

# The Love of Many Will Grow Cold

James Smyda

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During Christ's ministry, particularly the latter part of His ministry when He gave the Olivet prophecy to the apostles, He gave us some significant warnings that we need to pay attention to in our Christian lives today. He gave a very sober warning. One of the problems that would happen throughout time and particularly at the end, would be the problem of people having their "agape love grow cold". In other words, the love that is imparted to us through the Holy Spirit, the very love of God that we are supposed to be developing in our Christian lives so as to be molded into His image. He said that one of the major problems that would be happening throughout time in the church, is people having their *agape love* grow cold. If you think about that, that is a very disturbing thing; it's something that can keep us out of the Kingdom of God. Christ even tells us this is going to be a very substantial problem, so it's something we need to pay attention to. What we're going to do in the sermon today is look at this particular subject. If you would like a title for this sermon, it's:

## The Love of Many Will Grow Cold

You probably recognize that quote, it's coming directly from Matthew 24, and you're right. We will go to Matthew 24 look at a section of scripture where this direct quote comes from. This is a section of scripture we talked about in my last sermon and we're going to cover the same ground we covered last time, but also have an emphasis on verse 12 and cover some things we didn't talk about last time.

**Matthew 24:9** *Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. (NKJV)*

Just to get the context here, I want to emphasize that in verse 9 He talks about being hated for His name's sake. What group of people would be hated for Christ's name's sake? Obviously, they would only be His followers. It would only be the people who recognize Him as the Messiah and are trying to follow His teachings in their lives; that's who would be being addressed. The point I'm trying to make is that over these next couple of verses, if we understand the context, it's very much focused on addressing problems within the church of God. Often that particular point there gets missed and we try to apply it to the world in general. While those concepts can apply to the world in general, He is specifically addressing the church.

*10) And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. (NKJV)*

We talked a lot about this verse last time and particularly the facts that the words *offended* and *betrayed* don't carry the meanings of how we typically use those words in English. We'll recover some of that ground today. Picking up in verse 11.

- 11) *Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.*  
12) *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*  
(NKJV)

This verse obviously is going to be our main focus today.

- 13) *But he who endures to the end shall be saved.* (NKJV)

If you notice a couple things, the context is focusing specifically toward the church and we know that, as in verse 12, the Greek word for *love* is the word *agape*. That's the word the Bible uses to refer to the Godly form of *love* that we receive through the Holy Spirit. So the only people who could be having their *agape love grow cold* are those who have *agape love* in the first place. In other words, those who have the Holy Spirit. The verse right after, in verse 13 says that:

*"Those who endure to the end will be saved."*

Who could endure to the end and be saved? That's only people who have been offered their opportunity for salvation. So obviously those we are talking about in this whole picture are specifically church members.

Before we start looking specifically at the principles related to *our love growing cold* and what we can do in our lives to try and prevent our love growing cold, I think we first need to understand the magnitude of the problem. Notice that Christ says "the love of *many* will grow cold." As we're going to see, this is a rather sobering picture that He is painting. Why I say this is, if we look at the Greek word that is translated as *many*, it is transliterated into English as *polus* and is Strong's #4183. The definition I'm going to give you is from The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament by Spiros Zodhiates. If you look at Zodhiates write up about this or even most other Lexicons as they address this word, you will see it has a wide variety of nuances and meaning. It's similar to the English word "many". You can have a variety of different nuances of meaning of what's intended by using that word when you consider context and how it's used. This word functions very similarly. What's interesting is, if you look at how Zodhiates addresses this, he is covering these varieties of different nuances of meaning. There is a particular definition he gives and specifically sites this verse as an example. Let me just quote to you the definition he gives for this.

*"Also, the many, meaning the most, the greater number but implying exceptions."*

You can see the definition he is giving for *many* here, is "the majority". That's the concept of what he's getting at. If you think of that as saying, "those who received the Holy Spirit who have *agape love*", Christ would be warning that the majority could have their love grow cold, that's a sobering picture. That's a frightening picture that we need to take seriously. One could argue that this very fact has a variety of nuances and meanings depending on context and say, that's not really what Christ was getting at; He

was painting a more positive picture. One could argue that, because Zodhiates is one Greek scholar giving his opinion on that. Often this is something, that as church members, we don't like to look at because it's a disturbing, ugly picture. But let's just look at a variety of other scriptures that point out to us a very similar outcome or picture. Look at Matthew 7:13.

**Matthew 7:13** *Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.  
14) Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (NKJV)*

That is a very straightforward, easy to understand statement. The ramifications of this statement are disturbing and upsetting, but it's not hard to understand His words. Often, I have found in my years in the church of God, which has really been my entire life, church members look at verses like this and what you hear from them is mental gymnastics. They say,

*"Well, He doesn't really mean that ugly picture. All He is trying to say is that it's just the Firstfruits who are called right now; it's just a small number of people who are given the opportunity to understand the truth—that's all He is getting at."*

That is a much more emotionally satisfying conclusion but it's not what the Bible says. In Matthew 22, we're going to read the parable of the wedding feast. As you can imagine, verse 14 is where we are headed, but I want you to see the entire context leading up to this verse because if we understand the context, then it's really clear what verse 14 is saying. But let's start in verse 1.

