In the Last Days Men Will Be Incontinent, Having Only a Form of Godliness

Let us open the Word of God to 1 Peter chapter 4. Let us read from verse 3: "*For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you*."

I would like us to study two terms we find in these verses: "*lasciviousness*" and "*excess of riot*", which in my own Bible are words built on the idea of being "unbridled". I have read this text many times, and at the word lasciviousness I thought of big things, terrible things. The same with riot: I thought of very big things. But being *unbridled* does not only mean very big things.

There are some people who say that if you have given up drink, fornication and cigarettes, you have already taken very big steps, but it is much more than that.

The word *unbridled*, when you take it apart, is really two words: *un* and *bridled*. To be *bridled* is something like being *shut*, and to be *unbridled* is something like being *open*.

Open, shut, unbridled, bridle. Where does the word come from? The bridle is like a horse's bridle. It is a harness, a bit put in the mouth, and you control the horse with this bridle. That is how a horse is held in check.

Either you are held in check, or you are not held in check. Being unbridled also means having no restraint. And that does not only cover drunkenness and fornication.

Each of us perhaps thought of drunkenness, great lusts, who knows what wild parties. I would like us to study these terms a little: *self-control* and *unbridledness*, the bridle and the lack of one. We will see that God has placed self-control, temperance, in the fruit of the Spirit.

We will read Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 and 23: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*." Amen.

In the dictionary you will find many explanations of *self-control* and its opposite.

I will give you the dictionary definition. To be *bridled*, to be temperate, means *self-mastery*. Let us remember these terms. We hold ourselves back from something; it is moderation, abstinence. That is what self-control means. And these things concern us directly.

Not to be temperate means not to master yourself, not to keep yourself in check in everything. Let us pay close attention: it means being unable to refrain from doing certain things that belong to the flesh.

Verse 24 is not placed there by chance: "*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*." Amen. That is, we could say, they have restrained themselves, they hold themselves back from the passions and lusts of the flesh.

The lust of the eyes comes, and what are we to do with it? We must have levers with which to rein it in. Perhaps we have not studied the Word of God this way; perhaps when we thought about restraining our lusts we thought of certain bigger things such as fornication or drunkenness, but we never thought about how restrained we need to be.

When we think about self-control, we must know that we are called to live as the Lord Jesus lived.

In fact, He calls us to be as He is, as the Lord Jesus was. So let us ask ourselves: Did the Lord Jesus walk in the flesh? Did He live, even for a moment, according to the flesh?

The Lord Jesus had the flesh crucified and held Himself back from every lust. That is how the Lord Jesus was.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bring us to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that is, to be self-controlled in all things, just as He was.

We might say that this is too much. "*We still have our little cravings*," we might say. We have a nice saying, a wish people offer one another before a meal: "*good appetite*", and it is innocent. What does this wish urge you to do? Eat with a good appetite!

It does not say a bad appetite, but a good appetite. Make sure your appetite is good, not bad; that is, eat in moderation, do not gorge yourself. What is gluttony, really? It is a sin, it is a lack of self-control. "*No, we can't help it, we can't hold back, we can't master ourselves.*"

Many think that eating too much is not such a serious sin. But the fruit of the Spirit is temperance. Let us ask ourselves: did the Lord Jesus ever gorge Himself? If He had the flesh crucified, we know for certain that He never gorged Himself. He did not live according to the flesh, and He calls us to this same standard.

I would like us to go through the Word of God a little and see what happens to those with no bridle, to the unbridled, and to those who are self-controlled.

Let us see how important it is for us, too, to restrain ourselves. The goal we must have is to hold ourselves back from everything that belongs to the flesh. "*They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh*", that is, they have restrained themselves, they keep restraining themselves.

There are several kinds of sin in this area, and I would like us to find them, to see how important self-control is and how much we need to work on this.

If we love the Lord Jesus, it means we also love this trait of His character, which was self-control. He did not live according to the flesh, and let us think about the reason why He did not. If there had been anything good in the flesh, He would have lived by it. But there is nothing good in the flesh. Everything we give to the flesh works against us. "*They that are in the flesh cannot please God*."

