



Apostasy

in the body of Christ

Herb Paynter

Accepting Christ as Savior but denying Him as Lord

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Introduction

The Bible states clearly that God’s intent for every believer is that they grow into “the image of Christ.” This is a process called sanctification; the process of becoming pure and holy. This is our calling as a body. We were purchased with Christ’s blood for the express purpose of continuing His ministry in His absence *and in His holiness*. But when we lose sight of this calling we fall prey to internal apostasy.

During their earthly lifetime Christians are instructed to learn obedience to the will of God through the moment-by-moment mentoring and guidance of the Holy Spirit. During this training time, we are to be vigilant in our daily walk, ever watchful for the “roaring lion” lurking around every corner. Satan and his minions are intent on devouring believers.

How does Satan attack the believer? He does most of his work through smooth talk and deception. Satan is the *master* of deceit, and his plan, and intent, is to mislead all believers. One of his most effective deceptions comes through preaching and teaching of God’s Word.

How can he possibly do that? He simply promotes teaching of the benevolence of God without teaching the truth about the *presence* and life-changing *power* of God. God not only loves and provides for believers, He commands them to live by the principles in His Word.

The absence of personal spiritual discipline in the life of the believer first renders him weak, then vulnerable, and then eventually apostate. Any position or behavior that departs from complete obedience to God’s law is apostasy. This behavior is not confined to public ministry. It equally describes the lifestyle and behavior of individual believers. Here’s why.

Apostasy is simply a departure from the path of God's calling, as set out for each believer. We are corporately called to holiness in our everyday lives. Believers are expected to live holy lives simply because we are under the new management and authority of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, all believers are called to unique mission assignments in this lifetime.

Every believer has a unique set of assignments being delivered to his spirit every day. If we are not actively practicing spiritual discipline and living in holiness, we can totally miss our assignments and thus, miss our true calling. We are to conduct our lives worthy of this calling. To not seek this God's calling would be a true violation of our spiritual destiny, and an insult to our Savior.

Ephesians 4:1

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Colossians 1:10-12

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

Apostasy is departing from the reality of our position and calling in the body of Christ. Apostasy is a word typically associated with renegade Bible teachers and pastors, and while this is true, it is not the full truth. While the Bible warns against apostate teachers, each individual is a commissioned agent (witness) of Christ. This makes us ALL teachers.

How do believers become apostate? No believer sets out to disobey the Lord, they simply atrophy into apostasy. They are led away from their call to personal holiness, sometimes by buying into godly-sounding preaching of unconditional acceptance. This is the same reasoning that convinced Eve to disannul God's clear command in the garden; "*surely God would not be so harsh.*"

Human logic and God's word are almost always diametrically opposed, yet believers are seduced away from God's hard-line law by human reasoning on a regular basis. The naïve call this softened approach "*21st Century Christianity,*" God calls it apostasy.

The Apostles Paul, Peter, and Jude all warned about the insidious teachings of "false teachers."

1 Timothy 6:3-24

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

2 Peter 2:1

just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Jude 1:4

For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

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, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Should we pretend that mature believers cannot also fall victim to this reasoning? Hardly! How can this level of ungodliness exist in the body of Christ? It happens when we let our guard down; when we cease being diligent (stedfast) in our call to walk godly in this ungodly world. When we act like the world in order to attract the world to Christianity, we violate God's law.

So what is the believer to do?

First, we are to study (determine) to show ourselves approved of God. Second, we are to become workmen who know how to correctly understand the Word of Truth; able to discern truth from error, and then, third, we are to depart from evil, in practice, association and influence. We are to become sanctified- we are to keep our minds and bodies pure. The human spirit is born again and indwelled by the Holy Spirit, but the human soul must be transformed to obedience. While human nature cannot live this level by itself, the indwelling Holy Spirit provides the power to do so.

It is essential that believers guard their lives against the apostasy that is coming against God's Word.

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Did you catch that statement? Offering our bodies to God's service is what Scripture defines as "worship." Somehow today we interpret *worship* as singing praises to God- mainly praising Him for what He has done for us! True worship is unbridled lifestyle of obedience to Him and service to others. The lifestyle harmony is further described as un conforming *to the world's pattern of behavior*. That is a decision of the mind (the soul) of the believer. Anything less is a departing from God's will.

The Biblical Meaning of Apostasy

The English word apostasy is a term that is used more *about* the Word of God than it appears *in* Word of God. In various places of the New Testament the word **apo-stasis** (apostasis) is translated depart from or fall away. The contracted Greek term literally means to stand away from. The sense of the word is clearly seen in the Gospels where the word apostasion is translated into the English word divorce.

Matthew 5:31-32

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce [apostasion]. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.'"

Mark 10:4

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce [apostasion] and send her away."

Greek: apostasion

Definition: Something separative, i.e. (spec.) divorce