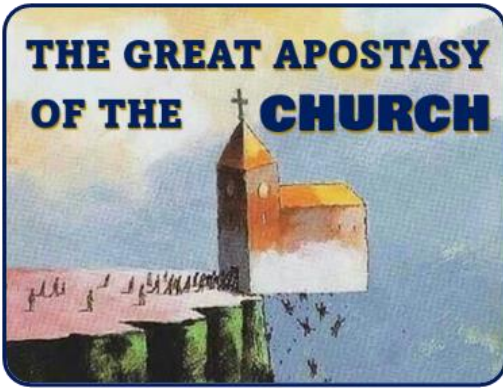


Topic: Spirit of Apostasy (*The Symptoms and The Cure*)



For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. They won't listen to what the Bible says but will blithely follow their own misguided ideas.

~ 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (TLB) ~

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INTRODUCTION

Our study scripture for this lesson is taken from the Apostle Paul's second letter penned to his young son in the gospel Timothy. By the time the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since leaving home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. The Apostle Paul wrote this second letter to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of trying and difficult times and trials. The apostle knew he was nearing the end of his earthly life and desired to share one last time with his dear son and protégé.

Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle's impending death. Paul knew that Timothy's task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul encourages Timothy to remain passionate for Christ and to remain firm in sound doctrine. Paul admonishes Timothy in chapter one to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (*cf.*, 2 Timothy 1:5; 1:13-14). Likewise, as followers of Christ in a world strapped with influences contrary to the ways of Christ, we must remain passionate for Christ while standing firm in the things we have learned. The apostle reminds Timothy that God has not given him the spirit of fear; God has given unto Timothy the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind. Therefore, in spite of not fully understanding the road that lies ahead, Timothy has nothing to fear as he has been given a sound mind to operate the power to overcome he has received of God. This too resides in the life of every born-again believer who walks up right in the sight of God.

The apostle then moves on in chapter two to exhort Timothy to a life of constancy and perseverance. He tells Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and to endure hardness as a good soldier warning Timothy not to let the affairs of this life become a snare and trap unto him which can so easily be the case for the believer who doesn't remain constant and persevering in the faith. Paul goes on to give Timothy a beautiful depiction of the life of our Savior Jesus Christ which is the Good News the apostle preaches. It is for the cause of the preaching of the Good News of Christ that the apostle is suffering and has been chained like a criminal. Paul tells Timothy that he is fully committed to enduring whatever he must if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

2 Timothy 2:9-13 (NLT)

- ⁹ *And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained.*
- ¹⁰ *So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.*
- ¹¹ *This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him.*
- ¹² *If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us.*
- ¹³ *If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.*

My question to you is...Is this your heart as well? Are you willing to endure suffering for the cause of Christ so that others, through your life, come to the knowledge and embrace of a true relationship with the Savior?

Paul tells Timothy that he must be a student of the things of God if he is to gain an understanding to enable him to rightly interpret the things of God as he explains to others the Word of Truth. He continues to instruct Timothy in the ways of God before moving his topic of discussion on to sharing the wickedness the last days will see.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (KJV)

- ¹ *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*
- ² *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*
- ³ *Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*
- ⁴ *Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*
- ⁵ *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

The apostle begins this chapter with “This know also”. The object of this reference to perilous times which were to occur was evidently to show the necessity of using every precaution to preserve the purity of the church of the living God. It is during these times that the apostle tells his young son that men will appear to be godly but will lack the power that accompany those who walk in the truth of God. While they will be wise in their learning, they will never attain to the knowledge of the truth that liberates and sets men free from sin’s grip. Such knowledge comes only through having a pure and true relationship with God’s Son Christ Jesus. Apart from this relationship men will be as Paul describes:

- **Lovers of their own selves:** Affection and attention directed solely at self. Lovers of themselves is the plague of narcissism we see in culture, an unregulated self-focus with little moral compass, leading people to live apart from truth.
- **Covetous:** An insatiable (impossible to satisfy) desire to find fulfillment, meaning and purpose in things, instead of in God. Can be also be described as strong unquenchable desire for worldly gain.
- **Boasters:** Characterized as an expression of pride; one who talks in a way in which they praise themselves and what they have done. The apostle Paul describes arrogant and boastful as “God-haters” (*cf., Romans 1:30*).
- **Proud:** An improper and excessive self-esteem known as conceit or arrogance. Pride can be defined as elevating one’s opinions and thoughts above God’s authoritative Word.

