



LET'S BEGIN HERE

Paul concluded the first half of 2 Timothy ringing a spiritual liberty bell. When godly leaders “gently instruct those who oppose the truth,” they may repent (2 Timothy 2:25). And if they do, “God will change those people’s hearts” (2:25) and *free* them from “the devil’s trap” (2:26). Their chains will fall off, their eyes will be opened, and they will follow the light of Christ.

Paul opens the second half of 2 Timothy tolling a warning bell. Although some who oppose the truth will turn to Christ, many will *not* repent. The devil’s bonds will not be broken but will hold fast. These people will enslave themselves to their own desires and sink deeper into a pit of sin—turning *against* Christ and His church.

Paul’s description of a future steeped in evil is realistic and raw. He removes our blinders and shows the destructive impact of sin. Why would Paul put depravity on parade? He must have reasons . . . and he does. Let’s look for the answers as we dig into the opening verses of 2 Timothy 3.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Paul’s first words sound the warning:

You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. (2 Timothy 3:1)

Using our *Searching the Scriptures* method, let’s study this verse in three segments: “you should know,” “last days,” and “difficult times.”

Quotable

*The whole point
is this:
evil has a short
shelf-life. . . .
In the end,
God wins!*

— Charles R. Swindoll





Searching the Scriptures Study Tool

Throughout this study, we'll refer to Chuck Swindoll's *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* from the Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary series. Also, we recommend a concordance that includes the meaning of Greek words, such as *The Strongest NASB Exhaustive Concordance*. These resources can be obtained in the Insight for Living Ministries Web store. Online tools include www.biblegateway.com, which features multiple translations of the Bible, and <https://lumina.bible.org>, which features a study tool for Hebrew and Greek.

A Harsh Reality We Must Realize

The phrase “you should know” in Greek communicates urgency, as if Paul were poking us in the sternum with his quill, insisting we pay attention. “The verb *ginoskō* [1097] appears in the present tense, imperative mood, which is literally translated, ‘You, keep on knowing this!’”¹

Last days refers to the times in which we live—“the time between the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem and His return in Jerusalem to set up His kingdom.”² And the meaning of *difficult times* in Greek flashes a red light signaling danger ahead.

The Greek term *chalepos* [5467], translated “difficult,” is used only one other time in the New Testament, to describe the two demonized men living among the tombs near Gadara (Matt. 8:28). Empowered by evil, they broke the chains that bound them and terrorized the region with their “extreme violence.” To say that they were “difficult” is an understatement! The term means “harsh,” “hard to bear,” “vicious,” “dangerous,” or “menacing.”³

Look up for yourself the definition of *chalepos* at <https://lumina.bible.org>. Go to 2 Timothy 3:1, and then select “Greek” in the opposite panel to reveal the Greek text. Click the final Greek word in the verse, which reveals *chalepos* in the box on the lower part of the screen. In the space below, write down the definition of the word.



Now pull together the insights you discovered in your study of the Greek words, and write down in your own words what this verse is saying. Try to capture Paul's urgency and intensity.

An Unvarnished Exposé of “Last Days” Depravity

As a commander bracing his troops for battle, Paul spoke of the struggle ahead. The Enemy will take captive the hearts of men and women whom the Lord loves and turn them against Him and all that is good. They will be “lovers of self” (2 Timothy 3:2 NASB) “rather than lovers of God” (3:4 NASB). Loving self over God capsulizes the core problem in people's hearts and lays the seedbed from which all other sins grow.⁴

Including these two descriptors that are like bookends, Paul lines up 19 adjectives and descriptive phrases to characterize human depravity. The impact of these sins can be grouped under three headings: the breakdown of relationships, the disintegration of families, and the destruction of communities.

In the following charts, fill in the definitions of Paul's descriptors and the impact to relationships. Look for definitions in Chuck's commentary, a concordance, or even an English dictionary. For online help, go back to the Greek section at <https://lumina.bible.org>, and select each Greek word to find the definition. Draw from your own experience to describe the impact.



