

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

Pastor Vijay Eathakota

www.gracetabernaclehyd.org

Yes, Lord, You are a miracle-working God. You are great. You do miracles so great. Lord, in every one of our lives, You have done awesome miracles; that each one of us could be called Yours sons and daughters. It is only Your miracle of mercy and grace. And this evening, O Lord, we just, Father, abandon ourselves to Your mercy, to Your grace. Even during the speaking and the preaching of the Word, let it be a miracle of Your grace and Your mercy that You visit Your people at the most appropriate time and You give them a Word and cease them. A word that will encourage, exhort, rebuke, chastise, correct, and speak of Your love and of Your mercy into our lives. That work, O Father, is a work of miracle, O Lord. And that You choose fallen earthen vessels like us. It's our privilege that we carry this glory in earthen vessels as Your apostle said, O Lord, "Let the surpassing mercies of God be shown through us that we should not glory in ourselves but in God who causes the dead to rise." O Lord, this evening, O Lord, we pray, O Lord, You would quicken areas which have been dead, O Lord, by Your Words speak Your words. Let Your Word go forth, O Lord, and bring life, O Lord. Bring us, Lord Father, back to Yourself. And therefore, anoint, O Lord, each one of us even as I speak, even as I all of us hear, O Lord. Let us all be attentive to what You have to say to us in this last hour of time. In Jesus' Mighty Name, Amen.

All of the young children are back and also, Pastor James is back. And so, today, we'll just continue to study on what we've been looking at in our Church the past several weeks. And I'll look at the first portion and I wanted to look at *1 Timothy 4:1-2*. This is what it says,

1 Timothy 4:1-2

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times (that is the last days) some will depart from the faith (want to look at that, "departing" that's what I want to look at today "departing from the faith") by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, ² Such teachings come from hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared, as with a hot iron.

Now, when we look at this; now, don't ever think that "I'll not be among them." If you read through the Bible and if you look at the portions in *Ezekiel*, (I don't want to turn there) it says, "*When a righteous man, if he sins, all the righteousness that he has done till that time will not be counted against him. He will surely die in his sin. But if the wicked man, if he repents, all the wickedness that he has done will not be counted against him. And he'll be considered righteous.*" That is God's ways. And therefore, as we are progressing in our sanctification and our holiness, never ever come to a point in our lives where we can think that we can never fall. No. I mean, we may not say it but our attitude may be one of that kind. And therefore, we should try to see from Scripture if we have that attitude to see how we can we identify those characteristics of being at the threshold of falling away. And by the way, you know it – to build a life of character, it takes a lot of time; but to fall, it's so easy. You can be high this day and by evening, you can fall. So, all of us are prone to that. And that is the reason why Paul tells the Corinthian Church in *1 Corinthians 10*. He says, the "Take heed lest anyone thinks that he will not fall, he will fall." Okay. So, we need to understand that some will depart from the faith. It's very interesting word – 'Apesthama' that is, it will not be faithful people. What is that? Let's see another portion from Scripture.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

¹ Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. ³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first...

A lot of people will fall away. To fall away, you should be standing. We've looked at that in several contexts in our Church in different messages. That falling away will come first and the man of sin is revealed and son of perdition. What is this falling away? Look at a few other translations to get the spectrum of thought that is being conveyed over here. The word falling away comes from the word 'apostestia', 'apostacy', 'apostestia'. It has got a very deep meaning. If you look at some translations, they'll try to render it in different ways. This is the NIV. "*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs...*" Meaning – falling away is equivalent to rebellion. So, what kind of rebellion it is? Is it rebellion of children against parents? Church members against elders? Is that how you look at it? Because it's rebellion whenever you talk about a rebel, you'll have one Sheik Kubera all the time, right? I remember some time back in IIT, we

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

had a Robotics camp. And the title of the camp theme of the camp was revolution. We had Shiek Kubera with robotics faces. What is that? Is that the thing that comes to your mind – rebellion? Another translation; look at what it says, *“Don’t be fooled for what by what they say for that they will not come until there is a great rebellion against God.”*

So, you have apostasy, which means ‘falling away’ as what some translations call it. Some translations call it ‘rebellion’. Some translations call it ‘great rebellion against God’. One of the things I found when I study Scripture, in most of the times, when we look at our languages, what they tend to do is that they tend kind off placate the intensity of a particular word the meaning they are trying to convey. We all do it in our own lives, right? Did you sin? “No, I just made a mistake.” I mean sin and mistake; mistake has got a little less intensity, but sin had got a greater intensity. Did you rebel? “No, I just got angry.” So, angry and rebellion; so, rebellion is more intense, anger is okay. So, when you look at apostasy, rebellion kind of okay; falling away, kind of okay; great rebellion, still not to the point. And therefore, we need to try to dig into to see what it actually conveys in its totality. So, just go to the concordance and one of the things you can do is just go to the concordance and see where all it occurs on the Bible to get a meaning to get a complete picture as to what that particular word means. And therefore, you see in *Acts 21:21* and this is when Paul comes to Jerusalem and he goes to the Church and he gives them a report and there is a fantastic, what you call – the reception for Paul. They all are happy the way God is using Paul to speak to the Gentiles, but many Jewish people had many misconceptions

Acts 21:21

²¹but they have been informed about you (about Paul) that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake...

