

COMMENTARY

1 The introductory phrase “mark [*ginōskō*, GK 1182; cf. 1:18; Gal 3:7] this” calls for discernment. Paul reminds Timothy that there will be “terrible” (*chalepos*, GK 5901; cf. Mt 8:28, “violent”; Isa 18:2 [LXX], “aggressive”; Ignatius, *Pol.* 4:1, “evils”) times “in the last days” (cf. Ac 2:17; Jas 5:3; also Heb 1:2; 2 Pe 3:3; Jude 17–18). Rebellion will run rampant.

The defections of Paul’s coworkers (1:15; 4:11) and the presence of heretics in the Ephesian church, in keeping with Paul’s own prediction (cf. Ac 20:29–31), are clear signs that the “last days” (i.e., the days prior to Christ’s return) are upon the church. As Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, believers must be “wise” in how they live and “make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:15–16).

2–5 The apostle proceeds to elaborate on the terrible conditions predicted for the last days, listing no fewer than nineteen negative characteristics (see the vice list in 1 Ti 1:9–11). A chiasmic pattern can be discerned, with *diaboloi* (“slanders,” perhaps linked to the devil, *diabolos*, cf. 2:26; see Knight, 429–30) as the center and emphatic exclamation point (see Quinn and Wacker, 713–23). “People” (*anthrōpoi*, GK 476, used inclusively) will be

- lovers of themselves (*philautoi*, GK 5796; only here in the NT; cf. Philo, *Leg.* 1.49),
- lovers of money (*philargyroi*, GK 5795; cf. Lk 16:14; see also *T. Levi* 17.11),
- boastful (*alazones*, GK 225; cf. Ro 1:30; see also 1 Jn 2:16; Jas 4:16),
- proud (*hyperēphanoi*, GK 5662; cf. Lk 1:51; Ro 1:30; Jas 4:6; 1 Pe 5:5),
- abusive (*blasphēmoi*, GK 1061; cf. Ac 6:11; 1 Ti 1:13; 2 Pe 2:11),
- disobedient to their parents (*goneusin apeitheis*, GK 579; Ro 1:30; Tit 1:16; 3:3),
- ungrateful (*acharistoi*, GK 940; cf. Lk 6:35; see also Sir 29:17, 25; Wis 16:29),
- unholy (*anosioi*, GK 495; cf. 1 Ti 1:9),
- without love (*astorgoi*, GK 845; cf. Ro 1:31; see also Ro 12:10),
- unforgiving (*aspondoi*, GK 836; only here in the NT),
- slanderous (*diaboloi*, GK 1333; cf. 1 Ti 3:11; Tit 2:3),
- without self-control (*akrateis*, GK 203; only here in the NT; cf. Pr 27:20 [LXX]),
- brutal (*anēmeroi*, GK 466; only here in the NT),
- not lovers of the good (*aphilagathoi*, GK 920; only here in the NT),
- treacherous (*prodotai*, GK 4595; cf. Lk 6:16; Judas; Ac 7:52; see also 2 Macc 5:15; 10:13, 22),
- rash (*propeteis*, GK 4637; cf. Ac 19:36; see also Pr 10:14; 13:3 [LXX]; Sir 9:18),
- conceited (*tetyphōmenoi*, GK 5605; cf. 1 Ti 3:6; 6:4),

- lovers of pleasure (*philēdonoi*, [GK 5798](#)) rather than lovers of God (*philotheoi*, [GK 5806](#); both only here in the NT), and, in summary,
- having a form of godliness (*morphōsineusebeias*, [GK 3673](#), [2354](#); cf. [Ro 2:20](#); [1 Ti 6:3](#)) but denying its power (*dynamis*, [GK 1539](#); cf. [1:7](#), [8](#); for the whole concept, see esp. [Tit 1:16](#)).

If “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light,” it is not surprising “if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” ([2 Co 11:14–15](#)). This is what makes the false teachers so dangerous, and this is why their true motives must be unmasked and their identity revealed (note the naming of specific heretics in the [PE](#)).

The list is striking for its rich and rare vocabulary. As many as seven terms occur only here in the NT, and six further expressions are found elsewhere only once (for extrabiblical references, see [BDAG](#)). The present list bears the closest affinity to the vice list in [Romans 1:29–32](#) (four terms shared). As to literary form, four of the attributes focus on people’s misdirected love: “lovers of themselves,” “lovers of money,” “not lovers of good,” “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,” with the first and the last terms enveloping the entire list by way of chiasm. Eight traits relate to the lack of a certain virtue (most beginning with an *alpha* privative): “boastful,” “disobedient to their parents,” “ungrateful,” “unholy,” “without love,” “unforgiving,” “without self-control,” “not lovers of the good.”

Some terms relate to attitude and others to the manifestation of such attitudes in speech or action. What they have in common is godless self-centeredness (cf. Stott, *Message of 2 Timothy*, [86](#)). The list is not intended as a comprehensive description of depraved humanity; rather, the desired effect is moral outrage. This is how evil people will be in the last days, and by implication, this is the true nature of the false teachers in the Ephesian church (cf. [1 Ti 1:9–11](#)). Paul’s advice for Timothy is succinct: “Have nothing to do with them” (*apotrepō*, [GK 706](#); cf. [2:19](#), [21](#); the present tense may be durative). There is no basis for fellowship with the heretics in the church.

