

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Apostasy: The Negative Response to the New Covenant, Part 1

Scripture: Hebrews 10:26-27

Code: 1624

Father, we thank you for the sweet expression of that song. Oh, what a joy it is to know that we can rejoice because of who you are and what you've done for us. And, Father, we cannot but speak words that don't even begin to tell of the joy in our hearts. Father, overwhelm us just with the rejoicing that is ours because of what you've done.

And now, as we look at your Word, oh, Father, we pray that you'll bore within your hearts a deep, deep hunger for your truth that can only be filled by it. And, Father, press upon our minds the urgency of the hour in which we live, and give to us a great compassion for those without Christ. And, Father, make us teachable tonight, that we might be instructed out of thy law.

Bless those who are among us who've never met Jesus Christ. May they tremble under the Word of God, and, not only that, but may they be drawn to the love of Jesus Christ as well, that this might even be the night of their salvation. We thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our lesson tonight comes from the tenth chapter of Hebrews. Hebrews, chapter 10, we will be considering verse 26 through 39 in this message. The subject, "Apostasy: A Negative Response to the New Covenant." And I have to say that, as I told you at the very beginning, there were going to be five warnings in the Book of Hebrews, warnings to the intellectually convinced, who know that Christianity is true but have never committed themselves to it honestly and truly.

And of those five warnings, this is by far the most terrifying and the most serious. In fact, it may be the most serious warning in all of the Scriptures. It deals with the subject of apostasy.

Now, I told you last time that once the new covenant is presented, or the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented, there are only two possible responses. When a man knows all there is to know of the gospel, when he hears all the truth there is to hear, he either believes unto salvation or he disbelieves and becomes an apostate. Apostasy is the sin for which there is no forgiveness.

Now, apostasy is not a new problem. Let's talk about it so we understand what it is. In Deuteronomy 13:13, the Bible says this. "Certain men, worthless fellows, are gone out from among you and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known.'" Now, that, in a sense, is apostasy. It is drawing away from the true God to false gods. That's what it means to be an apostate.

And we are saying, then, that someone who comes to Christ all the way up to the edge, knows the truth, believes it to be the truth, and then, in unbelief, finally turns and walks away, never having committed himself to Christ, has done essentially just that. He has turned away to other gods, going away from the truth to falsehood.

Now, in Deuteronomy, this is again indicated to us in chapter 13, following the text we just read, beginning in verse 14. He says in 13:13 that thing that I just read to you. Then in 14, "Then shalt thou inquire and make search and ask diligently. And, behold, if it be truth and the thing certain, that which abomination has wrought among you, thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword."

"And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof and shalt burn with fire the city and all the spoil thereof every whit for the Lord thy God. And it shall be an heap forever. It shall not be built again. And there shall cling nothing of the cursed thing to thine hand, that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show thee mercy and have compassion upon thee and multiply thee as He has sworn unto thy fathers when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God to keep all His commandments which I command thee this day to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord thy God."

Now, God's attitude toward apostasy is indicated there. This situation, given a particular city which became apostate, became then at the same time the object of God's wrath. And He said if such a city does that and turns from God to false gods and to idols, I'll destroy it and wipe it off the face of the earth and it'll never be rebuilt again. That's God's attitude toward apostasy.

In chapter 17, beginning at verse 2, we find in Deuteronomy also another indication of apostasy and God's attitude. "If there be found among you," beginning in 2, "within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman who hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God in transgressing His covenant, and hath gone and served other gods and worshipped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven which I have not commanded, and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it and inquired diligently, and behold it is true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel, then thou shalt bring forth that man or that woman who hath committed that wicked thing under the gates, even that man or that woman thou shalt stone them with stones until they die."

Now, that's God's attitude toward apostasy. That's God's attitude toward one who knows the truth, is identified with the truth, belongs to the organization that holds the truth, turns around and walks away. God is very serious in dealing with them. God hates apostasy.

In the case of Saul, we have an example of an apostate, King Saul. I Samuel 15:11, "It repented me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me," said God. Amaziah, another example, II Chronicles 15, verse 14 and 27 say this. "Now it came to pass, that after Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down before them. Wherefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Amaziah. They sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there."

