

Discerning the Times: Departing the Faith

Saying Good-bye

As reported by [Way of Life Literature](#), there are several people to add to the growing list of deserters of the Christian faith.

- **Reed and Jess Bogard**, husband-wife pastoral team of Hillsong Dallas. Apparently, this church has shut down due to the two leaders who spent thousands and thousands of the church's money to fund their extravagant lifestyle on clothing, meals, trips and whatnot. It can likely be truthfully stated that people like the Bogards do what they do in service to Self, not in service to the Lord.
- **Carl Lentz**, former leader of the NYC Hillsong church was fired from the church after his affair with a Muslim designer surfaced.
- **Dave Gass**, who had "20 years' experience pastoring evangelical churches, including Grace Family Fellowship of Pleasant Hill, Missouri" tweeted out from his Twitter account the following: "I am walking away from faith. Even though this has been a massive bomb drop in my life, it has been decades in the making."
- **Jon Steingard**, "singer and guitarist of the Christian rock band Hawk Nelson and a pastor's son," announced this past May of 2020 that he was now an "agnostic." His statement, "I now find I no longer believe in God" really makes him more of an atheist than an agnostic as he renounced the faith he said he once held.

While the debate continues as to whether or not a person can actually *lose* their salvation, it appears these people who *do* walk away from the faith do so because they weren't really Christians in the first place.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2:19 KJV)

We see the reality of their lives because of their decisions to walk away/depart from the faith. If we couple this with Paul's statements concerning the coming great falling away, we can come to no other conclusion. Ultimately, it is for God alone to decide, though His Word seems to clarify for us.

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition... (2 Thessalonians 2:3 KJV).

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:1-3 NKJV)

The term "falling away" in the texts essentially means to *depart from revealed truth*. The Greek word *apostasia* is the origin of the term "falling away." Because of this, people even during Jesus' day, essentially *departed* from the truth, or turned away from Him (John 6).

Of course, what is just as concerning, if not more so, are the many leaders within Christendom who have **not** yet physically left the faith, but have remained, teaching heresies to followers, which results in creating heretics. This latter group may be far worse than the first, though both are clearly problematic. While the first group has at least been honest enough to admit their own failure to believe truth and have, realizing they cannot remain, the latter group has walked away from the truth and replaced it with lies, yet they remain in positions of authority within Christendom.

What followers of those who remain have done is cling to a particular *personality*, one they specifically feel endearment toward and can equate to. This is done because those leaders are often quite engaging. They *appear* honest and upbeat and speak with some semblance of authority. They never offer any "hard sayings" as Jesus often did (cf John 6). Instead, these leaders spoon out emotional pabulum that engages the hearers only by tickling ears.

So for these followers, rejecting the teachings of their chosen leader means they would need to reject the *person*. This they are often fully unable to do since that action would create a deep sense of loss within them. Certainly, we need to be in prayer for the followers of these false leaders, that God would open eyes to see the heresy that is being taught and embraced. We know that God has done and continues to do this because there are many who *do* end up walking away from these false teachers.

Apparently, even Democrats in Congress is getting into the act. [Two Democrats have written letters to CEO's of major cable providers](#) to take action to de-platform conservative news bureaus. The falling away from God's moral code continues even outside the church.

Due to Marxism and other left wing ideologies, society *outside* Christendom is quickly and consistently breaking down into a chaotic mess (Romans 1). Unfortunately, this type of error is also leaching into Christendom, which is why there are a growing number of teachers whose lies are accepted as truth. Obviously, the father of this is Satan himself and he creates this to bring about the final world order.

The Lord Guides

But let's end this on a very refreshing biblical note with **Isaiah 58:11** (NKJV), shall we?

*The Lord will guide you continually,
And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones;
You shall be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.*

God says He will "*guide you continually*." Moreover, He will "*satisfy your soul in drought*" and "*strengthen your bones*." Beyond this, your life will be like a "*watered garden*" which "*waters do not fail*."

There is something seriously *implicit* in the above verse though and because it's not directly stated, can be easily missed. In fact, I believe that most of God's promises are *conditional*, with a few exceptions (like God will never leave or forsake us; Matthew 28:20; see also Heb 13:5). The implication is that God *will* do these things for us on condition: if we willingly obey Him in all things. That is the beginning and the end of it, in my opinion. If we obey His commands, He will "reward" us with the fulfillment of His promises.

Consider *why* many people become saved today. It is often to "avoid hell." While there's nothing wrong with wanting to avoid eternity in hell, if that is the *only* reason to embrace salvation, something huge is being missed. I don't want to get into the "lordship salvation" debate. However, it is important for unsaved and saved to understand that becoming a Christian *should* mean we enter into a living, growing relationship with God whereby we give Him our lives to do what He will do and we endeavor to serve Him *in exchange* for the salvation we have received. This is exactly the model that Jesus lived for us. He was and remains our perfect Example. How can we simply "receive" salvation and then go off and live our own life without even a care about what God might want us to accomplish for Him?

Too many pastors/evangelists rarely if ever preach this from the pulpit. Too often, they use the same types of motivational verbiage first promoted by Charles Finney. Yes, God wants us saved. But God also wants to give us salvation in exchange for our willingness to make Him Lord of our life.

As we learn to live in this manner (yes, it's a *process*), God's promises throughout His Word become active in our daily living. There is NO way that a person will see the fulfillment of His promises like Isaiah 58:11 unless that person is determined to live the way God wants him/her to live. The entirety of the Old Testament alone is filled with examples of people who did or did not live in obedience to God and His will. These are examples to us. The nation of Israel was always in or out of favor (fellowship) with God and it was always based on their obedience. The many times God dealt with Israel is proof of that. Just as God has promised to never forsake or leave the nation of Israel (He always keeps for Himself a remnant; Romans 9-11), the same applies to each Christian within His Body.

If we do as Solomon says, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man*" (Ecc 12:13), we will begin to receive the many blessings that God has promised us. These will come to pass. Yes, there may be hardships and troubles. But God will bless us in the midst of them because of our willingness to obey Him in all things.

There are difficult days ahead as I'm sure you know. There could be drought, famine, loss of job or any number of other situations. However, I am convinced that God will not leave those who seek to "*fear God and keep His commandments*." As God fed Elijah by the ravens, God will take care of His people, but there is an obligation to obey Him, to live as He would have us live. The

two go hand in hand. While we do *not* work for our salvation (a free gift), we must be willing to submit ourselves to Him for His use so that the work we do *after* we are saved will bring Him much glory.

That is the only way I know of as to actually *be* an authentic Christian. I wish I knew of it years ago...

Have a great weekend, everyone!