

THE APOSTASY

We are going to be looking at II Peter chapter 2. We think the apostasy is here. It's going to get worse unless we have revival, and if it gets worse the question is, "How do we deal with it?" There will be tremendous opportunities if we know how to deal with it and tremendous failures if we do not. IIPeter 2:19-22 is where the Apostasy ends. You see it to a degree today, but it is going to get worse--worse than if they had never heard.

I want to make a few remarks before we start in verse 1. A friend of mine from England that usually comes in annually and preaches for us, started the meeting this past Spring by saying that when he comes to the States he is constantly asked, "Do you believe that God is going to judge America? Do you believe that the judgment of God is going to come on us?" He said, "I have a very simple answer. 'No. No, God is not *going* to judge America because He's already judging it. The judgment is already here.'" A lot of things that we struggle with are simply the judgment of God. There is evidence of this. God can raise up leaders and He can put them down. When He needs something done, He has plenty of wicked people He can put into power. That is a mark of His judgment on the nation. He can allow lost people to pastor so-called Bible-believing churches, and that too is part of the judgment on the nation.

This chapter opens up much information on the realm of Apostasy. Apostasy is a continual theme throughout the Scriptures. II Peter 2 and the book of Jude are parallel passages; that is, they are commentaries on each other. When you add to that the teachings of Christ in the Gospels, areas of Scripture particularly like Galatians, I Timothy chapter 4, II Timothy 2 and 3, you begin to pick up other areas of teaching on the Apostasy. Then there are still other verses throughout the Bible.

Apostasy is not in the cults and "-isms". It is not in the world and it is not with the atheist and agnostics. It is not with those that do not have time for religion. Apostasy operates on the inside of right religion. The apostates creep in privately. They bring their damnable heresies into the midst of those that are right. This

weakens us, and eventually may destroy us from within. Apostasy is not something that will be new at the end. There have already been apostasies of large and small sizes. God's people knew how to deal with these and, of course, God knew how to deal with them. At the end there will be a Great Apostasy that will look like it has finally taken over and then God will step in and get rid of it all.

We will suffer persecution and the wrath of man. God allows persecution so that the persecutors have more than earned the wrath of God to come on them. We will suffer the wrath of man. We will not have to face the wrath of God except for our own sinfulness. The Apostasy is part of how God allows things to get to the place where we find that we are not able to operate things in our own strength. We cannot have a perfect government. We cannot have a perfect work of the gospel. We need God and God alone. God steps in.

Whether we are moving into the last Apostasy, or simply one like the various other ones of history, I do not know. God gives basic principles for operating in any and all apostasies. It is one thing to talk about its coming. It is another thing to know it has come, and still another thing to know how to act during such a time.

We are privileged to live in some of the most exciting days of history and some of the most challenging days. These are great days of opportunity. Hopefully we do not flunk the test. "... when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"(Luke 18:8b). "... The just shall live by faith."(Galatians 3:11b). "(For we walk by faith..."(II Corinthians 5:8a). "... Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith..."(James 2:5). Most Christians have chosen to be rich in this world which results in being poor in faith. What a pitiful choice!

To be able to stand right for God and to believe God, is almost a lost reality in the church. Many advise to get ahead here, pile it up, but we know we are going to leave it all behind. The logic somehow escapes me. This Apostasy is striking at the very root of where we live.

There is an old phrase, "A text without a context is a pretext." That's particularly important as far as II Peter 2 is concerned. On the matter of context, when

you look at a word or phrase, you want to look at the verse and the setting of the word. You then want to look at the chapter and then the chapters around it. Finally you want to look at the book, and then group of books. Jesus talked about books as groups. “You’ve heard in the law” (five books), “you know from the prophets” (sixteen books). Then you want to consider, “Is it Old Testament or New Testament?” Then you must consider the context of all of the Scripture, and the usage of that word or phrase.

Jesus gave us an example of the last state being worse than the first. He was talking about a man who had a demon that left, and he came back with 7 more that were worse than the first one. The last state of that man was worse than his first state. Peter uses the very same phrase. God has put it in there. Just like that demonized man, who had been cleansed, and then he ended up worse than before his cleansing (2 Pet. 2:20). So, it is for those in Apostasy. They will be worse off because they had a temporary cleansing.

Look at the context and the passages that are similar in the Scripture. That will help you in your study. There have been many of these Apostasies. If you study the histories of them, they generally came before times of revival. There was a declension and then revival. Today people aren’t so interested in revival or in knowing how to live in the Apostasy of the last days. They are enjoying what the world has to offer.

Consider the audience for whom God wrote this book. It is the same group God had I Peter written to. You will find it in I Peter 1:1. Basically it was South Western, Western, and Northern Turkey. Some of those areas were where Paul had ministered, Galatia would be one of the areas. The book of Galatians had been written by Paul. Paul had established churches, and written letters to these people. Paul was now off the scene and God had Peter writing to them. He said, “Now you may be strangers to me, but we’re together in Christ Jesus.” He is addressing these people from Babylon just south of Baghdad, Iraq. Peter was ministering there, not in Rome. He was where Roman Catholicism came from. It is difficult for Catholics to face the fact that they claim him as their first Pope, and he was in Babylon. Peter was there and was addressing

those who were missing Paul.

Peter was not angry with Paul; he did not hold a grudge against Paul. Paul had rebuked him, Peter accepted it, and loved him for it. He was a wise man according to the book of Proverbs. We think that if somebody rebukes somebody that they'll be an enemy for life. Not so in the early church. They were closer to the Savior. They knew more of His nature and how He worked. At the end of II Peter chapter 1 we find that we have a more sure word of prophecy than what Peter heard on the Mount of Transfiguration when he saw Jesus transfigured, and heard God speak out of Heaven. He said in II Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy...". Verse 21 continues, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

I grew up in Baptist group whose motto was "The Bible: Our only rule of faith and practice." The motto of the strict and Particular Baptists in Great Britain is "The Centrality of Scriptures." They apply this to their worship, church, home, and lives. Our church has, as its motto, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." The Scriptures are important, and they are emphasized in the end of chapter 1. In Chapter 3, ten times the Scriptures are mentioned by one of perhaps six different names. The theme of Apostasy is surrounded by the greater theme of the Scriptures.

Apostasy is the leaving of the total authority of the Scriptures. The apostasy is evidenced by false teachers. People have God's Word but choose to follow a man's teaching. God makes an issue of that. That is the context of this on Apostasy.

CHAPTER 2

I Peter 2:1 begins with the word, 'But'. In contrast to the sacred, pure, Holy-Ghost-given words of God given through holy men. The Apostasy came through false prophets then and false teachings now. The false has always mixed in where the truth exists. There were prophets of Baal, which were false. There were the true prophets who had been hidden away by God and His servants in the days of Elijah. We have in the Old Testament the story of the true holy men of God, and the false prophets.

There is a change. Now the Scripture tells us in II Peter 2:1, "... even as there shall be false teachers among you...". The false prophets were in the Old Testament, but the emphasis will be on the teachers in the New Testament. False teachers do not say they are false. They do not deny the cardinal doctrines out front. They even claim to support them, claiming to be evangelical and in some cases, even fundamentalists. God said there will be false teachers who mix in with those who are right. The reality is, that though they may sound good, their heart was never really changed. At the end of the chapter God said they are still a dog--they are still a hog. They cleaned up for a while, but they get entangled again in their sin.

We hear the doctrine of the back-slider. Some people claim that they were backsliders from the point of their conversion. That is unbiblical, but there are those that teach it. Years ago I was talking to a man that had just been exposed as a molester of boys. He had already confessed this to his minister. When I spoke to the minister, he said "Yes, I know that, but he's a baby Christian." He had not been baptized yet, and they acted as if baptism was going to cleanse that out of his system. I said, "Did you ever consider that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature? Old things are passed away. All things become new?" The minister said, "Well that's a different thought." I read the guilty man some Scriptures. He said, "Well, according to what you're reading, I'm lost." I said, "Well, you decide what you want to believe." He responded, "Then I'm lost." The minister was upset at this, for he had been trying to give the sinner assurance of salvation. His man-made theories on baby Christians and baptism were in direct opposition to clear Scriptures. I am

telling you there are false teachers among us.

This is not addressed to the lost or the world, but it is addressed to the believers and the churches. They will get in among the believers where the Bible is believed, and secretly they are going to bring in their heresies that will create a damnable condition. I did not create that word, God did. It is a strong word, and that is how God feels about the issue. What is part of the nature of the damnable heresies that they bring in? II Peter 2:1 says, "... even denying the Lord that bought them..." They do not deny He existed, but they only want part of His person. They will deny His position. Some of them teach that He only makes adjustments in destiny but does not change lives. They are not so obvious in statement, but in their practice they deny His purchase. He is the Lord that bought them, yet in one way or another, they deny Him.

