Apostasy and Persecution

Turn to our Bibles to 2nd Timothy, 2nd Timothy chapter 4, verses 14-15, 2nd Timothy 4 verses 14-15. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much harm.

May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must be aware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. Let us pray.

Herein we have a short fashion description of a man who certainly was harassing, if not outright persecuting, the Apostle Paul and his ministry. And it seems strongly likely that he is the same one who believed something of the truth of the gospel, but denied the resurrection, as we read in 1st Timothy. And thus, in these two verses, we have both apostasy and persecution in summary fashion.

And as we go through this somber and serious situation and matter, in teaching God Almighty, may it strengthen our resolve and draw us closer to you, we pray. With all grace and kindness, we ask, by the power of the Spirit upon us, that we would be strengthened therein, not out of pride that we are not like other men or women, but rather God, out of humility, clinging more and more to Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Apostasy and persecution are not topics, of course, of delight, the things we wish to think about. And yet they are necessary because it is part of life and certainly here in the Word of God. It is needful, therefore, to review these things here for two reasons, that we not forget to examine our own lives, both inward and outward, to see if we are following Jesus instead of following the world and going off in a different route.

And the other reason, of course, is to arm ourselves against temptation of those who wish to draw us away from the holy path of righteousness and away from Him and towards the world itself instead of heaven. And so I think it's helpful to go over some of this here in this manner to describe such things and define them and show and explain and encourage us to stand firm in our path and our walk with Jesus. And that means the first point is apostasy, apostasy, abandoning God and His truth.

Apostasy

You can't abandon it unless you already had it, at least on your lips, at least somewhat outwardly in some way, form or fashion, right? You're baptized, you're raised up in the family of God, you confess Christ, and then later on you throw it all away. That's apostasy. When professing believers of Him and to Him, supposedly, later on in their lives, maybe next year, maybe several decades later, sadly, I know of stories, for example, of families, large families, homeschooling families, eight, nine, ten kids, and the parents raise them up.

Of course, we don't know what's going on in the household. Later on, decades later, it turns out the family gets a divorce, the parents get a divorce, and they're both atheists. What was going on? I do not know.

But that is apostasy, as terrifying as it is. It may be slow, it may be sudden. Either way, it is dangerous and a bad thing, indeed.

Paul doesn't go into the psychology, the sociology of it, of course. He's not concerned here in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy as well when it's brought up a number of times, actually, because he's talking and writing his letter. I say talking, he's writing his letter to young Pastor Timothy about these serious concerns and matters.

And he's not concerned about blaming the church. As, again, we've heard before that it's a common problem today. Those who apostatize, the first thing they say, it's the church's fault.

We heard in prayer time this morning, one of our families, they have relatives and whatnot, and how they grow up in a Mennonite mother who became a pastor in a PCUA church or something like that. And he's recovering from Christianity. Well, I can imagine that.

Yeah, that's not really Christianity. Yes, churches fail. Yes, families fail and sin.

David did. Peter did to his Lord and Savior there, living with him for three years. And he failed.

And the people who apostatize, that doesn't matter to them. They're going to use that as an excuse. Their failures don't count.

It's your failures that count. Don't forget that. That's from their mindset.

I'm helping you because you're going to see, I fear, in the future, more people who apostatize. And they're going to use all the weapons at their disposal, which includes lying, half-truths and the like, to make you feel guilty for their problems. I've read this stuff.

I've been reading on it since I investigated homeschooling over 10 years ago, right, in our circles around here. We had a number of apostates from the homeschooling circles. And the way they painted these things, I didn't recognize their Christianity.

I think something else is going on here. It's that form of apostasy, people who don't want to take seriously anymore what God's truth is. Why should we, as it were, take them at face value? It doesn't mean everything they say is wrong.

There could be real abuses. I think there were at times. But abandoning the truth and fleeing the good news of Jesus Christ to fulfill your lusts and desires or whatever reason they have in mind is a very serious problem, and it happens in the churches, even Reformed churches.

Clarifications here, of course, this is not a denial of the perseverance of the saints or the preservations of the saints, right? God preserves us through our perseverance. He gives us the might and the power that we keep on keeping on. That's a good way, it's from my mentor, Dr. Pappas.

