

6. Learning Why People Follow False Teachers

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to be an example to others. We saw that we want to help them learn how to become an example to all people including those who are false teachers. This requires an attitude of gentleness and humility. We are to show our children by our example how to develop these attitudes so that they can have a ministry even to those who are in opposition to the truth. Today, we are going to see in our topic why many people are attracted to false teachers and their teachings.

Paul shared with Timothy what many people will be like in the last days. We have to help our children learn to understand the attitudes of people so that they can learn how to be effective as they minister to them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 says, “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.” Here, we see that Paul wanted to help Timothy understand what the times will be like between the return of Christ to heaven and His second coming. We need to help our children understand we are living in the last days.

The word that is translated “perilous” is only used one other time in the New Testament. Matthew 8:28 says, “When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed *men*, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.” Here, we see that the word is translated “fierce” because the word means *dangerous or troublesome*. As a result, we are given a long list of the characteristics of people without Christ. These characteristics certainly describe many people today.

First, we see that people will be lovers of themselves or selfish. Christ said in Mark 7:20-23, “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’” Here, we see the source of such selfishness. We see that such attitudes come out of the heart of man. Proverbs 23:7 says, “For as he thinks in his heart, so *is* he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.” Then Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Here, we see that we want to help our children understand the hearts of people without Christ in their lives.

Second, we see that people will be lovers of money. The only other verse where the word translated “lovers of money” is used is Luke 16:14 where we read, “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.” However, Paul also wrote in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “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. 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.” Here, we see the destructive power of the love of money.

We also see many other negative characteristics. The word translated “boasters” means *an empty pretender and speaks about a person who pretends to be something that he is not*. The word translated “proud” means *one that despises others and treats them with contempt*. James 4:6 says, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” Christ spoke about the proud when He said in Luke 18:9, “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Here, we see that the reason why the proud despise others is due to the fact that they trust in themselves.

The word that is translated “blasphemers” means *one who speaks evil or abusive language to another person*. 1 Timothy 1:12-13 says, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.” Here, we see that Paul realized that he had been a blasphemer before Christ changed his life. The angel said to Zacharias in Luke 1:17, “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,” and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Here, we see the ministry of John the Baptist and it points out that he would speak to those who were disobedient.

The next four negative characteristics: unthankful, unholy, unloving and unforgiving all begin with “un,” which means “not.” Today, we certainly see that many people are not thankful. They do not live holy lives. They do not even understand godly love and many cannot even show human affection. The word that is translated “unforgiving” is not the usual word for forgive but instead means *one who will not make a treaty or keep an agreement*. The word translated “slanderers” means *a false accuser and is usually translated the devil*. 1 John 3:8 says, “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.” Here, we see the word is translated “the devil” three times.

The word translated “without self-control” describes a person that does not have control over his sinful desires. “Brutal” means *fierce or not tame*. The word translated “despisers of good” means *a person that is opposed to goodness or good people*. The word “traitors” is used to describe a betrayer and is used in Luke 6:16 where we read, “Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.” The word translated “headstrong” means *a person who is reckless*. The only other place where it is used is in Acts 19:36 where we read, “Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.” Here, we see the word is translated “rashly.” The word translated “haughty” means *to be lifted up with pride or to be conceited*. In 1 Timothy 6:4 we read, “He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions.” In this verse, it is talking about individuals who are false teachers.

The phrase “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” means *loving pleasure and speaks of people who live to please themselves*. The phrase “having a form of godliness but denying its power” speaks about people who have an outward appearance of respect for God but inwardly they

refuse to accept the power or influence of God over their lives. A more complete description of such individuals is given in Romans 2:17-20 where we read, “Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.” Here, we see that such people think that they can lead and teach others when they are spiritually blind themselves. Paul gives a warning to turn away and avoid the teaching of such individuals because they are deceiving themselves.

2 Timothy 3:6-9 says, “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. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.” Here we see that such false teachers particularly try to get their teachings into households where there are gullible women. The word that is translated “gullible” speaks about women who have a large amount of guilt about their sins or various lusts from their past.

Titus 3:3 says, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” As Christians, we did serve various lusts and pleasures before we became Christians. However, we have been forgiven and no longer need to live with past guilt. Here, we see that false teachers seek such women that are continually trying to find some new way to get rid of their guilt but will not come to Christ for forgiveness.

False teachers are compared to Jannes and Jambres. According to Jewish tradition, these two men were part of the mixed multitude of Egyptians that left Egypt with Israel. Jewish tradition says that later these were the two people who encouraged Israel to make the golden calf. Here, we see that Paul used them as illustrations of false teachers. False teachers resist the truth. They are people with corrupt (depraved) minds. Titus 1:16 says, “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Their false teachings and their sinful actions show that they do not have a true faith. God says that the day will come when their total lack of spiritual understanding will be revealed to all because they will be sent to eternal judgment when they stand before God.

As we see why people follow false teachers, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize and avoid them. We also want to teach them how to protect weak Christians from such false teachers. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to protect others from false teachers.