

Fact Sheet for **“A Fundamental Law of Humanity”**
2 Timothy 3:1-15

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Our physical world has some fundamental laws. One is entropy. One is gravity. And there are others. But there are some fundamental laws of humanity also. One is death. And one of the others is a fallen nature. Every person on this planet has inherited from Adam and Eve the inborn tendency to do the wrong thing. It's there at conception. It's there when we die. This has been called “original sin” by theologians. We know this to be true from the opening chapters of Genesis. And Genesis 6:5 is the result if we are left to ourselves. But for the Christian God has given us help. First we have the Bible. This is a standard outside of ourselves that clearly speaks of what God hates and of what he desires in us. But secondly we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us, who works not only with our consciences but also with our ability, to choose what God's desires for us. The real hitch is, “What will you choose to do?” We all have failed at times to choose well, but as a whole we as Christians are certainly going in the right direction.

Now Christians are the only ones who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And we are really the only ones who can consistently and correctly apply the scripture (1 Corinthians 2:12, 14). Therefore it should be of no surprise when company executives make decisions out of greed that negatively influences people, or even the company itself. Remember that fundamental law of humanity... original sin. It should likewise be of no surprise when non-Christian politicians make some horrible laws. But there are a few things we can do. 1st – Pay attention to your choices. Choose what God wants. 2nd – Judge people by their character as well as their words, but not primarily by their popularity or influence..

Timothy was dealing with some false teachers at Ephesus who had some influence in the church. Look at their character and consider how Paul directs Timothy.

ESV 1 ¶ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, 4 treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Paul wrote about “latter times” in his first letter to Timothy (4:1-3). The “last days” or “latter times” are still future to us. It will get really bad then, but a taste of it existed in both Timothy's day and exists in ours. It is seen when Original Sin blooms in people's lives. Here will be the character of people in the last days. They will be...

lovers of self – self-centered
lovers of money (Compare 1 Timothy 6:9-10)
proud – braggart, show-off
arrogant – proud
abusive – insulting
disobedient to their parents
ungrateful – not thankful
unholy – irreverent
heartless – unloving
unappeasable – irreconcilable, unforgiving
slanderous – This same word is used to describe the devil in Matthew 4:1.
without self-control
brutal – vicious
not loving good
treacherous – betrayer, traitor
reckless - rash

**swollen with conceit – puffed-up
lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God
having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power**

Although these characteristics are a prediction of what people will be like in the last days, it is clear that Paul considered them to be present in Ephesus with the false teachers. In Ephesus those who were teaching errant theology displayed these characteristics and were negatively impacting some of the weaker members of that society in Ephesus. Paul instructed Timothy to “avoid such people.”

⁶ For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, (1) burdened with sins and (2) led astray by various passions, ⁷ (3) always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

Notice that it was these women who were “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.” Given the character of these false teachers it would be of no surprise if some of them were involved in immorality with these women.

⁸ Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.

Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned in the OT, but there was a widespread Jewish legend about two of Pharaoh’s magicians who opposed Moses and lost (See Exodus 7:11; 9:11). These corrupt men in Ephesus also opposed the truth. They were disqualified therefore in regard to any claim to be teaching the faith.

⁹ But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men.

Now Paul makes a huge contrast with Timothy.

¹⁰ ¶ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra-- which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Paul, the apostle, tells Timothy to follow his teaching and example. That included persecution which awaits everyone who wants to live a godly life for Christ. This can be subtle or overt.

¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Impostors – charlatans

Remember that fundamental law of humanity, original sin. Paul makes a huge contrast with Timothy again.

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul instructed Timothy to look at his (Paul’s) teaching and example and at the sacred writings (which for Timothy would have been the OT). What should we do?

1. Pay attention to the Bible (both OT and NT). Eagerly seek after what God desires from you.
2. Don’t be surprised when non-Christians do things that are consistent with that fundamental law of original sin.
3. Learn to judge people by their character as well as their words.