

# OpenTheo

## In Perilous Times



### Message For The Young - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the end of an era and the perilous times we are currently facing in the Christian community. In this warning to young Timothy, he cautions against divisive behavior and lack of discipline within the church. He urges listeners to consult the word of God and avoid the pursuit of pleasure to stay strong during these difficult times.

### Transcript

I would appreciate it if you would turn with me to 2 Timothy. The last quite a few times that I've spoken here we've been taking lessons out of 2 Timothy and I'd like to read the first five verses this morning. Paul said to Timothy, Brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power.

And from such people turn away. I've been looking at this passage for several weeks now partly because I thought I was going to teach on it. Last time I shared from 2 Timothy here I thought we'd get to this passage but we didn't.

I ended up taking just one verse I think the whole time. I thought I was going to go through that one verse quickly and get to this passage. So I was prepared for this passage then.

And I've looked at it quite a bit more since then as well. And I have my doubts that I'd be able to say everything I want to say about it. It's got a lot of material in it.

But I will say what I can in whatever time I have allotted here. I'd like to begin by pointing out what occurs at the end of the passage and we'll go back and look at the earlier parts of the passage in due time. The last line in the passage as we read it in verse 5 is from such people turn away.

Turning away from people is something that Christians, evangelicals don't easily do because it doesn't seem loving to us. If there's somebody in the church who's morally compromised, if there's somebody in the church. And by the way, Paul is certainly

talking about people who apparently are in the church because he says they have a form of godliness.

And to Paul godliness, there's no such thing as godliness outside of Christianity. To Paul godliness and Christianity are basically the same thing. These people have the appearance of being Christians.

They have the outward form of being God centered, God focused. But they deny the essence of what real godliness is. They deny the power of it.

I will say more about that later. But these are people who are within the Christian community, it would appear or will be. Paul says this will take place in the last days.

But we have to remember that the last days to Paul and the other writers of the New Testament was a term that was used differently than modern Christians typically use the term. It is clear that Paul expected Timothy to run into these people. That's why he said, from such turn away.

Now, Paul was not writing this to a church. He's writing to an individual. This is a letter to a man, an individual who was alive when Paul wrote it.

And Paul said to that man, you turn away from these people. So whatever the last days were, he figured Timothy was living in them because Timothy would have occasion to run into these people who were to appear in the last days and to turn away from them. By the way, they have appeared and they haven't disappeared yet in the 2000 years since he since he said this.

I might just point out, and this is certainly not one of the major points I wanted to make, but the term the last days in the scripture or comparable terms, the last hour, the end of the age and terms like that are consistently in the New Testament used to speak of the writers own time. And the writers lived 2000 years ago in Hebrews chapter one, it says, God, who at sundry times and diverse manners. Spoken to our fathers through the prophets has in these last days spoken unto us by his son.

So the writer of Hebrews said in these the last days, God has spoken to us by his son. In first Peter chapter one, I think it's around verse 20. Peter says that Jesus was foreknown from the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last days for us.

John says in first John, beloved, it is the last hour. And as you've heard that antichrist shall come even now, there are many antichrists whereby we know that it is the last hour. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, said this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, what he said in the last days.

I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. That was in the last days that was supposed to happen. Peter said this is that virtually

every writer in the New Testament identified his own times as the last times.

James said you have to the rich people. He says you have heaped up treasures for yourself in the last days. He said the judge stand before the door.

He said it's near now. We have to understand that, though, in popular evangelical Christianity today, the last days usually is used to mean the time nearing the end of the world and nearing the second coming of Christ. That's how that's the popular way in which the term is used today.

That's not apparently what they meant in the Bible when they use the term. Paul said in first Corinthians 10 and verse 11, he said, all these things that happened, he's talking about the Israelites who came out of Egypt. He says these things happen to them as examples for us and as a warning to us upon whom the end of the ages has come.

And the writer of Hebrews in chapter nine also referred to his times as the end of the ages. So these terms that sound very eschatological to us, they sound like, you know, end of the world, second coming kind of expressions. They weren't talking about the second coming.

They were talking about the end of one age, the last days of one era, which were to be followed by a new era. I personally believe the new era was and is our own. The era we're in and the last days of which they spoke were the last days of the era that all of them had been born in, which was the Jewish age.

They were all born under the era of the old covenant. That age came to a very graphic ending in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed. The Jews were dispersed and nothing of that old order remained.

By the way, I should point out to you, there does remain today nothing of the old order. There is no Judaism today. That is nothing resembling biblical Judaism.

There are Jews who meet in synagogues and they do things, but what they do is what the Talmud describes for them to do. They do not do what the book of Exodus describes to do because they can't. There's no way they can.

The Jewish religion of the Old Testament was a Jewish. It was a religion of animal sacrifices and temple focused worship. That's what Judaism is in the Bible.

There's no temple. There's no sacrifice. The Jews have not had biblical Judaism since the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

What they have instead is what would rightly be called Talmudism, which was the traditions of the elders, which Jesus was always in conflict with, which eventually were codified in the Talmud. That is not a statement of opinion. That's simply a statement of

fact.

You can confirm that with any Jewish people you wish to talk to. But the fact is, Judaism came to an end in 70 AD. The old order vanished.

The writer of Hebrews was living just before that happened. And he said when he quoted from Jeremiah 31, where Jeremiah said, I make a new covenant. God says, I'll make a new covenant.

And the writer of Hebrews in chapter eight and verse 13 says, now, in speaking of a new covenant, he's made the first one old, obsolete. The new King James says. And he says now that which is obsolete, he said, is ready to vanish away, meaning the old covenant.

When the writer of Hebrews was writing, he said, it's just about to vanish away. And it did when Titus and the Roman armies came in and destroyed Jerusalem, the temple burned down. Not one stone was left standing on another, as Jesus predicted, and the Jews were dispersed.