**Matthew 22:1** *And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said:  
2) The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,  
3) and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.  
4) Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."'  
5) But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business.  
6) And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.  
7) But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.  
8) Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy.  
9) Therefore, go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'*

10) *So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

11) *But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment.*

12) *So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.*

13) *Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

14) *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* (NKJV)

In the context of what he has just described, it's not hard to understand what He means by *many are called but few are chosen*. He's talking about a very ugly attrition rate. That's the whole context of the entire parable. Just to get the whole context of what's being addressed, there is a very obvious analogy taking place in this parable. He is talking about the Kingdom of God is like this:

*The Kingdom of God is like a king who is putting on a wedding for his son. [This is pretty obvious.] The king is God the Father, the Son is Jesus Christ and who is invited to the wedding to marry Jesus Christ?*

That would be church members who were called to salvation; that's who is being addressed. Notice all of those being addressed in this parable have been invited to the wedding. So, when we get to the end and we see *many are called and few are chosen*, it's not hard to understand what He's saying. He's talking about an ugly attrition rate. I've seen church members do mental gymnastics with this and say, He's really just saying that only a few are called at this time, it's just the Firstfruits who are called and while that is true, all that we're addressing here are those invited to the wedding. It says that *many* are called, the *few* are chosen. We're not addressing anybody who is not called. So, when you say *many are called but few are chosen*, what you are saying is there are a lot of people invited and a substantial portion of them, before they endure to the end, their love grows cold, they turn away from the truth. They lose their chance at being part of the wedding. Notice what happens. He talks about *weeping and gnashing of teeth and being cast into outer darkness*—we're talking about *the lake of fire*. The concept is not difficult, they are just very emotionally disturbing and not emotionally satisfying. In Matthew 20 we see a similar comment made. We're not going to go through the entire parable of the workers and vineyard, I just want you to notice verse 16 because it makes a similar comment that we just read in Matthew 22:14.

**Matthew 20:16** *So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen."* (NKJV)

We're seeing the same context. To put it in modern day terminology and into a sentence, we're talking about a very ugly attrition rate. As I mentioned, in my experience growing up in the church of God all of my life, what I like to refer to as mental gymnastics is something I've experienced a lot in addressing these particular scriptures

and when discussing them with other church members. The conclusion they point to is not an emotionally satisfying conclusion, it's a sobering and ugly conclusion.

To give you an example of what I'm talking about, about ten or fifteen years ago, I was having a conversation about these kind of verses with a very good friend of mine. We were both individuals who loved to study God's Word and discuss it for hours and debate various concepts. Just so you understand the relationship as I tell the story, both my good friend and I have sarcastic senses of humor, so sometimes when we would make a point with each other and spar. In discussing an idea, we would get sarcastic with one another but it wasn't offensive to the other, it was just our personalities. That's important to understand as I tell you some of the conversation.

In discussing all of this, I mentioned to my friend a lot of the same concepts I have just laid out here. It makes the comment that *the way is narrow and difficult, few find it*, and the Bible mentions *many are called, few are chosen*—it's painting a pretty obvious picture. My friend told me, that just couldn't be. His whole appeal was God is just too loving for that. A loving God wouldn't do that. He literally went to the point of telling me that a loving God, if He thought He was going to make mankind and then have to throw a substantial portion of them into the fire, He wouldn't even create mankind in the first place because that's not what a loving God would do. As I mentioned, we both have sarcastic senses of humor so to try to get him to see what I was saying, this is how I responded to him. “

*“So, what you're saying is, a loving God would never, ever do something like, create a class of angelic beings—millions if not billions of them—to then later have to turn around and take an entire 1/3 of them and throw them into the lake of fire. He would never do that because that just wouldn't be loving. Are you sure about that?”*

I could see my friend—it hit him as I used this analogy for this example—and he started back pedaling. He realized this wasn't a speculative or going out on a limb example, this was a very easily, provable example from the Bible. We know for an absolute fact that God created millions, if not billions of angels and then gave them free moral agency and 1/3 of them rebelled and the Bible clearly tells us that 1/3 of them are going into the lake of fire. So, when we see these comments about *many are called, few are chosen*, we need to take this seriously. When Christ tells us that *the many will have their love grow cold*, that is a very sober warning that we need to take very seriously. It's not a mild thing.

Now to understand how we can prevent our love from *growing cold* as individuals, let's go back to Matthew 24. We're going to see, as we go through the verses, not only verse 12, but the verses around it also, give us a lot of clues, a lot of good insight into things that can cause our love to grow cold. Things that we can do to avoid that happening to us. Things that we can practice in our own lives and we can take Christ's warnings.

Start in verse 10.

