

“Apostasy”  
1 Timothy 4:1  
(Preached at Trinity, May 9, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. One of the most fearful teachings of Scripture is that there will be some who profess Christianity and outwardly appear to be Christians but have not been converted. In fact, a person can be a professor of Christianity and a longtime church member and not know Christ.
2. Paul is saying in this verse that some will depart from the faith.
  - a. The Greek word for “depart” is ἀφίστημι – Jesus used the word in the Parable of the Sower.  
**Luke 8:13 NAU** - "Those on the rocky *soil* are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no *firm* root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away."
  - b. It is the same form as the word Paul used in 2 Thes 2:3  
**2 Thessalonians 2:3 NAU** - "Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,"
3. By “the faith” we mean that system of doctrine which defines Christianity – it refers to faith in the objective sense.  
To apostatize is to abandon our profession of Christ.
4. This must be a warning to every person who calls himself a Christian. Every true Christian can rest assured that God will preserve and sustain them until then end. Our love for Christ and passion to know Him more will continue to increase.
  - a. This passage isn't calling into question the faith of the elect nor is it meant to lead Christians to doubt. It is stating the danger that people can be attracted to Christianity who are not Christians.
  - b. This passage is stating the truth that some will fall away. They are turning away from that which they never possessed. Hebrews 3 puts it in the form of a warning.  
**Hebrews 3:12 NAU** - "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God."
  - c. Most apostates at one point appeared to be genuine – they were convincing enough for a local church to make them a member. Most likely they believed they were true Christians, but after a season they fell away.
  - d. Over the last few years we have witnessed several high-profile individuals repudiate their faith openly announcing they are no longer followers of Christ.  
We need to bear in mind that not every apostate openly renounces his faith. There are many who remain in the church. They may even believe they are Christians. But in heart and conduct they testify they do not know Christ. They have not been brought to saving faith. They do not have spiritual appetites.

5. I'll set this subject before you this morning under four heads  
 The certainty of apostasy  
 The chronology of apostasy  
 The cause of apostasy  
 The character of apostasy

I. The Certainty that some will apostatize -

“The Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times”

“Explicitly” - ῥητῶς, - expressly, specifically, explicitly – in no uncertain terms.

In other words, this is a certainty – It is bound to happen.

A. It is a certainty because of our natural propensity for religion

1. God has made Himself known to all men

**Romans 1:18-19 NAU** - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."

κατέχω - restrain, hinder, suppress

2. They know God, but they suppress what they know. They understand God's wrath but invent ways to push it from their thoughts. By either pretending it doesn't apply to them or inventing religious works to barter with God.
3. Many use Christianity as a tool to bargain with God. Religion softens the assaults of the conscience.

The lost man hates Christ, but he loves religion.

B. Apostasy is a certainty because many are attracted to Christianity without knowing Christ.

**Matthew 7:22-23 NAU** - "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

1. Paul is saying that in the latter days many will continue in religion, but it will be a religion of their own making—a religion that is often void of Biblical truth. Paul says they are deceived by deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. But it isn't Christianity.
2. For some, it is simply a religion that doesn't make demands. It doesn't embrace the rigors of the Christian life. With any degree of difficulty many will fall away. There will be a great purging of the church.

## II. The Chronology of apostasy - "In the latter times"

- A. The "last days" usually refers to the entire church age – the age from the resurrection and ascension of Christ until He returns in glory.  
John considered himself living in the last days.  
**1 John 2:18 NAU** - "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour."  
The Book of Hebrews opens with a comparison of the Old Covenant and New. The New Covenant is referred to as "these last days."  
**Hebrews 1:1-2 NAU** - "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."
1. Throughout the age of the church there would be some who would be attracted to the Christian religion but not persevere.
  2. Paul writes of the "latter times" but applies it to his present time, the situation at Ephesus. The latter times had already begun.  
It also applies to our time.
- B. The number of defections will increase as we near the end of the age.  
**2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 NAU** - "that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,*"
1. Paul expresses it as something widespread – "the apostasy"
  2. It is one of the elements preceding the end of the age.