- **Blasphemers:** Great disrespect shown toward God or toward something holy. The act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence toward God.
- **Disobedient to Parents:** The act of children demeaning or belittling their parents' leadership.
- **Unthankful:** Ceasing to acknowledge God and to be thankful for His abundant blessings.
- **Unholy:** Showing disregard for what is holy. Having a wicked or evil disposition.
- **Without Natural Affection:** Perverse in affection; heartless and unloving. Void of an affection which is common among men.
- **Trucebreakers:** One who violates a truce, covenant, or engagement. One who honors no promise nor oath made.
- **False Accusers:** Spreader of false accusation; slanderers. One who strives ever to ruin the character of others.
- **Incontinent:** One who is lacking self-restraint; who is incapable of being controlled; ungovernable.
- **Fierce:** Having or displaying an intense or ferocious aggressiveness. Characterized as being dangerous.
- **Despisers of Those That Are Good:** Having a hatred of for what is good. One who is hostile to virtue.
- **Traitors:** Signifies one who delivers up to an enemy the person who has put his life in their hands. One who lacks loyalty.
- **Heady:** One who is headstrong, rash, and inconsiderate.
- **Highminded:** Denotes one who is full of themselves and yet empty of all good.
- **Lovers of Pleasure More Than Lovers of God:** Those who seek pleasure and sensual gratification as their god who they love and serve as oppose to loving and serving God. Also characterized as vain amusement.
- **Having A Form of Godliness, But Denying the Power Thereof:** Those who profess to be godly but in reality live in denial of the power to effect true godliness in their life. Those who maybe connected to the local church but not connected to the true church, the Body of Christ.

Paul concludes this chapter with encouraging Timothy to continue in the things of God that he has learned and has been assured of as being the truth. He reminds Timothy of how from a child Timothy has known the wisdom of salvation that comes from the Holy Scriptures given unto men by inspiration of God for the purpose of equipping the man of God to carry forth good works. Paul knew that if one is to be steadfast, unmovable and always abounding in the things of the Lord, that one must have an understanding of the times and things that must be endured. Paul shares his testimony to encourage not only Timothy but all

who would read it that though difficult and trying times will come, having an unshakable faith and reliance in the God of our salvation will be to our victory.

While the days the apostle Paul warned Timothy would come in his time may not be exactly as the days we are right now living in, there are similarities. We are living amongst a society who, as a majority, no longer values God nor the things of God as we once did. Some maintain the outward appearance of religion (belief in Christ) yet repudiate its power. There are those who prefer to believe a lie rather than allow the truth to reveal their true inner being and their need for change. These are those who seek after the crowd who says exactly what they desire to hear thus fueling or promoting their ungodly behavior. The church of the Living God has opened its doors extending an invitation that allows or tolerates repulsive behavior that the church once spoke out against. Even church leaders who once lived and demonstrated what they preached and taught can now be found saying one thing and living or demonstrating another.

Despite what the world portrays, there are yet people who are holding the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ; people who have taken a firm stand saying...For God I Live and For God I die. This is the remnant of those who will stand in the gap; those who will come against every evil thought and every evil imagination and every evil intent to turn people away from a pure faith in Christ. A people who will not only set their heart and goal to expose the spirit of apostasy but who will promote the cure as well. Such is the leading behind this study topic.

OUR STUDY

Now that we have purposely given a rather lengthy introduction to this lesson, lets dive into the heart or meat of the lesson.

The apostle Paul opens chapter 4 with charging his young son Timothy to be diligent to preach the truth of God's word in season and out of season. He tells him through the word of God he is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. He lets Timothy know of the times that would come upon the earth.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (VOICE)

³Because a time will come when some will no longer tolerate sound teaching. Instead, they will live by their own desires; they'll scratch their itching ears by surrounding themselves with teachers who approve of their lifestyles and tell them what they want to hear.

⁴They will turn away from the real truth you have to offer because they prefer the sound of fables and myths.

