

Society's Last Chance? What Gets In The Way Of Improving Its Destiny?

5 Insidious Warning Signs The Media Rejects

Hostile conditions prompted 100s of England's citizens in early 1600s to search for a better future. Nearly 400 years later, these resulting United States emulate the conditions our fore-fathers escaped. The brighter future they sought eludes masses of our population as well as peoples of the world now.

As Yogi Berra said, "The future ain't what it used to be."

Cultures throughout the world today seethe with an insidious infection that yields an ornery present and a fearful future. Discord and rebellion reign in every nation of the world. A look at the warning signs confirm it.

5 Warning Signs of Discord and Rebellion

1. Bitterness

Most of us have experienced a kind of bitterness, e.g., tasting a sour, acrid fruit (1). But, bitterness can occupy the mind and soul, too, which affects the whole life. It prompts anger, even provoking vile speech toward other people. (2)

Thus, bitterness affects public discourse, especially politics, and creates difficulties among people. It even impacts religious conversations and, sadly, the Christian community, a declining authority in the world.

In addition, bitterness incites self-seeking in our actions which prompts us to resist and exclude those who disagree with us. Look at the destructive effects of bitterness in our culture.

- Republicans fight republicans, democrats and independents.
- Democrats contest democrats, republicans, and independents.
- Independents resist republicans, democrats, and independents.
- Christians antagonize other Christians.

Bitterness in mind and soul yields vile speech and self-seeking in those swayed by it. It fractures our society into factions that fight against each other.

2. Envy

Aristotle defined envy as "grief because (s)he does not have." As he indicated, it goes beyond mere jealousy of what someone else possesses.

Jealousy decays into envy and anger that cause one to make war upon that which it desires, even attempting to degrade the very thing(s) that it wants. (3) It degenerates into envious, contentious rivalry. (4) This bitter strife leads to factions. (5)

For example, agitators foster envy and division between the rich and the poor, demanding that the rich share equally their possessions and incomes with the poor. The rich take advantage of their positions and power to increase their advantages to the detriment of the poor. It results in an increasing rift between the haves and the have nots.

Like bitterness, it seems like envy pervades cultures which thrive on it. Politics today reeks of it in all political spectrums. Envy floods the internet and social media, stimulating their followers to jealousy with petty carping and fault finding. (6)

Nor does the religious community escape it. Pastors of small congregations covet larger crowds, even compromising Biblical truth to get them. Larger religious assemblies develop even larger audiences instead of helping the smaller ones to thrive.

To make matters worse, bitterness and envy create strife.

3. Strife

Contrary to popular belief, “strife” describes more than mere uneasiness and disputes. Strife embraces a wide spectrum of actions:

- pushing forward for personal ends leading to faction; (7)
- canvassing for public office; (8)
- electioneering for office, courting public opinion/applause by trickery and low acts; (9)
- serving in official positions for their own selfish reasons and interests; (10)
- promoting a party spirit, factions, and contention. (11)

Surprisingly, strife describes a lot of the political exchange now. But, these descriptions of politics also expose the similar behavior in business and religious organizations, even professing Christian ones.

4. Confusion

Cultures around the world border on disorder. Factions appear in virtually every corner of societies, which frequently erupt into confusion and revolt. We see factions develop in open defiance of authority, engage in insurrection, and presumed intention to overthrow authority or to act in complete opposition to authority’s demands. (12)

Commotion and tumult grow out of seemingly inoffensive, yet different philosophic positions. (13) Disputes develop into disruptions of community peace. (14)

I fear that some hope their confusion will advance into anarchy.

5. Evil Work

The conditions of these cultures continue their inevitable decline into evil works. Without exception, this ultimate conclusion results from bitterness, envy, strife, and confusion.

What describes “evil work?” Immoral, mean baseness seizes control of a person’s attitudes and behavior. (15) This spirit yields wicked, depraved, corrupt, evil deeds. (16) These good-for-nothing deeds cause the impossibility of any true gain coming forth from them. (17)

Yes, cultures on every continent today seethe with the insidious evils of bitterness, envy, strife, confusion, and evil works.

3 Causes of Cultural Decay

What causes these evils? Actually, the Bible describes not only these evils but their causes. Possibly you’ve heard this assertion which prompts skepticism in your mind. Before you reject my proposal without consideration, keep reading to see its profound yet simple analysis.

“But if ye have [bitterness] envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” (18)

This section from the Bible describes cultures throughout the world today. Notice the evils: bitterness, envy, strife, confusion, and evil work. These verses also identify their origins. Let’s look at them briefly.