**Matthew 24:10** *And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.* (NKJV)

We talked about this verse quite a bit in my last sermon and, as I mentioned in that sermon, and which I will mention again today, the word *offended*, the meaning being expressed is not how we typically use the word *offended*. In our modern-day culture, when we say, “I’m offended by that” or “that offended me” what we are normally referring to is something emotionally upsetting to an individual. Someone else said something or did something that they felt was insensitive or rude and they felt emotionally hurt by it. That’s typically the meaning we are trying to express with the word. That’s not what Christ is trying to say. The Greek word for *offended* transliterated into English is *skandalizo*, it’s Strong’s #4624 and I’m going to quote from Zodhiates, he defines this as: “to cause to stumble and fall”, in the New Testament, figuratively:

“To be a stumbling block to someone, to cause to stumble at or in something, to give a cause of offense to someone, to cause to offend, lead astray, lead into sin, be a stumbling block or the occasion of one’s sinning, to be offended, to lead astray or into sin, fall away from the truth”.

What he is referring to is that:

*Many will fall away from the truth, they will fall into sin.*

As I mentioned last time, when it talks about *betray one another*, it’s not talking about that they were rude to them, they talked about them behind their back, they shared something in confidence and then blabbed it to the world, this is *betrayed* like Judas did to Christ. To turn over to the authorities with evil intent for trial or condemnation. This is very ugly. So, you can see why the end of the verse says, *they will hate one another*. If you fall into sin and you’re doing that kind of betrayal to others, you hate them. This is a pretty ugly picture.

What I want you to notice is the context is of people falling into sin and the effects of sin. That is the context. We are going to look at verse 11 in more detail a little later so we will go down to verse 12 first.

**12)** *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*  
(NKJV)

As I mentioned, the word here for *love* is *agape love*. Notice that what it is that causes love to grow cold is *lawlessness*. In our popular culture today, people—even religious people—see love and law as somehow at opposite ends of the spectrum. That law in the Old Testament was mean and harsh and cruel to people, but Jesus is love and He cares for people and you don’t have to keep that law anymore. He’s saying the exact opposite. What causes love to grow cold is *lawlessness*. Notice what the actual meaning is for this. The Greek word translated into *lawlessness* is transliterated into

English as *anomia*, Strong's #458. According to Zodhiates he defines this as, "lawlessness", in most cases in the New Testament it means "not the absence of the law but the violation of the law, i.e. transgression or lawlessness". In the New Testament it places stress not in a subjective law that we ourselves create for our convenience but in a divinely instituted law. In other words, what causes love to grow cold is a violation of God's law; that's what causes our love to grow cold. We have to understand the biblical definition of love. We, even as church members, can fall into a carnal human reasoning definition of love. I'm sure those who have heard a lot of my sermons know where I'm going here. I think you can define it with a question. We often define love humanly with a question,

"Does it feel good?" — Does it make us feel positive and give us warm, fuzzy emotions? That's love and a good thing and if it feels bad that can't be love. That's not how God defines love. God defines love with the question,

"Does it do good?" — What is the end result? What does it ultimately result in; that has much more to do with it than whether it feels positive to our emotions or not.

We have to notice that God defines sin, which is the problem here—people falling into sin. He defines it in terms of law. We will go to 1 John 3, I'm sure everybody knows where I'm going. This is a very common verse, typically a memory verse for most Christians.

**1 John 3:4** *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.* (NKJV)

*Sin is the transgression of God's law.* If we go against what God instructs us in the Bible, regardless of how that feels to our emotions or human reasoning, we have to take the stand point that God knows best and we don't. We have to try to mold our minds and character into His image. All too often what happens, if we define love and particularly, if our view of Godly love is defined with emotion, what will happen is we will unknowingly try to mold God into our image. Kind of like when I was talking about the conversation with my friend; there were numerous scriptures that very clearly point out a picture. He would just deny—he did it unknowingly with good intentions, he wasn't trying to be rebellious to the Bible—but he was saying it can't mean what it says because that conclusion is too emotionally disturbing. What that conclusion winds up doing is, we try to mold God into our image. We try to insist that it's only things that feel good that can be true. Things that don't feel good can't be true and what we're doing if we do that is we are trying to mold God into our image. We're basically exalting our emotion and human reasoning above God and the Bible. We can't do that. We're all subject to that because of our carnal, deceptive human nature. It's something we need to be aware of—that tendency to fall in that direction. We have to understand that sin is what causes our love to grow cold and God defines sin in terms of law. One of the keys to making sure our love doesn't grow cold, is we need to develop a love for God's law. To see that we will go to Psalms 119:165.