The Breakdown of Relationships

Descriptor from 2 Timothy	Definition	Impact to Relationships
Love . . . Their Money (<i>philarguros</i>) 3:2		
Boastful (<i>alazon</i>) 3:2		
Proud (<i>huperephanos</i>) 3:2		
Scoffing at God (and Others) (<i>blasphemia</i>) 3:2		

The Disintegration of Families

Descriptor from 2 Timothy	Definition	Impact to Families
Disobedient to Parents (<i>goneuso apeitho</i>) 3:2		
Ungrateful (<i>acharistos</i>) 3:2		
Consider Nothing Sacred (<i>anosios</i>) 3:2		
Unloving (<i>astorgos</i>) 3:3		
Unforgiving (<i>aspondos</i>) 3:3		



Destruction of Communities

Descriptor from 2 Timothy	Definition	Impact to Communities, Schools, Workplaces, Churches
Slander Others (<i>diabolos</i>) 3:3		
No Self-Control (<i>akrates</i>) 3:3		
Cruel (<i>anemos</i>) 3:3		
Hate What Is Good (<i>aphilagathos</i>) 3:3		
Betray Their Friends (<i>prodotes</i>) 3:4		
Reckless (<i>propetes</i>) 3:4		
Puffed Up with Pride (<i>tetuphomenos</i>) 3:4		
Love Pleasure (<i>philhedonos</i>) 3:4		

As if this dark onslaught of sin wasn't shocking enough, Paul dropped the next bombshell: *the army of the depraved will infiltrate the church's ranks*. Indeed, they were among Timothy's congregation, and some were leaders!



Read 2 Timothy 3:5–7, and answer the following questions.

- How do these undercover agents act? _____
- What do they reject? _____
- On whom do they prey? _____
- What does Paul instruct Timothy to do? _____

A Biblical Example of Opposition

Having described the overwhelming odds facing them, commander Paul concluded his speech to the troops with a story from Israel's past. He compared "these teachers [who] oppose the truth" (3:8) to the Egyptian magicians in Pharaoh's court who opposed Moses (Exodus 7:11; 9:11).⁵ Their trickery worked for the moment but *failed in the end*.

What's his point? Just like the evil sorcerers in Moses' day, the deceivers in our day "won't get away with [their sin] for long. Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are" (2 Timothy 3:9).

An Encouraging Promise of Reassurance

Let's go back to our original question: Why did Paul put depravity on parade and warn Timothy of future evils? What possible answers can you think of?

Although Paul's list is disturbing and his forecast is bleak, his purpose is not to discourage us. His desire is to point us to the light beyond the dark clouds—to our triumphant God who specializes in overcoming overwhelming odds. Hate and cruelty may flourish in the moment, but *in the end, God wins*. Paul reassured Timothy, "Someday everyone will recognize what fools they are" (2 Timothy 3:9). Jesus' promise of victory will not be denied: "I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18).





Bring It Home

Are you discouraged by the evil you see in the world? Disillusioned by the deceivers in the church? Chuck Swindoll offers four points of application to inspire your courage:

1. *Difficult times will come as evil tries to destroy good. Accept this truth.* A positive attitude requires realistic expectations.
2. *Deceivers will present themselves as genuine ministers of the gospel. Reject false teachers.* If a teacher denies God's Word and leads others astray, confront this person and, if necessary, remove him or her from the church.
3. *Evil sometimes occupies positions of power that cannot be overthrown. Endure persecution.* We know it won't last forever, so we can persevere.
4. *The primary weapon of evil is deception. Reveal the truth.* Never be afraid of shining the light of truth in dark places. Even the darkest evil will flee from the light of Christ!

Which of these points of application encourages you the most? Write down your reflections and the steps to put into action these application points.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I sometimes lose hope in the face of evil's overwhelming odds. Thank You for Jesus, who never lost sight of Your power to overcome the worst evils, even death. Remind me that You win in the end. Help me to be gracious toward people who are captives of the evil one. Steady me with the confidence that You are faithful, that even in dark times, Your light shines through. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 11 (Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2014), 224.
2. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 224.
3. Swindoll, *Insights on 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, 225.
4. Misplaced affection is the root of all sin. From the beginning, the Enemy's strategy has been to lure people away from God's love into the sanctuary of self-love where people "love only themselves and their money" (2 Timothy 3:2) and "love pleasure" (3:4). Narcissism. Materialism. Hedonism. The unholy trinity of our modern age.
5. The names Jannes and Jambres—which mean "the rebel" and "the opponent"—do not appear in Scripture. Jewish folklore assigned these names to the sorcerers Pharaoh summoned to oppose Moses and attempt to mimic Moses' miracles.



PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Depravity on Parade

2 Timothy 3:1–9

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

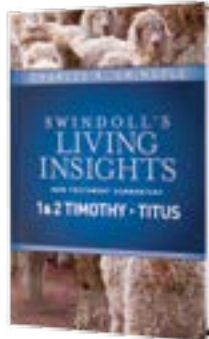
STUDY



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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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