Perseverance is keeping on keeping on. 1 John 2.19, they went out from us, 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. Well, one of the things you find out with apostasy is as untasteful as it is, as sad as it is, especially when it happens to friends and family members near you. There is a function and a purpose, one of which is that they would come out from us, that we would know they were never of us.

They're exposed, another one. And that's a good thing. You don't want to keep being around people who are secretly lying to you and putting on a false front.

That's going to start undermining you eventually. In that sense, God is actually helping us in preserving his church. Acts 20, 29 through 30, we read that this is a fact of church life.

It's not just something that happened in the Old Testament. It's easy to pick up examples in the Old Testament as we went through, what, 1st, 2nd Samuel, 1st, 2nd Kings on Wednesday night. It just seemed like they keep falling back and forth.

They keep lapsing and apostatizing from God's truth, right? Paul tells us it happens in the New Testament era. A lot has changed. We have a lot more grace and power from on high, from the Holy Spirit, right? We have collective maturity in which we don't fall often to the same degree and the same magnitude.

That is, numerically, we don't have entire nation falling down to outward false idols the way they did as much, although we have that in some ways in some forms. Things have changed, and yet in some ways, things are still the same. So Paul tells us, or he tells the ruling elders of the churches of Ephesus in his short speech or prayer here in Acts 20, 29 and following, for I know this, Paul tells them, that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also from among yourselves, men will rise up, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. We read about that last time in Deuteronomy 13 in which, I guess that was Wednesday night, in which the passage there describes that prophets will be raised up among them that will try to lure them from God and His worship. They tell them, don't listen to those prophets.

They're there to test you. And we have the same thing going on in the New Testament era until Christ returns. This is going to be an ongoing problem.

Savage wolves will come among you, not sparing the flock. They will deceive you and lie to you and pretend they are one of you, right? A wolf disguised as a sheep, speaking perverse things, lies, twisted things, half-truths, to draw away the disciples, away from Jesus Christ, to help you apostatize. It's among you, among the church, people who profess Jesus, people who were baptized.

Paul is warning the church leaders there that false teachers are going to be there. Don't be surprised. And that's important to learn and hear for those who give these terrible stories of how terrible these fundamentalist churches were.

They would include us as a fundamentalist church in these biographies. They write as though it's a total shock that people sin. I can't believe my pastor sinned.

It was horrifying. You know, my parents did it, my neighbor did it at church, and this and that. You're like, what is going on here? Of course they are.

If you have the wrong expectations, it's going to mess you up. And we have to understand there is sin in the church. We shouldn't wear rose-colored glasses.

1 Corinthians 11-19 gives us another purpose in which God, dovetailing with the prior in 1 John 2-19, we have 1 Corinthians 11-19, for there must also be factions among you that those who are approved may be recognized among you. So on the one hand, negatively, you find out who these troublemakers are, that they would come out from us, that we may manifest that none of them were of us, so more of a negative description, that they're not of us. These were false converts.

They're not true believers. And here we have another reason, 1 Corinthians 11-19, why God allows us in the church. There must be factions and divisions and fights and implications.

Of course, these are bad things, and part of bad things includes apostasy as well. That those who are approved may be recognized among you. Those who are in the right, those perhaps, in his case, he's speaking of church leaders, men who could be potentially church leaders, are showing their true mettle by resisting and standing firm upon the truth against those who stood against the truth in the church.

So on the negative, on the one hand, and positive to show that God has those he has raised up to protect and defend his church, to separate the wheat from the chaff, especially in the leadership, it seems. The details of apostasy, one of the longer lists that we have is 2 Timothy 3. I'm not going to go through all that. We've been through some of it earlier.

2 Timothy 3-1-3, 4 and 5. But here we have a description of a departure from the faith. He says, But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come, for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Verse 5, having a form of godliness, but denying its power, from such people turn away.

Describing here this long list of various and sundry sins, all of which could describe one degree or another apostasy, some of which may never describe apostasy, but people who've fallen away a little bit or are just in serious sin and perhaps could repent, but it can cover either way. He's not getting very specific, but we know apostasy, the way it looks and how it functions and comes forth, can look different. All the different sins and reasons why people apostasize, that list could certainly cover it all.

