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APOSTASY

#205

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WHAT IS APOSTASY?

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

IN the past, dear reader, there have been thousands who were just as confident that they had been genuinely saved and were truly trusting in the merits of the finished work of Christ to take them safely through to Heaven, as you may be. Nevertheless, they are now in the torments of Hell. Their confidence was a carnal one...They were too confident that their faith was a saving one to thoroughly, searchingly, frequently test it by the Scriptures, to discover whether or not it was bringing forth those fruits that are inseparable from the faith of God's elect. If they read an article like this, they proudly concluded that it belonged to someone else. So cocksure were they that they were born again so many years ago, they refused to heed the command of 2 Corinthians 13:5: "Prove your own selves." Now it is too late. They wasted their day of opportunity, and the "blackness of darkness" is their portion forever.

In view of this solemn and awful fact, the writer earnestly calls upon himself and each reader to get down before God and sincerely cry, "Search me, O God: reveal *me* to myself. If I am deceived, undeceive me ere¹ it be eternally

¹ ere – before.

too late. Enable me to measure myself faithfully by Thy Word, so that I may discover whether or not my heart has been renewed, whether I have abandoned every course of self-will and truly surrendered to Thee; whether I have so repented that I hate all sin and fervently long to be free from its power, loathe myself and seek diligently to deny myself; whether my faith is that which overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4) or whether it be only a mere notional thing which produces no godly living; whether I am a fruitful branch of the vine or only a cumberer² of the ground; in short, whether I be a new creature in Christ or only a painted hypocrite.” If I have an honest heart, then I am willing, yea anxious to face and know the real truth about myself.

Perhaps some readers are ready to say, “I already know the truth about myself. I believe what God’s Word tells me: I am a sinner with no good thing dwelling in me. My only hope is in Christ.” Yes, dear friend, but Christ saves His people *from* their sins. Christ sends His Holy Spirit into their hearts, so that they are radically changed from what they were previously. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the hearts of those He regenerates, and that love is manifested by a deep desire and sincere determination to please Him Who loves me. When Christ saves a soul, He saves not only from Hell, but from the *power* of sin. He delivers him from the *dominion* of Satan and from the love of the world. He delivers him from the fear of man, the lusts of the flesh, the love of self. True, He has not yet completed this blessed work. True, the sinful nature is not yet eradicated. But one who is saved has been delivered from the *dominion* of sin (Rom 6:14). Salvation is a supernatural thing that changes the heart, renews the will, transforms the life, so that it is evident to all around that a miracle of grace has been wrought...A faith that does not issue in godly living, in an obedient walk, in spiritual fruit, is not the faith of God’s elect. O my reader, I beg you to diligently and faithfully examine yourself by the light of God’s unerring Word. Claim not to be a *child* of Abraham, unless you do the *works* of Abraham (Joh 8:39).

What is apostasy? It is a making shipwreck of the faith (1Ti 1:19). It is the heart’s departure from the living God (Heb 3:13). It is a returning to and being overcome by the world, after a previous escape from its pollutions through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 2:20). There are various steps that precede it. First, there is a *looking back* (Luk 9:62), like Lot’s wife, who though she had outwardly left Sodom, yet her heart was still there. Second, there is a *drawing back* (Heb 10:38): the requirements of Christ are too exacting to any longer appeal to the heart. Third, there is a *turning back* (Joh 6:66): the path of godliness is too narrow to suit the lustings of the flesh. Fourth, there is a *falling back*, which is fatal: “That they might go and fall backward, and be broken” (Isa 28:13).

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, reprinted by Chapel Library.

A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author of *Studies in the Scriptures* and many books including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God*; born in Great Britain, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his homeland in 1934; born in Nottingham, England.

“Let us then be agreed of this notion of apostasy, which is evident: it is a falling off from the obedience that we owe to our rightful Lord.”—*Thomas Manton*

WHY SOME LEAVE CHRIST

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Will ye also go away?” — *John 6:67*

NO mischief that ever befalls our Christian communities is more lamentable than that which comes from the

² **cumberer** – that which clutters.

defection of the members. The heaviest sorrow that can wring a pastor's heart is such as comes from the perfidy³ of his most familiar friend. The direst calamity the Church can dread is not such as will arise from the assault of enemies *outside*, but from false brethren and traitors *within* the camp...

In all our churches, among the many who enlist, there are some who desert. They continue awhile, and then they go back to the world. The radical reason why they retract is an obvious incongruity.⁴ "They went out *from* us, but they were not *of* us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" (1Jo 2:19). The unconverted adherents to our fellowship are no loss to the Church when they depart. They are not a real loss, any more than the scattering of the chaff from the threshing-floor is a detriment⁵ to the wheat. Christ keeps the winnowing fan always going. His own preaching constantly sifted His hearers. Some were blown away because they were chaff. They did not really believe. By the ministry of the Gospel, by the order of Providence, by all the arrangements of divine government, the precious are separated from the vile, the dross is purged away from the silver [so] that the good seed and the pure metal may remain and be preserved. The process is always painful. It causes great searching of heart amongst those who abide faithful and occasions deep anxiety to gentle spirits of tender, sympathetic mold...I put it to myself. I put it to those who are the officers of the church. I put it to every member without exception: *Will ye also go away?*

...Why *do* [some] renounce the religious profession they once espoused? The fundamental reason is [lack] of grace, a lack of true faith, an absence of vital godliness. It is, however, the *outward* reasons that expose the *inward* apostasy of the heart from Christ of which I am anxious to treat.

WHY SOME LEAVE CHRIST: Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord's own day, who depart from Christ because they cannot bear His doctrine. Our Lord had more explicitly than on any former occasion declared the necessity of the soul's feeding upon Himself. They probably misunderstood His language, but they certainly took umbrage⁶ at His statement. Hence, there were those who said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (Joh 6:60). So they walked no more with Him.

There are many points and particulars in which the Gospel is offensive to human nature and revolting to the pride of the creature. It was not intended to please man. How can we attribute such a purpose to God? Why should He devise a Gospel to suit the whims of our poor fallen human nature? He intended to save men, but He never intended to gratify their depraved tastes. Rather doth He lay the axe to the root of the tree and cut down human pride. When God's servants are led to set forth some humbling doctrine, there are those who say, "Ah! I will not assent to that." They kick against any truth that wounds their prejudices.

What say you, brethren, to the claims of the Gospel on your allegiance? Should you discover that God's Word rebukes your favorite pleasure or contradicts your cherished convictions, will you forthwith take umbrage and go away? Nay, but if your hearts are right with Christ, you will be prepared to welcome all His teaching and yield obedience to all His precepts. Only prove it to be Christ's teaching, and the right-minded professor is ready to receive it. That which is transparent on the face of Scripture he will cordially accept, as he says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa 8:20). As for that which is merely inferred and argued from the general drift of Scripture, the true heart will not be hasty to reject, but patient to investigate, like the Bereans, who "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Act 17:11). Oh! That the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly! God forbid that any of us should ever turn aside offended because of Him, His blessed person, His holy example, or His sacred teaching! May we be ever ready to believe what He says and prompt to do what He commands!...

Others there are who desert the Savior for the sake of gain. Many have been entangled in that snare...If you would make money—and there need be nothing sinful in that—do let it be made honestly. Never let riches be pursued under the presence of religion. Sell your wares and find a market for your merchandise; but do not sell Christ nor barter a heavenly birthright for a worthless bribe. Put what goods you please into your shop window, but do not put a...hypocritical expression on your face or "wear a holy leer" with a view of turning godliness into

³ **perfidy** – betrayal.

⁴ **incongruity** – lack of conformity; something out of place in its context.

⁵ **detriment** – loss; damage.

⁶ **umbrage** – a feeling of anger caused by being offended.

gain. God save us from that arrant⁷ villainy! May it never have a footing in our midst! Does any man join a church for the sake of the respectability it implies, for the standing it may give him, or for the credit he may get? He will soon find that it does not answer his purpose. Then away he will go. The graver probability is that he will be thrust out with shame.

Some leave Christ and go away terrified by persecution. Nowadays it is supposed that there is no such thing. But that is a mistake...Godless husbands play the part of petty tyrants and will not permit their wives the enjoyment of religion, but make their lives bitter with a galling⁸ bondage. Employers full often wreak malice on servants whose piety towards God is their sole cause of offense. Worse still, there are working men who consider themselves intelligent, who cannot allow their fellow-workman liberty to go to a place of worship without sneers, jeers, and cruel mocking. In many cases, the mirth of the workshop is never louder than when it is turned against a believer in Christ. They count it rare fun to hunt a man who cares for the salvation of his soul. They call themselves “Englishmen,” but certainly, they are no credit to their country. Look at the base-born, ill-bred cowards.

Yonder is an *atheist*: he is raving about his rights because the magistrate will not believe him on his oath. He claims liberty of conscience to be a heathen himself, but denies his comrade’s right to be a Christian. Look at that *little party of British workmen*: they belong to the Sabbath desecration society. They are petitioning Parliament to open museums and theaters on Sundays. At the same time, they are hounding to death a poor fellow who prefers going to chapel. They air their own self-respect by the oaths they utter, while they betray their self-abasement by the scorn they vent on those who presume to sing a hymn. They hail the drunkard as a chum and scout⁹ the sober man as a fiend...God give you grace to bear such persecutions as these! If they cut us to the quick, may we learn to bear them with equanimity,¹⁰ and even to rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for the Sav-ior’s sake!

Some of us have had to run the gauntlet for many years. What we have said has been constantly misrepresented. What we have endeavored to do has been misjudged and our motives have been misunderstood. Yet here we are, as happy as anybody out of heaven. We have not been injured by any or all the calumnies¹¹ that have been heaped upon us. Our foes would have crushed us but, blessed be God, He cheered us often when we were cast down. The Lord give you, in like manner, strength of mind and courage of heart to bear the trial manfully! Then you will care no more for the laughter and the sneers of men than you do for the noise of those migratory birds high overhead, which you hear on an autumn evening as they are making their weary journey to a distant clime. Take heart, man. Fear God, and face your accusers. True courage grows strong on opposition. Never think of deserting the army of Christ. Least of all should you play the coward because of the insolence of some ill-mannered bully. Let not your faith be vanquished by such scoffing...

Anon,¹² there are people who forsake true religion out of sheer levity.¹³ I know not how to account for some men’s defections. If you take up the list of wrecks, you will notice some that have gone down through collisions and others through striking upon rocks. But sometimes you meet with a vessel “foundered¹⁴ at sea.” How it happened no one knows. The owner himself cannot understand it. It was a calm day, and there was a cloudless sky when the vessel sank. There are some professors who, concerning faith, have made shipwreck under such apparently easy circumstances—so free from trial, so exempt from temptation—that we have not seen anything to awaken anxiety on their behalf; yet all of a sudden they have foundered. We are startled and amazed!

