

Part 6. Our Enemy

Lesson 5: Heresy, Apostasy, and Demonic Influence – The Battle for Truth

Lesson Summary

The Bible warns of deception that threatens the Church through heresy, apostasy, and demonic influence.

Heresy is a deviation from foundational doctrine—especially truths concerning salvation, Christ’s deity, and Scripture’s authority (2 Pet. 2:1; Gal. 5:20). Church history records examples such as Arianism, Gnosticism, and Pelagianism.

Apostasy is the willful abandonment of the faith after exposure to truth (1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 6:4–6; 2 Thess. 2:3). Scripture affirms that those who permanently fall away were never truly regenerated (1 John 2:19).

Demonic influence frequently lies behind false teaching, as Satan masquerades as an angel of light to twist or replace God’s truth (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 11:13–15). God disciplines doctrinal rebellion (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20), yet not all trials are demonic—some are permitted under His sovereign hand (Job 2:6–7; John 9:3).

Believers are called to defend the faith with the Word (Heb. 4:12; Jude 3), guided by the Spirit (John 16:13), and to stand firm in apostolic teaching (2 Thess. 2:15). The last days will intensify deception (2 Tim. 3:1–5; Matt. 24:12), but faithfulness, discernment, and endurance will mark true disciples.

Even when wrongly accused of heresy, believers must test all things by Scripture, respond with grace, and trust God for vindication (Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 3:15). Victory comes only by clinging to Christ—the Truth who overcomes every lie.

Key Takeaways

- **Heresy:** False teaching that distorts core truths of salvation, Christ, or Scripture (2 Pet. 2:1; Titus 3:10).
- **Apostasy:** Willful rejection of the faith, revealing absence of true regeneration (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 2:19).
- **Demonic influence:** Satan inspires false doctrines and deception (2 Cor. 11:13–15; 1 Tim. 4:1).
- **God’s discipline:** He may hand unrepentant teachers to Satan for correction, yet trials are sovereignly permitted (1 Cor. 5:5; Job 2:6–7).
- **Defense of truth:** God’s Word and Spirit equip us to contend for the faith (Heb. 4:12; Jude 3).
- **Last days:** Apostasy and deception will increase, but endurance marks true disciples (2 Tim. 3:1–5; Matt. 24:12).
- **False accusations:** Standing for truth may bring charges of heresy—believers must remain faithful, test by Scripture, and trust God (Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Questions & Answers

1. **Q:** What is heresy according to Scripture?
A: Teaching that departs from foundational truths about salvation, Christ, or the authority of Scripture (2 Pet. 2:1).

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2. **Q:** How is apostasy different from heresy?
A: Heresy distorts doctrine; apostasy is a willful abandonment of the faith (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:3).
3. **Q:** What did Charles Ryrie emphasize about apostasy?
A: That permanent departure shows the person was never truly born again (1 John 2:19).
4. **Q:** What role do demons play in false teaching?
A: Many false doctrines are demonically inspired to twist or replace God's truth (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 11:13–15).
5. **Q:** How does God sometimes discipline false teachers?
A: By allowing them to face Satan's destruction to learn not to blaspheme (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).
6. **Q:** What safeguards believers from deception?
A: Scripture, the Spirit, sound doctrine, and testing all teaching by God's Word (Heb. 4:12; John 16:13; Acts 17:11).
7. **Q:** How should believers respond if wrongly accused of heresy?
A: Remain faithful, defend truth with grace, test all things by Scripture, and trust God for vindication (1 Pet. 3:15; Matt. 5:11–12).

“Heresy distorts truth, apostasy rejects truth, and demonic influence replaces truth—but God calls us to cling to His Word, contend for the faith, and endure in Christ until the end.”