**How To Study the Bible**

**Pastoral Epistles**

**2 Timothy 3:1-9**

**If you were to describe the world today to someone who lived 100 years ago what would you tell them?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Why did Paul find it necessary to begin with the emphatic command, “Mark this”?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

After all, the existence of active opposition to the gospel was evident. Paul himself had been arrested, chained and imprisoned because of his own loyalty to it (1:11, 12; 2:9). Everybody in Asia had repudiated him, as Timothy was well aware (1:15). And earlier in the letter the apostle has urged his young friend not to be ashamed of the gospel, but to take his share of suffering as Christ’s good soldier; has reminded him that he must endure with Christ if he hopes one day to reign with him; and has warned him that behind the ‘word-battles’, ‘godless chatter’ and ‘stupid and senseless controversies’ spread by false teachers there lurks the evil figure of the devil himself (1:8; 2:3, 11–12, 14, 16, 23, 26). So why does the apostle enjoin Timothy to understand what he already knows? Surely because he wants to emphasize that opposition to the truth is not a passing situation, but a permanent characteristic of the age. Perhaps he fears that Timothy will be over-optimistic, hoping that if he lies low for a while, the storm will pass. But Paul gives him no such hope. We too should ‘understand this’, and be quite clear about the perils and troubles which will beset us if we stand firm in the truth of the gospel.

*John R. W. Stott, Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 81–82.*

**What did he mean by “the Last Days”. Consider these texts before you answer: Acts 2:14-17; Hebrews 1:1-2**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Next, Paul refers to ‘the last days’. It may seem natural to apply this term to a future epoch, to the days immediately preceding the end when Christ returns. But biblical usage will not allow us to do this. For it is the conviction of the New Testament authors that the new age (promised in the Old Testament) arrived with Jesus Christ, and that therefore with his coming the old age had begun to pass away and the last days had dawned. Thus Peter on the Day of Pentecost quoted Joel’s prophecy that ‘in the last days’ God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, and declared that this prophecy had now been fulfilled. ‘This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel,’ he said. In other words, ‘the last days’ to which the prophecy referred had come (Acts 2:14–17). Similarly, the Letter to the Hebrews begins with an assertion that the God who had spoken of old to the fathers through the prophets had ‘in these last days’ spoken to us through his Son (1:1, 2). This being so, we are living in the last days. They were ushered in by Jesus Christ, God’s Son.

What follows in 2 Timothy 3, therefore, is a description of the present, not the future. Paul depicts the whole period elapsing between the first and second comings of Christ. ‘Under the last days he includes the universal condition of the Christian Church.’ This not only follows from the way in which the expression ‘the last days’ is used in the New Testament. It is also plain from the fact that what Paul gives Timothy here is not predictions about some future epoch which he will not himself live to see, but instructions relating to his present ministry, including (for example) the command to ‘avoid’ certain people (5). Timothy is already living in ‘the last days’ to which Paul is referring. And so are we. They may get worse in the future (13), but even now the times are bad and perilous.

John R. W. Stott, Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 82–83.

**Why did he say there would be “terrible times”? Look up some other translations to seek clarification.**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

In these last days, Paul adds, ‘there will come times of stress’. What Timothy is to understand about the last days is not that they are uniformly, continuously evil, but that they will include ‘perilous seasons’ (av). Church history confirms that this has been so. As the vessel of the Christian church put out to sea, it was not to expect a smooth untroubled passage; it has been buffeted by storms and tempests and even hurricanes.

These seasons Paul denotes as ‘times of stress’. The Greek adjective *chalepos* means basically ‘hard’ or ‘difficult’, and implies either ‘hard to bear’ (for example, in the case of physical or mental pain) or ‘hard to deal with, violent, dangerous’ (ag), ‘menacing’.1 The word was used in classical Greek both of dangerous wild animals and of the raging sea. Its only other New Testament occurrence is in the story of the two Gadarene demoniacs who were as savage and untamed as wild beasts and whom Matthew describes as ‘so *fierce* (*chalepos*) that no one could pass that way’ (Mt. 8:28). This gives us an idea of the kind of seasons which the church must expect in the last days. They will be both painful and perilous, hard to endure and hard to cope with.[[1]](#footnote-2)

**4 Things to ponder before we move on.**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Paul goes on immediately to tell us why this is so: *For men will be* … It is important to grasp that it is *men* who are responsible for the menacing seasons which the church has to bear, fallen men, evil men, men whose nature is perverted, whose behavior is self-centered and godless, whose mind is hostile to God and his law (*cf*. Rom. 8:7), and who spread evil, heresy and dead religion in the church.