**Psalms 119:165** *Great peace have those who love Your law, And nothing causes them to stumble. (NKJV)*

I mentioned a number of times in my last sermon that in the New Testament you will see the word *stumble*, it's *skadalizo* and it is the same word in Matthew 24 for *offended*; it's falling into sin. Obviously, this is the Hebrew in the Old Testament so it's not the same Greek word. It's the same concept, causing them to stumble. Causing them "to stumble" here, is "stumbling into sin". Those who love God's law, who cherish it, who see great value in it and want to try to model their lives after God's law, that's something that protects us from our *love growing cold*. One of the greatest enemies of not having our love grow cold is loving God's law and following God's law in our day to day lives. Not just paying a lip service to it—that it's a good thing—but sincerely trying to mold our lives to it and seeing, that when we identify areas in our life where we're not showing the proper respect for God's law. We are repenting and changing that and seeing that we are trying everything we can to mold our lives in accordance to God's law in the New Testament and truly value and cherish it. To actually love God's law and to mold our lives around it. That's one of the biggest things we can do to try and keep our love from growing cold.

Loving God's law means protecting ourselves and realizing that the society around us is constantly bombarding us with evil messages. Satan and the world around us are very good at propaganda. Taking very evils things and packaging them in nice looking packages to make the evil seem appealing to us and getting us involved and flirting with it. If we allow ourselves to love the world around us, that's another thing that automatically starts killing the love of God in us and killing the love of His law.

**1 John 2:15** *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (NKJV)*

Love of the Father is *agape love*. If we love the world, that is automatically going to be at odds with *agape love* in us.

*16) For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

*17) And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)*

It's telling us that we need to be on guard and to not love the things of the world around us. As I mentioned, Satan and his agents are very good at what we would call in our physical world, propaganda. Getting us to buy into his thought processes by packaging it in a way that is attractive to us. Let me give you an example that hit me almost twenty years ago. Looking back at just how entertainment in our modern-day world can feed you very unhealthy things, very sinful things but packaged in something that might appeal to you. About twenty years ago, when this whole trend of what is now referred to as reality TV—which is not reality at all—but when that trend first started coming about there was a show called Survivor. Some of you may remember, I don't know if it's still



on, but when it first came out it was this idea of taking a group of people and putting them out in the wilderness somewhere or on an island, somewhere they have to rough it and survive the weather in all different circumstances without modern conveniences to see who could survive the best.

My wife, in particular, was attracted to the outdoors, camping and those kinds of activities and liked the idea of seeing a show like this. She loved sports and they would have creative sporting activity as a part of the show. So we would watch this and became fans when it first came out. Then you begin to realize that what this is based upon isn't just this package of how they sold it. The core of this is about a system that doesn't really reward those who have performed well and who work hard, who have skills. What it turned into was, that those who were poor performers would make alliances with each other and turn on and get rid of the people that performed well and were good contributors. Those who worked hard and gave a lot to the group, they wanted to get rid of those people because they were all vying for the money.

What you realize is it's turning it into an entertainment package, selling you something that is promoting the rottenest values of humanity that there are. It's not about those who are smart and have skills and work hard to battle the elements and provide for the group, and those people being rewarded. No, it's all about those who aren't good performers plotting and scheming against the others to undermine them and take away what they have. It's basically glorifying the worst of humanity. They often put it together in a package that make you want to sit in your living room and absorb this all the time. You start realizing this is horrible and it's teaching me rotten values and the worst of mankind.

I use this as an example of how the society around us can erode our values and send us very sinful messages but packaged in such a way that would cause us to want to partake in it. That's something we all need to be aware of, because if we love the world around us, if we get attracted and buy into these things what naturally happens? We develop a love for the world and that kills the love of God within us. We're basically taking on Satan's way and turning away from God's way and what does that naturally result in? It results in our love growing cold and turning away from what we should be embracing and developing in our lives.

Now let's also realize, there is more than one way that sin can cause our love to grow cold. There are really two sides to this. We can have our love grow cold by just letting down in our own lives and embracing a sinful way of life. Another way that can cause our love to grow cold is the effect of the sins of others upon us. Let's go back to Matthew 24 and what we're going to see is not only being directly on the receiving end or exposed to other sins, but what I'm going to refer to as "the shock wave" from other's sins can significantly affect our lives and own love if we aren't on guard for this.

**Matthew 24:10** *And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.* (NKJV)

We've talked about this verse not only today but in my last sermon. As I mentioned, being *offended* is falling into sin. *Betray* is a much uglier picture than we often think of. The meaning is "to turn one over to the authorities with the evil intent for a trial or condemnation" like Judas did to Christ. So, you can see the context of why they hate one another. If they are treating each other like that, that's from pure hatred. Notice in this picture, just like in the case of Christ, there was someone on the perpetrating end and there was someone on the receiving end. We have to realize that being on the receiving end of this, if we don't handle that well can also result in our love growing cold. That's not just necessarily being on the direct receiving end, like Christ for example, when Judas betrayed Him. Christ was arrested, taken off, beaten, tortured and murdered and that greatly affected Him. We're also going to see examples today of what I'm going to call "the shock wave" and I'll explain that in a moment. How people can get hit by a "shock wave" from the sins of others and if they don't handle that well, that can also result in their ruin and *their love growing cold*.

