

A SERIES OF LESSONS BY DONALD TOWNSLEY

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

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Page 3: Attitudes: The Seeds of Apostasy (2 Timothy 4:3)

Page 8: A Failure to Respect the Silence of the Scriptures (2 John 9 - 11)

Page 13: *"My People Are Destroyed for Lack of Knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6)

Page 16: "Drifting" (Hebrews 2:1)

Page 20: The Role of Elders and Preachers In Preventing Apostasy" (Acts 20: 17 - 38)

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

LESSON ONE

ATTITUDES: THE SEEDS OF APOSTASY

INTRODUCTION:

1. It has been said that those who are ignorant of history are doomed to repeat it.
2. I believe this statement is true.
3. The church of the Lord has a great number to depart from the faith about every fifty (50) years.
 1. Over the missionary society in 1849.
 2. Pre-millennialism in 1908
 3. Institutionalism in 1940 - 1950
 4. Unity-in-diversity in the latter half of the 20th century
4. The reason for this is ignorance of the word of God and ignorance of the causes of apostasy.
5. The church stands only one generation away from apostasy all of the time.
6. The generation after Joshua is a good example of how fast apostasy can come among God's people.
 - (1) Israel, under Joshua, was faithful to the Lord (Joshua 24:31).
 - (2) But, the next generation "*knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel*" (Judges 2:10).
 - (3) The characteristics of this apostasy:
 1. They were ignorant of God's ways (Judges 2:10; 2:17; 17:6).
 2. They forsook the God who had saved them (Judges 2:13).
7. The New Testament warns over and over that departures from the faith will come:
 - (1) Matthew 7:15
 - (2) Acts 20: 28 - 31
 - (3) I Cor. 11:19
 - (4) 2 Thess. 2: 3, 7
 - (5) I Tim. 4: 1 - 6
 - (6) 2 Tim. 4: 1 - 5
 - (7) Hebrews 3: 12 - 13
 - (8) I John 2:19
 - (9) I Tim. 6:10

(10) 2 Tim. 2:18

8. In our first lesson we want to study:

ATTITUDES: THE SEEDS OF APOSTASY

Introduction:

1. "Attitude" is one's thinking or mindset; our attitude is seen in our actions, manner and disposition.
2. Prov. 4: 23: *"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."* **KJV**
 - (1) *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."* **NIV**
 - (2) *"Above all else guard your heart, for it affects everything you do."* **New Living Translation**
3. A "seed" is the source, origin or beginning of anything.
4. In this lesson we will examine some attitudes that lead to apostasy:
 - (1) Reprobate mind -- Romans 1: 28
 - (2) Spirit of disobedience -- Eph. 2:2
 - (3) Carnally minded -- Rom. 8:6
5. We must all realize that apostasy does not take place overnight; there is a period of time between the planting of the "seeds" of apostasy and the full-grown harvest.
6. Apostasy begins with little "trends" or "deviations" from the New Testament pattern.
 - (1) You plant a "seed" (or trend), and it will produce after its kind (Gen. 1: 12; Gal. 6: 7 - 8).
7. The real root of error begins with a loose attitude toward the Divine pattern -- first in small, seemingly innocent things.
 - (1) "Dinners-on-the-ground"
 - (2) VBS with "Kool-aid, cookies and recreation.
 - (3) Announcing "pot-lucks" in the assembly.
 - (4) These were seemingly "innocent" trends in the wrong direction.
 - (5) They opened the door for the "social gospel", kitchens and "fellowship halls", "family life centers" and gyms".

I. SCRIPTURAL WARNINGS ABOUT WRONG ATTITUDES THAT WILL BRING A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH:

1. Paul said: *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine;"* (2 Tim. 4:3).
 - (1) Faithful Christians desire the word (I Pet. 2:2; Matt. 5:6; Psa. 19:10; Psa. 119: 103).
 - (2) They love the truth (Psa. 119: 127, 128; Psa. 119: 97).
 - (3) Men who have no desire for sound doctrine forsake or reject God's law (Psa. 119: 53).

