

FINISH LINE

- **Matthew 16:1 – 3 (GNT)** *Some Pharisees and Sadducees who came to Jesus wanted to trap him, so they asked him to perform a miracle for them, to show that God approved of him. ² But Jesus answered, “When the sun is setting, you say, ‘We are going to have fine weather, because the sky is red.’³ And early in the morning you say, ‘It is going to rain, because the sky is red and dark.’ You can predict the weather by looking at the sky, but YOU CANNOT INTERPRET THE SIGNS CONCERNING THESE TIMES!*
 - Jesus was saying, “You know how to read the room around you, the people around you, and the weather around you. But you have no idea how to read what time it is around you.”
 - Three reasons we need to be reminded that we are in the last days:
 1. **To Be Encouraged**
 2. **To Be Motivated**
 3. **To Be Warned**
- Matthew 25:1 – 13 (NLT)** *“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids^[a] who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. ² Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. ³ The five who were foolish didn’t take enough olive oil for their lamps, ⁴ but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. ⁵ When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶ “At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’ ⁷ “All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. ⁸ Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’ ⁹ “But the others replied, ‘We don’t have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’ ¹⁰ “But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. ¹¹ Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ ¹² “But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don’t know you!’ ¹³ “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.*
- **QUOTE:** *We must learn to endure as if Jesus will be a long time returning but be ready in case He comes back today.*

Week #8 – Stand Strong

DESPISERS OF GOOD (KJV – despisers of those that are good)

- *Despisers of Good (Gr. Aphilagathos) – opposed to goodness & good men.*
- *Despise – to regard with contempt, distaste, disgust, or disdain; scorn, loathe.*
- It’s more than hatred for people who are good. It is hatred for whatever is good, right, just, or true.
- **Isaiah 5:20 (NCV)** – *How terrible it will be for people who call **GOOD THINGS BAD** and **BAD THINGS GOOD**, who think darkness is light and light is darkness, who think sour is sweet and sweet is sour.*
- The Root of this Hatred of Good? SIN (3 distinct stages of sinning)
- **Romans 1:20 – 32 (NLT)** *For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

²¹ Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. ²² Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. ²³ And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. ²⁵ They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. ²⁶ That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. ²⁷ And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.

²⁸ Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. ²⁹ Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. ³⁰ They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents. ³¹ They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. ³² They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too.

Stage 1 – Practicing Sin

- **HONESTY MOMENT:** There is a *short-term* fun to sin!
- **Hebrews 11:25 (NLT)** – *He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin.*
- **Romans 7:11 (AMP)** – *For sin, seizing its opportunity through the commandment, beguiled and completely deceived me, and using it as a weapon killed me [separating me from God].*
- **Romans 1:32 (NLT)** – *They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, THEY ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO DO THEM, too.*

Stage 2 – Approving of & Encouraging Others to Sin

- **NOTE:** There is a tendency to seek agreement when we're wrong to help us overcome the weight of our conscience. It is **MISDIRECTED VALIDATION**.

Stage 3 – Despisers of Good (aphilagathos)

- **QUOTE:** *RIGHTEOUS LIVING* will either be a guiding light that helps others be free or a shining light that causes others to be convicted.
- **HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?**
- **Matthew 5:10 – 13 (MSG)** *“You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom. ¹¹⁻¹² “Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort, and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even! —for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds.*

And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

- **I Peter 4:14 – 16 (MSG)** *If you're abused because of Christ, count yourself fortunate. It's the Spirit of God and his glory in you that brought you to the notice of others. If they're on you because you broke the law or disturbed the peace, that's a different matter. But if it's because you're a Christian, don't give it a second thought. Be proud of the distinguished status reflected in that name!*

TRAITORS

- *Traitors (Gr. Prodotes) – betrayer; literally describes men who betray another's trust and confidence or are false to an obligation or duty. It describes one who is untrue to what should command their fidelity or allegiance. Used only 3 times in the N.T. – once to describe Judas the traitor (Luke 6:16).*
- Paul describes the last days as days that will be filled with disloyalty. **JUDAS DAYS**
- We must resist the world's lack of loyalty and refuse to let it cling to us!!

- **I Chronicles 29:18, 19 (NIV)** – *Lord, the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel, keep these desires and thoughts in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts LOYAL to you. ¹⁹ And give my son Solomon the wholehearted devotion to keep your commands, statutes and decrees and to do everything to build the palatial structure for which I have provided.*
- Loyalty to the people in our lives begins with cultivating **LOYALTY TO GOD**.

- **I Samuel 22:14 (NIV)** – *"Ahimelech answered the king, "Who of all your servants is as LOYAL as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household?"*
- Let this be the testimony that others say about us!!
- **QUOTE:** *Even when you've been betrayed by others, don't let their LACK OF LOYALTY diminish your HEART OF LOYALTY.*