

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

1201 Meeks St. Corinth, Ms. 38834

Phone – (662) 287-2187

Visit Our Website at:

MeeksstreetchurchofChrist.com

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“Apostasy Versus Steadfastness #1”

By Brian Meade

The apostle Peter warns and admonishes us in 2 Peter 3:17-18, “*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*”



Someone once said, “*Attitude determines outcome.*” Our attitude should be of faithfulness and a steadfast spirit of determination to make it to heaven.

But what if, somewhere along the way, we lose our focus and desire to serve Christ? What if we yield to temptation to go back out into the world and apostatize? (2 Tim. 4:10)

I don’t believe anyone who sincerely obeys the gospel ever thinks that they will not stay faithful to the Lord, but it happens more than it ever should.

I have personally known of brethren who were faithful, active, and zealous for God and then, all of a sudden (it seemed), they were gone. I would be at services of the church where I would sadly get the news that someone (or someones) were no longer assembling with us or anywhere else for that matter. They had gone back to their former life in sin. Many attempts would be made to restore them, but to no avail. They had already hardened their heart to the point that our words meant nothing to them anymore.

It is a scenario that plays out just the way the Devil intended for them— for them to lose their faith! And someone has even suggested that if all those who have fallen by the wayside were restored to faithfulness, we could increase attendance of most churches by almost double! A sad reality indeed!

And the other side of the coin has to do with being steadfast in our faith and never looking back! I have known of brethren who were very strong in the faith and their faith brought them to the finish line. (1 Timothy 4:6-8) That is goal of the life we have in Christ— to be victorious! (1 Corinthians 15:57-58) It has everything to do with our attitude about our service and whether we take it very seriously or not. Our eternal destiny may very well be determined by our strong commitment to God or lack thereof.

In this article, we will primarily focusing on the danger of apostasy from the faith. Contrary to the popular teaching of his a clear and present danger to every Christian.

apostasia- “*a defection, revolt, apostasy,*” is used in the New Testament of religious apostasy; in Acts 21:21, it is translated “*to forsake,*” lit., “*thou teachest apostasy from Moses.*” In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, “*the falling away*” signifies apostasy from the faith.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words)

There are two types of apostasy that the Bible makes reference to:

(1) **Large scale apostasy**— Jeremiah 2:19; 6:13-16; 8:5; 1 Timothy 4:1-3. This is where many individuals leave God's ways in a multitude; like the nation of Israel did several times in their history. The books of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles have such examples of large scale apostasy as well as the major and minor Prophets who preached repentance to a fallen Israel. In the New Testament it has reference to many being led astray by false teaching to apostasy (2 Peter 2:1-2).

(2) **Individual apostasy**— Acts 1:16-20; 2 Timothy 4:10; Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-6; 10:38. This is the individual and personal apostasy that happens when the child of God leaves their faithfulness to pursue worldly and sinful conduct, thus leaves Christ and forfeits the reward of the faithful (Hebrews 10:25-30; 35-36; 2 Peter 2:20-22). This also brings the condemnation of God upon them (Hebrews 10:26; 29-31; 2 Peter 2:20).

The Attitude of apostasy often begins in such an imperceptible way that is very hard to see the slow drift away from faithfulness. If one were to make a giant leap toward leaving God, it would be very easy to see the shift— but that is not the way of apostasy works! It is usually in little steps away from God that causes the most damage to our spiritual life with Christ.

Like a small boat left unsecured at a dock will drift along with the current until it is far, far away from the shore. If someone was asleep in the boat, one could imagine the shock and surprise of waking up so far removed! That's the same thing that happens when we fall asleep spiritually and drift away from God.

Apostasy can begin with us:

(1) When We Don't Want To Hear, Read, Study, God's Word.

