God wants us to worship Him. He doesn't need us, for He couldn't be a self-sufficient God and need anything or anybody, but He wants us. When Adam sinned, it was not He who cried, "God, where art Thou?" It was God who cried, "Adam, where art thou?"
A.W. Tozer

Prayer Study # 500
2ND TIMOTHY 3
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia 31069

2 Timothy 3 Amplified Bible (AMP)
DIFFICULT TIMES WILL COME

3 *But understand this, that in the last days dangerous times [of great stress and trouble] will come [difficult days that will be hard to bear].*

We have spoken here of the Last Days, the End of the Age, and the Day of the Lord, the Time of the End, and the Age to Come. There is much dispute concerning some of these phrases, and we don't have time to analyze each of these phrases, but I do want to address again the Last Days:

> The Last Days refers to the final end of time of the Church on earth. In some sense, the Last Days includes the entire period of time between the first and the second comings of Christ. From the very day our Lord rose from the dead, these were the last days. Certainly we are now in the Last Days, but in addition we are living at the end of the Age or the final days of the Last Days. During these days that we now live, there will be recurrent cycles of distress. We are experiencing these times right now. They are days when people long for

peace but are beset with anxiety about the future. In the closing parts of chapter 3 and chapter 4 of 2nd Timothy, Paul shows Timothy the twofold way out of these snares of the enemy. We are to (1) be patient in suffering and (2) be persistent in truth. He tells Timothy to preach the Word, be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction.

There will be signs of the time during these days that will give evidence that we are indeed living in the Last Days, so, although scripture makes it perfectly clear that NO ONE can tell you when Jesus is coming back-only the Father God knows-, you can know the season by observing the signs of the time.

Signs of the Times

Some of the "Signs of the Times" concerning the End of the Age were prophesied thousands of years ago. This is not an exhaustive list but a few examples.

1. People will run to and fro (Daniel 12:4).
2. The Spirit will be outpoured on all flesh (Joel 2:28).
3. There will be universal apostasy (2nd Thessalonians 2:1-4).
4. The Gospel will be watered down with preachers preaching the doctrines of men rather than those of God (Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7, Colossians 2:2, Hebrews 13:9, 1st Timothy 4:1).
5. False prophets and false christs will arise and deceive many (Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:24).
6. Good will be called evil, and evil will be called good (Isaiah 5:20).
7. The Gospel will be preached to all nations (Matthew 24:14 and Revelations 14:6-7).
8. Worldly knowledge will increase (Daniel 12:4).
9. Israel has been restored (1948) as a political state (Deuteronomy 28:64 & 30:3; Jeremiah 29:14 & 20:3; Isaiah 43:5-6; Ezekiel 36:24; Amos 9:14-15).
10. Earthquakes, floods, famines, plagues, diseases will come, such as the world has never seen (Matthew 24, Luke 21).
11. Wars will increase to a level where war is practically in every land and there will be no peace (Matthew 24 and Luke 21).

12. There will be an increase in wickedness, murder and crime and a parallel increase in the belief in the occult (Matthew 24:9, Mark 13:9).
13. People will not believe the signs of the times. Even some Christians scoff at the 2nd Coming of Jesus in this generation (2nd Peter 3:3-4, Matthew 16:1-4).
14. Christians will be increasingly persecuted (Matthew 24:9, Mark 13:9).
15. There will be unusual phenomenon which the Bible refers to as Signs and Wonders in the heavens (Mark 13:25).
16. Sin will abound and the love of many shall grow cold (Matthew 24:12).
17. The Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world. (***And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come***-Matthew 24:14).
18. The Lord God will use His people, especially the Remnant Company, which is sold out to Him, to make His enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1).
19. Perilous or difficult times will come. (*You may as well know this too, Timothy, that in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to parents, ungrateful to them and thoroughly bad. They will be hardheaded and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel and sneer at those who try to be good. They will betray their friends; they will be hotheaded, puffed up with pride, and prefer good times to worshiping God. They will go to church, yes, but they won't really believe anything they hear. Don't be taken in by people like that* (2nd Timothy3:1-5-Living Bible).
20. The days will be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot (Luke 17:26-32).

As I understand it, the term Last Days and Day of the Lord are not synonymous. The Day of the Lord will occur, however, at the end of the Last Days. It will not be one day but a period of time marked by horrific events and catastrophic happenings on the earth

as the Lord intervenes in the affairs of man, bringing judgment in an unprecedented way. Most Pentecostals and Charismatics believe this will be the time of the Great Tribulation. Furthermore, they believe that the Church will be raptured before the Day of the Lord and thus escape the horrors of this time.

