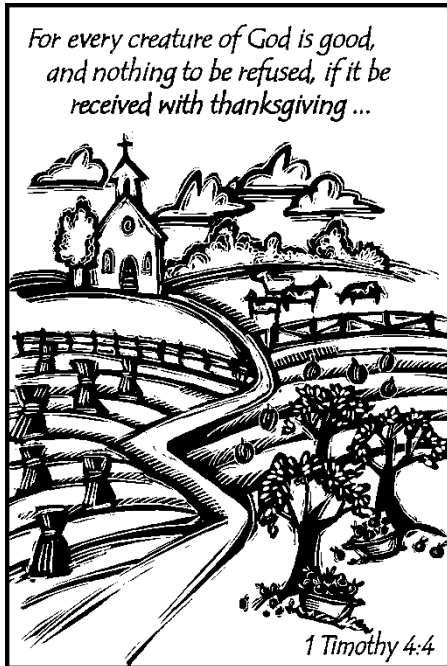


SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 7



PROPHECY OF COMING APOSTASY

Scripture Texts: 1 Timothy 4:1-9; Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:13-23

The express speaking of the Spirit names specific practices which are the outgrowth of apostasy. Apostasy is the departure from true teaching and beliefs. What religious systems fit the description named in our text? Is Catholicism the only system that incurs God's wrath? Wherever men stray from the mainstream of the Gospel, God's attitude toward it and the result is the same. The tragic result brings a departing of God's Spirit from a group or an individual life. What would you call the chief wrong of the apostasy foretold here? What is meant by bodily exercise?

Apostasy in the latter times is prophesied. We must watch that we be not led astray.

MEMORY VERSE: *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

—1 Thessalonians 5:21

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Proverbs 1:1-9** Where true wisdom is found.

Tue.—**Jeremiah 23:1-6, Jeremiah 23:21-32** True and false prophets.

Wed.—**Ezekiel 34:1-10** False shepherds.

Thu.—**2 Peter 2:1-11** False teachers.

Fri.—**2 Peter 3** The destiny of the false and the true.

Devotional Reading: Galatians 1— Some would pervert Gospel.

Some Shall Depart

1 Timothy 4:1-3 The Spirit speaketh expressly—the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul, pointedly, specifically, clearly. **In the latter times**—meaning later than He spoke, in the last dispensation, the one then in its beginning and now still continuing in these latter days—**some shall depart from the faith**—from the truth of Christ, the way of salvation. Why? Because they give **heed to**—listen to—**seducing spirits**—spirits that deceive— **and doctrines of devils**—evil teachings and practices. Paul names some: (1) Teaching about demons. Pagans worshipped demons believed to be agents between gods and men, some being souls of dead humans. This practice would be a part of the worship of those apostates. (2) **Speaking lies in hypocrisy**. Not being founded on truth, they do not love truth, but follow the devil's practice of lying (**John 8:44**). **In hypocrisy**—pretending to be good, wearing a cloak of right (**Matthew 7:15-16**). (3) **Having their conscience seared with a hot iron**. Deadened to feeling, they sin with no remorse and seemingly little realization that it is sin. They feel no repentance. The same hot iron of the Gospel of Christ that smoothes out the wrinkles of the hearer will sear the conscience if unheeded. (4) **Forbidding to marry**. Refusing themselves to marry and requiring others to remain single, forgetting God's Word that **marriage is honorable in all** (**Hebrews 13:4**). (5) **Commanding to abstain from meats**. They make rules forbidding food at certain times or certain foods to be eaten ever or at certain times.

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Freedom in Christ

1 Timothy 4:4-5 Every creature of God—everything created by God— **is good**. He called it **very good** (**Genesis 1:31**). **Nothing to be refused**—that is, nothing that was made for food is to be denied or forbidden—if **received with thanksgiving**. No ungrateful, arrogant reaching for God's gifts as if they belonged to us pleases God. If accepted thankfully, food is **sanctified**— pure and sacred. Two things make it so. (1) **The word of God**. God's Word or authority set food apart for man's use (**Genesis 1:29**). (2) **And prayer**—both prayer for God to provide (**Matthew 6:11**) and thanks to Him for having done so (**Romans 14:6; Ephesians 5:20**).

How to Be a Good Servant

1 Timothy 4:6 Timothy was put in trust by God as a minister, a servant of God and the church. To fulfill this trust, he must **put the brethren in remembrance of these things**—tell, remind, instruct, warn them of the coming apostasy and teach them how to refuse the false and hold to the truth. Thus Timothy would show himself **nourished** or taught **in the words of faith and of good doctrine**. Paul knew he had **attained** to this place and wanted him to continue in it.

Can one be a good servant of Christ and shut his eyes to the signs of apostasy? Can one be a good watchman and not warn the flock of these dangers? Can he be true to the Lord and the spiritual gift given him unless he puts the brethren in remembrance of the sharp line of difference between godliness and fables? It may make one popular to cooperate with everything and to smile at all doctrines, but it does not please God. See **2 Corinthians 6:14-16**.

Godliness Versus Bodily Exercise

1 Timothy 4:7-9 Throughout our lesson text we see two ways of life expressed. They are (1) **godliness**, or Godlikeness, obeying God, living as motivated by the Spirit, and (2) **bodily exercise**, or outward forms and observances, obeying man's ordinances, living as motivated by our minds and wills. The first is freedom in Christ (**John 8:36**); the second is bondage to man's rules. The first is on the inside; the second, on the outside. The first is minding the things of the Spirit; the second, minding the things of the flesh (**Romans 8:5**). The first is living in the power of God; the second is living in one's own human strength. **Godliness is profitable unto all things**. Godliness benefits in this life and also in the life to come. But **bodily exercise profiteth little**—is wasted effort. **Refuse profane and old wives' fables**—earthly, man-made traditions and superstitions. They lead many souls to destruction.

Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:13-23 Even the forms and days of the Mosaic Law are of no effect since Christ came. They were the **shadow** or type. Christ is the **body** or real substance, the antitype. **Voluntary humility** is much the same as bodily exercise. By their own willpower, people afflict the physical body in outward, material ways. They forbid touching or tasting or handling. They neglect or punish the body to gain merit. They spend their time and energy on things that **are to perish with the using**— outward things. They forget the **Head**, Christ. They neglect inward things of the Spirit. This has a **show of wisdom**, looks very religious, but does not bring freedom or satisfy the longing in the heart, and has no value to the saving of the soul.

Lies and Hypocrisy

The magazine, *Christian Heritage* of June 1959, quotes Catholic sources as teaching, "For a grave reason, a lie may be told without sin to a person who has no right to the truth." One whose writings are taught in Roman Catholic seminaries lists many examples of excusable lying. Their forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats is well known. Trust in bodily exercise or voluntary humility is evident in their great use of dress, learned prayers, observance of days, images, shrines, beads, charms, penance, candles, crosses, etc. All

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these are on the outside and of little profit. They do not reach the heart where true godliness must be. It is trusting in one's own efforts rather than in Christ's atonement." Some shall depart from the faith" refers to any and all who turn from Christ and His Word to another doctrine.

JUST A THOUGHT

Salvation is much more than acknowledging God's power.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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