***Apostasy in the Local Church - Jude 12

JD10-01***

We continue with the book of Jude by looking at Jude 12. Apostasy is falling away from sound doctrine into human viewpoint disorientation. Behind every apostate is the moving of the hand of Satan. Apostasy, we have seen, is possible for believers as well as unbelievers. In Jude 11, Jude gave us three historical illustrations from Jewish history of three types of apostates. One of them was an unbeliever (Cain), and two of them (Balaam and Korah) were believers. Each of these represents a certain type of apostasy. Each of these is to be found in our day. Cain represented the lust for praise type of apostasy. Balaam was a believer who had a lust for money. Korah had a lust for power. Now Jude, in Jude 12 and 13, looks out into the world of nature. He ransacks nature and comes up with five vivid descriptions of apostates which again, by the very illustrations that he uses, tells us something about the nature of apostasy.

First of all, Jude 12 says, "These are spots in your love feasts." "These are" is the Greek word "eimi," and it is simply a verb for describing a person's condition. Here it refers to these apostates in Jude 11 that he has just been telling us about--Cain, Balaam, and Korah. They are in a constant condition that he's going to describe here. This verb is in the active voice which means that they have chosen to be in this position of apostasy.

**Hidden Reefs**

He calls them "spots," but the word is not "spots." The Greek word is "spilas." "Spilas" actually means "a shoal." It means hidden rocks. It means a reef. This is a rock formation just below the surface of the water so that as you approach it on a ship, you cannot see it. These reefs pose a grave underwater hazard, of course, to ships. During World War II, the United States Marine Corps was commissioned to make a landing in the Gilbert Islands. It was to be made on a little island called Tarawa. The Japanese name was Betio. There were something like 25,000 Japanese troops dug in. It was known to be a strategic stepping stone in our advance toward the Japanese empire across the Pacific. It was going to be a vital link. It was an island we had to have at all costs in order to set up the airbase for the next step. Extensive preparations were made. Plans were laid out. Of course, as was typical on the morning of D-Day, there was extensive shore bombardment and aerial bombardment softening up the beaches preparing for the first wave of Marines to land.

Finally, the signal came; the bombardment was lifted; and, the crafts which were circling in rendezvous were signaled to move in. So the first wave lined up in formation and headed for the beach on Tarawa. 1,000 yards from the beach there was a sudden scraping on the bottom of the Higgins landing craft. Everybody's heart on board those landing crafts sank. They realized that somehow a miscalculation had been made, and the tide was lower than it was supposed to be. Or perhaps the reefs were higher than they were supposed to be. In any case, 1,000 yards offshore they ran into a reef, and the ships could go no further.

Once an operation begins, there is no stopping. So the landing craft simply had to drop the ramps, and the Marines had to pour out and wade the final distance to the shore. This made them, of course, sitting ducks in the water. Because the bombardment had not completely devastated the Japanese emplacements, they opened up on the Marines. The sailors on board the ship later reported that they knew immediately that something had gone very badly in the operation because of the high casualty returns early in the campaign on the morning of D-Day. It almost cost the Marines a defeat to hit this underwater reef. It was only the grace of God and the fortitude inherent in the United States Marine Corps that enabled them to make the landing in a few days' time, and the island was secure. However, when it began, everybody thought this disaster was going to be one of the greatest that we had ever experienced. It was almost seemingly impossible that anybody could wade ashore; fully-equipped; through that much water; chest-deep; slow-moving; and, a sitting duck with guns up on the shore--emplacements cited in on them.

So this is what we're talking about. We could have lost the battle. We lost many men. However, we are talking about a hidden reef (a shoal) that's infinitely more disastrous to you and me as believers than that would have been to the operation of the campaign in the South Pacific. We are talking about something that has eternal repercussions for you and me as believers. This word "spilas" (hidden reefs) is used symbolically of someone whose conduct causes dangers to others. The reef or the shoal image here connotes a deceptive condition. You don't know it's out there. You're leisurely sailing your boat along, and it's sitting out there. Jude is saying that apostates are like hidden reefs that you come upon as you sail your ship.

