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2 Timothy 3:1-15 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction: The section of Scripture which begins in 2 Timothy 3:1 and continues to 4:5 is a critical defense of the use of the Bible as the church's source of doctrine and teaching. Paul had just mentioned, at the end of Chapter 2, the importance of keeping oneself free from the corrupting influence of false teachers. Now, he looks ahead for his young mentee, and points out that one of the key characteristics of the "last days" is that godless conduct would be rampant. Such conduct is closely related to not only false teaching, but also to the absence of solid teaching. People would be turned aside from God altogether it seems. And that is not difficult to see in our world today.

Paul compares, for Timothy's encouragement, the "perilous times" he sees coming with what Timothy had learned from Paul himself. Timothy is encouraged to remember Paul's teaching and his example of endurance and living. He is not to allow himself to be swept away with what was certainly coming. What would prevent that? Remember what he had learned, and who he had learned it from, and in addition to that, "the Holy Scriptures." Nothing grounds a person and prepares him for trials, persecution, an onslaught of falsehood and the corrupt conduct it breeds like a solid knowledge of, faith in, and commitment to be obedient to the written word of God, the Bible.

1. Verses 1-9 - Perilous times in the last days.

- v.1 - **know this...** this is a certain prophecy. **the last days...** the days leading up to the return of Christ. **perilous times...** many speak of the great revival before Christ returns; here, the Scriptures seem to speak of the exact opposite. Do not be deceived!

- vv.2-5a - The description of **men** is a scathing picture of ungodliness. Carefully consider each one as you read.

- vv.5b-7 - **...from such people turn away!** The word is clear, and it is an appropriate follow-up to what Paul wrote at the end of Chapter 2 concerning the clean and unclean vessels. Bad teaching (or lack of faith and no teaching at all) leads to bad conduct. You must separate from it or *your own conduct* will begin to resemble that of those who **make captives of gullible women** with their smooth-sounding, uplifting and entertaining, but corrupting teaching.

- vv.8-9 - **Jannes and Jambres** are the names in Jewish folklore associated with two of Pharaoh's magicians at the time of **Moses**. Those names are even used in modern tales. The literary legend is used here as an example of false, **disapproved** teachers. They represent false teachers of Paul and Timothy's times, and they represent false teachers of our times. Note the harsh description of their motives. Timothy is encouraged that their sway over people would be only temporary.

2. Verses 10-15 - The example of a faithful teacher and the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.

- vv.10-11 - **But...** i.e., in contrast to the aforementioned false teachers and the corrupt conduct they foster. Paul offers his own doctrine and conduct and experiences with the Lord as a continuing example of what Timothy should follow even in the face of so much falsehood and debauchery.

- v.12 - A promise. We must not be deceived into thinking that living **godly** is a path to earthly pleasure. While it is true that generally things will go well for the workers of righteousness, good conduct also angers the powers of darkness. The wicked resent the righteous. And so **persecution** should be expected.

- v.13 - Another reminder that evil will increase right up to the end.

- vv.14-15 - Timothy is encouraged to **continue** walking in all that Paul has set as an example and taught. What the flow of the world around is is irrelevant. Paul points to two crucial sources of encouragement and instruction for Timothy: 1) his own example; and 2) the **Holy Scriptures**. The "Scriptures" here is likely a reference to the Old Testament. While likely by this time some apostolic writings were recognized as inspired (and eventually canonized as our New Testament) what Timothy knew from his **childhood** would have been the Old Testament.

NOTE: The phrase "All Scripture" in v.16 can perhaps be seen as a contrast (adding the word "All"), thus being inclusive of certain New Testament writings that had significant circulation by this time. Whatever the case, this phrase becomes critical in understanding the next passage, 3:16-4:5.