

2. 5 Last Days Commands-Part 2

A New Years Exhortation for 2026

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(1-4-26)

Find this week's sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

We have just entered into a new year—a year that we all hope will be as good if not better than last year—however that might not be the case.

I say that because, as Christians we're fighting in a war (something we absolutely must not overlook or ignore)—and therefore this year could wind up being a very challenging year for many of us.

The fact that we as Christians are soldiers of Christ fighting in a war is reinforced throughout the pages of the New Testament—for example:

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (NKJV)

³ You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Ephesians 6:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

2 Corinthians 10:3–4 (NKJV)

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds...

From the very beginning of the Church's existence, it has always been understood that Christians were soldiers fighting in a battle. We battle the world, we battle the flesh, we battle the devil, we battle sin, heresy, pride, materialism and every high thing ('lofty ideology') that exalts itself against the true knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:5).

In the New Testament, we're not only called soldiers—we're also called, wrestlers, contenders, and fighters.

We are commanded to fight the "*good fight of faith*" (1 Timothy 6:12) every single day of our Christian life (the Greek is commanding us to—"keep on continually, constantly fighting the *good fight of faith*").

The word for "fight" is *agonidzomi* the word we get our English words agonize and agony from—implying this battle won't be 'fun' or enjoyable.

Because we are in a war—a war with an extremely powerful, super intelligent, hyper-malevolent spirit-being known as the devil who commands a very powerful army of demonic warriors.

As such, the devil ('the god of this world') and his army are determined to destroy people in hell by keeping them prisoners—and we are the army of God commanded to go into all the world with the gospel which alone can set them free.

Because of it, the enemy has placed a 'bullseye' on your back—in other words, he's going to target your walk, your ministry, your marriage, your kids, your health—so as to defeat you and neutralize your effectiveness for God.

I personally think that whatever is coming in the way of spiritual, emotional and maybe even physical attacks in this new year will in many ways be attached to 'last days' spiritual warfare.

The question is:

- *Are we ready for what's coming?*
- *Do we understand the times we are living in and*
- *Are we doing what the Word commands for those living in the Last Days?*

In 1 Chronicles 12:32 there is a statement about the sons of Issachar—“*They had understanding of the times and knew what Israel needed to do.*” If we apply this to ourselves, we could say, “*Blessed are the children of God who have understanding of the times they are living in and know what the Church needs to do.*”

What should we as the men and women of God living in the last days need to do?

Well, last week we started a little series designed to lead us out of 2025 and into 2026.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 Paul gives what I'm calling, “**Five Last Day's Commands**”—or “*Five Commands to Christians Living in the Last Days.*”

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴Let all *that* you do be done with love.

Here Paul gives us five *imperatives* (commands) for things we are to do right now that will strengthen us as believers today but will also prepare us for the difficulties we can expect to face tomorrow and on into the future.

Last week we looked at the first one and started the second one—the first command we looked at was the command to—**Watch!**

I. Watch—verse 13a

The Greek word here means, “*to be awake*”, “*to stay alert*”, and “*to remain vigilant*.”

“*To watch for what?*” In the New Testament we are commanded to watch for the coming of two very different *lions*.

The first one is the **devil**, who Peter said we are to be vigilant to watch out for because he ‘*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*’ (1 Peter 5:8); and as Jesus said, ‘*He comes to steal, kill and destroy.*’ (John 10:10)

And the second “**Lion**” we are commanded in Scripture to be watching for is—“**the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.**”—the Lord Jesus Christ!

The only way to be watching for the Lord's return is to know the signs that He gave us to look for that will tell us His coming is getting near—it's called '*end-times prophecy*'.

Prophetically speaking, there has never been another generation in the history of the church that has seen more end-times prophecies being fulfilled than the generation we are living in—and yet as Jesus told the Pharisees and Sadducees living in His day (His First Coming):

Matthew 16:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. ² He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, '*It will be* fair weather, for the sky is red'; ³ and in the morning, '*It will be* foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times.