So during the time and all that happened after the New Testament was written, but not much later. And the writers of the New Testament had this awareness from their understanding of scripture and from Jesus having opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures and from Jesus own statement that this generation would not pass till all these things be fulfilled. They understood that they were in that last generation of the order that had been inaugurated 1400 years earlier in Moses and that a new order that would be free from all the trappings of the old order was coming.

And they were in the last days in that transition period. It's interesting thing. This is a side.

It's not related to what I wanted to talk about today, but I won't charge extra for this. When the Jews came out of Egypt, God entered into a new covenant with them, but it was 40 years until they actually entered the promised land and began to realize the benefits of the new covenant free from that past generation that was idolatrous and had come out of Egypt. It's interesting that Jesus established a new covenant in the upper room with his disciples when they took the first communion.

But it was 40 years, a generation before the old order was swept away in 70 AD and that the new covenant came into its own as an unrivaled situation. Because before that, the Jews who became Christians from 30 AD to 70 AD, the Jews who lived in Jerusalem had an identity crisis. They weren't sure if they were Jews or not.

You read in the book of Acts how that they still worshipped at the temple. They still offered animal sacrifices. They still Nazarite vows.

I mean, they didn't know what they were because they've been raised Jewish, but now

they were supposed to be Christians and they kept trappings of both until the temple was gone. Then there was only Christianity, just like when they came out of Egypt. There was some Egypt in them still.

Golden calves still appearing once in a while. You know, things from Egypt were still with them. It's all they had known.

But that generation passed and then they came into the promised land and there was just Israel. And so God, in forming the old and the new covenant, both seem to permit there to be or require there to be a generation of transition from the time the covenant was made at Mount Sinai until they came in the land, from the time the covenant was made at the cross till the old order was swept away. And I believe that every passage in the New Testament that speaks of the last days, the end of the age or whatever, can be seen best in that particular light, that they were living at the end of that age and they knew it.

They were quite aware of it. Jesus had made that clear. Now, that's very that's the least important thing I have to say today.

But what I wanted to point out is Paul said these people are going to appear in the last days. Well, Paul used that term elsewhere and the other writers in the New Testament did. And it's clear he expected Timothy to be around to see these people appear.

And he told him, turn away from those people when you see them. Now, let's talk about turning away from people in the church. This is not a popular subject because we say, well, we're supposed to be loving to everybody.

We're not supposed to condemn. We're not supposed to judge. But Paul tells Timothy, there will be some people who profess to be godly, who have the outward pretense and form and structure of a religious life.

But they inside, they don't believe what we believe and their lives really show it. They may have the religion in place, but their morality and their attitudes show that they are not true Christians and from these people turn away. Now, how do you turn away from people who are in the church? You come to church on Sunday morning.

If those people are there, how do you turn away from them? You know, we have here an unusual group because we don't have any official leadership. And that's on purpose. At this point, we suppose you've been here a long time, know the background.

There's there been times since this fellowship started that there was consideration. Should there be appointed leaders? Is it time? Is it not time? At this point, the brethren felt like it was not time. And so we still have a fellowship.

And frankly, I hope we do for some time to come. That does not have any official

appointed leaders. But whenever I've talked to people who want to start home churches or or new churches bringing up and they're trying to avoid the politics of church and trying to avoid quickly appointing leaders and so forth.

The question always comes up. Well, what do you do about church discipline? Right, isn't that the first thing that comes to a lot of people's minds and say, well, if you don't have any leaders. You don't have any appointed leaders.

What do you do about church discipline? Well, you can do what Paul said. You can do what the Bible says you can. Everyone can act like a Christian.

And and if and when and when Paul says, you see these people turn away from them, it doesn't take a church official to tell you to do that. Paul told you to do that. I've never I have not seen a problem yet in the year and a half that I've been in this fellowship.

And I know it's been around since before I was here. I've not really seen a problem yet arise with church discipline because because, you know, there's a family dynamic here, like in a family. If there's a black sheep in the family who brings disgrace to the family or whatever, you know, they're kind of shunned by the family.

Does that mean they're not loved? Well, I don't know. I mean, they might be or they might not be. Depends on the individuals.

But we can love people that we have to shun. We can. Paul says to shun these people.

We can love people while shunning them, but even if we're having a hard time loving them, it is done not always just out of love for them, but out of love for the body itself. Is it loving to remove a cancerous tumor from a person's body? Well, it's loving to the person's loving to the body. It may not be regarded as the most merciful thing you could do to the tumor, but the tumor is not as great a concern as the body is.

And when there are persons infecting the body of Christ with wickedness. Then they become a danger to the health of the body. And the Bible says in many places to remove them, to turn from them, to not fellowship with them.

Let me give you several scriptures so you don't think that this is the only one. Far from it. The first relevant to this actually comes from Jesus himself in Matthew 18.

By the way, I don't know of any case. I didn't choose this topic because of some case I feel we need to address here. I'm just going through Second Timothy and it happened to come up today.

So I don't I tell you quite honestly, I don't know of anyone in this fellowship that needs to be disciplined. OK, I'm just this is just for setting biblical foundations in our thinking. The time may come.

In Matthew 18, 15, Jesus said, Moreover, if your brother sins against you, there's a private matter between you and him. Go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you've gained your brother.

No one else has to hear about it. But if he will not hear you, take with you one or two more still keeping it relatively private. You don't spread it all over through gossip.

Try to try to win him over without causing a big public stir. So that's about by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, well, you can't keep it so private anymore.

He's been warned twice. You tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church.

That is, if the church as a community says, listen, we do not approve of your behavior, you need to repent of this and he won't listen, he won't repent. Well, Jesus said, then let him be to you like a heathen. And a tax collector.

That is where this whole idea began that Paul's talking about, where somebody will not repent of sin, somebody who is in the church, their brother. That's the starting versus if your brother sends you, they are a brother, but they are in sin. They've been confronted at several levels.

