me to explain.

### **The Disease (vs. 1-2a)**

**But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. For people will be lovers of self....** **2 Timothy 3:1-2a**

That there will be what Paul actually literally calls "*fierce times*" in the last days is a direct consequence of the fatal disease that plagues all mankind in this world cursed by the fall. And just what is that disease you might well ask? It is the malady that is the cause of all that is evil in the universe. Satan was the first to catch it, and he, being the infectious carrier that he is, infected man with it, when he exposed them in the Garden of Eden. The disease is that of *self love (philautos)*, or what some would even call narcissism. It is the love of one's self above all other things. And it is this disease that is the root cause of all the sins of this world. Even the word "sin" has an "I" at its very core. *To live to gratify one's self. To desire to be the master of one's own fate.* This is the virus that Satan himself first contracted and then passed on to every generation of mankind since the beginning.

**Shining morning star, how you have fallen from the heavens! You destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground. You said to yourself, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will set my throne above the stars of God."** **Isaiah 14:12-13a**

It is also important for us to be reminded that in the context of Paul's letter to Timothy, he has been discussing wicked people who will infiltrate the church and not just the wicked of the world. The false prophets will do everything that they can to infect the church with love of self in order to render it as ineffective as possible. Just as no one can go to work when they have the flu, the church is rendered powerless when false teachers attempt to take us back to where we started before we were made whole by The Spirit. In short, the devil is pushing us to relapse!

Allow me to give an example. As Believers, we are commanded in Scripture to **"Love, The LORD our God with all our heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself."** (**Mark 12:30-31a**). This simply means that we are to love God and others above all else. Now enter the false teacher. Would you like to know the part of those verses that he (or she) will draw attention? The "*as yourself*" part. They will say, "So you see, in order to love God and others you must first learn to love yourself. In order to be what God wants you to be, in order to have what God wants to give you, you need to love yourself *first*."

This is false doctrine, or as Paul would say, "*the doctrine of demons*" (**1 Timothy 4:1**). The reason the Scriptures tell us to love our neighbor as ourselves is because God knows that our flesh is already bent upon self-love. Don't believe me? Then let me ask you this question, when someone takes a group photo, and you are in the group, when you see the picture, who do you look for first? (You do not have to answer. I already know the answer!) You see, we have no problem with putting ourselves first. What God has commanded us to do is to put ourselves last, to take the love of self and refocus it on God and others. While the so-called "*prosperity gospel*" attempts to put your propensity to love yourself back

into the forefront, the gospel of Christ is a gospel of self-denial and self-sacrifice. We live not to please ourselves, but to bring honor to The One Who gave His life to redeem us and give us a better nature. We need to empty the cup of self and allow God to refill it with His Holy Spirit. Only then, will we live a life that has meaning. Narcissism breeds emptiness and strife, but The Spirit gives love, joy, and peace. He gives our life meaning! So the question remains, have you been emptied of self and refilled by The Spirit of The Living God?

### **The Symptoms (vs. 2b)**

**...lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy.** **2 Timothy 3:2b**

As Paul continues his discourse on the fierce times ahead for the church, he begins to list many of the symptoms that accompany self-loving. Now that we are aware of the disease that plagues this fallen world, let us look to the symptoms of its infestation.

**A) Lovers of money:** (*philargyros*; pronounced fil-ar'goo-ros) meaning literally “*silver lovers*”.

*The Bible* repeatedly says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. This does not mean it is wrong to have material wealth, but it does mean that it is wrong to live for material wealth. So many in America today are more than willing to sacrifice their morals, family, and all else to the pursuit of wealth. And the end result is emptiness and despair. Money not only won't buy you happiness, but the love of it usually leads to the very opposite. Greed has destroyed many a life in the history of this world and will always continue to do so.

It stands to reason that those who are infected with the disease of self-love will have a thirst for more and more material possessions. For those who live for self feel that they always deserve the very best. This is why children of this generation expect, and in fact *demand*, to acquire instantly all that their parents have worked for a lifetime to achieve. This is why people have overextended themselves into indebtedness that they have no possibility of repaying. Greed ruins lives, and it is a direct consequence of loving self above all else.

As Warren Wiersbe has so eloquently stated in his commentary on *2 Timothy*, “*In this universe there is God, and there are people and things. We should worship God, love people, and use things. But if we start worshipping ourselves, we will ignore God and start loving things and using people.*”

**B) Boastful:** (*alazon*; pronounced al-ad-zone') meaning an empty pretender or boaster.

Those who are lovers of self have a natural overinflated estimate of their self-worth. In short, they are the heroes of all their own stories. They elevate themselves as being far more important than everyone else around them. While they may be able to “get along” with others, make no mistake, the wants and needs of their family and peers are secondary to them having the attention that they feel is their due. We live in an age where the current generation prefers to become so-called “influencers” on social media rather than play any actual role for the betterment of mankind. Once again, we see this progression of the demonic influence increasing all the more in these last days.