He is pointing out that this is not open rejection of Bible truth. The apostate is not running around openly championing obviously evil goals or evil practices. Actually, when you look at this hidden shoal type of apostate, you are rather impressed. You're perhaps even moved by his zeal and by his works. However, what is under the surface here is an apostate condition of soul which Satan will use to wreck other believers. This apostate has a shallow covering of truth, so he is hard to spot.

So Jude says, "These are hidden reefs in your love feasts." Again, it is not "love feasts." What we have here is the Greek word "agape" which is the word for the mental attitude of love. It is actually in the plural. So what it says is that these are hidden reefs "in your loves." The reason this word is plural is because there are certain classifications of our love relationship. There is a love which is toward God. There is a love which is toward the opposite sex. Then there is a love toward friends. So, it uses the word "loves" in the plural. What it is saying here is that in a Christian's human relationships or in a Christian's normal relationships is an attitude of "agape" love. It is this kind of a relationship toward various classifications of humanity that is the norm for us as Christians.

In these relationships with other people, the apostate has a hidden reef which is a very destructive element. The apostate, in other words, will destroy your relationship of affection toward God. He will destroy your love toward your right man or your right woman, and he will bring a destructive effect upon your association with your friends. The apostate is an unseen hazard to our human relationships.

**Apostates in the Local Church**

So we may translate: "These are shoals in the sphere of your love." Then Jude says, "When they feast with you." This means "feasting together." It connotes here, in this context, a social relationship. On occasions of social life, these apostates are destructive to your human relationships. There are various situations into which you and I as Christians are thrown together socially. We are thrown into these situations with the underwater hidden-reef apostate type. This includes a various type of local church gatherings. It may be a meal which is shared. This is particularly a time of spiritual camaraderie. It's an easy climate for an apostate to enter and to gain acceptance.

He will infiltrate a local congregation and become a threat to the spiritual lives of the believers. The local church is in danger, then, of being torn apart by these opponents who are doing their own thing because they are apostates. They will come to you with smiles. They will have a spirit of sharing. They will deal with you in calculated speech designed to raise doubts in your mind. They will treat you to flattery, and they will display a very wonderful air of innocence about the whole thing. This happens to be in the present tense which means that this is their continual practice. Every time the saints gather, the apostate is there. It is active which means he does his homework, and he does whatever he has to in order to gain a hearing with you. It is a participle which means it's a principle of technique of operation for apostates.

The expression "without fear" goes with this word. The Greek word for this is "aphobos." "Aphobos" means "shamelessly." So it should read, "When they feast with you shamelessly," or "When they feast with you brazenly," or "boldly." The apostate does his sly work with impudence. If the apostate happens to be a woman, you will discover that she has even more gall and more impudence and more audacity, and the word "brazen" is very aptly applied to her. These apostates do their work with such impudence and with such brazen courage because they count on Christians to be the Candid Camera type.

It has been a long time since we've had the Candid Camera program on TV, and I don't know how many of you will remember it. It was one of those terribly humorous programs where people were being put in all kinds of situations with unimaginable impositions being exercised upon them. It always fascinated me to watch how much a person would take. A person would go to a lunch counter. A man would ask for a cup of coffee, and the waitress would serve it, but they would put salt in the sugar bowl. The man would reach over and put a little sugar (he thought) into his coffee. Then he would stir it up and start drinking it. The camera would move in on the face. He would look at it, and you could just see the wheels spinning. He would drink it again. Some would grimly gulp it down. Then, when they would pay the waitress, she would say, "How was the coffee?" Almost always the man would say, "Just fine. Just fine." Nobody would raise a howl about this coffee.

That happened at our house one time. Somehow salt got in the sugar bowl, and I drank tea for a week wishing that the water in Irving would improve before I discovered why it was so bad. I just didn't want to raise any furor. Now that's what the apostate underwater reef type is counting on. He's just counting on the fact that you're going to be the Candid Camera type who's not going to raise any howl over what he's doing. So he acts in his brazen bold role fearlessly when he meets with you in your social relationships.

