



Closer than we think!

PART 3 OF 5

July 16, 2018

2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4 NKJV – (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; **(4)** and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Many will turn away from the faith. A third sign Jesus gave his disciples to signal the end of the world is, “At that time **many will turn away from the faith**” (**Matthew 24:10**). Pew Research recently reported on the rapid rise of the “nones,” those in America who self-identify as not being affiliated with any religion or denomination. From 2007 to 2015 this number increased from 16 percent to 23 percent while self-identifying Christians dropped from 78 percent to 71 percent. While the number of Christians still predominates, what is the most alarming trend is that the majority of ‘nones’ are in the younger generations, meaning that American Christians are failing to passing on their faith to their children, and Christianity (in this country at least) is one to two generations from a tipping point crisis. Whatever that ends up looking like, it should not surprise us. Jesus forewarned us two thousand years ago that **before the end** of the world many would turn away from the faith.

Paul was also clearly describing a time when **preachers** will minister for the applause of people instead of the approval of God. We the people fail to inspect their teachings. The Bereans did it to Paul in the Book of Acts. Does the teacher have a problem when you ask them a question? The true ministry of God's Word will not always produce pleasant things being said. There are unpleasant times when we need to be rebuked or challenged. Ministers need to take extreme caution not to preach just what people want to hear but what the Lord wants them to say. It is easy to get to where the motivation for ministry is the recognition of man instead of the approval of God. Keeping a pure heart before God is the only safeguard against “itching ears.” Another point, most preachers will be desirous of hearing pleasant things said about them. The Living Bible translated this as “people won't listen to the truth but will go around looking for teachers who will tell them just what they want to hear.”

Another reason people don't want sound doctrine is because they may be an apostate. What is an “Apostate?” The term apostasy is translated in the Greek as meaning defection, departure, revolt or rebellion. It has been described as “a willful falling away from, or rebellion against, Christianity. Apostasy is the rejection of Christ by one who has been a Christian. ***The following are characteristics of an apostate...***

Ignoring God's word, justifying sin, application does not match with the word, adding or subtracting to God's word, you are unable to follow God's instructions without justifying why? No commitment, no submission, when excuses take place of God's instructions, when you second thought what is right and your repentance is not genuine.

Then there are those who will argue with you that they are doing what's right, but their application to the word is not. Remember, even the Satan knows scripture. Paul spoke on this matter as well in the book of **2 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12 NKJV – (9)** The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, **(10)** and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. **(11)** And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, **(12)** that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

I know this sounds crazy, but again, not only it's “**Closer than we think, but it's in affect NOW!**”

SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 13:49

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: If we lose love and self-respect for each other, this is how we finally die.