Apostasy, you see, is nothing new. Nor is God's attitude anything new. God has always hated that most abominable of sins, the sin of a man who knows the truth, knows it completely, and identifies himself with the people of the truth, then, after a given time, turns his back and walks away. That is the most serious sin in all of Scripture.

Now, here in our text, we find a presentation, in Hebrews 10, of apostasy, New Testament vintage, the negative response to the new covenant. Now, you remember that in the Book of Hebrews, the Lord is presented to us as the mediator of a new covenant. And in every way Christ is superior to everything in the old covenant. We've been through this so many times.

He is a perfect priest with a perfect sacrifice, therefore securing a perfect covenant. He provides everything the old covenant couldn't provide: forgiveness of sins, full and forever; access to God, full and forever; salvation to the uttermost, full and forever. All of these things the old covenant was only temporarily and partially providing.

Now, it's taken ten chapters for the writer of Hebrews to present the superiority of Christ, and finally, beginning in verse 19, He asks for a response. And the first response He asks for is positive. He asks for three things. Verse 22, "Let us draw near." Verse 23, "Let us hold fast." Verse 24, "Let us consider one another."

And what He's saying there is "Come on. You've come this far. You know it's true. Don't linger on the edge. Come all the way to Christ." And there are three parts that are demanded of a man who would come to God. Faith, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. Hope, "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope. And love, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love.

And so He is asking for those things, the triad of Christian virtues, the three things that must make up true salvation: faith, hope and love. And He is saying, "Be for real. Come on to Christ. Exercise your faith. Hold on. And stay in the fellowship. Don't forsake the fellowship. Don't go back. Stay." That's the positive response.

Now, there were Jews in the congregation to which He wrote who were in danger of going back to Judaism. They had come all the way up, and it all looked so good, and everything looked so rosy.

And initially their hearts were warm, and it was kind of exciting. And then they began to get persecuted, and, as the persecution arose, they began to kind of fade a little bit, and they were in danger of turning around and going back to Judaism. And if they had done that, with full knowledge and full revelation, they would've been apostates.

And in Hebrews, chapter 6, the Bible says if a man has had all the revelation there is and turns around and walks away, it is impossible for him to be renewed again unto what? Unto repentance. So for a man to know the truth and turn his back and walk away from it is a tragic sin, which steps...puts him, I should say, as stepping outside the grace of God.

And so He urges them in verses 19 to 25 to be for real, and to secure their salvation by not going back. You see, Jesus said in John 8:30, it says in verse 30, "Many believed on His name." In 31 He said, "If you continue in my words, you are my disciples." Not just superficial believing, but continuing.

In John 15:6, He said, "The true branch abides." The true branch abides. The branch that's attaching itself for a little while and never bears any fruit, He chops it off and burns it. The true branch abides and bears fruit. So He's really asking for conversion. He's really asking them to come all the way to Christ and to remain there.

Then from 26 to 39 He takes the negative side. And He says to them, in effect, there, "Don't do the opposite. Don't be an apostate." And He emphasizes three things. He gives them three things: the nature of apostasy, the results of apostasy and the deterrents to apostasy.

Now, please understand as we go that we will clearly define apostasy in case you're still a little bit foggy about some of the issues that are involved in it. Let's, to begin with, look for a definition of apostasy. Verse 26, the nature of apostasy. "For if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth," stop there. That is a definition of apostasy. It is one who has received the truth and who has then rejected the truth. He has received the truth totally. He has rejected it totally. That is an apostate.

Now, the word "apostasy," which doesn't appear in this text, but appears in a couple of other texts, twice in the New Testament, is a terrible word. It means a falling away. It means a withdrawal. It means a defection.

The word is used in Acts 21:21 when Paul was falsely accused of teaching the Jews apostasy from Moses. It is used again in II Thessalonians 2:2, when it says, "In the latter days, before the coming of the end, there will be a great apostasy, or falling away." It means to fall away.

Jesus predicted that it would happen, in Matthew 24 and verse 10, that people would do this. It says, "And then shall many be offended and shall betray one another and shall hate one another. And

many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold. But he that endures to the end shall be," what? "Saved."

