

20251026 2 Timothy 3

The Sin of Self

For perhaps the last twenty years, I have seen a world rise up around me that my parents could not have even contemplated. This is particularly true of the West in general and the United States of America in particular. And yet this kind of world was foretold of by Paul in this second letter to Timothy.

Godlessness in the Last Days

3 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men. (2 Timothy 3:1-9, ESV).

This is a message about the world and what it will be like in the “last days.” This looks like a description of what is going on RIGHT NOW all over the earth. Just turn on the news and pick a station. You’ll see story after story that exhibits the list that Paul gave to Timothy. This is the world of “selfies” in which we are now living. Paul starts off by telling Timothy that this time period in the earth will be accompanied by “times of difficulty.” Life gets harder as those around us fall captive to self and its own interests above all else. As we delve into the passage verse by verse, we find a laundry list of what a society consumed by self looks like. This isn’t anything new. Self is rooted in the rebellion of man against God, and a desire to replace God with self. Let’s go back to the beginning to see how this self-love began.

3 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

(Genesis 3:1-7, NKJV).

It is interesting that as Satan approached Eve to tempt her in the Garden of Eden, he started by first questioning what God had said. In his craftiness he asked, “Did God actually say such and such?” That’s what Satan does. He questions what God says. He did it to Eve in the garden, and he does that to us in our own lives. For example, we read in scripture that God tells us “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” And then, usually amid trials, Satan whispers in our minds that we have been left, forsaken, and FORGOTTEN! He is a liar and a thief. Then Eve exaggerated what God had said (we also often misinterpret what God says to suit our own purposes). The text tells us that Satan appealed to her through: 1) the lust of the flesh, 2) the lust of the eyes, and 3) the pride of life. We read: “When the women SAW that the tree of life was **GOOD FOR FOOD**, and a **DELIGHT TO THE EYES**, and that the tree was **DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE** she took of its fruit and ate it. The sin of man was rooted in REBELLION AGAINST GOD MANIFESTED IN SELF-LOVE.

Paul tells us clearly that we are to live a different kind of life. We are to live lives not centered on self, but one in which we esteem others over self.

³ Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3, NKJV).

Let’s go down this list and contrast it to the way that we should live when we are in love with God instead of in love with ourselves. I want to preface this by saying something about loving self. Paul says, “People will be lovers of self.” Everything else we see in this passage emanates from self. People are eaten up with self. I have heard people say that we have to learn to love ourselves, but frankly I don’t think people need any help in learning to love themselves. People are in love with themselves and their own pleasures. Perhaps a more accurate statement is that we need to learn to love ourselves like God loves us before we can learn to love others. Paul gives us a list of what SELF EXPRESSED IN BEHAVIOR LOOKS LIKE:

Lovers of Money – People crave money because it gives them power and control. Understandably, we all need a certain amount of money to stay fed and clothed, and to keep a roof over our heads. But it is easy to forget that the things that are of the greatest value do not have a price on them. There is no amount of money that can compare to the love of another human being, or just eating a good meal with people we love. No amount of money can compare to fishing in a boat with a grandchild, or having your health and just feeling good. That’s the real stuff. That’s what has value. Paul is careful to tell us that the “love of money is a root of all evil” and that many have been led astray by it. We learned a lot in our study of Proverbs about having the right relationship with wealth. It can get sideways really quick when self loving is involved.

Proud and Arrogant – I’ve put these together because they’re two peas in a pod. Pride in one’s work can be a good thing. But, when it causes us to feel we’ve got a corner on truth and do things better than others, it gets ugly. It is what turned Lucifer into the Devil. Pride puts self above all others. Pride is the full-blown manifestation of the person who sets himself or herself up to be a god. Arrogance seeks to feed that love of self by putting others down. Some people seem to put down everyone around them (usually a poor spouse) in an attempt to feel better about

themselves. This is a sign of spiritual illness and arrogance. We've all met the person that can't stand that someone can do something better than they can. That person is focused on pointing out the faults of others with the desperate hope of self aggrandizement. Arrogance is full blown self-worship. The term narcissism is in vogue at present, but it is just good old fashioned pride and arrogance.

Abusive – Abusive people are controlled by their flesh. They are manipulators. They want to get their way by running over the feelings of others. An abusive spouse is a controller. They are so consumed with themselves that they sometimes seek to control every detail about their spouse's life. They want to control their relationships. They want to control their interests. They want to control their finances. Control is the dead give-away. Control is a flesh habit that works itself out in abuse. When a person is subject to abuse it can cause physical, emotional, or mental damage. The recipient of abuse often ends up depressed and filled with anxiety.

Disobedient to Parents and Ungrateful – I've put these together because kids who are disobedient to their parents (if they are good parents) are kids who are ungrateful. I qualify obedience to "good parents," that so we will understand that we're not talking about obeying wicked parents who have bad intentions. Ungrateful people have no joy in their lives. When adults are disobedient to God and His commands, they too are ungrateful. They have no joy in their lives. Joy ALWAYS is found in gratitude for something. When there is a lack of joy, there is always a lack of gratitude. We must always find something to be thankful for. Scripture tells us this over and over. This is the opposite of having a victim mentality and being perpetually dissatisfied.

