

## **Preparing Against Apostasy - Shawn Mathis**

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2nd Timothy. 2nd Timothy chapter 4 verses 3 and following. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God.

2nd Timothy chapter 4 verses 3 and following. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Let us pray. And herein, glorious God, we read of a sad description of the struggles of those falling away of apostasy in the church and around them, God. And we certainly witness it in our own lives at times perhaps who are far.

It's a sad thing to see, yet it's there in the Bible, and we must grapple with it, understand it, Lord, and put things in proper perspective. And I pray that this be the case in this evening sermon, that you would be magnified, and that we would be properly warned and encouraged to stay the course. And Lord, to pray for those who are tempted and are falling away right before our eyes.

We ask this in your name alone, Amen. The admonitions to Timothy in these verses include a sorry state of affairs, a warning of sorts about apostasy, a falling away from the faith. It's not a happy topic, yet is indeed needful.

We all need reminders, of course, the dangers for ourselves and for each other, especially the younger among us as they grow up and are tempted by this world. For the covenant children grow up in a secure home and a church, and know little of the wolves in sheep's clothing other than what we tell them. But the dangers of people pretending to be Christians.

To that end, let's examine some of the things here about apostasy, to learn to rely upon God while resisting the allurements of the world.

### **Apostasy in General**

And so I will speak of apostasy in general, define it here, the definition, simply a falling away from the faith. That's the word used to go astray, lost, to turn aside or away.

There in that famous text in Hebrews 6.6, I won't go over that text, but that's the one that speaks of those who have tasted of the age to come and of the powers of the Holy Spirit and have fallen away. Falling away. It is an act of turning away from the truth of God or abandoning his, him and his truth.

It is an act. What I mean by that is it's sudden or slow in terms of time, but definite either way. There is a cutoff.

They don't just wake up and go, wow, wow, where'd that come from? Build up to it either slowly or quickly and they want to go that way. It's a turning away, of course, to emphasize the responsibility of apostasy, the imagery of being on the path of righteousness, of God's salvation and saying, I'm not satisfied with this. I'm gonna go the opposite way.

I'm out of here. That's the idea of turning away. It's an act, a definitive act of their will, of their mind and away from God.

The truth of God or of God himself, of course, or whatever is related to him, the core truths of Christianity, it makes Christianity and things related to Christianity. Specifically, when professing believers of Jesus Christ later turn away from God and his truth over time or suddenly, as I said, this is what apostasy is about. It's not related to the world.

They cannot apostatize. They were never of us. They were never part of the church in any formal or outward way, like through baptism.

No, it's referring to Christians, those within the church, who give it all up because they'd rather have their own desires fulfilled. Now, Paul does not go into the psychology or the sociology. You won't see much of the details here in the New Testament era or even in the Old Testament.

You have descriptions, stories and events. We'll talk about one of them in Deuteronomy, for example, a little later in the sermon. Here, as he does elsewhere, and we'll quote that section as well in Timothy, in which he just simply describes.

This is what it looks like, so you're aware of what apostasy entails. And, of course, Paul is not concerned about blaming the church. This is a common problem in practice today.

You hear a little bit about that in Sunday school class when Trip was pointing out this phrase that came up of spiritual abuse. It's very vague. You can, I can imagine, have a helpful definition of it, but often it is.

It's just, they said things I didn't like and I was sitting and they caught me. That's what I've read over and over again. I've read a number of these stories of people who have apostatized from the faith.

That's what it comes down to. Certainly, churches can fail. That's true.

But apostasy, at the end of the day, is their decision. They can blame whoever they want. Pastor, the church, my family.

They decided. This is what they wanted to do. No one forced them and pushed them off a cliff.

Now, of course, there are degrees of abandoning the faith. It comes in many forms and causes. I won't go into all of those.

I'll talk about a little bit later. But here there are degrees of apostasy, of falling away and leaving God's truth and word. Outright rejection, of course, of God and Christ and embracing false gods.

It's just like in the Old Testament. Like, ah, whatever. We're just gonna follow Baal.