1. Earthly

What does that mean? It does not mean dirt. Instead, it describes the attitudes of the earthly realm as opposed to a Godly one. It embraces the kind of wisdom that people produce, not the wisdom from God. (19) One writer called it “the wisdom of mankind, misleading, and liable to error.” (20)

Bitterness, envy, strife, confusion, and evil works originate from the wisdom of humanity, the kind of wisdom that humans produce. So, our human minds, separate from Godly influences, foster and advance plans, ideas, and purposes that, in the end, decay into these five evils.

2. Sensual

Sensuality further defines the source of earthly wisdom. It depicts that wisdom that humans produce which harmonizes with corrupt human desires and affections. (21) It distinguishes human wisdom, depravities, and the insights they foster from God's spotlessly upright wisdom.

3. Devilish

Sadly, every culture rejects all discussion about a person of evil, the devil or satan, who exists and exerts his evil desires into people's lives. Perhaps you reject it, too.

You cannot dismiss the reality of evil. It has a source and the Bible reveals its origin.

It began in God's perfectly created paradise, the Garden in Eden. Evil did not exist in God's original creation. The devil, the arch enemy of God, who himself rebelled against God, inhabited a serpent and tempted God's original, sinless humans, Adam and Eve, to disobey their Creator God's commandment and to eat of the fruit of the tree that God forbade them eat.

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, and sin corrupted their natures because of their sin against God. Evil entered God's perfect creation. Their sin separated them from God and a spiritual gulf divided them from Him placing them under God's just condemnation.

Thereafter, all humans, including you and me, are born with an evil nature which we inherit from Adam and Eve, the progenitors of all humanity. Our sinful natures impel us to act upon their impulses, producing bitterness, envy, strife, confusion, and evil works.

In addition, as in the Garden in Eden, satan uses his devilish spirits to follow his lead. They comprise part of his evil kingdom, commonly called demons, who tempt humans to sin. These temptations, through the devil's demonic powers, can overwhelm us. Evil thoughts and deeds grow within us and produce wicked behavior.

When humans succumb to satan's temptations, their actions become devilish. Then, humans behave as a typical demon acts and behaves, becoming demon-like, resembling a demon, evil to the core. (22)

This describes the devilish decay into which the cultures of the world have degenerated.

Solution

1. Steps to Solution

First, the Bible states that God does not author confusion, but peace. (23) Whenever confusion exists, regardless of its circumstances in the secular or religious world, it comes from an earthly, sensual, devilish source.

Next, the Bible contrasts the evils listed in the Biblical passage from James 3 (see above quotation) with Godly wisdom. (24) In the complete context, it distinguishes earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom from Godly wisdom and gives the characteristics of Godly wisdom:

- purity;
- peace;
- gentleness;
- rationality;
- mercy;
- good fruits;
- impartiality;
- absence of hypocrisy.

God promised to give this wisdom to those who seek it from Him. (25)

The nations of the world, including Christian congregations, suffer a spiritual battle between the evils resulting from earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom and the wisdom of God. Sadly, the effects of evil empowered by the devil and his demons emerge from the shadows and attempt to control cultures throughout the world.

Mere human efforts and strategies fall helpless in these spiritual battles. Victory comes only from the divine intervention of God's mighty power brought to bear upon the conflicts. (26)

2. Believers who follow Christ

For Christ followers, God has provided the means for victory over evil, even devilish evil.

When Christ invaded earth in human form, He overcame the strongman, i.e., the devil. (27)

At His crucifixion and then His resurrection three days later, Christ rose victorious over sin and death, destroying all the works of satan.

Further, God has given to His children His full armor that enables the child of God to resist and stand against all the wiles of the devil. (28)

Therefore, Christ-follower, stand strong in the Lord, clothed in His armor, against the earthly, sensual, devilish acts of bitterness, envy, strife, confusion, and evil works in the world about you and, if present, in the local Christian assembly where you worship God with other believers. Tear down the demonic strongholds that satan has built against you. (29)

You will live in the victory that Christ obtained for you.

3. Unbeliever(s)

Perhaps you wonder, what hope do I have if I do not presently follow Christ?

The victory that I described for Christ-followers can become yours today, too.

God provided His Son, Jesus, as the Savior-Redeemer for sinners like you and me. He came in the likeness of humanity, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross as a Substitute, suffering God's judgment on behalf of sinners like us that we justly deserve.

Christ promised that He will accept everyone who comes to God through faith upon Him as his/her Lord and Substitute-Savior. His salvation redeems from sin all those who trust upon Him for salvation. His salvation bridges the gulf that exists between them and God, and reconciles them back to God, making them children of God.

Therefore, turn from your present sinful condition, unbelief, and separation from God and His condemnation against you. Trust Christ and His provision for people like you and me.

Conclusion

Without God's divine intervention, the present and the future provide no hope for you, me, or the world, for that matter.

Therefore, I urge you to cast your faith upon Christ and live in the victory that He provides for His followers.

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