My brother and my sister, believe it or not, we are living in such times today. We have entered the time of a great falling away or a time of **Apostasy**.

What is Apostasy?

The freedictionary.com defines apostasy as: an abandonment of one's religious faith, party, or a cause. While this does define the meaning of the word apostasy, it fails to address the seriousness of the act of apostasy as it pertains to the Christian's walk and relationship with his creator God. See, the Biblical definition of the word "**Apostasy**" is "the repudiation of Christ and the central teachings of Christianity by someone who formerly was a Christian (Christ-follower)". One who is falling away. One is only capable of

“falling away” from something or someplace where one once was. So, we come to see the state or act of apostasy is one that rests with those who were once enlightened or who once embraced the truth, the apostate. An apostate is someone who once believed and then rejected the truth of God. The act of apostasy is an act of rebellion against God because it is a rebellion against truth. In the Old Testament, God warned the Jewish people about their idolatry and their lack of trust in Him. In the New Testament, the epistles warn us about not falling away from the truth. Apostasy is a very real and dangerous threat. The Bible makes clear in warning us that there will be an apostasy that is associated with the appearance of the Antichrist which is declared to occur prior to Christ’s return.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 (AMP)

¹Now in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to meet Him, we ask you, brothers and sisters,

²not to be quickly unsettled or alarmed either by a [so-called prophetic revelation of a] spirit or a message or a letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] come.

³Let no one in any way deceive or entrap you, for that day will not come unless the apostasy comes first [that is, the great rebellion, the abandonment of the faith by professed Christians], and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction [the Antichrist, the one who is destined to be destroyed],

⁴who opposes and exalts himself [so proudly and so insolently] above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he [actually enters and] takes his seat in the temple of God, publicly proclaiming that he himself is God.

⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

While most Christians are on lookout for the arrival of the Antichrist very few are on lookout for “the apostasy” that must come first. Very few have taken notice of the signs identifying the presence of the state of apostasy. The question that must be asked is, “Is there an apostasy occurring in the Christian church today?” Some would say no and others would say yes. As we look for the arrival of the Antichrist, we should also be on the lookout for the arrival of apostasy. And where should we first look but in our church house for the Bible tells us that judgment will begin in the house of the Lord (*cf.*, *1 Peter 4:17*).

How do I recognize Apostasy?

As has been previously stated, apostasy is the act of falling away from the truth. The Bible makes it plain that the greatest threat to the church is not persecution from without but poison from within. It is not outside disturbance but inside disease that is the church’s greatest threat. We are warned over and over in the Bible of the dangerous threat of invaders in the church who will secretly introduce destructive heresies and lead the church into a state of apostasy before the Lord comes back (*cf.*, *2 Peter 2:1-2*).

The Bible declares that the professing church of the last days will be apostate – it will have fallen away from sound doctrine and true saving faith – thereby producing powerless professors of the faith who are not really saved. The apostate church of the last days will be embracing false doctrines and believing deceiving spirit and holding on to a false destructive faith. This is the message the apostle Paul sought to share with his son Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4. This is the message the Holy Spirit inspired men to leave on record for you and I of today.

The Forms of Apostasy.

As to the forms of apostasy, understand there are two main types. The first form of apostasy is a falling away from the true doctrines of the Bible. This is evidenced by one embracing heretical beliefs that are

opposing to the beliefs of the Bible. In truth, this form of apostasy is not a state of irreligion but is a state of much religion – religion that has turned away from the truth. The Old Testament example of the apostasy of the nation of Israel is overwhelming in its description of how religious the people were but how far they were from true worship of Christ. The person who professes to know and serve Christ but in truth lives a life and holds a religious belief that is in contrast. The second form of apostasy is a complete renunciation of the Christian faith which results in a full abandonment of Christ. The person who walks away from Christ submitting what they once believed about Christ is no longer valid. Romans chapter one speaks of the one who when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans goes on to say about such a one...professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Romans chapter one continues to say that God gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. When God no longer has our heart, we are left to our own destruction and its consequences.

The Symptoms of Apostasy.

The best place to identify the symptoms of apostasy from God is to turn to the Word of God (Holy Bible), the book of Hosea, chapter 8. God's chosen people, Israel, serve as our witness and example of apostasy and the danger it breeds.