I remember one that fell into a gross sin, of whom a brother unwisely said, “If that man is not a Christian, I am not.” His prayers had certainly been sweet. Many a time they have melted me down before the throne of grace; and yet the life of God could not have been in his soul, for he lived and died in flagrant vice and was impenitent to the last. Such cases I can only attribute to a sort of levity that can be charmed with a sermon or a play; take a pew at the chapel or a box at the opera with equal nonchalance;¹⁵ and eagerly follow the excitement of the hour, “everything by turns, and nothing long.”¹⁶ Unstable as water, they shall not excel (Gen 49:4). At the spur of a

⁷ **arrant** – thoroughgoing; extreme example of.

⁸ **galling** – irritating; offensive to the mind or spirit.

⁹ **scout** – mock at.

¹⁰ **equanimity** – steadiness of mind under stress.

¹¹ **calumnies** – false accusations; malicious misrepresentations.

¹² **anon** – from time to time.

¹³ **levity** – instability.

¹⁴ **foundered** – sunk.

¹⁵ **nonchalance** – casual lack of concern.

¹⁶ **Lord Byron** (1788–1824) – English poet; a leading figure of the Romantic Movement.

moment, they profess Christianity; they do not espouse it; and then without troubling themselves to renounce it, they drop off into infidelity...You spring up soon, and suddenly you wither. Hardly is the seed sown before the sprout appears. What a wonderful harvest you promise! But ah! No sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than because there is no earth, the good seed withers away...Never cease to pray that you may be rooted and grounded, established and built up in Christ, so that when the floods come and the winds blow, you may not fall with a great destruction, as that house fell which was built upon the sand (Mat 7:24-27).

And, oh! How many leave Christ for the sake of sensual enjoyments! I will not enlarge upon this. Certain, however, it is that the pleasures of sin for a season fascinate their minds until they sacrifice their souls at the shrine of sordid vanity. For a merry dance, a wanton amusement, or a transient joy that would not bear reflection, they have renounced the pleasures that never pall,¹⁷ the immortal hopes that never fail, and turned their backs upon that blessed Savior Who gives and feeds the tastes for joys unspeakable, for joys of glory full.

In our pastoral oversight of a church like this, we have painful evidence that a considerable number gradually grow cold. The elders' reports of the absentees reiterate the vain excuses for non-attendance. One has so many children. The distance is too great for another. When they joined the church their family was just as large, and the distance was just the same. But the household cares become more irksome¹⁸ when the concern for religion begins to flag, and the fatigue of travelling increases when their zeal for the house of God falters. The elders fear they are growing cold. No actual transgression can we detect, but there is a gradual declension over which we grieve. I *dread* that cold-heartedness. It steals so insensibly, yet so surely over the entire frame. I do not say that it is worse than open sin. It cannot be. Yet it is more insidious.¹⁹ A flagrant delinquency would startle one as a fit does a patient; but a slow process of backsliding may steal like paralysis over a person without awakening suspicion. Like the sleep that comes over men in the frozen regions, if they yield to it, they will never wake again...

Unsound doctrine occasions many to apostatize. There is always plenty of that about. Deceivers will beguile the weak. Some have been led aside by modern doubt. Modest infidelity has its partisans. They begin cautiously by reading works with a view to answer scientific or intellectual skepticism. They read a little more and dive a little deep-er into the turbid²⁰ stream because they feel well able to stand against the insidious influence. They go on until at last they are staggered. They do not repair to those who could help their scruples; but they continue to flounder on until at last they have lost their footing; and he that said he was a believer has ended in stark atheism, doubting even the existence of a God. Oh! That those who are well taught would be content with their teaching! Why meddle with heresies? What can they do but pollute your minds?...Why should you be so unwise as to go through pools of foul teaching merely because you think it easy to cleanse yourself of its pollution? Such trifling is dangerous. When you begin to read a book and find it pernicious, put it aside. Someone may upbraid you for not reading it all through. But why should you?...One sentence of some books ought to be quite enough for a sensible man to reject the whole mass. Let those that can relish such meat have it, but I have a taste for better food. *Keep to the study of the Word of God.* If it be your duty to expose these evils, encounter them bravely with prayer to God to help you. But if not, as a humble believer in Jesus, what business have you to taste and test such noxious fare, when it is exposed in the market?

From *Abscinding and Apostasy*, published on Thursday, March 22, 1917.

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892): Influential English Baptist minister; history's most widely read preacher (outside the Bible); born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.

¹⁷ **pall** – become unsatisfying.

¹⁸ **irksome** – troublesome.

¹⁹ **insidious** – spreading harmfully in a subtle way.

²⁰ **turbid** – murky.

PARTIAL OR FINAL APOSTASY?

Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754)

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”—John 6:66

WHEREIN lies the difference between the partial and temporary defections of the godly and these total, final, and irrecoverable apostasies of hypocrites and temporary believers? Unto which I answer

1. **The believer, when he is left to backslide or to fall into any sin, howls and groans under it.** It lies heavy on him, like a burden too heavy for him to bear. “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me” (Psa 40:12). They can never enjoy themselves with satisfaction until they be recovered again. An instance of this we have in the Apostle Peter, after he had been left to make that foul step of defection in denying Christ with curses and imprecations.²¹ After Christ gave him but a look, he went out and wept bitterly. The same we see in David (Psa 51). After he had been guilty of murder and adultery in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba, how doth he lament and bewail his folly! And that which principally touches them is not so much the penal, as the *moral* evil of their defection. They are not so much grieved that they themselves suffer, as that God is dishonored and religion wounded by their means, as we see in David. “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psa 51:4).

2. **They are never at rest or ease until they have the guilt and filth of their sin expiated²² and washed away by the blood and Spirit of the Lord Jesus.** All the world will not quiet their consciences until this be obtained. “O,” says David, after he had made this foul step, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psa 51:2). And again, “Purge me with hyssop,²³ and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (51:7). The hypocrite, when he falls, satisfies the clamors of his conscience either by extenuating his sin or by multiplying his duties...But he never runs to Christ to have his conscience sprinkled from dead works.

3. **The believer, after he has fallen, doth not satisfy himself with a turning from sin unto God, but he must have some reviving intimations of God’s favor and reconciled countenance.** As David, “Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice” (51:8). Though all the world should fawn²⁴ upon him, yet it will not please him, unless he gets a smile from God Himself.

4. **The [believer’s fall] leads him to bewail the corruption and depravation²⁵ of his nature.** He traces the streams to the fountain, sits down there, and weeps over it as the cause of all his defections and backslidings from God, as David did. “Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me” (51:5). [He] looks up to God for a cast of renewing grace, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (51:10). Hypocrites bewail the loss of their reputation more than they do their sin or the depravation of their nature.

5. **When believers fall, they come under fresh engagements through grace to walk more closely with God than ever they have done before.** [They] endeavor to be more serviceable to Him in their generation than ever, as David. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation...Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee” (51:12-13).

6. **As burnt bairns²⁶ dread the fire, they are afraid of falling into the same sins again.** For this end, [they] indent²⁷ with God, not in their own, but only in His strength to keep them, as David. “Uphold me with thy free spirit” (51:12). And again elsewhere, “Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not” (Psa 17:5). And, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!” (Psa 119:5). Now, from these marks of the partial falls of the godly, ye

²¹ **imprecations** – blasphemies.

²² **expiated** – wiped out.

²³ **hyssop** – an aromatic shrub, generally considered to be the Syrian marjoram, used by the Jews for Passover rites, the purification of lepers, plague, and at the red heifer sacrifice.

²⁴ **fawn** – lavish caresses on.

²⁵ **depravation** – moral perversion.

²⁶ **bairns** – children.

²⁷ **indent** – enter into an agreement.

may easily gather the difference between them and the damnable apostasy and total defection of hypocrites and reprobates.

From “The Backslider Characterised” in *The Whole Works of the Late Rev. Ebenezer Erskine*, Vol. 1, reprinted by Tentmaker Publications.

Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754): Scottish divine; born in Dryburgh, Scotland.

APOSTASY AND HEBREWS 6:4-6

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”—Hebrews 6:4-6

THE passage that is now to occupy our attention is one of the most solemn in the Hebrews’ Epistle, yea, to be met with anywhere in the New Testament. Probably few regenerate souls have read it thoughtfully without being moved to fear and trembling. Careless professors have frequently been rendered uneasy in conscience as they have heard its awe-inspiring language. It speaks of a class of persons who had been highly privileged, who had been singularly favored, but who, so far from having improved their opportunities, had wretchedly perverted them; who had brought shame and reproach on the cause of Christ; and who were in such a hopeless condition that it was “impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” Well does it become each one of us to lift up his heart to God earnestly, beseeching Him to prevent us making such a shipwreck of the faith...

The chief difficulty connected with our passage is to make sure of the class of persons who are there in view. Is the Holy Spirit here describing regenerated or unregenerated souls? The next thing is to ascertain what is meant by, “If they shall fall away.” The last, what is denoted by “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” Anticipating our exposition, we are fully assured that the “falling away” that is here spoken of signifies *a deliberate, complete, and final repudiation of Christ*—a sin for which there is no forgiveness...

...To prepare the way for our exposition of these verses, the contents of which have so sorely puzzled many, let us recall once more the condition of soul into which these Hebrew Christians had fallen. They had “become dull of hearing” (5:11), “unskilful in the word of righteousness” (5:13), unable to masticate²⁸ “strong meat” (5:14). This state was fraught with the most dangerous consequences. “The Hebrews had become lukewarm, negligent, and inert.”²⁹ The Gospel, once clearly seen and dearly loved by them, had become to them dull and vague; the persecutions and contempt of their countrymen a grievous burden, under which they groaned and under which they did not enjoy fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Darkness, doubt, gloom, indecision, and consequently a walk in which the power of Christ’s love was not manifest, characterized them. Now, if they continued in this state, what else could be the result but apostasy? Forgetfulness, if continued, must end in rejection, apathy in antipathy, unfaithfulness in infidelity.

“Such was their danger. And if they succumbed³⁰ to it, their state was hopeless. No other Gospel remains to be preached, no other power to rescue and raise them. They had heard and known the voice which saith, ‘Come unto me...and I will give you rest’ (Mat 11:28). They had professed to believe in the Lord Who died for sinners and to have chosen Him as their Savior and Master. And now they were forgetting and forsaking the Rock of their

²⁸ **masticate** – chew.

²⁹ **inert** – sluggish; inactive.

³⁰ **succumbed** – yielded to an overwhelming desire.

Salvation. If they deliberately and willfully continued in this state, they were in danger of final impenitence and hardness of heart.”³¹

“A clear and growing faith in heavenly things was needed to preserve Jewish Christians from relapse. To return to Judaism was to give up Christ, Who had left their house ‘desolate’ (Mat 23:38). It was to fall from grace and place themselves not only under the general curse of the Law, but that particular imprecation³² that had brought the guilt of Jesus’ blood on the reprobate and blinded nation of His murderers.”³³ It should be pointed out, however, that it is just as easy and the attraction is just as real for a Gentile Christian to return to that world out of which the Lord has called him, as it was for a Jewish Christian to go back again to Judaism. And just in proportion as the Christian fails to walk with God daily, so does the world obtain power over his heart, mind, and life; and a continuance in worldliness is fraught with the most direful and fatal consequences...

