

Just Checking In - Apostasy in Action

September 1, 2009

JCI Apostasy in Action



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One aspect of my practice of the spiritual disciplines is to read through the entire Bible every year. Like you, I am amazed at how many times the things which I've read scores of times before seem to leap off the page and onto my conscience in a fresh way. I have also been memorizing the book of 2 Peter, and of course the second chapter is all about apostates. Peter is unflinching in his denunciation and condemnation of these seductive servants of Satan. We all understand apostasy... that moving away from and eventual rejection of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. I usually think of apostasy in realms of such things as denying the Trinity, Christ's virgin birth and bodily resurrection, the necessity of the new birth, a literal heaven and hell, etc. But 1 Tim 5:8 floored me...

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

The word "denied" is "*arneomai*", used in 1 Peter 2:1 referring to false teachers who "deny the Lord..." It is also the same word used to describe Peter's own denial of Christ in John 18. The thing that struck me was that there are two ways to deny Christ.. one is in the realm of *doctrine*, the other is in *duty*... one is in regards to *revelation*, the other in regards to *relationships*. To deny the faith is not merely an intellectual faith-drift, it is also a selfish lack of responsibility in the daily grind of family relationships.

Paul, in the context, is speaking of widows who were in material need. He is instructing Timothy to see to it that true, godly, destitute widows were cared for by the church body. But those widows who have relatives are to be cared for by those relatives, and not to become wards of the church. This is when Paul connects family duty to Bible doctrine... "if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

I thought about Jesus' words concerning "not loving relatives more than Him or we couldn't be his followers." *Yet, not caring for our relatives is to sin on the other extreme.*

It seems that the early church's fervent expectation of Christ's soon return led some to ignore their personal responsibility to work (2 Thess 3:10-13.) Being *too spiritual* to work for wages, they mooched off those *unspiritual*

clouds who didn't expect Christ to come soon, and who went to work and brought in a paycheck and thus were able to feed them!

It also seems that some felt that since the church is a family, they could let the church do what they themselves were responsible for, i.e. the needs of the immediate family.

It is a subtle seduction to think that "keeping the faith" is only a matter of correct doctrine intellectually subscribed to. (Pharisaism) This word from Paul about denying the faith brings it out of the doctrinal statement and into the realm of relationships. A believer who does not care for the needs of his own family is worse than an unbeliever, since most unbelievers naturally care for their families, and those who don't have never confessed Christ as Lord and taken on themselves His holy obligations to love their neighbors (and our closest neighbors are our own family members) as themselves. To neglect my familial obligations in the name of the Christ who obligates me to them is to warp the truth and deny the faith I profess.

Am I denying the faith by failing my family?

Questions to Consider:

1. Am I gladly and fully fulfilling my obligations towards my spouse?
2. Am I gladly and fully fulfilling my obligations towards my children?
3. Am I gladly and fully fulfilling my obligations towards my extended family?
4. Do others in my family see that my love for Christ actually benefits them in observable ways?

For Further Study:

Matt 15:5; Matt 5:21-26; Matt 12:46-50; John 19:26-27; Col 3:12-21

"O Father, from whom every need of this Thy child is fully met, grant me the grace to serve You in the daily mix of family obligations. Let me not forget that You are served as I serve my family. Deliver me from the false desire to escape my home-life duties. I know that Your call to love my neighbor must not exclude those who live in my house. Give me the grace and patience and perseverance to treat my family and my team, as kindly as I do those who are all but strangers to me, yet recipients of my glad service. Make my love to be genuine and complete. And let me not be-grudge the service I do for those closest to me. May they never feel they are interruptions in my life. I pray this in the Name of Him who demonstrated the greatest love and care for His own family, both on the cross and after His resurrection... My Lord Jesus Christ, amen."

Remember, you are very special to us and we are praying for you. May you find in Christ your joy complete, your

strength sufficient and your vision clear... all the way to "that day"!

Living with leaving in view.... John 9:4 **Ron & Val Berrus** rsb@abwe.org

Seeing The Invisible, embracing The Unapproachable, declaring The Unexplainable, changed by The Immutable, running after The Irresistible with inexhaustible joy in our inexpressible sorrows, spending our time on eternity, owning nothing yet possessing everything that matters and lasts. We are Pilgrims in Paradox. Welcome to THE JOURNEY.