In Revelation 1 John has an apocalyptic vision of the end times. He says that he has this vision on the Lord's Day. Does this mean he had the vision on Sunday? All the first century Jewish and Gentile believers referred to Sunday as the Lord's Day, whereas the non-Christian Jews spoke of the Sabbath as their holy day, which was on Saturday. The Christians met on Sunday because that is the day that the Lord rose up from the grave.

Or is John speaking of the apocalyptic term, Day of the Lord, which the context seems to indicate.

At any rate Paul tells Timothy that the Last Days will be very dangerous times. The Greek word, used here and translated either dangerous, difficult or perilous, is chalepos. It is the word used in Matthew 8:28 to describe the two scary demoniacs [In Luke's rendering of this historical event in the country of the Gadarenes there is only one demoniac mentioned (Luke 8). In Matthew 8, two demon possessed men are mentioned.] They met Jesus among the tombs. They were violent and dangerous or chalepos. The Roman Plutarch used the word to describe an ugly wound, and astrologers used the word to describe a dangerous and threatening conjunction of the heavenly bodies.

Paul is saying here that in the Last Days there will be great danger. The world will try to destroy the Christian Church. This will be a horrible time of evil before the Father sends the Son to destroy this evil permanently. If you are a Christian in Syria or Iraq, you probably believe that we are in that time now.

I don't know what will happen to America, but I do believe that we are under judgment, and I believe that it will become increasingly evident that we are at least approaching this time, if not already in the beginnings of it.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLESS SOCIETY

2 *For people will be lovers of self [narcissistic, self-focused], lovers of money [impelled by greed], boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy and profane,* ***3*** *[and they will be] unloving [devoid of natural human affection, calloused and inhumane], irreconcilable, malicious gossips, devoid of self-control [intemperate, immoral], brutal, haters of good,* ***4*** *traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of [sensual] pleasure rather than lovers of God,* ***5*** *holding to a form of [outward] godliness (religion), although they have denied its power [for their conduct nullifies their claim of faith]. Avoid such people and keep far away from them.*

I have long thought that this description describes the modern world we live in. Let's look at it in the Living Bible translation:

2 For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them, and thoroughly bad. 3 They will be hardheaded and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think nothing of immorality. They will be rough and cruel,

and sneer at those who try to be good.
4 They will betray their friends; they will be hotheaded, puffed up with pride, and prefer good times to worshiping God.
5 They will go to church, yes, but they won't really believe anything they hear. Don't be taken in by people like that.

There are nineteen words or phrases used to describe the people of the Last Days:

a. **Lovers of Self:** Barclay says, "Lovers of self is the basic sin from which all others flow. The moment anyone makes self-will the center of life, divine and human relationships are destroyed, and obedience to God and charity to other people both become impossible. The essence of Christianity is not the enthronement but the obliteration of self." This is the "It's all about Me" attitude.
b. **Lovers of Money:** Timothy was in Ephesus, which was called "the treasure house of the ancient world." There was in that day and is in our day a strong emphasis on gaining money.
c. **Boastful People:** People are turned off by braggarts and know-it-alls. We see this quality in many places in our world, such as in the entertainment and sports

industries, but especially so in our politicians.

d. Prideful and Arrogant People: This is a dangerous quality because scripture speaks so much concerning pride. In James 4:6, 1st Peter 5:5, and Proverbs 3:34, we are told that God resists the prideful but receives the humble. Barclay says of this trait, "…the sin of the person who is arrogant is in the heart. The arrogant person might even seem to be humble; but deep down there is contempt for everyone else. People like that nourish an all-consuming, all-pervading pride, and in their hearts there is a little altar where they bow down before their own images of self."

e. Revilers or Railers. These are those who are always poking their noses in everyone's business. They also are masters of insult.

f. Those Disobedient to Parents: In the ancient world, even up until recent times, obedience to parents was very important. The Greeks took away all rights of a man who struck his parents. To the Romans, to strike a father was as bad as murder. To the Jews honor for father and mother was part of the law, high up on the list of the Ten Commandments. Again I quote

Barclay: "It is the sign of a supremely decadent civilization when youth loses all respect for age and fails to recognize the unpayable debt and the basic duty it owes to those who gave it life."

g. Ungrateful People: J. Vernon McGee observes, Many people receive kindness from others without even thinking of thanking them. And they accept everything from God without ever returning thanks to Him." I myself believe that lack of gratitude is one of the characteristics of this generation and a sin that does not please the Lord.

h. Unholy and Profane People: The Greek word used here is *anosios*. *Anosios* does not mean that people will break the written laws, but they will offend others in society by breaking the unwritten laws. They will be unethical, but not illegal. To the Greeks, for example, it was *anosios* to refuse to bury the dead or for a brother to marry a sister or a son a mother.

