

18 - 1 John 2:18-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 - 2018-08-26

Call to Worship: Psalm 9:1-2

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 11:5-16

Sermon: "The Apostacy: They Went Out From Us" 1 John 2:18-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Benediction: Psalm 9:9-10

## INTRODUCTION

Deep inside us, where the Holy Spirit has given us a new birth, we love the righteousness of God and His law, and long to live in holiness, even as God is holy, walking as Jesus walked. Yet temptation arises from without and from within, and so often we find ourselves returning to old sins like a pig going back to its wallowing in the mud. So we often find ourselves praying to our Father is, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" and "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Help me, Lord, not to do such things anymore, but to live in loving obedience. Please, Lord, help me not to sin!

This letter, 1 John, was written to us to help us not sin: 1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. Here is the help you need! The reading of this letter (along with the rest of holy scripture), the expounding it, the meditating on it, the discussing it, the praying about it---this is a major part of the help the Lord has sent in answer to those prayers. As the Holy Spirit uses these truths in your life, you are helped not to sin.

Yet, this letter also reminds us that if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous! He pleads our case with the Father based on His own righteousness, not ours; and based on His having shed His own blood to wash us clean; and based on His own death, who did nothing to deserve it, as a substitute for us, who did everything to deserve it. This letter is written to such as are in Christ through faith because your sins are forgiven for His sake.

This letter was written to us as those who live in the last hour, the last time before the Lord Jesus Christ comes back. It was originally given to Christians who knew that Antichrist was going to come, when he had not yet appeared, but when his appearing was foreshadowed by the coming of many antichrists.

Last time we learned to look at another passage of scripture alongside this one, as referring to the same things, so we can better understand that passage and this one: 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, written by the apostle Paul. Paul referred to Antichrist as "that Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition." He reminded the church of what he had taught them in person: that the Lord Jesus would not come back until Antichrist, that Man of Sin, and Son of Perdition, had appeared. And Antichrist's appearing would not be until the falling away, the departure, the rebellion, which Paul called, "the apostacy."

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is sure to come. He will appear, and we, whether dead or still alive, will be changed to incorruptible, and will rise to meet Him in the air, and so we will be with Him forever.

But before He comes, there was to be coming of Antichrist.  
And before Antichrist, there was to be the apostacy.

The apostacy was to be grief to the church. Yet the grief of it is to be mitigated by the fact that it was prophesied beforehand; we knew to expect it, and by the understanding that the end of the apostacy will be the great appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Today we consider the apostacy. Here is the doctrine of the apostacy in a few words:

**They were with us, but they went out from us, which shows that they were not of us.**

TEXT

1 John 2:18-19

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

BODY

**They were with us, but they went out from us, which shows that they were not of us.**

- I. Before the Apostacy, They Were with Us
  - A. 1 Jn 2:19 “they would have continued with us”
  - B. Who is “us”?
    1. 1 John 1:2 John as one of the apostles, possibly the last by that time
    2. 1 John 1:3a the Christians who believed the gospel as declared by the apostles
    3. 1 John 1:3b as in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ
    4. so, the apostles, and those who believed in Christ according to the apostles’ witness, as those in true fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ
  - C. What does it mean that they were “with” us
    1. they professed repentance from sin and faith in Christ
    2. they were baptized
    3. they took the Lord’s Supper
    4. they met with us in the assembly of the church for worship on the Lord’s Day
    5. they devoted themselves to the apostles’ doctrine
      - a) John was still living

- b) there were faithful men to whom it had been entrusted
    - c) the letters were circulating
- D. This was true immediately of what was happening at that time; eventually it would be true historically
  - 1. at the time this was written, individuals had been with the churches, and had departed
  - 2. when those antichrists had attracted a following, their groups or churches would include people who had not themselves been with the true churches and departed
  - 3. it would then be, “they were with us,” meaning, “historically that group of churches used to be with us”

## II. In the Apostacy, They Went Out from Us

### A. Order of events

- 1. Paul spoke and wrote about the apostacy in 2 Thessalonians (A.D. 50-55)
- 2. John wrote about the apostacy in 1 John, and what he wrote was already beginning (theories vary from A.D. 68 to 97)
- 3. What Paul wrote about the apostacy would happen

### B. The apostacy as John wrote about it

- 1. was beginning in the time of John:
  - a) v. 18 “even now many antichrists have come”
  - b) v. 19 “They went out from us”
- 2. was characterized by grossly unorthodox doctrine regarding our Lord Jesus Christ
  - a) 1 John 2:22 “denies that Jesus is the Christ”
  - b) 1 John 2:22 “denies the Father and the Son”
  - c) 1 John 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.
  - d) 2 John 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.
- 3. the apostacy at that time, in its infancy, took this form
  - a) the churches, as visible assemblies, were the faithful
  - b) the many antichrists departed from the churches