- (4) They have no love for truth (2 Thess. 2:10).
 - (5) They are like Jeroboam -- they love the things they devise in their own hearts (I Kings 12:33).
2. Paul told the Thessalonians: *"The mystery of lawlessness doth already work."* ASV (2 Thess. 2:7)
- (1) The Apostles, Prophets and early Christians believed implicitly in the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17; Eph. 1: 22 - 23).
 - (2) They believed the Word had to be followed (I Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9 - 11; James 1:22).
 - (3) They believed the inspired scriptures were sufficient (2 Tim. 3: 16 - 17; Jude 3).
 - (4) Here in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 Paul said a lawless attitude was already at work.
 - (5) Once a lawless or liberal attitude develops, a floodgate for innovations is opened; and it does not matter how small the opening, there is no way to close the gate.
 - (6) Brother W. W. Otey said (in a letter to Yater Tant in 1957): "No well-defined trend away from the New Testament order of things has ever stopped till a full apostasy matured."
 - (7) When a "trend" away from the New Testament order arises it must be opposed and exposed immediately if the truth of the gospel is to continue with us ! (Gal. 2:5)
 - 1. Eph. 5: 11 *"Rebuke and expose them"* New Living Translation
 - (8) It has always been difficult to keep Christians and churches satisfied with the simplicity of the New Testament order of things.
 - 1. Mal. 1:13 *"what a weariness it is"*
 - (9) In every age the uninformed and the worldly members have been numerous enough to influence departures from the faith.
 - (10) Eternal vigilance has ever been necessary (Acts 20: 28 - 31).
 - 1. Apostasy begins and is perpetuated by men who stray from the Word.

II. THE DEVICES SATAN USES TO BRING ABOUT APOSTASY AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE:

- 1. A lesson every Christian must learn is that Satan uses the same devices over and over to destroy God's people (2 Cor. 2:11; I Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11)
- 2. Satan uses our LACK OF KNOWLEDGE (when our senses are not exercised to properly discern between good and evil) to bring about apostasy (Heb. 5: 12 - 14; Hosea 4: 6).
 - (1) Satan loves it when preachers preach only positive sermons -- this keeps people ignorant of doctrinal error.
 - 1. With only positive preaching, people won't know what is wrong with denominational error and issues that face God's people (Luke 11:52).
 - 2. These preachers become blind to error and sin.
 - (2) Satan loves it when we refuse to study and be informed (2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:5; I Pet. 2:2).

3. Satan loves it when brethren begin to object to any and all controversy (Jude 3; Phil. 1: 17; I Thess. 5:21; Titus 1: 9 - 11).
 - (1) Churches stay free from error only when error is vigorously opposed (2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 5:11; Acts 20: 28 - 31; 2 Tim. 4: 6 - 8).
4. Satan loves it when brethren take an "on-the-fence", "middle-of-the-road" position.
 - (1) The Christian (or the church) that takes the "middle-of-the-road" on issues is no friend to the Lord (Matt. 12:30; Rev. 3: 15 - 16).
 - (2) The "middle-of-the-road" is the path that liberals walk in.
 - (3) The "middle-of-the-road" is a road of compromise.
 - (4) There is NO "middle-of-the-road".
5. Satan loves it when the church takes on social and domestic responsibility.
 - (1) Social and domestic responsibilities belong to the home and to the individual (I Cor. 11: 22, 34; I Tim. 5:10; Acts 2:46; I Pet. 4:9; Heb. 13:2).
 - (2) A Christian is under obligation to bring his children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4; I Tim. 5:8).
 - (3) The church cannot take over the task of rearing our children for us.
 - (4) We, the church, must be careful not to let individual efforts in the realm of the social become too closely identified with the church.
6. Satan loves it when brethren fail to plead for unity on the basis of the Word of God.
 - (1) Many today want "flexibility" in the faith; they want "unity-in-diversity".
 - (2) They want to use Romans 14 as the basis of having fellowship with people in error.
 1. Romans 14 is not dealing with doctrinal and moral matters; it is dealing with individual liberties -- things of indifference to God.
 - (3) This attitude of "flexibility" is not the attitude that is taught in the scriptures.
 - (4) The scriptures teach that there is ONE FAITH (Eph. 4:5).
 - (5) The gospel is "the faith" (Gal. 1: 11, 23).
 - (6) The curse of heaven is upon any being that changes the gospel (Gal. 1: 6 - 9).
 - (7) Jesus prayed for unity upon the Word (John 17: 20 - 21).
 - (8) Paul pleaded for unity upon the Word (I Cor. 1:10).
7. Satan loves it when the attitude develops that where the Bible has not specifically forbidden a thing it is alright to practice that thing.
 - (1) They teach that silence gives liberty to act.
 - (2) They speak of those who follow the New Testament in every detail and are silent where the Bible is silent as LEGALISTS.

(3) Through this floodgate all innovations are justified.

(4) 2 John 9 - 11; Deut. 29:29

8. Satan loves it when the attitude develops that the prohibitions on women are only "cultural ones".

(1) Paul bases man's headship over woman in the creation and fall (I Cor. 1 1: 8, 9; I Tim. 2: 12 - 14; Gen. 2: 18 - 24; Gen. 3:16; I Cor. 14:34).

(2) God gave men and women distinctive roles from the beginning.