To see this basic concept go to Luke 17:1.

**Luke 17:1** *Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but woe to him through whom they do come!" (NKJV)*

Notice it's talking about offenses coming through someone else.

*2) It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*  
(NKJV)

We're going to come back a little later in this sermon and deal with verses 3 and 4 but first of all notice, when it refers to *offenses coming*, what does that mean? This is related to the word to *skandalizo* that we talked about previously. That was Strong's #4624, this is Strong's #4625, *skandalon* and is closely related to *skandalizo*. This is how Zodiates defines it:

"The trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed and when touched by an animal, springs and causes it to close, causing entrapment."

We're getting at the same idea of being entrapped into sin. That can come through someone else's actions. It's not always just us giving in or not being diligent in our own personal lives, it can also be because of the actions of other people. This cannot only be by being on the direct receiving end, like I mentioned if you look at Judas' betrayal of Christ. Christ was on the direct receiving end of the actions. It could also be those being hit by "the shock wave". What do I mean when I use the term "shock wave"? The way I like to look at sin is, it's similar to the concept of going out to a still body of water. Have you ever been out to a pond or some body of water that is very still? You can walk out there and take a rock, throw it into the water and watch what happens. Wherever the rock lands there is a shock wave, ripples of waves that are going to go out away from where the rock actually hit. The larger the rock that is thrown in, the bigger the wave is

going to go out in every direction. If you throw in a little pebble, you'll just see little ripples going around it. You throw a big bolder in and you will see a huge disruption in the water and this big shock wave going out. This same concept is what causes tsunamis. Often that can come from an earthquake that typically happens somewhere off the coast. If you have seen pictures of when a tsunami happens, you have the earthquake that happens miles off the shore and then the shockwave causes this big wave of water to come and hit the coastal area. If it's a big earthquake it can be a huge tsunami that devastates the coast. This is the shockwave of what's happening that's way away from where the original event took place. Sin can happen very much the same way. To see how this can affect a person's life, let's look at a biblical example of an individual whose life was ruined when he got hit by a "shockwave" of someone else's sins and he didn't handle it well. Oftentimes we can't control the things that happen in life, but we can only control our own behavior. Things will happen in our world that we didn't have any control over and that we didn't want to happen in our lives, but we always have the control over how we choose to respond to it. That's one of the lessons of this.

To illustrate this point, let's look at the life of Ahithophel. You might be familiar with the name Ahithophel. He was a character mentioned several times in the Old Testament. He was one of the advisors of King David. He's praised in the Bible for the advice he gave because it was so wise, it was said to be "like one was enquiring of the oracles of God". Towards the end of David's life, Ahithophel basically joined forces with Absalom during Absalom's rebellion. We will see in the example that we go through today, Ahithophel obviously had an axe to grind with David. He wasn't just supporting the opposition in a rebellion against David, he had a very personal beef with David and wanted to kill David. This desire wound up destroying his life. To understand what this is all about, we will go to 2 Samuel 11 because we are going to see that the Bible doesn't explicitly tell us the source of what fueled Ahithophel's anger, but if we put together what the Bible tells us about his family relations, it's not hard to come up with a picture of what was probably behind his hatred for David. Particularly when we look at what he recommended Absalom do to try to get back at David and we put it together with what happened to Ahithophel's family, it's not a difficult picture in which to connect the dots.

**2 Samuel 11:1** *It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.*

*2) Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.*

*3) So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (NKJV)*

Before we cover the rest of the story, I want to put together the puzzle of how Ahithophel is connected to this story. Notice in verse 3 we just read that Bathsheba's father is Eliam. That's going to become important because we're going to come right

back to this chapter. Turn to 2 Samuel 23 and read the later part of verse 34. This is a long list of David's mighty men, if you look at the whole context of this chapter. A lot of this list is irrelevant for our purposes today but the last part of verse 34 is important.

**2 Samuel 23:34** ... *Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite* ... (NKJV)

Notice that Ahithophel is Eliam's father, Eliam is Bathsheba's father. That makes Ahithophel Bathsheba's grandfather. So now we can establish the family relationship and see why the story we're about to read has some relevance to Ahithophel's life. Back to 2 Samuel 11:4.

**2 Samuel 11:4** *Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.*

*5) And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."* (NKJV)

David has just had an affair with a married woman and now she's pregnant and he now has a problem. Notice what he does to try and solve his problem; he makes matters dramatically worse.

*6) Then David sent to Joab, saying, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David.*

*7) When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered.*

*8) And David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him.*

*9) But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.*

*10) So when they told David, saying, "Uriah did not go down to his house," David said to Uriah, "Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"*

*11) And Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." (NKJV)*

What David wanted to happen was that Uriah would go home, spend the night with his wife so that later when the pregnancy became obvious Uriah would not be saying,

"It's not my child as I haven't been home or done anything with my wife, so it's not my child."

That would become very obvious. He wanted there to be plausible deniability but, unfortunately, for David, Uriah was not playing along.