### C. The apostacy as Paul wrote about it

- 1. to happen later, in the future
- 2. the apostacy in the future, in its maturity, would take this form
  - a) the churches, as visible assemblies, would be apostate, ready to take the Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, as if he were God

- b) the faithful would be a distressed minority within those assemblies, or would have to be outside those assemblies, in secret or at least obscurity

III. By the Apostacy, They Showed That They Were Not of Us

A. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us

1. the apostle is certain that those who are of us continue with us
2. this is a powerful statement of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints
3. the Lord Jesus has said: John 10:27-30 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (28) And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (30) I and My Father are one."
4. 1689.17.1 Those whom God hath accepted in the beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved...and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which by faith they are fastened upon...they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.
  - a) our confession cites 1 John 2:19 in the proofs of this doctrine
5. so sure was John that those who are the saints will persevere, that he can be just as sure that those who do not persevere are not the saints

B. They went out from us . . . that they might be made manifest that none of them were of us

1. this was good for the church
  - a) its own doctrine
  - b) its own devotion to Christ
  - c) its testimony to the world
2. this was good for them
  - a) that they not think themselves of Christ
  - b) that perhaps they be convicted and saved

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- A. Be fortified in your commitment to maintaining sound doctrine by the understanding that false doctrine is part of the apostacy.
  - 1. God as Trinity - important to be precisely correct?
  - 2. Jesus as both God and Man - important to be precisely correct?
- B. Learn to evaluate a church not by the fact it claims to be a church, or that it talks about Jesus, but by its firm adherence to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints
- C. Evaluate what your church believes and teaches, most especially its Theology Proper, that is, its doctrine of God; and its Christology, its doctrine of Christ, and act accordingly
  - 1. if you find it correct, biblical, in keeping with the ancient ecumenical creeds, then learn it and hold fast to it; believe in Christ accordingly
  - 2. if you find it incorrect, unbiblical, not in keeping with the ancient ecumenical creeds, find a different church, whose doctrine of Christ you do believe, then hold to what you believe to be true!
- D. Understand and appreciate the approach we take in this church
  - 1. few are set in the place of bible teacher
  - 2. sometimes a big talker comes; if what he says is not sound doctrine, he is asked to be quiet; if he won't be quiet, he is told to leave
  - 3. programs that the pastors will have to oversee are resisted, not because they might not be good, but because they will draw the attention of the pastors and the church away from preaching and teaching the word
  - 4. a substantial confession of faith is held to, insisted on, studied, reviewed; it is not revised or amended; it is referenced and considered a trustworthy guide in interpreting the bible
- E. Resist all tendencies to setting up another man as head over the churches in place of Jesus Christ, the true and only Head of the church.
- F. Love Christ for who He really is! Do not try to love Him as someone the bible does not teach Him to be. Any false notion about Christ presents Him as not as beautiful as He truly is. His true majesty is perfect, to be admired by all, in awe and wonder. Any doctrine that presents Him different from what is true denies to our minds the ability to worship Him as He deserves, and as we will most enjoy.
- G. Love Christ for all we can know Him to be. Do not be satisfied with a little knowledge of Christ, by which you can admire Him a little.

**with us**

Poole:

Christ, and the truly Christian community

Gill:

whenever the apostle uses this pronoun "us", he includes with himself all true believers, and may more especially here intend the churches of Asia; or rather the members of the church at Ephesus

they were of the church, and of the same mind with it, at least in profession, antecedent to their going out; for had they not been in communion with the church, they could not be properly said to go out of it; and if they had not been of the same mind and faith in profession, they could not be said to depart from it

in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the fellowship of the church, as true believers

**they went out from us**

Gill:

this sense makes these antichrists to be only preachers; whereas, though many of them might be such, yet not all; for whoever, in a private capacity denied the Father and the Son, or that Christ was come in the flesh, was antichrist

the sense is, that there were some persons in the Apostle John's time, who had made a profession of religion, were members of the church, and some of them perhaps preachers, and yet they departed from the faith, and dropped their profession of it, and withdrew themselves from the church, or churches to which they belonged, and set up separate assemblies of their own

JFB:

Not necessarily a formal secession or going out: thus Rome has spiritually gone out, though formally still of the Christian Church.