Before we study in detail Paul’s characterization of these men, we need to absorb his words of introduction. First, we are living in the last days, he says; Christ brought them with him when he came. Secondly, these days will include seasons of peril and stress. Thirdly, they will be the result of the activities of bad men. Fourthly, we are to understand this, to be quite clear about it, and so to be prepared.[[2]](#footnote-3)

**Make a list of who these “men” will be. (2-9)**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
6. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
7. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
8. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
9. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
10. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
11. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
12. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
13. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
14. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
15. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
16. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
17. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
18. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
19. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
20. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
21. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
22. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
23. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
24. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
25. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Which one(s) stand out to you and why?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**What is the effect such men have on the church?**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**What does Paul mean when he says, “they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

So Paul rejects them as men who were ‘corrupt’ in their ‘mind’, despite their claim to *gnōsis* (knowledge), and ‘counterfeit’ (*adokimoi*, ‘tried and found wanting’) as to their ‘faith’. Moreover he is confident that such men ‘will not get very far’. They may themselves ‘go on from bad to worse’ (13). Their false teaching may also temporarily spread and ‘eat its way like gangrene’ (2:17). But its success will be limited and transient. How could Paul be so sure? Because ‘their folly will be plain to all, as was (or ‘came to be’ *egeneto*, an aorist) that of those two men’, Jannes and Jambres.

We sometimes get distressed in our day—rightly and understandably—by the false teachers who oppose the truth and trouble the church, especially by the sly and slippery methods of backdoor religious traders. But we need have no fear, even if a few weak people may be taken in, even if falsehood becomes fashionable. For there is something patently spurious about heresy, and something self-evidently true about the truth. Error may spread and be popular for a time. But it ‘will not get very far’. In the end it is bound to be exposed, and the truth is sure to be vindicated. This is a clear lesson of church history. Numerous heresies have arisen, and some have seemed likely to triumph. But today they are largely of antiquarian interest. God has preserved his truth in the church.

Having reached the end of the first paragraph of chapter 3, it should now be plain to us what these dangerous seasons are which occur spasmodically in ‘the last days’ in which we live, and how they arise. It is because in that part of God’s field (the world) in which God has sown wheat, the devil has also sown weeds. Changing the image, the devil has his ‘fifth column’, his secret agents, actually inside the church. As the Church of England’s *Article XXVI* puts it: ‘in the visible Church the evil (is) ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the Ministration of the Word and Sacraments …’ Yes, inside the church, within the visible society of professing believers, there are men of immoral character and conduct, of purely external religiosity, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith. They are lovers of self, money and pleasure rather than lovers of God and their fellows. They retain the form of religion but deny its power. They oppose the truth and seek to win the weak to their pernicious errors. Morally, religiously and intellectually they are perverse. It is a remarkably apt portrayal of the so-called ‘permissive society’, which genially tolerates every conceivable deviation from Christian standards of righteousness and truth, and whose ethos has crept into the church.

But Timothy is not to catch this infection, nor be carried away by this flood-tide, but to stand out boldly against the prevailing fashion.[[3]](#footnote-4)

1. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus76ti2?ref=Bible.2Ti3.1&off=3234&ctx=e+bad+and+perilous.%0a~In+these+last+days%2c+), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus76ti2?ref=Bible.2Ti3.1&off=4433&ctx=+hard+to+cope+with.%0a~Paul+goes+on+immedia), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. John R. W. Stott, [*Guard the Gospel the Message of 2 Timothy*](https://ref.ly/logosres/bstus76ti2?ref=Bible.2Ti3.6-9&off=4554&ctx=sing+and+rejecting.%0a~So+Paul+rejects+them), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 90–92. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)