i. People who are Unloving or Without Natural Affection: One reason the Holy Spirit chose Greek for the New Testament was it has such precise words. For example, we say love when we mean love our mother, love our dog, love our car, love our possessions, etc. For the Greeks,

there were four specific words for love. The first, *eros***,** is not used in the Bible. It denotes sexual love but in the sense of being totally self-centered with no concern for the partner. *Phileo* is brotherly love. *Agape* is God's love (and you would do well to research what all *agape* includes). But the kind of love being referenced here is the love of family or *storgos.* Paul is using *astorgos* here, which means the opposite of *storgos.* He is saying here that in the Last Days, children will not have love for parents or parents for children. People will be so self-focused that even the closest ties will mean nothing to them. This word also sometimes refers to abnormal relationships, such as the love found in homosexual relationships.

j. **Irreconcilable and Unforgiving Truce breakers.** People who refuse to get along with others, who are dishonorable, and who break promises represent this class of people. Often this is the characteristic of those who walk in bitterness. It is easy for a person to pick up a root of bitterness, if they are not careful. I think this is important enough for us to sidetrack and look at the root of bitterness:

A Root of Bitterness

Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Hebrews 12:14-15

There are generally two points of view about a Root of Bitterness. I personally subscribe to the point of view put forth by the ministry "Love Worth Finding", which says that a root of bitterness is bitterness in a heart that harbors hostility and old hurts. People who have a Root of Bitterness look for things to criticize, find fault with others, are hypersensitive, ungrateful, insincere, hold grudges, and have mood swings. People with a root of bitterness have trouble forgiving others. Many Christians have a root of bitterness, and God is not real to them. They often feel abandoned by the Lord. A root of bitterness, according to this point of view, is about relationships between the brethren (and sisters!).

The other theological view is that the root of bitterness speaks of an individual being defiled by false doctrines and things not of Christ. This point of view says a root of bitterness is talking about a heart of unbelief, someone who once believed but has been lead astray from the faith by false teachers and false doctrines. According to this point of view, a root of bitterness is not between specific individuals but against unity in the congregation. One with a root of bitterness cannot have fellowship and unity with the righteous. There is a breakdown in relations among believers because one believer has become bitter because of his hold on false, contrary doctrine. His bitterness is against truth and those who hold to that truth (see Deuteronomy 29:18, Matthew 7:17-19, and Hebrews 3:12).

k. Malicious Gossipers and Slanderers:

The Greek word for this is *diabolos,* which is also translated in English as devil. After all, Satan is the accuser of the brethren who loves to slander the people of God. These people destroy someone's good name and often their gossip is completely false. Barclay sees this as a big problem in churches and says, "There is slander enough in many churches to make the recording angel weep as he records it."

l. **Incontinent People devoid of self-control:** No one can take control of anything successfully unless he can take control of self. Many people today lack self-control and are slaves to habits which usually will bring them to ruin.

m. **Brutal, Fierce Savages:** So many of our streets in major cities in this country have become overrun by savage people who show no sensitivity or sympathy towards others and who have no respect for life.

n. **Haters and Despisers of Those Who Are Good:** So often in our schools there are those students who make fun of other students who are excelling and doing good. People who try to live the Christian life in the school or workplace are often put down and called "good, goody!" or

worse.

o. **Traitors:** When Paul was writing this, being a Christian in the Roman Empire was a crime. There were traitors who would inform the Roman government of someone's Christianity to win favor with the authorities, to settle an old score, to seek revenge, or to gain some favor.

p. **Reckless or Heady People:** These are people who, swept along by passion or impulse, act before they think and rush headlong into something.

q. **Conceited People:** This comes from a Greek word that in English literally means *swollen head.* This describes people who are full of pride and are convinced of their own importance. (Sounds like many of our politicians to me!) I am afraid they are not following Jesus who was gentle or meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29).

r. **Lovers of (sensual) Pleasure rather than Lovers of God:** Never in the history of mankind has there been a time when people spend more time and money to have pleasure of all kinds than today.

This section ends with one of those SELAH-"*Stop and Think About It*" moments. Having a form of godliness but denying the power is one of those things that I lie awake at

night and think about. Do we merely have a form of godliness here or do we have the power too? Without the Holy Spirit power we are just another religious group.

SEDUCTION IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

6 *For among them are those who worm their way into homes and captivate morally weak and spiritually-dwarfed women weighed down by [the burden of their] sins, easily swayed by various impulses,* ***7*** *always learning and listening to anybody who will teach them, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Paul is describing people here who have been in church for years but know little more about the Word of God than when they began. Their lives never really changed, and they never matured.

Those who wormed their way into these homes were false teachers who had a form of godliness but no power. They were perhaps Gnostics whose own doctrine was so contradictory. The Gnostics believed that the spirit of a person was all good, but the body was totally evil. Since the body was evil anyway, the Gnostics saw no condemnation in indulging in sexual sin. So these teacher often crossed the line and engaged in sexual lust with these women.