JRY:

John spoke of what was already happening, as the apostasy was beginning  
-certain men who had been with the churches, professing the apostolic faith, were going out from it

-1 Jn 2:19 "They went out from us"

Paul prophesied of what would happen in the future, when the apostasy was realized  
-the churches themselves would go out from the apostolic faith

-2 Th 2:4 he sits as God in the temple of God

Calvin:

Now, none can be termed apostates, but such as have previously made a profession of Christ and the gospel. Paul, therefore, predicts a certain general revolt of the visible Church.

Poole:

the cause of it [the apostacy] is said to be, not receiving the truth in the love of it a general apostacy of the church, though not of every individual; that church that is afterwards called "the temple of God"

Hawker (on 2 Th)

an apostacy from the church, a falling away; still professing Christ, but in works denying him. For the character is further defined, of sitting in God's temple, and calling himself god; yea, exalting himself above all that is called God.

And where are we to look for the fulfillment of this prophecy? If a Church professing christianity can be found, to whom those titles clearly belong; there will remain no shadow of doubt, but that this is the very one the Apostle had in view, in this scripture prophecy. And all that have written upon the subject, from the first moment the scriptures have been commented upon, to the present hour, have uniformly, and with one voice, declared it to be the Church of Rome. The selling of indulgencies, pardons, grants, and the like, are too nearly allied to the man of sin; and where practiced, too strikingly represent him, whom Paul describes as sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. And it is to oppose Christ in all his offices, as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church; when teaching the worship of saints; when setting up merit, and joining intercessors with Christ; and when taking up the title of supremacy, as head of the Church. And, it is certainly not a little remarkable in confirmation, that what Paul calls in this place, the mystery of iniquity, in allusion to the heresy he had been describing; John, in the book of the Revelations, calls Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. Rev\_17:5. From these, and numberless other testimonies, which, if necessary, might be brought forward, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt, but that the Apostacy the Apostle had in view in this scripture the See of Rome was all along designed.

Ellicott:

“That falling away” must undoubtedly imply that the persons so apostatising had formerly held (or, perhaps, still professed to hold) the Christian faith: men cannot fall from ground which they never occupied.

Manton:

Let us then be agreed of this notion of apostacy: which is evident, that it is a falling off from the obedience which we owe to our rightful Lord.

The apostasy mentioned in the text was . . . an apostasy of the visible church from him who is Lord of the church.

The apostasy from the Lord will be determined chiefly by these two things:

1. by undermining his authority
2. by destroying the interests of his kingdom
  - a. wherever there is a degeneration from the purity and simplicity of the gospel, the interests of Christ's kingdom are destroyed 2 Cor 11:3
  - b. the ancient, pure, apostolic Christianity doth only preserve the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world; there is no way of safety but by keeping there
  - c. we need to be exactly careful to keep close to the doctrine, worship, and discipline of the first gospel church; for if these had remained pure, Antichrist had never risen. Christ's institutions would have preserved his interests in the world; but as these were corrupted, the apostasy prevailed. When the faith of the gospel was turned into dead opinions and curious questions, if not direct errors, and the worship of the gospel was corrupted by giving divine honour to saints and angels, and turned into a theatrical pomp and the pageantry of empty ceremonies, which eclipse the majesty and splendour of it; and the discipline of the church into a temporal domination, and all is carried in the world by sides and interests, that Christianity looketh like another thing, a design calculated for the present world rather than a serious preparation for the world to come; then certainly there is an apostasy and a defection from Christ; however the corrupt manners of the church be varnished over with the name of Christianity, there is a degeneration questionless; and that is apostasy, in a mystery, such as this is, though not in open revolt from Christ.

Prelude: Trinity 263 "Psalm 19"

Camille: piano 1 - see attached in D

Noah: trumpet - see hymnal in E

Anna: clarinet - see hymnal in E

Sarah: piano 2 - see attached in D

Grace 124 "O Church, Arise"

Camille: flute - see attached in D with parts

Noah: trumpet - see attached in E

Anna: clarinet - see attached in E

Sarah: piano - play from Hymns of Grace in D

Trinity 9 "Psalm 150"

Camille: piano 1 - transpose

Noah: trumpet

Anna: clarinet

Sarah: sing

Trinity 403 "Not What My Hands Have Done"

Camille: flute

Noah: direct

Anna: piano

Sarah: sing

Trinity 719 "A Shelter in the Time of Storm"

Camille: sing

Noah: trumpet - from *Trinity* in F

Anna: sing

Sarah: piano 1 - from *Grace* in Eb