You see, one of the facts of salvation is that the truly saved one continues. He continues. The apostate joins the outfit, signs up, lines up, tacitly believes it, then somewhere along the line turns his back and walks away.

I'll never forget when I was younger, I had a friend. His name was Ralph. And Ralph and I used to go and witness places. We'd go down to Pershing Square once in a while and share Christ. There was always something I felt in Ralph's life that was missing.

We played some ball together, so we were pretty close friends. He was raised in the church. From occasion to occasion, we would have opportunity to witness and to talk to people about the Lord, and so forth and so on. And then all of a sudden Ralph disappeared from my life.

Then I met somebody about three years later who happened to know Ralph, and I said, "Hey, how's Ralph?" To which this person replied, "Oh, Ralph's an atheist." And I said, "He's what?" She said, "Oh, he's an atheist. He doesn't believe in God. He's living in amorality. He's accepted Fletcher's situation ethics and concluded there is no God."

Now, you'd question yourself, I mean, and say, "What happened?" Now, my theology allows for the security of the believer. What happens to Ralph? And, as much as I hate to say it, and I shudder on the inside to say it, and I would not say it apart from the knowledge of the Word of God, it is very possible that Ralph is an apostate, that it is now impossible for him to be saved.

I talked with him one time later. We met at a certain thing. And I said, "Ralph, is it true?" And he said, "Yeah." And I said, "How could you do it, Ralph? You knew the truth. I thought you even knew the Lord." "Ah," and he passed it off. And then I tried to share Christ with him, and it was like talking to a concrete wall.

He knew everything there was to know. He knew as much about the truth as I did. And one day he turned his back and walked away. And I say he never knew Jesus Christ, because, if he had, I John 2:19, "he would have continued with us. But he went out from us, that it might be made manifest that he never was of us." That's sad for Ralph. He's an apostate. And I only say that from my information. Our Lord knows.

Now, this is what we're talking about. And we ask ourselves the questions time and time again. What about so-and-so? They used to come to church. Gone. Well, maybe they're a carnal believer who's having a brief period of time away from the fellowship of the Lord. That's very possible. Not everybody who doesn't come to church for a few months has apostatized. I want you to understand that. And

we'll see more about that as we go.

But apostasy has always been a fearful thing. You know, there were angels who were apostates. Did you know that? Did you know that all of the demons who lived in heaven with God knew the truth? Did you know that? And Satan came along, and he got all those angels to follow him in a rebellion. They knew God, and they knew the truth of God. They apostatized. They turned their backs on God. They joined with Satan. They got booted out of heaven. There are apostate angels.

And you know what happens to apostate angels? Jude 6. "And the angels who kept not their first estate but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains unto darkness, unto the judgment of the Great Day." They're damned forever, and they're chained forever. They are apostate angels.

Now, not all of them are bound. Some of them are running around loose. But even the loosed ones know that judgment is coming on them. And we'll see that a little later.

Now, the apostle Paul said apostasy is going to be a bigger problem in the last days. I Timothy 4. "Now the Spirit speaketh very expressly," or very pointedly, "that in the latter times," the last days of the church, "some shall depart from the faith."

Now, what does he mean? Some shall turn their backs on the truth that they know to be truth, and shall give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. They'll follow their flesh, and they'll follow the system that is being run by demons, pulling them away, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, no longer sensitive to the gospel. You heard of anybody like that? That's an apostate. That's Ralph. The gospel doesn't reach them. This is going to happen in the last days.

And in the text that I mentioned earlier, II Thessalonians 2, "Don't be soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit or by word nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come except there come the apostasy."

And so in the end times, the times in which we live, apostasy will become a greater problem than it's ever been. But there've always been apostates. There has never been a time when there haven't been apostates. And if you study your Bible carefully, you'll find them popping up in a lot of places.

Let me introduce you to one. His name was Demas. Now, if ever there must have been an irresistible man in the world, it would've been Paul. What a beloved man. What a Christlike man. And if anybody ever spent much time with the apostle Paul, there's no question in my mind but that that guy would know the truth. Right?