1. Woman is to be in subjection to the man (I Cor. 11:3; Gen. 3:16; Eph. 5: 24).

2. Woman's role is equal in level of importance with man's, but the sphere in which she moves is different (I Tim. 2:15).

3. God and Christ are equal, but Christ is in subjection to the Father (Phil. 2:6; I Cor. 15: 27 - 28; I Cor. 11:3).

4. Man and woman are equal in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

(1) But woman has a subjective role to man (Gen. 3:16; I Tim. 2: 10 -15).

5. Woman is prohibited from doing two things in relation to man -- I Tim. 2: 11 - 12:

(1) She is not to teach over man

(2) Nor to "*usurp authority over the man*".

6. Satan and his ministers want men to believe that these prohibitions are only "cultural", so women can preach, be elders and take on a leadership role (Tit. 2:15; I Cor. 14: 34, 35).

7. God placed woman in subjection from creation (I Tim. 2:13; Gen. 3:16; I Cor. 11: 8, 9).

9. Satan is pleased when brethren have the attitude to transfer authority from the New Testament to the church. The reasoning goes like this:

(1) The church of Christ is the Lord's church.

(2) The church of Christ is the one true church.

(3) The church of Christ stands for the truth.

(4) Therefore, what the church of Christ teaches and practices is right in the sight of God.

(5) The truth is: the church of Christ is only right when it teaches and practices the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9 - 11).

CONCLUSION:

1. I think you can see from this lesson that apostasy always begins with attitudes.

2. These attitudes, if not corrected, always develop into apostasy.

3. Attitudes are "seeds" of apostasy.

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

LESSON TWO

THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES OR THE LAW OF EXCLUSION

INTRODUCTION:

1. This is a very important lesson because most religious people labor under the false impression that a thing in religion is not wrong if the Lord has not specifically said, in so many words, that it is wrong.
 - (1) Martin Luther, 1520 in Germany, argued that the silence of the scriptures was always permissive.
 1. He asserted that if the Bible did not specifically and explicitly condemn an action, that action would be permissible.
 - (2) Ulrich Zwingli, 1516 in Switzerland, a contemporary of Luther, argued that the silence of the scriptures was always prohibitive.
 1. He believed that unless the scriptures authorized an action, such action was unacceptable to God.
 - (3) Both men had two different attitudes toward the scriptures and this kept them from uniting.
 - (4) The majority of religious people hold to Martin Luther's position.
2. When one questions many practices in religion, the reply often comes: " BUT WHERE DOES GOD SAY NOT TO DO IT?"
 - (1) These people believe that the silence of the scriptures gives them permission to practice about anything they want to in religion; if the word of God does not expressly condemn it, it must be all right.
 - (2) If this notion were true, the silence of the word of God would be as much a guide for men as the positive affirmation of the Word.
 - (3) If this were true, there would be no end to the foolishness men could engage in as religious activities and still be pleasing before God.
 - (4) But, when God commands man to do a thing specifically, that excludes everything else in that related category.
 1. When Christ authorized unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine as elements of the Lord's supper (Matt. 26: 26 - 29; Ex. 12:8).

- (1) That excludes everything else.
 - (2) It would be sinful to add meat and potatoes to the Lord's table.
 - (3) The scriptures authorized the first day to eat the Lord's Supper -- Acts 20:7
2. When God commanded the children of Israel to use a lamb "without blemish", a "male of the first year", taken "from the sheep or from the goats" in the Passover feast (Ex. 12:5):
 - (1) This excluded a male lamb with blemish
 - (2) This excluded a female lamb
 - (3) This excluded a two-year-old male lamb.
 - (4) This excluded a year old male calf (or a chicken).
 3. When the Bible teaches that we are to baptize in water, that excludes every other kind of liquid (Acts 8: 36 - 39; I Pet. 3: 20 - 21; Eph. 5:26).

I. PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THAT SHOW THE PROHIBITIVE NATURE OF THE SILENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD:

1. Deuteronomy 4:2
2. Deuteronomy 12:32
3. Joshua 1:7
4. Proverbs 4: 26 - 27; 30: 5 - 6
5. I Corinthians 4:6 -- "*Not to go beyond the things which are written*" (ASV)
6. 2 John 9 - 11
7. I Peter 4:11
8. Revelation 22: 18 - 19
9. Galatians 3:15 (Psalms 89: 34 "*My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips*")
10. Galatians 1: 6 - 9
11. Matthew 7: 21 - 23
12. Matthew 18:18; Psalm 119: 89; Matt. 24: 35; I Peter 1:25
13. THE SILENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD IS AS BINDING AS WHAT IT DOES SAY !

II. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE THAT SILENCE PROHIBITS:

1. Nadab and Abihu used fire in their censers that the Lord "*commanded them not*" -- Lev. 10:1
 - (1) Fire went out from the Lord and "*devoured them, and they died before the Lord*" -- Lev. 10:2
 - (2) God had specified the fire to be used: "*coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord*" -- Lev. 16:12
 - (3) They presumed upon the silence of the scriptures (Psalms 19:13).
2. Moses presumed upon the silence of the scriptures at Kadesh:
 - (1) God told Moses to "*take the rod, and gather thou the assemble together . . . and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water.*" --Num. 20: 8
 - (2) Moses took the rod and gathered the congregation together before the rock (Num. 20: 9, 10).
 - (3) Instead of speaking to the rock as God told him, he took his rod and smote the rock twice (Num. 20:11).
 - (4) Because of his presumption God did not allow him to bring Israel into the Promised Land (Num. 20:12).
3. King Saul presumed upon the silence of the scriptures:
 - (1) I Samuel 15: 3, 9, 11, 13, 19

III. MAN CAN ONLY KNOW WHAT PLEASES GOD BY GOD'S REVELATION, NOT BY HIS SILENCE !

1. All we know about the will of God is that which God has revealed (I Cor. 2: 9 - 13; Deut. 29:29).
 - (1) We know the worship that pleases God -- the worship He has revealed.
 - (2) Worship must be God-centered rather than man-centered.
 1. John 4:24
 - (1) Men want thing that please and excite them; things that make them feel good.
 2. Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19
 - (1) Teaching -- I Tim. 4:2
 - (2) Giving -- I Cor. 16:2
 - (3) Lord's Supper -- Acts 20:7
 - (4) Prayer
 - (5) Singing -- Col. 3: 16

(3) We know the church that pleases Him -- the one He planned and that Jesus built (Eph. 3: 10 - 11; Matt. 16:18).

(4) We know the church government that pleases Him (Acts 14:23; I Pet. 5:2).

(5) We know the work God wants the church to do:

1. Preach to the lost -- Mark 16:15 - 16; I Tim. 3:15

2. Edify the members -- Eph. 4: 11 - 12; Matt. 28:20

3. Help needy saints -- I Cor. 16: 1, 2

4. The work is not social -- I Cor. 11:22

(6) We know how He wants Christians to live -- Titus 2: 11 - 12; James 1:27; I Tim. 2:9

IV. LET US LOOK AT SOME MODERN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES THAT ARE PROHIBITED BY THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES:

1. Burning of incense in worship:

(1) The New Testament is silent on it, and this silence does not give liberty to practice it.

2. Sprinkling and pouring for baptism

(1) The word "baptism" means immersion or burial (Rom. 6: 3, 4; Acts 8: 38 - 39).

(2) The New Testament is silent on sprinkling and pouring, and this silence does not give us liberty to practice it.

3. Church-sponsored recreation is prohibited by the silence of the scripture.

(1) The local church is to:

1. Preach to the lost -- I Tim. 3:15

2. Edify the members -- Matt. 28:20

3. Help needy saints -- I Cor. 16: 1, 2

(2) The church cannot have a ball team because the scriptures are silent on ball teams !

4. "Brotherhood elderships" and the "sponsoring church" are prohibited by the silence of the scripture -- Acts 14:23

5. The playing of musical instruments is excluded by the silence of the scripture.

(1) God said "sing" -- Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16

6. Chorus and choir singing in the worship of the church is excluded by the silence of the scriptures.

(1) All Christians are to sing in worship to God -- Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16

(2) This excludes choir-singing.

V. EXAMPLES OF UNSCRIPTURAL PRACTICES THAT HAVE DIVIDED THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF THE ATTITUDE THAT THE SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES DOES NOT FORBID, BUT GIVES LICENSE TO PRACTICE WHAT IS NOT SPECIFICALLY FORBIDDEN:

1. This attitude was involved in the division of the 19th century -- the Christian church and Disciples of Christ.

(1) It was upon this attitude toward the scriptures that the Missionary Society and instrumental music in worship was accepted.

(2) It was this same attitude that caused them to bring in choirs, socials, women preachers and women elders.

2. This attitude is involved in the division of churches of Christ in the 20th century:

(1) Many churches of Christ in this century accepted the attitude of the Christian church of last century.

(2) The cry went forth: "We do many things for which we have no Bible authority".

(3) They had not New Testament authority for their benevolent societies, sponsoring churches, church-sponsored recreation, brotherhood-wide projects.

(4) They have tried to justify all these things by the silence of the scriptures.