They will not repent. They're not acting like a brother. Real Christians want to repent when they sin.

And if you give them a couple of chances and they have no interest in doing so, then you don't know if they're really saved or not. But God says you can't read their heart, but you have to treat them as if they're not. You have to assume they're not until they begin to act like they are again.

And so Jesus is the one who said that this this judgment should be made under certain cases. Notice how gentle it is. However, it starts out very private.

Give him a chance to repent privately. If you know, if he repents, then no one else has to know. Even if he's stubborn, that might just bring a couple more, and if he repents, no one else has to know.

But if he doesn't want to repent when he's been confronted that way, then other people have to know why. Because Christians will be corrupted by him. Many of us have been in churches that did not practice what Jesus or Paul taught on this and have allowed unrepentant sinners to continue fellowship in the church.

It's extremely common, for example, for churches to have men who have divorced their wives without grounds. And have remarried and they're and they're living in an

adulterous situation, according to the definition Jesus gave of such things, and they're in the church in good standing. I was in a church once where one of the deacons was in the Masons and was a drunkard.

The pastor knew it, but wouldn't address it. The man had been there too long. He's one of the more influential men in the church.

And this is very, very common for people to be living in sin. And the leaders of the church know it, but they dare not say anything. I was in a church once where the woman who led the choir was having an affair with a married Sunday school teacher.

Everyone seemed to know about it. When I came to the church and one of the first things people warned me about is look out for her. She's, you know, preys on the men in the ministry here.

I said, well, why is she here? You know, the pastor went on vacation, so they let me preach. So I preached on the message to the church that had Jezebel prophesying there. But she steered clear of me.

But the fact is that Jesus is the one who says you've got to keep the church clean. Peter said in first Peter, he said, you've got to judgment has to begin at the house of God. And there's a sense in which we need to do that ourselves.

In first Corinthians, Paul addressed a case where the church was tolerating blatant sin among some of its members. A man and his father's wife. You know the story.

It's almost too blatant. Gross to to read in detail, but Paul addresses that situation and he says in first Corinthians five, nine through 13. I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

Yet, I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the covetous or extortioners or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. You're not required to leave your job if there's somebody who's covetous that works there with you. Somebody who's in an immoral relationship.

If they're not a Christian, you can't leave the world. You're not expected to try. Paul's not making an appeal for monasticism, going off into cloistering, hiding from the corruption of the world.

He says, listen, you can't leave the world. You're not even supposed to. There's going to be a lot of that out in the world and you can't avoid it.

That is, you can't avoid the people who do it entirely and don't feel like you have an obligation to avoid them entirely. But he says yet. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone who's named a brother.



That's someone who claims to be a Christian who is sexually immoral or covetous. How about that one or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner? An extortioner is someone who threatens to do something to you if you don't give them their way. That's an extortion.

Extortion is where you get your way by making threats if people don't comply. People who do that. But he says not even to eat with such a person.

You don't not not only do you not let them come to your communion table, you don't you don't eat at their table or them at yours at home. You don't eat with them. That's too close a fellowship to have with some.

Now, notice he says only this is only true of those who claim to be brothers. You can eat at your neighbor's house if they're not a Christian and they may be living in sin. You can go over there to evangelize them.

But but you cannot fellowship with someone who claims to be a Christian and does these things. Same thing. Paul said to me, turn away from such people.

Says, for he says in verse 12, for what have I to do with judging those who are outside the church? Do you not judge those who are inside, but those who are outside God judges, therefore put away from yourselves that evil person. Now, Paul indicates that the church has no obligation to go judging those who are outside the church. Makes a little difficult for me to know how I would get very much involved in politics if I thought about doing so, because in politics, you're supposed you're trying to judge the pagans.

I mean, the population of the country, which are mostly pagans. Who am I to judge them? God judges them. I'm supposed to judge the church.

And what one of the biggest things that I think is a reproach and where the church has, as usual, turned everything on its head vis a vis the scriptures. I mean, the scriptures do something you can count on at the modern church. We do just the opposite.

The modern church goes out there and points a finger at the homosexual community who aren't in the church. Talks about how dirty their lifestyle is and how bad they are and how we got to clean that and pass laws against that and so forth. And yet we got the same thing in the church.

We don't clean that. Well, but they may be good tithers. And the Bible says we need to clean the church out.

It's not our place to clean the world out. Remember the parable of wheat and the tares? That's not about what's in the church. People get that all wrong.

People say, well, we're not supposed to clean the church out because Jesus said there's

wheat and tares growing together in the field until Jesus comes. We just have to wait for him to come and take it away. He didn't say the field is the church.

The field is the world. The parable is saying that we're going to live in a world that's full of false. You know, people, they're not really God's children, they're the children of the devil, the parable says, and the people who are God's children are going to live in that world with him.

And we're not supposed to go out and remove them from the world. It's not our place to clean the field out of tares. Jesus will take care of that when he comes.

The world God judges, but the church we are to judge. We are we are accountable to each other. And we do have to hold each other accountable in terms of moral living and so forth.

In second Thessalonians, chapter three, Paul says something along the same lines. This time he's talking about people who won't work. But are in the church and they still want to eat.

Most people still want to eat. There are some who won't work. And Paul says of them in first Thessalonians three, verse six, but we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received of us.

And in verse it says in verse 14, and if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed yet. Do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him. That means warn him as a brother.

The person may yet be a brother and you may and you hope that he is. You hope that he may respond to admonition and warning, but you cannot keep company with him. Why? Because he is not submitted to Christ.

His lifestyle is disorderly, not submitted to the apostolic authority and so forth of Paul's writings. So what do you do? You avoid them. You keep no company with them.

The same is true of people who are divisive. We could have a lot of fun defining what constitutes divisive because Jesus caused divisions. You read the Gospel of John about three times.