Three things claim our careful attention in coming closer to our passage: The persons here spoken of, the sin they commit, the doom pronounced upon them. In considering the persons spoken of, it is of first importance to note that the Apostle does not say, “*us* who were once enlightened,” nor even “*you*”; instead, he says “*those*.” In sharp contrast from them, he says to the Hebrews, “Beloved, we are persuaded better things of *you*”...It is scarcely accurate to designate as “mere professors” those described in verses 4-5. They were a class who had enjoyed great privileges, beyond any such as now accompany the preaching of the Gospel. Those here portrayed are said to have had five advantages, which is in contrast [to] the six things enumerated in verses 1-2, which things belong to man in the flesh under Judaism...Yet were they not true Christians. This is evident from what is *not* said. Observe: they were not spoken of as God’s elect, as those for whom Christ died, as those who were born of the Spirit. They are not said to be justified, forgiven, accepted in the Beloved. Nor is anything said of their faith, love, or obedience. Yet these are the very things that distinguish a real child of God.

First, they had been “enlightened.” The Sun of righteousness had shone with healing in His wings, and as Matthew 4:16 says, “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” Unlike the heathen, whom Christ in the days of His flesh visited not, those who came under the sound of His voice were wondrously and gloriously illumined.

The Greek word for “enlightened” here signifies “to give light or knowledge by teaching.” It is so rendered by the Septuagint³⁴ in Judges 13:8; 2 Kings 12:2; 17:27. The Apostle Paul uses it for “to make manifest” or “bring to light” in 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 1:10. Satan blinds the minds of those who believe not, lest “the light of the gospel should shine unto them” (2Co 4:4), that is, give the knowledge of it. Thus, “enlightened” here means to be instructed in the doctrine of the Gospel, so as to have a clear apprehension of it. In the parallel passage in 10:26, the same people are said to have “received the knowledge of the truth” (*cf.* also 2 Peter 2:20-21). It is, however, only a natural knowledge of spiritual things, such as is acquired by outward hearing or reading, just as one may be enlightened by taking up the special study of one of the sciences. It falls far short of that spiritual enlightenment which transforms (2Co 3:18). An illustration of an unregenerate person being “enlightened,” as here, is found in the case of Balaam (Num 24:4).

Second, they had “tasted of the heavenly gift.” To “taste” is to have a personal experience of, in contrast from mere report. “Tasting does not include eating, much less digesting and turning into nourishment what is so tasted; for its nature being only thereby discerned, it may be refused, yea, though we like its relish and savor on some other consideration. The persons here described then are those who have to a certain degree understood and relished the revelation of mercy. Like the stony-ground hearers, they have received the Word with a transient³⁵ joy.”³⁶ The “tasting” is in contrast from the “eating” of John 6:50–56.

Opinion is divided as to whether the “heavenly gift” refers to the Lord Jesus or the person of the Holy Spirit.³⁷ Perhaps it is not possible for us to be dogmatic on the point. Really, the difference is without a distinction; for the

³¹ **Adolf Saphir** (1831-1891) – Hungarian Jewish preacher and commentator.

³² **imprecation** – curse.

³³ **Arthur Pridham** (1815-1879) – Brethren author of a commentary on Hebrews.

³⁴ **Septuagint** – a Greek translation of the Old Testament commonly abbreviated as LXX, which derives from its alleged “seventy” translators; made approximately 3rd century BC, it was the Bible of the early church.

³⁵ **transient** – lasting a very short time.

³⁶ **John Owen** (1616-1683) – Puritan theologian who produced a massive, seven-volume commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

³⁷ **John Owen** viewed it as the “Holy Spirit”; **William Gouge** (1575-1653)—“faith”; **John Gill** (1697-1771)—“Jesus Christ”; **John Brown** (1784-1858)—“the Gospel.”

Spirit is here to glorify Christ, as He came from the Father by Christ as His ascension “Gift” to His people. If the reference be to the Lord Jesus, John 3:16, 4:10, etc., would be pertinent references; if to the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17. Personally, we rather incline to the latter. This Divine Gift is here said to be “heavenly” because [it is] from Heaven and leading to Heaven in contrast [with] Judaism (*cf.* Act 2:2; 1Pe 1:12). Of this “Gift,” these apostates had “tasted” or had an experience of. Compare Matthew 27:34 where “tasting” is opposed to actual drinking. Those here in view had had an acquaintance with the Gospel, as to gain such a measure of its blessedness as to greatly aggravate their sin and doom. An illustration of this is found in Matthew 13:20-21.

Third, they were “made partakers of the Holy Spirit.” First, it should be pointed out that the Greek word for “partakers” here is a different one from that used in Colossians 1:12 and 2 Peter 1:4, where real Christians are in view. The word here simply means “companions,” referring to what is external rather than internal. It is to be observed that this item is placed in the center of the five, and this because it describes the animating principle of the other four, which are all effects. These apostates had never been “born of the Spirit” (Joh 3:6), still less were their bodies His “temples” (1Co 6:19). Nor do we believe this verse teaches that the Holy Spirit had at any time wrought within them, otherwise Philippians 1:6 would be contravened.³⁸ It means that they had shared in the benefit of His supernatural operations and manifestations: “The place was shaken” (Act 4:31) illustrates. We quote below from Dr. J. Brown:

“It is highly probable that the inspired writer refers primarily to the miraculous gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit by which the primitive dispensation of Christianity was administered. These gifts were by no means confined to those who were ‘transformed by the renewing of their minds.’ The words of our Lord in Matthew 7:22-23 and of Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 seem to intimate that the possession of these unrenewed men was not very uncommon in that age. At any rate, they plainly show that their possession and an unregenerate state were by no means incompatible.”

Fourth, “And have tasted the good word of God.” “I understand by this expression the promise of God respecting the Messiah, the sum and substance of all. It deserves notice that this promise is by way of eminence³⁹ termed by Jeremiah ‘that good word’ (33:14). To ‘taste,’ then, this ‘good word of God,’ is to experience that God has been faithful to His promise—to enjoy, so far as an unconverted man can enjoy, the blessings and advantages that flow from that promise being fulfilled. To ‘taste the good word of God,’ seems just to enjoy the advantages of the new dispensation.”⁴⁰ Further confirmation that the Apostle is here referring to that which these apostates had witnessed of the fulfillment of God’s promise is obtained by comparing Jeremiah 29:10: “After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.”

Observe how studiously the Apostle still keeps to the word *taste*, the better to enable us to identify them. They could not say with Jer-emiah, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them” (15:16). “It is as though he said, I speak not of those who have received nourishment; but of such as have so far tasted it, as that they ought to have desired it as ‘sincere milk’ and grown thereby.”⁴¹ A solemn example of one who merely “tasted” the good Word of God is found in Mark 6:20: “For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

Fifth, “And the powers of the world to come” or “age to come.” The reference here is to the new dispensation that was to be ushered in by Israel’s Messiah according to O. T. predictions. It corresponds with “these last days” of Hebrews 1:2 and is in contrast [with] the “time past” or Mosaic economy. Their Messiah was none other than the “mighty God” (Isa 9:6), and wondrous and glorious, stupendous and unique were His miraculous works. These “powers” of the new Age are mentioned in Hebrews 2:4...Of these mighty “powers” these apostates had “tasted” or had an experience of. They had been personal witnesses of the miracles of Christ and of the wonders that followed His ascension, when such glorious manifestations of the Spirit were given. Thus, they were “without excuse.” Convincing and conclusive evidence had been set before them, but there had been no answering faith in their hearts. A solemn example of this is found in John 11:47-48.

³⁸ **contravened** – contradicted.

³⁹ **eminence** – distinguished superiority.

⁴⁰ **John Brown of Edinburgh (1784–1858)** – Presbyterian author of a commentary on Hebrews.

⁴¹ **Owen**

“If they shall fall away.” The Greek word here is very strong and emphatic, even stronger than the one used in Matthew 7:27, where it is said of the house built on the sand, “and great was the fall thereof.” It is a *complete falling away*, a total abandonment of Christianity that is here in view. It is a willful turning of the back on God’s revealed truth, an utter repudiation of the Gospel. It is making “shipwreck of the faith” (1Ti 1:19). This terrible sin is not committed by a mere nominal professor, for he has nothing really to fall away from, save an empty name. The class here described are such as had had their minds enlightened, their consciences stirred, their affections moved to a considerable degree, and yet who were never brought from death unto life. Nor is it *backsliding* Christians who are in view. It is not simply “fall into sin,” this or that sin. The greatest “sin” that a regenerated man can possibly commit is the personal denial of Christ: Peter was guilty of this, yet was he “renewed again unto repentance.” It is the total renunciation of all the distinguishing truths and principles of Christianity, and this not secretly, but openly, which constitutes apostasy.

“If they shall fall away.” “This is scarcely a fair translation. It has been said that the Apostle did not here assert that such persons did or do ‘fall away’; but that if they did—a supposition which, however, could never be realized—then the consequence would be they could not be ‘renewed again unto repentance.’ The words literally rendered are ‘and have fallen away’ or ‘yet have fallen.’ The Apostle obviously intimates that such persons might and that such persons *did* ‘fall away.’ By ‘falling away,’ we are plainly to understand what is commonly called *apostasy*. This does not consist in an occasional falling into actual sin, however gross and aggravated; nor in the renunciation of some of the principles of Christianity, even though those should be of considerable importance; but in an open, total, determined renunciation of all the constituent⁴² principles of Christianity and a return to a false religion, such as that of unbelieving Jews or heathens, or to open infidelity and open godlessness.”⁴³

“It is impossible...if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.” Four questions here call for answer. What is meant by “renewed unto repentance”? What is signified by “renewed again unto repentance”? Why is such an experience “impossible”? To whom is this “impossible”? Repentance signifies a change of mind: Matthew 21:29 and Romans 11:29 establish this. It is more than a mental act, the conscience also being active, leading to contrition and self-condemnation (Job 42:6). In the unregenerate, it is simply the workings of nature; in the children of God, it is wrought by the Holy Spirit. The latter is *evangelical*, being one of the things that “accompany salvation.” The former is not so, being the “sorrow of the world,” which “worketh death” (2Co 7:10). This kind of “repentance” or remorse receives most solemn exemplification in the case of Judas (Mat 27:3, 5). Such was the repentance of these apostates...

But what is meant by “renewing unto repentance”? “To be ‘renewed’ is a figurative expression for denoting a change, a great change, and a change for the better. To be ‘renewed’ so as to change a person’s mind is expressive of an important and advantageous alteration of opinion, character, and service. And such an alteration the persons referred to had undergone at a former period. They were once in a state of ignorance respecting the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, and they had been ‘enlightened.’ They had once known not of the excellency and beauty of Christian truth, and they had been made to ‘taste of the heavenly gift.’ They once misunderstood the prophecies respecting the Messiah and were unaware of their fulfillment, and of course were strangers to that energetic influence that the N. T. revelation puts forth. They had been made to see that that ‘good word’ was fulfilled and had been made partakers of the external privileges and been subjected to the peculiar energies of the new order of things. Their view, feelings, and circumstances were materially changed. How great the difference between an ignorant, bigoted Jew, and the person described in the preceding passage! He had become, as it were, a different man. He had not indeed become, in the sense of the Apostle, a ‘new creature.’ His mind had not been so changed as unfeignedly⁴⁴ to believe ‘the truth as it is in Jesus’; but still, a great and, so far as it went, a thorough change had taken place.”⁴⁵

Now it is impossible to “renew again unto repentance” those who have totally abandoned the Christian revelation. Some things are “impossible” with respect unto the nature of God, as that He cannot lie or pardon sin without satisfaction to His justice. Other things that are possible to God’s nature are rendered “impossible” by His decrees or purpose (*see* 1 Samuel 15:28-29). Still other things are “possible” or “impossible” with respect to the rule

⁴² **constituent** – essential.