I had not been pastoring long in the hills of Ohio when one of the men of the church had his heart get out of rhythm and begin racing. I was called and went to him, prayed with him and waited. Finally, he began to get a little better, walking around the yard at 2 or 3 in the morning. I said to him, "If you had died, would you have gone to Heaven?". He said, "Oh, yes. I'm saved". He further added, "Jesus has never been my Lord. Jesus is not my Lord, and he probably never will be my Lord, but I'm going to Heaven just as sure as you are." I said, "You've heard me preach. I don't need to tell you anymore." It is a very sad thing that he had been taught that.

I was twelve years old the first time I heard that sort of thing. I was at youth camp and I had been saved for six years. God had dealt with me for a year. I had made professions, I had said prayers, but I had not been saved until finally I broke on who was going to run things. Six years later, I was back in that camp. The preacher was preaching and he had gotten a number of professions of salvation that week, and he decided to get some more decisions so he went after the Lordship issue. He said, "You may have made Him Savior, and now you can make Him Lord." I left there stunned and confused, it never occurred to me that there were three kinds of salvation. A) Where you accept a change to go to Heaven. B) Where you agree to believe a few things. C) Where you get committed and you belong to Him.

That is what is being taught in many schools. I thought there was only one kind. I thought there was the kind expressed as, “Now I belong to Jesus, and Jesus belongs to me.” I went out in the dark and sat on a bench stunned. I just could not grasp this. Finally, I was able to get it sorted out. What I had heard could not be right.

The Bible says in Acts 16:31, “... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...”. Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...” Romans 10:13 adds, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” I Corinthians 12:3 states, “...no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” Romans 14:9 clarifies, “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.” The issue is, Who is going to run the life? That was the issue in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Eve decided she wanted to run it and Adam agreed. They were put out of God’s garden. The devil did not want Him to rule and he was put out of Heaven.

You do have to believe on what He did on the cross, but remember, He did that to purchase a people. We are bought with a price. We are not our own. We have become servants, not free agents to enjoy the world now and Heaven later. We are a changed people and we are ambassadors. We belong to Him. He bought us with His blood. Can you imagine buying something and then finding out that it does not really belong to you?

Imagine if you buy a puppy, and the puppy wants to run off all the time. You say, “That dog belongs to me. I bought it.” Well, Jesus bought you, and bought me, but some deny the Lord that bought them. They resist belonging to Jesus. They want to belong to themselves. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, “... If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” That is what the Bible teaches. Apostasy is the leaving of the total authority of Scripture. They want to have, available at their leisure, the option of service.

I preached in a Bible School which was training missionaries. One day I had preached four different times. During those four sessions, I had talked perhaps 10-15 minutes about Christ being Lord. That seemed to be about the only thing they had heard. Afterwards they

said that there were people that got confused by my preaching. I thought, “Oh, well, I’ve got another 3-4 hours to get it straightened out.” I asked, “What are they confused on?”. They replied, “They think that you said Jesus is to be Lord.” I said, “They understood. What don’t they understand?”

I found that the school taught against Christ being Lord of the life. They trained and sent out missionaries by the hundreds. One fellow came to my room at night. He said, “You’ve upset me.” I said, “Well, I didn’t intend to upset you. What was it? Was it me or was it the Bible?” He told me, “What you read out of the Bible.” I asked him to tell me what it was. He explained, “Well my mother thought it would be good for me to go to Bible school with people going to the mission fields. So, she arranged, got my train ticket, packed my bags, came down to the commune, got my hair cut, and I quit using drugs, quit living loose, and came here. She said, ‘One day, son, you’ll let Him be your Lord.’”

I said, “What’s the Bible say?” He said, “The Bible says I’m lost.” I answered, “You just go with what God said.” I did not have four hours to straighten things out, because that was the last time I ever preached in that meeting, or any meeting for that entire mission. This mission called “make Him Lord” a heresy. Instead, they should recognize what God calls a damnable heresy “... even denying the Lord that bought them...” (II Peter 2:1)

Some deny His position in the church. He said in Matthew 16:18b, “... I will build my church...”. But they talk about the church as belonging to them. He is the head of the church according to the Bible, but they think that the pastor or the deacon board, or some particular family is to be the head of the church. They are denying the Lord. He bought us individually, but He also bought the local church. We read in Acts 20:28, “... which He hath purchased with His own blood.” The local church is a blood-bought institution, if it is a real church. Many man-made organizations put the word “church” in their name.

There are churches in eastern Europe that used to have the officers gather for a business meeting. They would sit around the table, leaving the chair at the head of the table empty. That was to remind them who was the head of the church, the unseen head. They were there to

follow His direction.

We should thank Him for being the Head of the Church. Some people deny Him in their life. We are moving into a day when this is more and more common. What is the answer? Preach Jesus in all of His positions, in all of His power, in all of His purchase, in all of His person. Preach Jesus. Keep Him at the center and you will be different. While the Apostasy goes on, you can choose not to be a part of it. These that do such bring upon themselves swift destruction. When they start in that direction, God may cut the light off, God may cut the hope off, God may cut the opportunity off, and one day, there will be eternal destruction reserved for them. They have rejected and denied the Lord that bought them.

II Peter 2:2a says, "And many shall follow their pernicious ways..." These teachers will have a following. In fact, in the Apostasy, the majority of people will follow false teachers. It is nice to dream about everybody coming to the truth. The Bible says in Matthew 7:13-14, that when the Apostasy comes, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Many would say, "Lord, Lord." They use the term, but they only used it as a term of identification, not as His entitlement to rule their lives. He will respond, "...I never knew you..." (Matthew 7:23). Many will follow their pernicious ways. We see the way of truth is spoken of in an evil way. Many do not feel bound by the Scripture. They have their doctrine, traditions, history, and those that they will follow. Instead of following God's holy Words, they follow these teachers.

My son Mark and I had a chance to talk at length with a priest and give him the gospel. All he had known was a shallow religion. A soul winner had him repeat a sinner's prayer. The priest said, "I was Catholic. We were used to saying prayers all the time. We confess we are sinners, so saying a sinner's prayer was no problem at all. Then the soul winner told me that I would go to Heaven for saying it." Remember, this was a Catholic priest. He had no concept of the true gospel. One of his first questions was, "Who do you follow?" We said,

“Jesus.” He said, “Yes, we all do, but who do you follow?” We said, “We follow what the Bible says.” He was confused. He thought everybody picked some human to follow. He wanted to pigeon-hole us by who we were following. In each Apostasy many follow a false teacher and their pernicious ways.

The word *pernicious* gives the concept of living loosely. It includes sin, freedom from restraints and lasciviousness, according to Jude 4. As a result, these tell us that we do not need to be so strict, we do not have to hold such high standards. The Scripture says in Isaiah 59:19b, “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Standards are raised during times of Apostasy. Apostasy always has the way of truth evil spoken of. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” They offer many ways that are in direct contradiction to what Jesus said.

Thus, the false teachers mock and scoff at the way of the truth. Peter warns that the followers will do even as their teachers. This is what we have to look forward to in the last days. Our forefathers could hardly grasp such a thing, but we are observing it. Many of the Apostasy once stood with us but now are against us. (I John 2:19). Those who leave us with those who were already opposed to us, bring persecution upon us. Education will speak evil of this way. The government will speak evil of this way.

Now, Apostasy has its blessings. It sorts things out. The founders of our nation had some Biblical insight. They believed that the government was a necessary evil. Our generation thinks that the government is a necessary good. Government, by its very nature, is evil. Small government creates little evil while big governments create much evil.

Our government has gotten bigger, and so has the evil. Obviously, revival will not come through the government. Apostasy may be, however, advanced by government. Be careful to maintain holiness and separation during the Apostasy. Preach Christ, stay by the Words of God. Keep the standards up. These are some ways to not only survive the Apostasy, but perhaps to even thrive. Keep in mind, I John 4:4 says, “... greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the

world.” We have a great Savior. Lean on Him, love Him, live for Him, sacrifice for Him, serve Him. Do not take on the ways of the world.

CHAPTER 3

In II Peter we're looking at how not only to survive but to thrive during the Apostasy. If we are now entering the final and Great Apostasy, it will be bigger and deeper than anything before. If God soon grants us revival, that may give us an extra dispensation of time. If He does not, we get to prove how great our God is by being faithful in the darkest of hours.