It says there was a division caused by him. There was a division over him. In fact, Paul said in first Corinthians, chapter 11, he says there must needs be divisions among you.

So those who are approved may be manifest. However, that doesn't mean that we are to be divisive people. People may divide.

If you are simply presenting the truth and people don't like the truth, there will be, you

know, there'll be fighting over that. Those who want it, those who don't will divide over it. But what Paul refers to twice, once in Titus, chapter three, and once in Romans 16, as a divisive person is somebody who's coming in and undermining the teachings of Paul, undermining the scripture, I mean, teachings of Paul to us are scripture.

They're undermining the scriptural authority. In Romans 16, for example, verses 17 and 18, Paul says, Now I urge you, this is Romans 16, 17. Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you've learned, that is from Paul and other Christian leaders, and avoid them.

For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and smooth word by smooth words and flattering speech. They deceive the hearts of the simple minded. Avoid them, people who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine that was taught by Paul and the others over in Titus.

There's a last scripture on this point I'll make, but in Titus, chapter three. Verses 10 and 11, Paul says, Reject a divisive man. After the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self condemned.

Now, a divisive man is a person who's trying to cause division among brethren. It says in Proverbs, chapter six, verses 16 through 19, there are seven, six things the Lord hates. He hates seven are an abomination to him.

And the last one mentioned is he that causes who sows discord among brethren, a person who goes and tries to divide the family, tries to campaign for their issue against maybe some other one in the church, who's maybe the pastor or something and trying to tear the body apart is a divisive person. In fact, that is what the word heretic means. What I just read in Titus, the King James says he is a heretic.

The New King James is a divisive person because the word in the Greek means a divisive person. But the word heretic meant somebody who seeks to divide and disunify the body of Christ. Now, let me just say this.

I don't believe that the person who is dividing the body of Christ is the person who teaches what the Bible says or even what he truly believes the Bible says, even if he's wrong. I mean, for example, people have said, well, the issue of tongues divides the body of Christ. We shouldn't talk about that because some people are for it, some are against it.

And some people say, well, you know, the Bible teaches tongues is okay. Others say, no, the Bible teaches tongues isn't okay. And therefore, we don't want to talk about that because it's a divisive issue.

Well, people don't divide over the issue of tongues. People do the same thing is said about things like eternal security or eschatology and different issues like that. Well, we

don't want to be divisive by bringing up different opinions here.

Well, that's not what causes division. What causes division is lack of love. I've been in many fellowships where some of the women believe they should wear a head covering.

Some don't. Some of the people believe in eternal security. Some don't.

Some people believe the rapture is before the tribulation. Some believe it's after. Some believe it's the middle.

Some believe there's no tribulation at all. I've been in I've been in churches where people spoke in tongues and other people didn't speak in tongues. And some of them believed it was, you know, the manifestation of the spirit.

Others believe it was manifestation of flesh or whatever. But because of love, because of the brotherhood, the church was not divided. Remember when Abraham and Lot had problems because there was strife over the grazing land and Abraham's herdsmen were striving with Lot's herdsmen and so forth.

And Abraham, this is in Genesis 13, Abraham called Lot aside and said, listen, let there be no strife between me and you, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brethren, he said. That was his reason, because we're brethren. Now, he could have said to Lot, now, Lot, listen, I was mighty nice to you in bringing you here.

You were an orphan after all, and and you didn't have anywhere to go. And I took you with me because I didn't have a kid of my own. And and, you know, God gave me all this land.

Now you're acting like you own half of it. In fact, you're striving over the part that my herdsmen are occupying. Why don't you just go back to where you came from, Lot? Because God gave me all this land.

Well, Abraham didn't do that. He was a he was a man who believed in unity of the family. He said, we're brethren.

Let's not strive over this. I'll take whichever portion you want. I'll take whatever you leave behind.

That's a very Christlike way to make unity where there's strife. But you see, a divisive person is not a person who has a different opinion than I have. Or then you have a person is someone who wants to divide the body of Christ over his opinion.

A person who is divisive is a person who thinks that, well, like like Paul said to the elders of Ephesus in Acts, Chapter 20, he said, there's going to arise even among yourselves, among the elders, wolves who do not spare the flock and who draw them in after themselves. What divides is ego. What divides is when a teacher wants people to believe

his way and is not satisfied until people do.

What doesn't divide is for us to say, listen, Jesus is Lord. You think so, too? So do I. Guess we're brethren. And I follow after these things with all those who call on the Lord out of pure heart.

It doesn't really matter too much what they believe on some issues that are still worth still the, you know, the jury's out on some issues. It's OK. The jury can be out for a long time on a lot of issues and we can still follow Jesus together.

And a divisive person is one who doesn't want that to happen, doesn't want us to follow Jesus together until everyone comes over to their side. And there are people who I haven't met them here. I don't I don't know if they're here.

I don't think so. Maybe they'll show up. But I've been in churches where they were.

I've certainly seen them. And I've seen people kicked out of a church because they didn't believe in the same view of the millennium that someone else had. Doesn't make sense to me.

Something else matters more than Jesus in those cases, but not for us. Now. The Bible, therefore, says that there is something, an obligation on Christians to turn away from certain people.

This does not have to be done because of some ecclesiastical bull. I don't mean that in a bad way. It's a Catholic term, a papal bull that says, OK, all heretics who who believe that you're saved by grace alone, let it be anathema.

And and anyone like that is out of the church. And in former times, they'd burn them at the stake for that. But the.

You don't need an ecclesiastical organization to live this out. If there is sin in the camp and if some of the brothers know of it and they address it personally to the person and the person won't repent and they go through the procedure, Jesus said, and the still won't repent. It can be brought to the church without any official leaders.

You don't need a pastor or elders to do that. This can be brought to the attention of the church. And it's not like it's not like some ecclesiastical order has to be there to make sure everyone disfellowships this person.

