

What Can Believers Do in Days of Apostasy?

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Thru the Bible Radio Network
P. O. Box 7100
Pasadena, California 91109

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But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 20 – 25)

Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New Scofield Reference Bible*.

Printed in the United States of America
1969, Revised 2005

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The Apostasy Has Arrived

The church is in a very sad state at the present hour. The thing that is alarming about it is that the church is satisfied with it. Some preachers are greatly exercised over it, but they are the minority. I find very few people who are disturbed today. Most of the church has settled down into this deplorable state we're in, have accepted it, and feel that nothing can be done about it.

As we approach this subject of apostasy, I want to define our terms so that we do not get lost in the labyrinth of bewildering theological nomenclature. We need to understand exactly what the apostasy is before we can know what to do about it.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)

The verse begins with the little Greek word *de*, which is translated here as “now” but is better translated as “but” since it indicates a contrast with the early doctrinal creed given in the verse that immediately precedes it:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the nations, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

“Latter times” in 1 Timothy 4:1 is a technical expression. In the Bible you will find the terms “last days,” “last times,” or “the time of the end.” The Bible doesn’t use the expression “the end of time” because the world doesn’t come to an end. (Although “the end of the world” appears in our Authorized Version, it is more

accurately “the end of the age.” The world doesn’t come to an end. Oh, I know there will be a new heaven and a new earth, but that doesn’t mean we get rid of the earth. It’s here for eternity. Therefore, there is no such thing – as far as the Word of God is concerned – as the end of the world or the end of time.) But there is such a thing as the last days, the latter times, and the end of the age. When you find this expression occurring in the Scriptures, you need to discern to what it refers. It can refer to the nation Israel (as in Genesis 49:1) or it can refer to the church. Those “last days” refer to a very definite technical period that the Lord Jesus in the Olivet Discourse labeled the Great Tribulation Period.

Now when Paul uses it here, speaking to the young preacher Timothy, he is referring to the latter days of the church – that is, those days immediately preceding the Rapture. This is the way the church will conclude its earthly career: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). In other words, the Spirit of God would emphasize to believers that in the latter days some shall depart from the faith.

The expression “depart from the faith” is where we want to center our attention. The word “depart” is the Greek *aphistemi*, formed by the little preposition *apo*, which means “away from,” and *histemi*, meaning “to stand.” The apostasy (for we bring it over into English by transliteration) means “to stand away from.” It means to one time profess something and another time deny that which you once professed. Webster, who always does a good job of defining words, says that the apostasy is the “abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; total desertion of the principles of faith.” *Abandonment of that which was voluntarily professed.* Our Lord used that expression when He was giving the parable of

the sower. Referring to the seed that fell on the rock, He said:

They on the rock are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of testing fall away. (Luke 8:13)

“Fall away” is the Greek *aphistemi* – they apostatize. They professed to believe, then they moved away from it. They no longer believe; they have departed from the faith. Apostasy would be impossible among unevangelized tribes who have never heard the gospel. An apostate is one who has not only heard the gospel, but who has professed to believe it, and then departs from it. That’s apostasy. This word occurs also in Hebrews:

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. (Hebrews 3:12)

Here are those who have professed to believe, and then they no longer believe. They have departed from it. Time and time again I have heard this among preachers. There are today thousands of men in the ministry (and they’re an unhappy lot) who can say, “I once professed it, but I no longer believe it.”

I want to give an example that I think is startling. Frankly, it ought to cause us to bow our heads in humility before God and ask for His help. We are told to examine ourselves to make sure we are in the faith. These are days when God’s people need to examine their relationship with Christ.

It may surprise you to know that Karl Marx was an apostate. This is the man who wrote *Das Capital*, the basis of Communism and world revolution. He was brought up in a Christian home. His father, who descended from a long line of rabbis, accepted Christian baptism for himself and his family when Karl was six years old. Young Karl attended the gymnasium at Trier and his school-leaving examination papers have been discovered. The one

that gained the most unqualified approval was a theological essay on the union of the faithful in Christ according to John 15:1-14, portrayed in its origin and essence, in its unconditional necessity and in its effect. That is quite a subject for a young fellow! It was marked by the teacher as a thoughtful, copious, and powerful presentation of the theme. The boy was 17 when he wrote this essay in 1835. This is the man who went on to write the ideology for godless states. He was an apostate! He once professed to believe something, there came a day when he stood away from it, and then he no longer believed it.