Demas knew the truth. But listen to II Timothy 4:10, one of the saddest verses you'll ever read. And I imagine there were tears in Paul's eyes as he wrote this. He says in verse 9, "Timothy, do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." You say, "Why, Paul?" "Because I'm lonely, and my heart is broken." "Paul, what happened?" Verse 10, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Isn't that sad?

You say, "Demas, you fool. You must know. I mean, those years with Paul and all that he is, how can you walk away like that?" And Paul says, "It hurts, and I'm lonely, and Demas is gone. Timothy, could you come and see me?" You say, "Well, I thought real strong super Christian leaders didn't need to be comforted." Guess again. Sometimes they suffer the deepest hurts that are possible, just like anybody else.

And then of course you have the classic apostate of all time, a man by the name of Judas Iscariot. If it was one thing to company with Paul and walk away, imagine what it must've been to company with Jesus for three years, turn your back and walk away. And then when you've done that, sell Him for what amounts to about \$17 to \$25, the Son of God. That is apostasy. Judas is a classic.

And there is a place in the Judas part of hell for every apostate. For what is apostasy but another Judas kiss? It would've been bad enough if Jesus had been kissed by one Judas. He's been kissed by a million Judases since, who have feigned love and feigned interest and feigned being a part, and walked away.

Now, you say, "Well, what causes people to do that?" I mean, if they know the truth, and the beauty of the gospel, and even as Neil was saying tonight, if they've seen the foolishness of the gospel and what real wisdom it is, and they've seen it unfold in their lives, as they've been a part of what's going on. Not that they were ever saved. They were just there, and they were involved. Whatever causes them to go away?

Well, the Bible lists several things. Let me tell you what they are. Number one is persecution. Persecution is a problem, and some people are apostates because they can't handle persecution. Now, we've been talking about that on Sunday morning, and that's just part of the Christian life. Right?

In Matthew 24, verse 9, "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, shall kill you. You shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." We just read this, but let me read it again. "Then shall many be offended and betray one another." You see, when the persecution comes, some of the people are going to run. Some people can't take the persecution.

8:13, you remember the parable of the seed, of Luke. "They on the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the Word with joy, and these have no root," watch, "who for a while believe and in time of testing," do what? "Fall away."

There's another thing. That's false teachers, verse 11. "And many false prophets shall arise and deceive many." Apostasy comes as a result of false teaching. Not just false teaching. You've got to have the right attitude to receive false teaching, or the wrong attitude.

In II Timothy 4:4, listen to this. This is so sad. "There will come in the end time," verse 3, "teachers having...and people who will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." Another problem that turns people into apostates is false teaching. But false teaching only affects those who are ready for it.

There's a third thing, temptation. Apostasy comes sometimes because people can't handle temptation. And that turns them from Christ. And it may be, friends, not just one of these things, but a combination of all of these things. Remember the seed that was sown on the ground and the thorns grew up and persecution came and choked it out? They were gone. Temptation.

Then another one is worldliness. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved," what? The system. "Demas wanted what the system offered, not what I had to offer."

Then we come into the Book of Hebrews. There's another thing that causes apostasy, and this is one of the saddest things imaginable. Grab this one. Neglect. Could you imagine a man be so foolish as to spend his eternity in hell just because he neglected to do something? Where is that? That's in Hebrews, chapter 2, and verse 3. "How shall we escape if we," what? "If we neglect."

Some people have wound up in apostasy because they neglected so long that they did the next thing. They hardened into unbelief, chapter 3, verse 12, Hebrews. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, departing from the living God." Verse 13, "Exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

Persecution, false teachers, temptation, worldliness, neglect and hardened unbelief. Another thing that can make people be apostates is a failure to release old religion, chapter 6. He says in the first couple of verse, "Leave that old covenant. Leave that thing, and come to Christ. Because if you don't, and you fall away, it's impossible to be renewed again to repentance." Some people hang on to traditional systems, you know?

We have a wonderful man around here. His name is Augie. Augie's our janitor. I don't know if he's here tonight. He won't mind me telling you this. I prayed for Augie for four years, that he'd come to Christ. Some of you people prayed for him ever since he's been here. I don't know, how long has he

been here? How many years? Six? Six, seven? We prayed for Augie.

