

KINGDOM PREPAREDNESS FOR END-TIME LIVING

Preface

We are living in challenging times. The disciples of Jesus asked him what signs they could expect to signify the end of time. Among many signs that Jesus mentioned, He stated the following as recorded in Matthew 24:12-13; *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, [13] but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”* These are very sobering words to every believer. Let’s ask ourselves the question, “Are the evil influences of our society affecting us to the extent that we are growing cold in our faith?”

The apostle Paul said to Timothy, *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”* (1 Tim. 4:1). Remember, he is talking to Christians. This is a warning concerning the demonic influences that will cause people to leave the faith.

The writer to the Hebrews gave this warning; *“We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away”* (Hebrews 2:1). Paul says to the church at Corinth, *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall”* (1 Corinthians 10:12)! To the church at Rome he said, *“But make sure that you don't get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is about over, dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing! God is putting the finishing touches on the salvation work he began when we first believed”* (Romans 13:11, Msg.).

The Bible is full of exhortations and reminders as to how we as Kingdom believers must be prepared for end-time living. Believers in many parts of the world are living under extreme trials including; dictatorships that deny freedoms, persecution, poverty due to war, famine, and social injustice, etc. In America, we do not face many of these pressures but we do face a rising tide of secularism and materialism which often leads, if we aren’t careful, to spiritual apathy.

If we are going to see God’s Kingdom advance, as Kingdom believers we must submit fully to the rule of God in our lives and be alert to the times we are in. We must make every effort to be prepared for the challenges we currently face and even greater trials and tests that will come in the future. We cannot live in fear but claim our full rights as adopted Children of God. This will enable us to demonstrate God’s grace as we face the challenges that the Bible so clearly warns us about. Let’s rise up as prepared Kingdom people to advance God’s Kingdom!

-Henry Buckwalter, Bishop/Overseer, Harvest Fellowship of Churches

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Matthew 24:12-13

“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

INTRODUCTION:

-No one, except God, knows when the end of time will come. Matthew 24:36 says, *“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”*

-Matthew 24 and other references in the Bible reveal various signs of the end of the age. It is very important to be aware of these signs and very alert to the times in which we live. *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”* (Matthew 24:42).

-There is much theological debate concerning end-time events. While many people have strong convictions regarding these matters, no one knows exactly how the final events will unfold. **The focus of this teaching will be on Scriptural warnings that will help to prepare us as Kingdom citizens for end-time living.**

-The glorious and ultimate Kingdom that all true and faithful believers will be ushered into is something far beyond what we could ever imagine. Our finite minds cannot begin to comprehend the glories of heaven as described in the book of Revelation. Do we live with eternity in view?

-ARE WE PREPARED FOR THE COMING OF THE KING? Remember the Parable of the Ten Virgins? Five were wise and five were foolish. We don't want to hear the words spoken to the foolish virgins; *“Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ ‘But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don't know you.’ ‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour’”* (Matthew 25:11-13).

-Here is my deep conviction as overseer and bishop for HFC: For the Kingdom of God to advance with power and for God's glory, as Kingdom people, we must be prepared and equipped for the challenging days we currently experience and more intense days that will come.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS TEACHING:

1. Be informed of warnings in the Bible regarding the end of time.
2. Learn how we as Kingdom citizens can overcome the challenges we face in order to be prepared and therefore *“stand firm to the end.”*
3. Understand the grace of God that makes end-time living possible.
4. Reflect and evaluate what changes we need to make in our own lives.
5. Provide material that will stimulate additional Bible study and be taught to others.

BIBLICAL WARNINGS AND KEYS TO OVERCOMING (Please note, this list is not exhaustive. Hopefully, it will stimulate you to further study.) All Scriptures printed are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. Word definitions are taken from the Webster Dictionary

1. **APATHY – LUKEWARMNESS**

-Apathy = “Lack of interest or concern; indifference; lack of feeling or emotion.”

-Lukewarm = “Lacking conviction; halfhearted.”

-We are living in a time when we as believers are tempted or in reality are busy with things and pleasures of this world that spiritually we suffer. We may have *apathy* about the condition of the world around us or our own spiritual condition. Spiritually, the Bible warns us of *lukewarmness*.