In my own lifetime I have known man after man who once preached the faith, then later on repudiated it entirely. They are apostates. The Word of God warns that this will happen: “In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith” – they will apostatize.

All the New Testament writers speak of the approaching apostasy. To them it was just a little cloud on the horizon the size of a man’s hand. But that cloud has now darkened and covered the sky. Today you and I are in the storm. We are seeing one of the greatest departures from the faith in the history of the church.

When the church was young it thought of itself as a pilgrim and stranger in this world. It was true to the Lord. It preached the gospel, as defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Had it continued in that condition, there would have been worldwide evangelism in the first 500 years. But in A.D. 313 Constantine was converted. He issued the Edict of Toleration, which meant that persecution ceased. No longer was the church a martyr church. It came up out of the catacombs. Five million Christians had shed their blood and laid down their lives gladly for Jesus Christ. But suddenly the church found itself in power. Augustine, a great man with a keen mind, wrote *The City of God*, which gave the church a vision of building the kingdom of God down here upon this

earth. Actually this explains Roman Catholicism today. They have attempted to do what Augustine said the church should do – build the kingdom of God here upon this earth. But God never intended that His church should do that. Its mission was to preach the Word of God and to win men to Jesus Christ. But it got away from that. By the end of the nineteenth century, with the tremendous expansion of the British Empire, the most optimistic ideas and notions entered the church. Let me give you two illustrations of this. Ernest Naville in his book, *The Problem of Evil*, pointed out that the civilization of Europe, which he characterized as Christian civilization, “is visibly making the conquest of the world. Its triumph is only a matter of time. No one doubts it.” A few years ago a man could make that statement and nobody would contradict him. (Oh, there were a few old mossbacks who contradicted him, but nobody paid any attention to them.) But how absurd that statement is today! Also, Justin Smith wrote in 1883: “It has been said that in twenty-five years more, if the present rate of progress continues, India will become as thoroughly Christian as Great Britain is today. There will be 30,000,000 Christians in China, and Japan will be as thoroughly Christianized as America is now. The old systems, they tell us, are honeycombed through and through by Christian influence. It looks as if a day may soon come when these systems, struck by vigorous blows, will fall in tremendous collapse. Meantime, every weapon formed against Christianity breaks in the hand that holds it. Already the Lord’s right hand has gotten Him the victory.” On and on he goes in that vein, as if the entire world would be converted by the beginning of the twentieth century!

However, today there is a line of demarcation running through the organized church, irrespective of denomination, that is as deep and as wide as the Grand Canyon. This breach cannot be

resolved, and it cannot be reconciled. It has passed the point of no return. This bifurcation in the church began years ago in Germany in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its origin was with what is known as higher criticism. First the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis made its attack upon the integrity of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible written by Moses), and the attack was, of course, upon the Mosaic authorship. Then there was the Bauer-Tubingen hypothesis that made its attack upon the New Testament. These started the assault upon the integrity of the Word of God. Also during that century Darwin wrote his *Origin of the Species*, and the theory of evolution was introduced into the church and accepted by many. Also it was at this time that Karl Marx wrote *Das Capital*.

At the turn of the century these philosophies were splitting the church. The protagonists who espoused these viewpoints boastfully took the name of “modernism.” They were progressive, modern, and intellectual, according to their own estimation. Those who did not adopt their viewpoint were called “intellectual obscurantists” – that was their favorite designation. Today modernism has pretty much gone out of style, and the tag that it bears today is “liberalism.” That covers a multitude of sins, let me tell you! It covers a wide range of those who hold various viewpoints in the church today.