We don't care about Yahweh or Jehovah. We care nothing of that. We're just gonna go off and hang out with the Philistines or whatever.

The Syrians and the Syrians and the like. Renouncing the gospel way, for example. There are people who've done that even today in this day and age, sadly.

I don't know if you know of any. There are some big names and relatively big in some evangelical circles that have done this. They're like, we're done with this.

We want out of here. In fact, you may know one of them. I don't remember his name off the top of my head.

But back in the late 90s, he wrote about I Kissed Dating Goodbye. Remember him? Joshua, right? Joshua somebody or other. Harris, yeah.

He was a homeschooling, you know, guru. He's up-and-coming. And about, what was it, five years ago? He's like, yeah, I gave it all up.

It was all just a game to me. It wasn't real. Yeah, oh yeah, he's pro-gay the whole nine yards.

I remember watching and seeing this. He apostatized. He's like, I'm done with this.

He and his wife, I think they divorced. But whatever the case is, he divorced God. I mean, that's what that is.

He divorced God. He's like, I'm done with this. It's sad.

It's horrifying, in fact. Other ways of doing it, although not often formally this way, but people renounce their baptism. Like, I'm not a Christian.

My baptism means nothing to me. At least that's what they're doing functionally, even if they don't say it outright. Denial of other key doctrines.

We read about that in Timothy elsewhere, as you recall. They deny the resurrection. Paul said, this is a bad thing.

You may say I believe in God. This is why I'm talking about degrees or ways of describing apostasy. They may say with their lips, I'm following God.

I believe in Jesus. I just deny the resurrection. Like, okay, whatever.

That's a serious heresy and you're not a believer. You've denied the faith. So you can deny certain parts, is what I'm saying.

The first part is the whole package, as we say, the whole enchilada. We're just done with this. Others are playing this other game.

They want to, you know, either publicly they want to look still kind of good. They don't want to make their friends embarrassed. Whatever the reason, but they give up on significant parts of the Bible.

That too is a form of apostasy. Denial of key practices. So again, you can have the teaching and the beliefs.

Yeah, I believe in the Trinity. I believe in the Bible. I believe the Bible's inspired.

I've said it before, and I guess I'll say it again. In America, you have all kinds of weird combinations. I can conceive of people, and I've run across people almost like this.

Oh, I believe all this stuff of the Bible. In fact, I like the Confession. It's a good summary of the Bible.

I just don't want to practice baptism, going to church, being a church member in the Lord's Supper. I just, you know, stay home and read my Bible. It's all just a head game.

Yeah, some of you are like, what? People do this. People do this. It's terrifying.

That's a form of apostasy. It's by practice in that case more than by doctrine, but what's the point of doctrine if you're not going to live it? Not much of a point at all. Violations of God's law as well.

If it's serious enough, and the longevity of the transgression is a form of apostasy as well. Again, you can say with your mouth all you want, but if you're living with another man's wife, you apostatize. And if the church will come to you and discipline you and excommunicate you, if you do not repent, if you stay in it, you are apostatizing.

So don't think of apostasy as, oh, I've got my sign and, you know, the church has abused me, and I'm making it official. They just, it's a fact what they do. It's an act.

They've accomplished it and made it done for all practical purposes. And of course, in the case of excommunication, the church is just saying, well, we agree with you. You're not a believer.

You've left the faith. It's sad, but that's what's happening. If they don't repent, whether they expressly, explicitly apostatize or not, that's what they are doing in their heart and by their actions.

Now, some clarifications here. It's not a denial of the perseverance or the preservation of the saints. The perseverance of the saints, that's the language of what we are called to do.

We are called to persevere, to keep on keeping on, not to give up, to keep running the extra mile as believers. That's what that verb reflects. Preservation is what the Spirit does of and on, upon us and through us.

And we'll hear a little bit about that next week. So preservation, of course, is by the Spirit. This is not a denial of the perseverance of the saints.

That is, God does not lose His chosen. The elect never apostatizes. He'll never lose them out of His hand.

