



**Topic: Spirit of Apostasy**  
*(Endeavoring to Stand in Truth)*

*For there is going to come a time when people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear. They won't listen to what the Bible says but will blithely follow their own misguided ideas.*

~ 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (TLB) ~

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## INTRODUCTION

Our study scripture for this lesson is taken from the Apostle Paul's second letter penned to his young son in the gospel Timothy. By the time the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, the young pastor had been ministering to the church at Ephesus for four years, and it had been almost that long since he had received his first letter from Paul. Timothy had been a faithful servant to Paul since he had left home with the apostle more than a decade earlier. The Apostle Paul wrote this second letter to this young leader in the church at Ephesus to provide him encouragement and fortitude in the face of trying and difficult times and trials. The apostle knew he was nearing the end of his earthly life and desired to share one last time with his dear son.

Paul understood that the ministry would only become more difficult for Timothy with the apostle's impending death. Paul knew that Timothy's task of keeping the church within the bounds of sound doctrine while encouraging believers to live their lives well for the sake of Christ would be an often thankless and difficult task. Though hardship would come, Paul encourages young Timothy in chapter one to continue in those things he had learned, drawing on the rich heritage of faith that had been passed down to the young pastor, not just from Paul but also from his mother and grandmother (*cf. 2 Timothy 1:5; 1:13-14*). The apostle then moves on in chapter two to exhort Timothy to a life of constancy and perseverance. He tells Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and to endure hardness as a good soldier warning Timothy not to let the affairs of this life become a snare and trap unto him. Paul goes on to give Timothy a beautiful depiction of the life of our Savior Jesus Christ and the contrast of his own life with that of our Savior.

### 2 Timothy 2:6-13 (NKJV)

*The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

Paul tells Timothy that he must be a studier of the things of God if he is to gain an understanding to enable him to rightly interpret the things of God. He continues to instruct Timothy in the ways of God before moving his topic of discussion on to sharing the wickedness the last days will see.

### 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (KJV)

*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, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

The apostle begins this chapter with “This know also”. The object of this reference to perilous times which were to occur was evidently to show the necessity of using every precaution to preserve the purity of the church of the living God. It is during these times that the apostle tells his young son that men will appear to be godly but will lack the power that accompany those who walk in the truth of God. While they will be wise in their learning, they will never attain to the knowledge of the truth that liberates and sets men free from sin’s grip. Paul concludes this chapter with encouraging Timothy to continue in the things of God that he has learned and has been assured of as being the truth. He reminds Timothy of how from a child Timothy has known the wisdom of salvation that comes from the Holy Scriptures given unto men by inspiration of God for the purpose of equipping the man of God to carry forth good works.

Paul knew that if one is to be steadfast, unmovable and always abounding in the things of the Lord, that one must have an understanding of the times and things that must be endured. Paul shares his testimony to encourage not only Timothy but all who would read it that though difficult and trying times will come, having an unshakable faith and reliance in the God of our salvation will be to our victory.

## OUR STUDY

The apostle Paul opens chapter 4 with charging his young son Timothy to be diligent to preach the truth of God’s word in season and out of season. He tells him he is to, through the word of God, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. He lets Timothy know of the times that would come upon the earth.

### 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (VOICE)

*Because a time will come when some will no longer tolerate sound teaching. Instead, they will live by their own desires; they’ll scratch their itching ears by surrounding themselves with teachers who approve of their lifestyles and tell them what they want to hear. They will turn away from the real truth you have to offer because they prefer the sound of fables and myths.*

My brother and my sister, believe it or not, we are living in such times today. We have entered the time of a great falling away or a time of **Apostasy**. It is to this topic that we endeavor to share in this lesson.

### What is Apostasy?

The freedictionary.com defines apostasy as: an abandonment of one’s religious faith, party, or a cause. While this does define the meaning of the word apostasy, it fails to address the seriousness of the act of apostasy as it pertains to the Christian’s walk and relationship with his creator God. See, the Biblical definition of the word “**Apostasy**” means to fall away from the truth. One is only capable of “falling away” from something or someplace where one once was. So, we come to see the state or act of apostasy is one that rests with those who were once enlightened or who once embraced the truth and has now become an apostate. An apostate is someone who has once believed and then rejected the truth of God. The act of apostasy is an act of rebellion against God because it is a rebellion against truth. In the Old Testament God warned the Jewish people about their idolatry and their lack of trust in Him. In the New Testament the epistles warn us about not falling away from the truth. Apostasy is a very real and dangerous threat. The Bible makes clear in warning us that there

will be an apostasy that is associated with the appearance of the Antichrist which is declared to occur prior to Christ's return.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 (AMP)