*12) Then David said to Uriah, "Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart." So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next.*

*13) Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. (NKJV)*

All the attempts were failing.

*14) In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.*

*15) And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die." (NKJV)*

So now he's setting him up to get killed, to cover his sin—that's what David was doing.

*16) So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men.*

*17) Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. (NKJV)*

You can see what David did. He tried to cover his sins because he knew Uriah of all people would figure out that something was wrong when his wife showed up pregnant and he hadn't been home. David was trying to cover his sins, so he set Uriah up to be murdered. Keep in mind this is Ahithophel's granddaughter who is involved. If you think about this, personally I don't believe Bathsheba was totally innocent in all of this. I think she played her role in it as well. But you can think of a grandfather, looking at his granddaughter and seeing the mess that is taking place. It would be easy for a grandfather to place all of the blame, 100%, on David and see Bathsheba completely as the victim in the whole situation. We won't read this part of the story but you're probably familiar with the fact that God's punishment in all of the sin taking place, is the child they conceived dies. This child was Ahithophel's great grandchild. So, you can imagine how this personally affected his life.

With all of this in mind, we will go to 2 Samuel 16. Overtime, Absalom, David's son, started leading a rebellion and battling for the throne and Ahithophel switched sides and basically aligned himself with Absalom. There was a point where he gave advice to Absalom and if you read the advice he gave, you can see this is a man not just strategizing to overthrow a king, this is a man with a score to settle and he was seeking revenge and wanting to inflict upon David, the very pain he felt was inflicted upon himself. 2 Samuel 16:20.

**2 Samuel 16:20** *Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give advice as to what we should do."*

21) *And Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Go in to your father’s concubines, whom he has left to keep the house; and all Israel will hear that you are abhorred by your father. Then the hands of all who are with you will be strong.” (NKJV)*

Notice his advice was to take one of David’s wives and to inflict upon David what he had inflicted upon his family. “Let’s get even with this guy”; was the advice he was giving. But he didn’t stop there.

22) *So they pitched a tent for Absalom on the top of the house, and Absalom went in to his father’s concubines in the sight of all Israel.*

23) *Now the advice of Ahithophel, which he gave in those days, was as if one had inquired at the oracle of God. So was all the advice of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. (NKJV)*

**2 Samuel 17:1** *Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, “Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight.*

2) *I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king.*

3) *Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace.”*

4) *And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. (NKJV)*

He basically hatched a plan to murder David. You can see here, Ahithophel is trying to settle a score.

*“Let’s cause him pain by humiliating him—you go sleep with his wives—and then let me personally kill the guy. I have a score to settle and I want to kill him with my own hands.”*

This is basically what he is planning out. You can see that he was seeking revenge. What David perpetrated very much involved sin and that sin greatly affected Ahithophel’s life. Not only did it ruin his granddaughter’s marriage, but his great grandchild died as a result of all it. You can see how this personally hurt his life. He wasn’t the one who committed the sin, he wasn’t involved in it at all, but he got hit by “the shockwave” and it wound up hitting his life and greatly hurting him. Notice what it did to his life. He plotted to kill David but he escaped. David was warned that they were trying to get him and he got out of the area and escaped the attack—but notice what this did to Ahithophel’s life when his plans didn’t work out. Look in chapter 17:23.

**2 Samuel 17:23** *Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father’s tomb. (NKJV)*

This destroyed his life. He basically got consumed with hatred and ill feelings towards David because of David’s sins. What happened to Ahithophel’s love? His love grew

cold, his life became consumed with hatred and a desire for revenge. If we go back to where all of this started, it didn't start with Ahithophel's sin, it started with David's sin. Ahithophel could sit here and tell you what a rotten guy David was and what evil things he had done and perpetrated and it would all be true. All the allegations are true and David is guilty but Ahithophel wound up destroying his own life because he couldn't let it go. He allowed the effects of "the shockwave" to then take over his own life, because of his own choices. He could have chosen to deal with this—he had nothing to do with the original sin. He couldn't choose to have undone that, that just happened and he had nothing to do with it, but it affected his life. He could have chosen to deal with it differently. This is a lesson that all of us can learn.

We're going to finish the rest of Luke 17 so let's go back to Luke 17. It gives us the key as to how we should deal with situations like this when they happen. We read verses 1 and 2 earlier and I mentioned how offenses coming from other people are basically traps that pull us into sin. This is what Christ is talking about. We just looked at a graphic example of how it destroyed a man's life. Sins that he didn't perpetrate but he got hit by "the shockwave" from these sins. How he chose to deal with it absolutely destroyed his life. The same thing can happen to us—we can be hit by the sins of other people—but we have to make the appropriate decision on how to deal with it. That's addressed starting in verse 3 of Luke 17.