It's just warn the family, just warn the family to stay away from that person. And you know what? When people have said to me, well, if you don't have official leadership in the church, how are you going to exercise church discipline? I say, well, most churches I know do have official leadership and they don't know how to exercise church discipline. And even the ones who want to, which isn't very many of them.

But even the churches I've been at that want to exercise church discipline, the elders get up and they say, OK, we hate to say this, but you've got to avoid this person because he's, you know, whatever's happening in his life. And we've confronted him. He won't repent.

The people don't obey. The people still want to find out the other guy's side of the story. People want to go over to his house to eat and find out.

And so he gets his little group over there. It doesn't having official leadership doesn't do it. What does is everyone wanting to obey what the scripture says.

Everyone really following Jesus is what gets this done. And so Paul says to Timothy, turn away from people like this. Well, like what? Who are these people? Now, Paul gives a really long list.

This is one of his longer lists. There's 18 descriptive words he gives here. I'm not going to go into an extensive thing about this, but I do want to run through a few of these so that we can understand some of the words that are not real clearly understood just from the translations that we have.

He says, first of all, in the last days, perilous times will come. The word that word perilous is found only in the Greek word that Paul uses. There is found in only one other place in the Bible.

It's in Matthew eight in the description of the the demonized man who lived in the tomb. He was said to be perilous, dangerous, fierce. The days that Paul is describing would be days that are dangerous days.

And maybe for the same reasons that the demon possessed guy was dangerous because he was demonized. You know, the days before the fall of Jerusalem were demonized days. Do you know that? You know, that that that interesting little paragraph that Jesus gave near the end of Matthew, chapter 12, where he says, when a demon, when an evil spirit goes out of a man, it goes through waterless places, seeking rest and finding none.

It says, I will return to the house from which I came. And he comes back and he finds it swept and garnished and empty. And he brings he moves back in and brings seven more with him.

Now, on the surface, that's not like Jesus just giving us a little lesson in demonology and what demons do. But then he he makes his point after he says all he says, so shall it be with this evil, indulgent generation. He's talking about his generation, the Jews of his time.

Who had the advantage of him coming in and cleaning house for them, but they're not receiving him. And so the demons are going to come back sevenfold to them. And if you

read Josephus account, which very few Christians bother to do, it's very lengthy.

But if you read what Josephus wrote about how the Jews were behaving in the siege in Jerusalem in the Rome, those those years when the Romans were there and before Jerusalem fell. There's no explanation for the irrationality of their behavior, except say hosts of demons must have been released upon them. It's like the bottomless pit of an open and out came these locusts and afflicted them for those five and a half months that they were under siege.

And that, I believe. Is probably why those last days were so perilous, but you know what Paul didn't say only those days will be perilous. He was warning Timothy that there were times coming in his lifetime that were going to be far worse than what they'd experienced yet.

But he didn't say that they'd end, you know, in 70 AD. We have times that are more and times are less perilous ever since. There are times where there is more and times where there are less of these problems in the church.

I think we're living in a time where there's more than average. I think we're living in days that are somewhat perilous in the same ways. And one of the most interesting things that Paul defines about these days is that men, first of all, be lovers of themselves.

I don't suppose there's ever been a time when men weren't lovers of themselves. I mean, we can't say, oh, well, these must be the last days because men are really lovers of themselves. Well, men have always been lovers of themselves.

But one thing I've noticed is this is one of the few times in history I'm aware of that self-love has been regarded as a virtue. And as a mark of mental health and the lack of self-love is considered to be something to get over. You don't have enough self-esteem.

You don't have enough self-love. And, you know, people who don't have enough self-esteem need to go see a counselor. They need to go get bolstered.

They need to get in love with themselves more. Now, the Bible doesn't anywhere say that people should love themselves, but it does say they should love. It says we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves, but that doesn't say we should love ourselves.

It just tells us we do and that's since we do we should love our neighbors as much as we already love ourselves. That's all that means. When Paul talks about what love is in 1 Corinthians 13 5, he says, love seeketh not its own.

Love does not seek its own. Paul said in Philippians chapter 2, he says, let every man not think only on his own interest, but on his neighbor's interest. He said, esteeming others better than yourself, he said.

In Romans, I think it's 12:10 or 11, Paul says, in honor preferring one another to yourself. The Bible never exhorts us to think well of ourselves, never exhorts us to love ourselves. And we live in an age where the Bible is so far from being the informer of our values and of our culture that the culture doesn't know this and they think that you need to love yourself and that's because once you don't have God as the center of your life as the focus of your love, you need another God and there's none so close at hand as yourself and there's none that is more gratifying to worship than yourself.

And so men in perilous times are lovers themselves. Now, I don't think that Paul's time, Timothy's time, our time are at all the only times that men have been lovers themselves, but it is that when people love themselves that the times become very perilous. And when self-love is esteemed as a virtue and even the church teaches it and the Christian books and the Christian bookstores on self-help have chapters, whole books even, on how to love yourself.

Then I'd say it's perilous. Now, the peril in this case is not the peril that I'm going to walk down the street and get mugged or murdered. There are those perils in some of the cities.

I don't feel that peril here in this valley that much or most of the places I've lived, but the peril that Paul speaks of is not likely to mean mortal peril or physical peril, but rather spiritual peril. There is spiritual danger here. We live at a time where if you do what the Bible says and what Jesus says, even the churches are going to tell you you're mentally off-balance.

That you need maybe see a therapist, you know, because you don't love yourself. You're denying yourself. You've got to look out for yourself.

Well, the Bible doesn't say you need to look out for yourself. The Bible says you need to focus on doing what God wants and God will look after you. But the perilous times are characterized, first of all, by men being lovers themselves.