THE OPPONENTS OF GOD

8 *Just as Jannes and Jambres [the court magicians of Egypt] opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, unqualified and worthless [as teachers] in regard to the faith.* ***9*** *But they will not get very far, for their meaningless nonsense and ignorance will become obvious to everyone, as was that of Jannes and Jambres.*

Jannes and Jambres were two of Pharaoh's magicians who had opposed Moses. At first they could duplicate Moses' wonders before the Pharaoh but in the end they could do nothing. They are not named in the Old Testament but are referred to in Exodus 7:11, 8:7, and 9:11. There are, however, many outside the Bible sources that tell stories about these two men and sources that would be well-known to the Jews. Paul tells us that these men had depraved minds and had rejected the faith totally. Men, like Jannes and Jambres, are living today who are operating in satanic power but in the end will be exposed, and their power will destroy them.

What we learn from these magicians is that Satan does have some supernatural power and ability to do signs and wonders and to imitate, on a small scale, the things that God does. John warns us in 1st John 4:1, "Behold, believe

not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This scripture should encourage us to follow Jesus, and not signs and wonders, and to be wary of prophets whose meetings seem bizarre and out of order.

PERSECUTION

10 *Now you have diligently followed [my example, that is] my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness,* ***11*** *persecutions, and sufferings—such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, but the Lord rescued me from them all!* ***12*** *Indeed, all who delight in pursuing righteousness and are determined to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be hunted and persecuted [because of their faith].* ***13*** *But evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

Timothy knew well Paul's history, a history that was full of persecution and suffering. Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians 11:23-33 a summary of his life:

23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ***24 From the Jews five times I received***

forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. 31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; 33 but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

Paul only gives a passing mention of his

stoning at Lystra. He was stone there and left for dead. Many scholars believe he was dead but was raised from the dead by the Lord.

Verse 12 in this section is a powerful verse that brings both concern and comfort. If we live godly lives in Christ Jesus, we will eventually suffer persecution, but what a privilege to suffer for the Lord!

Suffering for Jesus seems unlikely to many in America, the home of the free, but already in our country real Christians are becoming more and more unpopular and many are having to fight legal battles because of standing on the Word and Christian principles which our country has held over 200 years.

This section gives us a warning that evil men and imposters will become worse and worse. We must be so careful not to follow men but to follow Jesus and to stand on His Word.

The section closes with a veiled warning about deception. Jesus spoke much about deception, and the great Bible teacher Derek Prince said that deception would be the number one problem the Church would face in the Last Days.

False christs and false prophets will come and perform great wonders and miracles. They will try to fool even the people God has chosen, if that is possible. Now I have warned you about this before it happens. Mathew 24:24 NCV

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

14 *But as for you, continue in the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced [holding tightly to the truths], knowing from whom you learned them,* ***15*** *and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings (Hebrew Scriptures) which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus [surrendering your entire self to Him and having absolute confidence in His wisdom, power and goodness].* ***16*** *All Scripture is God-breathed [given by divine inspiration] and is profitable for instruction, for conviction [of sin], for correction [of error and restoration to obedience], for training in righteousness [learning to live in conformity to God's will, both publicly and privately—behaving honorably with personal integrity and moral courage];* ***17*** *so that the [man of God may be complete and proficient, outfitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Timothy's mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were Messianic Jews, meaning that although they were born Jews, they had converted to Christianity. Nevertheless, this Jewish root was so important because all Jewish households believed in teach their children the Holy Scripture, even when the children were very young. Timothy's father was a Greek but most probably died

when Timothy was very young.

Paul makes it clear in verse 16 that all scripture is given by inspiration of God. We at First Love believe in the inerrancy, which means there are no mistakes, of scripture in the original languages, Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament. Some of the translations are not 100% accurate but most, especially the King James, is close to the original texts. Men wrote the Bible as the Holy Spirit gave the Word to them, under the inspiration of God. In the days ahead of increasing apostasy, our hope and comfort will be in the Word of God.

Barclay gives us 5 points on the usefulness of scripture as Paul has outlined in Chapter 3:

a. Scripture gives us the wisdom of and points the way to salvation.

b. Scripture must be taught to believers.

c. Scripture is valuable for reproof, which basic means that people will be shown and convicted and convinced of their sin by reading scripture.

d. Scripture is useful for correction. All teachings, theories, theologies, and ethics are to be tested against the Bible.

e. Scripture trains people in right living until they are equipped for every good work. We must study the scriptures to make ourselves useful to God and to other

people.

There are several very valuable passages of scripture to read as we prepare for the Last Days. 2nd Timothy 3, along with Psalm 2, and Isaiah 60 are just three that come to mind. I am thankful that Paul wrote this very personal letter to his spiritual son Timothy to prepare us for lies ahead.