⁴³ **Brown**

⁴⁴ **unfeignedly** – with sincerity.

⁴⁵ **Brown**

or order of all things God has appointed. For example, there cannot be faith apart from hearing the Word (Rom 10:13–17). “When in things of duty God hath neither expressed command thereon, nor appointed means for the performance of them, they are to be looked upon then as impossible [as, for instance, there is no salvation apart from repentance, Luke 13:3 (A.W.P.)] and then, with respect unto us, they are so absolutely and so to be esteemed. And this is the ‘impossibility’ here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavor, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promise to assist us in it. It is therefore that which we have no reason to look after, attempt, or expect, as being not possible by any law, rule, or constitution of God...

“Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.” This is brought in to show the aggravation of their awful crime and the impossibility of their being renewed again unto repentance. By renouncing their Christian profession, they declared Christ to be an Imposter. Thus, they were irreclaimable.⁴⁶ To attempt any further reasoning with them would only be casting pearls before swine. With this verse should be carefully compared the parallel passage in 10:26-29. These apostates had “received the knowledge of the truth,” though not a saving knowledge of it. Afterward they sinned “willfully”: there was a deliberate and open disavowal of the truth. The nature of their particular sin is termed a “treading under foot the Son of God (*something which no real Christian ever does*) and counting (*esteeming*) the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,” that is, looking upon the One Who hung on the Cross as a common malefactor.⁴⁷ For such, there “remain-eth no more sacrifice for sins.” Their case is hopeless as far as man is concerned; and the writer believes, such are abandoned by God also.

“Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” “They thus identify themselves with His crucifiers—they entertained and avowed sentiments that, were He on earth and in their power, would induce them to crucify Him. They exposed Him to infamy, made a public example of Him. They did more to dishonor Jesus Christ than His murderers did. They never professed to acknowledge His divine mission; but these apostates had made such a profession—they had made a kind of trial of Christianity and, after trial, had rejected it.”⁴⁸

Such a warning was needed and well-calculated to stir up the slothful Hebrews. Under the O. T. economy, by means of types and prophecies, they had obtained glimmerings of truth as to Christ, called “the word of the beginning of Christ.” Under those shadows and glimmerings they had been reared, not knowing their full import until they had been blessed with the full light of the Gospel, here called “perfection.” The danger to which they were exposed was that of receding from the ground where Christianity placed them and relaxing to Judaism. To do so meant to re-enter that House that Christ had left “desolate” (Mat 23:38) and would be to join forces with His murderers, and thus “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh,” and by their apostasy “put him to an open (*public*) shame”...

Taking the passage as a whole, it needs to be remembered that all who had professed to receive the Gospel were not born of God: the Parable of the Sower shows that. Intelligence might be informed, conscience searched, natural affections stirred, and yet there be “no root” in them. All is not gold that glitters.

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Fathers and mothers, watch over your children. Keep them from the world. Train them up for the world to come. Draw out their young hearts in admiration of the coming glory, so that earth’s vanities shall fade from their eye. Be careful as to what books or magazines they read. Discriminate between the useful and the useless, between the wholesome and the poisonous. Lead them not into temptation. As the world goes on in its apostasy from God and its deification of humanity, its snares will become more subtle and its falsehoods more beautiful, especially for the young heart and eye. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life. No amount of “progress” or “culture” or “liberality” can make that gate wider or that way broader, either for yourselves or your children.—*Horatius Bonar*

⁴⁶ **irreclaimable** – impossible to call back to right ways.

⁴⁷ **malefactor** – criminal.

⁴⁸ **Brown**

THE EVIL OF APOSTASY

Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754)

Is it so that many of Christ's pretended disciples do, some time or other, fall totally and finally away from Him? Then let me exhort and persuade all hearing me, but especially you who have been lifting up your hands to Him at a communion table and professing to be His disciples by laying your hands on a slain Redeemer, to endeavor firmness and stability in cleaving to Christ and His way...To enforce this exhortation, consider *first* the evil of apostasy either in part or in whole.

1. **It is a provocation of the highest nature.** And there are especially two evils in it, which cannot but awaken divine resentment, viz., *treachery* and *ingratitude*. 1st, *There is treachery in it*. What husband would take it well, if his wife should abandon him and follow after other lovers? My friends, you have been taking God for your husband in a solemn manner before angels and men. Will it not be treachery in the highest degree to go and prostitute your souls unto sin, His greatest enemy? Will not this cast a calumny and reproach upon God, as if others were better than He? This will make Him say, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" (Jer 2:5). "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee?" (Mic 6:3). 2dly, *There is ingratitude in it also*. It was a very cutting word that Christ had to His disciples..."Will ye also leave me?" The same is He saying to every one of you: "Will ye also go away, after such proofs of My kindness, after such repeated vows and obligations?" From all [this], it is evident that apostasy is a provocation of the highest nature.

2. **Your backsliding will give a deep wound to religion and bring up a reproach upon the good ways of God.** You have been owning Him as your Lord and Master and declaring before the world that you think His service the best service, His wages the best wages; that one day in His courts is better than a thousand (Psa 84:10). Now, if after all you backslide, will not the world conclude that you have not found that in His service that you expected? Thus, others will be scared from the good ways of the Lord.

1. *You will grieve the hearts of the godly, whose hearts God would not grieve.* And it is a dangerous thing to offend one of His little ones. It were better for you that "a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones" (Luk 17:2).

2. *If ye shall apostatize in whole and slide back with a perpetual backsliding, it will be a prelude of your eternal banishment and separation from the presence of God.* God's soul takes no pleasure in [such] backsliders, and therefore they can never have access into His gracious presence. Consequently, [they] shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

3. *If ye be believers and apostatize in part, ye shall put a whip in God's hand to chastise you.* If ye shall after this turn careless in your walk, more remiss in duty, less frequent, less fervent, less lively than before, ye may assure yourselves that ye shall not go unpunished. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amo 3:2). "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments...then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (Psa 89:30-31).

Secondly, consider some great advantages of stability in cleaving to Christ and standing firm to His cause and interest.

1. *It will furnish you much inward peace and tranquility of mind.* "Great peace have they which love thy law" (Psa 119:165). God tells Israel that, if they had cleaved unto Him and His way, their peace should have been as a river and their righteousness as the waves of the sea (Isa 66:12).

2. *It will glorify God and reflect a luster upon religion.* Make the world conclude ye serve a good Master. Hence is that of Christ, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Mat 5:16).

3. *As backsliding strikes a damp upon the spirit at the approaches of death, so stability of heart in the Lord's way affords courage and confidence through Christ upon the approach of that grim messenger of the Lord of hosts.* Hence is that of

Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..." (2Ti 4:7-8).

4. *The reward of grace is insured in Christ to the steadfast soul.* "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58). Remember that your title to the reward comes in by virtue of your union with Christ; and, O, how glorious is that reward the steadfast soul is entitled to through Him! It has a *kingdom* secured to it: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; And I appoint unto you a kingdom" (Luk 22:29). A *throne*: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev 3:21). A crown is secured, a *crown of life*: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev 2:10). A *crown of glory*: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1Pe 5:4). A *crown of righteousness*, which is laid up for all that keep the faith and "that love his appearing" (2Ti 4:8). A crown of joy, yea, a crown of everlasting joy shall be "upon their heads...and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa 35:10).

I conclude with two or three advices.

1. *Take care that the foundation be well laid upon the everlasting Rock Jesus Christ.* For this is the foundation that God hath laid in Zion, and another foundation can no man lay. Ye must be cemented to this foundation by the Spirit and faith, otherwise ye can never stand in a day of trial; for your root being rottenness, your "blossom shall go up as the dust" (Isa 5:24). The house built upon the sand fell when the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon it; but the house founded upon this Rock shall stand out against the utmost efforts of the gates of hell (Mat 7:24-27).

2. *Maintain an everlasting jealousy over your own hearts.* For "he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pro 28:26), considering that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). Particularly take heed of the workings and sproutings of the bitter root of unbelief, which causes to depart from the living God (Heb 3:12).

3. *Keep your eyes upon the promises of persevering grace,* particularly that [of] Jeremiah 32:40: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." If you plead and improve this promise by faith, it is impossible ye can draw back. For it is "impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18). God stands on both sides of the covenant to fulfill both His *and* our part of the same. Therefore, plead that ye may fulfill His in you, that He would keep you by His power through faith unto salvation (1Pe 1:5).

4. *Keep a steady eye on Christ, the blessed Mediator of the covenant.* Eye Him as the storehouse and fountain of all your supplies of grace and strength. For it is out "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Eye Him as your Captain to fight all your battles against sin and Satan; for He has "spoiled principalities and powers" (Col 2:15); and if ever we overcome, it must be in the blood and strength of the Lamb. Eye Him as your guide to lead you through all the dark and difficult steps of your pilgrimage. For He leads the blind "in paths that they have not known" (Isa 42:16). Eye Him as your pattern. Endeavor to imitate Him in all His imitable perfections. Run your Christian race, "looking unto Jesus" (Heb 12:2). Remember how steady and firm He was in carrying on the great work of redemption. He set His face like a flint against all the storms and obstacles that lay in His way. He did not faint, nor was He discouraged, but travelled on in the greatness of His strength, enduring the cross, and despising the shame. For He said on the cross, "It is finished" (Joh 19:30). So study ye after His example to run your Christian race, your course of obedience, and press on against *all* temptations and difficulties, until ye have finished your course with joy and arrive at the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ.

1. *Be aware of the first beginnings of defection and backsliding.* For one trip makes way for another. Defections are like the rolling of a stone upon the brow of an high mountain; if once it begins to roll, it is fair never to rest until it be at the bottom. Ye have been upon the mount of God, Sirs! If ye begin once to roll down the hill of your high professions and resolutions, it is an hundred to one if ye do not land in the depths of apostasy and at last in the depths of hell.

2. *Lastly, study to be well skilled in the unmasking the mystery of iniquity, in detecting the wiles and stratagems of the tempter, and to provide yourselves with suitable antidotes against every attack of the enemy.* For instance, if he tell thee sin is pleasant, ask him if the gripings of the worm of conscience be pleasant too, and if one day in God's house be not better than a thousand in the tents of sin. If he tell thee that nobody sees, ask him if he can shut the eye of an

omniscient God, Whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and Who setteth our most secret sins in the light of His countenance (Psa 90:8). If he tell thee that it is but a little one, ask him if there be a little God or if His displeasure be a little thing. If he tell thee that sin is profitable, ask him, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mat 16:26). By considerations of this nature, the mind comes to be fortified against the attacks and onsets of that grand enemy of salvation, [which proves to be] a notable ballast to keep the soul firm and steady against the most violent storms and tempests that may blow either from earth or hell.