Those who adhered to the old creedal statements of the church and defended the fundamentals of the faith were designated as “fundamentalists.” This was an honorable and proud name in the old days. Under this banner marched an array of brilliant scholars and fine Christian gentlemen of the past. The outstanding Hebrew and Greek scholars (who still stand head and shoulders above any that we have today) were called fundamentalists, for that is exactly what they were. They believed in the *integrity* of the Word of God.

As time went on, “fighting fundamentalists” appeared in the ranks. They were more interested in attacking than in defending the faith. Many of them were unlovely in their conduct and questionable in their ethics. Also there appeared among the fundamentalists religious racketeers, making merchandise out of those who loved the Word of God.

Now don't misunderstand me, I am a fundamentalist in the true sense of the word, but today the label of “fundamentalism” is almost in desuetude. The press uses it as a term of aspersion and derision, and it is applied to some peculiar groups. For example, several years ago there were articles in the press concerning a group of Mormons in southern Utah and northern Arizona who practiced polygamy, and they were called fundamentalists! We find that the term “fundamentalist” was dropped by a great many, and a broader term “evangelical” was adopted. Under this banner march many speckled birds. It is a catch-all for those who make some attempt to stand for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Today the term we use more often to designate one who stands for the fundamentals of the faith is “conservative.”

When I entered the ministry in the 1930s, this matter of the apostasy was something way out yonder in the future. We had modernism, yes, but it was a minority and discredited. Dr. Machen had absolutely put the critics of the New Testament (especially concerning the virgin birth) to riot – they were running for cover. Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, the greatest scholar of the twentieth century as far as the Old Testament is concerned, spoke forty languages and had written many books on these ancient languages. I heard him make the statement that the thing he objected to was that his critics had to use *his* books for source material because there were none others. Dr. Wilson was an outstanding defender of the faith.

Now all of this is changed. The storm has broken with all of its fury. Though I am not a pessimist (I refuse to be called a pessimist unless the pessimist can be defined as the man who blows out the light the optimist thought he saw in the dark, and I do not want to blow out that light), I do think that we need not let the apostasy take us by surprise. We ought to be able to meet it in this hour in which we are living and to recognize it for what it is.

Our Lord Jesus never did predict phenomenal success for His church. This is the thing He did say:

...When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

In the Greek it is “*the* faith,” and *the* faith is that body of truth which the apostles have handed down to us. It is not a reference to personal faith, but to belief in the whole body of revealed truth.

The question, “Shall He find the faith on the earth?” is couched in such a way in the Greek that it demands a negative answer. No, He frankly says that He will not find the faith on the earth when He returns. Now I recognize that He is referring to the day when He returns to establish His kingdom, but this hour in which we live is the beginning of that apostasy. So we need to recognize it. We should not let it take us by surprise.

Jude is the book in the New Testament that deals almost exclusively with the apostasy. Jude begins his subject with verse 4:

For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men...

He warns against these certain men who have crept in unawares. “Ordained” here means they were written of beforehand. This is not something new, Jude says. They were “long beforehand

marked out for this condemnation.” We went through a period when theologians said that God was dead. Of course they would say that because they were “ungodly men” and God was not even in their thinking.

... Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

A better understood translation would be, “They turned the grace of our God into blatant immorality.” You see, the difference today is the fact that sin, which before was carried on undercover (I’m perfectly willing to admit that there was sin and unbelief in the church before), is today blatant. Immorality has come out in the open. Ministers in our great denominations are saying that adultery, lying, and stealing are perfectly permissible. They have turned the grace of our God into blatant immorality.

A few years ago in Washington, D.C., a minister said, “We liberal churchmen are no longer interested in the fundamental modernist controversy. We do not believe we should even waste our time engaging in it. So far as we are concerned, it makes no difference whether Christ was born of a virgin or not. We don’t even bother to form an opinion on the subject.”

An Arlington, Virginia, minister said, “We have closed our minds to such trivial consideration as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe that nonsense, we have no objection, but we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb twenty centuries ago.”

A leading minister in Washington, D.C., said flatly, “In our denomination what you call the ‘faith of our Fathers’ is approaching total extinction. Of course a few of the older ministers still cling to the Bible. But among the younger men,

the real leaders of our denomination today, I do not know a single one who believes in Christ, or any of the things that you classify as fundamentals.”

