

Overcoming the Present Apostasy (1)

How do we view the Bible?

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Introduction: The Bible's warnings of apostasy are widely ignored.

A. What is apostasy? (**2 Thess 2:3**) – “falling away”

1. **ἀποστασία** – *a falling away, defection, apostasy*; in the Bible namely, from the true religion: Acts 21:21; 2 Thess. 2:3; (Josh. 22:22; 2 Chr. 29:19; 33:19); Jer. 2:19 - Thayer's Lexicon
2. **ἀποστασία** as a condition resulting from changing loyalties *revolt, desertion*; as a religious technical term; (1) *apostasy, rebellion* (2TH 2.3); (2) *defection, abandonment* (AC 21.21) - Freiberg Lexicon
3. A “Changing of loyalties” is a good description of the term. (**Jer 2:19**)

B. Did the apostle Paul ever teach on this subject? (**Acts 20:26-32**)

1. “For three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”
2. When was the last time you heard a single sermon on this subject?

C. Apostasy is defined by a people who demand the kind of teaching they want rather than demanding God's will alone without compromise be taught. (**2 Tim 4:1-4**)

1. Is this an optional subject? Ask Paul! “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.”
2. People can ask for Bible teaching and be running away from God. Look back at where you attend and see not only what has been taught, but what has not been taught.

I. The Bible is a perfect revelation from a perfect God

A. If one concedes that the Bible is from God then several things must also be true about the Bible. (**2 Tim 3:16-17**)

1. “..that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
2. Anything that God provides man is sufficient for the task it is intended!
Creation – (**Gen 1:31**); Jesus as our Savior – (**Heb 7:25**)

B. One's attitude towards the Bible will in fact show one's attitude towards God. (**Jn 12:48**)

1. If we love God, then we must be seeking truth! Men quickly reveal their hearts when a Bible is opened and light is shown on their deeds. (**Jn 3:19-21**)
2. Two attitudes – two destinies – Where are you? (**1 Jn 4:1, 6**)
3. What do people mean when they call others “legalist,” “traditionalist,” and “Pharisees?” Ask them if they can find and stand in “the truth?”

C. It is not “legalism” or “traditionalism” to pursue a principled life based upon definitive answers found in the word of God.

1. New Testament Christians would have been startled that anyone would ever question the need to seek the truth about all things God revealed.
2. Consider how the Apostle John described Christians in **2 John**.

- a. “all those who have known the truth” (1:1)
- b. “the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever” (1:2)
- c. “I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father” (1:4)
- 3. Later John plainly wrote that we need to know if “we are of the truth.” (1 Jn 3:19)

II. Jesus showed us by example how to respect the revealed will of God.

- A. Must we have authority from God for everything we do we have the right to act when God is silent? Look at the repeated, emphatic response of Jesus!
 - 1. Jesus whole life was focused on “doing the will of the Father who sent Me.” (Jn 5:19-21, 30)
 - 2. There was not a single thing Jesus did without the fellowship and authority of the Father. (Jn 8:28-29)
 - 3. Jesus’ light was delivered in the form of words. They were recorded for us to see and respond to. Jesus showed us the response He expects! (Jn 12:46-50)
- B. What does perfect mean? What does “every good work” mean? If the silence of the Bible means that we can do what we think, then I do not know of a single doctrine of the Bible that is not compromised and made meaningless.
 - 2. God showed in the Old Testament that the silence of the scriptures is restrictive! (Lev 10:1-3)
 - 3. The New Testament recognizes this point and expects men to have the same view. (Heb 7:12-14; 2 Jn 9-11)
 - a. When men say “there is no God-given way to read the Bible (Hermeneutics)”, they are badly wrong!
 - b. Maybe Nadab and Abihu have an argument at the judgment!
 - 4. From a positive standpoint we can understand the proper view of the silence of the scriptures. (1 Pt 4:11; Col 3:17)
- C. There are some fundamental conclusions that every Christian must draw.
 - 1. We must know if a teaching or practice is **authorized by God’s word!**
 - 2. Every Christian must be willing to give “Book, Chapter, and Verse” for any practice or teaching they engage in. (Col. 3:17).