One of the nice things about an Apostasy is that it will eventually have a cleansing effect for those that will stay pure and right. God did not leave us without light in these dark days.

The Apostasy is not in the world but within the walls of the church. Some will change, but the change will be temporary.

II Peter 2:3 states, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." "And through coveteousness...", these are the false teachers. In other words, they will treat you like cans on a shelf. They will take inventory. They glory in numbers. This is one of the marks in false teachers. I am not against knowing what numbers are, but we do not work for numbers. The numbers only indicate how many we are actually ministering to. A lot of times those numbers may represent who was there, but we may not have ministered to everybody there. We can only minister to those that want help, and even some of them do not seem to be able to help. Some people come because it makes them feel better, but it does not make them holy. They have not been changed.

We have had some people leave our church. I went and talked with them, and they gave me an ultimatum that if I would do certain things for which there was no scriptural teaching or precedent, they might possibly come back with their crowd. They might, but they did not know. They said, "If you do not, then you'll be missing a lot of nickels and noses." I am afraid it was too close to the truth. We have done without the nickels and noses. For them to think that it was an enticement for me to make merchandise of them showed an ignorance of the Word of God. Many churches will soften up because their quantity of merchandise is

going down. They are trying to serve people instead of trying to please God.

How do they go about making merchandise of people? With feigned words, that is, fake speech. They choose words according to how those words effect the hearer. There are certain words that will produce certain effects. Sales people know this, and preachers learn that. I remember one evangelist who would get to the end of the message and if it did not look like anyone was breaking or moving, he would snap his fingers during the invitation. I said, "What in the world are you snapping your fingers for?" He said, "More people come when you do it." That was his motive and he ended poorly, very poorly.

They used feigned words, fake words; words chosen because of effect, rather than because of meaning or communication. They learn to use words to get results, rather than to communicate who Jesus is and let the Holy Ghost produce the results. Let me see if I can help you a little more with this, because this is inside the walls. Actors learn how to play different parts. They may play the part of a comedian one time, a criminal another, or maybe a minister another time. They know how "to put" on that identity, and how to adopt the speech that is necessary to carry the part. We have a generation of preachers that take at least one course in play acting to help them with their preaching. I have known of preachers who have practiced their messages on Saturday, to make sure that it had the appeal and the emotion to get the results they wanted on a Sunday morning. They would learn physical movements to be able to influence people. They learn the art of speech for results rather than simply speaking what God has put in their heart in the way that God has directed. Feigned words.

Billy Graham used to go to an empty chicken house or out in the woods and practice to get the rhythm, and the poetry, and the imagery--everything worked out in his preaching so that he would be able to sway crowds. Now we use video cameras. We have the speaker watch so that they can make changes for effect. Their preaching is not natural but is designed to produce results. They manipulate the people.

In downtown Athens, Greece, my wife and I saw a school called College of Hypocrites. The word

hypocrite is a Greek word that means to play or act. To be a hypocrite is to play the part of something you are not, nor can be. Feigned words, manipulative words, and power words. They used action words mixed in to get the audience to weep, to laugh, to come, and to give. Nobody accused the Apostle Paul of any of this. He was a poor speaker, but he spoke from his heart, and God used him. Tertullus was an orator. God did not use him.

This is in contrast to common teaching in the days of apostasy. We used to believe God worked. Now we want to use what works for us. The solution to this is to speak from your heart, communicate the Word, and watch God work. That will make a difference. We must learn to be sincere.

Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is in the lap of the sinner, not in a persuasive preacher's lap. It is our responsibility to get it there, and watch God do something. II Peter 2:4 states, "... if God spared not...". The problem today is that some people have the wrong god. We need to get back to telling people who God really is.

I sat in a living room with a man and we started to talk about God. He said, "I know all about God." I answered, "Wonderful. Tell me." He did not make it sixty seconds and he had already repeated himself. Generally, people do not know who God is. They have a god fashioned according to their imaginations and according to the philosophy of the world. The true God has some people and even some angels, that He will not spare.

Lost people say, "I believe God wants to spare everybody." God did not spare these. These were angels of a higher creation than mankind. They had sinned and He spared them not. He offered them no mercy. There comes a time when God quits sparing.

The book of Jude is a commentary on II Peter 2. In Jude we are told of the angels that kept not their first estate. Jesus taught that the proper estate of angels is singleness. Genesis 6 tells of angels who sinned by entering into marriage. They left their first estate, and God cast them down into hell. It was no slow or gentle

descent into the flames. Satan sinned and he was cast out of Heaven. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were banished from the garden permanently. Lost people will one day be cast into the lake of fire according to Revelation 20. This is the God of the Bible. Psalm 7:11b says, "... God is angry with the wicked every day."

We need to bring people back to understanding who God really is. II Peter 2:4 says that He, "... delivered them into chains of darkness...". The God of the Bible not only casts into hell, but also chains souls with darkness. There are no picnics, parties, or reunions in hell. There is no beach there. The darkness not only can be felt, but it is strong enough in feeling that it becomes like chains, and binds a person's freedom of movement. You might keep falling because it is like a bottomless pit, but you will not be able to move freely and associate as you choose.

Let me say this, and I hope you do not misunderstand and take it out of context. If a person goes to hell, they are in a holding cell. That being the holding cell, imagine what it is going to be like when they finally go through judgment! According to Revelation 20:14,15, they will be brought out of Hell to the great white throne of judgment from which they will be cast into the lake of fire where death and Hell are cast. We are told it is the lake of fire and brimstone. Hell is awful, but what is eternal is even worse for them. Hell is only a piece of what they will suffer. When they are put there, they do not get out--they cannot get saved. The angels are held there and God is not going to spare them, but He has reserved them until the judgment.

You better believe that a human rebel here on earth is also going to go there. They will be reserved for the judgment, and there will be no way they can get out of it. They can cry, 'Lord, Lord, we did this, and we did that.' He will say, according to Matthew 7:23, "... I never knew you: depart from me...". They can say, "No, it's been seven years, twenty years, then a thousand years, I've been in a holding cell, but I'm innocent. Lord, there's been a mistake." He will say, "No, no mistake, I never knew you. You weren't mine. You'd call me 'Lord,' but it was only a title. It was only a name. I bought you, and you denied me, and now you're trying to claim me. It's too late to put your claim

in now.”

We ought to learn from the angels. Learn, and consider it. II Peter 2:5 says, “And spared not the old world...”. He did not spare the angels and He did not spare the Antediluvian civilization. He intended to wipe it all out, but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Enoch had already been taken to Heaven. Methuselah lived until the year of the flood, and perhaps died in it. Lamech lived within five years of the flood, but decades before, the Lord looked, and Grandpa Methuselah did not find grace in the eyes of the Lord. Father Lamech did not find grace in the eyes of the Lord. It was the son and grandson, Noah, that found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah preached and preached, but there is no evidence of the conversion of his father and grandfather.

Sinners need to realize that it is not a case of whether God finds grace in their eyes, but whether they find grace in His eyes. Hebrews 11:6 states, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The sinner is to seek God. Somehow people have the idea that it is their job to resist God, and His job is to run after them. Even then they will fight Him off. They do not know the God of the Bible. They are like this Antediluvian civilization, which were not a bunch of atheists. They are apostates--religious, but not right. He did not spare them. He saved Noah, the eighth person, because he was a preacher of righteousness.

Imagine having to preach righteousness in those days. He was building the ark and preaching righteousness. Noah preached, “You need to live holy! Won’t you realize you need God to change you? You need His righteousness!” They responded, “We’re not interested. We’re happy as we are. We have our own preachers and we have our own ways.” There is only one way--the way of righteousness.

How do you survive apostasy and thrive? How do you get the blessings of God? Stay with the old preaching and let God make you righteous. Live right, do right, and be right. Preach righteousness, not plans, philosophies, concepts, and not ear-tickling ideas. Stay with the old ways. Noah came through fine, but the others never made it. He was a preacher of

righteousness. Let Jesus be your theme. Stay with the words of God. Stay holy during the times of Apostasy. You will be in the place of protection and blessing, while the others experience condemnation and judgment for the routes they have chosen.