Then last week, we *started* looking at the second Last Day's Command—

II. Stand Fast in the Faith—verse 13b

The *faith* of which Paul speaks here is not the faith of *trusting* (not a verb) but the faith of *truth* (a noun for New Testament truth in general but in particular the content of the gospel).

A. Stand for New Testament Truth in General

The Greek word means, "*To stand firm in defense of the faith.*" In other words, when the devil comes against God's Word, we are to stand firm and fight.

Jude 1:3 (NKJV)

³ Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

1 Timothy 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² Fight the good fight of faith... [i.e.—"Fight the good fight on behalf of the faith"]

God's Word is the only thing that is powerful enough to set a person free from the devil's power, his captivity which is why he tries so hard to undermine and destroy it—and has from the very beginning ("Did God really say..."—Genesis 3:1).

This folks, is spiritual warfare at its core—a battle for souls.

The devil has been hard at work in the church, infiltrating our ranks little by little with spiritual lies and flat-out doctrines of demons—and most of the professing Church of Jesus Christ has lowered its guard and has enthusiastically invited in this "Trojan horse."

Dave Hunt—

"Christianity may well be facing the greatest challenge in its history: a series of powerful and growing seductions that are subtly changing biblical interpretations and undermining the faith of millions of people. Most Christians are scarcely aware of what is happening, and much less do they understand the issues involved."

The seduction is surprisingly easy. It does not take place as an obvious frontal assault from rival religious beliefs. That would be vigorously resisted. Instead, it comes to some Christians in the guise of faith-producing

techniques for gaining spiritual power and experiencing miracles and to others as self-improvement psychologies for fully realizing human potential that are seen as scientific aids to successful Christian living. Or it may take other forms...Even the leading cult-watchers have generally failed to recognize the Trojan horse that has penetrated both the church and their own ranks and is seducing from within."

Chuck Colson—

"I have spoken of the frontal assaults and the sneak attacks. There is something worse...The enemy is in our midst. He has so infiltrated our camp that many simply no longer can tell an enemy from a friend, or truth from heresy."

George Barna:

"Over the past 20 years, we have seen the nation's theological views slowly become less aligned with the Bible. Americans still revere the Bible and like to think of themselves as Bible-believing people, but the evidence suggests otherwise. Christians have increasingly been adopting spiritual views that come from Islam, Wicca, secular humanism, the eastern religions and other sources. Because we remain a largely Bible-illiterate society, few are alarmed or even aware of the slide toward syncretism—a belief system that blindly combines beliefs from many different faith perspectives."

We need to sound the alarm and call the people of God to action before it's too late—which is why we could also name this series *"An Urgent Call to Battle."*

Actually, this call to battle is nothing new—as we just quoted Jude who admonished us as soldiers of Christ to *"earnestly contend for the faith..."*

Jude is admonishing all true believers to *"agonize in our fight for the truth of God against the devil's lies as when in hand-to-hand combat with a mortal enemy against false doctrine in maintaining the purity of the faith."*

Two years prior to Jude's admonition Peter, in his second epistle, also warned us *"There is coming into the Church false teachers...they will bring with them destructive heresies."*

Then two years later Jude says, *"They're here...they crept in unnoticed..."*

These false teachers so devastated the church in the 25 years that followed that Jesus in the Book of Revelation Chapters 2 & 3 dictated 7 letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) commanding them to repent and correct the false doctrine that had infiltrated into and corrupted their churches.

The Church has always had counterfeit Christians ('tares') in it (who are susceptible to false doctrine)—but I think that some (maybe many) genuine Christians will be swept away by these end-times deceptions as well—because they don't really know the Word of God and are not paying attention to Bible prophecy!

Which is why Paul admonished Timothy (a young pastor)—

1 Timothy 4:13, 16 (NKJV)

¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (*teaching from the Word of God*)....¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul is telling Timothy that the only way he was going to save himself and his congregation from the devil's lies (false doctrine), was by faithfully teaching true doctrine from the Word of God.

