

2 Timothy

I. Introduction

- A. **2 Timothy 3:1-5** . . . But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. [2] For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, [4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.
- B. Last week we looked at **vs 1-2**, and began taking about how the moral degeneration of society and the church – in the last days – will multiply life’s woes. Today we will continue that study by focusing on **vs 3**.
- C. Prayer

II. The moral degeneration of society and the church in the last days multiplies life’s woes

- A. [1] But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. [2] For men will be...[3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good . . .
- B. **Unloving** – What or whom do you think of when you think about the word **unloving**? As to the **what** of unloving, it is likely you think about things that have happened to you or happened to others that were unkind, unfair, hurtful, mean, or even evil. As to **who** is unloving, it is likely you don’t include yourself in that list.
 1. I do not doubt that you have fond feelings for many of the people in your life. I don’t doubt you have affectionate feelings for those who are near and dear to you. I don’t doubt that you feel the emotions of love – at times, and that you speak loving words, and that you do loving things.
 2. However, such feelings, emotions, words, and deeds, though good, generally speaking, are not proof that you love. They only prove that you know how to feel the feelings of love, say the words of love, and do loving things.
 3. According to God’s word and the meaning of love itself – love seeks the good of everyone who is in any way effected by your choices and behavior – and that includes the difficult, hard to get along with, painful to be around people; the lazy and irresponsible people; the

- frequently complaining, critical, and angry people; the self-focused, conceited, often bragging people; those who are nice to you when they want something from you while treating you as if you don't exist the rest of the time; and (*to keep this list from getting too long*), it includes your enemies.
4. In other words, the proof of love is not in feelings of affection or emotions of endearment. The proof of love is in doing good for those around us because they need good done for them. As God's word says, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink."
 5. Questions: Do you seek the good of others for their good, or for your good – that is, do you seek the good of others for what they are going to get out of it, or for what you hope to get out of it? Do you seek the good of others regardless of how they treat you, or only when they are generally good to you?
 - a. For example, do you seek the good of your spouse when he or she is not being very good or nice to you?
 - b. What about the difficult child, or foolish friend, or hard to please boss, or unpleasant neighbor? And what about the person who seems to despise you, or who seems to delight in making your life difficult?
 - c. Does the love you have compel you to seek the good of those for whom you have no warm, affectionate feelings?
 6. The word of God describes love so that we can know the difference between it and the kind of love that is expressed today and held back tomorrow.
 - a. **1 John 4:10-11**, "**In this is love**, not that we loved God (*our love for Him is not representative of genuine love, for it is in response to His love for us – with the understanding that by loving Him we will gain something good from Him*), but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (*He not only loved us first, and loved us while we were still rebellious sinners, He continues to love us in ways our human nature would never consider reasonable in loving those around us*). [11] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
 - b. **2 John 1:5-6a**, "[It is] not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. [6] And **this is love**, that we walk according to His commandments...." (*Even though love can include feelings and emotions, it is first and foremost dealing*

with others according to God's word (keeping His commandments), for that is the only right way to seek the good of everyone we effect by our choices and behavior. Anything less is less than love.)

7. The point of all this is, you do not have to be inhumane, cruel, mean, openly and unashamedly selfish, arrogant, or controlling to be unloving – you only have to repeatedly seek your good at the expense of others, or before seeking the good of others, or in seeking another's good in order to gain the good you are really seeking.
8. So, I ask you – just as I repeatedly ask myself – do you love? Do you consistently seek the good of others? Or do you speak words and do deeds of love because it helps get you what you want? To seek the good of others is to be loving. To seek the good of self is unloving. To seek the good of self, first and foremost, is to be an unloving person.
9. Now, imagine a world and a church where the number of unloving people grows so large that it taints everyone's life. That would be a difficult world in which to live.

C. **Irreconcilable** – The person who is irreconcilable is unwilling to let go of offenses. He holds on to resentment and bitterness, rarely forgives, and if he forgives, he forgives for the sake of his own mental and emotional health, not to restore the relationship.

1. Of course, there are times to walk away. God's word says so. For example, at the end of vs 5 we read, "Avoid such men as these." And we read in **1 Corinthians 5:9-11**, "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; [10] I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. [11] But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one."
2. However, the difference between living according to these verses and being irreconcilable is that the irreconcilable person doesn't want a relationship with certain people or certain kinds of people, whereas the believer who is living according to God's word wants relationship, and therefore looks for a way to reconcile when a relationship is damaged or broken.
3. Jesus said, there joy in heaven over every sinner who repents (**Luke 15:7**). Why? Because such repentance marks the restoring and

- healing of a damaged or broken relationship. And God is a relationship-desiring God. Therefore, we ought to have that same mindset when a believer who has hurt us comes to his senses, repents, and turns from the error of his ways.
4. Once again, consider how difficult life will be when the majority of people in the world, and in the church, are irreconcilable, and show it in their resentment, bitterness, anger, and unforgiveness toward those they do not want any kind of relationship with.