3. A study of this lesson will show you that the silence of the scriptures authorize nothing !

4. Where the Bible is silent, we must be silent. We must have authority from Christ before we can teach or practice anything without sinning (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1: 22 - 23; Matt. 7: 21 - 22).

CONCLUSION:

1. Let us all learn this lesson well -- WHEN GOD SAYS NOTHING, WE MUST NOT ACT !

2. The silence of the scriptures must be respected (Rev. 22; 18 - 19; 2 John 9).

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

LESSON THREE

"MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE: BECAUSE THOU HAST REJECTED KNOWLEDGE . . ." Hosea 4: 6

INTRODUCTION:

1. In 721 B.C., during the Assyrian Captivity, the prophet Hosea told of the sad destruction of Israel.
2. The reason for the destruction was ignorance of God's Word (Hosea 4:6).
3. Just as ignorance brought the destruction of Israel, it brings the destruction of God's people today (2 Tim. 4: 2 - 5 "*Preach the word*").
 - (1) Mark 16: 15 - 16; I Peter 2:2; 3:15; Eph. 5:17
4. God has given us a REVELATION, not to benefit God, but to BENEFIT MAN.
 - (1) Jer. 10:23; Heb. 1: 2; Eph. 5:17; Matt. 7: 21 - 23; Psa. 119: 104 - 105; 119: 130
5. The text (Hos. 4:6) teaches us what happens to God's people when they neglect and reject God's word.
 - (1) Abraham -- Gen. 26:5
 - (2) Noah -- II Pet. 2:5
 - (3) Enoch -- Jude 14 - 15

I. SOME LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS TEXT:

1. The true religion of God is based on a knowledge of God's Word
 - (1) This has always been so -- Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17; Luke 11: 50 - 51
 - (2) Idolatry and immorality thrived in Israel because the people did not know, or want to know, God's will (Hosea 4: 1 - 4)
 1. Worship introduced by Jeroboam I -- II Kings 17: 21 - 22
 - (3) Modern Denominationalism thrives when people do not know the revealed Word of God.
 - (4) Departures from the faith come when God's people are ignorant of His Will -- II Tim. 4:3.
 - (5) Divine religion, the religion of Christ, cannot exist where men are ignorant of God's Word (John 8:32; Rom. 10:17; Eph. 5:17; Jer. 31: 31 - 34)
2. The rejection of God's revelation is a WILLFUL, MORAL DECISION on man's part !
 - (1) "*Thou hast rejected knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6).

(2) If a man does not know the word of God today, it is because he has rejected and neglected God's word.

(3) Man has chosen something else besides the truth (2 Thess. 2:10 -12).

(4) The Gentiles (Rom. 1: 28, 21)

3. Spiritual ignorance is GOD-OFFENDING !

(1) Hosea 4:6 -- "*I WILL ALSO REJECT THEE*"

(2) Jesus (John 12:48; Mark 8:38)

(3) God is offended by our ignorance of Him (I Cor. 10:1; Eph. 5:17; John 6: 44 - 45).

4. Spiritual ignorance is DESTRUCTIVE

(1) Hosea 4:6 -- "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*"

(2) People who do not love the truth and will not hear the truth will perish (2 Thess. 2:10; Acts 3: 22 - 23; 2 Thess. 1: 8 - 9; Mark 16: 15 - 16).

(3) Men who do not worship God according to truth, their worship is VAIN (Matt. 15:9).

(4) God will not accept the lawless works of man (Matt. 7: 21 - 23).

(5) Men who labor in churches built by men labor in vain (Psa. 127: 1; Matt. 15:13).

5. Spiritual ignorance affects others:

(1) "*Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*" (Hosea 4:6)

(2) Some think only the man who is spiritually ignorant is affected.

(3) It affects his children; they grow up not knowing the truth and go into denominationalism.

(4) It affects his friends who could have learned the truth from him and been converted.

II. HOW DO WE LEAD GOD'S PEOPLE TO A GREATER BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?

1. It begins in the HOME:

(1) Parents must teach their children the word of God.

1. Israel was to teach their children (Psa. 78: 1 - 8; Deut. 6: 6 - 9).

2. Christians must teach their children the word of God (Eph. 6:4).

(1) Timothy was taught the scriptures from a child by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

(2) Parents must see that their children attend Bible classes.

2. It begins with the INDIVIDUAL:

(1) We must study (2 Tim. 2:15).

(2) We must read (I Tim. 4:13).

(3) We must add knowledge (2 Pet. 1: 5).

(4) We must desire the Word (I Pet. 2:2).