And one time Augie said, "Well, I have my religion. I was born that way. I'll die that way." And that scared me. And so we prayed about Augie, and a couple...I guess a month or so ago, Larry Correy met him on the steps, introduced him to Jesus Christ, and his life was changed. And I'm so glad that somehow he was willing to let go of that old thing.

There are some people hung up on old systems, you know? Particularly in dealing with Jews, but even with anybody. So religion can even be a problem. And there are barrels full of apostates in religion.

There's another danger that leads to apostasy. Chapter 10, verse 24, and we come right into our text. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." You know, some people hear the truth and know the truth, and they begin to drift. And the first thing they start to do when they drift is to eliminate themselves from the meeting together of believers. See? And they begin to drift away and drift away and drift away. And pretty soon they're apostates, gradually.

Now, those are all causes of apostasy, Biblically designated as such. So, you see, apostasy can be caused by many things or any combination of these things or all of these things. Now let's look more closely at our definition of apostasy. We move immediately, then, into verse 26.

The first thing about an apostate is, he has received the knowledge of the truth. Now, for the person who never has heard the full presentation of the gospel, he's not an apostate. Apostasy relates only to the one who has received the knowledge of the truth.

Now, there's two words in the Greek language for knowledge. There's more than that, but two basic ones that we're dealing with here, gnosis, which is simple knowledge, and epignosis, which is deep knowledge, or deep understanding, or what we might call heart knowledge, or deep perception. And that is the word that is used here.

He's not just saying, "This is the guy who has heard the gospel." This is the man who, not in a shallow, historical sense, but a living kind of believing knowledge, has come right up to it and completely understood it. An apostate has all the information. He lacks nothing. He has epignosis, deep heart understanding and knowledge of it in its fullness.

Now, there are many people in the world who know about the gospel, and they know a little smattering of it, and if they do not believe, that is not the same as apostasy. Apostasy is a reserved sin for the one who knows the truth. For example, chapter 6, verse 4, in describing an apostate, says he was enlightened, he tasted the heavenly gift, he was a partaker of the Holy Spirit, he tasted the

good Word of God and of the powers of the age to come.

Now, that is full knowledge. He's even experienced the ministry of the Spirit of God within the church as he stood around and watched things happen. He has heard the truth. His mind is enlightened. He knows what it is. He understands it completely. Then when he turns around and totally walks away, that is apostasy. And the tragedy of apostasy is, it's so sneaky. And it starts by those subtle persecutions, those false doctrines, those temptations, the little things that begin to draw us away.

Now, you'll notice that it says in verse 26, "if we sin willfully after we've received the knowledge of the truth." The term "the truth" means the gospel of the new covenant, the story of Jesus Christ, all that's involved in salvation. And it's not talking about being saved. It's only talking about knowing it.

Look at verse 32. He's talking to these potential apostates, and He says, "Call to remembrance the former days in which, after you were illuminated." Now, what does that have to do with? Your heart and your soul? No. Your what? Your mind. You knew the truth. Knowledge.

And they even went through some persecution. You know, they lined up with the Christians, and in verse 32, it says, "You endured some affliction." Verse 33, "You were made a gazing stock." You palled around with us. You were companions of them that were so used.

Verse 34, they even had compassion. I mean, they really got into the swing of things. Verse 35, they even thought it was so good they put their confidence in it. They got involved in the full sense, just short of salvation. They were members in good standing.

But you know what happened? Pretty soon they began to sense the pressure of the Jewish persecution, and their Jewish friends kept bugging them about lining up with this new heresy. "Why don't you come back to the Temple and back to the offerings?" And temptation began to come. Because they weren't really pure in their lives and they had not been cleansed by the grace of God, they found it very difficult to live like the real Christians lived, see. And so they were in danger of turning around and going back.

And that's the second point of apostasy in its nature. They receive the truth, one. Secondly, they finally reject the truth. And that's the first part of 26. "If we sin," what's the next word? What is it? "Willfully." That's the act of going back, to conclude, "I've been there. I've studied it. I understand it. I don't buy it," and walk away.