And there is enmity between the flesh and the Spirit of God. Those who live in the flesh cannot please God. What does God hold against them?

First of all, we will read from Exodus chapter 32, verse 25:

"*And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies*." In my own Bible this reads: the people were *unbridled*, for Aaron had let them loose.

The people had no bridle. There is a reason the people were unbridled: Aaron had made them so. Who was the high priest, after all? God had appointed Moses and Aaron to lead the people. Moses went up the mountain to bring down the tablets, and Aaron was left in charge.

And Aaron said: "*Let me make you a golden calf*." Aaron had let them go unbridled; with no restraint, they ran wild. They no longer had a bridle on them. Aaron had taken the bridle off them, and they could no longer be led.

Can the leader of a congregation keep those in the congregation in check? Is it his duty to keep them in check, or is it not? Let us pay close attention. This is the Word of God. Perhaps it sounds too harsh. Where there is no submission in the congregation, what will the people be like? Aaron had let them loose, to their shame among their enemies.

Why were the enemies mocking? We read in 1 Peter: "*they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot*." What excess of riot? That is what the world does. We, unlike the world, have a bridle on us: the yoke of Christ. The Lord Jesus says:

"*Take my yoke upon you*." What is this yoke? Let us think about it. Is a yoke not something like a bridle?

We will go to Proverbs and read from chapter 29, verses 15 to 18, and let us look at it spiritually as well: "*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth: but the righteous shall see their fall. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul. Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*" Amen. (Where the King James says "*the people perish*", my Bible says "*the people are unbridled*".)

Scripture tells us that when the people are unbridled (and with Aaron the people were unbridled), there is no vision, no revelation from God.

What does it mean for us to have revelation from God? Right now, as we search the Scriptures about self-control, are we receiving revelation from God? If the people do not know God's

requirements concerning self-control, they will be unbridled.

We read there in Galatians about temperance, the restraint of our lusts. What could the Lord mean by that? "*Well, I don't get drunk anymore*." Let's say. "*I've thrown the television out of the house*." Those count too, but that is not all.

We must have the bridle on us, not go without it, and with this bridle someone must lead us. There is someone who has to hold this bridle.

Aaron was the one placed there to keep the people in check, together with Moses. Here we read: "*where there is no vision, the people are unbridled.*" And it is not written by chance: "*but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*", or the Word of Christ! "*A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame*," but "*whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.*" Amen.

Again, perhaps we think of very big things when we read the word "*riotous*". But these are simply the people who have no bridle; that is all it says.

It is good to understand that this is about those who do not master themselves, who have no bridle on them. In one place it says such a child brings his mother to shame, and then it says he shames his father too.

If we are in the congregation, in the Body of Christ, we will bring shame on the Lord Jesus; we bring shame on the Church, or the Church is put to shame, to the mockery of her enemies.

Perhaps we will say: being shamed and mocked is not that serious. But things get worse. We read in Proverbs chapter 5, verses 21 to 23:

"*For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD*," He sees all his paths. "*His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray*." Amen. (My Bible puts it: "*He shall die for lack of self-control*.")

Scripture shows us what happens when there is no self-control. A man will die, he will perish for lack of self-control. Many say: "*Well, I can't restrain myself yet.*" Restrain yourself, friend, because whoever does not restrain himself perishes.

Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit; it is the fruit of the Spirit's work in the one who lives by the promptings of the Spirit and lets himself be led by Him.

What does it mean to remain in obedience to God? Does God require self-control of us, or does He not? For many it is hard, because it is about crucifying the flesh, the lusts of the body. Self-control is very difficult because we have to fight the old man, who wants the fleeting pleasures of sin.

Self-control involves crucifying the flesh, and it hurts. It hurts because the flesh wants to live in the fleeting pleasures of sin. With his mind a person wants salvation, but the body, the flesh,

also wants to live.

Gluttony is a pleasure of the flesh. It has nothing to do with the Spirit of God or with spiritual things. It belongs purely to the pleasures of the body, which must be kept in check or crucified.

