

Apostasy

There are 5 categories of apostasy (apostasia, falling away) in the Scripture:

First: Falling away as to reject the person of Christ, (1 John 2:19, 4:6) refers to a person who does not depart from where he is, but is standing away having chosen from the beginning to stay away, not to believe instead of believing. This refers to those who would reject Christ not to the saved person who would depart (2 Thess. 2:3, Acts 21:21).

Second: Falling away as in living a life of sin that denies the faith. This is in reference to believers who have been enlightened, tasted the goodness of the Lord but turned away from faith. It involves the deliberate shifting of the kardia from partial obedience to total disobedience. The issue here is not salvation but the lost opportunity towards spiritual maturity [Heb. 6:4-8].

The phrase "It is impossible to renew them again to repentance bring us to consider several things. The statement is an unclear translation of a Greek philosophical language. The believer cannot lose his salvation. Salvation is based on the essence of God not on men's wavering faith (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Our salvation is the finished Work of God, there is nothing to add and there is nothing to change. The believer in this context decided and resisted the privilege of rebound or chose to change his mind. God respects that decision and executes the divine discipline of sin unto death (Heb. 10:26, 1 Cor. 11:28-32).

Apostasy will cause the execution of painful sin unto death [2 Peter 2:20-22] against the hardened carnal or reversionist. Sin unto death means the painful preservation of the soul, but the destruction of the body [1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:20] after a series of warning discipline have failed to awaken the believer.

Third: Falling away as in times of sudden material prosperity (1 Tim. 6:9-10) refers to an immature or carnal believer who have been engulfed with the blessings of the world system, and deliberately chose to fall away from faith. The believer finds happiness in his prosperity, success, power, wealth and glory.

The believer thinks that he has found security in the material things. The believer in this category will rebound after God has removed his most treasured wealth or during severe infirmity before physical death.

Fourth: Falling away as when under the great persecution (Matthew 24:9-13) refers to persecution under the Great Tribulation. This category of apostasy concerns the people that will be left behind after the Rapture of the Church. They are the religious unbelievers who cannot endure the suffering and will deny Christ in order to survive.

Fifth: Falling away from difficult to accept Bible doctrine (John 6:60, 66) refers to those who cannot accept the truth of the Scripture, both the unbelievers and believers. The unbeliever does not fall away from the faith because they are outside the plan and will of God.

The term backsliding is never falling away from the faith because of someone's character or evil deeds but because of his negative mental attitude towards God and towards His Word. We do not fall away because of someone but because of our negative mental attitude and rejection of the truth. Do not wrestle with the truth, learning how to remove your doubt.

Apostasy is a deliberate repudiation and abandonment of the faith that one has earlier professed (Heb. 3:12). Apostasy differs in degree from heresy. The heretic denies some aspect of the Christian faith but retains the name Christian. Apostasy is temporary or permanent lapse into unbelief and sin following a spiritual conversion. The four relevant Hebrew words in the Old Testament are variously translated as backsliding (Jer. 8:5), "apostasy" (Jer. 5:6), "turning away" (Hos. 11:7), and "faithlessness" (Hos. 14:4).

The word "backsliding" is not found in the New Testament, but there are numerous examples of believers who draw away from fellowship with the Lord, like the disciples (Matt. 26:56), Peter (Matt. 26:69-75), Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), the Corinthian church (2 Cor. 12:20-21), and churches in Asia (Rev. 2:4, 14-15, 20).

The reason that some who are genuinely converted fall back into a life of sin is that the believer yet possesses the old sinful nature that is "corrupt through deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22; Rom. 7:13-24; 1 Cor. 3:1-3).

Some specific causes of spiritual backsliding include:

- Forgetfulness (Ezek. 23:35),
- Unbelief (Heb. 3:12),
- Bitterness (Heb. 12:15),
- Preoccupation (2 Tim. 4:10),
- Love of money (1 Tim. 6:10),
- Philosophies (Col. 2:8)
- Demonic doctrines
- Habitual sins and lasciviousness
- Other mental attitude sins

Backsliding displeases the Lord (Heb. 10:38), it grieves the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30), incurs divine punishment (Lev. 26:18-25), including sorrow of the heart (Lev. 26:16). Although backsliding brings untold pains and miseries, the backslidden believer is not eternally lost.