**Luke 17:3** *Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*

*4) And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent, 'you shall forgive him.'* (NKJV)

The key is forgiveness. It's also important to understand the nature of forgiveness. On this subject I like to point out that forgiveness and reconciliation are two separate subjects. Forgiveness is an absolute biblical requirement and it's a unilateral thing. In other words, one individual can choose to forgive and let offenses go. Reconciliation requires the actions of two people. Like in the example of Ahithophel and David. What Ahithophel was not aware of was that David had already repented for his sins. He had already gone to God and asked for forgiveness, God had already forgiven him. There were still consequences that David had to face for his actions—but God had forgiven him of his sins and David had recognized that he had totally messed up and repented of that. Oftentimes, that doesn't happen. When someone sins against us and they are not repented of it, they don't see they did anything wrong so sometimes reconciliation is not always possible. That requires the action of two people. That doesn't change our responsibility as Christians to give forgiveness because that is a unilateral subject.

What I often find as our biggest obstacle for all us carnal human beings to forgiving the offenses that we have received as a result of other people's actions is, we look at it like this—let me put it in the words of how Ahithophel might have put it.

*"Forgive David? Are you kidding me? Let me tell you what that dirty dog did to my family. He took advantage of my granddaughter. He set up and murdered her*

*husband as a result of nothing that Uriah did; he set the guy up and got him killed, my great grandchild died because of this guy. This guy doesn't deserve forgiveness."*

It's all in the context of whether that person deserves it or not. What's missed in all of this was, whose life was being destroyed as a result of Ahithophel refusing to forgive. It wasn't David's life, it was Ahithophel's life. Forgiveness is not a gift you give to the person who hurt you, it's a gift you give to yourself.

To notice this, look at Matthew 6 where we'll look at the model prayer and there's one verse we'll focus on, verse 12.

**Matthew 6:12** *And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. (NKJV)*

I think it's interesting it uses the "language of debt". I'm sure most all of us hearing this sermon have had some form of debt at some point in our lives. If you own a home, you either currently have or have had a mortgage where you are or were making monthly payments on it. If you own a car, you either currently are making payments or at one point made payments and you understand the concept of a debt. When you're holding a debt, someone is making monthly payments on that. If you think about this in terms of someone has hurt you and there is a debt you feel you are owed because of someone else's sins. Ask yourself the question, who is making the payments on the debt? It's typically not the person who hurt you. If you're hanging onto the resentment and ill feelings of how someone else's sins have hurt you, you're the person making the payments on the debt. If you give up that anger and the ill feelings towards the other person, you're not giving a gift to them, you're giving a gift to yourself. Reconciliation is a separate subject. In a minute we'll look at how to deal with that subject when the sinful behavior on the other person's part is an ongoing sin that is not repented of and is not changing. In those cases, reconciliation may not be a possibility but forgiveness is a Christian requirement. We have to let that go and get rid of our feelings of hurt and anger and hatred towards the other person for any harm we might have received. If you think of it in terms of a financial debt, ask yourself who is making the payments on the debt. It's not the guy who hurt you. If you're stewing in those negative feelings, you're making the payment yourself. Forgiving and letting that go is not giving a gift to them, you're giving a gift to yourself because you are releasing yourself from the payments.

We'll look a little later at how to handle that situation, if the person is completely unrepentant because that's going to tie into another concept we need to address as well. To cover one more thing that can address *our love growing cold*, we will go to Matthew 24, this time we'll focus on verse 11.

**Matthew 24:11** *Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. (NKJV)*

If we look at the whole section of scriptures before and after this, the whole focus is specifically on the church of God. Very often this verse gets looked at and people say this is referring to all the world's churches and all the other people who are deceived in



the false religions. You might apply the concept in that regard, but the context is specifically referring to the church of God. I think it's also important to understand the Greek word that is translated for *prophets*. If we look only at individuals who are trying to claim that they can foretell the future, I think we are missing some of the meaning. The Greek word that is translated into the English word as *false prophets*, is pseudo-prophetes and is [Strong's #5578](#) and defining it from Zodhiates:

“A false prophet, one who falsely assumes the work of a prophet, when pretending to foretell the things to come or teaching false doctrines in the name of God”.

I think it's important we understand the second part. It's not just those who claim to be prophets, it's also those who teach false doctrines in the name of God. I think we've experienced a whole lot more of that second part in the church of God than we have in the first part. We certainly, particularly in the last few decades, have seen a number of individuals who claim to promote themselves as prophets and tell us that they can foretell the future and tell us all about prophecy—that certainly happens. What I think is much more common is those who teach false doctrines in the name of God. It tells us that this is something that can cause our *love to grow cold* as well. We have to realize that Christ told us, that this is something we are always going to be dealing with. Paul addresses this as well in 1 Corinthians 11:17.