The word the same word apostasia – to forsake and again, you see the word ‘forsake’ doesn’t really convey totality of the meaning; ‘forsake’, meaning – “I forsake and went on my own way.” What is apostasy? That is something I want to look at. It’s so very important for us to understand the true complete picture of the word “apostasy” and we will look at this in a very strange context. But I think that’s a true context. It is found in *Matthew 5:31- 32*. Fantastic verse; this is what it says,

Matthew 5:31-32

³¹“Furthermore, it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of (apostasia)

That is the word. See? What is apostasy its divorcing. And why did God allow that divorce to happen in the marriage he gives the reason in the next verse.

³²But I say to you that whoever divorces (or apostasies) his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is (apostatized) divorced commits adultery.

That is the true meaning of the word ‘apostasy’, where you have been having this ongoing relationship with the Lord like in a marriage. And slowly, you are fooling round with several different lovers, albeit under the knowledge of your husband. And you come before your husband and act as if everything is okay. What has happened to you? It is that you have apostatized your husband. You see the intensity of the meaning? I mean, when somebody, the wife rebelled against the husband, or maybe, she got upset and you know, threw a stone at him maybe, that is quite understandable, but you’ll not say that, “The husband has been unfaithful”; you don’t say that. This fellow must have said something to instigate her. But if the wife, on the other hand, has been fooling around and then, comes to the husband and acts as if everything is okay, then she says, “Accept me,” God says, “You don’t understand My relationship with you. You don’t understand it.” That is the reason you need to look at Scripture. See. Now that I got your attention, look at what it says in one other verses in the Bibles, *James. James 4:4* onwards.

James 4:4-5

⁴Adulterers and adulteresses! (it’s so intense, you see) Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

Let me ask you this question: where does Scripture say this? Which verse is he quoting from when he is actually quoting and saying “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously” as the Scripture says? Where is it found? Let me tell you, there is

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

not one particular verse. You know what James is doing? He's summarizing entire Old Testament and he is putting one statement of the entire Old Testament; you know what the Old Testament says? *"If you have any other Gods other than God, I will visit the iniquity of your father to the third and fourth generation, because the Lord your God is a jealous God. If you have any other affections towards any other person or any other thing apart from Me, even if you have an inkling of that, I am jealous."* We never had this picture of God, did we? See. You know, it's like in a relationship. Even if the husband is talking about some other person in some other friend and then, you know discussing in a very random arbitrary environment and just makes a comment about that person if he is from the opposite sex. "Why did you mention that person?" – this will be the question asked by the wife. And should be asked. "And when you mentioned the name of that person, something happened to your face. There were some kind contours have changed. You kind of blushed. Why did you do that?" This should be allowed in a marriage because all the affections of the husband are only for her. And the all the affections of the wife are only for him. You see. That is the reason why apostasy has got a much more intense meaning. It is just not rebelling against God; it is like breaking that bond that you have with God and breaking it just tearing it apart. And psychologist say that the most traumatic experience that any man or a woman can go through is the experience when relationships break down, especially the marriage relationships. Such a traumatic experience.

So, you'll have that, through the Bible; I mean, especially, through prophetic Scriptures, you'll see the one message that keeps coming over and over again to the people of God is, "Boss, you're fooling around. You don't love Me the way I am supposed to be loved." See? Find this in one of the very interesting passages from the Bible, is found in *Ezekiel 20:1* onwards.

Ezekiel 20:1-13

¹ It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord and sat before me.

Like you know, you'll be sitting before God. Just imagine the picture. They all came to inquire before the Lord.

² Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ³ "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, (what should you say to them?) 'Thus, says the Lord God: "Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live," says the Lord God, "I will not be inquired of by you."

"Please don't ask Me anything." And the leader was asking, "Why?" And Ezekiel is getting this revelation from God. And you see God is crying out.

⁴ Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Then make known to them the abominations of their fathers.

⁵ "Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them (where?) in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, 'I am the Lord your God.'

In other words, "I am made a vow. I made a Covenant. I am the Lord your God," and then,

On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, 'flowing with milk and honey,' the glory of all lands. ⁷ Then I said to them, 'Each of you,

Where is He telling this? Outside Egypt or inside Egypt? Okay, notice this. It is not outside Egypt; it's inside Egypt. This is what He is telling them. It is not there in the first five Books of Moses. This is where Ezekiel is having special revelation of the visitation of God to the people of Israel in Egypt"

⁷ Then I said to them, 'Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.' ⁸ But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them (where?) in the midst of the land of Egypt.