D. Malicious gossips – The malicious gossip is someone who wants to spread lies, innuendos, hearsay, or even substantiated truth about someone or some group in an effort to hurt them personally, or their reputation. The malicious gossip is more than mischievous, he is evil, because he is driven by ill-will, hatred, and malice.

1. Though this kind of evil is often seen in politics, it can be found in the church, too.
2. Consider the way Protestants have or still talk about Catholics and their religious practices. It is as if Catholics are evil to the core, and their religion is a farce.
3. Consider the way Protestants talk about those who hold a different theology or belong to a different denomination. And they do this without meeting, talking to, or learning about those they are discrediting with their gossip.
4. In the last days, this kind of gossip will increase to the degree that being a Christian in any group that holds different views or practices will be maliciously gossiped about by other believers.

E. Without self-control – that is, without the kind of control over your passions, desires, fears, thoughts, words, and actions that is commonly expected of an adult, and ought to be natural for a Christian. After all, self-control is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

1. The Christian who lacks self-control allows himself to be driven **more** by his felt-needs, impulses, emotions, feelings, and whims than his intellect, God's word, and concern for how his behavior affects those around him.
2. In other words, such a person does not think about the good of others. He doesn't think about his duty as a Christian to be holy just as God is holy. He is not intentionally living for the good of God, the enhancement of God's reputation, or the good of those around him. He is focused on himself – first and foremost.

3. And he doesn't think about or take into account God's empowerment, promises, and the work of the Holy Spirit that enable him to be self-controlled – which is why for him, becoming self-controlled seems way too hard to even try.
4. The sad truth is, when it comes to self-control, the Christian who lacks self-control doesn't think. And he gives himself no reason to think, because he allows himself to be driven by what feels good or makes him happy or satisfies his most pressing urge at the moment.
5. I suspect you can imagine how a large number of these kinds of church attendees would make life more difficult – for themselves and everyone else effected by their choices and behavior.

F. **Brutal** – We know there are brutal people in the world, but if you are like me, it seems hard to imagine brutes in the church. After all, how can godly Christians allow brutish behavior to exist in their midst? And yet, there have been brutes in the church.

1. For example, there were the religious leaders of Jesus day who had Jesus crucified. And what was their reason? They wanted to prevent Him from competing with them for the people's attention.
2. The Inquisition, which was an office set up within the Catholic church to root out heretics and bring an end to heresy, operated for several hundred years – and often in cruel, inhumane ways. Many of those leading the charge against heresy were brutal in their dealing with heretics – and they were sanctioned by the church.
3. But there were also Protestants who persecuted and killed other Protestants – solely because they differed on some theological point or some practices. For example, the Anabaptists – who supported only adult baptism, were cruelly persecuted by Protestants who believed infant baptism was essential for a child to enter heaven.
4. The point is, there have been, probably still are, and apparently will be brutes within the church – and their brutish behavior will make the last days very difficult for the rest of God's people.

G. **Haters of good** – To hate what is good is to detest or despise what is good. And good, in this context refers to what God calls and determines what is good. And what God calls good refers to what is morally excellent, loving, just, and pure of heart.

1. Though we can define a hater of good, it may be hard for us to image what it is like to hate what is good. We hear of such behavior, but it is unlikely we think of ourselves as hating what is good. It is

- unlikely we are familiar with someone we would describe as hating good. And if we are familiar with such a person, it is probably only one or two at the most.
2. However, consider this: It is probable most of us do not see ourselves as committing spiritual adultery and being hostile toward God just because we are in some way and to some degree, participants in some of the ungodly ways of the world. True, we know we are doing something wrong, but we minimize the degree of wrong and in so doing, minimize what it means in relation to our relationship with God.
 3. And yet, God calls such behavior on our part, adultery and enmity toward Him. Can we love what is good and **repeatedly** involve ourselves in something that – according to God’s word – means we are committing adultery or treating God with hostility?
 4. If we cannot love what is good while **repeatedly** committing adultery against God and treating Him with hostility, doesn’t that mean we hate what is good – at least in that area or few areas of life?
 5. For me, the answer is yes. I have said it this way to myself, “I have hated what God loves and loved what God hated.” Or to put it into today’s teaching, I have hated what is good and loved what is evil.
 6. Our tendency is to only take into account the more obvious and extreme forms of hating what is good. This insulates or shields us from seeing it in ourselves. Now I am not saying you hate what is good as a way of life. But it is possible you hate what is good in some area of life.
 7. Therefore, will you consider this possibility?

III. Conclusion

- A. May we not be among those believers who are unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, and haters of what is good, for the day is coming when enough Christians will be like that to make life far more difficult for all of us than it already is.