

Why People Fall Away From The Faith

Recently, we featured an article on our NeverThirsty FaceBook page about the false doctrine of Annihilationism. This doctrine says that eventually the wicked will be destroyed rather than suffering in hell forever. Those who teach the false doctrine of Annihilationism believe that if the wicked suffer in hell forever, that will tarnish God's glory. They also believe that hell would mar God's eternal state after He destroys the universe and creates the new heaven and earth described in Revelation 21-22. So. They believe in their hearts that God would be good if He eliminated all evil, including the evil place called hell. But there are at least three reasons why Annihilationism is a false doctrine. First, Scripture teaches us that everyone lives forever. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus teaches,

And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.
Matthew 25:46 (NASB)

That is, both the unrighteous and righteous will live for eternity. The sad truth is the unrighteous will suffer for-

ever. There are other passages that reveal their punishment will last forever. The second reason the doctrine is wrong is that Scripture teaches hell will exist forever. So, why would hell exist forever if eventually no one will be living there? What is the purpose of an empty eternal hell? The third reason is, why would an infinitely holy God release sinners from hell when they still refuse to repent of their evil? Rev-

elation 21:8; 22:10-12 reveals that these wicked sinners will never stop sinning. They will continue rebelling while in hell or the lake of fire. How can an infinitely holy God be soft on Christ rejecting, hating sinners who refuse to repent? That would mean God is not holy and just. He is soft on crime. In summary, Annihilationism is a false doctrine. We were surprised at how many people responded with cursing and hateful comments. We have never experienced such anger to any article that we have featured or posted.

Now, why did I start with this illustration? Because false doctrine is exploding. The Internet is flooded with so many false teachers and deceptive doctrines about the Bible. These false teachers are distorting the meaning of the Bible and people are believing them. The tragedy is that people are deceived into believing lies. As a result, apostasy is increasing.

False teaching has existed since Satan lied to Eve when he said that she could become like God, knowing good and evil, if she ate the fruit. He deceived her. He lied to her. Yes, she did know the difference between good and evil after

eating the fruit, but she did not expect what actually happened. Satan did not tell her what would actually happen to her. She ate and then died spiritually. Satan had intentionally deceived her. I wonder if he thought to himself, "I got you, Eve!" I do not know if he did, but that was what he wanted. False teaching is more than a wrong understanding about the Bible. Satan uses false teaching to pull people away from



the truth. Satan works to cause people to become apostates. Satan is fighting against God to prevent people from believing in Jesus Christ and being saved. Satan is trying everything to win. There is a battle here on planet earth for the souls of men and women. Eve had heard the truth, but after listening to Satan, she believed him and disobeyed God. Next Adam sinned, both became sinners, and all of their children were then born with a sinful nature.

APOSTASY WAS PROPHESED— 1 TIMOTHY 4:1A. Our study is from 1 Timothy 4:1-5, and it is about false teaching and apostasy. Let's begin by reading verse 1, which says,

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. 1 Timothy 4:1 (NASB)

The first thing we need to notice is the phrase “fall away from the faith.” The Greek word for “fall away from the faith” is *aphistemi*. The word is sometimes translated as “to depart,” “to desert,” or “to leave.” That is, these individuals had heard the truth, but then left without ever believing in Christ. 2 Peter 2:22 refers to apostate teachers as dogs who return to their own vomit, and as pigs who wallow in mud after a bath. The Jews hated both dogs and pigs. So, the statement is not about believers losing their salvation but about individuals who never became believers. They had heard the truth, and eventually, they left. 1 John 2:19 says,

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. 1 John 2:19 (NASB)

This helps us understand that apostates were never Christians, even though they knew the Bible and may have been teaching it.

So, our study is about apostasy. We are going to discover five important principles about apostasy. The first principle is that apostasy was prophesied. The second principle is that it is occurring. Then we will learn that demons are the source of apostasy, people promote apostasy, and the error of apostasy.

Paul begins by giving Timothy and us the first principle about apostasy. He says apostasy was prophesied to occur. Apostasy has occurred and it is certain to continue occurring. Notice the word “explicitly.” It refers to a precise or exact statement by the Holy Spirit Himself. Paul wants us to know that what he is about to say is not his opinion. The Holy Spirit said it. He did not say it on his own. There are several New Testament passages about apostasy.