Another man said, “We are interested in human life and human destiny on earth. We don’t know or care whether there is a life beyond the grave. We presume there is a God but we know that he will ever be a mystery to us. We do not know or care whether God possesses personality or not. He may be just an impersonal force. Religion means very little, if anything. In the modern world religion has no vital place. The function of the modern ministers is to guide the thinking people along social and economic lines. Morals, like religion, are out of date. The world today requires a new social order. The younger generation won’t need either morals or religion if we create a social order without ignorance or poverty. We are moving in the direction of the elimination of prayer from our services entirely. We still include it occasionally, to please those who are accustomed to it, for prayer is a sort of habit with folks. It takes time to educate them to a realization that it is a hang-over from the superstitious past. We do not teach Bible to our young people. We do not teach them to pray. Our youth program is centered around recreation.”

Friends, at the present moment and for some time now the church has been engaged in a great brainwashing program to absolutely get rid of the Word of God. Now I went to school with some of these fellows, and I know what kind of grades they made, so their intellectual facade is interesting indeed.

It is my feeling that real believers ought to wake up at this hour. What a wonderful hour in which to live! We can still be intelligent and believe the Word of God, believe that Jesus Christ nearly 2000 years ago intruded into history and died on a cross, that He arose again the third day bodily, ascended back to heaven,

and that He is alive today. He has sent the Holy Spirit into the world, and the Holy Spirit has made Him real to multitudes of folk in every walk of life. This is our message, and it is still pertinent for this hour to meet the needs of the human heart.

I feel sorry for these men who have departed from the faith. My heart goes out to apostates, because they are lost without a compass, lost in the dark, lost without knowing where they are going.

Have you ever been lost?

I used to hunt up in the Tehachapi mountains in California. Several years ago a friend and I went up to the Kelso Valley to hunt quail. We parked the car and walked two or three miles, but we did not see a quail. Finally we came to a covey of quail, there must have been 200 birds in it! I have never seen such a large covey – believe me, we were excited. My companion had a heart condition, and he overdid it so he had to return to the car. But I stayed on and followed that covey as they scattered in every direction. As I followed them, I lost sense of time and direction. I didn't even know where I was. All of a sudden it occurred to me that I was lost. I did not know which direction to go. The foothills of the Tehachapis are rugged country. I climbed to the top of one of the hills and looked around to see if I could recognize some spot. I give you my word, I couldn't see a hill, a tree, or anything that looked familiar. At a time like that one has a feeling of fright, so I started out rather hurriedly and walked, I'm sure, for thirty minutes. Suddenly it occurred to me that I must be going in the wrong direction. I could see nothing familiar. I turned around and started off in the opposite direction, thinking I would see something familiar. There was nothing. Without a compass, without knowing where I was, I became absolutely frightened. Again I climbed to the top of the highest hill in that area and scanned the landscape. Believe me, I prayed to the Lord to get

me out of that situation. And as I stood there, I thought how tragic it is to be lost in this world and not know where you are going – to have no compass, no map, no anything. Just lost.

I must have stayed there over an hour praying and wondering. Finally I saw a car coming down a very rough trail. Men got out and started down the road. I called to them, “Have you seen a blue car?”

“Yes, parked up the road about one mile.” That was my direction. I came down off that hill, went up that road, and when I saw my friend – I never have seen anyone that I was as *glad* to see – there he was sitting, eating lunch.

My friend, today multitudes in this world are *lost*. And the tragedy of it is they have wrecked their compass, they have mutilated their map, and they don’t know which way to go.

Maybe you are lost.

Well, I am delighted to be able to tell you that this Book, the Bible, is a compass, and it’s a map. It clearly reveals the way to God. In it the Lord Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Multitudes who have been lost in this world have come to Him and found it to be true, and *you* can find it to be true even in these days of apostasy.

What Can Believers Do?