One of the first things you have here, he talks about departing from the faith. Now he means there not departing the subjective faith that we don't believe in Jesus anymore, though that's implied in some of the activities here. These are kind of people we should avoid and flee from, but he means specifically those who deny the objective truth of the gospel known as the faith, the faith.

That's used a number of times in the Bible, and it's just with respect to whatever is taught in the Word of God. So it's not just that his apostasy is not just denying the resurrection, denying that Jesus is God, but it could include all kinds of matters and parts and parcel of God's truth in the Bible, both in doctrine and in practice. These are people here, of course, playing fast and loose with God's truth, and they're therefore heaping up judgment upon their heads.

It's a warning to Timothy, a warning that he would take to heart. Now we ought to take to heart as well, although it was back then, his warning to them was not of the end times as such. As you may recall, when I preached through that, I reminded us there, it's very much clear in the text that he's telling them, be prepared for this now, not a thousand years from now, but it's going to happen within the lifetime of your ministry.

Be prepared for such kind of people who are troublemakers, who are traitors, who are ungodliness and have a form of godliness, but deny its power. From such people turn away. You can't turn away from them, but it hasn't happened for another thousand years.

He's describing what's imminent to Timothy's day, and of course, what we still see today. From that point on until Christ comes, there will be people falling left and right, unfortunately, from the faith. How much and how frequently, we don't know until it happens, but it's there, and it's something we ought to be aware of.

But of course, if they repent, that's why I mentioned the list here, doesn't say, well, because they did these activities, they're a traitor, they're headstrong, they're unloving, they're disobedient to parents, they're unthankful and unholy. Therefore, we know without a shadow of a doubt that they are apostatized, they are unregenerate, and they are going to hell. That's not the case.

We cannot read people's hearts. We read their actions, and if they do repent, we ought to have humble hearts and receive such repentance into the church, as we have done, and bring them back into the fold. But if they haven't, to that extent, we should turn away from such people, avoid them, for they are a danger to us.

What particular ways and forms and fashions we see in the Bible and in the life in which they exercise or teach false things and are dangerous to us, those who apostatize, or the reasons why they apostatize. One of the things that happened in the New Testament era was forbidding of marriage, Colossians 2.20. Now, this is quite interesting because we have a similar activity in the Roman Catholic Church, right? If you want to be really super holy, be a monk, right? Be a nun, you don't have to get married. Colossians 2.20, I have the text printed out here.

Go to it. That's the wrong verse, I thought it was. I have a typo here.

He mentions it elsewhere, I'll find it for you later. What we have here is, do not touch, verse 21, do not taste, do not handle, which all things concern, which perish with the using thereof, according to the commandments and doctrines of men, abstaining from food and drink, Colossians 2.16, and the like. The marriage is elsewhere, I'll have to find it for you.

The important thing is they're teaching things contrary to the Word of God. Here in particular, contrary to that which is natural. Marriage is natural and good and holy, as Paul says elsewhere, 1 Corinthians 7 and elsewhere.

And food and drink are not evil. In fact, we're told in 1 Corinthians that whatsoever you do, eat or drink, what? Do unto the glory of God. There's nothing wrong with these things.

They're not inherently evil. The Jews were kind of falling into this trap, it looks like Gnosticism it's called at the time, in which fleshly things are inherently evil, was on the rise and perhaps picked up by some of the Judaizers and mixed in with their religion. And you can see that would make sense since God had a lot of what? Don't touch, don't taste in the Old Testament ceremonial system, didn't he? And you can see perhaps over time Satan would twist it and they're like, well there must be something instinctively wrong with pigs.

I'm glad there's not, I like my bacon. There's nothing wrong with that. And so this is one of the ways in which they teach serious danger and error to draw you from what? Freedom in Christ.

You have freedom to eat pork and bacon. If you don't like bacon, that's fine, I don't think less of you. That's the freedom we have in Christ and it shouldn't be taken from us.

Those who apostate don't want that freedom and they wish to take it away from us. These are some of the reasons and things that they do. We read as well, continuing here in Colossians, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.

