



"Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens."  
—J.R.R. Tolkien

25-Jul-25

## Apostasy and Faith

Disheartened by the extraordinary dangers and difficulties of the war, a Roman army lost courage. Against their general's wishes, they decided to retreat. Not willing to give in easily, the general appealed to his soldiers' [love](#) of country, their honor, and their oaths. He tried desperately to revive their courage. Although they trusted and admired him, they were not convinced and turned in desperate retreat. In a mountain pass where the soldiers had just finished clearing a gorge, the road was no more than a footpath between two gigantic rocks on one side and a cascading, foaming river on the other. The path was only wide enough for a single-file line of men to step.

As a last resort, the general lay himself down in the path, saying, "If you will retreat, it is over this body you go, trampling me to death beneath your feet." No one advanced. The soldiers decided that they would rather face their fierce enemy than trample the leader they respected and loved. Hesitating no longer, they wheeled around to resume their march, deeming it better to suffer and even endure death than to trample underfoot their devoted and patriotic leader.

Their fear and lack of foresight caused them to lose sight of their original goal, leading them to near-apostasy. In a secular sense, apostasy is

abandoning one's political party, principles, or cause. Ancient documents indicate that the word was used politically in reference to rebels. In the case of the Roman soldiers, for a moment, all had abandoned the cause. We typically refer to this type of apostasy as "desertion," "defection," or "abandonment."

Biblically, apostasy is rebellion against [God](#) or the abandonment of [faith](#) in God by those once enlightened by the truth. In the [Old Testament](#), it always relates to rebellion against God. In Israel, apostasy was a capital [offense](#). One who sacrificed to another god was stoned to death ([Deuteronomy 17:2-7](#)). If an entire city was implicated, its inhabitants were killed, and the city and its contents were burned and reduced to rubble ([Deuteronomy 13:13-18](#)). Incitement to apostasy was also punishable by death (verses 2-12). Anyone who gave his offspring to another god was likewise stoned to death ([Leviticus 20:2-3](#)).

In the New Testament, *apostasy* takes on the added meaning of "defection from the truth." The Greek word *apostasia* occurs in only two places: in [Acts 21:21](#), as "forsake," and in [II Thessalonians 2:3](#), as "[falling away](#)." In classical Greek, *apostasia* is a technical term for political revolt, defection, or rebellion, as in the Old Testament. Other words and phrases in the New Testament also express the idea of apostasy: "fall away," "lead away," "drawn away," "depart from the faith," and "follow destructive ways." All refer to rebelling against God and rejecting the truth.

God's church is cautioned to beware of the danger of apostasy. [II Thessalonians 2:1-3](#) records that Paul predicted the apostasy from the truth, and [Galatians 1:6](#) contains Paul's amazement that it had begun so soon. A persistent danger to the church, falling away is prophesied to increase in the latter times. Paul warns us not to be deceived by any means and that the apostasy must occur before the [return of Christ](#). Although apostasy occurs constantly, not until recently has it happened so extensively in God's church.

[I Timothy 4:1-2](#) warns that *Satan's influence* can lead to apostasy: ". . . in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."

*False teachers* encourage apostasy by seducing Christians from the purity of the word to other gospels. Peter tells us it was happening in his time: "[T] here will be false teachers among you. . . . And many will follow their destructive ways" ([II Peter 2:1-3](#)).

Apostasy is encouraged by *false brethren*. Today, some among the churches of God have their own agendas, promoting false ideas to the brethren and causing confusion ([Galatians 2:4](#)). A person who draws people away from the truth is self-seeking and full of pride. Peter also warns us not to be led away by such wicked apostates ([II Peter 3:17](#)).

Apostasy tends to increase during times of *persecution* ([Matthew 24:9-10](#)). The persecutions of early Christians forced many to deny the faith and to offer incense to a heathen deity or to blaspheme the name of Christ.