We will read some more about the fate of the unbridled in Job chapter 36, from verse 9: "*Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them. They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean.*" Amen. (My Bible ends: "*they die like the dissolute*".)

Let us pay close attention. Being unbridled means anything done in the flesh, which often does not look bad at all. I go on holiday and live for the flesh. These are not serious things, not heavy things.

Someone was saying that for this new year he had set himself the goal of "*travelling more, getting to know more*", but not getting to know God, rather the things of this earth. It seems innocent. It looks as though there is nothing to it. But what does it feed, the spiritual man or the natural man?

If we have nothing to compare ourselves with, we do not understand much, but if we remember that we must live as the Lord Jesus lived, things change radically.

Is that what the Lord Jesus did? Did He visit all kinds of museums and temples made with human hands? Did He find His pleasure in such things?

Let us ask ourselves: is the Holy Spirit working in us to help us reach self-control? How self-controlled do we need to be? Where there is self-control, there is freedom.

Where there is no self-control, there is unbridledness. And the unbridled cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; His Kingdom is only for the self-controlled. Let us ask ourselves: does God have something against those who do not restrain themselves? Why must we be self-controlled?

If the Lord Jesus was self-controlled and never for a moment wanted to live according to the flesh, why did He not want to? Because there was nothing good in the flesh. A life lived in the flesh is only a snare, a trap.

Let us read from 2 Peter chapter 1, starting at verse 5: "*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*" Amen.

I must give all diligence to be self-controlled, because the Holy Spirit is working in me to bring me to full self-control, as the Lord Jesus had.

He urges us, guides us, reminds us that we must be self-controlled, and we must give all diligence to be self-controlled. Scripture goes on to say that if I do not have self-control in my heart, I am blind and walk with my eyes shut: "*But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*."

The Lord cleansed me from my sins when I came to Him just as I was, with the purpose of making me as He is, and He wants me to attain the self-control that He has.

I am forgiven of my old sins, but now I must work and restrain myself in order to reach the stature of the fulness of Christ. Because that is what He was: self-controlled.

Let us ask ourselves: where are we? Do we love His character? Are we in love with self-control, with the divine nature? Do we long with all our heart to be self-controlled as He was, or do we still like the flesh?

A man perishes for lack of self-control, we have read. If we do not learn to restrain ourselves, we will perish, even if we have believed in the Lord's sacrifice. For all our prayers, for all our gifts, without self-control we will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Whoever is in the Kingdom of God is self-controlled; he has come under the yoke of Christ, he has the bridle on him. Where there is no revelation from God, the people are unbridled, and that to the mockery of our enemies.

Let us remember that we can show mercy, give, visit the sick, do a great deal of good, but self-control has nothing to do with these things.

We must add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance. Only after that do we come to patience and brotherly kindness. Let us not skip over it, or else we have believed in vain. Without self-control we will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

We will also read from Titus chapter 1, verses 7 and 8: "*For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate*." Amen.

It is harder to ask a spiritual infant to be self-controlled. That is true, because he has only just started on this road. But the one appointed to shepherd God's flock must be self-controlled.

If he is not self-controlled, he cannot lead God's flock. There are many things people require of a shepherd. Those are the only things they care about: that he has one wife, that he has believing children…

But being self-controlled, not being given to anger, is not considered so important. What does self-controlled mean? Must we restrain ourselves from anger too, or not? What kind of sin is anger, how does the Lord Jesus see this sin? As a lack of self-control?

What is a person who is angry with his brother? He is a murderer. Can we lead a congregation if we are angry people? Can a murderer lead God's flock or not?

So this man must be self-controlled. The fruit of the Spirit must be present in his life; he must have grown spiritually; he must have gone through many stages of life and, through those stages, come to self-control.

And, we might say, he has these things in abundance, and if he has them in abundance, an entrance will be ministered unto him abundantly into the Kingdom of God. Does the Lord require self-control of us or not?

