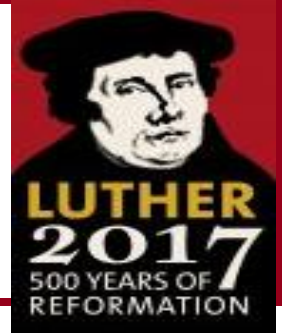


Apostasy & Heresy

2 Peter 3:1-14,18 Titus 2: 11-15 Mt 24:36-51

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One of the most distressing things about the Holy Christian Church is the **heresy and apostasy** that infects it like a deadly poison and lethal venom.

- ✓ **Heresy** is a word that means “to choose”, and it refers to choosing false doctrine rather than holding firm to God’s Holy Word.
- ✓ **Apostasy** is a word that means “to defect” and it refers to *falling away* from Christ, His Word, and His Kingdom.

Heresy and apostasy lead people away from Christ and His salvation. Like a malignant tumor, **heresy and apostasy** grow and overtake a person and they lose their faith in Christ.

Heresy and Apostasy are very, very serious things:

- ✓ Jesus refers to false teachings as **yeast** – meaning that they grow and spread Matthew 16:11-12
- ✓ St. Paul refers to heresy as **gangrene**, -- indicating that not only do they grow and spread, but they kill 2 Timothy 2:16-17
- ✓ St. John tells us that false doctrines are **satanic** 2 John 9-11
- ✓ St. Peter warns us that false teachings will lead you to condemnation and **eternal death**. 2 Peter 2:1-3
- ✓ In the Book of Revelation, they are figuratively described as destructive swarms of **locusts**, dangerous as **scorpions**, deadly as the venom of **vipers**, and as vast as 200,000,000 **warhorses**. Revelation 9

Heresy and apostasy are terrible things, they are signs of the end of the world, and they are very real and powerful dangers for us.

Remember that it was **heresy and apostasy** that destroyed both the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah in the Old Testament.

Heresy and apostasy were already at work in the days of the New Testament. 26 of the 27 New Testament books warn us about it.

Jesus even said that it will get so bad that *if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the Elect those days will be cut short. Matthew 24:22*

One tragic story of **heresy and apostasy** occurred during the days of the Lutheran Reformation. **Philip Melanchthon** was a brilliant scholar; he was Martin Luther's "*right-hand man*". After Martin Luther died in 1546, it appeared that Melanchthon was going to be the leader of Lutheran Reformation. But soon after Luther died the Roman Emperor Charles V invaded Germany and overtook it. He imposed Roman Catholic teachings in what's known as the **Leipzig Interim**. It was a law that forced churches and pastors to teach Roman Catholic doctrine. Many resisted, many others were martyred. Philip Melanchthon though was fearful for his life, and so he *compromised* the faith and *abandoned* in the Gospel. *It is a tragic story of heresy and apostasy; it is a sad chapter in the story of the Lutheran Reformation.*

Heresy and Apostasy are real dangers! Not only were they a danger and threat in the days of the Reformation, but they remain a danger and threat for us today as well – *perhaps even more so!*

The Bible teaches us how to fight these temptations and how to avoid this satanic yeast and gangrene that can kill your faith. The way that you combat **heresy and apostasy** is by **truth, zeal, and repentance**.

TRUTH

It all begins with the **truth** of God's Holy Word. The way to combat heresy – false teachings – is with the **truth** of God's Holy Word. You have to know what God's Word teaches; you have to understand what you believe, teach and confess based on God's Holy Word!

I read a story once about US Treasury Secret Service agents who work with counterfeit currency. In their training, they spend very little time handling counterfeit money — rather the bulk of their time and the focus of their training in on real money. They become so knowledgeable and so aware of all the features of real money that they can easily spot a counterfeit bill when they see one.

It's the same way with the truth of God's Word. Spend your time studying God's Holy Word; **make it your personal lifelong goal to be ever more biblically literate and doctrinally sound.** The more time you spend becoming knowledgeable and aware of the **truth** of God's Word, the easier it will be for you to spot a lie, to expose a false teaching, and to avoid heresies.

The way to combat heresy and false teachings is to know the **truth** of God's Holy Word. **Make it your personal lifelong goal to be ever more Biblically literate and doctrinally sound.**

ZEAL

The way to combat apostasy in your life is with **zeal** for Christ and His Kingdom! The word "**zeal**" means "**to burn, to be hot**". It has the idea that you are passionately engaged in the Kingdom of God. It means that you have a **driving desire to serve the Lord**, a **burning intention to please Him**; you are **compelled to seek His will** in all areas of your life, and **your goal is to glorify Him** in all you do.

Zeal drives you to work hard, use your gifts, make sacrifices, and even suffer for Christ and His Kingdom. **Zeal** compels you to be whole-heartedly committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. **Zeal** is a "burning" desire to serve the Lord in every area of your life! **Christian zeal** means to be "burn and be hot" for the Lord; not only is it God's will for you, but it is how you combat apostasy.

Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are His very own, **zealous** to do what is good. TITUS 2:14

Do not be slothful in zeal, be **fervent in spirit**, serve the Lord. ROMANS 12:11

You cannot be "**fervent is Spirit**" and "**zealous to do what is good**" on your own. **ZEAL** comes only from the Holy Spirit working through the Word and the Sacrament. The Holy Spirit works in you to create a passion for Christ, His Word and His Kingdom. **God's will is that you are zealous in your faith!**

The way to combat apostasy – *falling away from the faith* – is "to burn and be hot" for the Lord and His Kingdom: to have **ZEAL!**

REPENTANCE

Finally, as we study **heresy and apostasy**; truth and **zeal**, we all find that we fall short of God's will --- and that leads us to repentance. **Repentance means that we turn away from sin, confess it to God, and believe that we are forgiven through Christ the Lord.** Jesus came into the world to suffer and die for our failures and sins. He takes both our willingness to believe lies and our lack of zeal to the cross. In His resurrection from the dead on the third day, we are absolved of sin and given the Holy Spirit --- the Holy Spirit works through the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to reveal truth to you and create **zeal** within you!

So think about your life . . .

- ✓ Have you let false teachers influence your thinking?
- ✓ Are your attitudes shaped by the world and its ways rather than God's Holy Word?
- ✓ Are there signs that you are "falling away" from the faith?
- ✓ Have you become "cool", apathetic, or careless, in your Christian life?
- ✓ Is worship, rote, routine, and even boring to you?
- ✓ Do you have a "burning desire" to glorify God in every area of your life... or is it a smoldering wick?
- ✓ Are you striving to be ever more biblically literate, doctrinally sound, and passionately engaged in the Kingdom of God?

These are the kinds of questions that will start you thinking about your faith; and they will expose signs of **heresy and apostasy** in your life.

Repentance means that we turn away from sin, confess it to God, and believe that we are forgiven through Christ the Lord. The Holy Spirit works through the truth of the Gospel to create a zeal for Christ, His Word, and His Kingdom.

We live in the End Times... Jesus warned us repeatedly about **heresy and apostasy** --- these are serious things and terrible dangers that you must watch out for.

Rather than *falling into false teaching*, and *falling away from the Christian faith*, God's will is that you **know the truth of God's Holy Word** and **live a zealous life for Christ and His Kingdom!** Amen!