The **first symptom** of apostasy was Israel departed from God's word which was evidenced by her deeds. **Israel transgressed God's covenant and God's law** (*cf., Hosea 8:1*). Israel did not stay in the boundaries of God's word but instead crossed the lines and transgressed His covenant and rebelled against His law. Instead of relying upon God and His word they relied upon their own understanding –thinking that their reasoning was in line with God's reasoning.

- Israel departed from God's word when they professed to know God but were unwilling to be obedient to His word (*cf., Hosea 8:2*). Israel was loud in talk but lame in walk. They honored God with their lips but their heart was far from Him. Israel was a hearer of the word but not a doer of the word and yet they claimed to know God. Israel dared to claim obedience to the word of God even though they were guilty of transgressing His word and leaning on their own understanding.
- Israel departed from God's word when they rejected what is good (God's will and God's way as found in God's word) (*cf., Hosea 8:3*). Ancient Israel rejected God and His word and was therefore left to their own understanding and scheming which would result in them being pursued by the enemy. The tragedy was when they were supposed to have God on their side, they had God against them.
- Israel departed from God's word; they left God out of their decisions and brought idols into their religion (*cf., Hosea 8:4-6*). Israel chose leaders without the direction and input of God. Instead of trusting the Lord and His ways as found in the scriptures, Israel leaned on their own understanding and depended upon coups (politics and power wars) hoping to get the right man to the top as their leader. Israel followed their own wisdom in their choices for leaders and ended up with what they deserved – bad leaders.
- Israel departed from God when they sowed to the wind (flesh) and reaped the whirlwind (judgment) (*cf., Hosea 8:7*). Israel was loud in profession of true faith but lean in possession of true faith. Israel was guilty of sowing to the flesh (leaning on their own understanding) and reaping corruption

instead of sowing to the spirit (trusting the Lord with all their hearts) and reaping eternal life (*cf., Galatians 6:8*).

The **second symptom** of apostasy was **Israel defiled themselves with the world**. Being influenced by the world is shown to us in the Bible as first, becoming friends with the world. This is not to say that the Bible condemns us having relationship with the world. To the contrary, we are to have relationship with the world serving as a witness of good works that are visible for men to see and as a result, glorify the Father which is in heaven. What is being said is that we mustn't let the world influence us through friendship which can serve as the root of us becoming lovers of the world and then becoming conformed to the world.

- Israel became conformed to the world (*cf., Hosea 8:8*). Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights. Israel had defiled themselves with the world and had become an unclean vessel unworthy of containing and dispensing the Water of Life. Israel's responsibility was to transform the world, not conform to the world. They were to have contact without contamination. When we are contaminated by the world, we lose our influence and become like a vessel in which no one delights.
- Israel became lovers of the world (*cf., Hosea 8:9*). No one is conformed to the world who is not first a lover of the world and Israel loved the world. We are commanded, "do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (*cf., 1 John 2:15*). Loving the world and its ways is a sure sign of apostasy that by and by will lead to the world once again becoming our master. Remember what Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew 6:24a...*No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other.*
- Israel became friends with the world (*cf., Hosea 8:10*). Israel did not get to the point of being conformed to the world and loving the world overnight. They started with a step in the wrong direction – they started by being friends with the world. Israel began their slide into defilement by the world by becoming friends with the world. Israel went from being friends with the world to loving the world to being conformed to the world. This process still works in the church today. Take note that God is never pleased with the attempt of His people to be like the world in order to win the world. We are to never compromise with the world and become friends with it. We are to be steadfast, unmovable and ever abounding in doing the work of the Lord. We are to be the visible presence of God in the world by living our all and all unto God and the ways of God undeniably and uncompromisingly.

The **third symptom** of apostasy was that **Israel deceived themselves with their works**. Israel believed if it works then it must be right. However, the truth is that outward appearance can never determine the blessings of God. This is why Jesus said in John 7:24, "*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*" We mustn't let our works in the church deceive us into believing we are in right standing with God. Nor should we let increase in membership numbers promote that we are a healthy church. Remember our main study scripture makes reference to the time of apostasy being a time when people will be drawn away from the truth of God's word and drawn unto those speaking what makes them comfortable in continuing in the things that are not godly but rather please the flesh. Our leaders in the church must be careful that what they speak is the truth of God's word even if it leads to decrease in membership numbers. Our consolation is that God will always have a remnant of people who seek to obey His every command.