## III. The Cause of Apostasy

- A. "deceitful spirits" - Satan and his demons have always been active deceiving and convincing men of lies – Paul calls these lies "Doctrines of demons"
1. Paul is saying that ultimately false doctrine is forged in the fires of hell. From the very beginning of the history of man Satan has been in the business of deceiving multitudes into substituting the truth for lies.  
**Genesis 3:1 NAS** - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden '?"
  2. Satan is "crafty" - עָרוּם {aw-room'} - shrewd, crafty, sly  
He is the most sly creature God ever created
  3. He is a master of deception. He can make a lie seem true.  
"Indeed has God said"
    - a. Satan called into question the Word of God
    - b. He is still using the same tactic – One look at the great diversity of churches speaks to the reality of false doctrine
    - c. Satan is cunning – he is a liar and deceiver.
      - On one hand he accuses and deceives true believers in an attempt to discourage and weaken them.



#### IV. The Character of Apostasy – what does it look like?

- A. Some depart from the faith by embracing false doctrine
1. This is the chief focus here. Paul is speaking of a hyper-asceticism— forbidding marriage and denying certain foods. It was a perversion of the Gospel.
    - a. False doctrine was one of the problems in the Church of Ephesus and the reason Paul left Timothy at Ephesus.  
**1 Timothy 1:3 NAU** - "so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines"
    - b. Paul used the example of Hymenaeus and Alexander  
**1 Timothy 1:19-20 NAU** - "keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. <sup>20</sup> Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme."
    - c. These individuals must ultimately be excluded from the church  
**Titus 3:10-11 NAU** - "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."  
The word for “factious” is ἀίρετικός from which we get our word heretic.
  2. Christians can differ on many points. We don’t need to argue and divide over every point of doctrine.  
But there are some points of doctrine that are non-negotiable.
  3. Remember 1 Tim. 3:16 – there are some things which all must believe  
**1 Timothy 3:16 NAU** - "By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory."
- B. Rejecting sound doctrine isn’t the only characteristic of apostasy. Some depart from the faith by simply growing cold towards Christ
1. Don’t forget the letters of Christ to the seven churches  
Ephesus stood condemned because of the weakening of their love for Christ. Laodicea was condemned because of their lukewarm attention towards Christ.  
The apostate simply grows cold towards Christ.  
**Matthew 24:12-13 NAU** - "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> "But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved."
  2. The apostate may continue church attendance but that is all – there is no holiness, no zeal, no service within the church, no love for the Word of God.
  3. Jesus demands nothing short of a burning love towards Him  
**Revelation 3:16 NAU** - "So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth."

- C. Some depart from the faith by walking away from their profession. This is the final demonstration.
1. Satan usually convinces them that all is still well with their soul. They just don't have any religious affection.  
Remember. They were never believers. They are dead in sin—spiritual corpses. They walked away from what they never had.
  2. One of the signs of apostasy is the forsaking of assembling together as the lost soul simply grows tired of the charade. It may begin with a single service. And then another, and another until attendance is almost non-existent.  
**Hebrews 10:23-27 NAU** - "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; <sup>24</sup> and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. <sup>26</sup> For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries."

#### Conclusion:

1. While multitudes are following after false Christianity, true believers will be hated more and more because they seem like fanatics.
  - a. The church has always been persecuted but it will increase in intensity
  - b. The false Christian will be pleased to continue in the church as long as his profession doesn't make demands. He loves religion that doesn't insist on radical obedience and personal holiness.
  - c. People love a religion of fellowships and lively music. They love a religion that doesn't cause any discomfort.
  - d. Fiery persecution changes all of that. Few are willing to be inconvenienced for their faith and even fewer are willing to suffer.
2. We need to remember the nature of apostasy. Although it often manifests itself as a departure from the church it is ultimately a departure from God. It is going our own way setting our will above the will of God.  
Leon Morris: "In the Bible the essence of sin is not its ethical quality, but the fact that it is rebellion against God; it is the assertion of the will of man against that of God."<sup>1</sup>
3. The Bible presents us with wonderful comfort for the child of God, the genuine believer. The true Christian will persevere in the Christian faith until the end. No power, no force, no deception will ever be about to take us from our Father's hand. Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ. Nothing will prevent God from completing His good work in us. The fact that we continue to press on is a great source of confidence that our faith is genuine. It is impossible for a true believer to totally and finally fall away from the salvation God has appointed for them.

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *1 and 2 Thessalonians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 13:126.