

SOUL FOOD

APRIL 20, 2017

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-10 THE LAST DAYS

Ever since the ascension of Jesus we have been in the last days. These days are characterized by both blessings and cursings. While we still have to deal with the presence of sin and its devastation, we are able at the same time to enjoy the benefits of the presence of the Kingdom of God. Thankfully, we know that the time is coming when sin will be no more along with death and darkness.

In this passage Paul is talking about the manifestations of sinful behavior that will continue in these last days and will at times appear to be more aggressive and devastating. There will be times of difficulty. We can readily identify with many of these behaviors since we have seen them manifested many times over. We will just consider a few of them. People will be lovers of self and lovers of money. Scripture teaches us that love is the mark of the follower of Christ. Love for God and neighbor are the means of obeying the very law of God. Jesus teaches that the keeping of the Law hangs on these two pegs. Jesus does not mention 3 pegs. He does not say that we must love ourselves because He knows that we already do. Our love for our neighbor is to be a reflection of our love for ourselves. We are to love our neighbors AS we love ourselves. The type of self-love that Paul is dealing with is a self-centered love that pursues one's own ends without regard to God or others.

The love of money is a snare and leads to all kinds of evil. This is the expression of an addiction to the accumulation of wealth. This leads people to love things and use people rather than love people and use things. It should not surprise us to see and hear of many examples of selfishness and self-absorption. We should also expect to see many acts of pride and arrogance. Again, we see a bent toward the pursuit of independence from God and the building of one's own kingdom rather than God's Kingdom. Out of all of these characteristics, the one that challenges me most as a follower of Christ is that in the last days there will be the appearance of godliness while denying its power. Paul teaches elsewhere that the Kingdom of God is about power rather than words. In saying this Paul puts his finger on the reality that eloquence itself is not necessarily an example of faithful preaching and proclamation of truth. No, power is seen in faithful obedience and the willingness to suffer for the sake of the glory of Christ. So, God does not want us to simply perform acts of righteousness. He wants us to BE righteous and live a life of righteous integrity. This is why many often emphasize that Christianity is all about relationship rather than religion. The book of James instructs us that the true nature of religion is serving orphans and widows, those who often are forced to live on the outskirts of society. No, we must be faithful and pursue God's righteousness rather than moral behavior as defined by ourselves. After all, this is more about a false self-love rather than the love of God.