*But relative to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and our gathering together to [meet] Him, we beg you, brethren, Not to allow your minds to be quickly unsettled or disturbed or kept excited or alarmed, whether it be by some [pretended] revelation of [the] Spirit or by word or by letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] arrived and is here. Let no one deceive or beguile you in any way, for that day will not come except the apostasy comes first [unless the predicted great falling away of those who have professed to be Christians has come], and the man of lawlessness (sin) is revealed, who is the son of doom (of perdition), Who opposes and exalts himself so proudly and insolently against and over all that is called God or that is worshiped, [even to his actually] taking his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming that he himself is God. Do you not recollect that when I was still with you, I told you these things?*

While most Christians are on lookout for the arrival of the Antichrist very few are on lookout for “the apostasy” that must come first. Very few have taken notice of the signs identifying the presence of the state of apostasy. The question that must be asked is, “Is there an apostasy occurring in the Christian church today?” Some would say no and other yes. As we look for the arrival of the Antichrist, we should also be on the lookout for the arrival of apostasy. And where should we first look but in our church house for the Bible tells us that judgment will begin in the house of the Lord (*cf 1 Peter 4:17*).

### *How do I recognize Apostasy?*

As has been previously stated, apostasy is the act of falling away from the truth. The Bible makes it plain that the greatest threat to the church is not persecution from without but poison from within. It is not outside disturbance but inside disease that is the church's greatest threat. We are warned over and over in the Bible of the dangerous threat of invaders in the church who will secretly introduce destructive heresies and lead the church into a state of apostasy before the Lord comes back (*cf. 2 Peter 2:1-2*).

The Bible declares that the professing church of the last days will be apostate – it will have fallen away from sound doctrine and true saving faith – therefore producing powerless professors of the faith who are not really saved. The apostate church of the last days will be embracing false doctrines and believing deceiving spirits and holding on to a false destructive faith. This is the message that apostle Paul sought to share with his son Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 4. This is the message the Holy Spirit inspired men to leave on record for you and I of today.

We must understand that apostasy is not a state of irreligion but it is a state of much religion – religion that has turned away from the truth. The Old Testament example of the apostasy of the nation of Israel is overwhelming in its description of how religious the people were but how far they were from true worship.

### *The symptoms.*

The best place to identify the symptoms of apostasy from God is to turn to the word of God, the book of Hosea, chapter 8. God's chosen people Israel serve as our witness and example of apostasy and the danger it breeds.

The **first symptom** of apostasy was Israel departed from God's word which was evidenced by her deeds. **Israel transgressed God's covenant and God's law** (*cf. Hosea 8:1*). Israel did not stay in the boundaries of

God's word but instead crossed the lines and transgressed His covenant and rebelled against His law. Instead of relying upon God and His word they relied upon their own understanding—thinking that their reasoning was in line with God's reasoning.

- Israel departed from God's word when she professed to know God but was unwilling to be obedient to His word (*cf. Hosea 8:2*). Israel was loud in talk but lame in walk. She honored God with their lips but her heart was far from Him. She was a hearer of the word but not doers of the word and yet she claimed to know God. Israel dared to claim obedience to the word of God even though they were guilty of transgressing His word and leaning on their own understanding.
- Israel departed from God's word when she rejected the good (God's will and God's way as found in God's word) (*cf. Hosea 8:3*). Ancient Israel rejected God and His word and was therefore left to her own understanding and scheming which would result in her being pursued by the enemy. The tragedy was when she was supposed to have God on her side, she had God against her.
- Israel departed from God's word when she left God out of her decisions and brought idols into her religion (*cf. Hosea 8:4-6*). Israel chose her leaders without the direction and input of God. Instead of trusting the Lord and His ways as found in the scriptures, she leaned on her own understanding and depended upon coups (politics and power wars) hoping to get the right man to the top as her leader. Israel followed her own wisdom in her choices for leaders and ended up with what she deserved – bad leaders.
- Israel departed from God when she sowed to the wind (flesh) and reaped the whirlwind (judgment) (*cf. Hosea 8:7*). Israel was loud in profession of true faith but lean in possession of true faith. She was guilty of sowing to the flesh (leaning on her own understanding) and reaping corruption instead of sowing to the spirit (trusting the Lord with all their hearts) and reaping eternal life (*cf. Galatians 6:8*).