He said that. Jesus says that very clearly in John 10. The Father knows who is His.

They are in His hands and He will never lose them. But we don't know who they are because we can't read people's hearts. And that's why it kind of gets confusing and convoluted in our own minds because we just can't believe this person just gave up on the faith.

Surely he didn't apostatize. Surely she's not serious about living in sin this way. And, of course, the other part is it takes time.

It could be decades before someone actually repents. And then you find out, oh, they didn't really apostatize. It was temporary.

I mean, 10, 15, 20 years is very temporary for us. But in the long-term scheme of things, if they're saved, it is certainly temporary. So it's not a denial of the perseverance of the saints, that they will persevere.

They will get up after they've sinned, ask for forgiveness, and carry on. 1 John 2.19. It's a classic passage for this. A wonderful passage.

1 John 2.19. John, the apostle of love, writing this, they went out from us, he writes, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

And if you recall in 1 Corinthians, one of the things Paul brings up there, I think it was in chapter 11, the chapter on having the Lord's Supper, that the squabbles and the conflicts in the church are actually for their good, for it exposes troublemakers. I'm paraphrasing. And John's saying something along those lines as well.

For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest. It becomes clear and obvious, they're not of us.

They were just plain Christianity. Baptism wasn't a serious thing for them. And eventually they will leave.

And it's commonly the case. It's been my experience. Maybe you've seen it as well.

They don't stick with the truth. They don't stick with God's people. They're gone.

And they were never of us to begin with. He says at the end that none of them were of us. John's point is they were never truly of us.

And I've used this illustration before of traitors in America. We're all like, well, we're all Americans. We're patriotic.

It was our 250th anniversary. It's a great time. We think of the great things that God has blessed us with in our nation, our history, right, in our past, and even here and now, the blessings that have carried on generation after generation.

But we know that there are people who say with their mouths and say smiley things and say the right thing, but in their hearts, they're really traitors. And they would turn us in for cheap silver or cheap thrills or whatever if they could. They really don't care about America.

Their hearts are not in it. So outwardly, they look like the rest of us, talk like the rest of us, but we know if push comes to shove, in some cases, we've seen it. We know they're actual traitors.

They've been caught by the government, for example, selling American secrets. And their friends never knew about it. How would they? Wouldn't be a very good spy, would they? They keep it quiet, put on a face.

They're hypocrites. And that happens in the church, just like in the world. The same kind of human phenomenon, actions and the like, occur in the church because the last I checked, when you're born again, you're still human.

And you're still going to do human things, even human sins and the way humans sin. And that's one of them. You just play games and it's all lip service.

So that's not what he's talking about, obviously. Now this is a warning to Timothy that he has to be aware of this and deal with it, of course. And of course, by implication, for us, it's a warning as well, that we not fall into this trap.

For the time will come, verse 3, when they will not endure sound doctrine. Timothy, be aware of this, because time is short. Now another point I want to bring up about apostasy in general before I get to the second point is, and I hinted at this before, I actually said a little bit, is that apostasy can be temporary.

You ask pastor, how can that be if they renounce Christ, how can it be temporary? Well, in the case of renouncing Christ, not so much, obviously, with their mouth, if that's the case, and they certainly weren't, but there are those who give up the church, give up sound doctrine, and wander off in the wilderness for decades. So with respect to them growing up in the church, usually it's kids, they grew up in the church, they've been baptized in the church, and they give up. Adults do it as well.

That's a form of apostasy. It may not be so blatant, to be sure, but they had obligations, they were named a Christian by their baptism publicly before the world, whether they felt like it

or not, and they had obligations upon them, which is to embrace Christ and follow Him, and they said, I don't want anything to do with it, and they just wander off. So it could be decades, and so when you excommunicate people, when we excommunicate as a church, we've done that, it's not because we say, it is final, this is it, because we're not infallible.

We're not infallible, and those who are excommunicated, if they repent, they can be brought back into the church. That's the glories of the gospel. It's happened.

