

Chapter 3 “*Difficult Times Will Come*” (Part 3)

2 Tim 3:1 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.

There are 19 character-traits listed in this paragraph.

(1) Lovers of self (self-esteem) from *philautoi*. As pointed out last week, this holds the top spot because it is the most significant of all the traits that lead to degenerate culture.

The roots of self-love and unconditional love

Due to the misguided understanding of “self-love” that has been propagated in the world, there has come into the church a host of misinterpretations by the church concerning the nature of the genuine *agape* type of love. Self-love is rooted in self, or in man himself; whereas the NT teaches that *agape* is rooted in God as the source.

The father of “self-love” and “unconditional love,” as we examine this psychological standpoint, was Eric Fromm. Fromm was an atheist who argued against Christianity. He resurrected the old Greek philosophy that man “*is the measure of all things.*”

Since there is no God and man is the measure of all, then love cannot come from God, but must be drawn from within oneself, man being the supreme agency for love. Fromm taught that one must love himself, accept himself and esteem himself to reach his highest potential, just as the Greeks had thought. While he recognized that man has an innate sense of separation, he rejected God’s plan for reconciliation. He wrote:

Man—of all ages and cultures—is confronted with the solution of one and the same question: the question of how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend one’s own individual life and find *at-onement* [italics added].

By this little wordplay, he rejected the work of atonement on the cross for the solution to man's separation and spoke of *at-onement* which must be self-produced. It is found within man himself, through "unconditional self-love," which Fromm believed would enable individuals to love the whole world. Thus, the source of love is within the self. This was the *necessary beginning* for Fromm.

It was also Fromm who first used Matthew 22:39, "**You are to love your neighbor as yourself,**" with its twisted interpretation that we are commanded to first love ourselves. According to Fromm, if man is the center of all, then he has intrinsic worth and innate goodness. This was then advanced further by Carl Rogers, who himself was an atheist as was Fromm.

The NT teaches that *agape* comes from God, not innate in man.

What a contrast to 1 John 4:7ff.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (8) The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (9) By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. (10) In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another... (16) We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (17) By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

Let me make something clear. Psychotherapy itself is neither scientific or proven to be that effective. Rather it developed as an alternative explanation to man's behavior rather than accepting God and the Bible. Years ago, Ronald Koteskey wrote an article entitled, "Abandoning the Psyche to Secular Treatment," in *Christianity Today*. He states:

During the first half of the 19th century, when moral treatment was at its peak [because of the heavy influence of Christianity] at least 70% of the patients who had been ill for a year or less were released as recovered or improved ... Moral treatment did all this without tranquilizers,

antidepressants, shock treatment, psychosurgery, psychoanalysis, or any other kind of psychotherapy.

The he adds:

The use of moral treatment declined during the 2nd half of the 19th century. The results were disastrous! Recovery and discharge rates went down as moral treatment gave way to the medical approach.

In essence it was as earlier psychotherapists admitted, to replace the religion of Christianity. Psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, in examining the field of psychotherapy, wrote:

It is not merely a religion that pretends to be a science, it is actually a fake religion that seeks to destroy true religion.

(2) Lovers of money (*philarguroi*: *phila* = “love,” “fondness”; and *árguros* = “silver,” “money.” The compound word is found three times in the NT, and it is interesting that in the other two cases, it has implications for religious leaders who are “lovers of money.”

Luke records that when Jesus stated **“You cannot serve God and mammon”** (Luke 16:13), that the Pharisees were offended because they were, **“lovers of money”** (Luke 16:14). Indeed, they scoffed at Jesus when He said it. Geldenhuy's apply comments:

“Because the Pharisees were fond of money and regarded riches as the rightful reward for their faithful observance of the Law, they derided Jesus (who in contrast with most of them was poor and was followed by a small group of poor disciples).”

According to the theology of the Pharisees, Jesus' meager finances and that of his disciples would have been evidence, in their view, that God really was not honoring Jesus' ministry.

The second place that **“lovers of money”** is used is from Paul's letter to Timothy, where he speaks of “prophets for profit.” In other words, false teachers in the church.

Acts 20:33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. (34) You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the

men who were with me. (35) In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Paul was not out to acquire any wealth for himself. And by giving this cardinal doctrine of Christian living, “**It is more blessed to give than to receive,**” he sets a contrast to the conflicting behavior of those charlatans who are going to fleece the flock. False teachers will come and make an appeal in the name of the gospel for the wealth of the congregation.



Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, Marilyn Hickey, Frederick Price, Charles Capps, Morris Cerullo, Joel Osteen [although more subtle, he clearly embraces much of it] and Paul and Jan Crouch.

Now we turn to our current text in Timothy where Paul again warns against these false teachers who advocate the doctrine that “God wants Christians to be financially rich.” Both references, 1 Timothy 6:3-10 and Acts 20:20-35, concern themselves with the situation in the church at Ephesus. It is the same problem! Whereas Acts 20 gives us the motive of the false preachers, 1 Timothy 6:3-10 reveals the doctrine that they use to accomplish this end; in other words, the doctrine that “**godliness is a means of great profit.**” Paul writes:

1 Tim 6:5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

The core of their doctrine was that “**godliness is a means of great gain** [*porismos*, “of great profit”]. Here Paul seems to be quoting an actual cliché his opponents

used, as he repeats it again in the next verse. Barclay writes that they were *commercializing religion*.¹ And although these teachers may say “praise God” and “hallelujah,” or may claim to be divinely inspired, Paul regards them as “men of depraved minds” and “deprived of the truth.” Thus, they will say that “God told them,” when God told them nothing. These preachers, like the greedy of the world, have been ensnared by riches. Paul then says in verse 10:

1 Tim 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs [“pains” or “pangs”].

Today, the church has seen a resurgence of a “**godliness for profit**” gospel by numerous charismatic leaders. The movement has been dubbed the *Faith-Word* movement, *Prosperity Gospel* movement, *Positive Confession* Movement, or simply *Faith Movement*. Detractors, however, have called it the *Blab it and Grab it* movement or the *Name it and claim it gospel*. Well-known personalities within the prosperity gospel movement include Kenneth Copeland, Benny Hinn, Marilyn Hickey, Frederick Price, Charles Capps, Morris Cerullo, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen [more subtle but clearly embraces it] and Paul and Jan Crouch. Instead of being *godly* Paul sees those of the prosperity gospel as *greedy*. Even though they may have claimed Jesus and said, “Praise the Lord,” they are absent of real truth.

1 Tim 6:17 Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

1 Timothy 6:18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, (19) storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

Instead of clinging to their wealth, they are “**to do good.**” The following entails what Paul is driving at when he speaks of doing good: He is “**to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.**” The measure that a wealthy man gives to those in need is an indication of his attitude towards his wealth.

And a man who is generous with his wealth is a man who is storing up treasures in heaven and demonstrates the life he has in Christ.

¹William Barclay, *The letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, p. 128.