For example, in the parable of the Sower of the Seed (Matthew 13:20-22), Jesus declared that some people will believe, but then later leave the faith due to trials, affliction, persecution, worry, and wealth. Then in Matthew 24:4-5, 10, 24, Jesus warned us that false prophets would arise and people would fall away from the faith. God uses these various situations to reveal who are the real believers and who are not real. Some people abandon the faith because they never got their eyes off the world (1 John 2:15-17). They loved the world too much and eventually returned to the world.

Other people get caught into false doctrine by false prophets or teachers and eventually leave the true faith. Examples of this are found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12. There Paul warns about demonic forces who motivate people to become apostates. Throughout the book of Hebrews, people are warned to believe in Christ. They are urged to do more than just hear truth. They are urged to believe the truth and hold on to it. If they do not, they reveal that they are apostates. They are individuals who never truly believed and trusted in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 3:12-13 warns,

Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:12-13 (NASB)

The warning about false teaching and warnings against apostates are also found in 2 Peter 2:1-3; 3:3 and 1 John 2:18. Finally, Jude 3-4, 17-19 urges believers to fight for the faith. In summary, 1 John 2:19 tells us that these individuals were never really Christians.

I will later provide another example about apostasy which

will be from the Old Testament. So, the first principle is that the Holy Spirit Himself prophesied that it would occur.

APOSTASY IS OCCURRING — 1 TIMOTHY 4:1B. The second principle is that apostasy had already started occurring in the time of the apostles. Notice that we are told “in later times some will fall away from the faith.” When Paul says “later times,” we must remember that the last times started during the time of Jesus. Hebrews 1:1-2 says,

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB)

Notice the verse says that God the Father spoke to us in the last days. The last days started when Jesus came. Romans 5:6 says Jesus was born at the “right time,” and Galatians 4:4 says He was born in the fullness of time—the last days. When the apostle Paul wrote 1 John 2:18, he told his readers they were living in the last hour. Yet, 2 Peter 3:3 refers to the future also as the last days. This gives us the second principle about apostasy. It was already occurring during the time of the apostles and it is still occurring today. So, the simple truth is that apostasy is occurring. But it will explode even more as we get nearer to the time of the rapture and the tribulation.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF APOSTASY — 1 TIMOTHY 4:1C. The third principle about apostasy is that the demonic world is the root cause of apostasy. Paul tells us that some unbelievers will hear the Bible taught, and yet, “paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” The Greek word that is translated as “paying attention” is a present participle. This means that someone who becomes an apostate started listening, and then continued listening to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. They listened and gradually became convinced the false teacher was correct. Then they left the faith. They abandoned the faith because they never believed in Jesus.

This verse and 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 help us understand that demonic forces are the source of false doctrine. These two verses say,

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 (NASB)

Verse 13 refers to false apostles and deceitful teachers. Then verse 14 reveals that Satan is the root problem. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. That is, he deceives people into thinking he is morally good.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 adds that Satan has blinded the eyes of men so that they will not believe the truth. False religion and false teaching is how he does this.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NASB)

Deceitful spirits and the doctrines of demons promote apostasy by using deception. They distort Scripture and provide a wide variety of false teachings and false doctrines that will appeal to as many different people as possible. Satan provides a smorgasbord of deceptive teachings because different people respond to different false teachings and false doctrines. So, the third principle is that demons promote apostasy.

PEOPLE PROMOTE APOSTASY — 1 TIMOTHY 4:2. The fourth principle is that demons use humans to promote their false teachings and false doctrines. Verse 2 says that apostasy is occurring because people are “paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,”

By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron . . . 1 Timothy 4:2 (NASB)

That is, demons uses men who have seared consciences. The actual Greek word for “seared” was used to refer to cauterization of a wound. It was not used to refer to a branding iron. This reminds me that I had a cancerous growth removed from my right hand. During the procedure the dermatologist cauterized my wound because she had to dig so deep and it was

bleeding so much. That is, the men demons use have a cauterized conscience. So, they either do not know they are lying or they pretend to tell the truth, even while they know they are lying. They are hypocritical liars. Notice the passage refers to the doctrines as being the creation of demons.

Ezekiel 13 and 14 give us an amazing description of some false prophets and apostasy in the Old Testament. In these two chapters, God is speaking to His prophet Ezekiel. Starting in verse 2 we are told that God said,

Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Listen to the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins."' Ezekiel 13:2-4 (NASB)

Notice that God told Ezekiel to rebuke the false prophets because they were lying to the people. Their prophecies were lies. Their prophesies were from their own inspiration, their own spirit. They were motivated by their own imagination. God may have implied that they were very emotional and dynamic speakers. Verse 6 says,

They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, 'The LORD declares,' when the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of their word. Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, 'The LORD declares,' but it is not I who have spoken?