- Israel misapplied God's word (*cf.*, *Hosea 8:12*). Israel misapplied God's word by believing that His precepts and laws applied to someone else and not them...God's word was for the heathen nations and not apostate Israel. The days of Hosea weren't much different from ours. Today the church thinks that the word of God is for "those outside the church" and not for "those inside the church". In my early days of salvation, I heard a preacher make reference to how the greater percentage of the Bible is written for the child of God while the lesser percentage is written for the sinner. The Bible; the B.I.B.L.E, provides the child of God; the believer in Christ Jesus, some of the most profound **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. The sinner must first follow the instructions of Romans 10:9, "*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*" before the Bible becomes their book of instructions.
- Israel misapplied God's sacrificial gift (*cf.*, *Hosea 8:13*). Israel misapplied God's sacrificial gift by partaking of it with no intention of changing and it resulted in their sins not being forgiven and thus God did not delight in them. Many people want Jesus to be their Savior while at the same time, they continue in their sin and rebellion with no real heart for change. They attempt to make Jesus Lord while they are in fact still in control of their lives. The evidence for this is that they still live to fulfill the desire of the flesh rather than to fulfill the desire of the Father for their life. We mustn't lose sight of the greatest sacrifice given to man by God is the Father giving unto us His only begotten Son that we may live free and delivered from the captivity of sin.

The Cure of Apostasy.

The antidote in dealing with apostasy is the provision of life and the revelation (knowledge) of truth. 2 Peter 1:3 lets us know that according to God's divine power He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of God who has called us to glory and virtue. Verse 4 in this same chapter lets us know that we have received exceeding great and precious promises that by these you and I can be partakers of the divine nature and thus escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (strong desire). This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible to combat the spirit of apostasy. Remember, apostasy is a deviation from the right track of God's truth either through a desired contrary understanding of God's truth or a total abandonment of all things Christ. As we continue to live and grow in the knowledge of God, we would increase in our ability to live in right relationship with the Father through the Son. All we need to live and stand is found in the word of God. Now it is up to you and I to make the word of God our priority or daily rule for living. It's just that simple.

But to make it a little clearer, we must heed to living life as the Bible declares:

First and foremost, the starting point for the cure of apostasy is in our faith. Jude understood the dangers of apostasy in the church and that its cure lies within our faith. Jude urges his readers to defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to His holy people (*cf.*, *Jude 3*). The church of Jude's day was experiencing the presence of ungodly people who had wormed their way into the church speaking heresies. They were saying that God's marvelous grace allows for us to live immoral lives. This is a direct attack against the believers' faith in Christ which if it doesn't remain strong, will lead to the believer taking down from the truth of God's word. Jude encourages the believers to build each other up in their most holy faith. In other word, they were to stand together in their unified belief in the truth of God's word. This is the same for the church of our day. We must all speak the same thing; we must all hold to the truth of God's word and not let the world's influence infiltrate the church of the Living God (which is our body) nor the church establishment (our gathering place).

Along with holding or standing firm in the faith, we must continually humble ourselves before the presence of God. This is demonstrated in our unyielding obedience to God. Regardless of how trying and difficult the circumstances of our life can be at times we mustn't let nothing cause us to lose heart nor hope that God will deliver us; that God knows exactly where we are and what we are experiencing. Our faith must be strong in believing that if God has allowed us to experience this or that hardship, then God has a plan to not only bring us through but to empower us with a greater knowledge of just who God is in our life. When we humble ourselves before God's presence, we are saying to God...Lord, I have emptied myself of any will of self-defense and of self-promotion and have succumb to your will for this situation and for my life. By faith, we hold to God's promise as written in Exodus 14:14 *"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"*.

Along with building up ourselves in the faith comes keeping our self under the Word of God through both our personal devotional time of study and through attendance in a regular church environment where the true study of God's Word is being taught. Remember what the apostle Paul told the Roman church in Romans 10:17, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Remember, earlier in chapter 10, the apostle speaks of the way to salvation but now in this same chapter speaks of how faith is increased in the life of the believer. We must be students of God's word. The apostle Paul told Timothy to study so that he could rightly divide the word of truth and rightly share the word of truth with others.