And really, once that piece is in place in the culture, all the others kind of grow out as branches of that, because you don't have any... I don't know if you'd ever have any other sins if there wasn't love of self at the root. The second thing is lovers of money. And we know that that's at the root of all kinds of evil, too, according to Paul and in his first epistle to the same recipient.

1st Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10. He actually uses the noun form of this same verb. Lovers of money here is not used much elsewhere in Scripture.

But the noun form is found in 1st Timothy 6, 10, where it says the love of money is the root of all evil or of all kinds of evil. So we've got some of the foundation vices here mentioned first. And guess what? They are the ones most characteristic of our own



culture now.

Again, I'm not trying to make some kind of eschatological assessment of our times by this. I'm just saying, if this is what makes times perilous, then our souls are in peril. It's not time to be monkeying around, playing around a little bit with sin, hanging out with people who claim to be Christians and are doing these things.

It's too perilous. It's too dangerous. It's too contagious.

Love of money. Now, we saw a moment ago in 1st Corinthians 5, Paul said, if anyone calls himself a brother in his covetous... What is covetousness? It's the love of money. It's what covetousness is.

He says, don't even eat with that person. A person who loves money. Don't eat with them if they call themselves a Christian.

Now, that is so radical. Because how do you know if someone loves money or not? Well, one thing... You can tell what someone loves by, A, where their heart is. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

If a person's always thinking about their money, always, you know, grieved at the, you know, if the stock market goes down, they've lost a bundle there, and it ruins their whole day, maybe their whole life. You know, if something expensive of theirs gets damaged, gets stolen, is destroyed in fire, if their inner peace is interrupted by that, then they must have loved that thing more than lovers of God. Because God... Remember what it says in Hebrews chapter 13.

He can let your life be without covetousness, he says, and be content with such things as you have because... How can I be content with such things I have? Because he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. If everything was taken from you, could you be content and say, well, hey, they're not gonna take Jesus from me. You can... you can't take away the Lord.

And that is what the writer of Hebrews says, that is what the normal Christian life is. But is that the average Christian life? Remember, there's difference between normal and average. Normal defines norms, the way things are supposed to be when they're right.

Average is just whatever is. And the normal Christian life is to be free from covetousness. Now, that doesn't mean free from possessions necessarily.

In the Bible you'll read of Christians, godly Christians, who had possessions. Some of them may have had a lot of possessions, but the Bible also warns it's very difficult to have possessions and not to have them have you. Because the rich young ruler, when he was told to sell what he has, give to the poor and come follow Jesus, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

Now, if he hadn't had great possessions, that implies maybe he would have responded differently. A lot of people say, well, you know, not everyone's told to do what the rich young ruler did. Not everyone's told to sell what they haven't given before.

Well, that's true. That's true. I don't believe everyone is.

But is anyone going to get to heaven easier than he would have? In other words, if Jesus said to you, sell what you have, give to the poor, would you find it easier than he did? Now, it's so many people I just say, well, if an angel of God came down and told me, you know, to sell my house and give it to the poor, if Jesus appeared to me in a dream and said, get rid of all this stuff, I'd do it. I'd do it right away. I'm sure you would.

Would you do anything comparable to that just from reading the scripture? That's God talking to. And I don't find God saying you have to sell your house. But I do find God saying that he owns your possessions and you'd better not ever begin to think that you do.

If you begin to think they're yours, they're your treasure. And you know what Jesus said happens when it's your treasure? Your heart is there. Where your treasure is, your heart is.

It's not like it might be in danger of being. It is. Where your treasure is, your heart is.

Therefore, you better make sure that it isn't your treasure that's on earth here. You might have possessions. But the early Christians said that they didn't claim that anything they possessed was their own.

They escaped. They got through it. They got through the eye of the needle.

Many people who call themselves Christians are still struggling at the far end. I should say the close end of the eye of the needle. They haven't gotten through it and they won't.

And that's not just a minor thing. It's listed along with the other vices for which if a person who claims to be a Christian has these vices, they're not, you shouldn't fellowship with them. They're dangerous.

Now, you might say, well, I couldn't fellowship with hardly anyone if I followed these instructions. I don't think that's true. I think there are Christians, even Christians who have great possessions, who don't have great possessions, as possessing all things yet possessing nothing.

And who actually, you know, it is the Lord's. But I do believe also that in America in general, in the churches in general, you'll find a huge, huge block of the membership of most churches that are covetous and love money. And you know, if someone got up

there and told them that they ought to give more than 10 percent to anything, you know, of God's work, they'd want to fire that preacher real quick.

And that's why the preachers won't say it. Because they love money, too. What else is here? Boasters and proud.

These things are similar, but they're different. The word boaster, the Greek word that's used for boaster here, actually originally was a word that was used in ancient Greek before the time of the New Testament to refer to like a quack doctor, a charlatan, a flimflam man, a man who came with his elixir, said he'd cure everything. He'd brag, he'd make false claims about his product and he'd take advantage of people that way.

Well, by the time the New Testament was written, the Greek language, this particular word had come into a different usage. It just referred to anyone who made flamboyant claims for himself that weren't true. And that's what this word means, a braggart, a person who struts and pretends that he's got more going for him than he does.

And then proud, or I don't know what some of the other translations say, the word proud here actually means despising others, looking down on others and thinking oneself too good for them. The word blasphemers. Now, we know what blasphemy is, right? It's cursing God or using the Lord's name in vain.

Actually, that's not what the word means primarily. In the Greek *blasphemia*, obviously the root of our English word blasphemy is a generic word for insulting people or God. You'll find that Stephen in the book of Acts, chapter 6, was accused of blaspheming Moses and blaspheming the temple.

Well, they're not God, but blasphemy simply means to insult or to rail against. In fact, I think that maybe the King James has railers there. I'm not sure.

The word is blasphemy in the Greek, but it can mean one who rails or loves to insult anyone, God or man. Disobedient to parents. That's pretty self-explanatory.

