

Four Safeguards Against Apostasy

Joshua 23:6-16

Introduction:

- A. As Christians, we are to be dedicated to maintaining New Testament Christianity. That means maintaining the faith and practice of the New Testament church and being dedicating to preaching and living the pure Word of God.
- B. While we are doing this, we must never forget the possibility of apostasy. Apostasy is defined as a “renunciation or abandonment of one's religious faith or of an object of one's previous loyalty.” Although it is never used in the English New Testament, it appears twice in the Greek (Acts 21:21; 2 Thess. 2:3). The New Testament writers, however, repeatedly warn of this danger (Jude 3 [apostasy creeps in, Jude 4]; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 4:1-4).
- C. The question then is how can WE avoid drifting off into apostasy? The Israelites faced the same problem just before Joshua's death. Joshua gathered the leaders together and warned them of the dangers they faced and how to remain true to God (Josh. 23:6-11). His plan to avoid apostasy will work even today.
- D. Let's look at his 4 safeguards to help prevent apostasy.

I. The Safeguard of Obedience

- A. Joshua warned the people to "do all that is written in the book" - Josh. 23:6
 - 1. "Be firm", not tossed about - Eph 4:14-15
 - 2. "Do not turn to the right or left" - Josh. 1:7; Prov 4:27
 - 3. This, of course, presupposes knowledge of God's law.
- B. God has always expected his people to strictly observe His laws. (Children of Israel in Egypt)
 - 1. Cain and Abel - Gen. 4
 - 2. Nadab and Abihu - Lev. 10:1-2
 - 3. Uzzah - 2 Sam. 6:3-8; Num. 4:15
 - 4. King Saul and the Amalekites - 1 Sam 15
 - 5. Matt 7:21
 - 6. Lk 6:46-49
 - 7. Even Jesus “learned” obedience - Heb 5:8-9
- C. If we are to avoid apostasy, we must do exactly as God says (New Testament Christianity requires nothing less)
 - 1. Don't expect God's mercy and grace to substitute for obedience - Rom. 6:1
 - 2. There is no room for compromise
 - 3. Are you willing to build your life on the rock?
- D. 2 Tim 4:13-16

II. The Safeguard of Separation

- A. It was extremely important that the Israelites keep themselves apart from the surrounding nations - Josh. 23:7-8, 12
 - 1. Association with them would (and did) result in their destruction - Josh. 23:13, 16
- B. To avoid apostasy, Christians, too, are to be separate - 2 Cor. 6:17
 - 1. Christians are sanctified people (set apart) - 1 Cor 6:9-11
 - 2. The church itself must remain as pure as possible - 1 Cor 5:9-13
- C. What common ground do Christians have with the world? - 2 Cor 6:14-18

1. We must be distinctive
2. Must be the light for the world to see - Jn 3:19-21

III. *The Safeguard of Introspection*

- A. Joshua told Israel to take a long, hard look inward - Josh. 23:11
 1. diligent (Careful in KJV)
 2. It means, "done with careful, steady effort; painstaking"
- B. Constantly comparing ourselves with His Word will help us avoid apostasy.
 1. Examine yourself - 2 Cor 13:5
 2. When confronting God's Word, we must be willing to make necessary changes - Jas 1:22-25
 - a. Look in a mirror
 3. Corrections are always not easy, but are always necessary if we are to walk the straight and narrow path to heaven!
- C. We should examine while we have the time
 1. God will be true to His Word - Josh. 23:15
 2. He is patient with us - 2 Pet 3:9-10

IV. *The Safeguard of Love*

- A. Make every effort to love the Lord your God - Josh. 23:11
 1. Do not mention, swear by, serve, or bow before any other - Josh. 23:7
- B. Love is the greatest safeguard to help avoid apostasy - Mk 12:29-31
 1. If we love with heart, soul, strength, mind,
 - a. We will keep His commandments - Jn. 14:15
 - b. We will forsake all other things to serve Him - Lk 9:23
 - c. We will not want a religion to please us foremost - Gal 1:10
 2. Genuine love advertises true discipleship - Jn. 13:34-35
 3. Love characterizes true Christianity - 1 Cor 13:4-8a

Conclusion:

- A. These 4 safeguards will help avoid apostasy.
- B. Let's all resolve now to make these principles part of us.
 1. Strict obedience to God's Word
 2. Separation from the world and its influences.
 3. Self-examination regularly
 4. Love God...devotion to Him.
- C. Unfortunately, Israel did not keep Joshua's instructions and suffered the punishment (captivity and eventual death as God's bride)
- D. The question is will we do the same? Our history has yet to be written.