

2 Timothy 3:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,
deceiving, and being deceived.

Analysis

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. While godly people suffer persecution, evil advances unhindered—temporarily. "Evil men and seducers" (ponēroi de anthrōpoi kai goētes, πονηροὶ δὲ ἄνθρωποι καὶ γόητες). Ponēros (πονηρός) means evil, wicked, morally corrupt. Goēs (γόης) means sorcerer, deceiver, imposter—originally referred to magicians chanting spells, later to any charlatan or fraud. These are the false teachers from verses 1-9.

"Shall wax worse and worse" (prokopsousin epi to cheiron, προκόψουσιν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον). The verb prokoptō (προκόπτω) means advance, progress, move forward—but ironically toward "worse" (cheiron, χεῖρον), not better. Their "progress" is moral regress. Sin has progressive character—one evil leads to greater evil, creating downward spiral. Verse 9 promised limits to their advance; this verse acknowledges they will worsen before being stopped.

The tragic cycle: "deceiving, and being deceived" (planōntes kai planōmenoi, πλανῶντες καὶ πλανώμενοι). Planaō (πλανάω) means lead astray, deceive, cause to wander. Present participles indicate ongoing action. They actively deceive others while simultaneously being deceived themselves. False teachers aren't merely innocent victims of error but willing participants. Yet they're also deluded, believing their own lies. Satan, the ultimate deceiver, binds them in deception while using them to deceive others. This is the horrifying spiritual bondage Paul described in 2:26.

Historical Context

History validates Paul's prophecy. Heretical movements consistently progressed from bad to worse: Gnosticism began with subtle syncretism, advanced to radical dualism denying Christ's humanity. Arianism began questioning Christ's deity, progressed to open denial. Each compromise led to greater error. Contemporary examples abound: liberal theology started questioning biblical authority, progressed to denying resurrection and Christ's uniqueness. Moral compromise follows similar pattern: accepting homosexual practice led to celebrating it, now leads to persecuting those who object. Evil accelerates without repentance.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you see contemporary culture and apostate churches 'waxing worse and worse' in moral and theological decline?
2. In what areas might you be deceived while also potentially deceiving others—and how can you pursue truth to break this cycle?
3. How does this sobering reality motivate vigilance, discernment, and commitment to unchanging biblical truth?

Interlinear Text

πονηροὶ	δὲ	ἄνθρωποι	καὶ	γόητες	προκόψουσιν
evil	But	men	and	seducers	shall wax
G4190	G1161	G444	G2532	G1114	G4298
ἐπὶ	τὸ	χεῖρον	πλανώμενοι	καὶ	πλανώμενοι
worse and worse			being deceived	and	being deceived
G1909	G3588	G5501	G4105	G2532	G4105

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 4:1 (Evil): 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 Peter 2:20 (Parallel theme): For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Titus 3:3 (Parallel theme): For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

2 Timothy 3:8 (Parallel theme): Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

Job 12:16 (Parallel theme): With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his.

2 Peter 3:3 (Parallel theme): Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,