-Warning to the church at Laodicea – Revelation 3:14-22

-Warning to the church at Ephesus – Revelation 2:1-7

- Warning about growing cold in our faith – Matthew 24:12-13

-Warning about drifting away - Hebrews 2:1-3 – Message

“It’s crucial that we keep a firm grip on what we’ve heard so that we don’t drift off. [2] If the old message delivered by the angels was valid and nobody got away with anything, [3] do you think we can risk neglecting this latest message, this magnificent salvation? First of all, it was delivered in person by the Master, then accurately passed on to us by those who heard it from him.”

Keys to resisting and overcoming apathy and lukewarmness

1. Maintain an intimate relationship with God. –John 15:1-8
2. Resist continually the efforts of the enemy to draw away from God. – I Timothy 4:1
3. Repent immediately of apathy and lukewarmness when we’re aware of it’s affect upon our lives.

The following verses summarize points 1-3 above; James 4:7-8 - Message

“So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he’ll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field.”

4. Invite the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to daily fill us. – Ephesians 5:18b *“...be filled with the Spirit.”*
5. Maintain close communion and fellowship with God’s people - Hebrews 10:23-25
“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

For reflection and action:

1. Do I have symptoms of apathy and lukewarmness in my life? If so, what are they?
2. What specific steps will I take to deal with this issue in my life?

2. DECEPTION

-Deceive (verb) = “ensnare; to be false; cheat; to cause to believe an untruth

-Deception (noun) = “the fact or condition of being deceived”

-Deceptive (adjective) = “tending or having the power to deceive.”

-God warned us through the prophet Jeremiah; Jeremiah 17:9(KJV) – “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

-Jesus warned us concerning deception in Matthew 24:24; “For false Christ’s and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.”

-Paul warned the church in 1 Tim. 4:1; “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”

“Once a person is deceived, he does not recognize that he is deceived, because he has been deceived.” – Francis Frangipane – The Three Battlegrounds

-The Bible is full of numerous warnings how deception is manifested: The mouth, tongue, lips – Psalms 10:7; 36:3; Bad advice – Proverbs 12:5; Deceitful heart – Proverbs 12:20; 26:24; Rebellion – Jeremiah 8:5; Deceptive philosophy – Colossians 2:8; False thinking – Jeremiah 37:9; Claim to be without sin – I John 1:8; plus numerous other ways.

Keys to resisting and overcoming deception

1. Live a life of passionate intimacy with God. Matthew 22:37 – “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’”
2. Be alert to the powerful and subtle nature of deception. 1 Peter 5:8 – “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to make your heart sensitive to deception or even reveal deception that has already entered your mind and heart. (Ephesians 5:15-16)
4. Repent of sin quickly because unconfessed sin becomes an open doorway to Satan. (I John 1:5-9)
5. Be discipled and live in close fellowship with God’s people, the local congregation. (Ephesians 5:21)

For a much more complete study on the subject of spiritual deception, I invite you to go to the HFC website: www.harvestfellowshipofchurches.org . On the website, go to the tab marked “Teachings.” Or, ask Henry Buckwalter for a copy of the teaching.

For reflection and action:

1. What area in my life is deception possibly operating?
2. What is the Holy Spirit asking me to do in order to take a stand against deception?

3. DEAD RELIGION

-Religion = “*the service and worship of God or the supernatural; commitment or devotion to a religious faith or observance of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices.*”

-There are many religions but only ONE TRUE RELIGION! “*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"* (John 14:6).

-The prophets cried out concerning dead religion – Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Malachi 1:6-14. People were going through religious exercises but their hearts were not right with God. This is dead religion.

-Jesus constantly rebuked and challenged the Pharisees for their dead religion. Matthew 23.

-Symptoms of dead religion:

- no life
- people serve out of obligation rather than love for Christ
- people work under a burden rather than with joy
- no evidence of the Supernatural
- religious ritual is more important than freedom in the Holy Spirit
- no intimacy with the Heavenly Father
- frustration rather than fruitfulness

Keys to resisting and overcoming dead religion

1. “Wake up” to the reality of dead religion, if indeed it is present (Revelation 3:1-2)
2. Abide in the True Vine, Jesus Christ (John 15:1-17)! In Jesus there is true and abundant life (John 10:10). If we are truly abiding in him, there can be no dead religion.
3. Resist the spirit of religion and everything associated with it by not submitting to what *that* spirit desires. Paul said to the church at Galatia, “*Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you*” (Galatians 5:1, Message).
4. Live and walk in the power and freedom of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5-8). Jesus introduced a New Day, when the Holy Spirit would govern the affairs of the church and NOT religious systems that hindered God’s Kingdom advancement.
5. Receive the fullness of God’s grace! This is provided in our Kingdom inheritance. “*For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17).

