

Steps To Apostasy

2 Timothy 4:3, 4

Introduction

1. Word apostasy is not a word that we hear very often today, yet is an influence that is all around us.
2. It is a word that God uses in the New Testament.
 - a. Concerning apostasy God has given us some very stern and frightening warnings.
 - b. He also speaks harsh judgment against those who enter into apostasy.
3. Because of these things this is a matter that we must take very serious and be very careful that we do not become guilty of it ourselves.

Discussion

I. What Is Apostasy?

- A. In the NASBU the word apostasy is used in 2 Thess. 2:3.
 1. *“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.”*
 2. The Greek word here is *a-po-sta-sia* meaning “falling away, forsake” (Strong’s).
 3. Vine defines it as “a defection, revolt, apostasy.
 4. This same Greek word is used in Acts 21:21.
- B. Though this exact Greek word is not used in any other passages, Paul refers to this principle quite extensively in his first letter to Timothy.
 1. 1 Tim. 4:1: *“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.”*
 2. 1 Tim. 6:10: *“For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief.”*
 3. 1 Tim. 6:20-21, *“O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” - - 21 which some have professed and thus **gone astray from the faith.**”*
 4. He wrote of the great apostasy in 2 Thess. 2:3.
 5. He warned the elders in Ephesus about those who would draw men after themselves and away from Christ (Acts 20:29-30).
 6. In Gal. 1:6-9 he wrote harsh words against those who were teaching a *different* gospel than the one delivered by Christ.
 7. In Col. 2:18ff he warned the church in Colossi of the people were “defrauding” them of their prize by teaching false doctrines.
 8. In Titus 1:9 Paul told Titus that elders were to *“refute those who contradict”* because in verse 10, *“there are many rebellious men.”*
 9. Based on Paul’s emphasis alone we see the important nature of this subject, the danger that it posed to the church and the fierceness with which we must fight against it. **Apostasy is no laughing matter. It is real and it is all around us.**
- C. Apostasy is what happens when men leave the truth and follow human traditions, which God did not deliver to us.
 1. God has not left us empty handed in our fight against error.

2. He has armed us with the truth.
3. He has shown us how apostasy works and spreads.
4. He has given us the means to fight it, for our souls are at stake. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).*
5. We will look at the pattern of apostasy as described in 2 Tim. 4:3-4.

II. The pattern of Apostasy (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A. “Will not endure sound doctrine.”

1. Apostasy does not begin with a great wave of people going a different direction.
 - a. It starts small with just a few people.
 - b. God’s truth is laid out for us in the scriptures. The faith has been revealed. God’s pattern of worship made perfectly clear.
 - c. Apostasy starts when men no longer want to go along with God’s pattern.
 - d. They get other ideas in their head, start thinking about the way they want to do things and eventually they no longer endure the sound doctrine revealed in the scriptures.
2. This was the case in Acts 15:1-2.
 - a. It grew to the problems we see in Col. 2:16ff where men were binding the food laws and holy days of the Mosaic Law on Christians.
 - b. Today we have Seventh day Adventists who keep the Sabbath and food laws.
 - c. We have the Catholic Church which tries to pattern its priesthood after the OT priests.
 - d. But it began because men no longer endured the sound doctrine revealed in scripture.
3. “Heap to themselves teachers”
 - a. Because they will no longer endure sound doctrine they begin to seek out those who will agree with them.
 - b. They look for teachers who will go with their way of thinking.
 - c. Many in the religious world today follow this example. “Go to the church of your choice.”

B. “Turn away their ears from the truth”

1. Once they find others who are willing to go along with their error or find others in an error that sounds good to them they turn away from the truth all together.
2. In the 1800s instrumental music was a heavily debated issue in the churches of Christ.
3. Those who pushed the issue eventually split the church and started their own church: The Christian Church.
4. From that time to today that group has increased ten fold in the errors that they teach.
5. As soon as they were in a situation where they had little resistance they forsook the truth altogether and filled themselves up with their own doctrines.

C. “Shall be turned unto fables”

1. This is this condition we find many churches in today.
2. Because they have turned their ears away from the truth there is nothing left for them to pay attention to besides these fables.
3. These are given several names in the New Testament.
 - a. *“Doctrines of demons”* (1 Tim. 4:1).
 - b. *“Profane and old wives’ fables”* (1 Tim. 4:7).

- c. “Error” (2 Pet. 3:17).
- d. “Destructive heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1).

- D. Do not be deceived. There is no such thing as a little error.
 - 1. Once we have departed from God’s word in one thing, it is only a matter of time before we do so in other things.
 - 2. Before we know it we will have completely given up all ties to sound doctrine and fallen in to this same pattern.
 - 3. But God has not left us to fight this alone.

III. God’s Solution.

- A. God, through Paul, gave us the very instruction we need to overcome this.
 - 1. What was Paul’s solution to these developments?
 - 2. He exhorted the church in Ephesus to arm themselves by putting on the armor of God in Eph. 6:13ff. They were to get ready to fight!
 - 3. He charged Timothy saying, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2, 5).
- B. This was God’s solution in the first century and it is His solution for today.
 - 1. The only way we are going to be able to overcome it is to stand firm in our faith, hold fast to the truth of God’s word and preach the word with all confidence and conviction.
 - 2. As Jude said in Jude 3 we need to “contend earnestly for the faith.” Are you willing to join in this struggle as a soldier of Christ?
- C. We must be ever on our guard.
 - 1. Error is not something to laugh at or turn a blind eye to.
 - 2. The supposed philosophy of “tolerance” which many people hold to today is allowing them to be rolled over faster than ever by the errors that exist.
 - 3. But if we want to be standing when the battle is over we must heed the exhortation given by Peter.
 - 4. 1 Peter 5:8-9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

Conclusion

- 1. Error is in the world and it is a serious problem.
- 2. Let us take it serious and strive only to “preach the word” so that we may be found faithful to our Lord when He comes.

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