I won't go into that in any detail, but I did find out that the word disobedient there used, I think, one other place in the New Testament, or two other places. This particular Greek word for disobedient means unwilling to be persuaded. Children will be unwilling to be persuaded by their parents.

Sounds like it envisages a case where the parents and the children are kind of arguing over something, and the children simply will not bow to the parents' experience and wisdom and greater knowledge of the subject. They're not willing to be persuaded by their parents. Unthankful.

That's self-explanatory. Without gratitude. It's related to disobedient to parents.

Anyone who is disobedient to their parents and doesn't have the proper gratitude to their parents is going to be, generally speaking, unthankful to anyone. Unholy. Now, unholy sounds kind of generic, but actually, I found out that this word in the Greek literally means someone who does not recognize even the most basic forms of decency.

The word wicked is used as a synonym in the Strong's Concordance, but Barclay said that this is a person who wouldn't bury the dead, or a man who married his mother would be a person like this. Someone who neglects or rejects the basic decency. It's not just people who are disobedient to the laws, but they are people who lack all sense of decency.

They're shameless. There's a lot of people in our society. I think we have a more shameless society than we did 30 years ago.

People don't seem to have any sense that what they're doing is wrong, even the basic things that even heathens knew better than to do. In the past, people don't sense any, you know, decency at all. Unloving.

The King James says, without natural affection. The word is *astorgoi* from the word *storge*, one of the Greek words for love. It's specifically, unlike the word *phileo* and *agape*, *storge* is used of family love, and it's more often than not used of the love between a parent and a child.

A child and a parent love. *Storge*. *Astorge* is the negative of that.

These people don't have natural affection like parents and children have to each other. When people can abandon their children, flush them down toilets, and leave them in dumpsters, or just abort them, that is *astorge*. Lacking in natural affection.

Unloving is a little not quite strong enough a translation. Unforgiving. Now, I want to say something about this because the King James says, *truce breakers*, and that's a very different concept than unforgiving.

*Truce breakers* are people who break their promises or their truces. Unforgiving is a different story. Well, the reason there's this difference is because the Greek word here actually means people without a truce.

People without, literally, without a libation. A libation was offered when people made a truce. These are people who don't have a truce.

Now, that either means that when they make truces, they don't keep them. They don't honor their truces. Or it may mean that they refuse to enter into a truce with someone with whom they're alienated.

They will not be reconciled. Irreconcilable is another translation that sometimes use.

They will not forgive.

They will not reconcile. I know, actually, some people come to mind immediately, that that fits. Nothing that I know, everything I've tried, I cannot reconcile with these people, and I don't know why.

I mean, you do everything. You humble yourself. You apologize.

You reach out to them, but there are some people who simply don't want to be reconciled with anyone. They love to hold a grudge. Slanderers, I just point out the word slanderers is the Greek word diabolos.

Same word for devil. The word devil means slanderer. These people are devils.

They're slanderers, false accusers, the King James says, I think. Without self-control, King James, I think, says incontinent. Many people, when they reach their last days, are incontinent, but that's not what he's talking about.

He's talking about not able to control their behavior. It's a phenomenon not only in the last days. Brutal means fierce or savage.

Scholars say the word here that Paul uses is more fitting to a wild beast than man, generally speaking. Despisers of good, I think the King James says despisers of good men or something like that. The word good is generic.

It could be good men or good things, just people who don't like good. They like evil. They love evil and not good.

Traitors. We know what a traitor is. Headstrong is a word that many don't understand correctly and the translation doesn't help much.

The Greek word for headstrong means falling forward, meaning they're swept along almost by their lust so much that their actions precede thought. That they're reckless. They do things recklessly without thinking about it and thought doesn't motivate or govern their actions.

That's what that word headstrong actually means. Headstrong is not a very good translation. Haughty or puffed up in the King James.

Barclay said that word literally means swell-headed, like a swelled head. Someone who's inflated with the sense of their own importance. And then the last quality there is lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. I'm not going to preach on that. It speaks for itself.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. King James says more than. Most of the new translations agree that rather than is what's in view.

You can't love God and love your pleasure too. You can't serve God and man and you can't serve the flesh and serve the spirit at the same time. These two are contrary to one another.

Pleasure cannot be your objective. Now, let me tell you something. There is pleasure in knowing God.

In His right hand are pleasures forevermore, but you can't even serve Him because of your love of pleasure. If you say, well, I think it'd be more pleasurable to be in the presence of God than to be out, you know, running a prostitution ring. Well, maybe so.

But you need to love God, not pleasure. Even good pleasure is not a substitute for God Himself. Even seeking the pleasure that comes from being religious, seeking the pleasure that comes from being among good people, religious people, the pleasure that comes from feeling a clean conscience.

Those are good things, but we have to love God for who He is, not because the pleasure we get from being Christians. And certainly not as much. I mean, not we can't dispense with the love of God in order to love, you know, pleasures that He despises.

God is not against pleasure, but pleasure makes a very common idol and that is what our culture is after, pleasure. You know, entertainment is probably our principal form of pleasure in our society. People used to sometimes find pleasure in just conversing on the front porch with the neighbors or whatever like that, and some still do, but I mean those kind of things are pretty pretty, you know, unimpressive pleasures these days.

Nowadays you can go do video games and have the pleasure of blowing aliens away and watching their blood splatter all over the screen or you can tear the arms off of martial arts opponents or whatever you want to do, take their heads too if you want. And that's pleasure, man. And I'll tell you that gets the adrenaline going, but eventually that's not enough because pleasure is a harsh master.

Because the things that were pleasurable at first get ordinary. You know, you have to up the dosage, right? The pleasure that a person got from so much of this drug eventually is too ordinary, need a little more, a lot more, need a stronger drug. And the pursuit of pleasure is a pursuit that will never let a person rest.