- (5) We must grow into teachers of the Word (Heb. 5: 12 - 14; I Pet. 3:15).
- (6) We must search the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11).
- 3. The church must be busy teaching and preaching the truth (I Tim. 3:15).
 - (1) Preaching the Word in worship assemblies (Acts 2:42; 20:7).
 - (2) Bible classes (Matt. 28:20).
 - (3) By Biblically sound literature:
 - 1. Papers
 - 2. Tracts

III. ONE MUST HAVE THE COURAGE TO USE HIS BIBLE KNOWLEDGE ONCE IT IS OBTAINED.

- 1. Peter and John had courage to use their knowledge (Acts 4: 18 - 20).
- 2. Stephen had the courage to preach the Word even though they killed him (Acts 7).
- 3. Paul refused to give place to false teachers, even for an hour (Gal. 2:5).
- 4. Paul told Timothy to preach the Word in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).
- 5. Jesus is our example (Matt. 23: 1 - 11).

CONCLUSION:

- 1. Seeing the grievous problem which comes upon us when we ignore and neglect God's revelation, let us resolve to work to learn the Word of God and to teach others what God expects of us.
- 2. Let us be busy filling the earth with a knowledge of God's Word (Matt. 28: 19 - 20).

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

LESSON FOUR

DRIFTING

INTRODUCTION:

"For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it." (Heb. 2:1 NASV)

1. From this text we are warned about drifting from the word of God.
 - (1) The Law was received by Moses through angels -- Heb. 2:2; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19
 - (2) Christ is OUR spokesman -- Heb. 1: 1 - 2
2. We have all seen "driftwood" being driven by the water.
3. Many Christians get caught up in currents of the world and drift from their mooring, the word of God (Heb. 6: 19; Matt. 14: 25 - 33; Col. 2:7).
4. Drifting is hard to perceive at first; little by little and step by step we move away from foundation truths and principles.
 - (1) It is easy to rationalize sin until we awaken one day to realize how far we have drifted from what we used to be !
 1. Sin is progressive -- II Tim. 4: 3 - 4
 2. Liberalism is a "package deal" -- orphan homes, sponsoring church, colleges, social gospel, etc.
5. Many who have received the Word with joy have drifted away from it, and are still drifting !

I. WHAT CAUSES DRIFTING FROM THE WORD ?

1. The Word is not mixed with faith in the hearts of many (Heb. 4:2).
 - (1) Many hear what the Word says, but they don't believe it.
 - (2) We are warned about an evil heart of unbelief (Heb. 3:12).
 - (3) We are warned of being "*dull of hearing*" (Heb. 5:11).
 - (4) We are warned about HEARING the words of Jesus and DOING them not (Matt. 7:26; James 1: 22 - 25).
2. Some drift because they never develop enough familiarity with Truth (Luke 8:13; Matt. 13:21).
 - (1) They never studied the Word as they should (2 Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 2:2).
3. Some drift because they do not love the Truth (2 Thess. 2:10; Psa. 119:97; Prov. 23:23).

4. Some drift because they feel no obligation to know the Truth (John 8:32; Eph. 5:17).
5. Some drift because of evil influences (I Cor. 15:33; I Thess. 5:22; Rom. 12:1 - 2).
 - (1) False doctrine and false teachers (Matt. 7:15; 2 Pet. 3: 1, 2; Rom. 16: 17 - 18).
 - (2) Marriage partners
 - (3) Workplace (evil influences, guild friends, etc.)
 - (4) Peer Pressure (dancing, fornication, ugly talk)
 - (5) The entertainment world (TV, Movies)
 - (6) Strong social pressures (John 12: 42 - 43)
 1. Dressing immodestly (I Tim. 2:9; Matt. 5:28)
 - (7) The pursuit of material things (I Tim. 6: 9 - 10, 17; Matt. 13:22; Matt. 6:33).

II. CONGREGATIONS DRIFT

1. The churches of Galatia (Gal. 1: 6 - 9; 5:7).
2. The Ephesian congregation (Rev. 2: 1 - 7).
3. The church at Laodicea (Rev. 3: 14 - 22).
4. When a congregation settles down into a simple "house-keeping" routine, it is drifting.
5. When a congregation ignores uncorrected sins, it is drifting (I Cor. 5:2; 2 Thess. 3:6).
6. When a congregation pays little attention to its over-all teaching effort within and without, then the drift has already begun !
7. When a congregation does not want preaching that "reproves" and "rebukes", it is drifting (2 Tim. 4: 2 - 4; Eph. 5: 10 - 11).
8. When a congregation will tolerate false teachers, it HAS drifted ! (2 John 9 - 11; 2 Tim. 2: 16 - 18; Rom. 16: 17 - 18).
9. When a congregation will allow false teaching, it HAS drifted (Eph. 5:11; Matt. 15:9; 2 John 9 - 11; I Tim. 1:3) !
 - (1) *"That thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" --I Cor. 4:17*