Now, my dear friend, if you have all the truth and you know all the truth and you still don't want it, there's no hope for you. Right? What more can God do than show you the truth? What is there left for Him to display? What information don't you know? If you walk away from that, that's the end. It's impossible to be renewed unto repentance.

To consider all the evidence, to be a part of Christianity on a superficial basis, to attend for a while, to kind of feel a warm feeling all over the place, and to enjoy maybe sprinkling a little bit of divine salt on your human activity by attending church, you get all of these kind of nice little feelings, and you've checked it all out, and after X number of weeks or months or years, you just turn around and walk away. That's apostasy.

Now, there's two things that stand out in the Greek here about apostasy. Number one, it's voluntary. We sin willfully. *Acousios* means of one's accord, by my own decision. It is opposed to the sin of ignorance or the sin of weakness. It is the sin that is all planned out. It's as different from the sin of ignorance and weakness as first degree murder is different from manslaughter. It's a plotted and planned sin. "I don't buy it. I'm leaving." It's tantamount to murder.

The second thing standing out here is that it's habitual. If we sin, the Greek verb for this is a habitual verb. If we habitually forsake the only means of grace, we've had it. The sin here then is relinquishing, and the renunciation of the truth, and a continuation in that renunciation.

Now, you can always tell a believer, because a believer may drift away a little while, but sooner or later, he'll come back, unless the Lord disciplines him and takes him up to heaven. But I don't need to worry about checking on everybody and figuring out who's what. That's for you to figure out. And you know if you're a believer who's just being robbed of the joy of His fellowship or if you're an apostate. And we can't always tell.

People always say to me, "How can you tell the true Christian from the...or how can you tell the true Christian who is just carnal from the unbeliever who's an apostate?" And I say, "I can't, but that's not my calling, nor is it my responsibility."

All of us have times of lapse, and all of us have times when sin enters, and carnality, and we drift off, and perhaps we forsake the assembly for a while. But that's not apostasy. It's apostasy if it continues, if it's habitual. If it's a habitual and willful decision to turn your back on Christ, that's apostasy.

And you know as a Christian, and when you drift away, if you're really a Christian, it just bugs you to death. And it's not a willful thing. It's a hard thing to do. But for the apostate, he makes his mind up, and he willfully turns around and walks away.

Let me give you the simple difference. II Timothy 2:12, very important that you understand this. 2:12, and we'll start in the middle of the verse. "If we deny Him, He also will," what? "Deny us." Now, that's an apostate. If you turn your back and deny Him, He'll deny you.

Now look at verse 13. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself." You say, "What's the difference?" The second one is a Christian.

Now, sometimes as Christians our faith runs low, doesn't it? We really run out of faith. We find it hard to believe God for certain things, and we're really on a shallow end of our faith. And what does it say? "Okay, if you believe not, yet He abideth," what? "Faithful. He can't deny Himself." He chose you. You're his child. That's forever.

But if you deny Him, what? He'll deny you. To deny Him is apostasy. To slip in trust is carnality. For the apostate, Christ denies him. For the believer whose faith runs low, God is what? Faithful. You may be faithless at some point in your life. He is faithful.

All right, if a person, then, persists in deliberate and willful sin of denial and rejection, is he a Christian? Of course not. He's an apostate. Because the truly saved will continue. And this is so clear.

I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God does not continue to be committing sin, for His seed remains in him, and he cannot continue to be committing sin, because He's born of God." You see? If you're born of God, you cannot continue to be committing sin. But if you're an apostate, you continue to be committing sin.

Continuation, for one who continues in unbelief, he never was a believer. Because if a man is born of God, he cannot continue to commit sin. He must stop at some point and fall at the feet of his Savior in penitence. The truly saved continue. The truly apostate also continue in their unbelief. Continuance is the issue.

So there's the nature of apostasy. Received the truth, rejected the truth. And, as the writer wrote, there were potential apostates, and I think there may be some here tonight. I'm sure of it. Some of you who profess to believe in Jesus Christ. You've professed to receive Him as your Savior. You've professed His atoning sacrifice in your behalf. And yet you willfully and deliberately live in rejection. You've gone back to the former life. And what you're essentially doing is denying Christ.