**The Pastor-Teacher**

Then Jude 11 says, "Feeding themselves." Now what does that mean? The word for "feeding" here is a very strategic Greek word "poimaino." "Poimaino" is the word "to shepherd a flock." It connotes protecting, ruling, governing, and guiding. This is the word that is used through the Scriptures relative to the responsibilities in the local church of the pastor-teacher leadership. In Acts 20:28, Paul has gathered together a farewell to a group of teaching elders from the church at Ephesus. In Acts 20:28, he says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to feed the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood." The word "to feed" is this word "poimaino," or we would say, "to shepherd" the flock of God over which he has placed you in authority. In 1 Peter 5:2, we have this word again. Here it is used of the direction or the leading of a congregation. 1 Peter 5:2 says, "Feed ("poimaino," or shepherd) the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

In Revelation 7:17, we have this same word used of the Lord Jesus Christ: "For the lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed (shepherd) them, and shall lead them into living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This is also used in the sense of a shepherd exercising a destructive effect upon those who threaten his sheep. In Revelation 2:27, we have it used in this way. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, "And He shall rule (shepherd) them with a rod of iron. As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father." This is repeatedly used in the book of the Revelation in this destructive sense. In Revelation 12:5, the word "rule" in the Greek means "shepherd." It is this word right here "poimaino."

Here in Jude we have a group of apostates who are rejecting the local church pastor-teacher teaching responsibility, and they are doing their own thing. So he says, "They are shepherding themselves" in their apostate operations. Such a person is a very grave hazard to the local church members in the flock. What they want to do is to get together and pursue some routine under their condition. The condition of an apostate is always the condition where the emotions are dominating the soul. An apostate always begins like this. He first goes negative to sound doctrine. That's step number one. Anybody can do this. Once he has gone negative to sound doctrine, he will reflect this in a variety of ways. If you keep your ears and eyes open, you will learn some of the signals that a person has gone negative to sound doctrine. He will use such expressions as, "Oh, I know all that. I've heard that before and it didn't work for me, but now I've got the real thing."

Negative volition to sound doctrine puts the old sin nature in charge, and it cancels out the control of God the Holy Spirit. This leads to the condition of calluses on the soul. This is the hardening, of which Ephesians 4 speaks, upon the facets of the soul toward God and toward man. When this condition of hardening sets in, Ephesians 4 also tells us that it brings in a low pressure condition--a vanity or a spiritual vacuum. Into this vacuum is sucked in the doctrine of demons which is to replace what has been canceled out here of the doctrine that a person understood that he had in his mind. Once the old sin nature has been put in charge, the mind of the believer has been cut off from functioning. Whatever doctrine he has in his mind is shut off for the guiding of his soul. The old sin nature takes over; it sucks in doctrines of demons; and, then it puts the emotions in charge. The emotions start trying to run your life, and the result is apostasy.

This is the chain reaction that inevitably takes place, and you must understand this. It begins for anybody with the first time you go negative toward the Word of God. If you're going to say, "No" to something you're taught, be sure that what you are taught is false. Then, by all means, say, "No" to it. However, unless you're sure that it is false, you better not say, "No" to it. And, by the way, please don't ever be so unintellectual as to say, "No," and that you disagree with someone until you have learned and heard him out and studied and really know what he thinks.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to tell us how often he would set to flight his debaters by simply asking them to explain to him what he believed. He said, "Inevitably they were fighting straw men and telling me things that I didn't believe at all. They had taken things I said out of context. They were taking things and projecting them beyond what I said. They were putting their own meaning on it." Learn what a person thinks, and then you will be sure when to say, "No." If you are wrong, and that person is right and reflecting the mind of God, then you have set up this condition in your soul. It is a self-destructive course that leads to apostasy.

The emotions here are empty. You have no content in your emotions whatsoever. You can have no doctrine in your emotions. You can have no character in your emotions. You can have no leadings whatsoever.

