

Introduction

I think that most people would agree that we are living in difficult times, with many things that a lot of people are talking about. Here are a few

examples of the difficult issues of our day:

- Economic pressures
- War and rumours of wars
- Global climate consideration
- Battle of the sexes
- Fight for the minds and control of our children
- Racism
- Secularism vs. religion

Q – From this list, which of these do you consider to be most important or controversial?

The bible speaks of this time that we are now in as the “last days” (which is also called the “latter days”, the “latter times” and the “last hour”). These terms are frequently used in scripture:

Genesis 49:1

And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the **last days**..."

Micah 4:1

Now it shall come to pass in the **latter days**
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And peoples shall flow to it.

Q – What do you think it means by these phrases?

This phrase means **future times**, as compared to the times of the patriarchs (Abraham, Moses, etc.), Judges (Gideon, Samson, etc.), kings (David, Solomon, etc.), and prophets (Elijah, Jeremiah, etc.). The Jews expected this to be the times of the Messiah, and they expected it to be a long reign under his dominion, where his kingdom would be forever and that his government would be forever. However, the writers of the New Testament understood this to be the times of the gospel:

Hebrews 1:1,2

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in **these last days** spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Acts 2:17

'AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS **IN THE LAST DAYS**, SAYS GOD, THAT I WILL POUR OUT OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH; YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS.



1 Peter 1:18-20

... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in **these last times** for you

1 John 2:18

Little children, it is **the last hour**; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

Jude 1:17,18

But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in **the last time** who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

These are the times of the Messiah (Jesus), which is the last era and the times that we are now living in. It is therefore extremely important for every believer to understand the characteristics of the time (what people are like) and how we should strive to be different.

Q – How could we still be in the “last days” after almost 2000 years of history? Why is this period so long?

These times are clearly described in Paul’s second letter to Timothy. He encouraged Timothy to be faithful, diligent and hard-working and he also wanted him to understand the difficulties that he would face because of the times that he was in. We are also in difficult times, as we are no doubt at the end of the “last days”. It is therefore important for us to be faithful, diligent and hard-working, as well as understanding of the difficulties that we are facing.

In this series we are going to have an indebt look at what Paul said so that we also will know what to expect and be prepared. We will also consider 4 ways in which we will be opposed in these last days:

- False teachers
- Scoffers
- Deceiving spirits
- Doctrines taught by demons

Paul mentioned 19 characteristics of people in the last days. These characteristics are the way that people are becoming more and more today, and are infiltrating the church as well. We must be aware of the subtility of the things that we are hearing and are being taught, so that we are not deceived by them. In this series, I will be dealing with each of these characteristics in greater detail. Here is Paul’s list of godlessness of the last days:

2 Timothy 3:1-7

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents,



unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

In other translations the word “perilous” is translated “times of trouble”, “very hard times”, “terrible times”, “times of difficulty”, “violent periods of time”, “grievous times”, and even one translation says “the culture of society *will become extremely fierce and difficult for the people of God.*”

Q – Does this make you feel a bit uncomfortable?

These are the times that we are in, and they would be very difficult to deal with without the Lord. But no matter what these troublesome times bring forth, we are promised strength and help to overcome. This is what Jesus said:

Matthew 11:28-30

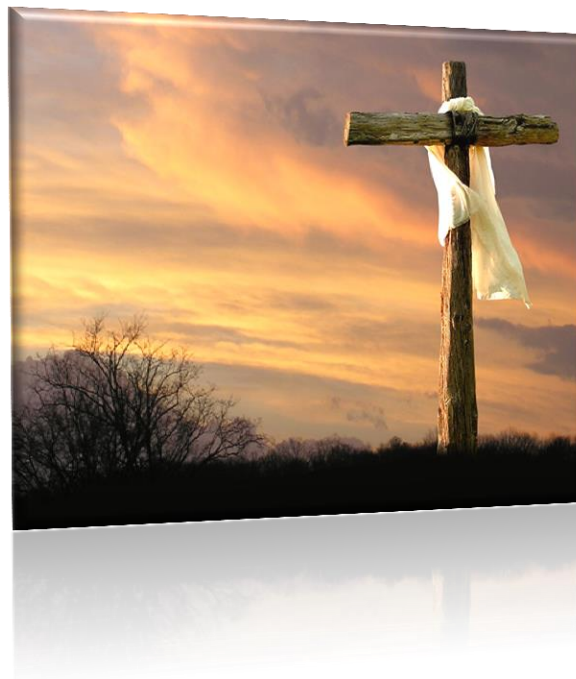
Come to Me, all *you* who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

Paul said this:

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.

So, it is true that we are in the “Last Days” and that these are troublesome times. But don’t be troubled or afraid. We are promised by God to receive help to deal with whatever we face in these difficult days. Jesus has overcome the world and so will we through Him!



Selfishness

No one likes a selfish person, and no one wants to be considered a selfish person. Yet we read in the bible that selfishness will be one of the increasing characteristics of many people in the last days:

2 Timothy 3:1,2

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be **lovers of themselves**, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...

This is the first thing that Paul mentioned, and all of the other characteristics that he mentions are based on this one thing.



Q – How do you describe a selfish person?

Here are 4 ways in which selfishness is described in the New Testament:

1. Selfish ambition (vainglory)

Philippians 2:3

Let nothing be done through **selfish ambition** or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Q – Is it wrong to have ambition?

This phrase (*selfish ambition*) is from the Greek word kenodoxia and means *empty glorying*, that is, *self-conceit*: - vain-glory. This is a person that is conceited and does everything for personal attention, fame or glory.

2. Self-willed

Titus 1:7

For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not **self-willed**, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money...

2 Peter 2:9,10

...then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, **self-willed**. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries...



Q – Is this the same as being strong-minded (like a strong-willed child)?

This phrase (*self-willed*) comes from the Greek word *authadēs*, and is described as one who pleases himself, wilful, obstinate; arrogant, stubborn. This person never admits that they are wrong and wants things their way no matter what.

3. Self-indulgence

Matthew 23:25

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and ***self-indulgence***.

Q – Is this suggesting that we should never “treat ourselves” a little bit?



The Greek word here is *akrasia*, which means: want of self-restraint: - excess, incontinency. In other words, this suggests that there is no will to control cravings or desires.

4. Self-imposed religion

Colossians 2:23

These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in ***self-imposed religion***, false humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

This Greek word - *ethelothrēskeia* – means: *voluntary (arbitrary and unwarranted) piety*, that is, *sanctimony*: - will worship. This person wants to look good on the outside without any change on the inside.