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 20 – 25)

When Jude began to write his epistle, he tells us that it was his thought to write on some theme that pertained to our common salvation. I imagine he could have been writing on repentance or redemption or sanctification or even the coming of Christ. But he was detoured by the Holy Spirit to write on the forthcoming apostasy, and he uses frightful terms to speak of it. I am of the opinion that folk in the early church, as they read the Epistle of Jude, found it difficult to believe that the days would come when there would be that kind of an apostasy in the church.

You see, the apostasy is not outside the church. It is on the inside. The severest attack upon the Word of God, upon the Christian faith, and upon the church, is coming from inside the church today. So much so that Charles Lee Smith, who founded the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, said: “The pulpit is doing a much better job than we are doing!” You will no longer see the greatest attack upon the Word of God made in the city square where the soap box orators hold forth – they are pikers. Go to some liberal church today and you will hear the greatest attack upon the Word of God. The Bible is being discredited all across America every Sunday morning.

It was Horatius Bonar, a great saint of the past, who made this statement in light of the little Epistle of Jude: “In some ages evil seems to sleep. In the last days it will awake to full life and activity. It will seize every instrument: the press, the pulpit, the platform.” Today evil has taken over the press; it has taken over the pulpit and the platform. Bonar continues, “It will enlist every science and art – music, sculpture, painting, portrait, philosophy – making them all subservient to its development. The multiplication of crimes, contempt of laws, blasphemies – these are the specimens of the energy of evil.” In this day in which you and I live, these are the things that fill our morning newspaper. There is no use for me to recount *ad nauseum* the things that are happening in our contemporary society. We are now in the midst of the apostasy.

What can God’s people do? Jude details for us what we as believers can do in days of apostasy. Frankly, these are things we *must* do if we are to keep our heads above water.

Now it irritates me a little when I’m aboard an airplane, especially when I’m flying over water, to be given those long instructions about what I’m to do in case we ditch. As you know, the stewardess goes through a demonstration, explaining what to do. I was complaining about this to a friend of mine who is a pilot. He said to me, “You’d better listen to those instructions. If you don’t follow them, you’d never get out alive. But you have a chance if you will follow the instructions.”

Jude has given us instructions. He warns us that we are flying over dangerous territory. If we want to survive, these are the things we must do. He mentions seven things that believers can do in days like these in which we are living.

Beginning with verse 20, he says, “But ye, beloved...” Up to this point he has described the apostasy. And, believe me, he paints a dark picture. But now he is speaking to believers. “But ye, beloved” do these things:

1. Building up yourselves on your most holy faith...

The word “faith” is actually *the* faith, the body of truth that has been given to us in the Word of God. When the first church came into existence, it is said that they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), which was the body of truth that has come down to us in the Word of God. We must build up ourselves in that if we are to stand.

In other words we are to study the Word of God. Since God gave sixty-six books, He meant that we are to study all sixty-six of them – not only the three or four that are our favorites. How many Bible classes go back and forth, teaching John, Romans, and oh, they’ll teach Revelation, but what about the other sixty-three books that are in the Bible? Why don’t we study them? Why don’t we study *all* of them? My friend, if you are going to build yourself up in your most holy faith, you must have the total Word of God. You can’t build a house without a foundation. And when you get the foundation laid, you will need to put up some timbers to hold the roof, you’ll need sides on it, and of course you’ll want to fix it up on the inside. Friend, you need all sixty-six books of the Bible if you are going to build up yourself on your most holy faith.

Paul and Peter urge us to study the Word of God. Paul in his “swan song” said:

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

We are to *study!* And he added:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)

In other words, the recourse that you and I have in these days is the Word of God.

The reason that many fall by the wayside is that the Seed fell among stones. It didn't get deeply rooted. The Word of God is the Seed, and unless you study all the Word of God, getting down in the good rich soil, you are not going to become a very healthy looking plant. And it won't be long until you are trampled down and burned out by the sun. To stand in days like these you need to be rooted in the Word of God.