Here is what is happening. With the old sin nature in charge, it sets up the condition of pouring its viewpoint into your emotions. Then your actions are being guided by your emotions instead of by your mind which God has designed to do that. Here are your emotions filled with the poison that's coming into it from the old sin nature, and your life goes into spiritual disorientation. Again, I must warn you that the apostate thinks that he is right on. The last thing an apostate thinks is that he is offbeat with God. In fact, under this condition he will often think he is closer to the Lord than he has ever been before. It's just that deceptive. Once your emotions come in, you cannot help being subjective. I don't care how determined you are not to be, once your emotions take over, you are subjective. You are no longer judging your actions by what the Word of God says. You are judging them entirely on how you feel about a thing. Spiritual disorientation will follow as night must follow day. This is the state of apostasy.

**Authority in the Local Church**

Well, what is it that this underwater apostate is opposing here when he starts shepherding himself? What is it that he's fighting? He is fighting the line of authority in the local church. Let's review the line of authority in the local church:

1. **No Apostles**

There are no absolute rulers in the form of apostles in the local church today. Local church leaders for this reason are warned in the Word of God that they are not to lord it over the people in the congregation. 1 Peter 5:3 says, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock." When there were apostles, apostles were dictators. They had absolute spiritual authority. An apostle told you what to do, and that was it. You did it. Furthermore, his authority extended over any church. He could walk into any church in the New Testament and declare to them what was the mind of God, and they were obliged to be subjected to that, and to be responsive to what he said. We do not have apostles today. Therefore, we are told not to try to play that role of being lords over the flock.

1. **Elders**

However, men are recognized, and they are appointed by that congregation in some way, as elders. These elders are to take charge of the local church organization. No matter how many other groups you may have, you start up here with the congregation. Then you have elders. It makes no difference how many other areas of the work you have. Anything else that exists in the church is all under the direct supervision of the elders. For example, here we have Berean Christian Academy; Berean youth clubs; the tape ministry; the work of the deacons; the choir; the band; and, so on. It is all under the supervision of the elders.

1 Peter 5:2 says to the elders, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight of it, not by constraint." This means not by somebody forcing you, but recognize that that's your job and that's your business--to be a supervisor and an overseer of the church's operation. Others are the ones who carry on the day-by-day and the week-by-week business of the local congregation. Once in a while, a policy line may have to be set, and a whole church congregational meeting is called, but normally the elders run the operating functions of the church.

1. **The Congregation**

Of course, the ultimate authority in the local church lies with the congregation at the top. They are the ones who are the decision-making body. For whatever method has been appointed, those who are recognized as voting members are now those who own the company. The company is not owned by the pastor-teacher. It is owned by God's people. They make the final and basic decisions. They will, of course, usually make those decisions on the basis of what the spiritual leadership may recommend to them.

**Deacons**

In Acts 6:2, we have an example of that. This was the problem of a debate between the Grecian widows and the Hebrew widows over the distribution of the material care that the early church provided for its members. They thought that they weren't getting a fair share: "So the twelve called a multitude of the disciples unto them and said it is not fitting that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables."

One of the reasons this problem had arisen in the first place was that the elders had become so pressed in the ministry of the Word and the responsibility of that and of prayer, that they were not able to cope and to handle adequately (good administrators as they may have been) the large number of people that they had to deal with.

So, Acts 6:3 says, "Wherefore, look among you for seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Here's where the deacons originated. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer to the ministry of the Word." Then notice that it says, "The same pleased the whole multitude." "The whole multitude" was the congregation. The recommendation, in other words, was approved. "And they chose Stephen, a man full of the spirit," and so on.

Then Acts 6:6 says, "Whom they set before the apostles. And when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them and recognized them in this office." That was the way they did it. There is some way of recognizing these people in these offices now. The congregation made the decision. They are the stockholders, and they approve the recommendation or they disapprove.

