

On to Perfection

The possibility of apostasy (falling away from Christ and the faith) is real and must be understood Biblically if the church is to remain strong and vital (see 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Heb. 6:1-6). When Christians become unfaithful they return to association with a world that is without Christ and which is void of spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3; 2 Pet. 2:2-22). Examining the Bible to find out why people become unfaithful, and discovering what may be done to help prevent unfaithfulness from occurring, will help us all in arriving at a solution.

Few would argue that all apostasy does not have its roots in ignorance of the word of God (Hos. 4:1-7), which leads naturally to an inordinate love of the world apart from God and an esteem of created things above the Creator (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Rom. 1:18-32). When one's affections are set on things below, rather than upon things above (Col. 3:1-5), the chances of being tempted and drawn away by lust (Jas. 1:13-17) are multiplied proportionately. Since the course of this disintegration is identifiable, it becomes avoidable and inexcusable. Those who fall away from the faith do so in spite of all that God has done, and all that He has prepared, to keep them faithful.

It must become a priority for all who are baptized into Christ to set a course that will strengthen their faith and remain on it throughout life (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Establishing good, consistent Bible study habits (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:14-15; 2 Tim. 2:15), coupled with a firm commitment not to willfully forsake any assembly of the church are essential first steps. Respect for authority ordained by God in the church (Mat. 28:18; 1 Tim. 3:15), civil society (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17), and home (Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) is another characteristic of the faithful. Those who fail to submit to proper, godly authority fall away and are condemned (2 Pet. 2:9-13). The Christian who would remain faithful unto death will also seek out the most faithful (not necessarily the most popular or most visible) Christians as examples to follow. Every Christian must provide a good example and pattern to be followed by others (1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7-8; 1 Pet. 2:11-17), for we all are being watched by someone. Finally, every Christian must seek to be involved in the work of the church (Eph. 2:10). Do not wait to be asked to serve, but take the initiative as Jesus intends for all His disciples to do (Lk. 9:23). Every Christian has something to offer in terms of service (Rom. 12:4-8), and the Lord requires of us according to the ability that He has given each of us (Mat. 25:15). When every member is involved the church is edified (Eph. 4:11-16), but when too many are "out of service" the entire church suffers (1 Cor. 12:14-26). People who are not busy for the Lord are at risk to become troublesome, meddlesome busybodies (2 Thes. 3:10-15; 1 Tim. 5:13) who ultimately become unfaithful (1 Tim. 5:15). The old axiom, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is Biblically sound in its meaning. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58)."

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