Paul started out this chapter (1 Timothy 4) with a grave warning about what was coming—what to be watching for:

1 Timothy 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

Notice how in 1 Timothy 4:1 he says that many will leave the faith—but not that they will necessarily leave the church.

I believe that what Paul is saying is that in the last days many in the Church would leave the faith (NT truth) that was committed to the saints for safe keeping and would embrace doctrines of demons that they would attempt to 'Christianize' and bring into the church and pass off as 'Biblical Christianity.'

Not because they're trying to deceive—but because they have been deceived.

One of the oldest and most powerful '*doctrines of demons*' that has been brought into the church is *visualization*. Visualization is a portal into the realm of the demonic.

All I can say is that I am shocked and dumbfounded at the appalling lack of discernment on the part of so many evangelical Christians who love the Lord and are otherwise '*right on believers*' and yet have bought into this deception.

'Visualization' has been practiced by those in the occult for thousands of years.

Sorcerers, diviners and witches for many centuries have known that the most powerful and effective methodology for contacting the spirit realm in order to acquire supernatural power, knowledge, and healing is through visualization.

Visualization is based on the belief that there is power in the mind to create your own reality and comes from the ancient Hindu teaching that the visible universe is actually an illusion created by the mind called a 'maya'.

And therefore, they say since what we perceive as reality is really just an illusion created by our minds then if we visualize in our minds a different reality (i.e. instead of poverty—wealth; instead of sickness—health etc.) then we can create whatever reality we desire for ourselves through the power of our mind.

Now I want to be careful here so that you don't think I am saying that any use of the imagination is occultic and forbidden by God—God gave us the ability to use our minds to imagine things.

The ability to visualize is a great help to anyone who needs to picture something in their mind before creating it—artists, designers, architects, engineers, novelists, screenwriters are only a few of the occupations which benefit from the "normal" use of the imagination.

The visualization that we are going to be dealing with has nothing to do with the normal use of your imagination.

It is an occult technique that seeks to use the power of the mind and mental images to create and control reality—which is why many call it, ‘*creative visualization*’.

However, it’s also used by those in the occult to get in contact with spirit guides—in fact one of the fastest ways to get a spirit guide or familiar spirit is through visualization. That’s how it has been flooding into the mainstream church because many in the church are using it as ‘*a powerful new prayer technique*’ to get in contact with God through a Christianized version of T.M. (transcendental meditation).

Biblical meditation means to *think deeply* about God and His Word. But in eastern mysticism meditation means to empty the mind of all thought in order to open it to the spirit world, leading to mystical and powerful experiences from “God.”

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* writes,

“In your imagination allow your spiritual body, shining with light, to rise out of your physical body...Reassure your body that you will return....Go deeper and deeper into outer space until there is nothing except the warm presence of the eternal Creator. Rest in his presence. Listen quietly [to] any instruction given” (p. 27).

This kind of *visualization* is actually nothing more than ‘*astral projection*’—a major occult technique used by shamans (witch doctors) to contact their spirit guides.

Yet Foster claims that it will allow you to contact Jesus:

“Take a single event [from Scripture]. Seek to live the experience, remembering the encouragement of Ignatius of Loyola to apply all our senses to our task...represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery...as an active participant....You can actually encounter the living Christ in the event, be addressed by His voice...touched by His healing power....Jesus Christ will actually come to you” (p. 26).

Dave Hunt—

“Not so! You cannot summons Jesus Christ from the right hand of the Father to appear before you anytime you so choose as if He’s your servant—but any demon will be happy to pretend to be Jesus.”

(Check out “The Beautiful Side of Evil” by Joanna Michaelsen)

Now many who practice this in the church are quick to point out that God has given many in the Bible visions of Himself which they claim justifies why this practice is OK.

But I vehemently disagree with that—if God gives you a vision it’s called *revelation*, but if you try to conjure one up its called *divination* which is forbidden by God in Scripture.

Many of the so-called “*desert fathers*” adopted occult techniques, later popularized as the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. (Define ‘*desert fathers*’)

They thought that if they could visualize Christ and biblical events in their imagination, the Bible would become more real and they would mature spiritually.

