

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 6



*Contend
for the faith
which was
once delivered
to the saints*
Jude 1:3

THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF APOSTASY

Scripture Text: Jude 16

In verses 14 and 15, Jude's thoughts reverted to the oldest of the Old Testament prophets, Enoch. In verse 16, however, he returned to those whom he had been exposing—the apostates in the first century—and proved that, from the first century to the twenty-first century, the nature of apostasy has never changed. It is a progressive nature. *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the word *progressive* as “moving forward or onward, continuing by successive steps.”

MEMORY VERSE: *Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-15).*

The Gradual Progression

These are murmurers. Apostasy is a condition that only continues to worsen. **Psalm 1:1** shows its progressive nature: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

1 Corinthians 9:24 equates the Christian life to a race. Notice, **Psalm 1:1** says, “walketh,” “standeth,” and “sitteth.” These words show a gradual decline and change of pace. If you are one who is listening to the “counsel of the ungodly,” you will gradually slow down in your race from a run to a walk, but you will not stop there. Soon, you will be one who stands “in the way of sinners.” Once the seeds of apostasy have been sown in your mind, “. . . ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (**Matthew 23:13**). Finally, you will be one who sits “in the seat of the scornful.”

Can you see that apostasy is progressive? **Joel 1:4** teaches this same truth: “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.” The Hebrew word for *palmerworm* is *gazam*. It means “to cut short.” If you take in the spirit of apostasy, your experience will be “cut short.” The Hebrew word for *locust* is *arbeh*. It means “to multiply.” The spirit of apostasy wants to multiply its effects and possessors as much as possible.

The word *cankerworm*, comes from the Hebrew word *yelek*, which means “to lick or lap.” When apostasy starts to work on others, it is as loving and affectionate as a loyal, loving dog; but this is a deception. The Greek word for *caterpillar* is *chasil*. It means “to consume, to eat up.” These four words represent the different stages in the development of the same creature: the locust. But they also depict the progressive, degenerative nature of apostasy.

The word *murmurers* are found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from the Greek word *goggustes*. It is used in the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, to describe the resentful, discontented grumbings of the children of Israel against Moses as he led them through the wilderness. (See **Exodus, Chapters 15 and 17.**)

Apostasy has its start in a resentful discontent of God-ordained authority. Seeds of apostasy are sown when an individual resents another person being in a position or making a move that he himself would not make or taking a stand that he himself would not take. Resentment is extremely dangerous! It starts out low, quiet, and careful; just a low, insistent muttering that turns into murmuring.

Murmuring may seem petty and insignificant, but the end of it is not. **1 Corinthians 10:10** says, “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.” When you are tempted to fall under the power of murmuring, remember that to murmur against God's ordained authorities is to murmur against God Himself. (See **Exodus 16:7-8.**)

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From Murmurers to Complainers

Complainers. The word *complainers* is an even stronger, bolder word than *murmurers*. The Greek word for it is *mempsimoiros*. It means “to blame for one’s allotted fate in life.” A complainer is dissatisfied with his lot and blames others for it. **1 Timothy 6:6** says that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Paul said in **Philippians 4:11**, “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

Complainers are people to whom the truth has become chafing and unbearable. The objects of their scorn are the ones who held truth before them—the true ministry. Initially, they muttered indistinctly, with just a few insinuations here and there. Then, as the truth became more unbearable to them, they became more brazen. They became *complainers*. People in this condition make God angry! **Numbers 11:1** confirms this: “And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.”

Unsubmissive, Arrogant Lives

Walking after their own lusts . . . their mouth speaketh great swelling words. Apostates do not just murmur and complain against divine authority—they do not submit their lives to it either. The Amplified Bible says, “These are inveterate murmurers (grumblers) who complain [of their lot in life], going after their own desires [controlled by their passions] . . .” When this spirit takes over, ones lose control. They operate purely under the flesh. Self restraint is abandoned and replaced with self-will.

The Amplified Bible also says, “Their talk is boastful and arrogant.” Ones who have thrown off the governor of godly restraint speak boastfully and arrogantly in ways they never would have considered while they were under the control of the Holy Spirit. **2 Peter 2:18** says, “They speak great swelling words of vanity.” One translation reads, “They utter arrogant nonsense.” Another translation says they use “phrases that have no meaning.”

Beware of Flattery!

Having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage. What does this mean? It simply means that, as another translation says, “They flatter men for the sake of what they can get from them.” They try to win people to their way of thinking. A flattering tongue is like a disguised viper waiting for the precise moment to inject its venom and bring death. Apostates use their tongues in the same way a snake charms its prey. **Psalms 5:9** states, “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue.” **Proverbs 20:19** says, “Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.”

JUST A THOUGHT

The best vitamin for a saint is B 1.