The believer's union with Christ sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), God's work of preservation (2 Tim. 1:12), Christ's effectual intercession (Heb. 7:25), and the fact that the life Christ gives is eternal (John 3:16; 10:28) guarantee the final salvation of every blood-bought child of God. The New Testament uses the term carnal, fleshly, the old man and theologically: reversionism refers to prolonged state of carnality.

Backsliding can be prevented by abiding in Christ (John 15:4-7), spiritual alertness (Eph. 6:18), constant prayer (1 Thess. 5:17), and the maintenance of a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:19). The promises of God to the backslider are exceedingly gracious: "Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:7).

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. (2 Thess. 2:3-4)

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

Falling away is the results of the hardening of the kardia. The hardening of one's heart or the state of hardness of heart is due to persistent but gradual rejection of the Word of God. This involves not simply a refusal to hear the Word but a refusal to respond in submission and obedience. The rejection may also extend to those who convey the Word. The objects of hardening of the heart may be individuals both the unbelievers or believers.

The believer who arrogantly refuses correction, rebuke, and reproof from the Word of God will slowly become calloused or spiritually insensitive. God will harden any unbeliever (Ex. 4:210 who has closed his soul to the Word of God (Ex. 8:15). Paul's comment on the incident is that God hardens whom He wills and has mercy on whom He wills (Rom. 9:18). The Scripture warns against hardening of the soul, implying personal volitional responsibility on the part of the hearers (Ps. 95:8; Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7).

The Hardening process, therefore, is a complex and tough phenomenon involving both divine and human agencies. But instead of being the manifestation of predetermined reprobation, hardening is primarily presented in Scripture as a means of God's accomplishment of his purposes for history. In every case, hardening results in a manifestation of mercy, grace and perfect justice of God.

Hardening is lifted only by God (2 Cor.3:15-16; 4:3-6) based on the free will decision of the individual to rebound (if believer) or to change his mind toward the Christ (if unbeliever). God wanted to bless the carnal or apostate believers with blessings beyond human imagination but he has to rebound and then reside and function inside the divine sphere. The blessing is waiting and so with the discipline for the apostate.

When there is no spiritual discernment: (sound doctrine in the soul –Titus 1:13), the believers are sidetracked with:

- Truth about themselves
- Truth about God and God's word
- Truth about eternal destiny
- Truth about the hope they have in God
- Truth about personal sense of destiny
- Truth about heavenly things
- Truth about earthly matter
- Truth about anything they have questions

The profile of compromiser:

- Busy cultivating the acceptance and approval of the world
- Lacking spiritual stability in any area of the spiritual life
- High degree of selfishness, harboring self-interest objectives and given to the concern of his own life
- Growing toleration of potential problems and allowing them to cause damages to the spiritual life without being resolved
- Desiring the wealth of the world more than the riches of heaven
- Arrogantly boastful of his religious belief without carefully examining or evaluating them

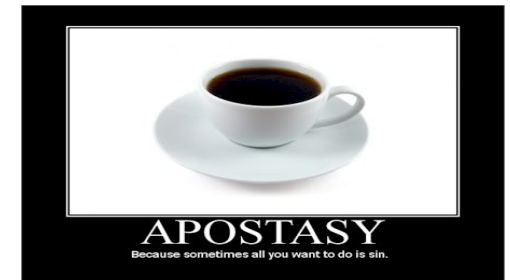
Common Signs of Compromise in Christianity:

- Adaptation and conformity to worldly trends
- Loving the world and the things of the world
- Aiming to be like someone in the world
- Following the norms and standards of the world
- Have more time for details of life
- Priority of things in the world
- Idolizing worldly celebrities
- False humility (courteous before men but not concentrating in the Word of God)
- Pleasing men more than God
- Not willing to suffer for faith and truth
- No concern for sharing the Gospel
- No desire for doctrinal truth
- Critical of doctrinal oriented believers
- Priority of church activities, programs and mission rather than studying Bible doctrine
- Religious rituals and church activities without true spirituality
- Praise and worship dominated by emotionalism
- Absorbed with contemporary Christian music

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