Now the congregation, on the other hand, is not to view these elders as being simply employees either. Once they have been recognized by the congregation, there is a certain authority which is vested in them. Hebrews 13:7 tells us about that: "Remember them who have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their manner of life." Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourself, for they watch for your souls as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief, for that is unprofitable to you." So to reject the authority of spiritual leaders would be a personal loss to the individual member. It is unprofitable for you.

1. **Pastor-Teachers**

Since a local church is an organization, Ephesians 4 tells us about the divine provision of certain gifted men with certain spiritual gifts provided in order to fill certain roles within the church. That gift is the gift a pastor-teacher. There were apostles and there were prophets at first. We don't have those anymore. However, we do have the evangelist, and we do have the pastor-teacher. The evangelist does not belong within the local church. He is outside the church functioning as the herald of the Word, bringing people into the local church. Within the local church, the gift that was provided is the pastor-teacher. His role is as the executive head of the work under the congregation. The congregation is faced, therefore, with recognizing their right pastor-teacher, and every congregation has one. Acts 15:13 reflects to us that in the church of Jerusalem, that role was filled by James.

In the book of Revelations, beginning in the second chapter, we have a series of letters which are written to seven churches. These letters are each addressed to what the Greek says is the "aggelos." The word "aggelos" primarily is used in Scripture (you can immediately recognize) of angel. However, it is also used several times as messenger or communicator, and that's what it means here in these letters. Each introduction to the letter is addressed to the church through its chief communicator which is the pastor-teacher of that local church.

Dr. John Walvoord, President of Dallas Seminary, has written a volume called The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is an excellent commentary on the book of the Revelation. I'd like to read his commentary on this particular segment. On Revelation 2:1, Dr. Walvoord says, "Christ the Sovereign Judge: The first letter is addressed to the angel or messenger of the church of Ephesus. The Greek word 'aggelos,' which has been transliterated in the English word 'angel' is frequently used in the bible of angels, and this seems to be its principal use as noted by Arndt and Gingrich." Arndt and Gingrich is a standard lexicon, an analysis of word meanings.

He goes on. "However it is often used also of men in Greek literature as a whole. In several instances, this word refers to human messengers in the Bible (Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:24, 27, 9:52. It is properly understood here as referring to human messengers to these seven churches. These messengers were probably the pastors of these churches, or prophets through whom the message was to be delivered to the congregation."

So these letters are addressed to the communicators. They are addressed to this position up here as the pastor-teacher executive head of that church whom God is contacting with each letter with a special message. The congregation recognizes its right pastor-teacher provided by the Lord, and appoints him as the executive head in the local ministry as per the understanding that Christ has provided each congregation with such a gift (Ephesians 4:8, 11). Now, the pastor-teacher is an elder, and once he is appointed by the congregation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he is in charge until the Lord, or the stockholders (the congregation), deem it proper to remove him. Once they have invested him without authority, he carries it. Other elders may teach, but they do not function as pastor-teacher executive heads. It is recognized that indeed they do feed the flock of God, and may be gifted with the teaching gift.

**Ephesians 4:12-16**

The pastor-teacher's relationship then is under the congregation. He is not under the board, but he is in a cooperative relationship to them. He is operating under policies of the congregation. This is the exercise of a spiritual gift to fulfill Ephesians 4:12-16, "For the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry (that is, their ministry), and, for the edifying of the body of Christ to bring to spiritual maturity till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man unto the measure of the stature and fullness of Christ; that we, henceforth, be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men in cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

The point of the pastor-teacher ministry is to bring the believers to the point of edified maturity. His authority extends only to his own flock--not beyond it. In any structure of organization, somebody always rises to the top. It is strange how some people think that it would be better to have somebody perhaps who is chairman of the board to be the executive head of the church. They want someone who is out there most of time away from the scene, and most of the time whose mind of necessity is preoccupied with the matters of his personal life. They think that it would be better to have this person who would have greater insight and be more in touch with the mind of God than a pastor-teacher who happens to be on the scene 24 hours a day who has the training; the background; and, the insight of experience, and whose life is entirely involved on the scene for the flock. It seems fantastically irrational, but this is often the case that somehow people think that the congregation will be protected if somebody who is not always on the scene too much is in charge rather than the one whom God has normally appointed for that. That of course is not true. It is certainly better to trust the work to somebody who is on the scene.