For reflection and action:

1. Do I have any symptoms of dead religion in my life? If so, what?
2. What steps will I take to ensure that dead religion will not function in my life?

4. IMMORALITY

-Immoral (adjective) – “inconsistent with purity or good morals”

-Immorality (noun) – “The quality or state of being immoral”

-Paul warns of serious conditions in the last days – “*But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. [2] People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, [4] treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- [5] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*” 2 Tim. 3:1-5

2 Tim. 3:1-5 (Message) “*Don't be naive. There are difficult times ahead. [2] As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse, [3] dog-eat-dog, unbending, slanderers, impulsively wild, savage, cynical, [4] treacherous, ruthless, bloated windbags, addicted to lust, and allergic to God. [5] They'll make a show of religion, but behind the scenes they're animals. Stay clear of these people.*”

-Immorality has always been present in history. However, as the end of time approaches, it seems that it will increase. We must be on our guard.

-With the invention of the World Wide Web, the Internet, it makes immorality as close as a click on the “mouse.” As believers, we must be constantly on our guard to not get trapped in the deep dark pit of pornography. Read Ephesians 5:3-7.

-The book of Revelation warns: *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. [7] He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. [8] But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, **the sexually immoral**, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."* Revelation 21:6-8

Keys to resisting and overcoming immorality

1. Set our complete hope and trust in Jesus Christ. “*Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. [3] Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*” 1 John 3:2-3
2. Choose daily to offer our body to God (Romans 6:13-14). We are the temple of God and God hates sexual immorality (I Corinthians 6:12-20).
3. Live with a clear mind and self control. “*The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.*” 1 Peter 4:7
4. Take special precautions such as filters, etc. and be accountable when using the internet. Also, use very special caution with your children’s use of the internet.

For reflection and action:

1. Ask God to search your heart for any impurity. Receive his cleansing power to forgive and wash away all impurity (Psalm 139:23-24).
2. What steps of accountability am I willing to take in order to walk in purity of life?

5. PRAYERLESSNESS

-Prayerlessness = Not taking prayer seriously; lacking in prayer; not praying at all

-In the final hours of Jesus' life before his crucifixion, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray (Mark 14:32-42). Prayer is what enabled him to endure this very difficult time in His life. If Jesus needed prayer to endure, how much more do we?

-Jesus warned his disciples in this hour of temptation, *"Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak"* (Mark 14:37-38).

-In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus gives the parable of the persistent widow. The widow wanted her legal right over her adversary (v 3). Through Jesus, we have our legal right over our adversary the Devil. God is passionate about our prayers being answered (7). God requires a human being on earth to carry out His will on earth.

"Prayer is essentially a partnership of the redeemed child of God working hand in hand with God toward the realization of His redemptive purposes on earth." – Jack Hayford

-Paul challenges us to pray - *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints* (Ephes. 6:18).

-Jesus is our example in prayer: Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16; Hebrews 5:7

-The success of the early church was due to their prayer life: Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:29-31; 12:12

-We are exhorted to intercede for our governing authorities and the land in which we live: I Timothy 2:1-2; Proverbs 14:34

Keys to resisting and overcoming prayerlessness

1. Recognize that prayerlessness is a sin and repent (II Chronicles 7:14; I Timothy 2:8).
2. Ask God for an increasing revelation of the importance of prayer (Luke 11:1).
3. Know that the prayer of the righteous delights our Heavenly Father. *The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him* (Proverbs 15:8).
4. Understand that the prayers of the saints are like a pleasing incense before the Lord (Revelation 8:3-4)
5. Make a daily choice to grow in the ministry of prayer

For reflection and action:

1. Do I fully believe in the power and purpose of prayer? If not, why not?
2. What steps will I take to grow in my prayer life, both personally and with the church?

6. APOSTASY

Apostasy = a falling away, defection, rebellion, abandonment, withdrawal or turning from what one has formerly turned to. (Full Life Study Bible, Zondervan)

-Individual apostasy is only possible for those who have first experienced salvation, regeneration and renewal through the Holy Spirit. *“See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12).