Paul is therefore very strong in his language about what they are teaching being dangerous to us, that there are doctrines of demons telling us how somehow we are super holy because we don't touch, we don't taste, and we don't get married, for example. Verses 4 to 2. With respect to apostasy and the dangers therein, we are called therefore to stay away from those who are playing fast and loose with gospel teaching, with gospel living, with holiness and the like. Tells us that there in verses 4 and 5, that they are lovers of rather than lovers of God.

2 Timothy 3. And from such who have a form of godliness, it looks good on the outside, it sounds holy. Look, I'm controlling myself, I'm not eating or touching these things, but deny its power. That is the source being in Jesus Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit.

And from such people, turn away. They may be someone you like, they may be a family member, and of course, if you're married to them, there's not much you can do about it. You're not going to stay married with them unless they leave you, sadly.

But as much as within you, stay away from bad influence. That's one of the best ways to avoid apostasy, at least with respect to those things around us. Internally, you must continue to read, pray, call to God for strength and mercy and humility, and to submit to Him and all that He has given us by His gospel.

Persecution

Secondly, persecution. From apostasy to persecution. The two sometimes overlap.

Some of the worst persecutors are people who have apostatized from the church, and they really hate what they grew up with. Persecution, second point. We have here, with respect to Alexander Wright, the coppersmith did me much harm.

I don't think it's physical harm. I don't know for a fact, I doubt it. Because he describes here, you must beware of him, verse 15, for he has greatly resisted our word.

So I think he's harming, he's using a metaphor here, the outward call and the work of the ministry of preaching, of teaching, of instructing the people of God, of warning the sheep as he does in Acts chapter 20 there, the church of Ephesus, for example. Beware of false, these dangerous wolves, false shepherds. The first great persecution started in the book of Acts, you might recall this, Acts chapter 8. Let's go to Acts chapter 8. Now Saul was consenting to his death, that is Stephan's.

At that time, a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. That's the beginning, that's the first great persecution of the New Testament church.

They were scattered about. The apostles there were the ones by God used to spread the good news. But that didn't stop the devil.

That didn't stop here, in this case, the Jews and the Jewish powers and the Jewish church, which is now becoming an apostatized church. Maybe we never thought of it that way. Judaism was an outward form.

This is how you act like a Jew, right? Do Jewish things. But the religion was always a substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And unfortunately, by the time of Jesus Christ, many of them had rejected that.

They're in the church in the Old Testament form. They've apostatized. They've thrown it all away.

They've rationalized it, to be sure. And here it becomes even more stark and stronger in the New Testament era where you have birth pains of the butterfly coming out of the growth of the Old Testament stage. And the beautiful butterfly of the New Testament age in which you don't have to be a Jew anymore.

You don't have to act this way and do these activities. And you can hang out with the Gentiles. It's okay.

That is, we're all supposed to be holy in Christ. And here is a great, what, persecution by those who've apostatized from the truth, rejected Jesus Christ, saw the miracles, saw more miracles of the apostles who testified of His resurrection, the greatest of all miracles. And what do they do? Fall down on their knees and cry out for mercy? No, they doubled and tripled down and started murdering and slaughtering God's people.

Persecution means to pursue or chase, of course, with the implication of chase you down, I guess, like an animal chasing down a prey. It's parallel. Its usage is with the word tribulation in the New Testament, which means pressure or pressing together.

So by persecution, of course, often even today we think of tribulations, hard times, difficulties, even outright murder. I think, and I'm going to use two different words here. I'm going to use harassment today in the American context more than the word persecution.

In my mind, persecution is still something we're not quite under yet, but if you want to use that word, that's fine. Another persecution was 64 AD, large fire in Rome. The debauched Emperor Nero, who had many lovers of both types, blamed Christians, as I said this morning, and used them as human candles.

In 115 AD, one Roman learned defender, excuse me, one Roman learned defender, an antagonist of Christians, asserted that Rome considered Christians guilty of, quote, hatred of the human race. Because you weren't Roman, you didn't accept the cosmopolitan, global, multicultural paganism. Sound familiar? You don't accept that, you must hate humans.

What kind of a human are you? You're inhumane, is the word I guess we would use today. You're inhumane. They're haters of the human race, because you don't have a religion, but you have rather a deadly superstition.

That's his words. That's how they described early Christian Christianity at the time, and the persecutions that were rising up, they count perhaps 10 major persecutions until about 313 AD, which was the Edict of Milan, in which the Emperor of Rome gave Christianity freedom. Not privilege, but at least protection and freedom at the time.