We must guard against temptation. The Bible commonly teaches about the temptation to fall away from the faith. Sadly, there have been many raised in Christian homes, taught the faith as children, and even some who served in ministry, who eventually fall away. Truth be told, this should not be surprising as this is mentioned through the Bible. The apostle Paul shared this with Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1, *"the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will desert the faith and occupy themselves with deceiving spirits and teachings that come from demons."* This is why staying connected to an environment where the truth of Christ is preached and taught; an environment where God's Word (the Bible) is routinely expounded upon is so important. This is our staying power...the Holy Word of God. It is in the Holy Word of God that we have a hiding place. It is a daily diet of the Holy Word of God that we will be kept from the power of any influence contrary to God. The Bible tells us (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4) *that man lives by every word that comes forth from God.* So, we can agree that the best cure against the spirit of apostasy begins with the embrace of a true and a pure faith in God and in God's Holy Word.

In addition to holding the faith, lets briefly discuss three additional areas of defense against the spirit of apostasy:

Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. The believers in the book of Hebrews were discouraged, despondent, and exhausted because of their trials and persecutions. They wanted to quit before finishing the race. They were in danger of becoming apostates. Therefore, the author of the book of Hebrews exhorts them to consider Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of their faith and who endured all that he did (the cross) because of the joy Jesus knew would follow (*cf., Hebrews 12:2*). The author encouraged the Hebrews to lay aside every weight and every sin that would hinder them along their journey with Christ (*cf., Hebrews 12:1*). We must keep our eyes on Jesus less we lose our footing and fall prey to being pulled away from Christ through manifold temptations and troubles. When we remove all the hindrances that attempt to stand in our way, the result will be our feeble arms and our weak knees gaining strength through the perfecting of God's strength. The apostle Paul came to this knowledge during his time of trial and suffering as the result of an affliction. Paul found that the strength of God is made perfect in weakness when he realized that God's grace was sufficient (*cf., 2 Cor 12:9*).

Make every effort to live in peace. If we want to avoid the danger of apostasy, we must pursue, strive, make every effort, and be very diligent in following the ways of God. Hebrews 12:14 encourages us to make every effort to live in peace with all men. Division among men, especially within the church, is sure to lead to a falling away of some from the flock. The enemy of our soul is bent on using disagreements between the children of God as a means of disrupting the flow of God's Spirit as well as causing those not as strong in the faith to turn away from the faith out of a false belief that people are all the same...even people in the church. Remember, the Bible instructs us as to how to handle disagreements among the brethren (*cf., Matthew 18:15-17*).

Make every effort to be holy. Holiness is not optional. It is the essential condition of seeing God both now and in eternity. Hebrews 12:14 tells us that without holiness no one will see the Lord. This is because one without holiness is a man considered an apostate. We find all throughout the Bible, there is the call for us to be holy just as God is holy. Being holy denotes or is evidenced by a lifestyle that reflects the attributes or characteristics of godliness. A heart that seeks to be holy in the sight of God is unlikely to be victim of the spirit of Apostasy. Jesus told the people in Matthew 5:8, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God*". This should inspire us all who name the name of Christ to make every effort to keep our heart pure as we set our heart to be holy unto the Lord.

CONCLUSION

There is so much more we can say about the spirit of apostasy and its presence in the world today. While we have only touched the surface, we pray we have shared enough to keep you alert to apostasy's lurking spirit and its attempt to draw away from Christ all who fall prey to its tactics. Be vigilant, my brother and my sister. Be full of God's Holy Word and His Holy Spirit. Do not become apostate; rather, as our example, look to Jesus, who refused the devil's offer of all the glories of the kingdoms of this world. He endured the cross for the joy that was set before him. So, fix your eyes on Jesus and know the benefits of your present suffering far outweighs all the trying and toiling days. They produce holiness, with which you will be able to see the Lord in that great getting up morning. Straighten out your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees. Receive the grace that comes to you. Run the race, finish the race, be holy, and you shall see the Glory of the Lord in the land and be destined to meet Him in eternity!

God's peace and blessing be upon you.

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