The **second symptom** of apostasy was **Israel defiled herself with the world**. Being influenced by the world is shown to us in the bible as first, becoming friends with the world. This is not to say that the Bible condemns us having relationship with the world. To the contrary, while we are to have relationship with the world serving as a witness of good works that are visible for men to see and as a result, glorify the Father which is in heaven. What is being said is that we mustn't let the world influence us through friendship which can serve as the root of us becoming lovers of the world and then becoming conformed to the world.

- Israel became conformed to the world (*cf. Hosea 8:8*). Israel is swallowed up; they are now among the nations like a vessel in which no one delights. Israel had defiled herself with the world and had become an unclean vessel unworthy of containing and dispensing the Water of life. Israel's responsibility was to transform the world, not conform to the world. They were to have contact without contamination. When we are contaminated by the world, we lose our influence and become like a vessel in which no one delights.
- Israel became lovers of the world (*cf. Hosea 8:9*). No one is conformed to the world who is not a lover of the world and Israel hired lovers – she loved the world. We are commanded, “do not love the world nor the things in the world”. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him (*cf. 1 John 2:15*). Loving the world and its ways is a sure sign of apostasy.
- Israel became friends with the world (*cf. Hosea 8:10*). Israel did not get to the point of being conformed to the world and loving the world overnight. She started with a step in the wrong direction – she started by being friends with the world. Israel began her slide into defilement by the world by becoming friends with the world. She went from being friends with the world to loving the world to being conformed to

the world. This process still works in the church today. Take note that God is never pleased with the attempt of His people to be like the world in order to win the world. We are to never compromise with the world and become friends with it. We are to be steadfast, unmovable and ever abounding in doing the work of the Lord.

The **third symptom** of apostasy was that **Israel deceived herself with her works**. She believed if it works then it must be right. However, the truth is that outward appearance can never determine the blessings of God. This is why Jesus said in John 7:24, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” We mustn’t let our works in the church deceive us into believing we are in right standing with God. Nor should we let increase in membership numbers promote that we are a healthy church. Remember our main study scripture makes reference to the time of apostasy being a time when people will be drawn away from the truth of God’s word and drawn unto those speaking what makes them comfortable in continuing in the things that are not godly but rather please the flesh. Our leaders in the church must be careful that what they speak is the truth of God’s word even if it leads to decrease in membership numbers. Our consolation is that God will always have a remnant of people who seek to obey His every command.

- Israel misapplied God’s word (*cf. Hosea 8:12*). Israel misapplied God’s word by believing that His precepts and laws applied to someone else and not them. God’s word was for the heathen nations and not apostate Israel. The days of Hosea weren’t much different from ours. Today the church thinks that the word of God that speaks to judgment for all disobedience is for “those outside the church” and not for those inside the church.
- Israel misapplied God’s sacrificial gift (*cf. Hosea 8:13*). Israel misapplied God’s sacrificial gift by partaking of it with no intention of changing and it resulted in their sins not being forgiven and God did not delight in them. Many people want Jesus to be their Savior while at the same time, they continue in their sin and rebellion with no real heart for change. They attempt to make Jesus Lord while they are in fact still in control of their lives. The evidence for this is that they yet still live to fulfill the desire of the flesh rather than to fulfill the desire of the Father for their life. We mustn’t lose sight of the greatest sacrifice given to man by God is the Father giving unto us His only begotten son that we may live free and delivered from the captivity of sin.

## CONCLUSION

### *Guard against apostasy (standing in the truth)*

2 Peter 1:3 lets us know that according to God’s divine power He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of God who has called us to glory and virtue. Verse 4 in this same chapter lets us know that we have received exceeding great and precious promises that by these you and I can be partakers of the divine nature and thus escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (strong desire). This is one of the most powerful verses in the Bible to combat the spirit of apostasy. As we continue to live and grow in the knowledge of God, we would increase in our ability to live in right relationship with the Father through the Son. All we need to live and stand is found in the word of God. Now it is up to you and I to make the word of God our priority or daily rule for living. It’s just that simple. But to make it a little clearer, we must:

### **Deuteronomy 31:6 (NKJV)**

*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your god, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.*

First and foremost, we must remember that God is always there. Even in the driest times, when we just don't feel God presence, we need to remember that God is always there. He does not forget us. What we will find is that true faith is developed even when we don't feel God.

**Philippians 2:12-13 (NKJV)**

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

Developing long-term habits is important to maintaining your faith. A daily devotional will keep you in the Word and enhance your prayer life. It will also keep you closure to God even when you struggle in your faith. I encourage you my brother and my sister to keep yourself in pursuit of God; continue to seek to be a vessel of honor committed to the Lord at all cost. Your labor will not be in vain.

***God's peace and blessing be upon you....***

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