Their sinfulness and apostasy brought in that flood upon the world of the ungodly. Now let me say this about the word *ungodly*. In I Peter 4:18 we are told, “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” God makes a distinction between ‘ungodly’ and the ‘sinner’. Sinners are out there breaking God’s law, violating His commands, and this was before the first verse of Scripture had been recorded on Earth, and God still had revealed His law. I will not go into detail, but there were sinners. There were also ungodly people. Some people are pretty good, upstanding citizens we would say, but they are ungodly. There are people in churches that are ungodly. There are people that hold to the fundamentals of the faith mentally and verbally that are ungodly. Let me see if I can help you with the word ‘ungodly’. *Ungodly* has two parts. *Un* and *godly*. The ungodly are the ones that do not live godly. These are the ungodlike people. They are not interested in being formed into the image of His dear Son. They are only interested in going to Heaven. They are only interested in being called a Christian. They are only interested in getting help from God, but they are not interested in being like God. They are not interested in being changed and conformed so they look like, sound like, think like, and react like God. These are the ones that are not focused on God. He is not their priority, but is used for times of need.

There are some people that only show up at prayer meeting because they have something major that they are worrying about. They come to get people to pray, but they will not pray for others. Occasionally, you used to see families, several families related show up in a service happily. I would find out that the young lady in the group was looking for a place for a wedding. They were trying to impress me.

We have people that will come and stand around, and act like they are part of us, but when they have to make the choice of what they are going to do on a Sunday, a family reunion wins over God every time. Fishing,

carnivals, sports, and friends may also be chosen before God. We have a generation that feels any excuse will do, because in their hearts they are not godly. God says that makes them ungodly.

That was the problem in Noah's day. They were violent, they were immoral. They did not hold to the old paths on marriage. God said the big issue above that is that they did not want to worship Him, love Him, and be like Him. God was justified for judging them for their ungodliness. Let that sink in, regarding the apostasy of this day. How many un-God-like so-called Bible-believing Christians do we have? They are out and out sinners, but they are a little on the self-righteous side. They are not interested in seeing how holy a saved sinner can be. It is a mark of the apostasy when religious people scorn those who want to be holy.

II Peter 2:6 says, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;" God did not bankrupt them. He did not just send them depression. He burned them up and left ashes on the ground. He condemned them with an overthrow. Just as God threw those angels into Hell, so He overthrew and burned Sodom and Gomorrah.

God did this to make an example to those who did not want to be like Him. He will do the same thing to any culture or civilization that neglects Him. What a warning for these days of apostasy, where entertainment draws more people than Jesus Christ! In practice they deny the Lord that bought them, and use smooth words, making merchandise of people. When the goal is Heaven without godliness, a sinner is not ready to be saved. The example of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals how God will deal with the ungodly. This is the warning in the days of Apostasy.

II Peter 2:7 continues, "And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;" Lot was in the midst of wicked Sodom. Both Lot and Noah lived in times of apostasy. Both were given extra help by God. If you will preach righteousness during the apostasy, God will also give you special help and blessings to compensate for what is going on around you. Such precious truths will help prepare us for the growing Apostasy.

II Peter 2:8 goes on to say, “(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)”. Lot was upset over the sinners and their sinning. Never get comfortable with the sin of the wicked. Lot consistently kept his soul righteous. He was vexed. How vexed are you? Is your soul so righteous that sin still vexes it?

From what I can tell in the book of Genesis and the rest of Scripture, Sodom and Gomorrah had no laws against Sodomy. What made these deeds unlawful? There is no evidence that Sodom had laws against these deeds, nor is there evidence that the culture or philosophy of the day had any problem with such deeds. Those learning from the angels mocked Lot for supposing this behavior was wrong. The developing Apostasy may bring us to a similar situation. God said that their deeds were unlawful. They violated His holy law. God’s law supersedes man’s law or lack of law. God judged them for leaving Him out of what they decided was right and wrong.

II Peter 2:9 states, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:” This is a wonderful promise. The worse it gets, the greater the deliverance. God is strong enough to deliver us in the midst of all the temptations.

One day God is going to remove us from this earth. At that time the raging Apostasy will be fueled by the wrath of man. They are sowing the seeds of their wrath and will reap God’s wrath in the judgment.

While man’s laws may not judge the wicked, God assures us that He shall judge them. The reservation of the ungodly for judgment is as certain as the eternal deliverance is for the godly. God is going to punish them like He punished the angels-- those at the time of the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah.

CHAPTER 4

Look at II Peter 2:10, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they...” They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. These people are self-willed. They walk according to their own will. They let their own opinion, such as, “How I see it, how I feel about it, what I like, what it does for me.” These people despise government. A whole lot of the anti-government crowd are the apostate wicked crowd because they despise government, whoever is in power. It started with the false teachers that deny the Lord that bought them. They say, “We will not have this man to rule over us.” They are rebels at heart, and if God even allowed them in the millennium, they would rebel against Him. They look down on government. They are anarchists. They want their way.

The person that submits to Jesus, has been purchased by the blood. They become servants, and they will love His leadership. They will let God do with the government whatever He chooses. He can use whatever government He wants, to do whatever He wants. They know that He will protect them and take care of them under any government that comes by. They do not despise the government, but rather, as in Romans 13, they realize that the government is the minister of God. Now it may be for blessing and it may be for judgment, but the government is the minister of God.

Christians are not to despise government. They are not to despise Christ’s government. They are not to despise the government of the home, the government of the church, or the government of the nation. The rebellion against government is fed by apostates.

Let’s look at II Peter 2:8-17. We are talking about the Apostasy. There have been a number of apostasies, not only from the Old Testament, but also New Testament times and to this present time. The Bible makes it clear that before Jesus comes there will be a Great Apostasy, similar to the others, but perhaps even larger. We are in an Apostasy. Whether this is the last and greatest, or not, we cannot be sure. God might send revival and deliver us, or He might just let it grind on down. We

need to be aware that there is such a thing.

How are we going to act? What are we going to do? We have been dealing with how to behave during the Apostasy, how to survive the Apostasy, and how to thrive during the Apostasy. One of the blessings of the Apostasy is that people eventually start showing that they have been counterfeit. They are not real and it sorts itself out. The sorting may be painful, but it is a good thing because people realize that what they thought was false really was. We have a chance to show that there is something different, and it is real!

II Peter 2:10 says, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh...”. Romans 8 warns about it and contrasts it to walking in the Spirit. These people operate according to their nature, saying, “It is natural. This is normal.” “That’s true, but isn’t it terrible!” That catches them. They say, “Well, I just do what comes naturally.” If they get saved they could do what comes supernaturally. They walk after the flesh. The Bible has a lot to say (and none of it is positive) on the matter of walking after the flesh. Walking after the flesh is uncleanness. It is uncleanness of mind, thought, talk, and motive.

The idea that being saved means you are going to be holy and clean is something that the apostates cannot grasp. They have instant backsliding, or maybe, they never did have to backslide. They have always been there. Uncleanness is seen in the way some preachers get together and their jokes are modified unclean jokes. Deacons are in homes where they feed on uncleanness. They insinuate uncleanness and they honor the unclean. Is it any wonder that the lusts of uncleanness rule in their souls?

We read “and despise government”. Verse one of this chapter says that the false teachers deny the Lord that bought them. When a person will not be ruled by Jesus Christ, he is a rebel, and will rebel against all other authority. If he cannot bow to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who has all power, what is going to make him bow to any other authority? Will he bow to the authority of parents? Will she bow to the authority of her husband? Will he bow to the Lord, who is to direct him in running the home? Will there be any authority in the home or will there be a despising of government? People despise the authority of their

parents governing them. They despise the authority of the church and the authority of the Word of God. They do not want any governing in their lives. They despise the laws of man, the police, and the judges. They despise the government that God has given us. Do you suppose that God is smart enough to handle our national leadership? Do you suppose that He might give us a Muslim to hold the Catholics back? I believe He let President Nixon get thrown out because the Mormons were trying to seize the government. You do a little studying and you will understand that He protected us from a Mormon/Catholic combination. When we look back at it from Heaven it may look like a brilliant move by God.

Be careful about despising government. We have never had a government that we liked fully. The truth is that we will never have a perfect government until the millennium. That is when God is going to show how it should be done. We will have a one-world dictatorship with Jesus in charge. We will get to rule and reign with Him.

The churches have prepared a generation that despise the government, and that leads to anarchy. They do not pray. Examine some of the kings in the Old Testament, what God used them for, and look at the character of each of them. You will realize how wise the Almighty is. He can raise up the wicked and hasty Babylonians. Habakuk had trouble with that. "You would use them? They are worse than we are!". "That is right. Judgment has to begin at the house of God. I have to have somebody wicked enough to deal with my people, to get them right. Then later I will deal with them (the Babylonians)". Let us not forget our Old Testament history. It is the same God, the same Bible.