Notice the connection of the word to faithfulness, and also what the lack of it in connection to drifting away from God in Hebrews 2:1-3, *"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,"*

Our interest in God's word should never diminish to the point that we don't even want to hear God's word anymore. There should remain in each one of us a joy of hearing, reading, and studying of scripture. It ought to mean something special to us because scripture is the communication of the thoughts and mind of our Creator— God, Himself speaking to us.

For us to no longer desire to hear what God has to say on any subject is a big red flag that we are headed away from God and into apostasy.

In the Old Testament, it was treated as apostasy to stop listening to God.

Notice Proverbs 28:9, *"He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination."* God would not want to listen to someone's prayer who had no regard to hear and do His words.

It is generally accepted that the first step in drifting away from someone in any relationship is a lack of communication. People who were once so very close have become complete strangers when the communication between them stopped for a prolonged period of time. They simply drifted apart. May it never be so with God!

(2) When We Lose Our Joy Of Worship.

Very similarly to our loss of joy in studying God's word comes the loss of joy in worshipping the God we love and adore! But the sad reality is— a loss of joy of worship is a spiritual heart problem that can be fatal.

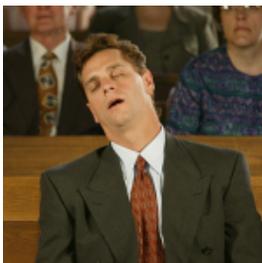
When members of the church start to assemble with the saints in less than a whole-scale fashion (Hebrews 10:22-25), it can be an early sign of leaving faithfulness.

Maybe someone starts to feel that an occasional forsaking of the assembly— when one is not sick, working, or hindered in some way beyond their control— is okay every once in a while. After all, they might say, *"I've gone to every service long enough, and I really could use a break from attending all the time."*

But the problem again is lack of love for either the saints of God, or for God Himself. Our lack of attendance to services of worship or Bible study can show a loss of love and dedication to God. We may have at one time been very zealous and had great love for God, but that can grow cold if we let it.

Whether or not people really want to admit it— how much we attend or we don't attend— our attendance says something about where our heart is (Matthew 6:21 and 33). It can very well be a barometer of our spiritual condition in general.

But it can be that our attendance wanes and diminishes because we have lost our joy for what we are doing when we assemble. We may have had a great love for singing in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but now that seems



boring to us. We may have lost zeal in praising God in song and look at worship differently now. Giving (I Corinthians 16:1-2) becomes much harder now as well.

It could be that prayer doesn't interest us or gotten to be so common to us, that we just see don't see what is so sweet about the "*Sweet Hour of Prayer*" in our song books anymore. Prayer is our only avenue to talking to God and a needed one in our spiritual lives (Acts 2:42). Partaking the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7) should be a regular and sacred time to remember Christ's death on the cross.

May it never be said that it is boring, lest we become like those who Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 11:30, "*For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number asleep.*"

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Betty Hurst, Steve Switcher, Gail Armstrong, Nicky Curtis, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), Charlene Newborn, Greg Fields, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Clois Wright, Debbie Keplinger, Gaddy Hall, Madeline Flippo, Karey Trimble, Jerry Trimble, Janis Johnson, Randy Ferrell, Delain Doles, and Daniel Holloway

Our Gospel Meeting with Trey Haskett begins Sunday—October 21st to the 26th.
(7:00 PM Nightly— Monday thru Friday)

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Tim Harris Sr.
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon: "*How Do I Receive Rebuke For My Sin?*"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service: Fred Johnson
The Book of John (Mike Willis)

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service:

Announcements: Paul Busby
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Tony Whittemore
Psalm 51:1-4
Song Leader: Adam Harris
Lord's Table: Paul Johnson
Assisting: Lee Busby & Adam Harris
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon: "*Overcoming The Guilt of Our Sin*"
Closing Prayer: Jerry Kennemur

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

August 22nd:

Auditorium Bible Class: Paul Johnson
1 & 2 Kings (Mike Willis)
Lesson 5, *Question #1*
Invitation: Paul Busby
Song Leader: Russell Briggs
Closing Prayer: Adam Harris.