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Now, none can be termed apostates, but such as have previously made a profession of Christ and the Gospel.—*John Calvin*

THEY WENT OUT FROM US

Samuel Eyles Pierce (1746-1849)

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”—1 John 2:19

THE former verse contained a declaration that there were at that period many antichrists, which was an evident sign the last state of the apostolic church was just closing. It was necessary this should be known and taken notice of because whilst the fathers in Christ might be wholly out of danger from these heretics and from heresies and errors, yet such as were not established in Christ might not be so. As the Apostle therefore wrote to these and informed them what the times were, so he also informs them from whence these persons came. *They originated in the church*: they went out of it. They were therefore the more dangerous, seeing they knew the better how to sow their pernicious⁴⁹ errors. They were the more to be avoided in their persons, as well as their doctrines also... Their renouncing the faith and fellowship of the Gospel after they have made plausible professions and appearances of being believers in Christ, their separating themselves from our church communion that they might broach⁵⁰ their infamous errors and spread the same with their infamous practices far and wide, fully manifest they were *never* true believers, but downright hypocrites and falsehearted professors. These persons I would guard you against. Your being preserved from them and their pernicious ways and errors will be good evidence for you that ye are on the Lord’s side and belong to Him. As this distinguishes you from them, so it makes you very precious unto us. It is therefore that I address you on this subject... I am

1. TO SHOW THESE ANTICHRISTS MENTIONED IN THE FORMER VERSE WENT OUT FROM THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST: and the reason they went out of it was *because* they were not of it. “They went out from us, but they were not of us.”

Where could these apostates go out from but the church? If they had not been in it, they could not have gone out from it. The church they went out of was the true church of Christ, founded by the Apostles themselves on Christ, the foundation and chief cornerstone, in which the true and everlasting Gospel was preached; the ordinances of Christ—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper—kept as purely as Christ Himself had delivered them; the whole church plan, form, order, laws, and government properly enforced and attended unto also. And these persons had professed their faith in all the essential truths of the Gospel. They had been baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. They had been regular members of churches. They had been admitted to the Table of the Lord. It may be [that] they had been admitted to fill up some office in the house of God, such as that of deaconship or of being preachers of the Word.

⁴⁹ **pernicious** – destructive.

⁵⁰ **broach** – introduce.

Yet their ambitious spirits were such, they could not be content but they must bring in another gospel, contrary to what the Apostles preached. And in the virulency⁵¹ of their spirits were set most desperately on spreading the same. They therefore broke through all the sacred ties and obligations of church fellowship and went off from the various churches to which they belonged, pretending to have greater light into truth and what they called the Person of Christ and grace than the very Apostles themselves. “They went out from us.”

The word *us* is a very distinguishing one in the New Testament. It was made use of on the first formation of an instituted church, which took place immediately on the ascension of Christ into heaven. Peter, speaking of Judas Iscariot to the church then present, says, “He was numbered with us” (Act 1:17). And of the whole church as included in the word *us*, he says, “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (1:21-22). We have this word *us* made use of by the Apostles in their writings to express the church of Christ by. As for instance, “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us” (Eph 5:2). “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev 1:5). Our Apostle uses this word *us* in the same sense here. These persons, whom he here styles *antichrists*, had been in the church. They went out of it without leave. They took themselves off abruptly; neither gave they their reasons for so doing. They would not acknowledge themselves under any sort of obligation to the churches to whom they belonged. Thus, they openly and publicly renounced all submission to Christ’s Lordship and Kingly authority over His house, the church. Thus, they went out as traitors and with a treacherous design against Christ and the church that He hath purchased with His own blood: to corrupt His worship, to renounce His truth, to blaspheme the same, to draw away from the true churches of Christ followers after them. They went out from *us*. It was most awful in them so to do.

It must have been in some of them the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is styled in this Epistle, “the sin unto death” (1Jo 5:16-17). They turned their back on Christ, His Gospel, His ordinances, His Apostles, His churches, and everything belonging unto Him, and framed out of their own errors, heresies, whims, and fancies, a Christ and Gospel for themselves. The Apostle assigns the reason why they went out from the churches in the way and manner they did—it was because they were not of one heart and soul with the churches in the truth. “They went out from us because they were not of us.”

The true church of Christ is holiness to the Lord. Her real members are born of God. They have the Spirit of God. They know Christ. They live Christ. They are baptized into one and the same Spirit. They love the Truth. They abhor all and everything that detracts from it. No marvel that these antichrists should go out, depart from the true churches of Christ, and set up for themselves. They were not one with them, whilst they remained amongst them. Therefore, they only waited for an opportunity, and then they left them entirely.

Thus, it was in the Apostle John’s time, a little before the close of the apostolic age. “Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us.” This is the account the Apostle gives of them. As it was then, so it has been ever since. All the heresies which have tormented the churches of Christ ever since and down even to our present times have originated from persons who have been in the churches, who have departed from the churches, from such as have made schisms and divisions in the churches. And when any old error is newly revived, it in general springs from such persons as are disaffected⁵² to the true churches of Jesus Christ.

It may be you will expect me to give you to understand what I mean by a church of Christ. Most certainly, I understand a company of saints giving themselves up to the Lord and to each other by the will of God, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord agreeable to the rules laid down in the written Word. I do not look on all the congregations of saints to be worthy of the title of the *churches* of Christ...Many denominations amongst us...are sound in the articles of Truth—so far as they respect salvation—yet I should not look on them as justly claiming the titles of the churches of Christ, and that for this reason: because they are not framed according to the plan and model of the New Testament account of the same. The greatest reformation of churches that ever took

⁵¹ **virulency** – extreme poisonousness.

⁵² **disaffected** – alienated; resentful and rebellious.

place since the reformation from popery was in Oliver Cromwell's days. Dr. Owen,⁵³ Dr. Goodwin,⁵⁴ Dr. Chauncey,⁵⁵ and others give the best account of the formation, plan, order, members and officers, laws, rules, government, and discipline of the churches of Christ, which I can refer you to: except it be in the writings of Dr. Gill,⁵⁶ who has made some improvement in the same. The churches styled independent churches, and those styled the baptized churches of Jesus Christ, are properly churches.⁵⁷ There is no difference between these but in the ordinance of Baptism. These have a defense in themselves, of themselves, and from themselves to defend their members from error and heresy. [Yet] many in these are weary of Christ's yoke and often find ways and means to cast it off. At times, error and heresies spring up amongst them; and it must be so, according to the purpose and sovereign will of God. So says the Apostle to the Corinthian church, "For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1Co 11:19). There were in that church many who profaned the Lord's Supper and polluted it, some who denied the resurrection of the dead. Yet the church at Corinth being properly organized according to our Lord's institution remained a true church, though all the members of it were not one with the Lord Jesus Christ. [Similarly,] the Gospel remains immutable in its truths, doctrines, and grace, notwithstanding Hymeneus and Alexander, [who] put the same away from them and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience (1Ti 1:19).

It is an honor to belong to a true church of Christ. It is to be lamented any should be admitted into it without having a clear and Scriptural knowledge of it. For when they profess and give themselves up to walk with a church, it is very dangerous to depart from that church, unless any immorality or heresy spring up and is connived at⁵⁸ by the majority of members. Or unless a member has good reason to believe he should increase with the increase of God more by removing his communion to another church. In the present day, *there is very little conscience made of these things.* But whoever observes it will see, it is no honor to remove from one church to another, nor is it a blessing to any church to receive any disaffected member into their communion. It is always best when the church in its members is gathered into its own holy fellowship by the ministration of the same minister of the Gospel. Then they uniting in the same faith, the obligations they subject themselves unto as the yoke and by the divine authority of Christ will have a very blessed effect and lasting effect on them...But I drop this and proceed to my next particular, which is

2. TO SHOW HOW THE APOSTLE CONFIRMS HIS ASSERTION. He had said, "They went out from us, but they were not of us." He gives this reason of their going out from them: *They did not belong to them.* Though they were for a season numbered with them, yet they were never of them or of their number; if they had, they would have most certainly remained with them: this is his argument. For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.

How solemn! How awful! These antichrists came out of the apostolical church of Jesus. They had been in it. Their names had been registered in their church book. They had been church members with the best of saints. Yet all this did not preserve them from the foulest apostasy. They had heard and professed to have received and believed the very same doctrine the Apostles preached! Yet this did not keep them steadfast in the faith. They were carried away with lust and lasciviousness. This led them to corrupt the doctrine of God's free grace: to suit it to encourage their own corrupt affections, and from hence to proceed to set forth such a different christ, such a different gospel, and such a different spirit as eclipsed the whole glory of that Christ and Gospel that was preached and declared by the Apostles themselves. If these wretches had not for a season been under the profession of Christ and in the church amongst His people, they could not have acted as they did. They could not so completely have corrupted the Gospel, if they had not had the notional scheme of the same in their minds. It answered their end for a season to remain in the churches to whom they had given in their names. It suited them to leave these churches at such seasons, when they could, to distil their pernicious influences, as they thought and hoped it would gain converts to them...Christ is yesterday, today, and the same forever (Heb 13:8). So are the truths and doctrines that

⁵³ **John Owen** (1616-1683) – Congregational pastor and theologian; often called "The Prince of the Puritans"; wrote "The True Nature of a Gospel Church" in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 16.

⁵⁴ **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1679) – Congregational pastor and theologian; wrote "Of the Constitution, Right Order, and Government of the Churches of Christ" in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, Vol. 11.

⁵⁵ **Isaac Chauncey** (1632-1712) – Congregational pastor and theologian; wrote *The Divine Institution of Congregational Churches, Ministry and Ordinances, [As has bin Professed by those of that Persuasion] Asserted and Proved from the Word of God*, for Nathanael Hiller, 1697.

⁵⁶ **John Gill** (1697-1771) – Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar; wrote numerous works on the nature, ministry, and ordinances of the church, including *A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*.

⁵⁷ Not all of our readers will agree with the author on this point.

⁵⁸ **connived at** – silently approved.

have respect unto Him, and in and by which He is revealed unto and set before His church, and which His saints have such evidence of in themselves that one for them all says, “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1Pe 1:24-25). These heretics left the churches because they were not of them, only nominally.⁵⁹ They were not the elect of God. They were reprobates.⁶⁰...It is evident these could never belong to Christ...*All heretics come out of the church.* Most of them have been preachers and teachers in it. They are raised up by Satan, first to disturb the peace of the church and next to pollute and defile it with their abominable falsehood. The words of the Apostle are very suitable here: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1Co 3:16-17). But I will go on and proceed to my last particular, which is

3. TO SHOW THE REASON WHY THESE ANTICHRISTS WENT OUT OF THE CHURCH. It was by their departure from the true churches and by their errors, heresies, and sins into which they fell, they were manifested to be what they were.