1. **Church Members**

This brief summary indicates what these hidden rocks are resisting here on the scene in Jude. So what does it mean to be a member of a church? The New Testament church is a group of people who gathered together in one place, and they recognize that geographic location and they recognize a pastor-teacher as shepherd of a flock. When you seek membership in a local church, therefore, you are saying, "I recognize and I accept that pastor-teacher authority over me.

In Jude 12 here, we have apostasy which is in rejection of properly constituted authority of a pastor-teacher, and the substitution of shepherding themselves. As we have shown you, an apostate is shepherding himself because he is in emotional domination within his soul. That domination, incidentally, comes from a mental attitude sin of one kind or another, usually of pride. He is so proud of his capacity that he shepherds himself. The apostate is promoting disorders which are viewed here in Jude as reefs which will be destructive to other members. Of course, they put on a phony front of love. They go around with big eyes yelling how they love everybody, and they run around smiling and gushing. Yet, they're in the grip of mental attitude sins under the domination of the old sin nature.

This emotionally dominated type in the pulpit can also be easily spotted. His preparation for explaining the Word is always pretty shoddy. He doesn't insult the crowd, especially the carnal crowd. He uses the word "fine" profusely. He gives people lots of attention and lots of praise. He makes them think it's a great favor to line up with doctrine and to respect the Lord. He thinks sweetness while souls are dying, and Christians are rotting in their carnality. But he thinks "sweetness and light." He's not going to face anybody. I could have explained to you about these hidden reefs and shoals, and I could go right on to the clouds without water and all these other illustrations, and said this is how it is. And you would have said, "Hmmm, yeah, uh-huh," and you have gone without any impression of having seen yourself perhaps. That's the difference between exegeting the Word and simply preaching the Word so that it doesn't put people where they can see themselves as God sees them. Apostates would prefer several authorities in the church so that they can keep a place open for their views.

**Worship**

The business of the local church is ultimately worship. The word worship in Greek is "proskuneo." "Proskuneo" means "to kiss face-to-face." "Pros" is face-to-face, and "kuneo" is to kiss. Worshiping the Lord is kissing the Lord face-to-face. How are you going to kiss the Lord? The only way you can kiss the Lord is by taking in His Word. John 14:23 explains to us that it is our relationship to the Word that demonstrates our relationship to the Lord. John 14:23 says, "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'If a man loves me, he will keep My Words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him.'" You cannot love the Lord's Words until you have been taught them. Therefore, until you know His Words, you cannot love the Lord. You cannot worship Him. So don't let some fool stand up and talk to you about worship, by which he means being able to get emotionally hot.

You understand when I'm talking about emotional domination, I'm not badmouthing emotions, but I don't want emotions to be coming from the rottenness of the old sin nature. We want the emotions to be coming out of God the Holy Spirit, who, in an apostate, is canceled out. We have deep emotions about the things of God. Like somebody the other day said to me, "I sit in church sometimes and just the very hymn that we're singing and the very words that we're singing raise a joy in my heart, and tears come to my eyes, and I have to stop singing for a while." That is emotion which is to the praise and to the honor of the Lord. It may be emotion unto tears, but it comes from God the Holy Spirit. It's not the fake rotten stuff that is shelled out by the sweetness-and-light crowd from the old sin nature. Just because you get a bunch of people who can do a lot of emoting together, don't think that you have something that is of God, and that the Lord is blessing. When you get a bunch like that, it's probably Satan's who's kicking things around. That's the business he's in.

If you cannot accept the authority of a pastor-teacher then in a local church, God has another one for you. Wherever you go, you will find an executive of one kind or another, and you will have to decide that that's the one under whose shepherding care you will place yourself. The rejectors of sound pastor-teachers are usually looking for one they can control, instead of that he would be controlled by the Lord.