Apostasy can be caused by *temptation*. The Parable of the Sower mentions how those without a solid foundation in the truth believe only for a while and, in a time of temptation, fall away ([Luke 8:13](#)). Happy with the truth at first, they become discontent when it does not fit their lifestyle.

*Worldliness* brings about apostasy. In [James 4:4](#), James refers to anyone who is unfaithful to their covenant with God by neglecting their duty to Him and yielding themselves to the indulgence of their own lusts and passions. We, in effect, break our marriage covenant with God if we love [the world](#) more than we love Him (see [I John 2:15](#)). Apostasy due to worldliness consists of setting our hearts on amusement and gratification, in conforming to them, and in making them the object of our pursuit with the same spirit with which the world seeks them. Without a staunch resistance to the world's enticements, it is just as easy for a believer to be a friend of the world as for an unbeliever.

*Unfaithfulness* or *unbelief* brings about apostasy. Faithlessness leads to an evil heart of rebellion against God. The author of Hebrews refers to this as "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" ([Hebrews 3:12-13](#)). He later writes, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" ([Hebrews 11:6](#)).

Faithlessness, rebellion, and defection from the truth are forms of apostasy. When a person apostatizes, he tramples underfoot his Savior [Jesus Christ](#), who died so that our sins could be forgiven ([Hebrews 10:28-36](#)). Faith, obedience, and loyalty to God make it impossible for the seed of apostasy to germinate and develop into rebellion. God encourages us to endure the bombardment of [heresy](#) and to stand firm, doing His will and not our own. The faithful listed in Hebrews 11 avoided apostasy by faith and obedience ([Hebrews 11:33-40](#); [12:1-2](#)).

We should, therefore, take to heart the advice found in [Hebrews 10:36](#): "For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." And so, as Christian soldiers, we can follow our Captain into battle against the enemy.

- Martin G. Collins

---

## Church News & Special Announcements

We are saddened to report the death of **Cal Hunt**. Cal died peacefully at 1:20pm CDT. Funeral arrangements are still being worked out. Please remember **Shirley** and the rest of the family in your prayers. Thank you.

24-Jul-25

**Patrice (Trish) Matthes**, who visited the Fort Mill congregation several times, had a heart attack on July 4, 2025, after which she struggled for almost two weeks with no improvement. She was removed from the ventilator and died on Thursday, July 17.

Cards may be sent to her mother:

Patrice Matthes, c/o Karen  
201 Church Street  
Clio, SC 29525

20-Jul-25

---

## **New Transcripts**

### **[BS-AC20: Acts \(Part Twenty\)](#)**

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 07-Feb-89

### **[BS-PH05: Philippians \(Part Five\)](#)**

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 29-Aug-89

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Beware of False Prophets](#)**

by Martin G. Collins

False prophets promote the broad way, giving people what they want to hear. Prophets who falsely speak in God's name, prophesying lies, are particularly odious to God Almighty, causing people to go into captivity. The false prophets lead people away from God's way of life, causing them to forget His name, replacing God's truth with human tradition. Penalties were severe in Deuteronomy 13:1-5, proscribing the death penalty for falsehood. Christ warned against false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount and the Olivet prophecy, both from outside and inside the church, promising liberty by preaching against the Law of God. Even though the false prophets and teachers are subtle, they are easy to identify if one examines the fruit. The law of biogenesis demonstrates that good fruit cannot come from a bad tree. Even though they may be persuasive and gentle, promising liberty, they deliver depression and discouragement, and like wolves, desire to tear the flock to shreds.

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[God's Power: Our Shield Against Apostasy](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

As Christians, we realize that God is not only powerful, but He is also the

source of *all* power. How do we translate this understanding into practical action? John Ritenbaugh explains how we can tap into God's power to avoid slipping into apostasy.

---

## Featured Audio Schedule

### Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 25-Jul-25) will be **Acts (Part Nineteen)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday** (EST) and all day Saturday.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

---