It will, you know, you'll find pleasure and then you'll say, well, I don't want to just have that much pleasure. I want more than that. And even the thing that brought me that pleasure doesn't bring me the same amount of pleasure as it used to.

So I need to go further and go further. Those who love and pursue pleasure will be on a

treadmill. That will never, it's like having a carrot on a stick out there.

You'll never really find satisfaction if you're seeking pleasure. Now, if you seek God and love God, you will find pleasures forevermore. They're at His right hand, in His presence, His fullness of joy.

But you don't find that by pursuing pleasure. You find it by making God who you love. Now, the reason I went through all those things is because there's two reasons and I'll close with this.

It's running late, but we got started pretty late here. One is Paul tells us when we see people like this who are professing to be godly and aren't, that we should turn away from them. So we need to know what these things are.

What's he talking about? What kind of behavior are we talking about here? So I can obey this command. So I can turn away from people who do those things. I need to know these, what these things are.

What are these behaviors? But there's another reason you know, is that so that I don't be one of those people from whom others are obliged to turn away. You see, there is on the face of it an obligation here for me to turn from people who do those things. But there's another more fundamental obligations presupposed is that I have an obligation not to be one of those people that others must turn away from.

And why must they turn away? Why do I not want to be one of those people? Because I don't want people to turn away from me? No. It's not a question of having them turn away from me as the ultimate punishment. The question is why does God want people to turn away from me? Because I'm dangerous.

If I'm one of these people who loves myself, loves money, arrogant, boasters and so forth, if I'm one of those people, then I'm dangerous. And times that they spend with me will be perilous times for them. And that means that I would in that case be working against God.

Chris mentioned the scripture earlier and so did Steve in the communion service about how God resists the proud. At least three of the things listed here are about pride. Boasters, haughty, puffed up.

God resists those people. Why? Because they're dangerous. As a surgeon resists and comes against the cancerous tumor in an otherwise healthy body, they've got to be removed.

They're dangerous. And we've got to understand that we're not able to play with fire in perilous times like this. You don't go over and play knife throwing with the demon-possessed man in the tombs.

He's too dangerous. You have to stay away from him like all the intelligent people did until Jesus came and delivered him. Now there is such thing as not avoiding them completely for the sake of reaching them.

And Paul did say in that second Thessalonians passage, don't count them as an enemy, but admonish them as a brother. That word admonish means to warn. There is, you know, it's one thing to fellowship with people.

It's another thing to use any contact you have with them as an opportunity to try to warn them and try to bring them back. Don't feel that if you know someone like this and you're trying to reach out to them and trying to tell them what they should be doing different and you're confronting them, don't feel that you're violating the commandment that you shouldn't fellowship with these people. Fellowship is more where you accept them on their terms as, you know, peers in the Lord and and you just kind of enjoy their fellowship and receive from them and they from you and there's no condemnation going on.

But these ones that you're not to fellowship with, your contact with them should be redemptive contact. It should be corrective. It should be remedial.

That's what Paul says. Warn them, admonish them. And so, I mean, if we know Christians like that, we need to talk to them.

But we need to do what Jude said. Jude said, some save with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. When you find somebody has fallen to to some sin, it may not be a scandalous sin, but covetousness is not a scandalous sin in our society.

The pastor could be the most covetous person and no one will think to discipline him for it. The television evangelist, he can live in total covetousness and people still send him their money. It's not a scandal in our society, but it's a scandal in the sight of God, just as if the man was living in homosexual relationships.

It's a scandal. It's dangerous. And the less scandalous it is in the eyes of our society, the more dangerous it is to us because our guard is down.

Well, this person's a good Christian. Yeah, it seems a little greedy, but hey, who isn't, you know? That's okay in our society. You see, the greater danger is when you don't take seriously some of the sins that the culture doesn't take seriously, because you're much more susceptible to them then.

So Paul warns Timothy, this series on 2 Timothy is kind of a warning to the young, but I didn't mention that because this particular passage doesn't have any particular reference to the young at all. It just is a warning to the church. It's possible to be too all-embracing.



People who are rejecting Christ in their actions. With their mouth, they profess to know God, Titus. Paul said to Titus in chapter 1, but in their works, they deny him.

And those people need to be avoided. You don't need some ecclesiastical organization to tell you to excommunicate that person. Just as a family member, you need to do what the Bible says to do.

Avoid people like that. That's what Paul told Timothy to do. And Timothy was a strong Christian, but he still was told to avoid them.

Don't think you're stronger than him. Let's pray. Father, we, uh, every time we look into your word, we see that which has the potential to correct us and to and to contribute to our greater safety and security.

If we would obey. We need to be discerning, Father. We need to know when we are with somebody that we should not be with.

When we are accepting of somebody's profession of Christianity, whose profession we should not accept. Not on face value. Father, this is difficult because we've all been conditioned.

It's wrong to judge people. But you make judgments and you've told us to make righteous judgments, too. And I pray, Father, that you'll help us to not make unrighteous judgments, not to judge according to appearances, but righteously.

And I pray perhaps even more than that, that we will not succumb to the sins of our culture and of our society because they are acceptable. And because the conscience of the society has been lost, I pray that ours will be honed as sharp as it can be. I pray that we will be always consulting your word and not our sentiments, not the sentiments of the church around us, not the sentiments of the culture, but that we'll be consulting your word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword and can discern between the thoughts and intents of the heart.

I pray, Father, that you will make us people who are serious about holiness, serious about obedience, serious about Jesus. Not just serious, but people who love Jesus so much that it's appalling to us to see him dishonored. Not just serious because we're religiously indignant, but because our heart aches for the pain that Jesus experiences when those who name the name of Christ do not depart from iniquity.

I pray that you'd work these things in our hearts so that we could live a holy life and a loving life and do the things that please you in the manner that pleases you and that draws others to you and makes you winsome to them. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.