Q – Where does selfishness come from?

James 3:13-16

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and ***self-seeking*** in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

Q - Is it true that we must love ourselves before we can love others?

A recently published article gave 7 reasons why it is important to love yourself. Here are their arguments – do they hold up against scripture?

Argument #1 - *When you love who you are, you accept who you are –*

Wrong! When you accept that God has made you for a purpose, you accept who you are!

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Argument #2 – *When you love yourself, it gives you confidence and approval* –

Wrong! When you love yourself, it leads to self-confidence and arrogance.

Luke 18:10-14

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."



Argument # 3 – *When you love yourself, you will avoid self-reproach (disapproval)* –
Wrong! You will become confused.

James 3:16

For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

(See also 1 John 3:19-22)

Argument # 4 – *When you love yourself, you will look better* –
Wrong! Not to God!

Proverbs 6:16,17

These six things the LORD hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,



Isaiah 2:11

Isa 2:11 - The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Argument # 5 – *If you love yourself, you are more likely to have a better family life* –
Wrong! When you give yourself for your family, you are more likely to have a better family.

Ephesians 5:25-29

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought

to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.

Argument # 6 – *If you love yourself, you will have happier children –*

Wrong! When you fear the LORD, you will be happy and your children will follow you!

Psalm 128:2-5

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the LORD.



Argument # 7 – *When you love yourself, the world around you changes –*

True! Our world is changing as more people are loving themselves, but not for good!

2 Timothy 3:1,2

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,



In the world, we are being taught to be self-seeking. Jesus teaches self-denial:

Matthew 16:24,25

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

So here is a summary of what we have learned so far:

- Selfishness is huge, and is destroying our entire society.
- It is an agenda of the evil one
- It is a natural desire of our sinful nature
- Don't be surprised when you see it in the world
- Don't allow it to consume you! Ask God to search your heart and remove it!

Lovers Of Money

There is much to be said about money these days. Some say that money is the root of all evil, while many would agree that money is one of the necessities of life.

Q – Is money a bad thing of itself?

When Paul wrote to Timothy about the last days, the second thing that he mentioned was that men would be “lovers of money”:

2 Timothy 3:1,2

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, **lovers of money**, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...

Q - What does the bible actually say about wealth and riches?

There are some very hard things said in scripture about rich people, such as:

#1 - It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven:



Matthew 19:23,24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

#2 - Beware of covetousness (greed):

Luke 12:15-21

15 - And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." **16** - Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. **17** - And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' **18** - So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. **19** - And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.'" **20** - But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' **21** - "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."



#3 - The rich will fade away in his pursuits:

James 1:9-11

9 - Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, **10** - but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. **11** - For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

#4 - The rich are often oppressors:

James 2:5-7

5 - Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **6** - But you have dishonoured the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? **7** - Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?



#5 - The rich are often arrogant:

James 4:13-17

13 - Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; **14** - whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. **15** - Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." **16** - But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. **17** - Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.

#6 - The actions of the rich often condemn them:

James 5:1-6

1 - Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you*! **2** - Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. **3** - Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. **4** - Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. **5** - You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. **6** - You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

Q – is it sinful to want to be rich?

However, there were many rich believers in the Old Testament:

Job

Job 1:1-3

1 - There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. **2** - And seven sons and three daughters were born to him. **3** - Also, his possessions were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East.

Abraham

Genesis 13:2

Abram *was* very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

Also, **Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon,** etc.



There were also several in the New Testament:

Joseph of Arimathea

Matthew 27:57

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:2-10

2 - Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. **3** - And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. **4** - So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. **5** - And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." **6** - So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. **7** - But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." **8** - Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." **9** - And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; **10** for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Here are a few others who had wealth in the New Testament:

- Women supporters of Christ (Luke 8:3)
- Roman Centurion (Luke 7:1-5)

- Many generous believers (Acts 4:4,5)
- Barnabas (Acts 4:6,7)
- Philemon (Philemon 1)

Also, the bible speaks very positively about becoming rich:

Pro 10:22 - The blessing of the LORD makes *one* rich,
And He adds no sorrow with it.

Pro 11:25 - The generous soul will be made rich,
And he who waters will also be watered himself.

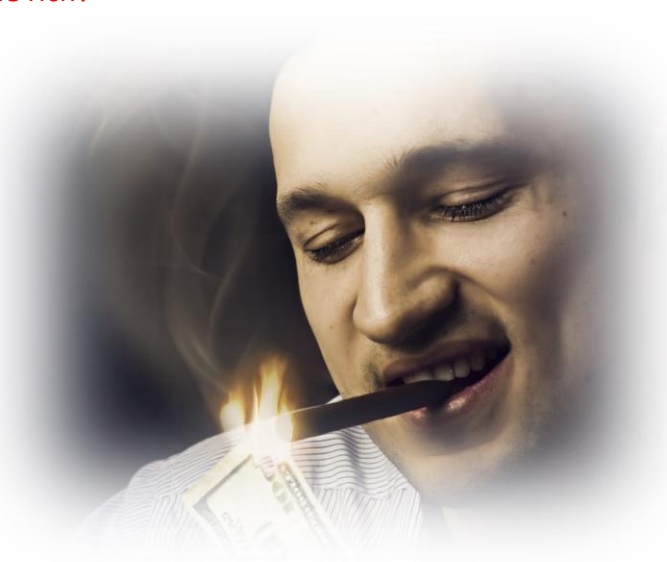
Pro 13:4 - The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.

Q – Is it sinful to want to become rich?

What is the real issue? Greed!

Proverbs 23:4
Do not overwork to be rich;
Because of your own
understanding, cease!

Proverbs 28:20
A faithful man will abound with
blessings,
But he who hastens to be rich
will not go unpunished.



Luke 12:29-34
29 - "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. **30** - For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. **31** - But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. **32** - "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** - Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. **34** - For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

1 Timothy 6:6-10
6 - Now godliness with contentment is great gain. **7** - For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. **8** - And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. **9** - But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. **10** - For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil,

for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

17 - Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. **18** - Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, **19** - storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

So, what is the bible telling us?

- Wealth in itself is not evil
- But the love of money can easily lead you astray, making it very difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God
- Now, in these last days, many are lovers of money and are falling into the trap of the devil
- Don't let it happen to you, but be rich in good works, and store up for yourself treasure in heaven!



Boasters, Proud, Blasphemers

In this series we are looking at the characteristics of people in these last days and so far, we have already considered two:

...men will be lovers of themselves...
...lovers of money...