We knew somebody here in our church back in the 90s, and he showed up about eight years ago and called me on the phone, Sunday morning, at our house here. Sunday morning, he called me, Pastor Matthews. Yeah, this is, I'm not going to give his name.

You wouldn't know him anyways, and I was like, yeah? He goes, I'm going back to church. Wow, praise the Lord. He wanted to tell me that.

There are others. We had another member of Providence who grew up Presbyterian, and she went off her merry way. Some of you may remember her.

She passed away a few years ago, and she finally got married like in her late 60s, was it? She was baptized and grew up Presbyterian. She wandered off on her own for decades, almost her entire life. She apostatized.

I never used that word. I wouldn't necessarily suggest using that word all the time, but that's what it is. Objectively speaking, she gave up on her baptism, but God didn't give up on her.

She repented and came back, and we rejoiced with her as the parable of the lost lamb. Even if one is brought in, the heavens rejoice, brothers and sisters. Even though none of us apostatized, by God's grace, we should all be happy together.

So, it is not permanent. That is, with respect to our perspective, it could change. We just don't know people.

But God, of course, knows when the apostasy is sealed in their hearts. Perseverance of the saints is chapter 17 of the Confession, so that's obviously the opposite of apostasy. Do you persevere? Do you continue on to trust in Jesus no matter what happens to you? Your whole family could turn against you and hate you, but you will cling to him anyways? Paragraph 3. Nevertheless, they, that is, believers, may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure.

In other words, the Confession is recognizing, what the Bible recognizes, Christian sin. We are sinners, but we are saved by grace, but we may fall away temporarily. Backsliding is what we used to call it in my circles when I was a kid.

And that phrase, that word is actually used in the Bible, in the Old Testament. You're like a stubborn mule, called Israel. So, Christians can do that.

David did that. Remember? He murdered a man. He was the mastermind.

We have crimes against people who are masterminds of clubs and gangs, and what clubs? Gangs, and what not, who murder people, although they didn't pull the trigger. And of course he committed adultery. And clearly it was several months had passed before he was finally confronted and repented.

Although he still had the suffering of the consequences of his short term, yes, but real backsliding. So, it may look like apostasy to us at the time, as I pointed out, but if they repent, they never truly apostatize.

## **Apostasy in Particular**

Now, apostasy in particular, so this text before us here, verses 3 and following, the time of apostasy, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

This may refer to the end times. We talked about this in 1 Timothy 4. So, 2 Timothy 4 talks about apostasy. 1 Timothy 4 talks about apostasy.

It has a lot more written about it there. Six, seven verses, as I recall. There is a warning of apostasy there.

Now, the Spirit expressly says, we read in 1 Timothy 4, that in the latter times, someone would depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. When he speaks there, or writes there of latter times, or the last or latter days, there's different ways of describing that in the New Testament era. I went over that there at the time.

I won't go through all those verses. It could refer to just before the return of Christ, but there in 1 Timothy 4, he lists a long list of sins. Why, if he didn't expect you to see them at the time in which he wrote it.

Similarly here, when he says, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, what's the connection to that? Verse 2, preach the word, for, because of this, the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. It wouldn't be relevant to Timothy to preach the word if Paul had it in mind 2,000 years later. So, I think when he says here at that time, for the time will come, he means within the lifetime of Timothy.

Just like in 1 Timothy, when he gives that list of sins, he means within the lifetime of Timothy, the last days are occurring. And the last days have been with us since then. Because it's before the second coming of Jesus.

That's the reference point. So, to be watchful here, as we read in verse 5 at the end here, again, makes no sense if it's outside of Timothy's own lifetime. So, I believe it is during his lifetime and not later.

And so, the call to preach is now in contrast with the coming apostasy that will come, that he preaches the word before it's too late, for they will not have a heart to hear the truth. Don't wait, Timothy. Preach here and now.

And it's not just Timothy. You yourselves have to teach your children and those who will hear you, if they will speak to you about the truth. You must believe in Jesus.

You must repent. You know hell is real and judgment is coming. So, it's good advice for us, not just for Timothy.