-Apostasy can happen in two ways: (a) Theological apostasy is a turning away or a rejection of the original teachings of Jesus or the apostles. *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. [2] Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron”* (1 Tim. 4:1-2). (also II Timothy 4:3) (b) Moral apostasy means that a person refuses to remain in Christ and they become enslaved again to sin and immorality. *“Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. [7] Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. [8] And God isn't pleased at being ignored”* (Romans 8:6-8 Message Translation). (Also Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 23:25-28; Romans 6:15:23)

-The Bible is full of numerous warnings concerning apostasy, alerting us to the danger of abandoning our union with Christ: (deceivers, Matthew 24:4-5; eager for money - *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs”* (1 Tim. 6:10). hard hearts, Hebrews 3:6-8; deliberate turning away from God, Hebrews 6:4-6).

-The steps toward apostasy include: (a) Unbelief concerning the truth (Mark 1:15; Luke 8:13); (b) Become tolerant to sin (I Cor. 6:9-10); (c) Resist the voice of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; I Thess. 5:19-22); (d) The Holy Spirit eventually departs (Psalm 51:11; Romans 8:13; I Cor. 3:16-17).

Keys to resisting and overcoming apostasy

1. Remain in the True Vine, Jesus – John 15:1-6
2. Hold firmly to the Word of Truth – I Corinthians 15:1-2
3. Be strongly established in your faith – Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 11:6
4. Watch your life and doctrine closely – I Timothy 4:16
5. Encourage one another – Hebrews 3:13; Acts 11:21-26
6. Grow in Christ-like character – II Peter 1:8-11

For reflection and action:

1. Where am I most tempted in my life to fall away from God?
2. What steps do I need to take in my life to draw closer to God so as not to fall into apostasy?

7. ANTI-CHRIST SPIRIT

Anti-Christ spirit = any spirit that exalts itself in our life that is not Christ-like; a spirit behind doctrine that is not of God

The Anti-Christ = A person that will be revealed in the end time to deceive and violently oppose God's Kingdom (Revelation 13:1-18; II Thessalonians 2:3-4).

-The apostle John warned of the coming antichrists, even in his day. *Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour (1 John 2:18). Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).*

-The apostle John gives additional warning: *"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2] This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3] but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world"* (1 John 4:1-3).

-In the last days, there will be an abundance of deceivers and false teachers. Jesus warned us about that: *Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. [5] For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5).*

-The anti-Christ spirit can be revealed in more subtle ways. Any thing that is contrary to Christ's character and spirit is the spirit of anti-Christ. One such characteristic that operates in the lives of many believers is the unwillingness to forgive offenses, or at least being slow to forgive. By not releasing forgiveness, one violates the character of God, does not reveal Jesus, and denies the power of the Holy Spirit. *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors (Matthew 6:12).*

-Being offended easily and not having a willingness to forgive quickly is one of the biggest hindrances to Christian growth. These offenses may come as a trial to test our faith (James 1:3-5).

Keys to resisting and overcoming the anti-Christ spirit

1. Live with the awareness that God in you is greater than any spirit that is in this world *My dear children, you come from God and belong to God. You have already won a big victory over those false teachers, for the Spirit in you is far stronger than anything in the world. [5] These people belong to the Christ-denying world. They talk the world's language and the world eats it up. [6] But we come from God and belong to God. Anyone who knows God, understands us and listens. The person who has nothing to do with God will, of course, not listen to us. This is another test for telling the Spirit of Truth from the spirit of deception (I John 4:4-6 – Message).*
2. Understand your full spiritual inheritance, including forgiveness, which allows us to release forgiveness to those who offend. *Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. Abundantly free (Ephesians. 1:7 Message)! Having a growing revelation of God's love for us through Christ will help us to overcome the anti-Christ spirit in any form in our lives.*

For reflection and action:

1. What anti-Christ attitude or spirit may be operating in my life?
2. What steps am I willing to take to show forth the full character of Christ in my life?

8. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Family = “A group of persons of common ancestry;” “a group of persons living under one roof and generally one head.”

Breakdown = noun - “A failure to function;” verb - “to make ineffective”

-God created and ordained marriage and the family (Genesis 2:18-25).

-From creation, Satan has tried to destroy marriage and the family (Genesis 3 & 4)

-Marriage is intended to be between one man and one woman. Satan is doing everything possible to deceive people into thinking that there are other options such as homosexual relationships, polygamy, cohabitation apart from marriage, etc. Satan works through political structures in government and through some organized church institutions to promote this deception.

-God intended that a marriage reflect the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-33)

-When husbands love their wives as Christ loved the church, it will not be difficult for wives to follow God’s order of submission (Ephesians 5:22-24).