The next three are very similar and in some ways almost connected:

2Ti 3:2 - For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, **boasters, proud, blasphemers**, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,



Q - How are they different? What is the difference between a boaster, someone who is proud, and a blasphemer?

By studying these words in their original language, we will get a better understanding of what the Apostle Paul intended. It is much easier to do this these days, thanks to the efforts of many scholars who worked diligently to make this information available. So, what do these words really mean?

Boasters –

Greek: *alazōn* – an empty pretender (Thayer). Primarily signifies “a wanderer about the country” (from ale, "wandering"), "a vagabond", hence, "an impostor. Valuing themselves beyond all others.



expensive cars, yet have

In other words, boasters are those who claim to themselves what they do not possess, and glory in it. This is closely connected with pride. A man who has an excessive self-conceit, will not be slow to proclaim his own merits to those around him. (Albert Barnes)



What is meant here by boasters is that there will be people that make a big deal or a show of things that they don't have. A good example would be those who buy designer clothes or hire little or no money at

home. They boast of that which they really do not possess. This will happen more and more in the last days.

Proud

Greek: *huoperephanos* - signifies "showing oneself above others, preeminent" (huper, "above," phainomai, "to appear, be manifest"); it is always used in Scripture in the bad sense of "arrogant, disdainful, proud,"

Having inordinate self-esteem; possessing a high or unreasonable conceit of one's own excellence, either of body or mind. (Webster)

This is saying that there will be those who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. They will consider themselves better than others when they really are not. They will think that they can do more than they actually are able to do.

Q – Based on the Greek definitions, what is the major difference between the boaster and the proud?



Did you figure it out? Boasting is to do with an outward show, but pride is to do with the thoughts of the heart. Sometimes those who are boasting have very low self-esteem, but those who are proud think that they are better than others.

Blasphemers

Greek: *blasphēmos* - speaking evil, slanderous, reproachful (fault-finding), railing, abusive



Blasphemy has two implications:

- To blaspheme against men is to speak evil of anyone, to injure by words, or to blame unjustly. This is an increasing trait among people today.
- To blaspheme against God means to speak of him unjustly, to ascribe to him acts and attributes which he does not possess or to speak irreverently, flippantly, or profanely. It also means to say or do anything by which his name or honour is insulted, or to attempt to do or say a thing which belongs to him alone, or which he only can do. (Barnes)

Q – How is blasphemy different from the boastful and the proud?

Boasting is to do with an outward show, pride is to do with the thoughts of the heart, blasphemy is to do with what comes out of the mouth.

Put the three together and what do you get?

“...They will boast of great things as they strut around in their arrogant pride and mock all that is right.” (*The Passion Translation*)

Q - Who are the boastful, the proud, and the blasphemers? After all, who would do such things?

The wicked:

Psalm 10:3

For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire;
He blesses the greedy *and* renounces the LORD.

Psalm 94:3,4

3 - LORD, how long will the wicked,
How long will the wicked triumph?
4 - They utter speech, *and* speak insolent things;
All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.

Isaiah 47:10

"For you have trusted in your wickedness;
You have said, 'No one sees me';
Your wisdom and your knowledge have warped you;
And you have said in your heart,
'I *am*, and *there is* no one else besides me.'

Proverbs 25:14

Whoever falsely boasts of giving
Is like clouds and wind without rain.

The wealthy:

Psalm 49:6,7

6 - Those who trust in their wealth
And boast in the multitude of their riches,
7 - None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him—

The mighty:

Psalm 52:1-7

1 - Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man?
The goodness of God *endures* continually.
2 - Your tongue devises destruction,



Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3 - You love evil more than good,
Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah

4 - You love all devouring words,
You deceitful tongue.

5 - God shall likewise destroy you forever;
He shall take you away, and pluck you out of *your* dwelling place,
And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah

- The righteous also shall see and fear,
And shall laugh at him, *saying*,

7 - "Here is the man *who* did not make God his strength,
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness."

The self-righteous:

Romans 2:17-23

17 - Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, **18** - and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, **19** - and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, **20** - an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. **21** - You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? **22** - You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? **23** - You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?



1 Corinthians 4:7,8

7 - For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*? **8** - You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

Some Pastors and ministers boast about their great ministries, or of how many people they have saved. Some Christians often think that they are better than others, or that they have a higher gifting than another. This should not be!

Notice the humility that is encouraged in scripture:

Paul would not speak of himself, even though he heard inexpressible words from heaven:

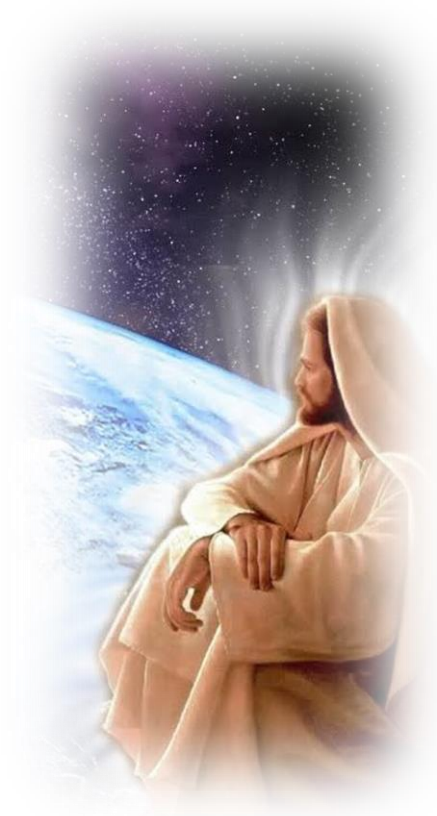
2 Corinthians 12:1-5

1 - It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: **2** - I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. **3** - And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— **4** - how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. **5** - Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities.

John spoke of himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”, but would not even mention his own name:

John 21:20-24

20 - Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, "Lord, who is the one who betrays You?" **21** - Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what *about* this man?" **22** - Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me." **23** - Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what *is that* to you?" **24** - This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.



Remember:

- The opposite of boastful is to outwardly show that we value others and boast of God
- The opposite of pride is to humble ourselves from the heart
- The opposite of blasphemy is sound and wholesome speech from the mouth

Conclusion:

- Don't be surprised when you see people of this age as boasters, who make a big show of things that they don't have.
- Don't be surprised when you have to deal with people who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think.
- Don't be surprised when people speak evil of others and are hurtful with their words, especially towards God.
- Most of all, don't let it happen to you!