6–7 The connection to vv. [1–5](#) is more obvious in the original, which links the heretics to end-time prophecy by the conjunction “for” (*gar*, [GK 1142](#); untranslated in the [NIV](#)). The “people” (v. [2](#)) with whom Timothy is to “have nothing to do” (v. [5](#)) are now described as those who, first, “worm their way [*endynō*, [GK 1905](#); cf. [Gal 2:4](#); [Jude 4](#); [2 Pe 2:1](#)] into homes” (cf. [Tit 1:11](#)), and second, who “gain control [*aichmalōtizō*, [GK 170](#); a stronger translation such as “overpower” seems preferable in light of the NT parallels ([Lk 21:24](#); [Ro 7:23](#); [2 Co 10:5](#))] over weak-willed women [*gynaikaria*, [GK 1220](#); cf. Epictetus, *Disc.* 2.18.18; 2.22.24; etc.; always a belittling word, such as “pretty,” “frail,” or “little woman”].”

Baugh, 489–90, observes that, while the “typical large Greek home had a clear demarcation between the public areas of the house and the women’s quarters (often on a second story),” a man might gain access as a “permanent guest under the patronage of the mistress of the house as a teacher or as a tutor for the children.” If the man’s motives were deceitful, this obviously created a host of difficulties, not the least of which was that caused by the spiritual subversion of the home away from the truth of the gospel by false teaching.

As noted in [1 Timothy 2:14–15](#), women are more vulnerable than men and if unprotected can become an easy prey of Satan (cf. [Ge 3](#)) as he uses these heretics for his destructive purposes. Paul’s concern for women’s preservation from the evil one (among other things) led him in [1 Timothy 2:12](#) (see [comments](#) there) to reserve authoritative teaching and governing roles in the church for men. It also stood behind his encouragement for younger widows to get remarried ([1 Ti 5:11–15](#); cf. [5:6](#)). The latter reference, too, speaks of these women “living for pleasure,” being “overcome” by “sensual desires” ([1 Ti 5:11](#)) and needing to focus on their domestic duties ([1 Ti 5:14](#); cf. v. [13](#)) in order not to fall prey to Satan ([1 Ti 5:15](#); cf. [1 Ti 2:14–15](#); for ancient references, see Fee, [273–74](#)).

These women are described by a series of participles: (1) “loaded down [*sesōreumena*, [GK 5397](#); cf. [Ro 12:20](#) citing [Pr 25:22](#); [Barn. 4:6](#); Josephus, *J.W.* [4.380](#); [6.431](#)] with sins” (the perfect expresses a present settled state of being); (2) “swayed [a bit strong; *agomena*, [GK 72](#), means “guided” or “led”; positively in [Ro 8:14](#) and [Gal 5:18](#); negatively in [1 Co 12:2](#)] by all kinds of evil desires [*epithymia*, [GK 2123](#); see esp. [Tit 3:3](#); cf. [1 Ti 6:9](#); [2 Ti 2:22](#); [4:3](#); [Tit 2:12](#)]”; and (3) always “learning [*manthanonta*, [GK 3443](#); cf. [1 Ti 2:11](#)] but never able” (cf. [2 Ti 3:15](#)) to come to a full knowledge of “the truth” (cf. [1 Ti 2:4](#); [2 Ti 2:25](#); [Tit 1:1](#); similarly, [Eph 4:14](#)).

The overall picture is one of lack of dignity and self-restraint, of both moral and mental weakness, of bondage to one’s sinful desires, and of a cycle of futility as far as true knowledge is concerned. Such knowledge involves more than passive listening; it requires action as well ([1 Ti 5:4](#), [13](#); [2 Ti 3:14](#); [Tit 3:14](#); cf. [Jas 1:22–25](#)).

8 Yet the greater blame is laid squarely not on the victims but on the perpetrators of the false teaching. Drawing on extrabiblical information regarding the identity of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses ([CD 5:19](#); Pliny, *Nat.* [30.2.11](#) [¹ AD 77]; *Tg. Ps.-J. to Ex 7:11–12*), Paul likens the false teachers to “Jannes” and “Jambres” (cf. [Ex 7:11](#), [22](#); [9:11](#)), men who “opposed” (*anthistēmi*, [GK 468](#); in [4:15](#) with reference to “Alexander the metal-worker”; cf. [Gal 2:11](#)) the truth as championed by Moses (presumably, Timothy stands to

Paul as Aaron did to Moses; cf. Johnson, 85). Like Jude, Paul employs typology, linking OT figures with present ones. Just as the attacks against Moses were unsuccessful, so the heretics will not prevail against Timothy (see Quinn and Wacker, 727–33; Marshall, 778).

The heretics oppose the truth because of their “depraved [*katēphtharmenoi*, GK 2967; cf. 1 Ti 6:5] minds.” Yet it is they who are “rejected” (*adokimoi*, GK 99; see esp. Tit 1:16; cf. Ro 1:28; 1 Co 9:27; 2 Co 13:5–7; Heb 6:8) as far as the faith is concerned.

9 In the end, these opponents are not going to “get very far” (*prokoptō*, GK 4621; see comments at 2:16; 3:13) because “their folly” (*anoia*, GK 486; cf. Lk 6:11; OT wisdom literature: Pr 14:8; 22:15; Ecc 11:10 [LXX]) will be “clear [*ekdēlos*, GK 1684; only here in the NT] to everyone.” This ought to reassure Timothy in his efforts. Yet he must also keep in mind that there is the real danger of doing nothing, of exhibiting a false tolerance that fails to take charge and to confront the heresy that threatens the spiritual well-being of the church.