



[2 Timothy 3:1-5](#)

(1) But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. (2) People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, (4) treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— (5) having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

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Perilous suggests "difficult," "threatening," and "dangerous." The term "last days" does not specifically mean the times we are living in at this moment, as Paul believed he was living in the last days. He expected Christ's return to be imminent, certainly during his lifetime, as many verses relate. Thus, he meant his instruction to Timothy to apply immediately. If this were not so, why would he tell Timothy in verse 5 to withdraw from the people he just described?

In verse 13 ("But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."), the Greek grammar gives the sense of conditions or expressions of human nature that ebb and flow like waves of the sea rather than a constant state of affairs. When combined with the idea of things growing "worse and worse" and Jesus' comments about the [days of Noah](#), we can understand the situation will be especially intense in our time.

In addition, Paul did not intend us to suppose that everyone would express all of these traits all the time. Rather, all of them would indeed exist in each person since he is describing the elements of every human's deceitful heart, but the intensity of their expression would vary from person to person.

The peril to church members is not to being injured or killed but to being drawn into expressing the same sinful attitudes and conduct that everybody else is! Paul's warning is not to mix with people dominated by these characteristics. This helps us to understand that the potential to commit these sins is right in the church! Why? It exists in the church because we have all come out of [the world](#) where these things are nurtured, and none of us have overcome all these characteristics yet. In other words, despite conversion, we are still capable of expressing these sins. We must be on guard!

The first characteristic Paul lists is "men will be lovers of themselves," the wellspring of all eighteen subsequent traits. The wellspring remains in us, as Paul graphically explains in Romans 7. About this verse, William Barclay says in the *Daily Bible Study Commentary*:

Love of self is the basic [sin](#), from which all others flow. The moment a man makes his own will the centre of life, divine and human relationships are destroyed, obedience to [God](#) and charity to men both become impossible. The essence of Christianity is not the enthronement but the obliteration of self.

New "religions" calling themselves "Christian" and having self-love as their very essence are popping up everywhere. These churches are quite popular, and their congregations tend to be large. In them, tolerance is a key concept, and the facts about the vileness of sin and man's vital need of [repentance](#) are smoothed over. Additionally, they will not teach several true Christian doctrines, ones essential to salvation, because of their belief that they are "divisive."

Truly, those doctrines do divide! They divide Christians away from the world yet unite them with God. These new religious groups are ignoring essential doctrines for the sake of so-called unity. Which is more important: unity with God or men? Men are easily deceived by their deceitful heart and blinded to their real state, believing all is well because everybody in the congregation is so "friendly," because the "gospel" music is entertaining, because the slide program is informative, and because the church is growing so large. With all these "good" proofs, they reason, surely God must be blessing their "church"!

They are deceived. None of these things is necessary to salvation and a good relationship with God. They are not proofs of God's blessing. Christ gives no indication His church would grow large. In fact He calls it a "little flock" ([Luke 12:32](#)). These churches may appear successful on the surface, but the fact remains that they are not teaching essential doctrines. They might as well be a weekly social center that also teaches some religious principles. Strong, detailed preaching about sin, repentance, and glorifying God through the works He demands must be part of Christian instruction, or the members will not grow in the grace and the knowledge of [Jesus Christ \(II Peter 3:18\)](#).

The preachers promoting this agenda are cheating people through their smooth words, convincing them that sin is not nearly as bad as the Bible makes it out to be. Sadly, church members do not sufficiently realize the extreme subtlety of our heart's disease. It does not come at us loudly proclaiming to be our deadly enemy, saying, "I want to ruin you in the Lake of Fire!" Sin comes like Judas, with a kiss, and like Joab, with his hand extended in friendship and his tongue uttering flattering words.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Is the Christian Required To Do Works? \(Part Two\)](#)

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