Maybe others of you haven't gone that far. You're still kind of lingering. And you've not come to Christ, and you've not denied Him yet. I warn you. I warn you. Come to Christ while you still can.

That's the nature of apostasy. Let's quickly look at the results. And this is from 26 to 31. Two things are the result. Number one, "remaineth no sacrifice," verse 26. "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." That's the beginning. "If we sin willfully," now, watch it," after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice for sins."

Now, friends, the only way a man'll ever get into the presence of God is if he gets his sins removed. Right? The only way your sins can ever be removed is by sacrifice, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. So there must be a sacrifice for sin.

The only sacrifice for sin is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. If you reject that, there is no other sacrifice for sin. If you turn your back on Jesus Christ, you shall die, as Jesus said, in your sins. "And where I go, you will never come." That's what He said.

There remaineth no more sacrifice. And this is so powerful to the Jewish person. Because, you see, these Jewish people to whom He was writing were turning around, and they were heading back toward Judaism, see. Back toward the old sacrificial system. And what he is saying to them is, "Don't go back to those sacrifices. They're obsolete. I mean, they were only partial when they were in operation. But they're not even in operation anymore. They're pointless. Don't go back to the sacrifices of Judaism. They're no good anymore."

You see, the old covenant vanished away. Didn't it? Sure it did. You go back, and what does it say at the end of chapter 8? "In that He saith a new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and groweth old is ready to vanish away." So the old system began to vanish away. It was done. It was finished. The veil was rent. The sacrificial system was done.

And He says, "If you're going to turn around and go back to that system, it's no good. It's over with. You're going through the motions." If a man turns his back on Jesus Christ, there's no sacrifice for sins. If his sins aren't sacrificed for, he'll never enter God's presence. "For God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look on evil."

There remaineth no more sacrifice. Oh, what a fearful thing. You walk away from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that's the end. You're absolutely outside of grace.

In I Samuel 3:14, you remember that Eli, the priest, had two really renegade characters for sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were worthless. And listen to what God said in I Samuel 3:14. "And therefore," listen to these words, "I have sworn unto the house of Eli," listen to this, "that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice or offering," watch this word, "forever." Did you get that? God says, "Sorry, folks. You have stepped outside the bounds of mercy. No sacrifice no time shall ever atone for your sins." Strong.

You see, there comes a day when God's mercy runs out. God said to those people before the Flood, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." You see, sin must be dealt with, and it must be dealt with now, lest a man go past God's mercy and find it impossible to get back. For if he rejects full revelation, what else could God do?

So the first thing, then, about the results of apostasy, there remaineth no more sacrifice. The second thing, recompense of judgment. Now, mark this, the greater the sin, the greater the judgment. And if apostasy is the worst sin, then mark it, it'll have the worst judgment.

Verse 27, here's what the apostate can look forward to. "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." That's all he can look forward to.

Judgment. You see, God sees the one who knows the truth and walks away as an enemy. The word is "adversaries."

In John 6, oh, it all looked so good. It all looked so good. John 6:66, "From that time, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." Some of those people came along, and they kind of believed. They followed Him around a little bit. Disciple means follower, mofetes. And then they wandered away, and Jesus said, "Well, will you leave me, too? Will you leave me, too?"

Now, I'm not sure they were apostates. But later on, in verse 70, Jesus talks about an apostate. Look what He says. "Jesus answered them, 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is,'" what? "An adversary. A devil." An apostate is an adversary.

Oh, and it's so sad, because an apostate, you see, starts out to be the closest friend and ends up being the worst enemy. There's no greater sinner, at least in the mind of man, that ever lived, than Judas. Why? Because he feigned friendship. "Oh, that's so disgusting."

You see, an apostate can only be bred in the brilliant light of proximity to Christ. Apostates are not bred in absence. They are bred in the presence of Christ. They are bred in the church. They are bred in all of the lingo that is Christianity. That's where they really grow.

