

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

Thrive with us by following on Instagram and YouTube
@FlagNazChurch, @FlagNazYouth and FlagNaz.org



BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

How does it change the concept of your life's purpose to know that your calling is to express God's unchangeable, unconditional character to all creation?

What deception is the Holy Spirit convicting you to examine in the beliefs you hold in your heart?

How would you think, speak, and act differently if you rejected that deception and accepted God's Truth instead?

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 – ⁹The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, ¹⁰and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, ¹²so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned.

I) The Onslaught...

Some of us go easy on children when teaching them how to play games. We give them a taste of winning. As their skill increases, we also play more skillfully. Until one day the child wins and we realize maybe we were beat legitimately. The competitive among us unleash our full ability in the hopes of proving to ourselves that no, we were not bested by a child. This same approach is often used in life's more serious adversarial confrontations, in which the side believing themselves superior uses no more force than thought necessary. When this tactic backfires, it can provoke a raging onslaught. Satan is outraged at Jesus's victory and is deploying every weapon he has.

◆ **Perfect soldier**: Most of us know someone dangerous. The person we prefer to keep in the dark about minor offenses because they do not act proportionally. To them, wrongdoing is addressed at full blast

March 17th, 2024

every time. We feel secure knowing we can involve this person when situations get beyond our ability. The Bible foretells of just such a dangerous person who respects no boundaries in perpetrating evil. “The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan (2 Thes 2:9).” We can expect to deal with people who are uninhibited in bringing out our worst to cause us to quit expressing the faithful goodness of God within our character. Satan does not adhere to a moral code in his struggle to cause creation to dishonor God.

◆ **Logical end:** This lawless one is the culmination of the deception, coercion, manipulation that the devil can conjure. He holds nothing back when he senses our weakness. He is merciless. If there is something—or someone—you desire as much or more than God, the devil will come after it. If there are emotions that overrun your self-control, he will provoke them. He “uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing (v9-10).” God tells us repeatedly that Satan is driven to destroy us at any cost. It is his sole purpose.

II) Stimulating Desire...

It is common to experience lasting satisfaction from healthy habits. Unfortunately, they don’t often provide the immediate sensation of pleasure that destructive behaviors offer. This is a contrast between joy and happiness. If we never tried the destructive source of happiness, we wouldn’t know the difference. Now that we have, it can be a constant temptation. But we have also learned of its destructive power and know our wellbeing requires us to avoid it. A merciful master would shield us from the temptation. Ours is not. We can expect the prince of this world to offer more destruction than we can handle.

◆ **Refuse treatment:** The Bible instructs us to not let ourselves be deceived. That assumes a critical dimension to our ability to resist temptation. Those who will give into the lawless one and perish do so “because they refused to love the truth and so be saved (v10).” Few sustain healthy habits unless they open their hearts and minds to small, accumulating buildup of wellbeing that result over time with consistency. Eating well, exercising, praying, expressing gratitude, and many other practices are easily given up if they are done for duty. The same holds if we do it for the instant gratification of a feeling. Only when we reflect on our love of Jesus and recognize how adhering to His truth is steadily building us into the fullness of His image will we choose to love and commit to the process of salvation.

◆ **Give in:** We return to the reality that God is the Creator and makes use of everything He has created. Even Satan. God desires that each of us express Him in creation. That means we are faithful to Him no matter our circumstances and we love others regardless of their response. We do these things because we love God and have committed to revealing His full glory. Any willful deviation from our faithfulness is intentional dishonoring of God, which He despises. Those who refuse to love the truth, “God sends them a powerful delusion (v11),” in the form of the devil’s temptation. Satan exposes those who have any motive other than the love of Jesus controlling them.

III) Glutton for Punishment...

We believe we are rational creatures. We make decisions that lead to our best. When we do something that harms us, we learn and do not do it again. Or so we tell ourselves. The reality is quite different. All of us know people who continue to harm themselves or refuse to do what is good for themselves. The explanation is that we do what is rational according to what we choose to believe. God urges those of us frustrated by our inability to resist temptation to reevaluate the details of what we believe.

◆ **Way past moderation:** In Jesus, the full truth of God is revealed. There is nothing left to discover. No combination of Jesus and anything is true at all. Those who believe and love the truth accept the conviction of the Holy Spirit and are built up into the image of Jesus. God wills that any who deny any part of the truth are known to be false and not taken as His expression. The powerful delusion is meant to lead “them to believe what is false (v11),” so that they have no part in Him. There must be a stark contrast between the people of God and the children of the devil.

◆ **Point of no return:** There is a distinction between those of us who believe and battle our flesh as we attempt to inhabit the truth, and those who prefer deception. God uses the lawless one to deceive “all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness (v12).” Our God is faithful and is working salvation in those who love Jesus. We must be honest with ourselves, though. Do we love Jesus enough to express Him perfectly when it causes us pain? When it fails to bring about immediate justice? When it puts our felt needs last? Those who take “pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned (v12).” Our calling and salvation are to know Truth, defend Truth, love Truth, and live Truth. What place does Truth have in your heart?