Unholy – People that are unholy are contaminated with the world and its ideas. They are not set apart. They are, in fact, wicked. They are fixated on moral wrongdoing.

Heartless – People have no compassion for others. They are indifferent to the needs and hurts of others. They are narcissistic regarding their lack of compassion. These are the kind of people who celebrated the death of Charlie Kirk. These are what heartless people look like.

Unappeasable – Means having the attitude that you never have enough. It is having a thirst for self and pleasure that can't be slaked. It is having a hunger for more and never being satisfied.

Slanderous – A slanderous person can't say enough bad about others. They are always whispering criticism of others. Their focus is on the real and made-up faults of others. This is a classic means of deflection. This is criticizing others for faults which you often have yourself. We see this in politics where one person will accuse another person of exactly what they themselves are guilty of. This is classic self-worship.

Without Self-Control – These are the people that fly off at the handle. They are angry and upset at other people and other situations. They exert control by the threat of blowing up in anger.

Self gives birth to attitudes that are: **brutal, not loving good, treacherous, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure** rather than being lovers of God. **AND THESE TYPE OF PEOPLE CAN APPEAR TO BE GODLY AND YET THEY DENY THE POWER OF GOD.** They deny the power of God in not

allowing Him to change their behavior. Paul is telling Timothy loud and clear that some of these will be believers who **MAY CARRY THE WORD IN THEIR HANDS BUT THEY DO NOT CARRY IT IN THEIR HEARTS.**

Paul then warns us to stay away from these people. They are the kind of people that prey on and capture “weak women.” There are people that profess to be godly but they pick out and choose what a friend of mine in the church calls “wounded birds.” A “wounded bird” is the woman with a troubled past who is torn because she feels the need for a man/partner. Then someone comes along in the church who targets her and brings all sorts of chaos into her life. We’ve had those come through our church. Paul says this is a reality. We should watch out for it.

V. 9 Paul says that these types won’t get far before their conduct is plain to all. They are known by their fruit.

Paul then writes, creating a contrast of a self-centered life with a God-centered life.

All Scripture Is Breathed Out by God

¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:10-17, ESV).

These are some of the most beautiful words in the Bible. Paul is praising Timothy and affirming him. Paul is near the end of his life, and Timothy has followed him faithfully. Timothy has stayed faithful to good teaching, living out the gospel well, and he is patient, loving, and steadfast according to Paul’s example. Paul tells him that suffering and persecution will indeed come. Bad people will get even worse. Then in verses fifteen and sixteen, Paul gives the secret to living a good and godly life. **The secret is in knowing the Word of God and living it out in one’s life.**

Paul tells him that he has been discipled from childhood in the sacred writings which have made him wise, and that he has learned the scriptures. The word of God is key because: *¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV).*

The same writings are available to each and everyone of us. The word “all” dispenses with any argument about chopping up the Bible and only seeing relevance in the New Testament. Paul tells us that “all scripture” is inspired (breathed out) by God. **We must remember that at the**

time Paul wrote this, the Bible consisted of only what we now call the Old Testament. That was the entire Bible for Jesus and His disciples. Verse 15 clearly defines the role of the Bible in our lives. It is profitable for:

Doctrine – This refers to teaching the principles found in the Bible. The Bible tells us how to get saved, and how to live our lives. For example, in Romans 10:9 we are told exactly how to get saved. And in Ephesians 2:8-9 the Bible tells us what it is that exactly saves us. It is God’s grace and not our works. Sound doctrine is the foundation of sound godly living. All that we need to live a godly life is found in the Bible, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, it can be lived out in our lives.

Reproof – This is plain old conviction. Some don’t like the term “convict,” but it is a beautiful function of scripture. The Bible serves as a mirror of sorts showing us our faults and failures. Sometimes our own eyes can’t see the parts of us that are in rebellion to God. The Bible wakes us up and shakes us up, leading us to repentance. I am talking about repentance to salvation as well as repentance to holiness in living. Reproof occurs when you read something in the Bible and your have a stark realization that you’ve lost the plot and need to find your way back home spiritually.

Correction – After we have the realization (conviction) that our thoughts, words, or deeds, are not where they are supposed to be, the Bible gives us instructions as to how to get back on the right path. That’s what this very chapter is doing. It shows, for example, a list of flesh-patterns, and then in these last verses it is telling us how we can use the Bible to repent and get back in the game. It provides instructions on how to find restoration back to God, and how to once again walk in His will. The Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. As God’s Word corrects us, we become more and more like Jesus.

Instruction in Righteousness – This refers to the Bible giving us detailed instructions on how to live a morally righteous and holy life. It tells us how to keep self off the throne and keep God on the throne.

The Bible provides us with everything we need to do every good work that God intends for us to do. We are not to be hearers only but also doers of the word. Commit today to live a life that is focused and guided by God’s Word. God’s Word provides all that a man or a woman needs to be “mature, thoroughly equipped to do every good work” (see 2 Timothy 3:17).

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