The next major persecutions are during the Great Migration of the Muslims in the 600s, as you know. The Muslims were hardcore and dangerous, and went across the Mediterranean area into Spain especially, and slaughtered all the Christians. And of course there were the religious wars, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Great Inquisition, after those, the Reformation, and the like.

Now there are types of persecution, or harassment, or whatever we wish to call it, or degrees, of course. Types and degrees. First, there is internal and external.

I speak with respect to the Church of God, those within the Church and those without the Church. Or sometimes they're coordinated together. There is also subtle types of harassment, right? Peer pressure, words are not spoken, but we all get the innuendos about Christians in the workplace.

Are you that kind of Christian, sometimes we're asked? We know what they mean. Are you a fundee? Are you really one of us, the more enlightened, progressive Christians? And of course there's the more overt ones, in which they simply harass us outright, hate Christians, and the worst kind, of course, is in which you start losing your job, and then your life, which unfortunately is still going on today in the world. Now the harassments that we have, that we've perhaps run across or heard about in churches, existing here in America, can be formal and informal, or public and private, or a combination of all these things.

I point these things out to remind us there's different and multi-faceted ways of seeing it. Not just thinking, well, if they're not coming after me with a sword, it must not be a harassment or persecution. That's not true.

And here's some specific examples. Again, Alexander the coppersmith here resisting Paul, obviously in a public manner, because Paul's writing about him publicly, and he's a man who apparently has some influence and power, perhaps a church leader, as 1 Timothy seems to suggest as well. And so, therefore, either through a formal act, or public teaching, or public way of going after Paul.

And thus we see Alexander, indeed he's the one that denied the resurrection of Christ, being one of the first to apostatize, and therefore turn around and start harassing the very church he claimed to be part of. Today, the same tools used in the rest of life. So, this is for some of you, I guess, political wonks.

You have the expert workings of the communists telling us how they manipulate the population, they manipulate people, they have these handbooks about how to be subversive and everything else. Was it Alinsky? That happens in the churches as well, brothers and sisters. And you don't really need a manual.

You just have to be deceitful and think that way. I know most of us don't. We're just like, how do you put your, how do you manipulate? I don't know, they do it, and it happens in the church, sadly enough.

Here are some examples. Thing happens at your job, perhaps, you've probably seen it in the rest of life, right outside the church, blacklisting. Or you've been blackballed, is an old way of saying it as well, which means you're put on the no-go list.

It's not an explicit list, it's not like they have a piece of paper and put everyone's name down. You're a jerk, I don't like you, you're never gonna get a job in this company ever again. And they hand it off to their other friends at another company.

And so, the whole career field that used to be open to, because your expertise is now closed to you, because everyone's talking behind your back and saying, don't hire him. That's a blacklist, doesn't have to be written down. Or you're blackballed, and you're never gonna get a job in that town or that career again.

You've seen it, and guess what? It happens in churches as well. I've seen it go from church to church to church, a guy going from church to church to church, and the bad blackballing

letter saying, he's a bad, don't go after him, don't hire him, don't make him your pastor. It happens.

You don't have access, perhaps, to committees or journals and writing gigs and whatever else. Or as I said, if you're a pastor, you never get a church ever again. Mainline churches are a good example of this.

Can you imagine trying to go to the Presbyterian Church USA today and going on a floor exam, and they're going to catch you right there on the spot. Do you believe in six days of creation? Do you believe in evolution? No, I don't. Okay, well, you're never going to be a pastor in our church ever again.

I mean, that's the most obvious way of doing it, but there are lesser degrees of that in other kinds of churches outside of mainline churches as well. Other ways in which harassment or persecution happens in the churches, and not just mainline churches, you go after people with formal charges. So this is more serious, right? There's a gentleman I know, I heard this sermon on 1 Peter and submission, women called by 1 Peter in the opening verses to submit to their husbands, in the fear of the Lord, of course, and preferably with love.

He preaches the sermon. It's not a hardcore, hey, you know, all you hateful women, what's your problem? He's just going very carefully, just makes a few choice applications, works his way through the text, that's it. It's not this in-your-face kind of exaggerated fundamentalistic preaching that you run across sometimes like on social media.

