

# DEAR TIMOTHY...

## AN 8 WEEK SERIES IN THE BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY

### Connect group questions

#### 2 Timothy 3:1-9 – Dear Timothy... there will be terrible times

1. Why have some people felt that when we see terrible things happen in the world, we are getting closer to the time of Jesus' return? By contrast, what does the term 'last days' refer to in v1?

#### WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

If you haven't done so, read 2 Timothy 3:1-9

2. Why did Mark argue that the people described in these verses, are actually people *inside* the church and not the world at large? How is this possible?
3. What does a person look like, who has a **form** of godliness, but denies its **power**? (Recall some of the examples Mark gave.)
4. While we are welcome to God's family "Just as I am", what would we normally expect to see in a person's life once they come, and how will this happen?

#### GENTLY INSTRUCT; OR AVOID?

Read 2 Timothy 2:25-26

5. What is the difference between those we are to 'gently instruct' and those we are to 'avoid'?
6. The Royal Commission has confronted us with the shocking reality of what people inside the church can be like. What does this passage tell us about such people? What if such a person was to genuinely repent? Should we still avoid them?
7. Why are we to avoid such people?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. How does this passage shed light on the 2 Tim 3 passage?

#### WHAT'S THE TAKE HOME?

Who am I to make that call?

9. Jesus tells us that we will know people by their fruit (Matthew 7:15-20). Those who are described here, will be obvious to us all. It won't be just an individual's call to make. Why do you think some people in the church, use their position for evil?

What if there is anyone like this here?

10. Mark said that people exhibiting this behaviour will often do one of two things. Recall what he suggested and discuss.

What's the up side to all this?

11. Although there will be terrible times, Mark also encouraged us to see there will also be glorious times. Choose some of the following passages and see the flip side - when people submit to the Holy Spirit's transforming work: Ephesians 4:1-3, Ephesians 4:25-27, Ephesians 4:29, Ephesians 4:31-32, Galatians 5:22-23, Colossians 3:12-14. What strikes you about reading these?
12. If someone confided in you, that they thought this passage (or some aspects of it), may be talking about them, what advice would you have for them?

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*Oh Lord, grant that in your kindness, you would protect our church from terrible times and terrible people... that among us here, by the riches of your grace, we would see more and more glorious times... marked by the fruit of the Spirit and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

**Date:** 2 June 2019  
**Services:** 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian  
**Series:** Dear Timothy  
**Title:** ... there will be terrible times  
**Passage:** 2 Timothy 3:1-9  
**Outline:**

1. **Who are these people?**
  2. **Gently instruct; or avoid?**
  3. **What's the take home?**
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## INTRODUCTION

- *But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days*
- this is one of those sermons I'd rather not give
- I'd rather skip through to next week's passage about the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation and how all Scripture is God-breathed...
- But we **mustn't** skip over those parts of the Bible we'd like to avoid //
- But we need to be clear from the start, about what Paul refers to as the 'last days' - v1
- I remember mum and dad saying 40 years ago - in response to something terrible around the world or moral decline in our own nation 'well, I think we must be in the last days' ...
- That is, it was their understanding that society would dramatically **decline** in the final days before Jesus' **return**... so every time something **bad** happened .... you'd hear this phrase... 'oh, we must be in the **last days**'
- But from the **Bible's** understanding - **theologically** - we understand the '**last days**' to be **ALL** the days between Jesus' **ascension** and **return**...
- so the days Paul is describing to Timothy - are both **his** days and **our** days - **1<sup>st</sup>** century and **21<sup>st</sup>** century - and **all** the centuries **in-between**. /
- And he says - there will be **terrible times**... in and among all these last days. /
- But I have a **problem**... **two** problems in fact
- First, **who are these people?** Paul says there will be terrible **times** - but these sound like terrible **people** don't they??
- in fact there are **19** ways in which they are **terrible**... so who are they?
- Here's my **other** problem: at the end of **last** week's passage you'll remember, Timothy was told that he was to **gently instruct** those who were **opposed** to him...
- ...but **here** we read at the end of v5 - *having nothing to do with such people*...
- So - **who** is it that we are to gently **instruct** and who is it that we are to **avoid**?
- So let's go exploring together this morning along these lines:
  1. **Who are these people?**
  2. **Gently instruct, or avoid?**  
And then ask:
  3. **What's the take home?**
- First:

## 1. WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

- I don't really want to read the list again...
- v2 - *lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control*... on and one it goes...
- And you know what our **first** inclination is...?