**1 Corinthians 11:17** *For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.  
18) For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. (NKJV)*

In other words, Paul was saying, dealing with false teachers is just going to be an ongoing issue that church members are going to be dealing with. God allows this because it tests His people. It tests who is going to hang onto the truth and who is just going to follow fables or follow a strong personality or leader. Who is going to take the time to search through the scriptures and be like the Bereans and search the scriptures daily to see if these things are true. It wasn't just an issue as you can see with the Bereans. Paul was coming, teaching things they hadn't heard before. He was telling them about Christ as the Messiah and things that were new concepts for them. It wasn't just a matter of, “you're saying something different that has always been taught so therefore that must automatically be wrong”. No, the Bereans searched the scriptures daily going back to check it out. They heard what he had to say.

“We're not just going to take your word for it, we're going to search the scriptures and if it pans out and matches, then we will buy that. But if it doesn't then we have a problem with it.”

That's the approach we should take. We need to be on guard for false teachers because that is something that can lead us into sin. It can lead us away from the truth because that is one of the core issues that causes our love to grow cold; getting off the

path, getting deceived into false ideas away from God's law. It causes our love to grow cold.

I think there is also another thing we need to be aware of as well. We need to be on guard, following the Bereans example of always searching the scriptures to see if things are true. But we also need to realize that once you identify a source of false doctrine—I am not just talking about someone who errs in a little area or is off on a few things because none of us has perfect understanding, everyone makes mistakes. If you have identified sources of individuals where you are constantly getting very wrong, very false doctrines from. The biblical issue is, you get away from it.

Let me give you an example that I experienced several decades ago to show you what can happen if one does not exercise this principle. There was a deacon I knew in the church many years ago, I actually went to Ambassador College with his daughter. He was baptized before I was even born. When the heresy really started multiple years ago in Worldwide, just coming like a tidal wave through the church, I remember this individual talking with others who were deciding to get out of that environment and he made the comment, we all know what the truth is. If they say something that disagrees with it, just disregard it. In other words, you don't need to get yourself out of that environment, just ignore anything that doesn't match. We weren't talking about a situation where someone was just in error about this little point or that little point, we are talking about massive undermining of the truth. The individual who said that decided to sit in that environment indefinitely and never make a move. What eventually happened to him was he eventually talked himself into believing all the heresies he was constantly being bombarded with. That is something we need to realize; if you identify a track record of someone being substantially off on doctrines, you should exercise the biblical principle—stop listening and get yourself out of that environment.

Notice this in Romans 16:17.

**Romans 16:17** *Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*

*18) 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.*

*19) For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil.*

*20) And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (NKJV)*

What Paul is saying here is, once you identify this—understand I'm not talking about being a fallible human being and having a misunderstanding on this little subject or that little subject—when you start seeing a track record on being significantly off on major doctrines, you stop listening and subjecting yourself to that environment. The same principle applies to any sinful or abusive behavior. I talked earlier about the example of Ahithophel and David and how we need to be forgiving, but as I mentioned,

reconciliation is not always a possibility. One of the mistakes I've seen Christians do all throughout my life is, maybe they have individuals in their lives who are living a sinful life or are just abusive to be around and they keep subjecting themselves—sticking their hand back in that fire—with the logic that I'm a Christian and need to be forgiving and be nice. Yes, we do need to be forgiving but the Bible gives us a clear principle that if a person is unrepentant and they are continuing abusive and sinful behavior, you don't keep sticking your hand in the fire; you get yourself out of that environment or it will wear you down over time. Forgiveness is unilateral, reconciliation requires the actions of two people. As our final scripture we will go to 1 Corinthians 5 and we'll see where Paul addressed this very concept.

**1 Corinthians 5:9** *I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.* (NKJV)

Notice you don't just take the perspective of we need to be kind and understanding—he's saying no, if they are still taking part in this blatant behavior, you get them out of your life.

*10) Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*

*11) But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.*

*12) For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?*

*13) But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."* (NKJV)

This gives us the concept of what to deal with, whether you are dealing with a false teacher or just a person whose behavior is abusive or who is living a blatantly sinful life. The obvious principle is you exercise these concepts and get that out of your life. We are all human and fallible and can be worn down over time and that can cause our love to grow cold. Just the hurt we receive being in the environment of abusive people or sinful behavior. That "shockwave" can hurt or damage us and if you continue putting yourself in that environment it can wear you down and cause your love to grow cold. It doesn't do away with our requirement to be forgiving and not to harbor hatred or ill feelings towards others who have hurt us. But it doesn't mean you keep subjecting yourself to that environment. It's an important key to making sure that we don't put ourselves in an environment for *our love to grow cold*.

Jesus Christ warned us of a particular problem that would happen in the church of God, particularly at the end time. It would be the problem of *our agape love growing cold*. He very clearly warned us that this would happen to the majority and so it's something we need to take very seriously to make sure we are not allowing ourselves to fall into this. There are a number of principles involved but they typically all revolve around sin. It's

either allowing ourselves to love the world and fall into personal sins ourselves and to give into our weaknesses or allowing the sins of other people and false teachers to wear us down in how we choose to deal with them. If we can exercise the principles we've seen in the Bible today, we can protect ourselves. We need to be doing that as we go forward to make sure our *agape love does not grow cold*.