And charges are brought against him because he offended the wrong kind of people in the church for preaching the Bible. He's being persecuted, he's being harassed. That kind of stuff happens in the churches.

It doesn't mean the churches and those kind of churches are automatically apostate, but it does remind us that no church on earth is perfect, and there are struggles, and there are battles, and we must be aware of these things, and therefore act accordingly, or react accordingly, or adjust our expectations so that we don't just fall apart when we find out, oh, no, there's sin in our church. In fact, my pastor apostatized, perhaps. It has happened, even reformed churches.

They just get up and leave and join the Eastern Orthodox Church or the Roman Catholic Church. Even professors, there are some of them, I found out. It's sad, it's frustrating sometimes, to be sure.

It's all here. Lastly, to prepare ourselves for harassment or persecution, knowing, of course, there are degrees of it and particular details, right? Christians may be weak, for example, and say yes to gay marriage just to keep their job. That's different than just outright saying, I hate Christianity, and I denounce my baptism.

You see, obviously, there's different degrees there. You go like, well, I understand he's weak, and sure, you don't want to lose your job, and that's not good, but that's a lot different than, whoa, this guy's just like, well, what do we say, giving the finger to God. That's what he's doing.

They are very aggressive that way. I don't know how else to describe it. And, of course, Paul tells us, you know, look, if they don't repent, they're apostatizing, and they are rejecting the gospel, they are anathema.

They think they can talk to God that way? Uh-uh. So it is much different than outright denouncing Jesus as their Lord and Savior. So there are degrees of unfaithfulness.

I wouldn't call the first guy apostate, but it is a form of harassment, and people may give in to that kind of harassment and threats of losing their job. And we ought to be merciful to the extent that we can, and pray for them, of course, and pray for ourselves that we could stand and have wisdom and do what needs to be done if we are going to be put against the wall like that. So in either case, we must be committed here and now, before it happens, not be soft about Christianity, but serious about what God has told us and what it means to follow Him, and be committed to Him, and to love Him, and to love one another and the saints.

Because when the screws are put on us, and I pray they won't be, and they haven't thus far in many ways, but in other ways they have, I'm sure, that we will say no and stand for Him. And thus we should teach ourselves and our children proper expectations. If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name we read elsewhere in the Bible, not just on Sunday, but throughout the week, of course.

Dad, your child, innocently asks you, why can we not watch that movie or go to my neighbor's church and the like? And because we are committed to a pure life, we tell them, and I think that a movie or that church will not help you to love Jesus a little better. That is instructing our kids in little ways here and now to say no to what? Pure pressure. That's before it becomes overt harassment and persecution about following Jesus.

When they're young, we tell them, you just got to stand up and say, no, I'm sorry. This is not good. This is dangerous.

The little times in our lives that we can explain to our children and to ourselves how important it is to follow Jesus before the big issues hit us. If we can't run with the footmen, how can we run with the horsemen? If we can't follow Jesus in the little things, it's going to be very hard to stand firm on our jobs and our neighborhoods and our HOA committees or whatever it is when push comes to shove and say, no, yes to Jesus, yes to His word, yes to His gospel, yes to His law, and I'm sorry, no to you, if that's what it comes down to. Brothers and sisters, these are ways, and of course, you know the other ways.

Prayer, even fasting, when the matter becomes serious enough, we have to find and get the resolve to stand firm or get a fine decision that we don't know exactly what we need to do in some cases. Use the means of grace. Encourage and pray for one another, brothers and sisters, that we are prepared for harassment, for persecution, and to stand firm and follow Jesus and resist the siren call of the world that says, turn away from Him.

It is safer and better to do your own thing and apostatize. Let us pray that Spirit of holiness and power to prepare us, to sustain us from apostasy and persecution, let us pray. Our Lord

and Savior, give us more of Your Spirit, give us more boldness and courage, we pray, for our particular circumstances of life, that we will stand upon Your word, our God, not out of snootiness, not out of arrogance, but rather out of conviction and love for Your truth and certainly, God, for those around us, especially who are not believers, that they would see and know and indeed be encouraged and strengthened to repent and to cling to You as we cling to You ourselves.

By Your strength and mercy, we pray. Amen.