

2 Tim 3:1-9

“A Better World, A Bitter Reality”

If you ask most what they wish for this world I am fairly confident that the majority would answer that the world would be a better place for all people. I have no problem with this answer and even share that sentiment. I am thoroughly convinced that if we truly want the world to be a better place the only hope of this happening is the gospel of Jesus the Christ. But the truth is, all will not surrender to the Lordship of Christ and therefor there will never be a universal pursuit of placing the interests of others above one's own. And considering these facts we must accept that this world, as we know it, will never be all that we hope for or wish it would be, but neither should we be discouraged because we were never promised through faith in God's Son a perfect world or life. As matter of fact, disciples of Jesus have been promised the exact opposite.

John 16:33 “³³ I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (NLT) With these words in mind I want to share three truths communicated by this text.

First truth, things will get worse before they get better. V1-5a “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ²For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.” I am convinced that the Church in many ways has been a buffer against rampant evil in the culture. But as the line that distinguishes the church from the culture

grows thinner, evil grows worse and the evidence of this reality is when such behavior as cataloged by Paul is commonplace among those who profess to hold fast to the name of Christ. In my opinion, there is nothing more detrimental to the life of the faith community and those communities around us than a flat-out rejection of the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus by those claiming to be his disciples. As Paul puts it, “having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power”. The only outcome of such a reality is things get worse before they get better. And to be clear the world we all so dearly want happens in eternity.

Matt 24:3-13 “³ And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? ⁴ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. ⁵ For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. ⁶ And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. ¹⁰ And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. ¹¹ And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³ But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (KJV)

Rev 21:1-4 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no

more.² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. ⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.””

Second truth, the relationships we form matter deeply. V5b “Avoid such people.” Why would Paul instruct Timothy to avoid such people in the church. Well, people have a way of rubbing off on you. We must stop believing we can hang out with anybody, watch and listen to everything, believing it will not have an effect on us. We must take very seriously who we attach ourselves to or place ourselves under! We must guard our hearts and our minds for spiritual warfare happens there and the relationships we form will impact our spiritual vitality. Who and what we watch, and who and what we listen to will shape our hearts and minds. And yes, one bad apple will indeed spoil the bunch. And yes, birds of feather flock together. And yes, if we play with fire we will get burned! Take seriously Paul’s warning here, to avoid such people, or we could very well make things unnecessarily worse for ourselves. The relationships we form matter deeply.

Proverbs 4:23-27 “²³ Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. ²⁴ Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips. ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. ²⁶ Give careful thought to the paths for

your feet and be steadfast in all your ways ²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.” (NIV)

Eph 5:3-8 “³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷ *Therefore do not become partners with them;* ⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” (ESV)

Romans 12:2 “² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewal of your mind*, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (ESV)

Third and final truth, if we fall victim to spiritual deception, it's our own fault. V6-9 “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.” A couple things must be explained here so we do not misinterpret what Paul is saying. First, Jannes and Jambres were the names given to the magicians of Pharaoh mentioned in Exodus 7:10-12. They represent a false message that was ultimately uncovered by the true message of

God given to Moses. These women Paul mention were weak because they were unlearned in the true way of God and yet hungry for knowledge. Thus, they were easily lead astray or deceived by false teachers. Certainly, a result of their context because in Paul's day women were not allowed to be taught as men. Now, here's the point. We do not live in similar circumstances, as least in the United States as it concerns access to correct knowledge about God. We all have access to the true word of God and sound biblical teaching if we are so inclined to read, to listen and to be taught. Thus, there is no excuse for our being deceived as it concerns the things of God, the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. If we fall victim to spiritual deception, it's our own fault and it will cost us dearly in the end.

Romans 16:17-18 ¹⁷“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. ¹⁸For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.” (ESV)

Col 2:8-10 ⁸“Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.” (NLT)

2 Tim 3:12-15 ¹²“Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil people and impostors will flourish. *They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.* ¹⁴But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. ¹⁵You have been taught *the holy Scriptures* from childhood, and

they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.” (NLT)

It is right to want the world to be a better place for all. However, how we go about it will make all the difference for many in eternity. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**