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

That means, in a very in a very fantastic way God visited them and spoke to them and said, “Forsake all your idolatry. Otherwise, I will pour out My fury on you right in the middle of the land of Egypt.” Then, what happened?

⁹But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. “Therefore, I made them go out of the land of Egypt (you see that?) and brought them into the wilderness.

So, God visited them in the land of Egypt said, “Please take away your idolatry; otherwise, I will consume you.” They did not listen, but for His own Name sake, He did not punish them. But then, you know what He did? He brought them out of the land of Egypt and then, He brought them to the wilderness, what did He do in the wilderness? The next verse,

¹¹And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, (Where did he give them? Ten commandments? On the mountain) ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them.’¹² Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.

You know, that is the reason why we gather every Sunday. Especially, we set apart three hours of our day to come to Church. What is a day of Sabbath? It is essentially a day we’re being set apart for the Lord and even as we hear the Word of God, even as we worship God, what is happening to us? Technically, it should happen to us that we are being set apart sanctified by the Word of God. That is the reason it says, “Be sanctified them by the truth your Word is truth.” So, it’s being set apart. But what did they do?

¹³Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.

And this keeps on happening over and over again. Right inside Egypt in the wilderness, they go into the Promised Land, until the time they’re kicked out of the land of promise into the exile. We always had this inclination towards idolatry, rebellion or apostasy. And you’ll see that. The moment they came out of Egypt and they went to Mount Sinai and Moses went to the top of the mountain to get the Ten Commandment, you’ll see immediately the spirit of apostasy comes into action. I want to look at that. And I want to check my heart to see if I have these characteristics. Of an apostate, of a potential apostate. So, I have titled the message as “Characteristic of a potential apostate.” How to identify one? *Exodus 32:1* onwards.

Exodus 32:1-4

¹ Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”² And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”³ So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.⁴ And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

This is what happened, and of course, after that, early in the morning, they get up. They offer burnt offerings and everybody eats and drinks and is playing and doing all kinds of extremely lustful acts. But let me tell you, the lessons that I learn from these 5 verses,

Lesson Number 1 – “One man can stop the spiritual degeneration of entire community.” That is the point. One man, in a family, one individual in a family can stop the spiritual degeneration of the entire family. If you are the only believer in your household, it is not by accident. You are the one who is actually constraining the hand of God against judgment in your family. In your office, the spiritual degeneration around you can stop because of you. Can you imagine the power of one man, one woman? You know, even though we gather in numbers, God is actually interested in individuals. Therefore, the first Book in the Bible is Job. The very first Book of the Bible is Job because God is looking all over the world and is looking for one man who is blameless and upright and who fears God, and shuns evil. And because of this one, he always offers

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

sacrifices. He will say, “Baba, My children, even if in their heart, they might have blasphemed against God,” and he continuously offers burnt offerings, and sacrifices so that the hand of judgment will not come into the family.

Job 1:5

⁵When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, “Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s regular custom.

God is looking in all the world for that one man. I am telling you, honestly, this is what I believe, in the last days, every one of us will be that one man. Do you want to be that man who will stop the spiritual degeneration in your household, in your work place, in your university? You can be that one man or that one woman who will stop the spiritual degeneration of entire nations, sometimes. See, one man can stop the spiritual degeneration of an entire nation. Can you imagine the absence of Moses, and you see rebellion breaking forth, apostasy breaking forth? And the Antichrist – Acts 20. This is about Paul.

Acts 20:25-31

²⁵“Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. (This is the last address to the Ephesians Church) ²⁶Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after I leave, (whose gonna come?) *savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.*

You know something? For 3 and half years he was in Ephesus, and this one man, stopped all the wolves from spoiling the Church. One man. You know what that talks about? It talks about spiritual authority. That is spiritual authority. It is not that you have eloquence, and gifts and talents, no. You are a person who has got a clear conscious with God and because you have clear conscious with God, you will fear no man. One man is enough to stop the spiritual degeneration of the entire nation. I experienced it in my own lab. You wouldn’t believe it how things used to happen. I used to have a bunch of my colleagues who used to come together and start discussing. And, suddenly, all kind of talks are going on and the moment, I opened the door and enter into the lab. “Shh!” Everybody. They looked at me and suddenly, something happens. It’s not because I am special. No. I am more intelligent than them? No. Some of them are more brilliant than I. Do you want to be that one man? The first lessons that I learn, I learned that one man can stop it, in your own family, in your own work place, and in your own universities. Be that one man. Be a man of spiritual authority, like we looked at Amos. Amos comes and preaches and all those people are getting worried, they said, “Please, don’t come here and preach in your own country and prophecy.” He says, “What are you saying? I am not a professional prophet like you. I am not a professional. I was just a shepherd. I was taking care of sheep. I was a farmer and the Lord called me, why? Because he found me faithful.” I could see one man whose heart is towards God. That is the reason why the eyes of the Lord are to and fro to see, if there is one man that can stay His judgment. And does he find one? No. *Ezekiel 22:30*

Ezekiel 22:30

³⁰“I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one.

That is the reason why God speaks to individuals even though we are collectively as a Church. He is speaking to us specifically. Do you want to be that one man, one woman who will stay the hand of God?

Matthew 5:13

¹³“You are the salt of the earth (what does the salt do? It delays decay, it doesn’t stop decay. It only delays) *But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

So, you are the salt. You can stay the hand of judgment in your community, in your place of work, whatever your place of influence is. This is the first lesson that I have learned. And therefore, it says in *2 Thessalonians 2:5-8*,

2 Thessalonians 2:5-8

⁵ Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

In other words, the last believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit, when He is removed from this earth, you know what's going to happen? All hell, literally, is going to break lose on the earth. That's lesson number 1.

Lesson number 2 – How do I know, that I have the characteristic of an apostate in my heart? How do we respond to God's delays? It is when Moses delayed. How do we respond to God's delays? Example from our own spiritual ancestry. Found in *Genesis 16:1*,

Genesis 16:1-4

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, (Ah! Significant, in the context of our Church, especially) Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

Immediate results. That's exactly what happens – you go out of step ahead of God's timings, immediate results will come. And you will think, "The blessing of God is upon my life." That's what she thinks. Remember Jacob? "I brought this to..." "Your voice is like Jacob, you are feeling Esau. How come you give so quick?" "The Lord gave me success." "Oh! So quickly, the Lord gave me." I remember that when I used to go for Visa interviews. Fudge, all our documents and go to American consulatory, Canadian consulate, or whatever consulate. 30 Lakhs in bank. No, my Dad never had that kind of money. And C.A will say: "This guy is a multi-millionaire." And, He will appreciate all your wealth and make you a Crorepati. And your Dad will look at the C.A report: "Arrey, Baba! I am Crorepati." And then, you go to the Visa interview – stamped, accepted. Then, you will come to Church, "The Lord gave me success – visa." I know so many people who did that. Fudged all their documents, everything, they went to the visa interview and got their visa and came to Church, "The Lord gave me success." Because they couldn't wait for Gods timings; they wanted to do it now. How do you respond to God's delays? And what happened to her? When she knew that Hagar conceived, she began to despise her mistress. Look at the classic response of madam Sarai.

Genesis 16:5

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering."...

What a response, amazing! Why are they going through this problem? "You are responsible?" Who asked it? "You asked it. Now, you got the problem and you are saying 'I am responsible'."

...I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me"

Can you imagine? "May the LORD judge between you and me." Oh boy! That's what happens in the families. "You have a clear conscious with God, right?" Conversations between husband and wife. "You are the cause of this problem." Couldn't wait, jumped in, created an Ishmael. And the problem is – you don't see the results immediately. Your results will be amplified for thousands of generations even till date because one day, Abraham did not wait and adjusted himself for God's delays, created an Ishmael and till date, there are problems. How do you respond to Gods delays? That's what exactly happened in Samuel, right?

1 Samuel 13:1-3

¹ Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel, ² Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. ³ Jonathan defeated the

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land,

This is what exactly Saul does. Somebody else gets the credit and he blows the trumpet; it's called 'plagiarism'. Somebody else does the hard work and you get the credit for yourself and then, what happened?

"Let the Hebrews hear."

That this is the work of Saul. And some of the Hebrews crossed over Jordan and then, what happens? The enemies come with their numbers and those people are like the sand of the seashore and all of them are trembling. All the Israelites go into the holes and they become like rodents for a few days and they are all hiding and Saul is seeing all this.

1 Samuel 13:7-8

⁷ and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead...

Remember the Gadites and some of the two and a half tribes and half the tribes of Manasseh they had the Promised Land on the other side of the Promised Land they all ran to the other side of Jordan.

...and all the people followed him trembling. ⁸ He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him.

That was his problem – he wanted exaltation, and quick exaltation don't wait for exaltation. That's the reason why it says, exaltation does not come from the east or it does not come from the west; it comes from God. God's timing, you see. Then, what happened?

1 Samuel 13:9-10

⁹ So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. ¹⁰ As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came.

And you know the story. How do you respond to God's delay? That is lesson number two.

Now, lesson number three – how do I work in the absence of supervision?

Matthew 24:45-51

⁴⁵ "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food ^[i] in due season? ⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. ⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying ^[i] his coming,' ⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, (You know what he is going to do?) ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, ⁵¹ and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Why should he directly not throw him into a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth? Why should he cut him into two? It's a question we need to ask. What is going over here? Why should this fellow be cut into two? I'll tell you this is my perception and understanding. In the Old Testament when two parties made a covenant, you know what they did? They brought a few animals, they cut the animal into two, they had the terms of a covenant written down on a piece of paper or whatever they had as witnesses if they had no paper. They would cut a bull or an animal or whatever or a goat or something. They would cut into two, pour the blood on a particular place, divide the two parts like this and each of them will walk in the middle of that dead pieces symbolizes that if anyone of us breaks the terms of the covenant, this is exactly what will happen to us. We will also be cut into two. You know what God said? "You unfaithful servant! In your unfaithfulness, you broke the covenant and this is exactly what I am going to do. I going to divide you into two, symbolizing when you actually disobeyed the terms of the covenant what happened to Me is what you will experience all through eternity."

⁵¹ ***and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***

God is very interested and how we respond and work in the absence of our bosses actually tells a lot about us.

Philippians 2:12-16

¹² ***Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.***

You see, God is very interested in how we respond to delays. God is very interested in how we work in the absence of supervision,

¹⁴ ***Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.***

You know what Paul is saying? “I don’t know how you are working but all of you, one day, will be standing before the Judgment seat of Christ and I will also be standing along with you. That day, when God looks at you, He should say, ‘when Paul was absent, I saw how you worked, how you behaved. You were behaving just as if Paul was there.’” And Paul will say, “Thank God. I’m so proud of them I did not run in vain.” You want that? He is very interested as how you work in the absence of supervision, children, all of us. Therefore, we need to learn from animals, insects. You know when you look at insects and Solomon says, “We should become like them, hard working like them.” That is not the point. Look at what it says in Proverbs.

Proverbs 6:6-8

⁶ ***Go to the ant, you lazy man! Observe its ways and become wise. ⁷ It has no commander, officer, or ruler, ⁸ but prepares its provisions in the summer and gathers its food in the harvest.***

It doesn’t mean that you become like an ant and hardworking. That is not the point but yes, that would be the obvious message but the more important message is – how do you work when nobody is watching you? And that is what you are.

Then, lesson number four – “Detect all your rats in your basement.” Now, let me tell you what it is, this is from C.S Lewis from his book ‘Mere Christianity’. If you want to know whether there are rats on your basement, how should you go? Open the door and say, “Hello, I’m coming!” And then, you will open the door with a big bang and make a lot of noise with your feet, saying, “I’m coming to see the rats.” You open the door and you finally open the door of the basement; you look there and you switch on the light, will you find rats? No. And you say, “No rats.” Look at the words of C. S. Lewis. This is from ‘Mere Christianity’ – From radio talks, it became a book. “Surely, what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is. Surely, what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth.” Do you see that? In other words, somebody suddenly comes and before you can do that, to hide your table or your computer screen; suddenly, the door opens and you have to do ‘Ctrl + R’, what is that command? To collapse all your screens and act as if everything is okay. Before you have time to put on a guise, that is the truth. Then, he says, “If there are rats in the cellar, you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly.” It’s very obvious. “But the suddenness does not create the rats; it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way, the suddenness of provocation does not make a man ill-tempered; it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am.” C. S. Lewis. The rats are always there in the cellar but if you go on shouting noisily, they will take cover before you switch on the light. That is the reason why getting rid of all the secret sins in your life is so important for God.

I remember the story of this message by this South African Pastor, Erlos Stignar. The message is available online. It’s in Zooloo, translated into English. The title of the message is, ‘The Curse of Pornography’. In the message, he talks about this Pastor who is supposed to be a very good Pastor, comes and preaches very powerfully, has a reputation as a very godly, powerful preacher and a man of God. His wife also has the same impression. He spends most of the nights in his office, in his office room. One day, he is in the office after she goes to bed and he is studying. That’s what she thinks that he is doing.

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

She says, "My husband is praying and he is studying the Word. I want to make him a cup of tea and give it to him. I don't want to disturb him and I want to ensure that he doesn't fall asleep. I want to strengthen his hands." So, she makes a cup of tea and she slowly tip-toes into his office. She slowly opens the door, slowly goes behind him to hand over the tea and suddenly, she sees that man browsing something and that gives her a heart attack. She just collapses to the floor because this guy is browsing all kinds of pornography material. He is a Pastor. What happens to that? You are embarrassed before your wife is something. God, in His mercy, possibly, allowed him to be embarrassed before his wife before he could be embarrassed before God. That is the spirit of apostasy. You are so concerned about our reputation before men but you are not concerned about your reputation before God. That is the reason why God says, "Whenever you give, give secretly. Whenever you pray, go to your room, close your doors shut, pray in secret. Your Father who sees you in secret will reward you openly." That is how you pray. That is how you work. That is how you fast. That is how you do everything. You do it as unto God, as if God were watching you and nobody else. That is the spirit of faithfulness. Every other characteristic is the spirit of apostasy. You have the characteristic of an apostate. Very important. So, do you have rats in your cellar?

How do you know your children are behaving themselves? When parents slowly come. Whenever the children are silent, parents get worried. "Why are they so silent?" They are silent for some reason because they know that if mamma and papa come to hear these sounds, they are going to stop. Slowly, you enter into the room and you find that something is going on over there. It happens with children too. They have this in their heart to hide things from their parents. Do you have, these days? Today, do you have anything to hide before God? Ask yourself this question: do you have anything to hide before God? If your wife comes to know, will you be embarrassed? If your Pastor comes to know, will you be embarrassed? If your elders come to know, will you be embarrassed? If your co-workers come to know, will you be embarrassed? If your boss comes to know, will you be embarrassed? Will you be embarrassed? Are there rats in your basement? Very important. Are there rats? This is so important for God. I have seen it. Even in the ministry how people act or behave when the boss is around, supposedly and when the boss is not around. Whom are you working for? Whom are you trying to please? That is the reason why Paul tells to the Galatian Church, "If I were to please men, I should not be a bondservant of Christ. I should not be. I should just quit the ministry and go somewhere else because that means I don't have the spirit of working as unto God and not unto man." So, what do I do? What do I have to do? I have to go before God every day of my life and ask Him, "Lord, is there any unrighteousness in me? Show it to me, Lord, every day." I always tell myself and I always tell people, I say, "Keep short accounts with God." If you mess up and you are embarrassed to share it with somebody, the best thing you can do is write an email to God. That's what I do. I have my drafts so that, one day, after I die, when you hack into my email and see my drafts, you know all my secret sins, it doesn't matter because I have already confessed them to God. This is what I do, I just go to the drafts columns and I write an email, a long email showing out and calling my sin the way it is and it has saved me so much in my life. Go before God and say, "Lord, this is what I did. This motive, Lord. This one, Lord. I remember when I wrote that one line in my thesis, a lie; it was a lie. I didn't test it. And it went for thesis. And it's amazing how God tells the examiner to look at that one line. In all the things that you write, he just zeroes in on that one line, "What does that one line mean?" "Arrey, you didn't see the rest of the thesis? It was only two lines, maybe and one tabular column." I said something and he came out to me and he said, "Doctor Vijay." You know something? God was telling me, "Doctor? Really?" For two months, I was struggling. I said, "Lord, what is this?" "Call it what it is. Call it cheating. Call it lying." Nobody knows but I know. Don't stand at the holy gates with a Ph. D in your hand and say, "Lord, let me in." He would say, "That is the biggest stumbling block in your life. Throw it into pieces and in the garbage bin. Then, I will allow you." That's exactly how God zeroes in on one thing because He wants to give spiritual authority into the hands of people and how can He give spiritual authority into the hands of the people whose conscience is not clear with God? How can He give? The secret of Paul's ministry was this, that every time he had this, he said, "I make it my endeavour to keep my conscience clear with God and with man." When he walked, people trembled. He used to go and talk to the kings and all of them used to tremble. One fellow always wanted to give him a bribe. Every day, he would preach the same message. He would talk of self-control, of righteousness and judgment. They used to fear and tremble. Do you know why? He was a prisoner in bonds but in authority. You know what he says? "I am an ambassador in bonds." Do you know what an ambassador is? He has got diplomatic immunity. Nobody can arrest him but he says, "I am an ambassador of Christ and I can go and talk to the biggest rulers of the planet earth and nobody can touch me. Do you know why? Because I am a man under spiritual authority, not because of anything of myself but because I have a clear conscience with God and with man. All the rats in my basement." You remember in what context he says that? The high priest comes and says something. Somebody slaps him, "You white-washed something, something." And immediately, somebody says, "How come you call the high priest like this?" "Oh, high priest? I'm so sorry, brothers. It is written that you should not revile authority. Please forgive me." At that instant, he has a clear conscience. You know, such short accounts with God. Instantaneous short

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

accounts with God. Every rat in his basement has been cleared off. Do you have rats in your basement, my dear brothers and sisters, young brothers, young sisters, young children? How do you behave when nobody is watching you? How much I can re-iterate this over and over again in my own life! I like that – it is ‘Mere Christianity’. It means, this is A-B-C-D of Christianity. Get rid of rats in your basement.

Next, final lesson – not in Exodus. Just go to a different passage. Same words that are being used by a different man. It’s found in *1 Kings 12:26*. We know this person as Jeroboam. We know this verse.

1 Kings 12:26-28

²⁶And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. ²⁷If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.”

And we know that, right? We know the context of the Sermon ‘Mist in the Pulpit’, ‘Fog in the Pew’. The two messages. Keep that in mind.

...“Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. ²⁷If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” ²⁸So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”

Same words. Nothing different of what children of Israel said when they made golden calves and what Jeroboam is saying when he did the same. What is this? How do I not become an apostate? Lesson 5 – ‘deal with the spirit of insecurity’. This is what Jeroboam said, “If these people go, I will no longer be king; somebody else will be king.” Insecurity. It happens in many places of work and also, in Churches – the insecure spirits. Somebody suddenly gets attention; it’s a test for all of us, actually. And you will find in your life, in your workplace, 100% probability. I will give you. You know what is a 100% probability? 100% probability of finding a guy who is much better than you. How much probability? 100% probability. A young guy who is more talented, more skilled; he comes to the office and suddenly, he becomes the boss’s blue-eyed boy or blue-eyed girl. Insecure. You know what happens? Suddenly, the real things start manifesting in their hearts. “I have to make this fellow look bad in the eyes of the boss. I have to do something about this.” It’s an insecure spirit. The spirit of competition. You can compare yourself with other believers to encourage yourself. That’s exactly what Paul also did. He told the Corinthian Church. “You know those believers in Macedonia? They were poor but the way they gave! Man, they gave not only out of their poverty; they gave much beyond their ability. You also give like that.” Some people say, “Never compare.” No, Paul compared. He did comparisons but those comparisons were only to exhort and encourage; not to make you look bad or worse. No, that’s not the point. He was telling them, “Look at those people. Look at the heart that they have. You fellows are more blessed, more rich; why are you stopping from giving to God?” That’s how we encourage people. That is what we do also in the Church. Just because people are comparing, don’t say, “Don’t compare me with somebody else.” No. It’s good. If some other person is more whole-hearted than you, I want to be whole-hearted like that. That’s exactly what it is. You look at the kings of Judah, you will see – “This person fell away. He was not as whole-hearted as David.” That was God’s benchmark. They didn’t say, “Why is He comparing me with David?” No, that’s not the point. He is saying, “You just have to be wholehearted like David.” David had all his flaws but he was wholehearted but there is something other than this, what we call as the ‘spirit of insecurity’. You are becoming insecure, thinking that the other person is more blessed than you.

Why did he become insecure? I was trying to look at this. One of the things that I thought was – he got a chair, a position of leadership and he wanted to hold on to that position of leadership at any cost. “At any cost, I want to hold on to it.” Look at what it says in *Philippians 2*,

Philippians 2:3-4

³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

This is how you kill the spirit of insecurity and competition. Another thing I always tell myself – “If I do well, I will be accepted.” I keep on telling myself this over and over again because I want to kill that spirit of insecurity inside of my heart because I know, one day, it will take me away from the Lord.

³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Now, look at this; this is what it says. This is in the ESV, English Standard Version,

Philippians 2:5-9

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

This is what we call as ‘tight-fisted’. We have two children in our home. Twins – a boy and a girl. When they come out, how do they come? Like this (clenched fists). If you put your finger there like this, they will hold on like that and they will keep on holding on to it and they never want to let go of it. That’s the Adamic spirit of each one of us. We just want to grasp and hold on to our position. You know what God says? “All the authority that God gave, hold loosely.” Job, “I don’t want to hold on. The Lord gives; the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” That’s the problem with many people.

You see in the Bible, Saul? Hold on to the chair. Test after test, failing; he now becomes jealous of David and he holds on to the chair. Think about it; what happened to him? What if Saul said, “Lord, You said the kingdom is gone. Take the kingdom, Lord. Take everything out. I don’t want any of these things. I want to have a clear conscience with You. If You do not accept me, it doesn’t matter if everybody else accepts me; it’s not going to work. It’s not going to really matter.” Do you see how we hold on to things of position and authority, as if it is ours? No. Hold it loosely. What did he do?

⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (And what does God do?) ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,

That is how we go through this whole process; not holding on. Learn from today onwards. “Lord, I don’t want to hold on to anything else in my life except You. If You say that I’m disqualified, it doesn’t matter what everybody else.” That is the reason why keeping short accounts with God is so important. Insecurity. Deal with insecurity. And I know it that so many of us struggle with that. I was talking to people and I see that they are insecure about relationships, insecure about jobs, insecure about attention, like children. Children grab attention. That’s exactly what children do, right? I have two children in my home. “Emmanuella, you are so cute.” Immediately, Abigail would say, “Daddy, what about me? You don’t love me like the way you love Emmanuella.” Who said that? Insecure. That is not the way it is. Don’t grasp things in your life. Learn these lessons and say, “Lord, I just don’t want to hold on to anything. I just want to serve You.”

So, five lessons I have learn from this entire episode, to see that I have the heart of an apostate. First thing I learn – one man is enough. One man can stop the spiritual degeneration in any of your office. You can stop it. You can be that one man. Second – how you respond to God’s delay is so important to God. Third – how you work in the absence of leadership or supervision is very important to Him. Fourth – get rid of all the rats in your basement. Get rid of those rats. Fifth – Lord, insecurity, feelings of insecurity. I don’t want to hold on to anything, Lord. I want to hold on to You and You alone. You alone, O Lord. It doesn’t matter if 100 people say negative about me but if You say something negative, I am gone. That is the reason why God could restore David. Do you know why He could restore David? He was never insecure about his position. One day, God told him, “You are that man,” you know what he did? He wrote a poem, a song; he went and told it to his choir members. “This is the Psalm.” “What is the title?” “This is the Psalm when Nathan came to me and confronted me because I went and committed adultery with Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife – heading.” I don’t know what the Worship leader would have thought. “What?” Oney-ni Elohim. Have mercy upon me, O God’, and till date, all of us sing that song. Do you sing that song – ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God’? Why? Because one man said, “O Lord, this position, leadership, authority, what is the whole point of all this if I am disqualified in Your sight?” whenever you grasp any other thing other than God, you know what is going to happen? You will become an apostate, an idolater. No one can satisfy you.

