

The Pastoral Epistles

II Timothy 3:1-9 – “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, ⁷ always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. ⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.”

Paul’s admonition to Timothy comes with a certain eschatological perspective: “in the last days there will come times of difficulty.” Each generation of Christian seems to think that they are living in the last days. Why would they each think that? The key may be in the following verses. Signs of the last days include:

1. People will be lovers of self . . .
 2. “abusive” – blasphemers; slanderous; railing
 3. “unappeasable” – not willing to make peace
 4. “brutal” – savage, ferocious
 5. “treacherous” – a traitor, betrayer
- ETC.

“Avoid such people.” Can this be any clearer? These kinds of people aren’t our Facebook friends, town chums, or within any of our social circles. They may be co-workers, classmates, teammates, and/or even relatives, but we don’t seek their company. Their character leads them into mischief that is highlighted in the next two verses.

Among the spiritual deviants of Ephesus, there were heretics who were praying upon weak willed women. There is subtle indication in the text that these women were of means, and being burdened by their own sin, they were looking for any means of consolation. Unfortunately their sin was being compounded because they believed lies, and were being led ever farther from sound doctrine. Examples of this in our day may be drug pushers, young men recruiting for Islam, or internet predators.

Paul names two historical figures as examples of what he has just discussed. Jannes and Jambres are not names found in the O.T. but it is believed that they were known through the oral tradition of the Jews (similar to our knowledge of George Washington, or Thomas Jefferson).

Finally, comfort can be derived from the assurance that the “success” of these predators will be short lived.