**C) Proud:** (*hyperephanos*; pronounced hoop-er-ay'-fan-os) to have an overweening estimate of one's means or merits, and thereby despising others or even treating them with contempt.

This goes hand in hand with the preceding symptom. Those who are lovers of self perceive themselves as being superior in nature to everyone else. They are braggarts, because they are truly convinced that they are superior.

**D) Demeaning:** (*blasphemos*; pronounced blas'-fay-mos) this is where we derive our word blasphemous, and it literally means to speak ill of all that is good.

Those who have self upon the throne of their lives are despising of both God and man, speaking horrible evil of any who would challenge their lifestyle. One need only to watch the news these days to see the horrible sins of man being celebrated, and those who would speak truth against them being despised and vilified. Blasphemy is the perfect description of the American mindset today.

**E.) Disobedient to parents:** (*apeithes*; pronounced ap-i-thace') literally meaning impersuasive and in-compliant.

We see this more than ever today. Children in these last days have no respect whatsoever for parents or any other authority for that matter. Modern psychologists forbid parents from any form of corporal discipline, and even go so far as to prevent the intervention of a child's "temper tantrum" for this could cause them to become insecure and may feel restricted in their convictions. Is it any wonder we see society falling apart before our very eyes?

**F.) Ungrateful:** (*acharistos*; pronounced ach-ar'-is-tos) without gratitude.

When we are victims of self-love, we sincerely believe that we deserve to have everything we want. So naturally, there is no gratitude for merely receiving what is owed to us. Children have no regard for the sacrifices made by their parents to provide for them, nor do men have any gratitude toward God, Who gave them life and all that is good in this world.

**G.) Unholy:** (*anosios*; pronounces an-os'-ee-os) wicked. Despising all that is good and holy.

Living in righteousness brings too many restrictions for those who wish to live in an unrestricted world. This is the reason that so many new laws are being passed in our society every day. For apart from a healthy fear of God, no one can restrain the wickedness of man. Or as *Proverbs* so concisely declares it:

**Without revelation people run wild, but one who follows divine instruction will be happy.** **Proverbs 29:18**

We are living in the last days, where fallen men have no natural desire for the revelation of God's Word. They would rather cast off all restraint, and do what is right in their own eyes. The above mentioned are but a few of the symptoms that afflict people who are infected with the disease of self-love. And according to Scripture, this disease is fatal, for as **Romans 6:23** tells us, **"The wages of sin is death."** We will continue to discuss the symptoms of this disease next time. But I do not want to end this week's lesson without providing insight as to the cure for this fatal disease. The cure is a Person, and His Name is Jesus!

### **The Cure (Matthew 9:2-8)**

**Just then some men brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Have courage, son, your sins are forgiven."**

**At this, some of the scribes said to themselves, "He's blaspheming!"**

**Perceiving their thoughts, Jesus said, "Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? For which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — then he told the paralytic, "Get up, take your stretcher, and go home." So he got up and went home. When the crowds saw this, they were awestruck and gave glory to God, who had given such authority to men.**

**Matthew 9:2-8**

When Christ healed the man who was paralyzed, He said to him, **“Take heart son, your sins are forgiven.”** (NIV). And the religious leaders who heard that almost went out of their minds! *“Who was this man who claimed that he had the power to forgive sins?”* they thought. “Only God can forgive sin.” But what they did not realize is that the Man Who stood in their presence that day was in fact...God. And when we place our faith in Christ, The Only Son of God, we are forgiven. We are healed of this disease that causes us to destroy our very souls with our own self-loving. In Christ, the Great Physician, we find the cure for what is killing us. Jesus is the cure. **And whosoever believes in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life (John 3:16b).**

For you see, it is just as Jesus said right before he made the lame man walk again, **“which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?”** Both things are impossible for us, but all things are possible for Him. And the answer to His question is simple: He needed only to speak the words for the young man to be healed of his paralysis. But in order to forgive him (*and us*) from sin, He had to die on the cross and be raised to life on the third day. Obviously the forgiveness part was much harder. *But take courage, Jesus has already done the hard part!*

All of us were born on this earth with an incurable disease. And it manifests itself with our own wretched love of self. We are dead to everything else, except our own fleshly desires.

**But God, Who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with Christ even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace!**  
**(Ephesians 2:4-5)**

Are you sin sick this morning? Are you enslaved to your own worldly passions or have you been set free by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus. Sin is the disease, but *Christ is the cure*. So, come to Jesus and be forgiven. Come to Jesus... and live.

And let all those who have been healed say... TRUTH!!!