Now Peter in his second Epistle (he is writing of the apostasy, just as did Paul) says:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. (2 Peter 1:19, 20)

Don't pull out just one or two verses and think you have it, my friend. That is the tragedy of Bible study today – drawing out a few verses here and a few verses there and building a system. Why not take it all? Certainly there are parts of the Word of God that you are not going to like. It steps on your toes, or it runs counter to current philosophy, but it is necessary to build up ourselves on our most holy faith.

In other words, when you get into days of apostasy, the compass and the chart that you have is the Word of God. This is the

reason I have built my ministry entirely upon the Word of God. I believe it is our only hope.

Now these pastors who say they do not believe nor teach the Bible – I am wondering how many people are interested in their liberal message today. In spite of days of apostasy, I find that there is a great heart-hunger on the part of many folk for the Word of God. They want a sure word from God Himself in this hour of uncertainty. They want to know what *He* says.

At the turn of the century there was a movement in the church away from preaching and teaching the Bible. I remember as a boy going to church I knew nothing, and I knew nothing after I'd been to church because the Word of God was never preached. It was always a service built on emotion or it was a book review or it had to do with some sort of an entertainment. As a result, we have in America a "Christian" civilization of the most biblically illiterate people who ever have been on top side of the earth. The common man in Germany after the Reformation knew more about the Word of God than does the average man in America today.

The tragedy is that even believers are ignorant of the Bible. In this hour of apostasy, God's people need not only to say they believe in the Word of God from cover to cover, but they need to know what is between the covers. In this day of confusion and compromise you need to build up yourself in the most holy faith by a serious study of the Word of God.

Let me remind you that the Bible is unique. It is a Book that is different from any other. It is written by men and they include in it their own personalities – God did not disturb that at all – but He so guided them that when they had finished, God had gotten through His message to man without error.

Not only is it without error, but this Book still has power. Paul writes to the Thessalonians:

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

This Book has a message for those who will hear it, a message that will transform hearts and lives. The Word of God is not only a chart and compass, but it is our powerhouse. My friend, you cannot be ignorant of the Word of God and live the Christian life!

There is a second thing, Jude says, that we are to do in days of apostasy:

2. Praying in the Holy Spirit...

This is a little different from saying your prayers at night. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, told them to take the armor of God (you'll notice that, with the exception of two, every piece of that armor is for defense). Finally he says to them, "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17) – that is that offensive weapon. We have no other offense than that *plus* "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit..." (Ephesians 6:18). This is the type of prayer that touches the throne of God. It is the type of prayer that gets things from God.

It was my theory, up until the time I was pastor of the Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles, that what we needed to do was multiply numbers in a prayer meeting. I do not hold that view any longer. If you have ten people attending a prayer meeting and they are more or less spiritually asleep, it is not a very effective prayer meeting, I can tell you. But to multiply that number from ten to one hundred hasn't helped it if you've brought in ninety more spiritually dull people. All you have now is a hundred dead

people instead of ten dead people, and that has not helped the prayer meeting!

However, we do need those who will pray in the Holy Spirit. We need prayer that reaches through and touches the heart of God – prayer to which He *listens*.

I love that prayer in the ninth chapter of Daniel. Daniel said:

And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes; and I prayed unto the LORD, my God, and made my confession.... (Daniel 9:3, 4)

And God dispatched an angel with an answer to his prayer. I think God said, “You go down and answer his prayer, but I’m going to listen to him.” Daniel went on praying, and he touched the very heart of God.

Have you ever read any of Martin Luther’s prayers? Oh, I tell you, when that man prayed, it was like storming the battlements of heaven! We hear very little praying like that today. But that is the type of prayer that absolutely transformed Europe – prayer in the Holy Spirit.

There are many times when we don’t know what to pray for. I’ll be honest with you – in my lifetime, I have encountered problems for which I have no solution. I used to be able to give the Lord the best advice He ever had received on just how He ought to handle the thing. But I’ve learned that instead of going to Him with a program all outlined and saying, “Look here, Lord, this is the course You should follow,” now I am more inclined to say, “Lord, I don’t know the answer, but You do; if we get the right answer, it will have to come from You.” Therefore, we can throw this back – and I say it reverently – into the lap of God. That’s the way He wants it.