"Presumptuous are they". They are presumptuous about the preacher. They are presumptuous about what they are going to believe about the Bible and what they will not believe. They presume that if they believe it, that makes it right. If that was all it took, we would not need a Bible! They vote whether they are going to follow the Bible or not. The word presumptuous ties in with feigned words, which are fake words. Presumption is fake faith. When the Israelites came out of Egypt and came up to Kadesh-Barnea, they sent in the twelve spies. When the report came back the majority said,

“They’re too big for us and our God.” Two said, “God’s big enough. He can handle it. We might as well go.” The people voted whether to obey God or not. They voted against obeying God!

Moses said, “You need to go!”, but the people said, “We voted against it.” The next day they found out what it was going to cost them. THEN they said, “Let’s go!”, but the Lord said, “You can’t. You had your chance to believe and wouldn’t.” They said, “We’re going.” They went up and had a terrible defeat. The Bible states it twice. They presumed to go. Presumption is “I know what faith is, and I’ll exercise it when I feel like it.” God says, “If you don’t believe when I give you the opportunity, you may not get another chance.” During the Apostasy there will be talk about believing what God commanded, but the timing is all wrong. We are not talking about an atheist, we are talking about what is inside the church walls.

“Presumptuous are they, self-willed.” They are self-willed but not self-governed by the government of God. They will do what they want to do. They never learned that the first thing Jesus required was for a man to deny himself. They are going to follow themselves and their will. They do not understand what it meant when Jesus was in Gethsemane. “Not my will, but thine be done.” He was God! We need to walk in His footsteps. They do not understand Galatians 2:20 “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me...”. We focus too much on “I! How does it affect me? How do I feel? How do I think? What do I want?” These are marks of Apostasy.

Too many pastors are finding out what the crowd is doing and jumping out in front, acting like they are leading it. They find out how the people will it, and that becomes how they lead. I once had a man ask if I would consider pastoring in a similar way as his brother did. He was the leader of a “Christian Rock” band and had designed a church the way people would want it. He already had 300 members after one year. He had a group of self-willed people.

“They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” They are not afraid to speak evil, it comes off their tongue so easily. R.I. Humberd said that parents who speak ill of a pastor at the dinner table will keep their children from benefiting from the pastor’s ministry.

They do not mind speaking evil of people in high positions. Many generations have been devastated by negative speaking about the leadership. We teach them to be rebels. This is a mark of apostasy, and it is so easy to fall into it.

II Peter 2:11 states, “Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.” If angels will not do it, why would we humans do it? Do we understand that every idle word will be given account for? What about those evil, railing, negative and destructive words? Even Michael, the archangel, did not bring railing accusation against the devil in spiritual warfare. Some people bring railing accusations and think that it is spiritual terminology and wonder why they do not experience real spiritual results. The Apostasy can be so close to reality in areas like this, and in times of ignorance there is trouble.

“But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed.” In our country animals are elevated and humans are lowered. Cats have more rights than children do! You could go to jail for killing unborn kittens, and yet, the government pays for the abortion of unborn human beings.

Many people act like beasts, pushing their way around and forcing their way into power. The Bible says, “... evil communications corrupt good manners.” (I Cor. 15:33). People who are genuinely saved were given good manners at the time of their conversion, but if they listen to wrong speaking, they will lose some of what they have been given. They not only have beast-like manners, behaviors, and desires, they even worship like beasts. Some people get so excited that they are animal-like and these passions seem to overwhelm their humanity. That lets you know they do not have genuine Christianity. These apostates act like brute beasts. This does not mean they are brute beasts, it says, AS brute beasts. They have taken on the lower creation as the manner in which they operate and behave, while all the time they claim to belong to Jesus.

They “speak evil of the things that they understand not.” I have been studying in Proverbs, looking at three words: knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. If you do not know anything, you will not understand anything. If you do not understand

anything, you will not have wisdom. It does not say these people do not know. It just says that they do not understand. There are a lot of people that hear facts and speak evil of them because they do not understand what these facts represent or what lies beneath those facts. These people will never get to wisdom because they are not after understanding. They just want something about which to fuss.

This is a mark of apostasy. Some people might have some facts, but no understanding. They know how to look right, act right, talk right, but they do not understand. That is supposed to flow out of a changed nature. Their ignorance is exposed, not because they do not know the facts, but because they do not understand. They never even try to understand.

“And shall utterly perish in their own corruption,” The corruption of rebellion, of ignorance, and of reviling. Sin is not a passing event. God asked Adam and Eve, “What is this sin?”. They did it in the past, but it existed in present. He did not say, “That was in the past.” It was still there. Do you know that sins people commit will last forever and ever and ever? If you do not get them cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, they will hang onto your bones in hell. It says in the Old Testament “Their iniquities are on their bones.” The corruption of men’s hearts and desires and behavior are going to surround them like they are drowning in a cesspool. They will perish in their own corruption. That filth of all their life will be around them as they sink down, down, down, perishing. It does not get left back here on earth. It lasts forever and ever. My sins would last forever but, bless God, Jesus washed them away. He took them away from me and put them as far as the East is from the West. They are gone. They have not quit existing, but they are where I will never run into them again. The apostate thinks, “Oh, that was just the past. Yes, I had a problem. Maybe I was upset.” They have a dozen excuses.

“And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness.” What you sow, you reap. You cannot mock God. Galatians 6:8 states, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;”. In 2 Peter 2:15 it is referenced to as “...the wages of unrighteousness.”.

“As they that count it pleasure to riot in the day

time.” Generally, riots are pulled off at night, but sometimes people get so beside themselves and are so brazen that they do not care who knows what they are doing. They are going to pull it off and they will go against any authority that gets in their way. When the riot occurs will tell you something about the nature of the riot. The apostate will rise up in the full day sun, in the light of the Word of God, and will challenge and speak evil of dignities. They will despise government and they will do it their way because they are self-willed. These want to make merchandise of you.

“Spots they are and blemishes.” We are to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, but these get to be spots in our churches. They are blemishes in the reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ because they deny the Lord that bought them.

“Sporting themselves with their own deceivings.” They deceive themselves and try to deceive others. Then, they almost brag about their lies, deceptions, and half-truths, and sport those when they are among people of God. They put on their artificial spirituality. They want people to know how spiritual they are. If they were really spiritual, they would not have to tell people, others would already know.

“Having eyes full of adultery.” The men come looking for the women at church and the women come to be looked at. The men have their eyes full of adultery, and they are analyzing the possibilities and excitement of that which God has forbidden. These are terrible men. There are women too with eyes full of adultery. They send, call, and try to catch the men with their eyes. This happens in the church, and it is more than just the dress issue. The Amish even have trouble with it.

I have a Mennonite friend who says that they have trouble with this in their church as well. The dress is fine, but their eyes are not. They have eyes full of adultery, and He is troubled about it. Watch those eyes! In some places if a woman looks a man in the eyes, she has made an invitation. If a man looks in a woman’s eyes, he is asking permission.

One needs to think about these things when they visit a mission field. There may be a different set of rules, but I am talking about eyes full of adultery. The apostates have their religion, their appearance, their doctrine,

their smooth words, and their followers. They have all these things, but their eyes are full of adultery.

“That cannot cleanse from sin.” This is because they are not saved. They try this plan or that plan. They try this teaching and they try that teaching. Benjamin Franklin was not saved, but he decided to get rid of one sin at a time, and replace it with a virtue. He found that once he got one virtue in and the sin out, another sin came in and a virtue left. Until God converts you and changes you, you cannot cease from sin. The Christian life is so holy that we cannot live it, as a lost person. However, it has been dumbed down so that lost people can look pretty good trying to live it. It is a mark of the apostasy that they expect and anticipate sin, and secretly, at least, they enjoy it.

“Beguiling unstable souls.” These are ones that have never been rooted and grounded in the Word of God. They are caught by every wind of doctrine, as discussed in Ephesians 4. They are like those in Galatians, who have been bewitched to get away from the Lord Jesus Christ. They know how to talk and lead people away from what is right. It is because people have never been stabilized by God’s holy Word, but only by church teaching and culture.

“An heart they have exercised with covetous practices.” Money determines what is good. I sometimes talk to people and ask them how their children are. They say, “Great! Wonderful! They have a good job, a brand-new house, and a fine car.” I might say, “But how are they spiritually?”. They say, “Oh, well, not so good. They have fallen out of church.” How are they doing well then?

Too often, people measure success by how much money they have. Some may ask, “Do you have a good job?” No, I have a great job. It may not pay much, but it has great eternal retirement benefits. I have had chances to swap it for far better-paying jobs with a lot less stress. Those jobs were not so good, they were just making money.