Disobedient to Parents

So far, as we have been considering the characteristics of people in these last days, we have seen that men will be:

- ...lovers of themselves...
- ...lovers of money...
- ...boasters, proud, blasphemers

On the surfaces, the next one may not seem to be such an issue, but it actually is:

2Ti 3:2 - For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, **disobedient to parents**, unthankful, unholy,

Q – Does it seem that this is on the rise in our society? If so, why?



The bible tells us very clearly that children must obey their parents:

Exodus 20:12

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Ephesians 6:1-3

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2** "HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER," which is the first commandment with promise: **3** "THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU AND YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH."

Q - Why do you think that God puts such importance on this?

Here are 3 reasons why parental obedience is so important:

#1 - Authority - the breakdown of authority in the family is the catalyst for the breakdown of authority in our society and ultimately causes a lack of respect and fear of God. God is our parent – when we disobey our parents, we are disobeying God. When we disrespect our parents, we disrespect God. The following verses remind us that God is our Father, who must be obeyed:

Isaiah 63:16

Doubtless You *are* our Father,
Though Abraham was ignorant of us,
And Israel does not acknowledge us.
You, O LORD, *are* our Father;
Our Redeemer from Everlasting *is* Your name.

Matthew 6:9
In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

We are also told in scripture that governing authorities are appointed by God and should be obeyed:



Romans 13:1,2

1 - Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.
2 - Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

Q – Are people these days less likely to obey those in government? If so, why?

Parental disobedience was punishable by the law with death:

Leviticus 20:9

'For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood *shall be* upon him.'

Deuteronomy 27:16

'Cursed *is* the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Matthew 15:4

For God commanded, saying, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER'; and, 'HE WHO CURSES FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT TO DEATH.'

Proverbs 20:20

Whoever curses his father or his mother,
His lamp will be put out in deep darkness.

Proverbs 19:26

He who mistreats *his* father *and* chases away *his* mother
Is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

18 - "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and *who*, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, **19** - then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. **20** - And they shall say to the

elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' **21** - Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.

Q – Why was the punishment for parental disobedience so severe?

#2 - Instruction – our parents should educate us in the things that are most important – the issues of life:

Proverbs 1:8

My son, hear the instruction of your father,
And do not forsake the law of your mother;

Proverbs 6:20-23

20 - My son, keep your father's command,
And do not forsake the law of your mother.

21 - Bind them continually upon your heart;
Tie them around your neck.

22 - When you roam, they will lead you;
When you sleep, they will keep you;
And *when* you awake, they will speak with
you.

23 - For the commandment *is* a lamp,
And the law a light;
Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life,



Deuteronomy 6:6,7

6 - "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. **7** - You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

One of the most familiar verses about children is:

Proverbs 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Q – What is the “way that he should go”?

#3 - Prosperity – the bible teaches that it will go well with you when you obey your parents:

Deuteronomy 5:16

'Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Proverbs 1:8,9

8 - My son, hear the instruction of your father,
And do not forsake the law of your mother;
9 - For they *will be* a graceful ornament on your head,
And chains about your neck.

Deuteronomy 27:16

'Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'

Q – Is there ever a time when we should not obey our parents?

Here are five important things to consider:

#1 – Once married, we are no longer under the direct authority of our parents.

Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.



#2 - We should always show respect to our parents, even if they are difficult.

There is a respectable way to disagree. Saul's son, Jonathan, is an example of a son who showed respect to his father even though his father was wrong. Saul was jealous of David and was planning to kill him. Jonathan therefore gave David permission to be absent in order to test his father's reaction and to discover whether his desire to kill David was actually true. Saul's response was not good:

1 Samuel 20:30-34

30 - Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious *woman*! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? **31** - For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." **32** - And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be killed? What has he done?" **33** - Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David. **34** - So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.

Although Jonathan was very angry, he did not disrespect his father, even though he ended up helping David. He continued to serve his father, which eventually cost him his life.

Q – Did Jonathan do the right thing?

#3 – We must obey God over all others, including our parents.

Matthew 10:35-37

35 - For I have come to 'SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW'; **36** - and 'A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THOSE OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.' **37** - He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Matthew 12:46-50

46 - While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. **47** - Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You." **48** - But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" **49** - And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! **50** - For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

#4 - Parents must not use this charge as a means of manipulating their children.

Ephesians 6:4

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Colossians 3:21

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Q – Why does it speak to fathers, but not to mothers?

#5 - The problem of disobedience to parents brings shame and a curse.

Proverbs 30:11

*There is a generation that curses its father,
And does not bless its mother.*

Proverbs
He who

19:26



mistreats *his* father *and* chases away *his* mother
Is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.

Malachi 4;5,6

5 - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

6 - And he will turn
The hearts of the fathers to the children,
And the hearts of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

Summary:

- Parental disobedience is causing a breakdown in our society
- It is the reason why many do not submit to any authority and ultimately God.
- It is the reason why so many have not been instructed in the real issues of life.
- It is why so many of us are not experiencing the true prosperity that comes from God.
- We must respect our parents, but not be manipulated when they act contrary to God's ways or purposes.
- As parents, we are responsible to instruct our children in the way of the Lord, not just in what we say, but more so in what we do.
- When we do not obey, we bring a curse upon ourselves.
- This is what is happening in these last days, so we must expect it, yet not do as they do.

The Four “Uns” (*unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving*)

What is an “un”? Those of you who are students of English know that “un” is a prefix which means “not”. Examples of this include unfair; unfelt; unseen; unfitting; unformed; unheard-of, etc. When we say “unfair”, we mean that it is not fair, or when we say that something is “unseen”, we mean that we cannot see it or that it is hidden, and so-forth. In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul speaks of 4 things that men will “not” be in these last days:

2 Timothy 3:2,3

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ***unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving***, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

#1 - The first is “***unthankful***”, which simply means that men will not be thankful in the last days. Ingratitude is a great crime and is an indication of a decline in religion. It is one of the reasons that sinful man becomes futile/empty in thought and ends up in darkness.

Romans 1:21

Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, ***nor were thankful***, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Q – Do you think that this passage suggest that people will be unthankful toward God, or that they will be unthankful in general?



- When we are not thankful, it is usually because we have forgotten the one that has been good to us.

- When we are not thankful, we tend to become negative as we focus on the things that we are unhappy about, which results in bitterness, resentment, fear, and selfishness.