Years ago a missionary in Venezuela sent me a little card on which was a definition of prayer: “Prayer is the Holy Spirit, speaking in the believer, through Christ, to the Father.” Friend, that is a very good definition of prayer.

Praying in the Holy Spirit means the Spirit of God leads and guides us in our prayer life. A great many folk say, “I pray for a certain thing, and I don’t get an answer.” That ought to tell you something! You are not praying in the will of God. My grandson can ask for more things that he shouldn’t have than any little fellow I’ve ever met! I take him with me to the store sometimes, and he wants everything he shouldn’t have. I think to myself, *My, that’s the way I pray!* Just like a little child, I say, “Lord, give me this and give me that,” and He doesn’t do it. Why? Because I am not praying in the Holy Spirit. Oh, to cast ourselves upon Him in days like these! In times of apostasy, how we need to pray in the Holy Spirit.

Jude gives us the third thing believers are to do in days of apostasy:

3. Keep yourselves in the love of God...

Notice this exact language. He did not say that we are to do something to *win* the love of God. You are already *in* the love of God – just keep yourself there. And, friend, you cannot do anything to merit the love of God, neither can you keep Him from loving you.

Do you remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus with a question? He wanted to know what he should do to inherit eternal life. The record tells us:

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And

he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:21, 22)

He turned and walked away from Christ, but God still loved him!

We need to recognize that God loves the believer. All through the Epistle of Jude he calls believers “beloved.” That doesn’t mean that Jude loves them or that they love him. It simply means they are beloved of *God*.

You see, you can’t keep God from loving you. You can, however, get out of that love. Let me use the example of sunshine. Where I am today the sun is shining brightly; it’s a beautiful California day. I can’t keep the sun from shining, but I’m not *in* the sunshine – I’m inside a building. It is possible to put over yourself a roof of sin. You can put over yourself a roof of indifference. You can step out of the will of God so that you will not feel the warmth of God’s love in your life. But you cannot keep Him from loving you. So Jude says in effect, “Keep yourselves out there in the sunshine of His love.” Let His love flood your heart and flood your life. That is needed in days of apostasy.

There are many people today who are going through severe trials. Recently, I have been talking to a family that has been called upon to bear more than its share of trouble. It is a Christian family. The father – candidly, I wondered if he would make it or not – said to me the other day, “If it were not for the fact that I am persuaded that the Lord Jesus loves me, I’d give up the whole thing and walk out.” But he won’t be walking out, because he has kept himself in the love of God.

How you and I need to keep ourselves in the light and warmth of God’s love in these days!

Jude reminds us of the fourth thing we need to do:

4. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

The mercy of God is His concern and care for you. Because of His mercy, He was able to save you – He was concerned about you. He is rich in mercy, He has plenty of it, and we need all we can get because it is by mercy that God would even put up with us.

“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ” refers, I believe, to the coming of Christ for His church, the event we know as the Rapture of the church. You see, the reason I believe the church is not going through the Great Tribulation is that we are told to look for mercy, not judgment. I am not looking for judgment or the Great Tribulation. I am looking for the mercy of God.

A long time ago when He saved me, He did it by His mercy. And the very fact that He keeps holding on to me is an evidence of His mercy. One of these days He will take His church out of this world. Believe it or not, I’ll be going along, and I’ll be going because of His mercy. If you meet me a million years from today in eternity and you find I’m still in heaven (and I will be there), I will tell you now what I’ll tell you then: I’ve been here a million years, because He is merciful to me.

I am looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. In days of apostasy we need to look for that, my beloved. In this day of failure, in this day of compromise, in this day of discouragement, we are to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

The fifth thing is a caution:

5. And of some have compassion, making a difference.

I'll have to change that translation just a little: "And of some have compassion who are in doubt." There are a great many good sincere people today who do have their doubts, and we need to be patient with them.