- We think – ‘how **accurate** – that is **just** what the world is like **today**...!’
- ...or ‘that describes **young** people today to a **tee**!’
- So we immediately think such a list is describing the **world at large**...
- **Because** we observe the world today and we note with great sadness that people do **not** love God – but they have (at least) three **other** loves – they love **self**, they love **money** and they love **pleasure**... and they’ll do **anything** to **satisfy** those three loves...!
- But here’s the **shock** //
- Paul is not talking about the **world**. / He’s not talking about people out **there**.
- He’s talking about the **church**... people **in** the **church**.
- Why do I say **that**?
- Two things:
- **First** – have a look with me at v5 – Paul says these people have a *form of godliness, but deny its power*.
- ...now – you’d never describe people of the **world** – **unbelievers** – that way!
- A ‘**form of godliness**’ – yes – they make **look** the part
- They may take part in church – **singing** – **praying** – **giving** – they **say** the **words** – they take part in the **rituals** – if they are clergy – they look the part in their all their fancy **robes**... an outward **form of godliness** – **but** /// they **deny** the power of the **Gospel** to **challenge** them, **change** them... to make a **difference** in their **lives**.
- They are in the **church** on Sunday – but well and truly of the **world**, come **Monday**.
- And the second reason I argue that these are people **inside** the church not **outside**... comes in the second paragraph
- ...look with me at v7 – *they are always learning, but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth*... that’s a description of certain believers...
- I know of many who are supposedly very learned – working on their next **degree** or next **book** – but they actually **deny** most of the fundament **truths** of the **Bible**!!
- So **who** are we talking about?
- People who by **outward appearance** are members of the **church** – they look like **Christians** – but by their **behaviour** – actually demonstrate that they are anything **but** Christian.
- Lovers of **self**... **money**... and **pleasure**, rather than lovers of **God**. //
- they prey on the most **vulnerable**, for their own **advantage**...
- v6 – *they worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women*...
- I know at least **two** Anglican clergy in the last two years who have been stood down because of adultery with people in their **parishes**...
- This is **just** the **kind** of **people** Paul is **talking** about...
- And the royal **commission** has tragically brought to light both lay and clergy who have used their position to gain control over the most **vulnerable** – **young children**....
- **That’s** who Paul is talking about
- I know of **treasurers** who have ripped off their congregations’ money...
- and **clergy** who have **bullied** their **staff**
- and lay **people** who have bullied their **clergy**...
- A **form of godliness**... they **look** the **part** – but they don’t want to be **changed** by the **gospel**
- Always **learning** – turning up to **Bible study** – or working away at their **masters** – while **all** the time – working on the woman **next door**... or that child in the **choir**...

- What a **sad, shocking** picture this is... //
- Why was Paul **telling** young Timothy this?
- So he wouldn't be naïve or uninformed in leadership... so he wouldn't be blind to the reality about people...
- ...so he would be **ready** and know how to **deal** with these situations... //
- And why are **we** being told this through the pages of God's word...?
- ...so **we** won't be **naïve** and **uninformed**...
- So we have a **realistic picture** of the **church**...
- So when clergy are put away for **paedophilia** and **treasurers** for **fraud**... and ministers stood **down** for **adultery**... we can say - **well - yes** - this is the church God himself **told us about**... //
- ...the "trouble" with church you see, is that **all** are **welcome**...
- **Tax-collectors** and **adulterers** and **prostitutes** and **other** notorious **sinner**s and not-so-notorious sinners - **all welcome**...!
- There is a **no standard of entry** test before you can **join**...
- "**Just as I am**..." said the words of the old hymn...
- And it's not that we are to regard the person next to us now with some sort of **suspicion** or **question mark** until they **prove** themselves... /
- ...because for the **most** part we come "just as I am" but we don't **stay** that way...
- for the **most** part - we will **NOT** deny the power of godliness, and God by his Holy Spirit will be at work to **change** us by his **Word** - as we'll see in next week's passage that the whole aim of the Scriptures is to **teach** us and **rebuke** us and **correct** us and **train** us in **righteousness**...
- ...it will **prepare** us for **every good work**...!
- It is just that in **reality**, we must be awake to the fact that some will come 'just as I am' and intend to **stay** 'just as I am'...
- ...in fact some churches will **PREACH** - "stay just as you are!!" // **No change required**...
- So love of **self, money** and **pleasure**... will either go **unchallenged**... or if it is **challenged** - the challenge will go **unheard**... or if it is **heard** - it will be **ignored**. //
- So - what are to **do** when we come across the small **minority** of **people** who wish to stay 'just as I am?' /
- Paul says - / Avoid them! /
- Which bring us to this little problem I raised:

## 2. GENTLY INSTRUCT; OR AVOID?

- Well - which is to be?
- Have a look at v25 of the previous chapter - *opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth.*
- And now in 3:5 - *have nothing to do with such people...* and v8 - *They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.*
- On the **one hand** - gentle instruction in the hope of **repentance**...
- On the **other**... **avoid** them.... They are **rejected** //
- The **difference** is between false **teaching** (quarrelling about words) and false **living**
- There is the hope in the case of the false teachers of ch 2, that by their **repentance** they may come to a knowledge of the **truth**
- There is **not** the same hope in the case of those who live as lovers of **pleasure** rather than lovers of

God... v7 – they are *never able* to come to a knowledge of the truth.