In the day in which we live, we have had many preachers who have shone forth in public view as blazing stars and comets, who have professed superior light, zeal, and usefulness to all others, who have been puffed off⁶¹ [and] had their own cant phrases.⁶² Such as saying of some of their great admirers, “They see the Spirit in such and such sentences,” in which they have chosen to express themselves. They have—very many of them—fallen foully, scandalously. Yea, most shamefully, and abominably, and all by lust...What shall *we* say or think of such? I know I think and cannot but pronounce they are of their father the devil. Yet we have persons professing godliness who will stand up for them, [saying] that they are powerful preachers, that they are preachers of the Gospel, that they are *clearer* and *deeper* in the truth than others are, that it is on account of their excellency of knowledge in the mysteries of Christ [that] they are persecuted!

Sirs, such excuses for such notorious sinners are an awful sign of what our times are. Let us by no means have *anything* to do with licentious preachers and teachers. It is a shame to speak of those things that are done of them in secret. I count it to be a defilement to mention the names of such. I fear there is more licentiousness stalking up and down the professing religious world than any of us are aware of. May the Lord preserve us from it.

It is by these most holy and righteous dispensations of the Lord that He is pleased to separate between the precious and the vile. As it was in John’s time, even so it is now. *They never belonged to the true church of Christ.* So it need not stumble or distress us, as if such were instances of falling from grace. No. Such were never partakers of the grace of God. They professed something that they called grace, but they never knew any more of it than the sound. Let us therefore rejoice when such are most justly exposed...

There is a greater discrimination made by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel than we can or ever shall be able to conceive and apprehend. It is to some the savor of life. It is to others the savor of death. All [this is] by divine and immutable appointment by which man and man are so discovered—as it concerns the Lord’s purposes towards them—as is most truly solemn and awful. One is called under the preaching of the Gospel, and another left. Not only so, but at times under one and the same Word, one is won to the obedience of Christ, another is led to blaspheme—so different are the effects that the revelation of God’s will produceth in the minds of such as are hearers of it. Hereby that solemn word of truth is realized in us poor worms of the earth, which is quoted by the Apostle, as delivered by the Lord: “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Rom 9:18-24).

⁵⁹ **nominally** – in name only.

⁶⁰ **reprobates** – those rejected by God.

⁶¹ **puffed off** – swollen with vanity and pride.

⁶² **cant phrases** – peculiar phraseology of a religious sect.

These are most important and very solemn questions in which great truths are implied and contained. When they enter into our minds, and their weight, importance, and authority rest upon our hearts, *they empty us of all dependence on ourselves*. We clearly see that he that glorieth must glory in the Lord. If these things are so, let us know and remember [that] the church of Christ will be preserved and continued to the end of time, and the gates, that is, the powers of hell, shall never finally prevail against it. Let who or whatsoever may arise, and even though it may overthrow the faith of some, yet we may say—and it becomes us to say with the Apostle, when all they who were in Asia were turned away from him—“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2Ti 2:19). It well becomes us so to do—to depart from all *doctrinal* and *practical* iniquity. I can never believe men to be sound in the faith and truths of the Gospel who live in any known sin. I therefore suspect the judgment of many, who insist...that men may be sound in the faith who do not adorn it in their lives and conversations. I am for my own self fully persuaded [that] we can live no one single truth of the Gospel over in our minds any farther than we know it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. And so far as we live any one single truth of Christ’s Gospel, so far we shall live *down* sin and live *above* by living Christ and living on Him.

From Sermon XXIV in *An Exposition of 1 John*, reprinted by
Particular Baptist Press, www.pbpress.org.

Samuel Eyles Pierce (1746-1849): Baptist preacher; known for his exalted view of Christ and love of sovereign grace; born in Up-Ottery, Devon, England.

The sin of those who forsake Christ and the Gospel, after their conviction of its truth and profession of it, is on many accounts far greater than that of those who crucified Him in the days of His flesh.—*John Owen*

SEVEN MARKS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

The first character: *False teachers are menpleasers*. They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart: “Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa 30:10). “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (Jer 5:30-31). They handle holy things with wit and dalliance⁶³ rather than with fear and reverence. False teachers are soul-undoers. They are like evil surgeons⁶⁴ that skin over the wound, but never heal it...False teachers are hell’s greatest enrichers...Such smooth teachers are sweet soul-poisoners (Jer 23:16-17).

The second character: *False teachers are notable in casting dirt, scorn, and reproach upon the persons, names, and credits of Christ’s most faithful ambassadors*. Thus, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram charged Moses and Aaron that they took too much upon them, seeing all the congregation was holy (Num 16:3). “You take too much state, too much power, too much honor, too much holiness upon you; for what are you more than others that you take so much upon you?” And so Ahab’s false prophets fell foul on good Micaiah, paying of him with blows for want of better reasons (1Ki 22:10-26). Yea, Paul, that great Apostle of the Gentiles, had his ministry undermined and his reputation blasted by false teachers: “For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2Co 10:10). They rather contemn him than admire him. They look upon him as a dunce rather than a doctor. And the same hard measure had our Lord Jesus from the Scribes and Pharisees, who labored as for life to build their own credit upon the ruins of His reputation. And never did the devil drive a more full trade this

⁶³ **dalliance** – light, irreverent action.

⁶⁴ **chirurgeons** – surgeons.

way than he does in these days (Mat 27:63). Oh! The dirt, the filth, the scorn that is thrown upon those of whom the world is not worthy...

The third character: *False teachers are venters⁶⁵ of the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts.* “Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart” (Jer 14:14). “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD” (Jer 23:16). Are there not multitudes in this nation whose visions are but golden delusions, lying vanities, brainsick fantasies? These are Satan’s great benefactors and such as divine justice will hang up in hell as the greatest malefactors, if the Physician of souls does not prevent it.

The fourth character: *False teachers easily pass over the great and weighty things of both Law and Gospel and stand most upon those things that are of the least moment and concernment to the souls of men.* “Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1Ti 1:5-7). “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Mat 23:23). False teachers are nice⁶⁶ in the lesser things of the law and as negligent in the greater. “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself” (1Ti 6:3-5)...The earth groans to bear them, and hell is fitted for them (Mat 24:32).

The fifth character: *False teachers cover and color their dangerous principles and soul-impostures with very fair speeches and plausible pretences, with high notions and golden expressions.* Many in these days are bewitched and deceived by the magnificent words, lofty strains, and stately terms of deceivers, viz., illumination, revelation, deification, fiery triplicity,⁶⁷ etc. As strumpets paint their faces and deck and perfume their beds, the better to allure and deceive simple souls, so false teachers will put a great deal of paint and garnish upon their most dangerous principles and blasphemies that they may the better de-ceive and delude poor ignorant souls. They know sugared poison goes down sweetly. They wrap up their pernicious, soul-killing pills in gold. Weigh the Scriptures in the margin...

The sixth character: False teachers strive more to win over men to their opinions than to better them in their conversations. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Mat 24:17). They busy themselves most about men’s heads. Their work is not to better men’s hearts and mend their lives. In this, they are very much like their father the dev-il, who will spare no pains to gain proselytes.

The seventh character: *False teachers make merchandise of their followers:* “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time linger-eth not, and their damnation slumbereth not” (2Pe 2:1-3). They eye your goods more than your good and mind more the serving of themselves than the saving of your souls. So they may have your substance, they care not though Satan has your souls (Rev 18:11-13). That they may the better pick your purse, they will hold forth such principles as are very indulgent to the flesh. False teachers are the great worshippers of the golden calf (Jer 6:13).

Now, by these characters you may know them, and so shun them, and deliver your souls out of their dangerous snares; which that you may, my prayers shall meet yours at the throne of grace.

From “Precious Remedies against Satan’s Devices” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 1, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

⁶⁵ **venters** – those who utter or give vent to erroneous doctrines.

⁶⁶ **nice** – precise.

⁶⁷ **triplicity** – one of four groups of the zodiac where each group consists of three signs separated from each other by 120 degrees.

THE EVILS WITHIN THE CHURCH

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

Jude 1-25

JUDE, “the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,” speaks to us in the tone of an ancient prophet. His voice is that of Elijah or John the Baptist. It is “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” He speaks to the declining churches of his day. He speaks to the Church of the last days. It is against the evils *within* the Church that he specially warns. What a picture does he draw of error, licentiousness, worldliness, spiritual decay, and ecclesiastical apostasy! Who could recognize the image of the primitive Church in the description he gives of prevailing iniquity? The world had absorbed the Church, and *the Church was content that it should be so...*

It is a picture for the Church in our day to study, for we are rapidly becoming part of the world and falling into the snares of “the god of this world” (2Co 4:4). Nay, and we glory in this as “progress,” “culture,” and “enlightenment,” as freedom from the bigotry of other centuries and the narrowness of our half-enlightened ancestors, who did not know how to reconcile contraries and to join what God has put asunder; how to believe everything alike; how to combine earth’s pleasures and gaieties with the joy of God; how both to pray and to dance; how to revel and to weep for sin; how to wear both the “white raiment” and the jeweled ball dress; how to maintain friendship both with God and with His enemies; how both to pamper and to starve the flesh; how to lay up treasure both on earth and heaven; how to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; how to be partaker of the Lord’s Table and the table of devils.

The names that he applies to these inconsistent brethren will seem to some hard and strange. “Spots in their feasts of charity,” “clouds without water,” “trees whose fruit withereth,” “twice dead, plucked up by the roots,” “raging waves of the sea,” “wandering stars,” yet naming the name of Christ and numbered among His disciples! O darkness of the human heart! O subtlety of the flesh! O deceitfulness of sin! What is there that a man will not profess when it suits his purpose? What contradictions of life, creed, and conscience will he scruple at,⁶⁸ when ambitious of position, fame, or wealth? *O Church of the living God on earth*, how art thou disfigured and defiled by those on whom thy name is written! How many are *in* thee who are not *of* thee, nay, who hate thee in their hearts while wearing thy livery;⁶⁹ for whom the reveling and banqueting of earth have charms far beyond thy simple bread and wine; who are at home in the gay lighted hall of midnight mirth, but out of place in the upper chamber of thy Lord and Master; for whom the fair faces of earth have an attraction that thy holiness and beauty inspire not; for whom the luxuries of the social feast have a relish which they cannot find in that which is to thee better than angels’ food, that flesh which is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed!(Joh 6:55).

In this day of half-discipleship, of double service,⁷⁰ of religious worldliness and worldly religiousness, how needful it is that the awful words of the Apostle be studied by the Church of God! *We need them now!* Ere long we shall need them more. Every day do we see, read, or hear of things and scenes in connection with professing churches of Christ that make us ask, “The Church or the world, *which is it?*” Are we not often constrained to say to ourselves, “Are Christ’s words no longer true? Have the broad and the narrow ways become one? Is there now no Church, or is there now no world?”

⁶⁸ scruple at – question.

⁶⁹ livery – the distinctive uniform style of dress worn by a person’s servants.

⁷⁰ double service – that is, serving God and mammon.