Church members change churches. So, even if they don't apostatize here and now, they may go to another church that's bad for them. Children grow up, perhaps leave the state.

So, even if it isn't immediate, now is the time for churches and pastors and leaders and parents, for that matter, to instruct their children while they still have the time to do it. And so, it's always a good policy to preach, teach, and instruct here and now as those who are willing to listen to you if you have that responsibility and opportunity, because they may never hear it again. Now verse 4. Let's go through some of the text here.

Verse 4. They will not endorse sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. False doctrine is a pressing concern of Paul's. It's not the first time.

Many times he's mentioned it in the letters to the pastor Timothy. He brought it up before as well with respect to fables, which perhaps was Jewish fables and beliefs affecting the church. He even disciplined false teachers.

He mentions that in 1 Timothy there, because doctrine or false teaching in this case is a very serious matter. Churches should take this truth to heart. They should teach the truth and nothing but the truth and not try to win people over with half-truths or watering the truth down or omitting the truth.

Sometimes one of the things they do is they won't preach it from the pulpit, because this is apparently the place in which we try to draw all kinds of unbelievers into the body. And sure, I want them to come here, but their policy is, I've been told this explicitly, that we only hit the heavy stuff in Sunday school class, if that. I'm sure that's certainly Paul's policy in Acts.

Of course it wasn't. You've read some of the, you remember some of his stuff. He got them so angry they picked up stones to kill him.

Who do we think we are, better than Paul? Itching ears. That's an interesting metaphor. You have an itch in your ear, what do you do? I know the kids will say, well I itch it.

You don't itch it, you scratch the itch. It's actually, the verb is scratch. You scratch the itch.

You don't itch the itch. You make it worse if you itch it. English is weird.

But you scratch the itch. They have something that is bothering them that they wish to have relief. And of course the imagery here isn't, it's a real need.

Oh, it's a real pain. No, it's their own desires. It's describing desires.

Their desire is, I want a good thing. I want my ears to be satisfied with things that satisfy my heart. That's what he's describing as.

They're not satisfied with God's truth, is the other side. That's why he says, preach the word, for they will not endure sound doctrine. The opposite of not enduring it is having itching ears.

We're not satisfied. We're not happy. We don't want to hear this stuff.

I want to hear something else that's more interesting, more satisfying, or more happy, or whatever it is that they have in mind at the time. Usually they're just following their lusts and their desires and rationalizing it, sadly enough. They hanker after something less offensive to their ears than to their hearts thereby.

He means ears, of course. He means the entryway to the heart, to the mind, to the soul. It's a common problem today.

Wanting, desiring, pleasant teaching, something comfortable, less offensive. Is it the word of God or isn't it? Is it in the text or isn't it? That's the question. Is it true, even more importantly? Sometimes, of course, you can have the right doctrine from the wrong text and that should be avoided, but at least it's the right doctrine.

It's not a lie. Truth is very important and we should embrace it. We live in a society that sometimes is described by even secularists as post-truth.

After the truth is whatever you make it to be because everything's become so politicized. Everything's about power politics that they're willing to manipulate things in the name of their political party and that's true for both sides and everyone in the middle. That should not be the case amongst Christians.

We should want to know the truth and nothing but the truth in the word of God. Is it thus saith the Lord or is that thus saith the pastor? That's the question. And because they want thus saith the pastor, we read here, they heap up for themselves teachers.

I just have this image of just grabbing a bunch of bodies and throwing them up and piling them up as a heap. Here, say something good for me, please. Satisfy me.

And it's so much easier today if you think about it. Back then you had to track someone down. It wasn't like there was a pastor on every corner.

Today you can get a pastor on every corner of the internet, can't you? Something a little bit for everybody. It's there. Even on the radio at times.

When I was growing up we didn't have the internet quite yet. It came a little later. You had the radio and you could find all kinds of people saying all kinds of things on the radio.

Find the right guy who says things that are pleasing to your ears, pleasing to your flesh, that justify or rationalize your sins, which is an easy way to be what? To be apostate. Rationalizing and excusing one's sins. So not all parachurches are bad, but it seems many are redundant, trying to do the work of the church already, and they become, therefore, another way in which wolves can come along and say, look, the church has got a problem.