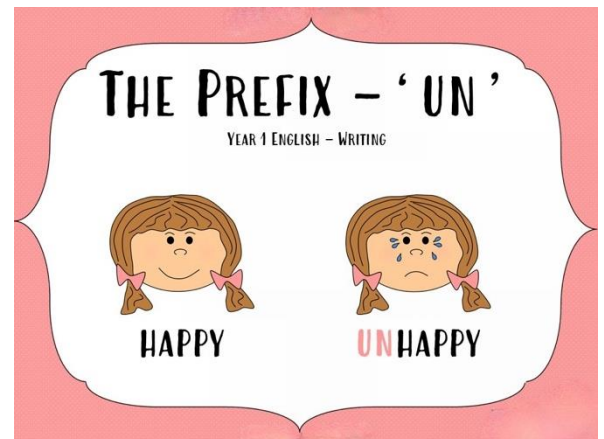
We are told over and over to give thanks to God:

Psalm 50:14

Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High.

Psalm 147:7

Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praises on the harp to our God,



Colossians 3:17

And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Q – Why should we as followers of Jesus be thankful?

1Thesalonians 5:18

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Psalm 100:4,5

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.
For the LORD *is* good;
His mercy *is* everlasting,
And His truth *endures* to all generations.

Psalm 18:48,49

He delivers me from my enemies.
You also lift me up above those who rise against me;
You have delivered me from the violent man.
Therefore I will give thanks to You,
O LORD, among the Gentiles,
And sing praises to Your name.

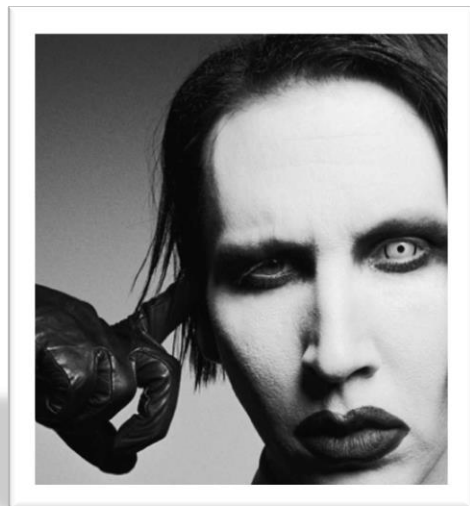
#2 - The second “un” is “**unholy**”. To be holy is to be set apart, separated from sin and unrighteousness. Therefore, to be unholy is the direct opposite. It means to have no regard or reverence for God. It also means to be wicked.

1 Corinthians 3:17

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

1 Peter 1:15, 16

But as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."



This is one of the ways to know a true believer in Christ:

1 Thessalonians 4:7

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

Hebrews 12:14

Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

Q – Does being holy mean that as a believer you never sin?

Here are a few verses in the same letter written by the same person that at first glance may seem to contradict each other:

1 John 1:8-10

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 3:2-10

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother.

#3 – The third “un” is “**unloving**”, and this one needs a little bit more explanation. The original Greek word used here is *as'-tor-gos*, which is defined as “without natural affection”; “unsociable”; “inhuman”; “without affection to kindred”; “hard hearted towards kindred”. This word is also translated: heartless; without natural love; lacking normal affection for their families; no love for others; unkind.

In short, this means that in these last days many will lose the natural love for family and kindred. This is not to be confused with the divide which Jesus makes between families because of the gospel, but this is simply selfishness that replaces what should be the natural love for family members. Examples of this are:

- Parents sending their children away because they don't want to raise them.
- Children running away from their parents due to rebellion.

- Religious orders demanding leaders to leave their wives and families.
- Cults and religions demanding that women or children be sacrificed to a god.
- Unbelieving relatives turning against believing relatives.

It happened to Job:

Job 19:19

All my close friends abhor me,
And those whom I love have turned against me.

It happened to David:

2 Samuel 16:11

And David said to Abishai and all his servants, "See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now *may this* Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him.

It could happen to us!

Matthew 10:21

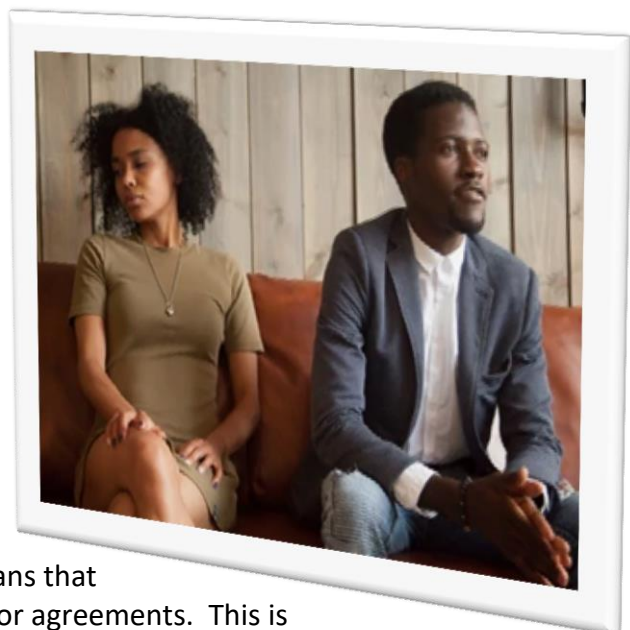
"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.

Q – Would you say that families are becoming more divided these days? If so, why?

4 – The fourth “un” is “**unforgiving**”. Here are a few ways that this word is translated: bitter haters; hateful; refuse to forgive anyone; unappeasable; merciless; refuse to make peace with anyone; trucebreakers; unyielding; unbending. The original Greek makes it even more clear:

Greek: *as'-pon-dos*: unwilling to make a treaty; hence, implacable (ruthless, cruel, rigid), irreconcilable. literally *without libation* (which usually accompanied a treaty), that is, (by implication) *truceless*: - implacable, truce-breaker.

What is meant here by “unforgiving” is that there will be some who will not be willing to be reconciled. They will not forgive, and will not be pacified or calmed no matter what you do. It also means that they will not stick to their oaths, contracts or agreements. This is happening a lot in business and in relationships. These are those who make promises yet never intend to keep them.



Matthew 6:14,15

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Ecclesiastes 5:2-5

Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few.
For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many words.
When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;
For *He has* no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you have vowed—
Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

Summary - here are 4 characteristics of wicked men in these last days:

- **Unthankful** – showing no gratitude for the goodness of God and becoming futile in their imaginations.
- **Unholy** – with no regard or reverence for God, and therefore no reverence for others,
- **Unloving** – losing the natural love for family, friends and all of society.
- **Unforgiving** – who are not willing to be reconciled or forgive, and who will not stick to oaths and promises.