III. SIGNS OF DRIFTING

1. There is drifting in the pulpit in many places.

- (1) The preaching is always in broad generalities, never in specifics.
- (2) Sin is rarely, if ever, described by name -- no one feels guilty of doing wrong ! (Acts 2: 37; 7:54)

1. Drinking
2. Fornication
3. Lascivious dress
4. Gambling
5. Drugs
6. Vulgar talk

(1) The Holy Spirit came to "*convict the world of sin*" -- John 16: 8

(2) The preacher is to rebuke sin -- 2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 4:12

1. The "cornerstone" of ALL preaching -- I Pet. 4:11

(3) Novel and "catchy" approaches, and "cute" phrases are being substituted for old-fashioned gospel preaching.

(4) Fundamental truths are by-passed in favor of sensationalism.

(5) The "felt-need gospel" is substituted for the real needs of the people.

1. Sermons on self-esteem, relationships, depression, how to manage your money, etc.

(6) God is only pleased when the gospel is preached in its fullness ! (I Cor. 1:21; Mark 16: 15 - 16; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20: 26 - 27)

2. Some elders are drifting !

(1) Instead of shepherding the flock, they are confusing the flock with indecisive leadership (Acts 20: 28).

1. By showing weakness in the face of error (Tit. 1:9; Jude 3)

2. By timidity in handling the ungodly (I Thess. 5:14; Col. 1:28)

3. By NOT dealing with preachers who have become weak in the faith and are leading the flock astray (Acts 20: 29).

4. By allowing the flock to feed on a "watered-down" diet of that which is faith-destroying.
3. Many church members are drifting when it comes to personal involvement in the work of the church (Phil. 2:12; I Cor. 15:58).
 - (1) Many members feel no loyalty to the local church (Acts 9:26).
 - (2) Many members feel no financial responsibility (I Cor. 16: 1 - 2).
 - (3) Many members feel no responsibility in personal evangelism (Acts 8: 4).
 - (4) Many don't attend gospel meetings (Heb. 10:25).
 - (5) Some don't attend Bible classes (Eph. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15).

CONCLUSION:

1. Yes, brethren, we are drifting -- in many places !
2. "*We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.*" (Heb. 2:1)

"WHY HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF"

LESSON FIVE

THE ROLE OF ELDERS AND THE PREACHER IN PREVENTING APOSTASY

INTRODUCTION:

1. Before Paul had completed his earthly mission as an Apostle and preacher of Jesus Christ, the seeds of apostasy were being sown in the church of the first century.
 - (1) Acts 20: 28 - 31
 - (2) 2 Thess. 2: 1 - 12
 - (3) I Tim. 4: 1 - 6
 - (4) 2 Tim. 4: 1 - 5
2. The apostasy that Paul foresaw, we now know took place:
 - (1) It did not happen in a day.
 - (2) There was a gradual departure from New Testament truths.
 - (3) The power of deception in an apostasy is the gradual drift from the New Testament order.
 - (4) Few would be willing to jump in one step from the simple truth into full apostasy !
 - (5) A gradual drift sets the course that ends in apostasy.
3. The history of man from the beginning of time has been the tendency to drift away from the truth (Heb. 2:1).
4. There are many causes of apostasy, but all may be summed up under two headings -- ELDERS and PREACHERS.
5. Paul discussed these two in Acts 20: 17 - 35.

I. THE PLACE TO BEGIN IN PREVENTING APOSTASY IS WITH THE ELDERSHIP

1. Paul's discussion with the elders at Ephesus reveals the cause of apostasy (Acts 20: 28 - 31):
 - (1) His title is "shepherd"
 1. He is to guide, protect, feed and water the sheep (John 10:12 - 13; Psa. 23:2)
 - (2) "*Grievous wolves enter in among you*" (Acts 20:29)

1. David -- I Sam. 17:34 - 36
 2. He knows the enemies of the flock.
 3. False teachers entering in from without.
 4. These false teachers would destroy the faith of the members.
 - (1) Hymenaeus and Philetus were false teachers and had "*overthrown the faith of some*" (2 Tim. 2: 17 - 18)
 5. The Judaizing teachers entered in among the church at Antioch and caused trouble (Acts 15: 1 - 3).
 6. Paul warned Titus of the Judaizers (Titus 1: 10 - 11).
 7. The churches of Galatia (Gal. 1: 6 - 9).
- (3) "*Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them*" (Acts 20:30).
1. This indicates a weakness in the men who are elders.
 2. Inward weakness in the church is always dangerous.
 3. But, it is doubly dangerous when in the eldership.
- (4) If the church apostatizes, it will be because of INTERNAL WEAKNESS.
- (5) If this internal weakness affects the eldership, apostasy will be the ultimate end!
2. The desire of elders to use the church rather than to be used by the church (Acts 20:28):
- (1) "*Take heed therefore, unto yourselves*" (Acts 20:28).
1. The man who is not willing to save himself is not going to pay the price to save others.
 2. Elders must be men who love the truth above all else and who want to go to heaven when they die.
 3. If elders do not desire, above all other things, to go to heaven when they die, they certainly are not going to lead others to heaven !
- (2) "*All the flock*" (Acts 20: 28)
1. The man whose heart is not big enough to take in every member of the church is not big enough to be an elder.
 2. One of the things that contributes to factions within a congregation is the lack of willingness on the part of one or more elders to follow the admonition of this statement.

