

THE LAST DAYS

BIBLE TEXT : I Timothy 4:1-9; II Timothy 3:1-7.

LESSON 414 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Timothy 4:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

1 Timothy 4:1-9

¹ Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

³ Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

⁴ For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving:

⁵ For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

⁶ If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

⁷ But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness.

⁸ For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

⁹ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.

2 Timothy 3:1-7

¹ This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Departing from the Faith

1. The Spirit gives warning that some shall depart from the faith, I Timothy 4:1;

1 John 2:18

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

1 John 2:19

¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

2. Doctrines of devils and hypocritical lies are substituted for the truth by these apostates, I Timothy 4:1, 2; II Timothy 4:3, 4.

3. Commandments of men are enforced, displacing the commandments of God, I Timothy 4:3-5;

Mark 7:6-8

⁶ He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

⁷ Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

⁸ For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

II The Minister's Duty

1. Words of faith and good doctrine are to be ever kept before the brethren, I Timothy 4:6.

2. Emphasis is placed upon godliness, I Timothy 4:7-9;

Titus 2:12

¹² Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

III Perilous Times

1. All manner of evil is a mark of the last days, II Timothy 3:1-4; Matthew 24:37-39;

Genesis 6:5-7

⁵ And GOD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

⁶ And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

⁷ And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

2. A form of godliness is observed, but the power is denied, II Timothy 3:5-7.

NOTES:

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their

to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

⁶ For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

⁷ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

conscience seared with a hot iron." One of the strong emphases that the Apostle puts on the sign of the last days is a departure from the faith: apostasy, turning away, forsaking the old paths. The Laodicean age is the last age of the Church on the earth, and it is marked by lukewarmness, a state nauseating to God. God has said, "I would thou wert cold or hot." Let us beware lest we become spiritually lukewarm in these latter days.

It is good to consider what the Spirit saith unto the churches through the Word. The Word is inspired by the Spirit of God. That is why the Word is alive. It is quick and powerful, and it pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joint and marrow — the spiritual and the physical.

Never-Dying Soul

Man was created in the image and likeness of God. When God breathed into man the breath of life, man became a **living soul**. He became alive physically and spiritually. The animals, birds, fishes, and all other created things were made different from man. Man was a distinct creation of God, a creation possessing a **never-dying soul**. How glorious! Yet how disgracefully man has treated his privilege to serve God and to be true to God.

Seducing spirits and doctrines of devils can enter into a man and work in subtle ways, in insidious ways, to delude, to deceive, and to draw him aside so that he misses the purpose that God had in mind for his eternal welfare. And there he is, nothing but a poor, deluded dupe of the devil, an apostate — departed from the faith — abandoned by God. God has declared that these seducing spirits would deceive the very elect if possible. Let us think seriously on these things.

Signposts

In God's Word we read: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers." Lovers of their own selves! Not lovers of God, not lovers of their neighbour, not lovers of the beauties of God's great salvation, but lovers of their own selves! Look the world over today and what do you find? A literal fulfilment of those very words of Scripture. Men are demanding, selfish, covetous, boastful.

The age in which we live is a boastful age. Men are boasting of their scientific discovery and development, boasting of their theories and of the preparations they are making for space travel, and investigating planets in the faraway heavens. Few things seem denied to the wisdom of man today, but with one stroke God can reduce man's wisdom to confusion, as He did to the builders of Babel.

The Apostle said: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (I Corinthians 1:20). After man's wisdom has utterly bit the dust, God's wisdom will be soaring on through the eons of eternity.

Evil Men

The Word of God describes the men of the last days: "Boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good." Never was there a time in the history of the world when these very words of Scripture were so literally and perfectly fulfilled, through the lives of evil men as today.

The social fabric in these days is breaking down in a marked way. Moral standards are no longer where they were; they are going down. Remember, the Bible declares that in the last days

"perilous times" shall come. We are living in the last days. Perilous times are here! Men are "incontinent," "despisers of those that are good." When was the world ever so given over to the lust of the flesh and the pride of life as today?

If one really has a standard of decency in his heart, he is often despised by others. Many people will follow a multitude to do evil, just because it is popular. But one can doom his soul to a devil's hell for all eternity by following a multitude to do evil. God hates it!

Lovers of Pleasure

The Bible tells us more about the people of these last days: "Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." About whom is this speaking? Anyone who finds earthly pleasures more palatable than the love of God and His law. It matters not whether he is in religious circles or not. One does not need to be an atheist or an infidel to grieve the Spirit of God and incur His wrath. All one needs to do is to have a greater love for pleasures than for God.

Sometimes we wonder about people who will lightly deny God's claims on them for true worship, serious thinking, service for the Lord in spreading the light of the Gospel; and, instead, will seek and do their own pleasure.

Give this matter a little thought: Are you a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God? What do you do on the Lord's Day? How much are you contributing to the cause of Christ? Are you giving God your time and your talent, giving of your substance and your ability? If not, perhaps you, too, are a mark, a sign of the last days because you have more love for pleasure than for God.

Formal Religion

After describing the men and women of the latter days, the Scriptures follow with these words: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Carefully note these words. Take inventory of your spiritual status. These words come from God's Holy Book.

Many people today have a form of godliness, but are spiritually dead. They continue their form of religion but they have no power — deny the power of God that quickens, that makes alive, that fills with zeal, faith, courage, and enthusiasm for the cause of Christ.

Their first love, that first desire to see men and women born into God's kingdom, came into their heart through receiving pardon for sin, after godly sorrow had taken place; but now seducing spirits of devils have crept in and undermined their former love and zeal and faith and the doctrines they once loved. They are now left stranded and destitute of the Spirit-moving power of God, but they continue on in form only.

Beware

God deals with men and women individually. He reveals His will through His Word. But if His Word falls on dull ears, that person becomes delinquent in his service for God; his love for God dims; he loses his zeal for God's kingdom. If that happens to be your condition, you may well know that there is something desperately wrong. And you should take care of the matter before it is too late.

God forbid that we, individually or collectively, should ever fall victim to that spirit of apostasy which has come over the nominal church — the professing church — in these last days. May we never lose that fervour, zeal, and burning desires to give our all for Christ's cause. May we serve Him with an intense earnestness

and give Him our time, our talent, our ability.

God's Word is true; and when we step into eternity, even those who may not believe it today will find that it is true. Someday all will know that this Bible is the Book of Life, the Book of God, the Book that determines one's eternal destiny. It is the Book that shows every man and woman the way to Heaven.

May God stir our hearts! May we never, never, let the spirit of the perilous times in which we live take such an effect upon our soul that we become careless and indifferent in our behaviour before God.

The Accepted Time

Today is the time to become concerned. Today is the day of preparation. Today is the day of salvation. How would it fare with you if today were the end of the world?

Now is the accepted time to seek God's pardon -- the time that God will accept you. The Word says to believe Him. God will accept you, sinner friend, lukewarm follower, backslider, cold and dead professor, if you repent.

God is calling. If you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, but come home to God's love and be ready for that last day.

QUESTIONS

1. Who warns us that there shall be a departure from the faith in the latter times?
2. What is substituted for the truth by those who depart from the faith?
3. What happens to the conscience of those who depart from the faith?
4. Are any of God's creatures to be refused? How are they to be received?
5. What is to be refused?
6. Complete the quotation: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, . . ."
7. When shall perilous times come?
8. Name the 19 signs that mark perilous times as foretold in the text of today's lesson.