

## **THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH (The Doctrine of Apostasy)**

The theme of Jude is “Earnestly Contending for the Faith” and the great issue in view is APOSTASY. Apostasy means “to depart from”. It means to abandon THE FAITH. Apostates have been “insiders” who never really came to a saving faith. Judas is the most famous apostate.

Apostates have been close to the things of God but have stopped short of true conversion. Apostasy is a process. One does not become a hardened defector all at once. It happens gradually. Such people are close. They may even make a profession but stop short. They are in “the balance” as they consider leaving Christ and grace and going back to their old ways, whether it be the world or false religion. It is this concern that the writer of Hebrews addresses:

**Hebrews 3:12** (NKJV) Beware, brethren, [fellow Jews] lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

Full-blown apostates are hardened unbelievers who have known great spiritual privilege. It is because of great spiritual privilege that they are so very accountable, as well as why they become so hardened.

These are DANGEROUS people who often move within the circles of God’s people and corrupt all who are influenced by them. They have a flesh agenda, not a Spirit agenda. God’s people must EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH in standing against their apostate ways.

Theologically, apostates are people who are not saved, they have never been saved, and if they harden in apostasy, they will never be saved (cf. Heb. 6:4-6). Heresy is when one gets off track in a certain area of doctrine, while apostasy is to completely abandon the faith. A believer may be guilty of heresy, but they will never become hardened apostates. A true believer will never completely and finally abandon THE FAITH.

The books in the New Testament that MAJOR on this subject are Hebrews, 2 Peter, and Jude. Many people do not understand the book of Hebrews properly, because they don’t properly understand the issue of APOSTASY.

Hebrews is written to people that have known the facts of the gospel and moved in Christian circles. The writer of Hebrews has a concern that some of them, however, may have stopped SHORT of true saving faith (cf. Heb. 4:1-2).

Some of them were considering abandoning Christ and going back to the Old Testament rituals and the sacrificial system as a means of salvation. That is apostasy. Once they make that move, the concern is that they will HARDEN in apostasy (cf. Heb. 6:4-6, 10:26-31). A comparison for today would be one that leaves the legalism of Roman Catholicism for grace, only later to abandon Christ, and return to Catholicism.

While true believers will never harden in apostasy, they can be influenced, and to some degree get off track (cf. 2 Pet. 3:17).

One of the great concerns with apostasy is that it takes over quickly if it is not confronted. Apostasy is aggressive defiance. If one is tolerant of it, it takes over. It is like a cancer which is deadly if not treated aggressively. Apostasy influences believers to compromise and go along with error and thereby be neutralized in terms of their testimony and ineffective in their service for Christ.

One of the terrible consequences of the false doctrine of EASY BELIEVISM (what I call, THE LORDLESS GOSPEL), is that no matter how far people apostatize, proponents of this errant theology often just put them in the category of “carnal Christian”. Rather, we should be saying to them, **“Examine yourself and make sure you are even in the faith”** (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5). We should be saying, **“We have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of confidence steadfast to the end”** (cf. Heb. 3:14).

The writer of Hebrews writes to those who may be in the process of APOSTATIZING warning them, **“Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts”**. (cf. Heb. 3:15).

Those who apostatize eventually harden, just like Pharaoh. There is a line of abandonment, which people cross, from which there is no return (cf. Romans 1). But only God ultimately knows this line. But the WARNINGS are strong to not go there!