(3) "*Feed*" (Acts 20:28)

1. The elders are to see that the flock is fed (I Pet. 2:2).
2. Elders who do not want to be fed the whole truth themselves are not going to see that the flock hears the whole truth.

(4) "*Holy Spirit made*" (Acts 20:28).

1. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, produces elders (I Tim. 3; Tit. 1)
2. Elders not made by the Holy Spirit, men without the qualifications of the Spirit, will not be able to carry out God's purpose for elders.

(5) The failure to use the right weapon will bring apostasy (Acts 20:32).

1. The church is built up by teaching the truth (Acts 20:32).
2. It is the responsibility of elders to see that the church is fed on the Word of His grace (Acts 20: 32).
3. Attempts to build the church by any other means can only lead to weakness and finally, to apostasy.
4. One of the greatest weaknesses in the church today is the lack of knowledge on the part of many within the church.
5. A lack of knowledge always spells apostasy (Hosea 4:6).

II. THE PREACHER

1. The pulpit is powerful in holding apostasy in check (Acts 20:20, 26 - 27, 31; 2 Tim. 4:1 - 2).
2. Just as the Apostle Paul shows the kind of elders who will stop apostasy, he also shows the kind of preaching that will keep the church from apostatizing.

(1) The preacher must be one who serves in humility rather than from personal ambition (Acts 20: 19).

1. The pulpit is no place for a man who is interested only in his personal ambition (Phil. 2: 20 - 21).

(2) "*Preaching that is profitable*" (Acts 20:20).

1. Paul preached for spiritual profit, not just to please people (Gal. 1:10; I Thess. 2:4).

(3) "*Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27).

1. Paul preached what was needed in spite of the difficulties that were involved.

(1) Stoned at Lystra (Acts 14: 19 - 20; 2 Tim. 3:11).

(2) 2 Cor. 11: 22 - 28

(3) I Cor. 4: 9 - 13

2. Too many times the pew is reflected in the pulpit, rather than the pulpit being reflected in the pew !

3. Preaching can become an ECHO rather than a VOICE.

4. A "sleeping church" with the preacher "rocking the cradle" is headed for apostasy !

(4) The preaching of fundamentals (Acts 20:21).

1. Repentance and faith are not mentioned here in the chronological sequence of their occurrence in the sinner's heart.

2. Faith always comes from hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17) before repentance can take place in the heart.

3. The church that is weak doctrinally will be weak spiritually.

4. Sin has to be "dug out" by the roots !

(5) Dedication that endures hardship (Acts 20: 23 - 24; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5).

1. The battle for truth and the souls of men would have never been won in the early days of the church had not Paul been one willing to endure hardship.

2. The man who is afraid of hardship has no place in the pulpit.

(6) Preaching is not a profession like a doctor or lawyer.

1. Paul said, "*I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*" (Acts 20: 33).

2. Preachers are to be supported (I Cor. 9: 14).

(7) Preaching is a serious matter.

1. Preaching is serious enough that a man must be willing to face afflictions to preach the truth (Acts 20: 22 - 23; 2 Tim. 2:3).

2. Preaching is a matter of "blood" (Acts 20:26; Ezek. 3: 17 - 19; 2 Tim. 4:5).

3. Preachers need to look at their hands and see if they are clean from the blood of the souls to whom they have preached.

(8) Preaching in tears (Acts 20: 19; 20:31).

1. This kind of preaching will stave off apostasy.

(9) "*Shall see my face no more*" (Acts 20:38)

1. When a preacher stands in the pulpit he needs to preach as if that would be the last time he would see the people in the audience -- it could be !

CONCLUSION:

1. The church is never very far from apostasy.
2. Every congregation that has ever apostatized, either the elders or the preacher played a great role in the apostasy.
3. The right kind of elders and the right kind of preaching will prevent apostasy.
4. Let us see that the church has both the right kind of elders and the right kind of preaching.

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