

It Is Written

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APOSTASY CAN HAPPEN QUICKLY

By Doy Moyer

Among the many lessons we learn from studying the children of Israel is that apostasy can happen within a single generation. Proximity close to the original is no guarantee of holding to the truth. This pattern happened quickly and more than once. The first generation that came out of Egypt under Moses fell into disbelief and couldn't enter the promised land (Hebrews 3:18-19). The next generation that entered under Joshua was better, but as soon as Joshua and the elders with him were gone, they quickly fell again. The warnings were given. The exhortations were strong (Joshua 1:1-9). But it still only took less than one generation to falter. Again, proximity close to the original is not fail-proof. This is why we must continually reassess where we are and make that commitment of faithfulness to the Lord based on His revealed will. Each one within each generation bears responsibility, and the standard for behavior is the same for each. We don't measure ourselves by the next generation in close proximity to the original, but by the standard that was to shape the original itself. Even in Scripture, while the apostles lived and taught, apostasy was happening (e.g., Corinth, churches of Asia in Revelation). The appeal was to the standard given (cf. Galatians 1:6-9).

While we appreciate the writings of early Christians from the second century onward and gain important insights (I do profit from reading them), we would be foolish to think that, because they were close to the first century, they were necessarily correct in all their practices. Nor should we think today that we should judge faithfulness by what Christians were doing in the 1950s or any previous decade.

If we follow Jesus, then we need to keep this before us continually: "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (John 12:48).

"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

For Want of a Nail

By Steven Harper

There is an old nursery rhyme that we may remember:

*For want of a nail, the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost.
For want of a horse, the rider was lost.
For want of a rider, the message was lost.
For want of a message, the battle was lost.
For want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

This supposedly refers to King Richard III's death at the Battle of Bosworth, where a message intended for the king on the battlefield never reached him because of the messenger's horse. Thus, the

series of events culminated in the potential loss of the battle and kingdom. Regardless of whether it is true, it illustrates the “domino effect” a failure can have on things, events, and people we may never realize or even know about. This seems like something we should consider in spiritual matters, too. It could read like this:

For want of Bible study, knowledge was lost.

For want of knowledge, a teacher was lost.

For want of a teacher, an opportunity was lost.

For want of an opportunity, the gospel’s spread was lost.

For want of the gospel, belief was lost.

For want of belief, repentance is lost.

For want of repentance, a soul was lost.

I know many stories of individuals who had one-time opportunities to teach complete strangers the gospel [someone has even compiled some of these stories in a book], and those opportunities were literally life-changing and soul-saving. In each one of those stories, the ending would have been vastly different had they not spoken the gospel when they had the opportunity. But they never would have had the opportunity if they had not known the message and the need to teach others. I thank God for those who spoke when they had the opportunity. I — like the apostle Paul, seek your prayers [even as I pray for myself] — “that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19). Let us all make the greatest effort to tell the greatest story to those who have the greatest need in hearing it.

Giving Our Best To God

By Tom Roberts

Some people seem to be content to give God their leftovers. They give Him their leftover time, their leftover money, their leftover talents. When their own wants and wishes have been fully and completely gratified, anything left (if it is convenient) is presented to our heavenly Father.

How would you like it if you never had anything served on the table but leftovers? How would you like it if your boss paid you only if he had any profits after taking all he wanted from the company? How would you like it if your children gave you what little affection they had leftover from their friends, pursuits, etc.?

David refused to offer in sacrifice to God, “that which cost me nothing,” and this should be our attitude. We should give to God a service that is meaningful and sacrificial. Romans 12:1 states it in clear terms: “Present your bodies as a living sacrifice...”

In our singing, giving, praying, study, all worship, and living, we should give to God the best we can offer. Nothing but the best should be offered. Remember, the nature of the gift reflects the attitude you have toward the one given the gift. Does your service to God reflect that you love and appreciate Him?