

## **Apostates Equal Con Artists** **by Fred DeRuvo – Study-Grow-Know Ministries**

If Jesus were physically alive on this planet today, He would live a life of simplicity, just as He did when He walked this earth over 2,000 years ago. Nothing about Him would be different.

It is tragic that people give so much credence to TV evangelists and others who preach a lifestyle that stands in direct opposition to God's Word. More than anything, God has made authentic Christians *rich* but those riches are in the *spiritual* realm. There is nothing greater than that because all wealth will one day disappear.

Those who live their life piling up riches for themselves will learn that they cannot enter the next life with one penny of it. It doesn't matter to apostates because their ultimate goal is to be surrounded by people who essentially worship *them*, not God, and *give* to them, not God.

Most of these apostates want to become wealthy, but not all. Some are simply content to have many people following their teachings and hanging on their every word. After a time, anything that leader does is fine, even if it means having sexual relations with young girls, or forbidding any of his followers to have sexual relations at all (even if married), or only allowing people to marry the people he approves.

Apostates *need* people to follow them, and it is for this reason alone that they become part of local churches. They are completely aware of the fact that most people who attend churches do not read their Bibles but simply depend upon the teaching of another person to spoon feed them their theology. Apostates know that it is relatively easy to take advantage of members of any flock because of this lack of biblical knowledge.

For the most part, all they have to do is enter into a congregation with a seeming innocence and self-deprecation, yet with an open friendliness that they know will break down barriers. Toss in a couple of memorized Scripture verses and they are in. Once they are accepted by members in that group, they begin to plant seeds, seeds that will take root and eventually cause people to start following the apostate. This occurs over time and is much like the frog that sits in a pot of water that slowly comes to a boil. The frog has no clue that it will eventually boil to death.

If an apostate came into a church congregation and on his very first Sunday ran up to the pulpit and declared himself to be a god, people would escort him out very quickly. Apostates are not stupid. They do not do this, but rather take their time to ensnare certain individuals that have let their guards down, and they build from there.

### **Turning Grace into Licentiousness**

One of the things that these apostates do is start planting the idea that *because* of God's grace, Christians can live any way they want to live. We have been *forgiven!* Because of that forgiveness, all of our sins, past, present, and future, are gone! Since that is the case, then we should enjoy life to its fullest *now*. Come on, join the fun!

Normally, the average church has rules of some sort. Many of these rules are not written down, but the expectation is there and people are aware of those expectations. For instance, we know that the Bible teaches that it is wrong to commit adultery. That's a given, yet people still do it. Aside from the commandments, though, there are rules that churches have that leaders expect parishioners to follow for the good of the entire congregation.

Things like refraining from drinking alcohol or attending movies may not be part of the written dogma of a particular church, but everyone who attends that church knows that it may be frowned upon by the leaders.

Is there anything wrong with actually drinking or going to movies? Some people believe that the Bible teaches that you should never drink. Others don't see it that way. What is the guiding factor? Paul tells us that if what we are doing causes a brother to stumble, we shouldn't do it, and certainly not in front of that brother (cf. Romans 14).

So the guiding parameter here is based on *love* for that other individual. It's part of the Christian's moral code, and Paul details it for us in 1 Corinthians 13.

The apostate teaches people that these things should be enjoyed and *not* prohibited. People tend to like this, and those who are weak in these areas will be drawn to such a person.

I know a number of pastors (and you probably do as well) who have lost their pastorates because they committed adultery with someone in their church, or they were involved in other questionable activities. Either they were counseling the woman and things got way out of hand or they simply found themselves attracted to the church secretary and, over time, went with their desires.

These things happen because people are not close to God. They begin catering to themselves and find ways to keep SELF happy. This is what the apostate does and teaches others to indulge in as well.

The apostate is always happy, always loud (once you get to know them), always has an answer about things biblical, and always encourages people to live life to the fullest. We are *saved*; therefore, since we cannot lose our salvation, go for it! This is a sham.

