

# Why God Allows Seasons of Great Falling Away From the Church

The church has often been taught about the times of refreshment that came during seasons of revival. The first such recorded time was the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost.

This is where 3,000 people were saved (Acts 2). In Acts 4 and 5, God continued to add to the church daily while there was unity and purpose of heart amongst His people. This released great signs and wonders that confirmed the resurrection of Christ. Additionally, in Acts 9, after Saul was converted, the church enjoyed a season of blessing, growth and renewal.

There were also great revivals in Old Testament times during the reigns of King David and King Solomon. There was repentance and revival during the reigns of Kings Hezekiah, Josiah and others (2 Sam., 1 Kings, 2 Kings).

While God sends great revivals that are necessary for the church, many people don't realize there are also seasons when God purges His church (John 15:4-7). He allows us to go through severe times of testing (like Israel did in the wilderness), during which the true motives of God's people are revealed.

Hebrews 3-4 relates how God was angry with the Jews who hardened their hearts with their incessant complaining and unbelief during times of testing. This resulted in God's favor being lifted from a whole generation who subsequently died in the desert and never saw the promised land. First Corinthians 10:1-14 teaches that the failure of the Jews during this time of testing is also relevant for today and serves as a warning to the contemporary church.

Thus, there are seasons of revival for growth and seasons of testing for purging that God allows so that, ultimately, His church will be pure so that she can fulfill her destiny in the kingdom of God!

Although it seems we are presently in a global time of testing for both the world and the church, there are also seasons of testing and purging for individual believers and specific congregations. During these seasons of testing, the number of people attending congregations may diminish, or there may be just general malaise and lack of commitment regarding financial giving and volunteerism among the fence-sitters. This will result in God's people being purified, so we will have true disciples and not just "mere Christians."

No one alive today can deny that the world, especially the United States and Europe, is in a severe testing time.

This global season of testing, precipitated by the global economic meltdown, has resulted in either people losing their jobs or working 2-3 jobs. This overall increase in stress levels has dramatically impacted key relationships and families' commitment to their churches.

Consequently, this has unleashed a fear greater than the actual challenges and has revealed the hearts of those who said they had great faith and were supposedly faithful during the times of plenty before 2007.

The result in the faith community has been alarming.

Except for a few, since 2008, most churches have seen their tithes and offerings drop almost 40%. This includes even many church leaders withholding their tithes from their local churches. (This has only gotten worse since the 2020 COVID pandemic.)

Since 2008, church attendance has been down. Folks under stress are taking their Sundays off for themselves, or they

continue to work on Sundays in an attempt to catch up with bills. Also, since 2020, about half of the church is afraid to come to a gathering for fear of the virus.

Furthermore, many people in the body of Christ are discouraged because they succumb to the overall negative global climate instead of fighting the good fight of faith. God has allowed this test to reveal to them the true condition of their false selves.

### **Why God Allows Seasons of Falling Away**

Ezekiel 3:20 teaches us that God allows stumbling blocks in the way of the righteous to see if they will pick them up and be ensnared by them. (Of course, people have legitimate reasons to stay home from church if they are genuinely concerned about COVID. However, some have used this season to entirely detach from church and the ways of Christ).

Consequently, we all have buttons that the enemy can push. If we refuse to deal with them, at a certain point, God will allow the devil to test us in particular areas that eventuate in our falling away from the purposes of God in our lives.

John 3:16 teaches us that if we believe in Him, we will not perish. "Perish" comes from a Greek word that has to do with us living in a ruined state, eventually resulting in eternal judgment. When we fall away from God's purposes for us in His kingdom, we may be deceived into thinking we are still okay with God because, in our hearts, we still pray and say we love Him. (Samson didn't even know when the Holy Spirit left him! (See Judg. 16:20.)

However, Jesus makes it clear in John 14:15 and John 14:23-24 that the ones who truly love Him are the ones who obey His commandments and keep His Word. Thus, the purpose and ministry God has for us are inextricably connected with this kind of love for God.

Jesus reiterated this to Peter in John 21:15-17 when He equated loving God with feeding His sheep.

*Tune into part two of this article on next week. {eoa}*

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