And Jesus sat at the table, dipped the sop and handed it to Judas in an act of love, and He said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly. Get out of here." And He sent him out, and he betrayed Him. That's apostasy. And the only thing that an adversary, one who feigns friendship and turns out to be the enemy, the only thing he can look forward to is a "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

And you'll notice there's a word in verse 27, the third word in the verse, "certain." What does it say in chapter 2? "How shall we escape?" What's the answer? Can't. Can't. And even the apostate angels know the judgment's coming and they can't escape it.

In Matthew 8:29, it says this. Listen. "And behold they cried out." These are the demons in the madman over in Garassa, or the Gadarenes country. Verse 29, "And behold they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come here to torment us'", watch,

"before the time?"

Do you know that demons know their doom is spelled? "What are you doing here, Jesus? This is before the time." It's amazing. Some of the demons have better eschatology than some preachers I know. They knew certain things had to happen before judgment came ultimately.

So it's one thing that an apostate can be sure of, judgment. And judgment here is described as "fiery indignation, which shall devour." Now, God has used fire before. In Leviticus 10:2, He wasn't too happy with Nadab and Abihu, so they were consumed in fire.

It is promised to all the rejecters of Jesus Christ that they will be burned with fire. In Matthew 3:12, it says, "who shall purge His floor, gather His wheat into the granary, but He will burn the chaff with unquenchable fire."

In chapter 13, verse 36, another picture of the judgment. It says, "Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house, and His disciples came unto Him saying, 'Explain unto us the parable of the tares of the field.'"

"He answered and said unto them, 'He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. But the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age. And the reapers are the angels.'"

"As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels. They shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend and them who do iniquity, shall cast them into a furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." That's judgment, fiery judgment.

Verse 47, "The kingdom of heaven is like a net, which was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore, sat down, gathered the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the age. The angels shall come forth, separate the wicked from among the righteous, cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

We find in Mark, chapter 9, more. Let me read it to you. Verse 43, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off. It is better for thee to enter lame into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of

God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The promise is judgment of fire. You say, "When does that judgment come?" Well, I believe for an unbeliever it comes when he dies. But the great holocaust of fiery judgment comes yet even at the end time. As we read in I Thessalonians, fearful words, chapter 1...pardon me, II Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 7, "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power." Judgment.

And so to the apostate is the promise of absolute and certain judgment. It's a sad thing when you look at apostasy, and you see people who stand on the edge of it. And I say to you tonight this, and I'm going to stop right here, if you have never come to Jesus Christ, repented of all the sin of your life, cast yourself on His mercy, and if you know the truth, you're in danger of being an apostate.

And the hottest hell is reserved for those, the Judas place. You remember it was said of Judas, "He went to his own place." And if you have kissed Jesus, or are about to kiss Him, with a Judas kiss, the kiss of a feigned friendship, oh, take the warning of the Word of God. Don't sin willfully after you've known the truth. Don't turn your back on Jesus Christ and walk away. Do the opposite. Draw near with faith. Hold fast with hope. Consider one another with love. Come to Christ. Let's pray.

Our Father, we know that all we can really do is present the truth and pray that men will respond to it. And, oh, God, you know that there are some here tonight who have never met you, who don't know Jesus Christ. And, Father, some of them really aren't in danger of apostasy, because they really don't know the whole truth yet. God, I pray for those tonight, that they might come to you, even now, even this night.

Father, there are others among us who know the whole truth, who have been a part of the church, who've maybe even owned or carried a Bible, who've gone to Bible classes, sung the songs. They've done it all, all except knowing you through salvation. God, I pray that you will penetrate their hearts with the fear of the Lord, that they will stand where they stand trembling, that they would have no rest and no peace until they have fallen with broken hearts at the foot of the cross and asked to be forgiven, until they have drawn with full assurance of faith into thy presence and held fast.

Oh, God, may no one in this place go away. May no one be an apostate. God, may it not be so. And, Father, help us as Christians to recognize our responsibility to encourage people not to forsake. God, when we find someone who knows the truth and has a smattering of faith in it, oh, God, give us a passion for that person. God, may we never let go of them, until they've come all the way to Christ.

And even as we close our time tonight, and what a sweet, precious time it's been, we pray that you'll speak to each of us the truth we need to hear. In Christ's name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).