The Lord requires self-control of us all, including the spiritual infant. At first he still has struggles, but his goal is self-control; his burning desire is to see the beauty of the Lord, and the Lord Jesus is self-controlled. Self-control is part of the beauty of His character.

Let us also read from James chapter 1, verse 26: "*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart…*" Scripture tells us that if we are not self-controlled, we deceive our own hearts. If we do not bridle our tongue, we deceive our hearts, thinking we are right with God.

If we are religious and do not bridle our tongue, "*…this man's religion is vain*."

Whatever we do, absolutely whatever we do, if we do not bridle our tongue, our religion is vain.

Yes, an infant has not yet managed to be self-controlled in all things, but where is his goal? To bridle his tongue, or not to bridle it? Let us read from chapter 3, since we are here: "*My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*."

We have read about being unbridled, and here too: "*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*." So whoever has learned to bridle his tongue can keep his whole body in check. But what does it say next? "*Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body*." You only have to put the bit in its mouth and you can steer it.

"*Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*" Amen.

What does Scripture ask of us here? What must we tame? What must we bridle? The first thing we must do is work on our tongue. Many say they are just quick to speak, but the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.

When we deal with the tongue, we are actually dealing with the heart, because the Lord Jesus says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

When we bridle the tongue, we bridle the heart, we bridle the body, we steer the body, we stop evil at the root. The tongue brings evil out, and do we see that whoever does not bridle his tongue deceives himself? He deceives himself, and that man's religion is vain. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, so the Word of God tells us.

"*But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*." The tongue cannot be restrained. We must restrain the heart, stop it from within, remove the evil from the heart.

If we do not remove the evil from the heart, what will the heart pour out? "*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*" We read verse 14: "*But if ye have bitter 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.*" Amen.

The mouth brings out what is in the heart. Bitter envy leads to strife. What I think, what I want to do, comes out. I bring it out through my mouth because I have to assert myself, to say what I think.

How important is it to restrain our desires? Here too we are told that we must bridle our tongue. This is the first thing we must do.

The tongue is a very simple test. If the tongue is not bridled, we have a very big problem. We put a bit in the horses' mouths. Where must we put the bridle on ourselves?

In the mouth as well, so that we obey, and so we steer the whole body. He is able to bridle the whole body, says the Word of God. And the heart can be held in check too.

We will read Proverbs 17, verses 27 and 28: "*He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.*" Amen. (My Bible says: "*whoever has a calm spirit is a man of understanding*.")

Whoever does not restrain his words does so to his own destruction. That is what we found written. "*He died the death of the dissolute*", those who had no self-control, who did not restrain themselves. "*Whoever has a calm spirit is a man of understanding.*"

If your spirit is calm, how will your speech be? Calm, or will you talk a lot? The Word of God tells us: "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*" "*Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding*." Amen.

Scripture warns us in 1 Peter: "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*." He may speak the words of God, but otherwise let him hold his peace. If he does not hold his tongue, he does it to his own destruction, so the Word of God tells us. So we see how important self-control is in God's eyes.

There are many kinds of self-control, a great many kinds. We said: if I have given up drink, I have restrained myself. Certainly, I have given up cigarettes too. We have refrained from cigarettes, we have given up feasting and wild parties, we have restrained ourselves; but we must also restrain our words, our mouth, put a bridle on our mouth, and when we speak, speak the words of God.

The Word of God tells us that choice words are found in the mouth of a man of understanding, a wise man, and the only truly choice words are the words of God.

We read in 2 Timothy chapter 3, from verse 1: "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*" Amen.

We must understand clearly that self-control is part of the Lord's commandment. Let us understand it well. Whoever does not restrain himself has only a form of godliness.

There are religious people who do not restrain themselves. If we do not restrain ourselves, the Word of God tells us that we have only a form of godliness, denying the power of God.

People want to live according to the flesh, and they come and tell us:

"*You're legalists!*" But look at the kind of "legalism" God requires of us here: to give all diligence, all our diligence, to be self-controlled. Otherwise, Scripture tells us, we will perish.