This is the way that the world is and it is becoming worse and worse as we draw nearer to the end. Let's encourage each other to walk opposite the "uns"

Slanderers

It is true that we are living in difficult days and the scriptures have been clear about what to expect during these times. So far, we have considered 10 characteristics of people in the last days. Now we are going to consider number 11:



2 Timothy 3:2

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

2Ti 3:3 - unloving, unforgiving, **slanderers**, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

Q - What does it mean to “slander”?

Cambridge Dictionary - a false spoken statement about someone that damages their reputation, or the making of such a statement.

Webster - the utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation; a false and defamatory oral statement about a person

Greek: *diabolos*

Strong - specifically *Satan* - false accuser, devil, slanderer.

Thayer - prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely, metaphorically applied to a man who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or to side with him. The word literally means “devils”, as Satan is the accuser of the brethren, so people will be like him. Those who charge others falsely. They try to ruin the character or reputation of others. They aim to cause contentions and quarrels.



This is how it is worded in other translations of the bible:

- “...Saying evil of others”;
- ‘...their words will be cruel’;
- “...they will talk about others to hurt them”;
- “...false accusers”;
- “...they will tell lies about people”.

Psalm 31:13

For I hear the **slander** of many;

Fear is on every side;

While they take counsel together against me,

They scheme to take away my life.

Psalm 50:20
You sit *and* speak against your brother;
You **slander** your own mother's son.

Proverbs 10:19
Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips,
And whoever spreads **slander** *is* a fool.

Q – Why do you think that people who slander are compared to snakes?

Slander is poison!

It is the custom in Africa for hunters, when they have killed a poisonous snake, to cut off its head and carefully bury it deep in the ground, a naked foot stepping on one of these fangs would be fatally wounded; the poison would spread in a very short time all through the system. This venom lasts a long time, and is as deadly after the snake is dead as before. The Red Indians used to dip the points of their arrows in this poison; so, if they made the least wound, their victim would be sure to die. The snake's poison is in its teeth; but there is something quite as dangerous, and much more common, in communities, which has its poison on its tongue. Indeed, your chances of escape from a serpent are greater. The worst snakes usually glide away in fear at the approach of man, unless disturbed or attacked. But this creature, whose poison lurks in its tongue, attacks without provocation, and follows up its victim with untiring perseverance. We will tell you his name, so you will always be able to shun him. He is called "Slanderer." He poisons worse than a serpent. Often his venom strikes to the life of a whole family or neighbourhood, destroying all peace and confidence. (*Dictionary of Illustrations.*)



Psalm 140:3
They sharpen their tongues like a serpent;
The poison of asps *is* under their lips. Selah

Romans 3:13
"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN TOMB;
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY HAVE PRACTICED DECEIT";
"THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

Ecclesiastes 10:11
A serpent may bite when *it is* not charmed;
The babbler is no different.

The devil is called the accuser, and slander and lies are his main weapon:

Revelation 12:9,10

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

Q – It is pretty clear that slander is not good, but many have been slandered by others. Is slander really a big deal? Or is it something that should simply be overlooked or forgotten about?

Have you ever been a victim of slander?



The LORD really hates slander:

Proverbs 6:16-19

These six *things* the LORD hates,
Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:
A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
A false witness *who* speaks lies,
And one who **sows discord** among brethren.

Exodus 20:16

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Exodus 23:1

"You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.



Leviticus 19:16

You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD.

Proverbs 20:19

He who goes about *as* a talebearer reveals secrets;
Therefore do not associate with one who flatters
with his lips.

Psalm 101:5
Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor,
Him I will destroy;
The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart,
Him I will not endure.

Some may slander you:

1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "IF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE IS SCARCELY SAVED, WHERE WILL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to *Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.



Don't let it happen to you:

James 3:1-12

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. **2** - For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. **3** - Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. **4** - Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. **5** - Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! **6** - And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. **7** - For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. **8** - But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. **9** - With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. **10** - Out of the same



mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. **11** - Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? **12** - Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

Summary:

- Slander is when we say something incorrectly that will damage the character or reputation of another.
- Don't be surprised when some may bring a bad testimony and even slander you, simply because you are a believer. This is the world that we are living in.
- It is easy to allow our tongues to slip and eventually poison others. Don't let it happen to you!

Without Self-Control, Brutal, Despisers of Good? (Really?)

Let's begin this section with a few questions to consider:

Q - Are people in the world today getting better or worse? Is the behavior of mankind improving, or are we seeing more violence and more hatred? Are people losing control?

Here are 3 more ways that we are told would increase in these last days:

2 Timothy 3:3

...unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, **without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,**

Are these three linked? Let's see:

Without self-control - what does it mean? How is it manifested? (How do we see this in society?)

- Greek: akratēs from α, negative, and κρατος, power.
- Literally, "without strength;" that is, without strength to resist the solicitations of passion, or who readily yield to it. (Albert Barnes)
- Without power, which means without the strength to resist passions; no ability to control fleshly appetites.

Other translations describe it this way:

Uncontrolled; no self-control, out of control, violent, incontinent, impulsively wild, slaves to their desires.



This is the direct opposite to the fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:22,23

22 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. **23** - Against such there is no law.

Q – What happens when men have no self-control?

Where there is no self-control, men become fierce/brutal.

- **Brutal** – what does this mean?



- *anēmeros* - not tame, savage, fierce (Thayer)
- Like beast of prey – applying cruelties and barbarities – particularly against believers. It is said that religion produces gentleness; the want of it makes men rough, harsh, cruel.

Q - What happens when there is no self-control and people are fierce?

Despisers of good – what does this mean?



- Greek: *aphilagathos* - opposed to goodness and good men (Thayer)
- This means that many will not like good works and they will not like anyone who does good.

So, men will have no self-control, become brutal and despisers of good.

Q - Can this happen to believers?

We have no self-control when we are not yielding to the Holy Spirit. This is the reason why so many believers are overcome by sin and bad behavior.

Romans 7:14-24

14 - For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. **15** - For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. **16** - If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that *it is* good. **17** - But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **18** - For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. **19** - For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. **20** - Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. **21** - I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. **22** - For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. **23** - But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. **24** - O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

When sin continues without true repentance two things happen:

- We become defensive and begin to behave badly.
- Sin becomes a stronghold and increases. We become multiple offenders – in other words, we continue to sin and become worse. This is why some are caught up with addictions and why some are angry, or can never admit to wrongdoing.