In our Thursday night Bible study several years ago a woman came to me after every service for, I suppose, six weeks with some question. I began to have a feeling she was trying to trap me or trick me, and I became, frankly, a little impatient with her. Always there was another lady with her, one of our church members. So one night I answered her question rather sharply, and she turned and walked out. The lady with her came to me and said, "Dr. McGee, just be patient with her. She is a very brilliant woman. She's in 'Who's Who,' and she has been in practically every cult there is. She is really mixed up! Now she is trying to make her way out. Please be patient with her." So after that I would really answer her questions the best I could. About three months later she accepted Christ as her Savior. And I had a wonderful letter from her when she was back in Ohio, telling me of how the Lord was leading her.

We are living in days when there is so much doubt cast upon the Word of God. Remember that we are in the apostasy. Though the creeds of all the great denominations were sound creeds (they differ a little in some points, but on the great basics there was no difference at all), the church has been taken over by liberals who totally reject the great doctrines their denominations were founded upon. Folk in these churches have been so brainwashed over the years that though they want to believe, they are having their problems. We would do well to be patient with them.

Now the sixth thing:

6. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire...

These are folk whom we would judge to be hopeless sinners. It seems to us that nobody could reach them. I have been amazed at some of the people who have come to the Lord through the medium of radio. People that I have known, and frankly have given up, have come to Christ by hearing the Word taught on radio. "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire!" What a tremendous thing!

A letter has come to me from Fairbanks, Alaska, which illustrates this:

...Because KJNP is the loudest voice in the Arctic, hundreds of bush pilots lock onto the station to guide them into the city of Fairbanks and they must listen to what is on the air at the time. Just a few weeks ago, one of the pilots was locked onto KJNP and, behold, you were broadcasting! By the time he reached Fairbanks he had repented and was wonderfully born again by the Spirit of God. He is now attending a fundamental church and doing well. Praise God!

May I say to you, friend, there is somebody around you today whom you can pull out of the fire. If there were a house on fire with somebody inside of it, you would do your best to get him out. But just think of the people around you today who are on the way to a lost eternity, and some of them you can reach. I don't think you can reach them all. I don't recommend you go out on the street and hand a tract to everybody who comes along, but I do say there is somebody you can reach. And the interesting thing is, you are the only one who can reach them – they would never listen to this preacher, but they will listen to you. They have respect for you. They have confidence in you. Yet you have

never told them about the Savior who has saved you. That is the type of witnessing we need in days of apostasy.

Now the seventh and final admonition of Jude is:

7. Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.

The word “flesh” does not necessarily mean only that which is licentious, although it includes that. The “flesh” refers to this old nature that we have, and this old nature does not always go in the direction of licentiousness. There are a great many people today who are art lovers and music lovers. There are cultured folk who would never rob anyone or engage in immorality. But without Christ they are lost people, and they are living in the flesh – as much in the flesh as any drunkard on Main Street. In God’s sight they are just as lost. God says that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). All come under that category.

You and I today are to hate the garment that is spotted by the flesh. May I make it personal? *Pride* is of the flesh. *Gossip* is of the flesh. *Harsh criticism* is of the flesh. And there is a lot of the flesh manifested in our churches. This *pious pose* that many have toward “spirituality” is of the flesh and not of God at all. Even Paul the apostle, a religious man who was converted to Christ, said, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24). This is not a lost man asking for salvation. This is the cry of a saved man who was living in the flesh. Anything that Vernon McGee produces of the flesh, God hates. Regardless of how religious it is or how pious it might be or how much Bible it has in it. If it is of the flesh, He hates it. Only that which the Spirit of God produces through us can He use. We should learn to hate “even the garment spotted by the flesh.”

These are the seven things we are to do in days of apostasy.

Dwight L. Moody said, “I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. Its ruin is getting nearer and nearer. God said to me, ‘Moody, here’s a lifeboat. Go out and rescue as many as you can before the crash comes.’” And up until the ministry of Billy Graham, Moody looked into the faces of more people than any man who ever lived, and he reduced the population of hell by 200,000. My friend, if God could use Moody, He can use you and He can use me in these days of apostasy.

The little Book of Jude concludes with a glorious benediction. Let me give you a literal translation:

Now unto Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you (make you stand) before the presence of His glory blameless with great rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, before all time both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24 and 25, as translated by Dr. McGee)