

First Free Will Baptist Church

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Six reasons why I believe in...

The Doctrine of Apostasy By A. B. Brown

We need to be clear about who saves and keeps the believer and on what condition or conditions. We also need to be clear on what is meant by the doctrine of apostasy.

A person is both saved (John 3:16) and kept by God (I Peter 1:5) on the sole condition of faith, not his good works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Good works are the *fruits* of salvation (Ephesians 2:10), not the *roots* of salvation. God does both the saving and the keeping, but He does both on the condition of faith (I Peter 1:5).

In the scriptures, continuous salvation is always conditioned upon continuous faith. This does not condone sinful living, since genuine faith is evidenced by the transformed life (II Corinthians 5:17).

Those who have been born again do not live lives characterized by sin ([John 2:29; 3:9). That person who claims to be a genuine believer and has no regard for the law of God is a liar (I John 2:3-4).

Apostasy is defined by the contemplated actions of the Hebrew Christians in Hebrews 3:12-14. Such an act would have demanded a *willful renunciation* of one's faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, and His atoning death. They would have had to go back and accept the same position as those who crucified Jesus, which involved a total and willful repudiation of His Messiahship and all that it involved.

This is why Hebrews 6:6 mentions crucifying Christ afresh and putting Him to an open shame. Thus, one's relationship with God is severed by the willful renunciation of one's faith in Christ. Here are six reasons which dictate the biblical doctrine of apostasy.

Jesus' Words

Jesus spoke of an individual believing, then ceasing to believe. While explaining the parable of the sower and the seed in Luke 8:13, Jesus tells us that the seed which fell on the rock represents those "...*who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in the time of temptation (testing) fall away.*"

In His explanation of the seed mentioned in verse 12, Jesus makes it clear that He is talking about believing unto salvation when He says,..."*lest they should believe and be saved.*" If Jesus warned about a danger; then that danger has to be real and we must take it seriously.

Conditional Covenants

All of God's major covenant dealings with men have been conditional, which clearly suggests that the covenant of salvation (New Covenant) is conditional also.

The first covenant in history, the Adamic Covenant, was clearly conditional. Regardless of dispensationalists' irrational denial, the Abrahamic Covenant demanded that he leave his country and his family and go into the land which God would show him.

The Davidic Covenant was later interpreted by both David and Solomon as being conditional. over 120 times in the New Testament, faith is set forth as the condition necessary to being saved or becoming a participant in the New Covenant.

New Testament Passages

The many New Testament passages which urge and warn the believer to continue in the faith demand that not continuing in the faith be a possibility. Otherwise, we have God warning us of a danger where no danger exists, and that violates His holy nature.

Because of space limitations, I will not list all the passages suggesting the possibility of ceasing to believe. Consider these—Colossians 1:21-23; I Corinthians 15:14; Ephesians 3:17; I John 2:24; Hebrews 6:4-6.

Clear Warnings

Hebrews 3:12-14 clearly warns the believer of the danger of departing from God. If one will simply apply the established rules of hermeneutics to the book itself, to the preceding and succeeding contexts, he will be forced to acknowledge that this is a genuine warning to genuine Christians.

By the way, nowhere in the entire Word of God are unbelievers admonished to exhort other unbelievers about the danger of their departing from God, especially in light of the fact that an unbeliever never has come to God.

Real Danger

The holy nature of God dictates that if He issues a warning, there is a danger. The doctrine of eternal security denies that such a possibility exists, making such warnings ludicrous.

When God says, "*The just shall live by faith, and if any man shall drawback, my soul shall have not pleasure in Him,*" we must take seriously the warning about drawing back from the faith.

John says that, "*If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*" If eternal security is true, the very mention of the danger of not continuing in the Son and in the Father would clearly violate God's holy nature.

Principle of Congruency

The principle of congruency dictates the doctrine of apostasy. Someone rightly observed that if one has the key which unlocks all the doors, he must have the master key or the correct key. It is possible to interpret the scriptures in light of the doctrine of apostasy and not be forced to violate the

rules of interpretation.

However, it is impossible to interpret such passages as Hebrews 3:12- chapter 12 and other related passages (basically the entire book of Hebrews) without violating the rules of interpretation. It is time that we hold our eternal securitist brethren accountable and require that they play by the same rules they apply to other passages.

It is indeed interesting to read most commentators' introduction to the book of Hebrews. They openly declare that it was written to a group of Hebrew Christians undergoing persecution and contemplating a return to Judaism, and that the book is a warning admonishing them not to do so.

Yet, when they encounter these warnings in the text itself they then, for theological reasons and not for exegetical reasons, deny the warnings. The warnings suddenly become "hypothetical situations" as a means of distinguishing the true believer from the false believer.

I want to categorically state that in no context in the book of Hebrews are the criteria for distinguishing the true from the false believer ever under consideration. That must be imported into the text for theological reasons. It is possible to apply the rules of interpretation to the so-called eternal securitist passages and still interpret them in light of the doctrine of apostasy. For example, John 10:27-30 can easily be interpreted in accordance with the doctrine of apostasy, even though eternal securitists repeatedly bend the rules of interpretation in order to maintain their position of eternal security.

Free will Baptists do believe in the security of the believer; we do not believe in the eternal security of the unbeliever.

About the Writer - Rev. A. B. Brown has served as academic dean at Southeastern Free Will Baptist College in Wendell, North Carolina. He has prepared a 175 page syllabus on the security issue titled **THE SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER**. You may purchase a copy by sending \$19.95. (includes shipping) to

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APOSTASY

(apostasi>a, *revolt*), a forsaking or renouncing religion, either by an open declaration in words, or a virtual declaration by actions. The Greek term is employed by Paul to designate *the* “falling away” (ajpostasi>a), which in his time was held in check by some obstacle 2 Thessalonians 2:3 “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*”

It means one of two things:

(1) Political defection Genesis 14:4, 2 Chronicles 13:6, Acts 5:37)

(2) Religious defection Acts 21:21; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:12).

The first is the common classical use of the word. The second is more usual in the N.T.

APOSTATE

(ajposta>thv, a *rebel, renegade*), a term used, in its strict sense, by ecclesiastical writers, to designate one who has, either wholly or in part, left the true faith to embrace a false belief, or who has forsaken any holy profession to which he was bound by solemn vows.

The term apostate is, in Church history, applied by way of emphasis to the Emperor Julian, who, though he had been nominally Christian when he came to the throne, renounced the Christian religion, and used every means in his power to reestablish paganism in the empire.