Not as if all this were strange and new, either in our days or in the Apostle's. The germs of this apostasy were seen before the flood. It was of such men that Enoch prophesied when he proclaimed a coming judgment and a coming Lord (verse 14). “Ungodly deeds,” “hard speeches,” “great swelling words”—these were in Enoch’s day. They were swept off by the avenging flood of water. They are now again coming up in the last days in wider and more awful development, waiting to be consumed by the flood of the devouring fire with which the Lord, when He comes, is to purge this polluted earth, that He may bring out of it the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Greater, indeed, and more hateful must be the wickedness of the last days...It is written of the last times, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure” (Psa 2:4-5). The way of Cain, the error of Balaam, the gainsaying⁷¹ of Korah will be all combined and repeated in the wickedness of the last days. Then the human heart shall, unchecked, be permitted to overflow. Do we not see the beginnings of this overflow in our own times?...

The whole of this epistle is full of solemn thought for us. It is very similar in tone to the apocalyptic epistles to the seven churches, and seems almost like a preface to them. Its warnings against declension from truth and holiness, against worldliness and luxury, against inflated self-sufficiency and boastfulness, against profligacy⁷² and carnality, against a fruitless religion and an empty name are very appalling and sound like a prelude to the last trumpet—a voice from heaven so loud and penetrating that it would seem as if even the dead would awake under its terrible thunder. What sins it exposes in the Church of God! What departures from first love! What debasement in evil! It takes up and echoes the apostolic warnings of earlier days. Here we find the summary of the sins and apostasies of Christendom. The “strong delusion,” which believes the lie, is here (2Th 2:2). The fatal friendship between God and the world is here (Jam 4:4). The often denounced fellowship between the clean and the unclean is here (1Co 10:21). Here is represented to us the last great lapse to the Christian Churches and with it the ending of the times of the Gentiles: the commixture⁷³ of religion and irreligion, of error and truth, of fleshly lusts and a confident profession, of antinomian laxity⁷⁴ and a high profession, the alliance—political, or philosophical, or scientific, or ecclesiastical—between Egypt and Israel, between Babylon and Jerusalem (2Ti 3:1-7). Here we see the Church absorbed in the world and the world in the Church, each delighted with the other; the sons of Belial sitting at the “feast of charity” and at the Supper of the Lord; error the companion of truth, and truth the ally of error; the fine arts—music, painting, sculpture—all made to minister, not to religion, *but to the production of religious sensations*, which make men believe that they are religious when they are mere admirers of the beautiful and solemn in sight and sound.⁷⁵

Thus does Jude warn us, as Paul did, against the perilous times of the last days. The Church of our age may not be chargeable with such declension as in the days of Jude. The fine gold may have become dim, but is not altogether dross. Yet modern Christianity has in it but little of the miracle or magnificence of early times. It is not so holy, so prayerful, so joyful; nor yet so high, so noble, so splendid. The grandeur of apostolic saintship has disappeared. How poor is much of the religion we see around us! How hollow and superficial! Sullen in some, flippant in others, showy in others, bustling and talkative in others, worldly and political in others, sensational and sentimental in others—in all, *second-rate*, even when sincere and true.

One of the most sorrowful things amongst us is the going back of many who “did run well,” who were once zealous and sound in the faith, but have been swept into the torrent of “progress.” They boast of keeping abreast of the age and mistake the snares of Satan as “an angel of light” for the “leadings of providence” and teachings of the Holy Ghost; leaving their first faith and love; taking one of earth’s meteors for the heavenly pole star.⁷⁶ Politics, pleasure, gaiety, business, philosophy, science have come between them and the glory, if not between them and *the cross*. Leanness of soul, lowness of spirituality, lukewarmness in everything but outward religious bustle describe their present condition. They do not thrive nor bear fruit. They have come to be once more in love with this present evil world, from which they had been delivered. They have become stagnant in the routine of external service and conventional talk. They have thrown themselves into the spirit of the age in its full breadth—a breadth too narrow to include the glory of earth’s coming King and the power of the Holy Spirit, but broad enough to

⁷¹ **gainsaying** – to speak against; contradiction.

⁷² **profligacy** – shameless immorality.

⁷³ **commixture** – mixing together.

⁷⁴ **antinomian laxity** – looseness in morality because of a denial of God’s Law.

⁷⁵ It is said, that in the last days of the old Roman Empire, when its “decline” was passing into its “fall,” everything was paralyzed by luxury save music, which was cultivated to utter intoxication. Old Rome died music mad.—*Horatius Bonar*

⁷⁶ **pole star** – North Star.

contain in it the dark subtleties of anti-Christian error, at least in their germ or idea, which in its full development will not only deify humanity and worship creature intellect and power, but will enthrone force, and numbers, and money, and commerce, and art with all that is called “nature” and “natural laws,” as the true regalities of earth, the true elevators of the race, and accomplishers of the destinies of man!

That any of Christ’s sheep shall perish, we do not believe. *God’s eternal purpose secures them forever.* But we see strange things in our time. Men believe one thing today, another tomorrow, and a third the next, and they call it *progress!* The voice of the age is reckoned the voice of God! Truth has become flexible and principle as pliant⁷⁷ as wax. Men who looked as like Christians as any could look, turn back into error or worldliness. They did run well, but they have been “hindered that they should not obey the truth” (Gal 5: 7). They have been “bewitched” (Gal 3:1), so as no longer to obey the truth. They began in the Spirit, and they are trying to perfect themselves by the flesh. Some who once preached the gladness of the glad news have plunged into the gloom of popery or ritualism. Others, who seemed to live in prayer and were absorbed in the study of the one blessed Book, now think prayer needless because of God’s universal Fatherhood, and the Bible, though the best of books, only one of an ascending series, all of them inspired; who look on novels and newspapers, depicting what they call “life and character,” as our true textbooks for daily study; who are persuaded that this world is not so evil as some *narrow* Christians think it, and that its feasts, luxuries, and gaieties are good things, which a Christian ought not to abjure⁷⁸ but to enjoy.

When we see these things, we stand in awe, perplexed as to what next may happen, asking, “Are there few that be saved?” and alarmed at finding how closely an unbeliever may resemble a believer, and how far down a Christian may be permitted to sink without totally falling away. Let us not be deceived by the vain show in which men are walking. In spite of all fancied progress, that word is still true, “We are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.” No amount of “culture” can change the natural man. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (Joh 3:6); and the “progress” of the flesh, however goodly it seems, must be ever *downward*. When that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part has been done away; when the Kingdom that cannot be moved has been set up, then the world’s true progress begins, and the divine “culture” will take the place of the human. Then, as we look back, we shall be astonished at the shallow thing that men call progress now and see in it man’s last proud effort to enter heaven without being born from above; to be a god to himself, and by his own intellect and energy to rectify the world that he has ruined—a world that can only be restored by the power of the Holy Ghost and the enthronization of its long absent King.

From “Light and Truth: Bible Thoughts and Themes” in *The Life and Works of Horatius Bonar CD*, Lux Publications, www.horatiusbonar.com.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889): Scottish Presbyterian minister whose poems, hymns, and religious tracts were widely popular during the 19th century; born in Edinburgh, Scotland.

THE PASTOR’S WORK AND APOSTASY

John Owen (1616-1683)

THAT holy, humble, laborious ministry, which Christ first instituted in the church, was the great means of converting men unto evangelical obedience and the preserving of them therein. This their doctrine, their spirit, their example, their manner and course of life, their prayers, preaching, and entire endeavors tended unto and were blessed and prospered of God unto that purpose. Then were the lives of Christians a transcript of the truth of the Gospel...

⁷⁷ **pliant** – supple; easily bent.

⁷⁸ **abjure** – give up; abstain from.

The well-being of the church depends on the right discharge of the office of the ministry...it is plainly declared by the Apostle (Eph 4:11-15). In proportion thereunto, it will thrive or decay. The nature of this office, the ends of its institution, the works and duties of it, with the universal experience of all ages and places, do evince this observation beyond all contradiction. If therefore those who undertake the exercise of this office do eminently and notoriously fail in the performance and discharge of the duties thereof, especially if they do so generally and in any long succession of time, it cannot be but that the people will be corrupt and degenerate from the rule of the Gospel. The flocks will not be preserved where the shepherds are negligent. Fields will be overrun with weeds, thorns, and briers, if they be not duly tilled. I shall therefore, in the first place, call over⁷⁹ some of those things that are indispensably required in and of the ministers and teachers of the church that it may be preserved in its purity and kept up unto its duty in evangelical obedience. And I shall insist only on those which all men will acknowledge to be such duties, or which none who own the Gospel can or dare deny so to be.

First, it is required of them that they keep pure and uncorrupted the doctrine of the Gospel, especially that concerning the holiness enjoined in it, both as to its nature, causes, motives, and ends. So of old, the “priest’s lips were to keep knowledge,” and “the people were to seek the law at his mouth” (Mal 2:7). This was one main end for which the Lord Christ gave unto and instituted the office of the ministry in the church...The preservation of the truth—the declaration, vindication, and defense of it—so as the members of the church, the disciples of Christ committed to their charge, be neither through weakness or ignorance as children nor through the delusions of seducers turned off from it or unsettled in it, was one great end why the Lord Christ instituted this office therein...

Secondly, it is required of the same persons that they diligently instruct the people in the knowledge of the whole counsel of God, in the mystery of the Gospel, the doctrine of truth, that they may know and do the will of God. This are they to do by all the means and ways that God hath appointed, pressing it instantly, together with instructions on their souls and consciences for its practice. The end why evangelical truth is committed unto their care is, not that they may keep it to themselves, so locking up the key of knowledge, but that they may communicate it unto others and instruct them therein.

1. *That they are to do it with all care, diligence, and sedulity.*⁸⁰ How vehement is our Apostle in his charge to this purpose! (2Ti 4:1-2)...

2. *That they labor with the utmost of their strength, even to fatigation*⁸¹ *and weariness.* All the names whereby their office and their work are expressed in the New Testament do include this kind of labor. As they are to “give themselves continually to the ministry of the word” (Act 6:4)—that is, wholly and entirely, in their utmost endeavors, continually unto this work—so are they enjoined “to labor to the utmost of the strength” they have therein (1Ti 5:17; 1Co 16:16; 1Th 5:12)...

3. *That their whole work and all their endeavors therein be accompanied with constant prayer that the Gospel in their ministry may run and be glorified, that the Word may prosper in the hearts and lives of the people.*

Thirdly, it is in like manner required of them (so far as human frailty will permit) that they do, in their persons, ways, and walkings or conversations, especially in the discharge of all their ministerial duties, give a true representation both of the doctrine that they preach and of Him in Whose name they dispense it.

From “Nature and Causes of Apostasy from the Gospel” in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol. 7, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust.

John Owen (1616-1683): Congregational pastor and theologian; called “The Prince of the Puritans”; born in Stadhampton, Oxfordshire, England.

[Satan] is ever on the watch to ensnare and lead captive the unwary.—*H. Bonar*

⁷⁹ call over – recite.

⁸⁰ sedulity – painstaking attention to duty.

⁸¹ fatigation – the state of complete exhaustion.