James 4:1-12

1 -Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires* for pleasure that war in your members? **2** - You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. **3** - You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. **4** - Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** - Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? **6** - But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." **7** - Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **8** - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. **9** - Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. **10** - Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. **11** - Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. **12** - There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

Q – How do we overcome such a struggle?

We must be careful not to follow the pattern of the world:

Ephesians 4:17-32

17 - This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, **18** - having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; **19** - who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. **20** - But you have not so learned Christ, **21** - if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: **22** - that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, **23** - and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24** - and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. **25** - Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," for we are members of one another. **26** - "BE ANGRY, AND DO NOT SIN": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **27** - nor give place to the devil. **28** - Let him who stole no longer, but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. **29** - Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what



is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. **30** - And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** - Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. **32** - And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Summary

- As the world gets further away from the true God, we are seeing more people without any control over their emotions, passions, lusts and selfish desires.
- We are also seeing more cruelty in their pursuits of their passions and in their hatred toward the things of God, even to the point of hatred toward anything that is good.
- This is the world that we are living in, but we must ask the Lord to help us, so that we do not end up doing the same things that they do.

Traitors, Headstrong, Haughty, Lovers of Pleasure

So far, we have looked at these characteristics mentioned by Paul of people in the last days:

2 Timothy 3:2,3

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

This time we are going to consider four more of these at the same time:

2 Timothy 3:4

...traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

First, we must understand what Paul was actually saying when he wrote this:

Traitors – betrayers; Greek *prodotes* - the idea is that they will turn their friends over to the hand of an enemy.

Matthew 24:10

And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.

This word is used of Judas Iscariot:

Luke 6:16

Judas *the son of James*, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.



Q – Have you ever experienced this?

You can expect that in these last days, people who should be your friends may turn on you.



Headstrong – Greek *propets*, which literally means “falling forwards”. It is used metaphorically to signify “precipitate (hurried), rash, reckless.” To act without thinking or restraint. We would use the metaphor “hard-headed”.

Q – Can you think of someone that has hurt either themselves or others by acting before thinking? Do you think that this type of behaviour is increasing?

You can expect that in these last days people will act without thinking, based on their emotions and make bad decisions.



Haughty – Greek *tuphoo*, which means “to wrap in mist or smoke”. It is a metaphor, meaning “to wrap in conceit” or “to make proud”. Today, we would say something like: “full of themselves”.

You can expect that in these last days people will be so full of themselves that they will turn on even their friends without even thinking. Too proud to admit wrong – never truly apologise.

Q – Can you name a celebrity that you would consider to be full of themselves? Is this being encouraged in our society?

Here is how this verse is translated in a few other English translations:

(BBE) False to their friends, acting without thought, lifted up in mind, loving pleasure more than God;

(ERV) People will turn against their friends. They will do foolish things without thinking and will be so proud of themselves. Instead of loving God, they will love pleasure.

(NirV) They will turn against their friends. They will act without thinking. They will think they are better than others. They will love what pleases them instead of loving God.

(NLT) They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God

Q - Is it wrong to seek pleasure?

Ecclesiastes 2:24

Nothing *is* better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

Here is what I have seen: *It is* good and fitting *for one* to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it *is* his heritage. As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this *is* the gift of God. For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps *him* busy with the joy of his heart.



Deuteronomy 12:7

And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

Q – Is there a difference between “rejoicing in your labour” and “loving pleasure”?

There is nothing wrong with enjoying life. However, anything that takes the place of God is an idol, including my own desires. Adam Clarke, a 19th century Methodist theologian, wrote this:



Pleasure, sensual gratification, is their god; and this they love and serve; God they do not.

John Gill, a Baptist theologian, said this:

Lovers of sinful pleasures, or the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, and not God; serving divers lusts and pleasures, and not God; making a god of their belly; sensual idolaters, delighting themselves in their carnal lusts, and not in the service of God.

More and more people are living for pleasure, and some have their own “belly” as the only thing that they chase. Some Christians and even ministers will have their own desires in mind and could cause you problems.

Romans 16:17,18

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Philippians 3:17-19

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Matthew 6:24

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.



You can expect that in these last days people will live for their own pleasure rather than God.

What can you expect in these last days?

1. You can expect, that people who should be your friends may turn on you.
 - a. Don't be surprised, but above all don't fall into the world's pattern.
2. You can expect that people will act without thinking, based on their emotions and make bad decisions.
 - a. Listen to God and ask Him to give you self-control and seek wisdom.
3. You can expect that in these last days that people will be so full of themselves that they will turn on even their friends without even thinking. Too proud to admit wrong – never truly apologise.
 - a. Humble yourself and He will lift you up. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble
4. You can expect that in these last days people will live for their own pleasure rather than God.
 - a. Decide in your mind to put Him first. He will test you, but you'll pass!

Having A Form of Godliness

Now we are going to deal with the last in the list of 19 characteristics of people in the last days:

2 Timothy 3:5

...having a ***form of godliness*** but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

One of the clear signs of the last days is:

- There will be those who look the part, but will not allow God to work in their lives
- There will be those who talk the talk but do not walk the walk

Titus 1:15,16

To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They ***profess*** to know God, but ***in works they deny Him***, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.



This is what we call “**religious hypocrisy**”, which includes:

1. **Carnal Christians** - (under the influences of fleshly appetites)



1Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

Q – What is a carnal Christian?

2. **False teachers** – (those who teach false doctrines)

Titus 1:10,11

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

3. False prophets – (who speak falsely on God's behalf)

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Q – What is the difference between a false prophet and a false teacher?

A religious hypocrite will usually have an external show of godliness and be outwardly righteous before men, yet:

- They do not fear God – they do whatever they want to do.
- They don't worship God – but merely pray for themselves.
- They don't serve God – never giving of themselves (time, possessions, emotions, etc.).
- They don't allow God to change them!

Q – How can you recognize a religious hypocrite?

Jesus faced much opposition from religious hypocrites and it appears to be a fact that he had more difficulty with them than with unbelievers. They were the ones who tortured him and persuaded the Roman governor to crucify him. Here are several characteristics of a religious hypocrite:

1. *They are not wise*

James 3:13-16

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

2. *They are not hospitable*

3 John 1:9,10

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church.

3. *They are not generous*

Proverbs 11:24

There is *one* who scatters, yet increases more;



And there is *one* who withholds more than is right,
But it *leads* to poverty.