I'm here to fix it for you. Wink, wink. Many new churches start with a big name, and that's what people like.

They like a big name. I heard that recently. Someone made some comment about someone visiting us, and I'm like, oh, he visited you? That's great.

What's going on here? What's going on here? So not all churches have this problem, of course, but megachurches seem to especially have this problem about big names. I met a megachurch's pastor's wife once. I didn't know it.

This was up when I was living up north with my wife. We were living up north. I got my hair cut.

She's chatting away, and I was talking, being friendly. She goes, yeah, my husband, we're multimillion dollars in debt, so we can get a big church. I was like, you know, I didn't want to jerk my head getting a haircut.

I was like, what? I can see why she's stressing out talking to a stranger about this. It's kind of, I guess, what was it, the Field of Dreams movie? I never watched it, but apparently if you build it, they will come was a meme that came out of that. So if you just go into debt, you build a big, and it's true, unfortunately, in the American scene.

Many people are sheep in the worst sense of the word. When I use it, I like to use it in a biblical sense, which is a loving sense. Yes, even the pastor at times is like a sheep, yes, but I mean in a bad sense.

Like, what are you doing? Just because it's a big church, it must be a great thing? This is crazy, but it's the American way. It was sad. I was like, oh, lady, please don't.

Get your money back. Now, one thing I want to point out here. As much as, and it's easy, and it's good to do, I want to rail on and hammer the false teachers.

Amen. But the sheep want it. This is what you're describing here.

They're both morally culpable before God. The sheep want them. They heap them up.

Give me more. Give me more. I'm not satisfied.

I got more sins you got to cover and make excuses for, or whatever the case is. They will turn away from the truth of the gospel for salvation by faith alone is offensive to many. Teaching depravity of man is not comforting.

Taking doctrine to heart is off putting to many. And that's within the church. The context is clearly the church here because they will no longer endure sound doctrine.

Do unbelievers endure sound doctrines to begin with? That is, those outside the church? No. That's why they're not baptized. They're not in the church in the pews listening.

These are one step closer, or yeah, perhaps one step further away depending on how you look at it. They are in the church, probably baptized. They are listening.

They have false teachers who claim to be real teachers. So this is all in the church context, this apostasy. And this falling away is especially in the church, sadly enough.

Now we have an Old Testament example. Deuteronomy 32. At the end of the book of Deuteronomy in this chapter, chapter 32, verse 16, we have a picture of false worship and embracing false gods.

Verse 16, Deuteronomy 32, verse 16 and following. So here we have some of the fruits of apostasy. Clearly they apostatized, or at least many of them did.

Again, the language of the Old Testament, and even New Testament often, is very broad based. It's just saying, you all, that it's relevant to, which is a lot back then. They had false worship.

That's one of the big signs of apostasy, in which they had true worship, threw it away, and went after man-made public worship, which is a sign of growing apostasy. They had a false gospel, therefore, because if you have false worship, often what accompanies it is a false god and a false way of worshiping him, and a false gospel, which describes a different way to be saved. A man-made gospel, of course, is a sign of apostasy.

It's not about God, it's about man. And a false life, as well, is man-centered worship and the desires that go with it. These are the fruits, these are the evidences, as well, of apostasy, or the conditions at times.

And they make their own morality. The occasions of this apostasy, this is where it becomes more hard-hitting for us today. The occasion of the apostasy is before verse 16 in chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, verses 13 through 15.

He made him ride in the heights of the earth, that is Israel, that he might eat of the produce of the fields. He made him draw honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock, curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, with fat of the lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the choicest wheat. He drank wine, the blood of the grapes.

What's he describing? Prosperity. You had a good, you had a maid in the shade, good stuff, good food, good prosperity. But Jeshurun, another name for Israel, grew fat and kicked, or as I like to say, fat, dumb, and happy.

