



Part 1: Keeping Our Love Alive

Matthew 24:1-14, 36-42

Jesus exhorts us to vigilance against the temptation of allowing our love to grow cold.

I. Jesus' Call to Stand Firm

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

Matthew 24:12-13

This same incident is recorded in Mark 13 and Luke 21 with similar warnings by Jesus. In Mark and Luke Jesus warns against being deceived – don't believe lies or misinterpret events. In Luke he also warns against being seduced and distracted by life's anxieties.

Belief is important because it's the first step in a love relationship. At its heart, the gospel is a restored love relationship with the Father through Jesus the Son. Of course, it's a belief system, but our belief leads us into love.

Love for the Lord, love for our brothers and sisters in the Father's family, and love for the

least among us, and love our neighbors who are lost and perishing apart from Jesus.

II. Last Days

A. Two Questions, Two Answers (Matt. 24:1-3).

Note: scholars disagree ...

1. The Jerusalem temple destroyed (Matt. 24:4-35).

2. Jesus' return (Matt. 24:36-50).

B. Closer to Jesus' Return

1. A great falling away among professing believers (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

1 Timothy 4:1

2. Corrupt love and spirituality (2 Timothy 3:1-4)

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. 2 Timothy 3:1-4

3. Peter's exhortation (1 Peter 4:7)

The end of all things is near. Therefore, be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. 1 Peter 4:7

4. Current persecution and revival

According to Open Doors, which tracks persecution of Christians, in 2020 more than 340 million Christians lived in places where they experience high levels of persecution (*And Then the End Will Come*, 114).

A report ordered by British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt found that persecution of Christians in parts of the world is at near-genocide levels: *“Evidence shows not only the geographic spread of anti-Christian persecution, but also its increasing severity...in some regions, the level and nature of persecution is arguably coming close to meeting the international definition of genocide, according to that adopted by the UN.”* (*And Then the End Will Come*, 114).

Yet there is also a great revival of the Gospel in the 2/3 world in the global South, in China, and the fastest growing church in the world is the underground church in Iran (see YouTube: “Sheep Among Wolves, Vol. 2”).

III. Threats to Our Love

A. Intimidation and persecution

The social costs of following Jesus and standing for truth in our modern culture is growing.

B. Seduction

Ex. Video: “Sheep Among Wolves”, Vol. 2 (1:16:46 – 1:18:18) – “Satan is playing a lullaby putting Christians to sleep here”

“In virtually every study we conducted, representing thousands of interviews, born-again Christians fail to display much attitudinal or behavioral evidence of transformed lives. ... Our lives don’t match our beliefs. In many ways, our lifestyles and perspectives are no different than those of anyone around us.” – David Kinnaman & Gabe Lyons, *unChristian*

“One of the greatest frustrations of my life has been the disconnection between what our research consistently shows about churching Christians and what the Bible calls us to be.” – George Barna, *Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary*

“The battle taking place over the human heart can be described as Satan using every form of seduction and threat to take our hearts captive and our loving Jesus doing everything he can to form single-heartedness in us.” – John Eldredge, *Resilient*

Don’t settle for knowing what you believe. Discover what you really treasure. Who and what do you love the most?

You are in whitewater rapids heading towards a waterfall. Only a strong love of

Jesus and his Kingdom will be enough for you to fight the current of intimidation and seduction.

C. Misunderstanding the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 24:14)

This is not a political series – not a pep rally to dig into our preferred political fight. This is a call to stand firm in the Gospel of the Kingdom and its call to radical love and obedience.

Desmond Doss (movie *Hacksaw Ridge*) is a picture of Gospel love – staying true to his convictions but maintaining a posture of suffering love towards those who hated him.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Romans 12:9

IV. The Ground of Love (Luke 7:36-50)

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.
Luke 7:47

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Matthew 24:12-13; Mark 13:5; and Luke 21:8, 34-36. Jesus warns us against deception, distraction, and cold love. What do you think is the relationship between what we believe, what we give our attention to, and what we love?
2. Read John 14:23-24 and 1 John 2:3-6. What does Jesus say is about our love for him? What have you been taught about loving Jesus? Do you have any ideas about the reason for the research conclusions

by Kinnaman and Barna quoted in the sermon (see sermon notes)?

3. What do you think about this quote?

“What you want? That’s the question. It is the first, last, and most fundamental question of Christian discipleship. ... It’s the question that is buried under almost every other question Jesus asked each of us. ... This is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because we are what we want. Our wants and longings and desires are at the core of our identity, the wellspring from which our actions and behavior flow. ... Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.”
–James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love*

4. How do you see our Western culture seducing and intimidating us away from loving Jesus? What do you think about the Iranian Christian wife’s comments to her husband about Satan’s lullaby in the American church?
5. Read John 15:9-11. What practices, if any, do you follow that help you stay resourced by Jesus’ love?