-Children who obey their parents in the Lord are promised blessing (Ephesians 6:1-2).

-Abortion is another means that enemy is using to destroy the family. If moral standards are established and observed, it will not be necessary to be faced with the issue of abortion.

Keys to resisting and overcoming the breakdown of marriage and families

1. Build a strong foundation of love and live by biblical principles regarding marriage and the family (I Corinthians 13). Build healthy relationships.
2. Do not consider divorce an option. Seek God’s help and assistance of Godly counsel to overcome differences. If divorce is part of your past, God will forgive and you do not need to live under condemnation (II Corinthians 5:17).
3. Be trained in practical ways on how to build a strong marriage and family relationship. There are numerous resources for Christian marriages and families. For assistance in this contact your pastor or myself.
4. Live with a true spirit of humility (I Peter 5:5-6). Humility will manifest itself in saying, “I’m sorry;” recognizing and admitting when we need help; be willing to be taught by others; confessing our sin to God and others when we have failed. It’s my personal opinion that if marriages would practice humility, the result would be less conflict, more joy, and few breakups.
5. Recognize that Satan is trying to destroy marriages and the family. Take a stand for righteousness. A website that can assist in practical ways is American Family Association.

For reflection and action:

1. What steps do I need to take and am willing to take to build a stronger marriage and/or family?
2. What specific step should our congregation take to equip marriages and families?

9. SELFISH LIVING

-**Selfish** = “concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself; seeking or concentrating on one’s own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others;”

-Here is a warning for the last days: “Don’t be naive. There are difficult times ahead. [2] As the end approaches, **people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting**, (2 Tim. 3:1-2a – Message).

-Jesus had much to say about the “self life.” *Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). *For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted* (Matthew 23:12).

-We live in a society that constantly reminds us through advertisements of the things we need in order to have a happier life. While we need many resources such as clothing, food, household items, etc., to live, if we aren’t careful, we use our resources to fulfill our own selfish pleasures in exchange for sacrificial giving to advance God’s Kingdom.

-We can even get selfish with our requests to God. “*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures*” (James 4:3).

-Peter recognized that the selfish desires of the flesh are a war with our soul. We must be aware of this struggle that exists. “*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*” (1 Peter 2:11).

Keys to resisting and overcoming selfish living

1. Receive the grace of God that enables us to resist the urge for selfish living. “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. [12] It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age*” (Titus 2:11-12).
2. Realize that our new life with Christ means that we have died to our old selfish nature. “*Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:24).
3. Find true satisfaction in Jesus Christ as the source of our security and not the pleasures of the flesh. “*...clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature*” (Romans 13:14).
4. Be fully submitted to the Holy Spirit and we will have the power to overcome the desires that the sinful nature, including selfishness. “*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature*” (Galatians 5:16).
5. Be practical. Set a clear budget, setting aside our tithes and offerings, what we need for basic living expenses, and limit ourselves of buying excessive things to please our self.
6. Recognize that selfish living is a violation of God’s principles and will not produce genuine joy (Luke 9:24; Mark 10:17-22).

For reflection and action:

1. Is there anything in my life that would characterize selfish living? If so, what?
2. What additional steps am I willing to take to demonstrate unselfish living in my life?

10. HATRED FOR PURE CHRISTIANITY

-Hate = “intense hostility and dislike...detest”

-Hatred = “prejudiced hostility or animosity”

- Jesus warned of the hatred toward true believers in the last days: “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, **and you will be hated by all nations because of me.** [10] At that time many will turn away from the **faith and will betray and hate each other,** [11] and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people” (Matthew 24:9-11). Thousands in the world today are being persecuted and put to death for their faith. “Today more than 200 million Christians around the world suffer imprisonment, abuse and even death because of their faith.” [Their Blood Cries Out](#) -- Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert; Paperback.

- Jesus reminds us that the world will hate us. “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

-There are demonic powers working through major influences in our society such as the secular media, special interest groups, radical politicians, and activist judges. In addition, there are religious systems at home and abroad that hate pure Christianity.

-Unfortunately, true Kingdom Christianity has not always been demonstrated. Many things throughout history have been done in the name of Christ that has built walls and built prejudice and hatred. On the other hand, true Christianity, and the true moral principles for which it stands will always generate hatred by those who oppose the truth as described in the verses above.