Brian Flynn, the director of One Truth Ministries in Minneapolis, says:

“Eleven years ago, I walked away from the life of a New Age medium and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. As a medium, I performed psychic readings and, through meditative practices, contacted spirit guides.

At the time, I did not realize these guides were demonic. Now as a Christian, I no longer have to chant, go into altered states of consciousness or perform rituals to find the peace and truth I found through the Lord and His Word.

Three years ago, I read a book called *A Time of Departing*, which claimed that many Christian leaders were teaching a mantra-meditation technique. You can imagine my shock when I discovered the New Age had infiltrated Christianity through such a technique, a practice called contemplative prayer.

The technique involves repeating a word or phrase over and over until reaching what is called 'the silence'. Sometimes, instead of a word or phrase, the breath is focused upon, thus the name 'Breath Prayers.' The goal? Reaching an altered state of consciousness in order to communicate with God...

Contemplating God's Word is a good thing. But the contemplative prayer I speak of is not. First practiced by monks centuries ago, it died out and did not re-enter the Church again until the 1960s when Catholic monks, Thomas Keating and Thomas Merton, decided to introduce the practice to mainstream Christianity.

Richard Foster, a supporter of contemplative prayer, writes a curious warning about this practice in his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*: '*I also want to give a word of precaution. In the silent contemplation of God we are entering deeply into the spiritual realm, and there is such a thing as a supernatural guidance... While the Bible does not give us a lot of information on that, there are various orders of spiritual beings, and some of them are definitely not in cooperation with God and his way! ... But for now I want to encourage you to learn and practice prayers of protection.*'

Then why do it, Mr. Foster? Why would God put me in a position to fend for myself in this unknown spiritual realm surrounded by spiritual beings that are not in cooperation with God and his way? He would not.

The Achilles' heel for Mr. Foster is that there is no scriptural support for contemplative prayer other than this warning, '*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions, as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*' (Matt. 6:7-8).

What would martyrs of the faith who departed from Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism say to us if they could speak of our intermingling Christianity with Eastern mystical practices?

As a former New Age medium, I know the difference between Eastern meditative practices and biblical Christian prayer. Sadly, too many in the Christian community do not."

Listen to his audio messages [here](#). [Episode 1](#) [Episode 2](#) [Episode 3](#) [Episode 4](#) [Episode 5](#)

What is the real origin of "spiritual disciplines" like contemplative prayer?

Prof. Johan Malan, University of Limpopo, South Africa:

"There is a widespread resurgence of Eastern meditation among nominal Christians in the West. In many churches and other Christian circles, prayer is increasingly replaced by meditation, which is also described as contemplation, centering prayers, or quiet prayers.

Meditation is often accompanied by Yoga relaxation exercises and relaxed breathing in order to promote a mental shift from the rational left brain to the intuitive right brain."

Rob Bell pastor of Mars Hill, an emergent mega-church says,—

"This is not just the same old message with new methods, we're rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern religion, as a way of life."

In his foreword to Ray Yungen's book, *A Time of Departing*, Ron Comer says:

"By using Eastern mystical techniques such as the repetition of words (mantras) and the emptying of the mind, professing Christians are testifying to powerful experiences in the spiritual realms.

In Christian circles these techniques are being called: the silence, breath prayer, centering prayer, or contemplative prayer.

Through these mystical prayer practices the church today has opened its door to a subtle abandonment of the gospel...

Like two rivers merging together, Eastern and Western religious thought are joining together, thus gaining momentum towards a one world religion in which all paths lead to God.

Dave Hunt—

"The growing belief that visual images created in the imagination open the door to a closer walk with God is part of an epidemic of extra biblical teaching that is being accepted in the church today. The door is being opened to demonic delusion, and it is astounding how many Christians are walking through it."

Yes, the door to Hinduism.

The basic tenant and goal of Hinduism is that mankind can evolve into godhood. This will be the religion of the Antichrist.

We'll explore this next time.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Catch this weeks' audio, video, study and sermon notes [HERE](#).