III. Attitudes and arguments of those who reject the limits of God’s authority

- A. Some are boldly claiming we do not need authority to act. Many are attributing this approach as coming from men:

“Not surprisingly, our historic legalism has created legalistic hermeneutics within the Churches of Christ. Thus, before we read the first word of Scripture, we have already brought certain false presuppositions to the process. For example, traditionally, we in the Churches of Christ have looked at the Scriptures to tell what is authorized. But before we look at the Scriptures, we decide that the question is one of authority. But, you see, the Scriptures not only tell us the answer, they tell us the questions, and authority is not one of the questions addressed by the New Testament. It is, however, a doctrine invented by John Calvin and still taught by strict Calvinists. You see, the Campbell’s and Stone were strict

Calvinists by education, and although they rejected the Calvinistic view of salvation, they did continue in the mainstream of Calvinistic hermeneutical thought.” – **Jay Gwin, “Do We Teach Another Gospel?”**

1. Not surprisingly brother Gwin includes within his description of “legalist” those who oppose instrumental music in worship. How can we know “if it is from God or from men?”
 2. How many who hold this position will fairly discuss it? Attitudes reveal hearts.
- B. Sadly, many preachers within churches of Christ will not be so bold. They will use other language that the hearer cannot understand.

1. **“Patternist”** - “It is time to admit that in our churches, a wide variety of people from all walks of life...simply do not find patternism and legalism to be meaningful themes” (p. 121). - Dr. Richard Hughes, “Reclaiming a Heritage; Reflections on the Heart, Soul and Future of Churches of Christ.”
 - a. Biblically the term pattern is equivalent to authority! (**Heb 8:5**)
 - b. Is it legalism to take “every word” that come from God on a subject and properly apply it and stay within what is revealed? (**Mt 3:4**)
 - c. If it is a matter of misapplied scripture then show where that is done!
2. **“Propositional Baconian”** - What has become sad is that current day CENIist deny the origins of their logician hermeneutic. D. R. Dungan gladly praised the origins of his hermeneutical method and quoted Bacon in his book on hermeneutics.

Dungan wrote, "... Bacon, to whom we are largely, if not wholly, indebted for this method of philosophy" (p. 82).

According to Dungan, the purpose of the inductive method is to report all the facts, "and from them the conclusion is to be reached" (p. 83). – **Discussion with a Christian Church Preacher**

- a. This kind of reasoning from scripture existed long before Francis Bacon.
 - b. What doctrine does not involve logic and application? (**Jn 7:17**)
3. **“CENI Hermeneutic”** - Why does CENI consistently distort narratives, poetry, parables, doxologies, psalms, wisdom, personal correspondence, beatitudes, etc. into one monotonous invective? Why would any conscientious "common sense" Christian allow such distortions to go unchallenged? – **Discussion with a Christian Church Preacher**

Pattern puzzle pieces come in three shapes, according to Church of Christ pattern-seekers. Each piece bears the form either of an express command ("C"), an approved example ("E"), or a necessary inference ("NI"). But the picture on the completed puzzle is surrounded on four sides with a very thick border. According to the pattern-seekers, this means that every detail of church structure, worship, leadership, and ministry must be "authorized" by one of those puzzle pieces, or else it is unlawful. By their reckoning, silence does not mean consent. It means absolute prohibition ("S"). We will refer to this doctrinal system as "CENI-S," an abbreviation for "command, example, necessary inference" and "silence." – Ed Fudge, the Plague of Patternism

- a. CENI is a description of language. It is like noun, verb and pronoun!
Why object to these things?
- b. Does the Bible approve of following examples and drawing inferences?
(1 Cor 11:1; Mk 12:23-27)

4. **“We should read the Bible as a narrative.”** – or **“We should only preach expository sermons.”** – “treat the Bible as a narrative that tells the story of God’s mighty deeds on behalf of the world which he created, which he seeks to redeem and over which he someday will triumph when his rule is complete” (p. 186). Richard Hughes, “Reclaiming a Heritage

“I believe we should go back to the Bible – free of any shackles of doctrinal issues of churches of Christ – and just read it as a story (which is what it is). Not seeking to find justification or argumentation over some preconceived notion about righteousness, holiness, patterns, etc. But, reading it as a Christological document (see the Art of Reading Scripture), I think we will be greatly enriched and many of our rigid rules will become more nuanced and refreshed. We may even drop some rules; and we may actually add some depth of commitment to the call to discipleship. As we do that, and as we begin to glean the true intent of this story and reinvestigate the real meaning of various contexts that have dominated us – in our issues – we will have done ourselves a great favor. We will not be propositional Baconians – nor will we be relativist postmoderns (though, to one degree or another, we will miss some points and probably lean in one or both of those directions at different times in specific instances). But, we will be Bible storytellers.” – From a preacher in a “non-institutional church”

- a. I recently hear a preacher in Auburn say that he would only emphasize the subjects that come from expository preaching.
- b. He likely will refuse to make applications to present day issues that flow from a study of scripture. I doubt he would oppose instrumental music because that issue is not specifically debated in scripture.
- c. Reading without personal application is vain! **(Heb 5:12-14)**

Conclusion: Where will the church be in the next 30 years? **(Acts 20:26-32)**

- A. Know the word of God.
- B. Be experienced in dealing with and solving problems God’s way.
- C. Be prepared to deal with the trends within the religious world.