Keys to resisting and overcoming the hatred toward Christianity

1. Recognize that hatred toward true Christianity will always exist. It’s a reality!
2. Overcome hatred with love (Matthew 5:11-12).
3. Know that the persecuted for righteousness sake are blessed and will inherit the Kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10; I Peter 4:12-15)
4. Learn to live and walk by faith. Am I willing to die for what I believe? This is the only way we will be able to endure the trials and tests of life. Hebrews 11 reveals the power of faith, even for those who died by persecution (Hebrews 11:32-40). Having faith does not always mean that we will be delivered from persecution. It means that we will have the strength to endure it.
5. PRAY, PRAY, PRAY for the secular media and all the forces of opposition to true Christianity. Also, let your true voice of concern be heard by those who influence the course our society takes locally, in our state, and/or nation. American Family Association helps to facilitate this in a special way through the internet.
6. Demonstrate true Christianity by living a life of integrity, no matter the cost.

For reflection and action:

1. Am I prepared to pay the price of persecution for true Christianity?
2. What is God asking me to do to take a stand for true Christianity?

11. LOSS OF THE FEAR OF THE LORD

-Fear of the Lord includes the following:

- recognizing God's holiness, righteousness, and justice as a counterpart to his love and mercy – (Psalm 76:7-8; 103:8-11)
- regarding God with holy awe and reverence – (Exodus 20:18-20)
- trusting God alone for our salvation, both for our entrance into the Kingdom and for every circumstance of life – (Psalms 115:11)
- knowing that God is angry with sin and has the power to punish sin, both now and for eternity – (Hebrews 10:31)

-Remember the words of Jesus, *“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold”*(Matthew 24:12). Due to evil influence around us, it is easy to lose the fear of the Lord and grow cold in our spiritual life.

-In our American society, among Christian churches, there often seems to be a lack of the fear of God or we could say reverence and respect for God. Losing the fear of the Lord may be manifest in the following ways:

- having a casual attitude about sin
- willing to compromise our beliefs in order to please ourselves
- not being serious about our Christian faith
- living to please self more than pleasing God
- having a casual attitude about church attendance and punctuality
- giving marginal time to the work of the Lord and advancement of God's Kingdom
- slow to repent of sin
- not having a close relationship with God
- seek to please people more than God
- fearful to confront our own lives and others with the truth of God's Word

Keys to resisting and overcoming the loss of the fear of the Lord

1. Live in absolute obedience to God. *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose”* (Philippians 2:12-13).
2. Maintain a close and intimate fellowship with the Lord which leads to true knowledge and direction for one's life. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline”* (Proverbs 1:7).
3. Place our complete hope in the Lord. *But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, [19] to deliver them from death, and keep them alive in famine”* (Psalm 33:18-19).
4. Know that fearing God I will not lack anything! *“Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing”* (Psalm 34:9)
5. Seek God's holiness (Isaiah 6:1-9)

For reflection and action:

1. Do I have the fear of the Lord operating fully in my life? If not, in what areas?
2. What are the next steps I must take to live in the fear of the Lord?

CONCLUSION

-Matthew 24 and Mark 13 talk about many more signs that will take place in the last days before his return. It includes earthquakes, famine, wars, rumors of wars, false religions, signs in the sky, and more. Current events and statistics seem to indicate that these signs are increasing.

-Jesus, in the midst of giving the signs and warnings concerning the last days, exhorts believers to be watchful:

Matthew 24:4

Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you."

Matthew 24:42

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Mark 13:9

"You must be on your guard."

Mark 13:23

So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time."

Mark 13:33

Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."

Mark 13:35

"Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn."

Mark 13:37

"What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

-In spite of all the warnings, all the signs, Peter warns us: *"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'"*(2 Peter 3:3-4).

-This is a time to remain strong and secure in our faith in Jesus Christ. Our response to these warnings must not be fear but a commitment to put our full faith and trust in God who is able to save us. Jude expresses his faith to God this way: *"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- [25] to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen* (Jude 1:24-25). **GOD IS ABLE TO KEEP US FROM FALLING!**

-Let our testimony be that of the Apostle Paul at the end of his life: *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen"* (2 Tim. 4:18).

-BY THE GRACE OF GOD WE WILL PERSEVERE! WE WILL NOT GROW COLD BUT WE WILL OVERCOME AND EXPERIENCE OUR ULTIMATE SALVATION! ALL GLORY TO GOD!

***"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved."* Matthew 24:12-13**

FINAL AND ETERNAL SALVATION IS FOR THE OVERCOMERS!