

GNITN
#380
Perilous Times
Week One

What Times Are We Living In?

From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take. (1 Chron 12:32, NLT)

As you well know, the sons of Issachar were part of the mighty men of who would eventually be King David. He trusted them to advise him and actually put them at the front of the battles when hard and crucial decisions would be made. It is rare to have your military statisticians in harm's way, but that was how special these men were. And now we have the written word of God as well as Holy Spirit living in us to guide us in what some are calling the last of the last days as we make difficult decisions not only about our future, but the future of the world. For many of us, these decisions are more for intercession, but if anyone doubts the value of prayer they are not seeing things the way God sees them. In any event, the questions remains, what kind of times are we living in?

Perilous Times

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Tim 3:1-5, NKJV)

This famous portion of Scripture was given to Timothy, the young protégé of the Apostle Paul as his mentor was about to be beheaded. It was to be his last advice to him and it was meant to warn him about people who would even be in his church. And it rings as true today as it did then, but we must be forward looking in its application since Timothy and Paul were alive a long time ago and some would say mankind has come a long way since then. People who think that the human race has advanced to a more civilized state are surely living with their heads in the sand, because the Bible doesn't forecast such an environment. Unless the spirit of Antichrist is taking a break, things are not getting better and this list from Paul tells us just that.

Knowing Is Key

The Greek word for "know" is *ginōskō* – properly, to know, especially through personal experience (first-hand acquaintance). ("experientially know") is used for example in Lk 1:34, "And Mary [a virgin] said to the angel, 'How will this be since I do not know (1097 /*ginōskō* = sexual intimacy) a man?'"

In a study from Rick Renner on this word he says this:

In this verse, Paul used ginosko in the present imperative tense, which means this message is something so critical that it must be known, must be recognized, and must be acknowledged.

Whatever the Holy Spirit is about to say, it is so important that hearing it is not optional — it MUST be known and understood.

Adding to it the depth of intimacy of knowing seen in the description above, Holy Spirit is telling us it is vitally important that we really need to study and be very familiar with these descriptions.

Timing Is Key

The next thing we'll look at in this first verse is where Paul tells us when these difficult times will occur. He notes that it will be in "the last days" and so we need to scrutinize that phrase to figure out what he means. Obviously the advice had to mean something to Timothy, so was he only talking about those days alone? Yes and no. Yes, Timothy should definitely watch for these people in his church and environment. It would be silly to think it didn't have that connotation. However, the Greek word used for "last" gives a future meaning as well. The word is *ésxatos* (from *esxaton*, "end, last") – properly, last, final (the furthest, extreme-end). 2078/*esxatos* ("future things"), the root of "eschatology" is "the study of last things." This includes future Bible prophecy, the end-times, and life after death ("the after-life"). You will notice that the word is used when we talk about prophecy and so the interpretation that it is also talking about the very last of the last times is seen in this verse as well. We're not stretching this point at all.

It's Always Been This Bad

We could go the other direction and make this a generic list of things to watch for in all generations and no one period of time is different than any other, but other parts of the Bible caution us from this sentiment. Jesus told us what to look for in the various Olivet discourses and Paul adds to his cautions as he also tell us about the time right before the Rapture of the church. You see, when you put it all together, rather than making it generic, we need to see it as more specific in our time. So yes, Timothy was right to heed the advice of Paul for his time, but things will get far worse the closer we get to the last days. In other words, this detailed list will only heighten in its impact as we see the Rapture and the Second Coming drawing closer and closer. This is why we need to take a closer look at these things now.

Knowing The Environment Is Key

We turn once again to the Greek word for "perilous" is *xalepós* and in *Thayers Greek Lexicon* we read that it means *hard to bear, troublesome, dangerous* when talking about environment and *harsh, fierce, savage* when talking about men. Putting it together, Renner explains it this way:

This word chalepos was used to denote spoken words that were hurtful, harsh, cruel, ruthless, cutting, wounding, and therefore hard to bear. But it was also used to describe animals that were vicious, ferocious, fierce, unruly, uncontrollable, unpredictable, and dangerous. In nearly every place where this word is used in secular literature of the ancient world, it depicts something said that is harmful or an environment besieged with high risk or danger.

I think the point is made that we should sleep with one eye open in these times. Even physical harm can occur with these people and they are not below putting killing on their list of things they want to do. As we break out the various terms from their full meanings, you will see I'm not exaggerating when I say that.

No Fear

Before we get into the specifics it is important to understand how we should feel about the times we live in. As each of the various terms are studied and dissected, one could easily get depressed or live in fear of what these people are capable of doing overall, let alone to us personally. But again, a closer look at the Greek word used for "perilous" and the only other time it is used in the New Testament will help us set our approach and attitude so that it is uplifting and not fearful. This Greek word is also seen in describing the two demon-possessed men in **Matthew 8:28**:

When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They came out of the tombs and were so violent that no one could go through that area. (NLT)

As the narrative suggests, going anywhere near these two men was a dangerous thing and no one dared do it. The implication is that death would ensue and most likely did for some. But we need to recognize someone who wasn't afraid to see them. Jesus didn't hesitate to go to them because He was greater than the demons in these men. So are these dangerous times, yes. But should we be fearful, no. Again, I turn to the same article from Renner to tie a ribbon on this lesson:

Because the word "perilous," the Greek word chalepos, is used to describe the demon-possessed men in Matthew 8:28, I personally believe that the Holy Spirit was warning us that demonic activity will be released in the last days that will bring about hurtful, harsh, cruel, ruthless, cutting, wounding situations that will be emotionally hard to bear. As a result of demonic activity, the world will become a place that is vicious, ferocious, fierce, unruly, uncontrollable, unpredictable, and dangerous. We are living in a generation that faces threats that no other generation has ever known. As always, the Holy Spirit was correct in what He was trying to tell us.

So how should we as believers respond to all of this?

Should we stay in our houses, close the blinds, and hide from what's going on in the world?

Should we never fly on a plane again or take public transportation?

Should we stop sending our children to public schools?

What should we do in response to these Spirit-predicted truths and the external reality that continually faces us in the world today?

Instead of retreating in fear, you and I must accept the challenge to step forward as Jesus did when He encountered the demon-possessed men of the Gadarenes. What terrified other people and made them retreat in fear is exactly what beckoned Jesus to action. In this hour, we must not retreat in fear!