- and – v8 *as far as the faith is concerned they are rejected*... and v9 *their folly will be clear to everyone*.
- Friends, for those who have been **abused** or **ripped off** or **bullied** by someone at church... here is a **clear** message that those **behind** such terrible actions, are **not acceptable to God**, and therefore, not to be **accepted** by God's **people**... they are **rejected** by God and are to be **avoided** by God's people...
- That may be **small comfort** to you today if you've been **hurt** or **damaged** by people in the church...
- But I hope it may be **some!** ///
- And yes there are **other** passages where people like this are to be put **out** of the fellowship of God's people so they might see the serious nature of their situation, **repent** and be **restored**... /
- ...but that is **not** what is being said here...
- No here: it is to **avoid** such people... they have been **rejected**...
- Why **avoid** them?
- (a) it will make abundantly clear, that such behaviour **is** unacceptable – **our** rejection will reflect the reality of **God's** rejection... and...
- (b) it will **protect** you from being led **astray** by them... so **their** terrible behaviour won't be some enticement to you to **join** them... //
- Now let's be **clear** – this doesn't mean to cut off our association with similar-behaved **UNbelievers**...
- Paul makes this clear... in 2 Corinthians 5 - he's explicit that he in **NO WAY** means to keep your distance from sexually immoral **unbelievers** – // if **that** were the case he says, you would have to **leave this world**...
- ...no – he **specifically** means – anyone who **claims** to be a **brother** or **sister** but is **sexually immoral**... (and he adds or an *idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler* – lest we think it is just about sex!)
- So it's avoiding people who **claim** to be Christian // but their **lives** clearly tell a different **story**... //
- This is **hard** isn't it?
- Do you know anyone in the church **claiming** to be Christian, but their **life** or **lifestyle** tells a different **story?** – they fit in other words – to the pattern of those described **here?**
- You need to **avoid** them... ///
- Now that might raise more questions than it answers, so let's look finally at:

### 3. WHAT'S THE TAKE HOME?

- **three** things I wrestled with:
  - a. **who am I to make that call?**
    - ...aren't we told not to judge?
    - Surely this insists on a making a judgement call!
    - Well, remember Jesus says, by their **fruit**, you will know them. Jesus' instruction about 'do not judge', is more about judging with a superior attitude...
    - But here's the thing – anyone described in this passage will be **obvious**...
    - If someone loves **themselves** more than God, their **money** more than God, **pleasure** more than God – **everyone** will know... it won't just be up to **you**...
  - b. **What if there is anyone like this here?**
    - ...well – as I just said – it will be **obvious** to everyone...
    - I've known a few people in church like this... and I tell you what has happened over time... one of two things – they've either **stopped coming** or (praise God) they've **repented**.

- They've stopped coming because we preach the Bible and they haven't wanted to **hear** the truth of the Bible because I've **challenged** them... so they've **quit**.
- I've not had to make a time to see someone and say 'officially, we're all avoiding' you... though I would if I thought that was **needed!**
- So they've either stopped **coming**, **OR** the Holy Spirit has **convicted** them as the Bible has been **preached** and they've woken up to see the **reality** of their **situation** and they've **repented** and put their life in **order**... /
- And if this **morning** – if you can see yourself in this description... maybe no one else can see it **yet** – maybe it hasn't come **out** – but if you can see **yourself** here – lover of **self** – **money** – **pleasure** before you love **God** – then I urge you today, to repent!! Don't let it get to the point where **everyone knows** and we have to **avoid you!**
- Repent **now** and by Jesus' precious **death** and **resurrection**, you can be **forgiven** and **reconciled to God**... **today!!!**... // and never be **rejected** by **him** or **avoided** by **us!**

### c. what's the up side to all this?

- The **up** side is the **flip** side
- Because yes it is **true** that there will be **terrible times**...
- It is also true, that there will be **glorious times!**
- There will be **glorious times** when God's people *live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* See Ephesians 4:1-3
- There will be **glorious times** when God's people *put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, .... when 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.* Ephesians 4:25-27
- And **wondrous days** when God's people do not let *any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* Ephesians 4:29
- And when they 31 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.* Ephesians 4:31-32
- There will be glorious times when the fruit of the Spirit is clearly evident in the lives of believers - *love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.* (Gal 5:22-23)
- Or **glorious times** when there is not *even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving*
- Glorious times when *as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity..* Colossians 3:12-14
- Are you getting the **idea?**
- **Glorious, wonderful times**, rejoicing in the Holy Spirit's **power** who is changing us from **one** degree of **glory**, to **another!**
- The power of God's Spirit to transform and change us is **very great**... and although there will be **some** in the church who **resist** the power of **godliness** and don't **want** to know the **truth**, // the **greater reality** is that though we **come** just as we are, we are **inwardly** being **renewed, day by day!**

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- Oh Lord, grant that in your kindness, you would protect our church from terrible **times** and terrible **people**... that among us here, by the riches of your **grace**, we would see more and more **glorious** times... marked by the **fruit** of the Spirit and the transforming **power** of the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord!