

# SEEN IN THE WORLD AND IN THE CHURCH

by Kim Josephson

The Bible says in 1 Tim 4:1-2

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

Now most would agree that these are the latter times but the next statement raises eyebrows. People departing from the faith? This is the kind of statement that makes people uncomfortable. It would probably be disregarded if it wasn't so specific about its author... now the Spirit , that is the Holy Spirit, says that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith. This is the type of negative report that we just don't want to receive. Aren't we supposed to have a great revival? What about these mega-churches and the attendance at these huge convention centers and such? Doesn't that contradict the idea of people departing from the faith? In a word, **NO!**

First of all, you need to understand what is meant by "the faith." This is that faith spoken about by Christ and all the apostles in the New Testament. It is the faith, trust and reliance upon Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It not only implies but demands obedience to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in taking up one's cross and following after Jesus. It is not some formula with which to manipulate God but a living breathing relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. It's walking in His name - on His assignments. It is **doing** your duty in the kingdom of God. So how's your faith?

**Faith is walking in His name -  
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in the kingdom of God.**

I think if we are honest, we will have to admit that not only some but many are departing from the faith today. The sad truth is, most people in the Church know little or nothing of Jesus as Lord. Some are even presumptuous enough to claim Jesus as their Savior but not their Lord. It's blasphemous. Others have deceived their own selves claiming Jesus as Lord and Savior but never producing even a shred of evidence to their supposed conversion. They claim a relationship with Christ but never pray or read His Word! They claim to be saved, but they're not saved from sin. In fact, many live just as they did before they were "saved" only now with the idea that their sins are somehow excused. How can this be?

The scripture answers the question. **It is because of seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.** In times past I have chided preachers for only choosing positive and popular passages of scripture. I have called it heresy and blamed it on cowardice as much as anything else, but I see now that the situation is much worse than I even dared to think. Seducing spirits have captivated the hearts and minds of many and we have been led astray by our own lusts!

No longer do we want to hear the OLD OLD STORY of Jesus. We've even abandoned the hymns and songs that tell of Jesus and His Blood. No longer do we talk about the crucified life or taking up our cross and following Jesus. The red letters are ignored and the commands of Jesus have been forsaken. Today, Jesus' words have been rationalized and His doctrine of absolute truth has been watered down to a mere set of suggestions for a rich and rewarding life. Again, it is doctrines of devils that have carried us away captive.

Listen! Any doctrine that contradicts Jesus comes straight from the pit of hell! **Any doctrine that encourages you to look past what Jesus said to some twisted scriptural interpretation that excuses you from obedience to Christ is a lie and it is a doctrine of devils!** Jesus is the final authority. He is the Word made flesh. If His words are difficult it makes no difference. **JESUS SAID IT AND THAT SETTLES IT FOREVER AND EVER.**

It is high time for us to honor the name, blood, and words of Jesus. Not just with lip service but with a whole hearted determination to be not only a hearer but a doer of His Word.

When Jesus says "Turn the other cheek" He means "Turn the other cheek". When He says "Go the extra mile" He means "Go the extra mile". When He says "Love your enemies." He means "Love your enemies". And when He says "If you are lukewarm I'll spue you out of my mouth" He means that too. When he says "If you deny me before men, I'll deny you before my Father" He means it. Again Jesus said "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*" If these words are rattling your doctrine then know this, yours is a doctrine of devils! I'm not saying this to hurt your feelings but to open your eyes!

There is no way around the words of Jesus. God give us grace to examine all of our cherished traditions in the light of His words. God forbid that we should hold on to some thought that contradicts Jesus Christ. We must be as Paul said "*Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that*

*exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*" (II Cor 10:5). This must be our goal lest we be nothing but hypocrites and castaways.

Another test that exposes seducing spirits and doctrines of devils is this" Does the doctrine serve the creature or the creator? This question is of major significance, because an honest answer uncovers the motives of the human heart. In times past I have tried to show how humanism has corrupted the gospel. I have tried to demonstrate how certain heresies that have crept into the

Church have given man the preeminence instead of God. I have stressed that you are here to serve God. He is not here to serve you! I know this seems obvious but forgive the redundancy and let's examine this further.

Take for example our worship service. It should be clear that the point of the **service** is to worship God. However, it is abundantly clear that a great many people don't

come to "serve" at all, but rather to be served. This attitude is reflected in their speech. They talk about what they liked or what they didn't like in a particular service. They talk about what they felt or didn't feel. They talk about the performance of the "worship team" or about the special music. Can this possibly be a proper attitude for worship? In our entertainment driven "worship services" it is easy to see how we could become confused. But, let me help you.

First of all, the congregation is there to perform worship to God. They are not there to judge and criticize or applaud. Secondly, the worship leader, team, choir or whatever is not there to show off their talents and put on a show. They are there to help the congregation touch God. Their performance, for lack of a better word, must be sincere and unto God. It must be led by the Spirit and presented not for the people's approval, but for God's! And thirdly a proper understanding of these things reveals that only God is the judge, not man. See how this puts things back in their proper order? Now God is the focus, not man. Now God is the object of adoration. "*He must increase, we must decrease*" (John 3:30).

But in today's Church it is just the opposite! The "gospel" is presented with man at the center. Christ is "pitched" like some engine additive that will help you become all you can be. "Add Christ to your life and you too can be successful." It's blasphemous! Where is the fear of God? Where is repentance? Where is the humbling of a man before His God? **Gone from the Church today!**

Today people are told that if they give God a dollar, He owes them a hundred - If they give ten, He owes them a

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thousand. What nonsense! God doesn't owe you anything and you can't manipulate God with some con man's "faith formula" or anything else - not with good works - not with prayer and fasting - **not with anything! GOD CANNOT BE CONNED OR BOUGHT! HE WILL NOT BE MANIPULATED!!**

The scripture says in Isaiah 66:2

*...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

Where do today's covetous, cross-denying, man-deifying doctrines square with this? They don't! They couldn't possibly because they are doctrines of devils straight from the pit of hell.

**Listen! If the word preached is not calling you to deny yourself and follow Jesus it's a doctrine of devils!** They can put Jesus' name all over it but it's still a sham if it doesn't exhort you to humble yourself, purify yourself, and separate yourself unto the Lord your God!

Finally, you know it's a doctrine of devils, if the doctrine tends to or makes a place for sin. God's will is that we be holy as He is holy. The fact is that the whole idea of sanctification is that we be conformed to the image of Christ. Taking up one's cross and following Jesus was never an option. The cross is the place where your will collides with God's will. It is the place where you must die. This was the attitude demonstrated by Jesus everyday of His life. That is what He preached. "*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me*" (John 6:38). Even the night before He died, in the garden of Gethsemane it was His prayer "*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*" (Matt 26:39)

Is this the Spirit in most of today's congregations? I don't think so. Today, we don't hear about the cross. We hear about my vision, my dream or whatever. When people get in the way of the vision - run them off! Does that sound like Christ?

Today, we are excused from obedience to Christ. We are exempted from Christ's own commands. God Have Mercy! Today, we are taught to save our lives, not lose them. We are taught to fight for our rights not against our flesh. Away with doctrines of devils that encourage our selfishness, our self-centeredness and our pride.

I will not deny that these doctrines are seductive. They often sound good, appeal to the pride of man and appease your flesh. They are often attended by great crowds. Their "ministers" appear successful. But just look at the damage satan has done with this poison.

First of all, look at all the scandals that have plagued the Church. Ministry after ministry has been exposed for their corruption, greed and lust. Think of the damage done to the cause of Christ and the reproach that has been heaped upon His name because of these self serving

cheats. Realize how many wounded have been left for dead along the road by these "visionaries" - these "lying prophets". God have mercy!

So what can we do to turn the tide on this corruption? First, we must see it for what it is, the direct result of seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. Secondly, we must no longer submit to the undermining of Christ's authority and the minimizing of Jesus' words! We must close our ears to man-deifying doctrines that exalt man instead of God. We must return to the "old paths" and seek to serve God rather than to be served by Him. And finally, we must humble ourselves before God, repent of our sins and take up our cross and follow Him. We need to forget about our wants and desires and dedicate ourselves to His. We need to get back to worshipping God in spirit and truth for Him alone. Then, we need to get about the Father's business, and that is winning people to Jesus. I know evangelism is out of style and out of the Church but that is just wrong. That's why Jesus came, died, and rose again. It's what He was about . It is still what He is about.

God give us grace to accept these words of exhortation. Save us from these doctrines of devils and any seducing spirits that would lead us away from the way of the cross and complete obedience to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



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