Characteristics Of A Potential Apostate!

I was listening to a sermon today in the morning about this potter, making the clay. When the potter makes the clay, do you know what he does? He puts water in it and on that wheel, he keeps on revolving it and then, he applies pressure accordingly. Slowly, he molds it and molds it and it becomes a beautiful vase. But on the other hand, you know what idols do? They don't apply pressure like that. They keep on applying pressure and pressure. Then, finally, they crush you. You are gone. You die under the weight of the idol. That's how He laughs, right? He tells Isaiah, "You know what? Look at these idols. You know what you should do? The guy makes it with beautiful gold and he puts it in a pedestal and makes a nice carved image and he puts it on the wall and he takes nails and he hammers it. If he has to move from one place to another, he has to hold that idol and he has to move. What a stupid thing! You have to carry your idol. On the other hand, I am the God who carries you." If you carry that idol, you know what that idol is going to do? It is going to crush you. Every relationship; you hold on to relationships like that, don't let go of those relationships and you become insecure. You destroy that person and you will destroy yourself because that relationship gives you identity. You hold on to your job, your career and you keep working. You know why? Because your identity comes from your career. And one day, your career is not going to give you what you want; it is going to destroy. You will be crushed; you will be depressed. It is going to crush you and it is never enough. Do you know that?

Do you know what somebody said? "I have to become the best and I have to prove to myself that I'm the best." 'I have to become the best' – that is what we call as the GOAT, right? Greatest Of All Time. GOAT, who is the Greatest Of All Time Tennis player? You say Federer. Okay, you have your own opinion. But you know something? Everybody's eyes are on Rafael and Federer. With how many Grand Slams are they going to finish their career? You know the pressure upon them? Nothing is enough. 16 is not enough. 20 is not enough and you know, they will say, "I love Rafael." Rafael will say, "I love Federer." They will come together for tournaments and everything but deep down inside of their heart, I know exactly what it is. Once, this is in 2018 US Open, Federer vs Del Potro. Who lost? Federer lost. This was in the Semi-final. At the interview, do you know what Federer said? "Del Potro has more chances of beating Rafael than me." That's interesting. That means, "Somebody has to stop this fellow from getting the Grand Slam. If I can't stop it, let somebody else stop it." This is Federer. 20 Grand Slams and counting, still not satisfied. He wants to be the GOAT at all cost and if somebody else can destroy his (Rafael's) career, all be it. Let it be like that way. You see their hearts coming out. Do you know why? Because their careers are so important to them. What will they do? I don't know what's going to happen to Federer after he retires. I think he is just going to go insane. He will go crazy because he has achieved everything that he can achieve. That idol has crushed him because there is insecure feelings in their heart because they always want to be the best and they want to prove to the world that they are the best. Insecurity. Are you insecure about anything?

Jesus, do you know what He said? "These words, you saw. Greater works than these, you will all do and that will be My joy." Have that attitude. "I want to share this thing with you." You know what He said to the Laodicean Church? I'm going to stop with this. He said, "If you overcome, you will sit on My throne just as I overcame and sat on the Father's throne." He doesn't have a problem sharing His glory with any one of us. You know why? Because He holds on to things very loosely. He has no insecure feelings in His heart. That is how I know that I don't have a spirit of an apostate inside of my heart. Insecure. Deal with that, my dear brothers and sisters, before the 10th year and say, "Lord, in the 10th year, I want to delight in somebody else's success." Do you have that attitude? I want to delight in somebody else's success. Shall we all pray? Let's pray.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we thank You. Father, all of us have the spirit of apostasy in every one of us in different levels because we don't look toward You but we look toward human approval, achievements, success according to worldly standards and therefore, O Lord, we become insecure and finally, if we don't get the things that we want, we give up on You and we fall away like what happened to Jeroboam and like what happened to the children of Israel; like what happened to Saul. The insecure spirit, the spirit of idolatry in each one of us; the spirit of apostasy. Father, enable us to recognize it in each one of our hearts and to deal with it with an iron fist every day of our lives so that, Lord, one day, You will find in each one of us a pure, spotless bride, ready for marriage with Her Husband. Thank You, Father. Father, even as we have come to the end of the ten years, O Lord, the last ministry day of this 10th year, Father, we want to thank You. We want to acknowledge, Lord, that You have been faithful in spite of all our unfaithfulness. You came through. You blessed us. You kept us all these years. I pray, Father, that even this year, that You would, Lord, go ahead of us, straighten crooked paths for us and what You have for us, let us all be prepared, O Lord, to fit in to our places in Your Kingdom and to fulfill our calling in Your Kingdom. We thank You. We praise You. In Jesus' Mighty Name, Amen.