

PathLights

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path”
Psalm 119:104

February 5, 2017

Unprincipled Men

by Frank Himmel

Twice in 2 Peter, the Apostle referred to *unprincipled men*. First, he used this phrase of the Sodomites and their sensual conduct (2:7), men who, in Jude’s words, “indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh” (Jude 7). Then in 3:17, Peter warned Christians not to be carried away by the error of unprincipled men who distort the Scriptures (cf. v. 16). He is almost certainly referring here to the false teachers he described at length in chapter 2.

Peter’s word is a simple one. It literally means apart from or contrary to law; “refusing to be subjected to legal requirements—‘lawless, unruly, not complying with law’” (Louw and Nida). Most translations render it *wicked* or *lawless*, but *unprincipled* is a fitting equivalent. Peter’s usage indicates that such people may be found both in and out of the church.

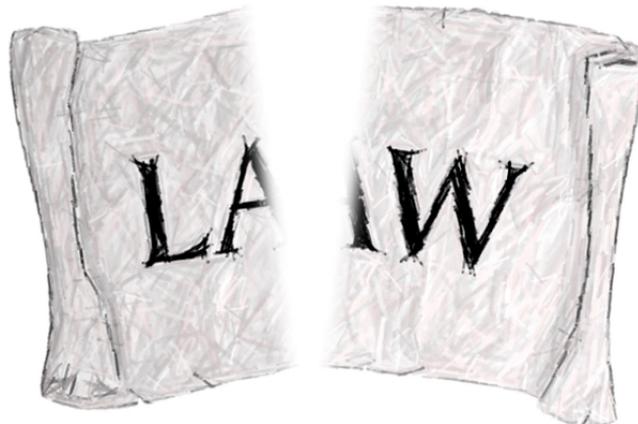
Unprincipled men would likely not admit to being such, nor would they openly acknowledge the one principle by which they consistently live: self-will. What they want overrides all else.

Unprincipled men cheat. They follow rules to an extent, but if setting them aside yields some immediate advantage, so be it. Such men have no real devotion to the principle of honesty.

Unprincipled men misrepresent. If their attack on an a situation or an opponent is legitimate, fine. If it is unsubstantiated, exaggerated, or distorted, that is of little concern. Some hurl out-and-out lies with evidently no scruples whatsoever; to them, the end justifies the means.

Unprincipled men are inconsistent. They appeal to law when it suits them, they disparage it when it does not. People who have no regard at all for the Bible will nevertheless quote it when they think it supports their contention. Come to think of it, isn’t that what Satan did when he was tempting Jesus?

Unprincipled men are often contradictory. Here is a prime example. Recently in our state a woman was charged with attempted murder because she gave birth in a store bathroom and threw the baby in the trash. If she had gone to an abortion clinic instead, that would have been perfectly legal! Same action, same effect, yet one is broadly considered acceptable and the other reprehensible. ▶



Unprincipled men are creative. I never cease to be amazed at the variety of ways in which folks find things in our nation’s constitution that it simply does not say. In reference to the Bible, that same creativity is often employed in the opposite direction—to dismiss what it plainly does say. Remember, Satan’s oldest lie is, God does not mean what He says.

Unprincipled men are usually persistent. They are determined to have their way, and often that means trying to silence all opposition and force acceptance. Intimidation is a favorite tactic.

Unprincipled men create chaos. Homes, schools, churches, businesses, nations, and societies all need the order that law provides in order to function. When individuals are at liberty to set aside rules they don’t like, other members of the group are harmed and the unit as a whole malfunctions. We constantly complain about referees, but just try to imagine a football game without them!

Unprincipled men are headed to destruction. Peter said of the Sodomites, “The Lord knows how to . . . keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment” (2:9). What about false teachers? They distort the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (3:17).

“... Be on your guard, that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:17). ■

Believing Bible Testimony



by Frank Himmel

“Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed’” (John 20:29).

“Doubting” Thomas did not believe the other apostles when they told him Jesus was alive. He needed to see Jesus for himself. Jesus gave him that opportunity, and Thomas believed. In our text, however, part of Jesus’ response to Thomas, the Lord pointed out that many would not have the opportunity for firsthand knowledge; they would be dependent on eyewitness testimony.

The Bible is that eyewitness testimony (vv. 30-31). It is the only way we have to know God’s will on any subject: who Jesus is, who will be saved and how, what constitutes right conduct, how to worship, how to conduct various relationships, etc.

Blessed are those who accept it; who do not skeptically insist on other proofs God has chosen not to provide; whose faith is solidly grounded on what God said, not speculatively based on what He did not say. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Bruce Williams	Mark Clifton
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Gary Hagler	J B Williams
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	Steven Turner	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Kerry Gray	Kerry Gray	
CUP	Albert Lee Harrison	Albert Lee Harrison	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Rawland Daniel		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Albert Lee Harrison
CLOSING PRAYER	Adam Gibson	Justin Candella	Ian Brown