You grew fat, you grew thick, you were obese. Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the rock of his salvation, and they provoked him to jealousy with foreign gods, and I read the rest of that, of the false worship. The circumstances and the accompaniment of apostasy in this case was prosperity and peace, which of course we see today in spades.

I mean back then they were still in the danger of being invaded in the desert and all this stuff. I mean even in the Promised Land they still had invaders amongst them. America hasn't had an invasion since 1812 when the capital was burned down.

Think about it. The safety and security that we have for so long, good food, good wine, good produce, prosperity and peace, many blessings that are taken for granted, freedoms, technology. As Cotton Mather, probably quoting a long known proverb, religion begat prosperity and the daughter devoured the mother.

That is prosperity devoured religion, and I think we see a lot of that in your and ours generation. They think they can get away with it because of the prosperity, why do I need God? Why do I need this religion? Why do I need my baptism? As I've said before, we have a lot of ability to sin and get away with it in our society because there are no laws against fornication, very few laws against adultery if they even exist, and the like. The temptation becomes strong for people, even within the church.

So prosperity becomes like a southern climate of humidity and greenery, so things grow so readily even as the heat slows the spiritual energy of the Christians. 1 Timothy 4, 2-5 is another way of describing what's going on then and even now. In 1 Timothy 4 we read of having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof clearly describes people within the church then and even now, sadly. Those who are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. We see this within the leadership of churches, men who resist the truth, who study much but learn little, who hop perhaps from one church tradition to another, changing views about Christ, Trinity, the resurrection, all in the name of freedom.

We see this amongst laymen, where bad practices can lead to bad thinking which in turn leads to bad doctrine and apostasy. They can feed each other in fact. If we get comfortable with shows and music and ways of speaking that glorify sin and transgressions, then we start rationalizing our poor practices and this in turn liberalizes our doctrine and teaching of those sins to back-fit our bad practices as it were, to retrofit and make it work, usually in the name of so-called Christian liberty.

I can watch all kinds of heinous things because I have Christian liberty. No, you don't. You don't have the liberty.

You don't have the means, causes, and occasions that lead into sin. And we have a lot of that in society, especially amongst the entertainment parts. Bad company is another way in which this happens as well.

If you hang out with the wrong crowd, bad company, you will change eventually. That's why we have Proverbs about it in the Old Testament. Even the New Testament has a proverb.

Quote in the Old Testament, Do not be deceived. Evil company corrupts good habits. And this is not just for kids.

This is for adults. Every pastor that I researched, and I couldn't research all of them, but I researched a number of them. I only put some of them in my book, that made a compromise with the gay mafia.

Every one of them had a gay person in their life close to them. The temptation is strong. To be comfortable with liars and fornicators and gays, and I don't mean repentant people.

This isn't the liberal talking point on the flip side, where the liberal is like, were you supposed to, you know, take an oath? No, it's repentant people. Jesus was talking to people who were going to hear him speak the truth, and he did, and they still wanted to hear more. The Pharisees did not.

No, I mean people who are not repenting. These are liars and fornicators and the like. Make people, start making excuses for them.

It's just human nature, because you have to live with them, or you're with them, you're with them on the job and everything else. The pressure becomes strong. It's one thing, of course, to be helpful for your neighbor, or your co-worker, but it's another thing to put them into your friend circle.

Let's take heed of Paul's warning here. Examine ourselves and our practices. Reinforce the truth with good reading, listening, and good sermons, and frequently use the means of grace.

It's why God has given it to us, and given us a whole day for this fact. And above all, to cling to Jesus Christ. May the spirit of truth preserve us from the evil around and among us.

Let us pray. Indeed, God Almighty, may we stand firm and rejoice in the salvation we have in Jesus Christ, and your solemn will for us, as we heard this morning. Preserve us from our own foolishness and the temptation around us, God.

And may we not have arrogant hearts, but humble hearts that pray for those that we see that are in danger of falling away, and that you would help us somehow, someway to speak, or to help them in other ways to draw them away from such terrible temptation. Our Lord and Savior, may all these things be done for your glorious namesake. Amen.