If we do not do this, we are blind and walk with our eyes shut. And in Revelation chapter 3, He says to the church in Laodicea: "*I will spue thee out of my mouth.*" Do you think you are doing well? Do you think you have become rich and so on? Look how well you are doing, but you are not self-controlled! Know that you are blind and walking with your eyes shut. You are blind. Lack of self-control is a sin; that is how God sees it.

The fruit of the Spirit is temperance. Let us allow ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit, prompted by Him, and let us give all diligence to be self-controlled.

If we want to be like the Lord Jesus, then we will restrain ourselves, because He was self-controlled in all things; He had the flesh crucified and never gave it free rein.

A person can live according to the flesh under a false cover.

"*I'm going on a trip.*" On the surface there is nothing serious about it. What is wrong with going on a trip? But if we go in order to live for the flesh, it is wrong.

What can we conclude from all we have read? Be self-controlled! Can we conclude that, or not? Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit if we let Him shape us.

To be self-controlled is divine. You become like the Lord Jesus. Only then do you taste the Kingdom of God, when you stop feeding the flesh, when you do not nourish the flesh, so as not to awaken its lusts. The fruit of the Spirit is temperance.

Do not feed the flesh, do not feed it and so wake it up, because the flesh wars against the soul. ("*Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*." 1 Peter 2:11)

Everything we do for the pleasures of the body is not spiritual; it is one hundred percent carnal. May the Lord help us understand that we have been called to self-control, just as the Lord Jesus was self-controlled.

Do we like the Lord Jesus, who held Himself back from all the things of the flesh? If we do not like Him, it means we do not want to be like Him. We only want heaven and His blessings. We only want not to go to hell. We must understand that whoever lives for the flesh will not enter the Kingdom of God.

Some of these things may be harder for some of us, but this is the Word of God. We must not despair. We only need to have this beautiful goal.

It is important to keep moving forward, to give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance. Let us give all diligence.

We must understand that this is a commandment of the Lord. Whoever lacks these things is blind and walks with his eyes shut, and has forgotten that he was cleansed. Yes, He calls us to this high walk of restraining our lusts.

There are many lusts, you know: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and so on.

We will read Galatians chapter 6, verse 7: "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*." Amen.

Why give pleasures to the body? Where is this body going? It is rubbish, it is packaging, it has no value, and we must not invest in it. Eat well, live well, love to rest well, feel good, and in the end it rots, and nothing is left of it.

He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. Only he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Amen. Let us take these things to heart. It is very important. The flesh is our deadly enemy. That is why the Lord requires self-control of us. We do many things, evangelism, who knows what else. But if we live according to the flesh, we have accomplished nothing, absolutely nothing.

If we live according to the flesh, we are lost. What does it mean to sow and invest in the flesh? To sow so that it later bears fruit. May the Lord help us understand.

There are so many verses that warn us not to live according to the flesh. We eat a meal, we eat it, but let us not invest in it, let us not value it more than it is worth. We eat a piece of cake, but it is just a piece of cake and nothing more. Not gorging ourselves on cakes to savour the flavours, to feel amazing.

The Spirit does not need these things, has no need of them at all. It sounds strange, but all these things belong to the flesh, you know. Whoever minds earthly things ends in destruction. And the apostle Paul said this weeping: "*whose God is their belly*".

Let us read in Philippians, so that we are a little alarmed; perhaps it will help us. Chapter 3, from verse 17: "*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ*." And religious people are included here too, you know: "*Whose end is destruction,*

whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" Amen. Our end will be destruction. It is everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and all we will have is eternal hell.

Do we really want to end up there? Does nobody want that? I think not. Let us be like the Lord Jesus. If our goal is to become like Him, we will want to restrain ourselves and have the flesh crucified. Otherwise we will live from one day to the next and endlessly beg for His mercy.

Let us not settle for a cheap salvation that comes down only to believing in His sacrifice. Let us all set our minds on being transformed into the image of Christ, and He will work. The Holy Spirit changes us from glory to glory, provided we do not have an evil heart of unbelief. Amen.

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