

7 Ways to Escape the Great Falling Away

There is much talk about Christ's soon Second Coming. But we know that Jesus will not return for a church without spot or wrinkle unless the falling away comes first...

I wrote those words in an article in which I asked the question: "Is the Great Falling Away Already Underway?" I was deeply concerned then that we could be witnessing the first fruits of the Great Falling Away about which the apostle Paul prophesies in 1 Thess. 2:3. I was concerned that we were at least seeing a shadow of the Great Apostasy.

A couple of weeks ago I wrote an article called "Apostasy Rising: 4 Denominations in Less Than a Week Defy God's Word" that went massively viral. All this has stirred my heart and the Lord has mantled me to pray—and inspire others to pray—for a Third Great Awakening in America. In yet another column on our Prophetic Insight blog, I shared what the Lord told me in 2007 about a Great Awakening coming to this nation.

With all that said, I want also want to equip folks—or open their eyes to any level of deception in which they may already be walking—so they can avoid the Great Falling Away. As I read 2 Peter I found what I believe are keys and safety nets that will guard our hearts from any and all deceptions in the days ahead. Although you can find these same concepts throughout Scripture, Peter outlines what looks like a road map to working out our salvation with fear and trembling (see Phil. 2:12).

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which

have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:2-4).

1. Pursuing Virtue

Peter writes, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue" (2 Peter 2:5). The word virtue in that verse comes from the Greek word *arête*. The New Testament Greek Lexicon defines it as: "a virtuous course of thought, feeling and action, virtue, moral goodness, any particular moral excellence, as modesty, purity."

How do you pursue virtue? It starts in your thought life: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

2. Increasing Knowledge

Peter exhorts us to add knowledge to our virtue. The word "knowledge" in that verse comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means, "signifies in general intelligence, understanding the general knowledge of Christian religion, the deeper, more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion, such as belongs to the more advanced, especially of things lawful and unlawful for Christians moral wisdom, such as is seen in right living."

Peter exhorts us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 3:18) and Paul intercedes over the Ephesians that the Father of glory "may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His

calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places..." (Eph. 1:17-20). This is something we should be praying over ourselves as we pursue the knowledge of God.

3. Practicing Self-Control

Next, Peter admonishes us to add self-control to the mix. This is important as Paul warned the church at Corinth that Satan could tempt them because of their lack of self-control (see 1 Cor. 7:5). We know that in the last days, Paul prophesied, men would be "without self-control" (see 1 Tim. 3:3). Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you manifest self-control. It is fruit of His Spirit deposited within you—but you have to work it out (see Gal. 5:23).

4. Practice Perseverance

Peter then warns us to add perseverance to our goals. This word, also translated "patience" in the King James Version, comes from the Greek word *hupomone*. It means, "steadfastness, constancy, endurance in the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings patiently, and steadfastly a patient, steadfast waiting for a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance."

I'm reminded of Jesus words in Matthew 24, where He's talking about the signs of the times and the end of the age. He warns not to let anyone deceive us and prophesies that many will come in His name to deceive many, that there will be wars and rumors of wars, that nation would rise against nation and there would be famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places. He said false prophets would rise up and deceive many, lawlessness would abound and the love of many would grow cold.

Then He said, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:12).

5. Go After Godliness

Next on Peter's list of self-protections is the pursuit of godliness. This word godliness comes from the Greek *eusebeia*, which simply means "reverence, respect piety towards God, godliness." The writer of Hebrews echoes this thought: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).

6. Breeding Brotherly Kindness

Peter wants us to add brotherly kindness to the list above. The concept of brotherly kindness comes from the Greek word *adelphotes*, which means, "brotherhood, brotherly kindness, a family of brothers, the brotherhood." Jesus says those who do the will of His Father are His brothers and sister and mother (Matt. 12:50). God's will toward us is kind (see Eph. 1:5) and our will toward one another should also be kind. Kindness is also a fruit of the spirit.

7. Love Above All

Finally, Peter wants us to add love—and not just any love. The Greek word used in this verse is *agape*. God wants us to love one another the way He loves Jesus. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). This will be a notable sign of Jesus' disciples when the love of many grows cold.

Peter wraps up his exhortation this way:

"For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your

call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:8-10). And you will never fall for the Great Apostasy. Amen. {eoa}