A couple came to me once and offered to pay me part-time work starting at \$30,000-\$35,000 with a chance to get \$50,000-\$60,000. That was a lot of money in the 70’s, but it was to keep me from the ministry. I looked at him and said, “I believe that you are at least to the fourth degree a Knight of Columbus.” He said, “How

did you find that out?” I said, “You just told me. You are a plant to try to get me to stop preaching what I am preaching.” He said, “Somebody has been talking.” Now, that would have been good pay by the world’s definition, but it would have been terrible pay by God’s definition. That was based on covetousness.

We have young people growing up wanting to make money, instead of serving the Lord. They deny the Lord that bought them because they have sold themselves out for money. Covetous practices got started early and became a way of thought and practice within the heart, and it will become evident within the life. Is it any wonder that when we say, “Would you like to be a missionary? Food might be tight, and you won’t get to eat well. You won’t get to sleep well, you won’t be safe, you might get some unusual diseases and not have very good medical care. People will forget about you, but you will be serving Jesus.” They respond, “Are you kidding? How long will I have to be gone? What are the retirement benefits?”. Covetous practices are the apostasy eating the inside vitals of the church.

“Cursed children.” They are not cursed by their parents or by the culture, but they have a curse of God upon them. What an awful thing! All these things that look good to the world, look terrible to God.

“Which have forsaken the right way.” We are not talking about people who never knew it. These are ones that had it and left it. Like those who followed Jesus in John 6, they forsook Him. Like the disciples, they forsook Him. Like, “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...”(II Timothy 4:10). Like the woman in Proverbs 2:17, “Which forsaketh the guide of her youth and forgetteth the covenant of her God.” People are forsaking. They forsake the preacher, the church, the Lord, and they forsake the right way. They have been around it and they gave lip service to it, but it was not in their heart.

“And are gone astray.” I have ministered to a lot of people who have left, but I am still waiting for one to leave, going to somebody stricter and holier. I would encourage them to do that. They could get fit better, but they go astray. The reason some people did not go astray at first is because they were afraid to, but they overcame their fears.

“Following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor

who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” He would turn against God and His people because there was money in it. Like Malachi they say, “There’s no money in the ministry.” That is one of the condemnations in Malachi 3 on those who will not tithe. They know there is no money because they did not put in, so there is none to draw on.

“But was rebuked for iniquity.” Making big bucks was iniquity in his case because he had to compromise to do it.

“The dumb ass speaking.” God took the cousin of a donkey and gave it a human voice temporarily to straighten out a prophet because there was no preacher around to do it. Jesus said if the children did not rejoice when he was on his way into Jerusalem, the rocks would cry out. God will have a voice, even if He has to use a donkey’s cousin or some rocks. God is not without a voice. It is a privilege for us to loan our voices to Him.

“The dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.” These people are crazy in their minds. Only those who are saved have sound minds. They say we turn the world upside down. Wrong! We try to keep it right side up. They do not see things right. It is madness to sell out for money, to make choices based on money-- coveting things. It cost Baalam pretty heavily. God said he had madness. That is how God looks at a lot of people in this world.

“These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest.” Jude talks about these. Proverbs 25:14 further speaks about these, “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain.” A lot of people brag saying, “I have this gift” or “ I have that gift.” It is as false as their false faith and feigned words. It is presumption. We pray for something and wait for it and somebody shows up that we think has the gift. But they are gone when the wind blows.

That happens in our churches. Some are here today and gone tomorrow. A little tempest comes and they are out of here. They will not make good soldiers! They might say, “Onward Christian Peace Corp. We don’t believe in war.” Clouds, gone with the tempest and gone with the wind. Do not count on them.

Also, they are wells without water. There is a difference

between a well and a spring. A spring is where the mountain is, and you can get some water, good or bad. A well is something you have to put some sweat and toil into it. You have to dig and dig. I have dug a lot of dry holes in my life and invested a lot of time. I did not get a cup of water from them. I have worked with people who said they were called to the ministry. I have worked, dug, sweat, toiled, and poured myself into them, and all I got was a dry hole.

In the apostasy you will pour yourself into people and often you will find that all you have is a dry hole. You will think something is about to happen and they will disappoint you. You must prepare for discouragement. That does not mean quit digging holes. We need to persist. Someday maybe God will let you get water. Maybe there will be something there one day.

I Corinthians 4:2 states, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." It does not say successful. Isaac dug a lot of wells and did not get to use very many of them. Some of them were filled in and some of them were stolen. Some people will try to steal what wells you have. This is the way it will be in the days of the apostasy. It is discouraging when you look to the right and look to the left, but thank the Lord it is not the looking around. It is the looking up that counts! Our redemption draweth nigh. He is able to deliver us from temptation. He is going to rescue us out of this. He is looking to see who will be faithful so that he can say, "...Well done, good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matthew 25:23). Let them put us to the test. By the grace of God and with the help of God, we will be faithful and ready. There is a way to survive and thrive during the apostasy. These are great days to show whether we have the heart of a soldier or the heart of a spectator.

CHAPTER 5

We are moving into one of the greatest times of prophesy. A whole lot of things have been revealed. We just did not expect to see them in our day. We may get to go and join that privileged company of martyrs on the other side. Many sing about Heaven, but they are in no hurry to go. I look forward to Heaven. We have an eloquent explanation here, not only in parts of Jude, but in Hebrews 6, the so called 'problem passage.' We are going to see a little bit about how close a person can get to looking like a Christian, living like a Christian, and thinking they are a Christian, but they are not truly saved. They can enjoy some of the Word of God, and the working of the Holy Spirit, yet never be saved.

We have dumbed down the definition of salvation so far that a demon could nearly get in. The devils believe, and that is all we ask of people. They tremble, and we do not even ask the people to tremble. We have tolerated too shallow a definition of salvation. Many people claim to be fundamentalists, who have denied the fundamentals of the teaching of the Word of God. They deny the fundamentals of what Jesus did. They deny the fundamentals of the working of the Holy Spirit. They deny the nature of regeneration and redemption, yet they claim to hold to the fundamentals. It is time we woke up and realized that God is sorting things out.

Since I was a boy, I've read the Scriptures, and I have yet to find a clear prophecy of the U.S. at the end time. It would appear that the U.S., which was nothing of world influence for most of human history, will cease to be of world influence at the end of man's history. How is the U.S. to be so neutralized that it is not even named when places like Ethiopia and Libya are mentioned? What is God going to do to America, and how? How is this great republic to cease to have any more influence than Guatemala?

I believe God is letting us see the beginning of the

destruction of our foundations. You cannot change prophecy, but you can learn how to operate during it. The first thing that had to be destroyed was what made our nation what it was--a belief in God, and churches that preached holy living. As the church goes, so goes the nation. Judgment must begin at the house of God. After this God can judge the rest. That is found both in the Old and New Testaments. We are talking about the apostasy, not the world. The apostasy is a church issue. Let me give you the things that can be found in this chapter on how to behave during this apostasy which I suspect is only in the beginning stages. I believe there is worse yet to come, but we must keep our focus on the very words of God. It is mentioned twice in the second chapter, it is mentioned in the last verse of chapter 1, and ten times in chapter 3. God puts an emphasis on His words in contrast to the apostasy.

Then there is the matter of preaching Jesus. "For they deny the Lord that bought them." We need to preach Him in His person, His positions, and in His power. We need to preach Him in His purchase, we need to preach Him in all the Biblical aspects, especially His Lordship, for that will be denied during the apostasy. We need to raise the standards, because we have let them slide. We have to get them back up. We must live holy, stay faithful, and let our soul be vexed by sin. Do not ever get comfortable with sin around you, it ought to vex you. Do not grow lukewarm to hold onto your family. The devil will try to destroy the next generation. Do you know that if those converted by the time of Charles Finney's movement had only reached their children, we would be in far better shape today. If we had just held our families, but they have slid. Find and follow the old paths, staying with them. That is the good place.

These truths are found throughout the Bible, but they are all brought out in this chapter. Expect rejection and persecution. Prepare for such and prepare others. Prepare for a culture change within the church on issues like marriage, morals, holiness, separation, and violence. We have seen some of it, but it will get worse if the apostasy continues, and there is no revival.

Recognize and proclaim the character of God. Do not just inform people that there is a God and He loves them. Tell them about that God, and the fullness of who He really is. You see, we are being paganized.

Look for God to bring deliverance from temptations, for they are going to be bigger than you can handle. God will provide a way of escape and one day we will make the great escape. We had a man in our church who became a martyr. He spoke at the end of his last service with us, and we went and shook his hand. When he spoke, I thought, "This man doesn't believe he's coming home alive." Some of the others picked up on it. Sure enough, he won his crown early, and did not have to suffer Parkinson's and its debilitating effects that had started. God totally healed him with a new body.