THE FINAL PRESERVATION

Gardiner Spring (1785-1873)

SUCH is the attraction of the Cross that what it once secures it holds fast forever. Those who are once interested in it never lose that interest. Once attracted to it by a true and heaven-imparted faith, they never so break the bond as to be ultimately severed from Christ and finally perish...Our position is that there is no such thing as finally falling away from the Cross. Once in Christ, always in Christ; once justified, always justified.⁸² The final perseverance of every true believer is certain. The reasons for this position I will state with as much brevity and simplicity as I can.

We find one of the fallen children of Adam at the Cross—penitent, humbled, and believing at the foot of the Cross. He came there, not because it was naturally in his heart to come. He was once a totally depraved being and hated nothing so much as the holy salvation procured by God's crucified Son. Salvation was freely [declared] to him through the Cross, but he would not accept it; nor did he accept it until God, by His own almighty power, created within him a new heart and a new spirit and transformed his character from death in trespasses and sins to spiritual life. He is *God's* workmanship created anew in Christ Jesus, "after the image of him that created him" (Col 3:10). Now, is there any reason to believe that God would thus have made bare His arm to awaken, convince, and renew this once depraved creature and conduct him to the Cross of His Son and give him joy and peace in believing, only to suffer him at some future period to break away from the Cross and perish?...

I read in the Scriptures such declarations as these: "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (Joh 13:1). "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom 11:29). "For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever" (Psa 37:28). "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph 1:13-14). "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6).

And what do they teach us, if not that *the God of love never leaves His own work unfinished, and that what He begins with grace He ends in glory*? It would be a new view of God to my own mind that He ever abandons those whom He has once united to His Son. It is, I am persuaded, a view unauthorized by the Scriptures...Take now another view of this same general thought. This regenerated and believing sinner, so lately brought to the Cross, is *pardoned* and *justified*. By faith in the Cross of Christ, he not only possesses a different character from that he once possessed, but is brought into new relations. He is no longer under the Law, but under grace. He is in a state of grace—a justified state. From the moment of his believing, the sentence of condemnation, which he had incurred by his transgressions, is removed. He is judicially absolved from punishment. His debt to divine justice is paid and a righteousness is imputed to him that answers every demand of the Law of God. He is reinstated in the favor of his once offended Sovereign and entitled to all the immunities of His kingdom. He is united by a living faith to the Savior and has become one with Him, as the branches are united to the vine, and the members of the body to its head. The precious faith by which he is thus united to the Living Vine, he obtained "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:1).

Now, how does the notion of *falling away* from the Cross accord with this justified state of every believer? Paul, in speaking of this condition of all true believers, uses the following language. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1-2). He regards the believer's justification as a permanent reinstatement in the divine favor, and he goes on to reason strongly and conclusively in support of his position.

His argument is this: If God gave His Son to die for men, while they were yet enemies to Him, how much rather, now that they are become His friends, shall He save them through His death! "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood,

⁸² **justification** – "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."—C. H. Spurgeon's *Catechism Q. 32*.

we shall be saved from wrath through him” (Rom 5:8-9). In perfect accordance with this are all the representations of justification that are given in the Bible. God never forgives one of the sins of His people without forgiving them all. When He once forgives them, there is no more condemnation. “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 10:17). Justification is represented as being unto life, to life eternal. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:1-2). Is the hypothesis to be allowed that those who bear so near a relation to Jesus Christ as to be the members of His own body will ever perish? Or is it more in accordance with what we know of Him to believe the encouraging assurance, “Because I live, ye shall live also”? (Joh 14:19).

The faith that was at first through His righteousness will through His righteousness be perpetuated to the last. And the union that it once forms with Him will never be dissolved. Such is the obvious teaching of the Scriptures. “He that believeth shall be saved” (Mar 16:16). If...none will be saved without persevering in holiness, and if all who believe shall be saved, then all who believe shall persevere in holiness. God has given this promise the solemn and emphatic form of a covenant—a covenant “ordered in all things and sure” (2Sa 23:5) and pledging to His people “the sure mercies of David” (Isa 55:3). Read His own interesting description of that covenant: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people...And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jer 31:31-33; 32:40).

In writing to the Hebrews, Paul speaks of this covenant not only as a new covenant, but a “*better covenant*” and established upon “*better promises*” than the covenant of Sinai (Heb 8:6). The covenant at Sinai was a pledge of the divine favor so long as the Israelites persevered in their obedience, but did not promise persevering obedience itself. But this new covenant contains this “*better promise*,” and this promise constitutes its great preeminence.

A justified state is one of the promises of this covenant—a promise made to faith as the revealed condition of its blessings. The great and primary condition of that covenant was the sufferings of the Cross. It has been fulfilled, and “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14). But there is a subordinate condition fulfilled by believers themselves in those transactions into which faith enters with their great Surety, and this also has been fulfilled. Nothing can be more to our purpose than the declarations of the Apostle urging the encouragements of this gracious covenant, when he says, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb 10:38-39). If there be such a final *falling away* from this state of justification, what is the import of such declarations as the following?—“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (Joh 5:24). “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (Joh 6:40). “...whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30). “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1Th 5:24).

But there is a view of the believer’s permanent hold of the Cross, which relates to the great Sufferer Himself, and which furnishes evidence certainly not less satisfactory of the truth we are considering. The Savior Himself has a chartered right to the final perseverance in holiness and the ultimate salvation of every sinner who once truly believes in Him. It is a right guaranteed to Him in the ages of eternity and purchased and sealed by His atoning blood. “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed...He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa 53:10b-11a). Paul speaks of those who have “hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Ti 1:2).

To whom was the promise of eternal life made before the world began? Not certainly to men because they were not in existence; but to Jesus Christ, for all who should thereafter believe on Him, and who were thus early given to Him as the reward of His sufferings and death. He did not lay down His life for nothing nor for a reward that

was indefinite. It was “to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church” (Eph 3:10) and His triumphant victory over the prince of darkness.

Had the success of His great work been dependent on the ungov-erned will of man, none would have accepted His salvation. Or had it been dependent on their own fickle and faithless minds, when once accepted, there would have been no security that those who once came to Him would not finally be cast out. And did He descend from heaven and pour out His soul unto death on any such uncertain and dubious enterprise? Or had He the promise before He left the bosom of His Father of the conviction, the conversion, the faith, and the final perseverance and salvation of a “great multitude which no man can number,” not one of whom should furnish occasion by ultimate apostasy...?

Nor was this great promise ever lost sight of by the Son of Man, but often adverted⁸³ to while He was on the earth. “All that the Father giv-eth me,” says He, “shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Joh 6:37). “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (Joh 17:2). “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (Joh 10:28-29). “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24).

Here lies the security against their falling away. The suffering Sav-ior has a claim upon them which is respected in heaven, and which He is able to enforce. We say of the Cross what a remarkable man once said of one of its kindred doctrines: “I understand, sir,” said a friend to the late Sir Rowland Hill,⁸⁴ “that you hold that terrible doctrine of election.” “It is a mistake,” replied Sir Rowland, “I do not hold election, election holds *me*.” Believers hold the Cross because the Cross holds them. I do not see that the Savior has any security for the salvation of those thus given to Him, if the doctrine of *falling away* be admitted. If one may fall away, *all* may fall away. The charter may be violated, and He may lose His reward, unless the grace of His Cross hold them fast and forever. There are obliquities⁸⁵ in their course, but His faithfulness is pledged to rectify them. There are sins to which they are exposed and will commit, but that same faithfulness will purge them away. “I have made a covenant with my chosen,” saith the Holy One of Israel (Psa 89:3). “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people...His seed also will I make to endure for ever. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail” (Psa 89:19, 29-33).

The Father’s engagement with the Son was a *bona fide* engagement. So long as God is on the throne and is able to control their hearts and govern their condition and destiny, their unfaithfulness shall never be allowed to “make the faith of God without effect” (Rom 3:3). Dangers may stand thick around all the paths they are traveling, and they may often tremble lest they fall by the hand of the enemy. But from that altar of intercession, He who bled on Calvary looks down and says to them, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleas-ure to give you the kingdom” (Luk 12:32). Nor could there be any such thing as the full assurance of hope in this covenant and promises, if believers ultimately fall. No present evidence of a change of heart, be it ever so convincing; no consciousness of love to God and faith in His Son, be it ever so strong and infallible; no indications of a pardoned and justified state, be they ever so conclusive could warrant that full assurance of hope possessed by the saints of the Old Testament and the New, expressed by Abraham, sung forth so often and so devoutly by David, and gloried in by Paul, had there been any uncertainty as to their holding out to the end. No living man can know that he will not at last lie down in hell, if he once admits the hypothesis that he may fall away. The assurance and certainty of salvation, so often enjoyed and so uniformly required in the Scriptures, were a state of mind absolutely impossible were not the attraction of the Cross powerful enough to keep all whom it once attracts.

Let this great doctrine of the Cross then be, as it was designed to be by its Author, for the comfort and edification of all who truly fear God and love His Son. Here, Christian, is the pledge of your security. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD” (Jer 17:5). Go

⁸³ **adverted** – referred.

⁸⁴ **Rowland Hill** (1744-1833) – Anglican preacher who ministered at Surrey Chapel in Southwark, London; often quoted by Charles Spurgeon.

⁸⁵ **obliquities** – deviations from moral conduct.

on your way and rejoice as you go. The Cross of your Redeemer is not so powerless as to be unable to keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy! The feeblest lamb is safe, once housed within the fold of the great Shepherd...Christ received is heaven begun. He who is the Author is also the Finisher of your faith. Away with your discouragements, and look to Jesus! Away with your weakness, and look to Jesus! Away with your darkness, and look to Jesus as the light of life. Look back to Him on the Cross! Look up to Him on the throne! Look forward to Him at His second coming. Your Savior, your Counselor, your Righteousness, your Strength, the Captain of your salvation, your Portion hung on that Cross is now on that throne and will soon come to judge the world in righteousness. If you have Christ, you have all! Heaven itself is not so great a gift as God's own Son! What shall we say to these things? "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom 8:31b-32)...

My beloved friends, if all true believers must and will endure to the end in order to be saved, what will become of you? If "the righteous," though saved, saved infallibly and forever, are saved with so much effort, "where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1Pe 4:18). You have come in sight of the Cross and have turned from it. You have to begin and persevere to the last, and you have not yet entered upon the path that leads to life. You have to fight the good fight of faith, and you are not only without your armor, but also asleep on the field. Can you hope to reach the goal, to gain the victory and wear the crown? When so much is to be done, can you be safe in doing nothing? Oh, when will you receive Christ Jesus the Lord and enter upon that course in which you have something more than human assurance that you shall hold on to the end? *Once in Christ, always in Christ*—what a motive is this to seek an interest in Him! *No falling away from the Cross*—what a motive is this to flee to the stronghold as prisoners of hope!

From "The Cross the Preservation from Final Apostasy" in *The Attraction of the Cross*.

Gardiner Spring (1785-1873): Presbyterian preacher and author; pastor of Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1810, where he ministered for 63 years; born in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

Obviously, the doctrine of justification by faith only is absolutely essential. There has never been a revival but that this has always come back into great prominence.—*D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

