

# The Essence Of False Religion

**Introduction.** Since creation, the earth has been the battleground between God and Satan. God calls mankind to respond to His word, and Satan tries to lure them to follow lies. Some claim satanic perversions to be the truth from God. Sadly, even some who profess to follow God's truth turn away from it.

Such deviations from the true faith are nothing new. Among the many examples of apostasy in the Old Testament was King Amaziah of Judah (2 Chronicles 25:2, 14, 27). His religion was mere external behavior, in his heart he did not know God. Soon he was lured away into idolatry.

The battle lines are sharply drawn. While not always popular in our day of toleration and "love," there is a biblical mandate to deal directly and firmly with false teaching. Any tolerance of error regarding God's revelation is a direct form of dishonor to Him (Psalm 138:2). Professing believers who would not speak a blasphemous or degrading word against God Himself out of reverence for His name will nevertheless readily misrepresent and pervert His word, which is to be equally exalted. We will look at what Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1-5 to see the true danger of false religion.

## ***I. "Now The Spirit Expressly Says ..." (v. 1a)***

- A. The lesson: There is a stark line of contrast between Paul and those who preach false doctrine.
- B. He wants Timothy to know that this was not Paul's opinion; it was the inspired word of God (1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).
- C. Paul's reference to the divine source of his preaching lent an air of urgency to it.
  - 1. This was not merely a concern of Paul's; it was a dire emergency to which Timothy needed to devote his entire heart and mind.
  - 2. If Paul did his work effectively, Timothy would understand how vital it was that he preach faithfully (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 4:6-8, 11).
- D. Unfortunately, whereas apostasy should sadden and outrage Christians, it should neither shock nor surprise them (2 Peter 3:3; Jude 18). Apostasy is predictable and inevitable. There will always be those who make a temporary response to the gospel, but have no genuine faith (1 John 2:18-19).

## ***II. It Would Come In The Latter Days (v. 1b)***

- A. The lesson: The farther away from the first century we get, the more likely false teachers will find willing victims.
  - 1. The farther we get from the apostolic times, the fewer people there are who revere the apostle's doctrine and care about the New Testament pattern.
  - 2. As often in prophetic utterances, what is predicted of the future is conceived of as already operative in the present.
- B. It must be noted that Paul warned often about the dangers of false doctrine and false religion that would come to pass at some later date.
  - 1. He warned the Ephesian elders that danger of apostasy threatened to arise from their ranks (Acts 20:28-30). He wanted them to be on guard against it.
    - a) Many brethren strongly disagree with preaching that exposes and explains a false doctrine if it does not exist in a local congregation.

- b) However, this is an incredibly short-sighted approach. Why wait until the heresy is already happening?
- 2. Paul warned that some would look for false teachers and would not adhere to the truth (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

### **III. Some Will Depart From The Faith (v. 1c)**

- A. The lesson: All false religion is a departure from the faith.
  - 1. One would think that false doctrine would be repugnant to people, but the opposite seems to always be true.
  - 2. People have a hunger and affinity for religious error (cp. Matthew 5:6). No matter what the error, there will always be someone who has itching ears, and are ready and willing to hear it.
- B. Why would you want to be part of something that leads you farther away from God (2 Peter 2:1; cp. Ephesians 5:1)? The Galatians are the perfect illustration of those who did this (Galatians 4:8; 5:9).
- C. The New Testament describes the condition of all who turn away from the faith (Matthew 23:15; Luke 6:39; Galatians 3:1; 5:7).

### **IV. They Give Heed To Deceiving Spirits And Doctrines Of Devils (v. 1c)**

- A. The lesson: False religion does not come from the Lord, it comes from the devil and his influence (Ephesians 6:12). It is far more than a human aberration.
- B. It does not matter how lovable the dealer of error might be, it must be taught and taught again that false teachers teach deceit and the doctrines of devils (2 Corinthians 11:14-15; 2 Timothy 3:13).
  - 1. “Deceitful” comes from the root word from which our English word “planet” derives. It carries the idea of wandering, and thus came to mean “seducing” or “deceiving.” Demons are called “deceitful” because they cause men to wander from the truth.
  - 2. The Holy Spirit leads people to saving truth, while these unholy spirits lead them into damning error.
- C. It is no wonder that the Bible cautions against exposing oneself to false doctrine (Deuteronomy 13:12-18). It was to be cut out of the nation of Israel like cancer from a human body. True Christians will not succumb (Psalm 44:18; Hebrews 6:9; 10:39).

### **V. Teachers Of Error Speak Lies In Hypocrisy (v. 2a)**

- A. The lesson: False teachers are hypocrites.
  - 1. In our sanitized and so-called “enlightened” day, we have forgotten that there are evil people out there (cp. Acts 13:10).
    - a) They may be religious leaders who appear outwardly good and devout.
    - b) They preach or write devotional books or commentaries.
    - c) Though they wear a mask of piety, they do not serve God, but Satan.
  - 2. People are so fearful of coming off as too hard-nosed or dogmatic that they are afraid to tell the truth about false religion.
- B. However, Paul could not have been stronger on this matter. Those whose religion is false are those who speak lies in hypocrisy. They blaspheme God.