Yes, I *do* believe a person who authentically receives Jesus as Savior and Lord *cannot* lose that salvation. At the same time, it is important to understand that the Holy Spirit who takes up residence in our life will begin directing our steps and remolding our character in the image of Jesus. If we oppose that, the Lord reserves every right to take us home, just like Ananias and Sapphira.

The people who *say* they are Christians and are really *not* have little to fear in this life. God will likely not “take them home”; that will happen soon enough, when they die and are sent to hell because of their life and actions *now*. The tragedy is what they do to others.

Anyone can *say* they are Christian and many people do. This does not mean that they actually *are* or *were* authentic Christians. It simply means they *said* they were one.

Not long ago, tragically, a madman gunned down nearly 100 people in Norway. He had a page on a social network in which he stated he was a “Christian” and a “right-wing conservative.” He also stated that he was part of the Knights Templar.

On the day of his massacre, he was wearing a police uniform so that the young people at the youth camp he was at would not be afraid of him and would even gather round him. It was because of his fake identity as a law enforcement official that he was able to kill as many people as he did that day. He says he’s not insane and that what he did he intended to do for the sake of his nation because of his disagreement over Norway’s immigration laws and the growth of Islam there.

As you can imagine, the liberal media had a heyday with this news that he was “Christian” and a “right-winger.” The actual truth of the situation is that he is *not* a Christian any more than Judas Iscariot was a Christian. That did not interest the liberal media, though. The gunman *claimed* to be a Christian, so we should believe him, right? According to the liberal media, *yes*. I noticed, though, that this same media did not for a moment believe him to be an actual law enforcement official, even though he attempted to pass himself off as one. Christian? *Yes*. Police officer? *No*. That makes no sense, except for the fact that it merely proves that the average person does not know what constitutes an authentic Christian. Just ask anyone who claims to be an “ex-Christian.” They don’t know either, but claim that they *were* at one time a true Christian, but now are not.

Apostates are just like this. They *pretend* or *say* they are something when they are not. They have their own agendas and that’s all they care about. Pulling the wool over as many eyes as possible is their initial goal so that their ultimate goal can be achieved: serving SELF.

Please notice also that Jude clearly makes the following statement about these apostates: the apostates “*deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*”

Jude's wording here is important. They not only deny God (Jesus), but notice how Jude refers to Jesus here, as "Master" and "Lord." At the beginning of his letter, Jude called himself a "bondservant," literally, a *slave* to Jesus, and Jude is one *willingly*. He was devoted to Jesus and had *voluntarily* put Jesus in the place of Master and Lord of his (Jude's) life. This is exactly how all of us are to respond to Jesus. We can do it willingly now, in this life, or we will be forced to bend the knee in the next life (cf. Philippians 2:10). Obviously, to do so of our own volition in this life is the hallmark of an authentic Christian. Those who refuse to bend the knee to Jesus *now* will be the ones who are forced to do it *then*.

Apostates like to give the *impression* that Jesus is their Master, while the truth of the matter is that they *deny* Him that place of honor. In effect, the apostate is his own highest authority, bowing to no one else in this life. He believes he answers only to himself and no one else. Again, though, impressions are important. The apostate *wants* above all things to give the impression that he is one of the true flock and other Christians have nothing to worry about, and they can therefore readily receive him with open arms.

Paul also points this out in his second letter to Timothy. He says that individuals like the ones Jude describes are "*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power*" (2 Timothy 3:4-5). Ultimately, these apostates love pleasure, not God, because they love themselves. In order to have a lifestyle which allows them to *indulge* their pleasures, they must have followers who are willing to support their lifestyle. Christians can become easy prey to individuals like this, and it is all because too many do not *study to grow through knowledge of God's Word*.

That's our show for today. Thanks for joining me and until we meet again, may the Lord open your eyes to show you how blessed you are in Him!