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you," declares the Lord GOD. "So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord GOD. It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace." Ezekiel 13:6-10a (NASB)

Notice how many times Yahweh called them liars. In verse 6,

Yahweh said, "They see falsehood and lying divination." Then He referred to "false vision and speak a lying divination" in verse 7. Then He said they have "spoken falsehood and seen a lie" in verse 8. In the next verse, Yahweh refers to "false visions and utter lying divinations." Then He adds, they have "misled My people." That is, they taught something that they claimed was true, but it was not true. Finally, they declared, "Peace" when there was no peace. They lied. They deceived. It was their own imagination or their own spirit. They were very convincing, and the people loved their message. The false prophets were dynamic and persuasive.

The people of Israel had listened to these false prophets. If we keep reading, we discover in chapter 14, verse 6 that God warned those who believed the false prophets and were following them to repent and stop. Listen to God's warning to them,

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations. For anyone of the house of Israel or of the immigrants who stay in Israel who separates himself from Me, sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet to inquire of Me for himself, I the LORD will be brought to answer him in My own person. I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from among My people. So you will know that I am the LORD." Ezekiel 14:6-8 (NASB)

These people of Israel were worshiping idols. God says the root problem was not in the teachings of the false prophets, but in the hearts of the people. They had heard the Word of God; but after hearing the false prophets, they turned away and followed the false prophets. This is an example of apostasy. This helps us connect the first four principles together. Apostasy was prophesied. It is occurring. Demons promote it by using humans who are seared in their conscience.

ERROR OF APOSTASY — 1 TIMOTHY 4:3-5. The fifth principle reveals the error of apostasy. Paul gives us two examples of the false doctrines of demons in verse 3. Then in verses 4-5, he reveals their error. The examples of false doctrines are two examples of asceticism. Verse 3 describes them,

Men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods . . .

1 Timothy 4:3a (NASB)

Paul's message in these verses is that demons design false doctrines to appeal to different people. Some people will respond to annihilationism. Some people respond to salvation by works and others to the idea that everyone is saved. Others like to hear that God wants you to be healthy and wealthy. Some people respond to legalism and others to asceticism. The false doctrines in verse 3 are examples of asceticism. They teach that people should not marry and people should abstain from certain foods.

Both false doctrines are promoted by religions, and by many individuals. Some Roman Catholics will eat fish on Fridays but not any other form of meat as an act of penance in honor of Christ who sacrificed Himself on the cross. The Seventh Day Adventists and many messianic ministries observe the food prohibitions of the Mosaic laws. It is interesting that they pick and choose what they will observe from the Old Testament. They do not do animal sacrifices. They promote these examples of asceticism as a way to be more devoted to God and to receive blessings from God.

But the last part of verse 3, and verses 4 and 5 teach us that these are examples of false doctrine.

... which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer. 1

Timothy 4:3b-5 (NASB)

The demons promote these false doctrines and men and women, who are their tools, teach them. Paul tells us that they missed some biblical principles. The first is that God created marriage and food. The second principle is that everything God created is good. Just read Genesis 1 and 2. Repeatedly, we are told that everything God created was good. So, marriage and food are good and they should not be rejected. Now you may have had a bad marriage experience and you may not like the taste of certain foods, but that does not mean they are

not good. The third principle is that we need to have positive attitudes about them. For the Holy Spirit says, they should be gratefully shared by those who believe and know the truth. They are sanctified or set apart from evil by the word of God and prayer. They are not to be rejected.

So, what is the error of apostasy? It fails to objectively consider all that Scripture has to say about certain topics. They pick and choose and distort what does not agree with their viewpoint. Some are untaught in the Scriptures and some are unteachable (2 Peter 3:15-16).

In Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:24-25, God commands males and females to marry and have children. After Christ died and was resurrected, the Mosaic food laws were revoked. Jesus tells us in Mark 7:19 that all foods are now clean. There are other passages that teach the same principle (Acts 10:9-15; Romans 14:1-12; Colossians 2:16-17).

CONCLUSION. The message of these five verses is that apostasy is occurring. Demons deceive and create false doctrines to appeal to a wide variety of people. Then they use humans to teach them, and people believe them. People then start to follow the false teacher and eventually fall away from the faith. 1 Peter 1:4-5 tells us that a true believer will never leave the faith because God protects the faith of true believers for salvation. Apostasy occurs when unbelievers reject what they have heard and abandon it. As a believer in Jesus Christ, we need to help people understand the truth. We need to fight for the truth of the faith.