4. *They are not holy*

3 John 1:11

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

5. *They do not believe the truth*

John 3:19-21

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

Also, those who are such cause trouble:

1. *They take advantage of the weak*

2 Timothy 3:6

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,

2. *They appear to be righteous, but are not:*

Matthew 23:27,28

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.



3. *They argue and generate strife:*

2 Timothy 2:23

But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.

4. *They cause others to fall*

Matthew 23:15

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

Here are three areas in which you are likely to see religious hypocrisy:

1. In the home –

- a. When we say all the right things in church, yet do all the wrong things at home.



- b. When we treat others in a godly way, yet treat family in an ungodly way. (1 Timothy 5:8)
- c. When our children see ungodliness and hypocrisy in church.

Q – What affect does hypocrisy have on our families? Does it affect those outside our families?

- 2. In the media –
 - a. Those who make claims of belief but do ungodly things
 - b. Those who say that they are Christians yet embrace ideas of the world

Q – There are many celebrities these days who are professing to be Christians yet seem to do things that contradict the character of God and the bible. Why is this a problem?

- 3. In doctrine/religious circles
 - a. Those who use their position as a religious leader to take advantage of people.
 - b. Those who claim to be seeking, yet never are able to grasp spiritual truth.
 - c. Those who stand against the truth

Q - What is our response to people who are such? Is there something that we can do about it?

We are told in scripture:

- 1. *To turn away from them:*

2Timothy 3:5

...having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

- 2. *To avoid them:*

Romans 16:17,18

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

If they are believers we are told:

- 1. *Turn them back:*

James 5:19,20

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

2. *Restore them:*

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

3. *Admonish them:*

2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.

If they will not listen:

1. *Withdraw from them:*

1 Timothy 6:3-5

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of* gain. From such withdraw yourself.

2. *Reject them:*

Titus 3:10

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition,

Why did Paul write these things to Timothy? Why is this important to know?

- So that you are not deceived by them!
- So that you do not become one of them!

False Teachers and False Prophets

I want to begin with a statement of fact: in these last days, there are false prophets and false teachers.



2 Peter 2:1-3

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

So, here are two simple yet important questions to consider:

Q - What is a false prophet?

Simply put, a false prophet is person who speaks falsely on God's behalf – they claim to hear from God when they have not.

Jeremiah 14:14

And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Matthew 7:15

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

Q - What is a false teacher?

A person who teaches that which is false – that is, contrary to sound doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:3,4

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Titus 1:10,11

For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

Jude 1:4

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.



Q - How do you recognise a false teacher or false prophet:

They take advantage of the weak:

2 Timothy 3:6

For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women...

Matthew 23:14

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.

They are led away by various lusts:

2 Timothy 3:6

...Loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts,

They never come to the truth:

2 Timothy 3:7

...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

They resist the truth:

2 Timothy 3:8

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth...

Exodus 7:11,12

But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

They have corrupt minds:

2 Timothy 3:8

... men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith...

1 Timothy 6:3-5

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

They deceive:

Matthew 24:11

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

They can show signs and wonders:

Mark 13:22

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

They look like sheep:

Matthew 7:15

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

They sneak around:

Galatians 2:4

And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage) ...

You will know them by their fruit:

Matthew 7:16-20

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.



Q – Have you ever come across a false prophet or false teacher?

Be warned:

- False prophecy will disappoint you (when the money/healing/wedding does not come)
- False teaching will hurt you (the way you raise your children, relate in marriage, acquire self-esteem, etc.)

Deceiving Spirits

Let's start this section with some questions:

Q – Do evil spirits actually exist? If so, what are they like and what do they do?

Paul warns that in these last days there will be some who will leave the faith (in Jesus Christ). They will be fooled, seduced, and devote themselves to two things:

- Deceiving spirits
- Doctrines taught by demons

1Ti 4:1 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

Q - What does this mean: "...giving heed..."? What is meant by deceiving spirits? How are people fooled by them?



Giving heed (Greek *prosechō*) – to hold to, bring near, apply the mind to a thing, to follow, be addicted to, be occupied with.

This is how others translate this phrase:

- ...devoting themselves...
- ...obeying...
- ...being fooled...
- ...following...
- ...chasing after

Deceiving spirits – (Greek *planos*) – wandering, roving, misleading, impostor, seducer.



This is how others translate it:

- ...giving their minds to spirits of deceit...
- ...they will be fooled by evil spirits...
- ...they will obey spirits that tell lies.
- ...devoting themselves to deceitful spirits...
- ...they will obey lying spirits...
- ...they will follow spirits that deceive...
- ...some are going to give up on the faith and chase after demonic illusions...
- ...they will follow spirits that will fool them.

So, there are some who will hold to, bring near, apply their mind to, follow, be addicted to and be occupied with wandering, roving, misleading, deceiving, seducing spirits.

- There are spirits who are trying to seduce and mislead you.
- Some people are directly under the influence of spirits.



Examples:

Satan himself is a deceiving spirit:

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:13

And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Satan is the father, and all who are deceived by him are his children:

John 8:41-44



You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

2 Thessalonians 2:9,10

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.



Q – Is God in control of what evil spirits can do?

Consider the example of Job:

Job 1:6-12

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan,

"From where do you come?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said,

"From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."

Then the LORD said to Satan,

"Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

So Satan answered the LORD and said,

"Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

And the LORD said to Satan,

"Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person."

So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Q – Who initiated the conversation between the devil and the LORD? How much authority did Satan actually have?

Now let us consider a very interesting event that gives us a glimpse into the very throne room of God. To set the scene, the king of Israel (Ahab) and the king of Judah (Jehoshaphat) had agreed to go into battle together to recover the town of Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat wanted to enquire of the LORD concerning the battle, so king Ahab sent for 400 of his prophets, who all told him that he would obtain victory. However, Jehoshaphat asked if there was a prophet "of the LORD" that they could ask. Ahab suggested a prophet named Micaiah, but he hated him because he felt that Micaiah only predicted trouble for him. They sent for him, and this is where we pick up the narrative.

1 Kings 22:13-23

Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the

word of one of them, and speak encouragement." And Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak."

Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?" And he answered him, "Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!" So the king said to him, "How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" Then he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace.' " And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?"

Then Micaiah said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The LORD said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the LORD said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.' Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you."

Q – What was the problem that King Ahab had with Micaiah? Who sent the “lying spirit” to deceive Ahab? What was God’s purpose in all of this?

There is more deception to come!

Revelation 13:11-18

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.



Why are we considering this?

- Because you need to know that which is happening around you.
- Because you must be careful not to be deceived!