Why in the world would we want to hold on to an old body that does downhill when we can have a new and perfect body? Do you know that the early church had to put out a proclamation so people would quit turning themselves in to be martyrs? They were advised to wait until the authorities found out on their own. They were going down voluntarily to be martyrs. They might say, "Need anybody to feed the lions? Throw me in!" Heaven was real to them.

Nursing homes are real to us. Guard against being affected by the culture. Noah and Lot became sipping saints and went out in disgrace of drunkenness. They had stood, they had run well, but they did not finish well. They picked up a little of what was around them. Guard against that danger. Realize that it will take time to reveal any true converts.

I am explaining about the apostasy. I am not talking about the ignorance out there, and the rejection of the Word of God. The apostasy is a movement that will look and sound real, but will not be right. It will be real apostasy. According to verse 17, God has reserved a place for whom the midst of darkness is reserved forever. Hell is not a well-lit party place. It is a place of darkness where the angels are bound in chains of darkness. There is a mist that keeps you from seeing. This mist is not cloudy or white or gray, but a mist of darkness which leaves you like a blind person. You will not be able to see your friends or relatives there. There is a mist of darkness that is as pervasive, and able to be felt as much as the chains of darkness. It is a place where the heat is so intense that it has become black. There is such a thing scientifically that the heat is so high that the light is kept out. In life they did not want

light, so they will get darkness. They will not only have it a little while, but they will have it forever and ever. There is a mist and it is reserved. That was their choice, and it is such a sad situation.

There are two kinds of people in verse 18. The first group has escaped the apostasy and the second group is made up of the apostates, pursuing those that got away. You need to understand this because you are going to see it in your churches. I have watched this happen over the years. Someone has been in something that is false and they get released. They escape--they break away with seemingly a clean break, but the second group will not leave them alone. They keep after them, even chasing them down. The second group is in error; the first group has escaped from the error. Somehow, they seem to get pulled back in.

I am thinking right now about a young man who escaped the apostasy. He came and received some help, but some of the apostates within got their fingers on him as they went out, and he was not able to get away. He escaped a second time, but they chased him and have caught him again. I do not know if he will escape a third time.

Look at the verse with that in mind. These that are clean escaped from them. Notice what they are doing. For when they (those in the apostasy) speak great swelling words of vanity, they know how to use feigned words. The words of persuasion may start like this, "You ought to be doing more for Jesus than you are. You come with us, and we will open doors of opportunity." They will appeal to them, saying how spiritual they are, and how they need that kind of a person in their group. They really just want to make them like themselves. They will use those great swelling words of vanity. They allure through the lusts of the flesh. They teach that you can be at ease in Zion, when the Bible says, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion..." (Amos 6:1). They know how to convince people that they can be successful through the lusts of the flesh. They might say, "We will help you get a better job so you will enjoy life more. Your children will be happier--we have things for your children. They can sing and dance, instead of sing and pray. They can learn to play act instead of learning about reality." What parent does not feel a little tug there in the lusts of their

flesh to turn their back on old paths and old-time religion?

They are putting the pull on, they are pursuing, they are searching. They say, "You will not have to live by such strict standards. You will not have to walk such a narrow path. You will not have to look so differently from the world. You can fit in. Maybe if you fit in, you could reach some people better." They know how to lie through their teeth. We are going to see how terrible it is. They will do this through much wantonness.

I know wantonness covers a wide area, but let me give you a simple definition. To a lost person, wantonness is what they want, and want, and want. They want their wantonness instead of God's righteousness. They say, "What do you want? We have it. If we don't, we'll start it, or we may even let you be in charge of it." They will appeal to the wants of the natural man, the lusts of the flesh. They may say, "We have more things than even you would desire." They will not tell you what all it is going to cost you. They do this to those who had escaped from them. Why? It is because these people live in error and truth is not a necessity.

They promise liberty. That is the cry today, "Liberty! Have your liberty in Christ." There is liberty in Christ, but these others have a different liberty. They are Libertines and lascivious. They have their pernicious ways. They will promise them liberty. They say that you do not have to walk the straight and narrow. My ordination council was made up of a mixed group of preachers. They asked me about the matter of evil, and I said, "We're to avoid the appearance of evil." One of the men tried to correct me and said, "Really, that should be *avoid evil*." Another pastor supported my position and said, "No. It says 'the appearance of evil.'" They will tell you that the other Bible says it is "avoid evil." Westcott and Hort did not mind looking like they were in evil. That is why they belonged to a club of spiritists. They liked evolution. They hated the blood, and they hated the birth, and they hated the American Republic. They redid the Bible to get a group of people to follow and become like they were. They thought that worshipping Mary and worshipping Jesus were the same thing. The "new Bibles" are all coming down from the corrupted text line.

It is obvious that they will promise liberty, when they themselves are the servants of corruption. They are going to perish in their corruption. Corruption is where they live, but they use the veneer and say, "You can have liberty." All the while, they are bound up and cannot get free. They cannot cease from sin. They cannot get out of it, so they excuse it and redefine it. Then it becomes acceptable to them. They are slaves talking about liberty.

II Peter 2:19 states, "... for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." If you are overcome by pornography, you are in bondage to it. By the way, pornography is one aspect of fornication. Pornography is a curse inside the walls of some churches. I know a former general in our military that sat on the committees reviewing applicants for officer training school. If he found any evidence of pornography, he disqualified them. He said, "They won't make a good officer." I asked him, "Are we abouttalking hard or soft porn?" He answered, "Soft porn? Hard porn? Porn's porn." That is the military. They have a higher standard than our churches do.

When is the last time you heard an ordination council say, "Have you ever viewed any pornography? How do you handle that?" No, we do not ask questions like that anymore. It is time we got back to realizing what a man is overcome with, he is bondage to. It may be adultery, it may be drugs, it may be wrong entertainment, or a wrong kind of speech. It may be coveteousness, greed, a matter of being power hungry, or any of many other things. What a man is overcome with is that to which he is brought into bondage. I changed a word there. The original is *of whom man is overcome*. Who do you think is behind these sins that bind people? It is bowing down to the tool of the enemy that puts a person in bondage. Let me say that there is another encouraging side to it. When you are overcome by Almighty God you are in fine bondage.

I have an autobiography of a cotton planter who lived in the Carolinas before, during, and after the Civil War. The man got in financial trouble, and he had to start selling things. He began by selling his slaves. I am not backing slavery, but I am trying to make a point. There was a servant slave that had been with the family from childhood and his name was John. The master called

him in and said, “You have been like family to me, but my creditors are demanding their money and I have to sell you. An auction is coming up, and here is what I will do. I will tell you the money I need and then you can have two weeks to go and find someone that will buy you for that price, and you will not have to go to auction.” John thanked him and started trudging around. He did not want to go to the first neighbor, because he did not want to belong to him. He went to the second neighbor because he treated his servants well. When the plantation owner came to the door, John said, “My master has to sell me, and he needs _____ much money. You are my first choice. Will you buy me?”

I am glad that one day, my Master came knocking at my door, said “I will buy you”. I responded, “I would rather serve you than the one I have been serving.” I do not mind being in bondage to Him. He is so good. Jesus takes care of His servants. Jesus will never have to sell us. Oh, let that sink into your soul. Did you ever say, “I’ll be yours, I’ll serve you.”? He said, “I believe I’ll accept you among the beloved. Come on in.” Or, have you been fighting against serving Him? In that case, you are in bondage to sin, and the one that manipulates you with sin. You could be in love bonds with Jesus. This principle applies during the apostasy. People are going to be in bondage, but they are going to talk about liberty.

When we get to Heaven, we are going to find out that some of those people crying, “Liberty! Liberty! Liberty!” were like those that cried, “Peace! Peace! Peace!” when there was no peace. This is apostasy.

The Bible says in II Peter 2:20, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” I want you to know that this rises above the teaching of “easy believism.” Decisional salvation does not expect a change or a deliverance. This group has escaped the corruption. They have found some freedom and they have escaped the world and the pollutions of the world. They have been cleaned up and there is a change that has occurred. These would look like the best of converts.

Four times in the book of Peter, He is called Lord and Savior. You bow to Him as Lord to enjoy His saving work and cleansing.

I taught in a public school after the Supreme Court said we could not read the Bible in the classroom. What they did not know did not hurt them. I read the Bible in the classroom. There was a shortage for teachers in my specialty, so the administration just gladly overlooked this. Suddenly, the students started learning better and behaving better, because they had started the day hearing a little bit about God from the Bible. I could tell when a student started attending Sunday School and church, because they started learning better. It improves the ability to learn. There is power in the Word of God. The Sword of God brings changes even if they are never regenerated by the Holy Ghost.