The apostate rejecter in Jude 12 is a shoal. He's right in the local church itself. He's hidden. He may be an officer, or he may be a worker. What if he's your friend? That puts a little bit of a crimp in it. This will be the time when you will have to rise and be able to distinguish between your friend and your love for the Lord. Your friend may be the apostate. You may recognize and you may pick up the signal that this character is negative and that this character is emotionally dominated, and you will move off from him. You will recognize that he is a hidden reef, and he will destroy you spiritually. He will tear you apart spiritually. He will disorient you. He will cancel out your effectiveness for the Lord, and you will find yourself dragging bottom and wondering why the Christian life isn't like it once used to be for you. Remember that true doctrine does not bring people together. Sound doctrine separates the sheep from the goats. Don't ever forget that the goats are screaming, "Lord, Lord, we cast demons out in your name. We did this for people. What could be more Christian?" What could be more destructive? This is what a self-shepherd does.

So here's the duty of a pastor-teacher. His business is to stop and to resist the apostates in the local church to protect his flock. A pastor-teacher is supposed to do two things. He's supposed to feed his people, and he's not supposed to give them straw and junk. He's supposed to give them substantial meat of the Word and bring them to the point where they can digest it; they can sit in church; they can listen to it; and, they can benefit by it. But he is also to protect them. We have the wolves of the false teachers going about. What good is it that the pastor-teacher stands up there and lets the wolves come in and eat up his sheep? That makes his teaching job a lot easier because there's nobody to teach. Matthew 7:15 says, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are raven wolves." Mark 13:22 says, "For false christs and false prophets shall rise and shall show signs and wonders to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." They seduce you emotionally.

The apostate participates without fear because he doesn't expect anybody to blow the whistle on him, especially the professional preacher. The professional preacher is bound by one thing--the numbers that he has sitting out there. The apostate plays heavily upon the Christian's sense of fair-mindedness, brotherhood, and love. The sheep are easily taken in by some personality type kid. When the sheep are exposed to the apostate, he is exposed as someone who has a pious front, and he seeks to cast little subtle reflections right up here in the structure of the church. You can always spot an apostate because this is what he hits. He hits the pastor-teacher authority first thing. This is because if that pastor-teacher stands firm, and if that pastor-teacher has any savvy, he knows that that apostate is going to be spotted in spite of his fandango sheep's clothing that he has come in. He's going to be smelled out the minute he walks in the door. When he starts undermining and casting doubt and undercutting, he knows that he's going to be faced eventually for the role of discrediting that he plays. Apostates are to be told to knock it off or to leave.

Now, what action does a pastor-teacher have when his flock is being threatened, and he knows they're being threatened, and he understands these things? The more you go along in this business, the more sensitive you are to this. He can either shut his eyes and let the sheep be torn to shreds, or else he goes in and he protects them. So in case you think the pastor-teacher comes on a little strong sometime, I would suggest that you exercise grace and sympathy toward him because he may have been exercising a lot of restraint and a lot of grace. But when the wolf keeps muscling his way in, and keeps changing the sheep's clothing to different kind of sheep's clothing so he can't be recognized, then eventually the pastor-teacher has to take strong actions.

It is not always easy in the course of combat not to come on too strong. Generally, I can guarantee you that a pastor-teacher is trying to be just as gentle and not heavy on the overkill as he can be. He is interested in giving people a chance to save face; to change their pattern; to get on the stick; and, to get on the job for the Lord. That's his only interest. If you think he's coming on too strong, you just pray for him and ask the Lord to help him to ease up. But recognize why he's coming on that strong. This is not just a group of Marines, as tragic as that was hitting the reef on Tarawa and paying for it with their lives. These are believers who for all eternity will be the poorer in their rewards because a pastor-teacher did not take care of the apostate who came in in sheep's clothing, and he permitted the hidden reef to destroy the lives of his people.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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