Judges used to send minor offenders to churches to get them straightened out. They did not expect to see them get saved, but they knew that the influence of the Word of God would bring a change that would help everyone. Oh, there is a power in the knowledge of who the Lord Jesus is! When we quit evangelizing this nation, the darkness will increase, and the changes will go in the wrong direction.

You might say, "They won't all get saved." They can all be affected though. These, in this verse, have a knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These people get changed, they get changed through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They escape the pollution of the world. For some of them, that is all they want. They do not want to be what God wants them to be, but they would like to get out of the mess that they are in. We read that they become entangled again.

There was a man, who, while he was drunk, went out in a field and got tangled up in a bunch of loose barbed wire. He could not undo it because he was so drunk. He died of exposure that night. That is what it is like to these sinners that cannot cease from sin, they get entangled back in what they once were in. You say, "Well, they were changed. I know they were changed. I saw the difference." Yes, but where are they now? They are back at it. They are overcome. They had knowledge, but they did not have a personal relationship. They had it in their head, but it had not

registered in making them a new creature.

I believe in the washing of regeneration, not the making of decisions. John 1:12-13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It takes God to save a sinner. Jonah thought man had something to do with it. After three days and three nights of stoutly resisting God dealing with his soul in the belly of the whale, he finally confessed, "... Salvation is of the Lord."(Jonah 2:9). God said, "Let him out now."

These people have escaped it, they are caught back in it, and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. God told Peter, by the Holy Ghost, to write this down. The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Jesus had taught that regarding a man who had been demon possessed. The Devil left and his house was swept clean. Upon seeing this he went and found seven devils worse than he was, and they came back. The last state of that man was definitely worse than the first. It is for those that escape the pollutions of this world to only get entangled again.

They are like a person that obtained a little bit of freedom, but they did not get God's new life and the Holy Ghost indwelling within. It was empty. The Holy Ghost never dwelled there. The apostasy looks like the real thing. We have a generation that tried to make that advise, "Just make a decision." We got that word from probably the greatest apostate of the last century. He named his magazine and his program "Hour of Decision". He pressed for decisions. Try to find in the Bible where it ever tells us to make a decision.

I have a book published by the Federal Council of Churches, which was the grand-daddy of liberalism. The book is called, *Visitation Evangelism*. It tells you how to go door to door, knocking on doors, getting people to make decisions and saying prayers for Christ and the church. They were rank, God-denying liberals. Norman Vincent Peale pressed the issue of the sinner's prayer, and he had a copy of it in his pews. I met a Baptist preacher from Ohio and he pulled it out and read it to me. He said, "Dr. Peale required a whole lot more than we do of our converts." I thought, do you hear what you are saying? You had to promise to be

sorry for your sins and you had to promise to let Jesus be your Lord. You had to promise to serve His church. Dr. Peale was a rank liberal, but without a decision for Christ and a sinner's prayer, you could not join his church. The liberals have taken over in a realm too close for comfort.

My son Mark let me go with him to sit down with a Roman Catholic Priest. He told us that when he was in college, Campus Crusade laid hold of him, and told him that if he would say this sinner's prayer, he could go to Heaven. He said, "I am Catholic. We have books of prayers. We have all kinds of prayers for all kinds of things. We have a number of prayers in our mass and they said if I'd say that prayer, I could go to Heaven, so I said it." He is a practicing Roman Catholic Priest and he is not saved. I heard another former Catholic say that he tried the sinner's prayer and it did not work. So, he tried it again, and again, and again. About the tenth time, he thought it might have made a difference. We have copied the methods of the Roman Catholic Church and the methods of the liberals.

Some would say that they are saved, and that they just backslid; that they are not as bad off as a lost person. But God said they are worse off than a lost person that has never been through any change. They will make their converts, according to Matthew 23, two-fold more the child of hell than they are themselves. I am quoting Jesus and what He had to say. It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness then after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

Righteousness is a way. Jesus is the righteous One. We are to walk in His way and become like Him. It had been better for them to have stayed in ignorance than to know, then turn and burn. This is the word of God for the apostate days. This knowing is not just a mental knowledge. They have had some experience in the knowing. You can experience a lot, but you must experience the regeneration of the washing of the Holy Ghost. You must know the reality of sins being taken away and being made a new creature. Can you say, "Since Jesus died for me, can I at least die for Him?" Philippians 3:10 says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;".

Stephen did not cringe and compromise, he just laid it on and when they came for him, he kept preaching. He prayed for them as he headed to Heaven. Jesus, who had been seated at the right hand of the Father, stood up to welcome the first martyr. I do not know, but He might stand up to welcome some others.

Do we understand the nature of the Apostasy? How close it can come to the real? Jesus said in Matthew 11:21-22, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee Bethsaida! ... It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." We have a generation that has heard. We say they are gospel hardened, but no, they are not hardened against the gospel. Think about it, they have known, but they have turned. From what have they turned? They have turned from the holy commandment. God did not give them an option. He commanded them. He did not say it would be nice if you would repent and believe the gospel. He said in Mark 1:15, "...repent ye, and believe the gospel." It is not an offer, plan, program, principle, choice, or an option. It is a holy commandment. Do not go witnessing to tell sinners there is something they might want to consider. Jesus has an offer that is available. I have a friend from England who said, "There's no offer of the gospel. It is commanded." That struck home to my heart! It is not just an offer, take it or leave it. It is a commandment, take it or be in rebellion. We get to deliver that commandment in our homes, neighborhoods, churches, communities, states, and in our nations. They are commanded to repent, to believe, and to obey, or judgment will fall.

We send this message out around the world. My children are involved in telling people that this is God's command, what are you going to do with it? You may say, "It does not make you popular." Oh, yes, it does. There are several million people cheering on the glory side, and only a handful down here growling. God is the majority and He is smiling. Deliver that Holy commandment.

You may say, "Well, they're just Christians, they're just struggling, and they need a little council and sympathy." It has happened unto them according to the true proverb. Not only is the holy commandment the Scripture, the proverb is the Scripture. The dog is turned to his own vomit. Many have left their sin for

the Holy Commandment, only to go back to their sin. The sow that was washed, returned in the mire. Through a knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they have escaped the pollutions, but they are headed back. The question is, *when?*

Time exposes lost people. There has been a change, but they never became a lamb. The changes are on the outside, but they never got the heart of the sheep or the shepherd. They do not understand that they are like Simon the sorcerer. He washed up, cleaned up, and joined with them. He looked good, but he did not have that understanding. Proverbs says beyond knowledge is understanding. They did not really understand, and beyond understanding is wisdom.

In I Corinthians 1 Jesus is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is beyond just a matter of facts. Knowledge will only get you so far, but Jesus is made wisdom to us. Let Him change you, let Him produce that which goes beyond. Wisdom personified is Jesus Christ.

If you read Proverbs 8 and 9, you will see Jesus through it all. It is calling Him wisdom. He made us wise because He is wisdom. He was wiser than Solomon. You need wisdom, not just knowledge. Peter, in chapter 1 of this book said add to your faith virtue and add to virtue knowledge. If you have not started building with virtue, you are not yet ready for the knowledge. Some people want to jump to the knowledge and it only carries them so far and for so long, before they revert back to where they were. They did not start where God said to start, and they did not go as God said to go. It seemed that they were doing really well, but it is because we were so ignorant of the Word of God, we are partly blind. Their behavior was only temporarily changed, They had not become a new creature in Christ. The seeming changes may have been intellectual and they may have been by works. They may have been because of teaching or intelligence or surface knowledge. Time proves they are only temporary, and they are going back to the mire, back to the vomit. What they came from, they return to, in time. They do not all have to be enticed that way, some of them just choose it. It is their nature.

Oh, if we could understand that some experience is temporary and passing, because it is shallow. They need

to come to the reality of regeneration. If any man be in Christ, not he might, or may become, but he IS a new creature, according to the Bible. II Corinthians 5:17 continues, "...old things are passed away, and all things are become new." Jack Hyles said, "While you're waiting for God to get one (a decision), use my methods, and get ten." The bridegroom cometh, and we are looking for Him. It will be too late to look for oil for our lamps at that time. Keep them trimmed and bright, ready for when Jesus comes. The Apostasy will be a great counterfeit and according to Hebrews 6:9, God is persuaded better things of us; things that accompany real Christianity, salvation. May God bless these thoughts to help you know how to survive and thrive during the great Apostasy.