

The Old Paths

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“The Seeds Of Error”

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In 1951, brother W.W. Otey wrote to G.H.P. Showalter. In his letter, he stated, “When a religious body grows to become numerous, cultured (?), popular, wealthy, worldly—then the seeds of error ... find a congenial soil to take root and apostasy begins” (W.W. Otey: Contender for the Faith, p. 341). What brother Otey stated at that time was nothing new, unfortunately. In fact, when reading the history of the Israelites, we see that they had lived these very things time and time again. Israel, upon leaving Egypt, decided that they wanted to go back into Egyptian bondage. In fact, this attitude sprang up more than once (Num. 14:3-4, Acts 7:39; etc.). Upon entering Canaan, the Jews were exposed to the idolatry of the land and they turned their backs on God. They then began to serve the false gods of Canaan. This is made abundantly clear when we read about “the high places,” the “groves,” and similar things these folks had made in their land for the purpose of worship (I Kings 3:2-3, 12:31, 14:22-23; Jdg. 3:7; I Kings 14:15). In Jeremiah’s day, they had become so wicked that they would worship these false gods, then turn around and try to worship Jehovah, saying, “We are delivered to do all these abominations” (Jer. 7:9-10)! How did this happen? It happened just as brother Otey observed. When these people tried to be “numerous, cultured (?), popular,

wealthy, worldly”, then apostasy came to this nation and they suffered at the hands of their enemies just as God promised (Deut. 28:15-25; contr. Deut. 28:7).

The Seeds Of Error Are Planted Today!

How terrible it is to read about the depths to which the people of God sunk in Old Testament days. What is even worse is when we realize that “we” Christians, often fall into the same snare because we have not learned from history!! Just as in Old Testament days, when people today push God to the side and become idle, wealthy, more interested in society’s view of them than God’s view of them, and strive to be popular; the “seeds of error” have found what brother Otey called, the “congenial soil” in which to grow and mature. Brethren, don’t fool yourselves. It is happening today (Gal. 6:7-8)!

Satan is looking for his opportunity to strike (I Pet. 5:8). He is patient and vigilant in his work, and therefore, we need to be patient and vigilant in our duties toward God! A sleeping soldier will do no good. We must be on our guard, wearing the whole armor of God, and ready to please Him who has called us to be a soldier (Eph. 6:12-18; II Tim. 2:3-4). Yet, when we allow our minds to become occupied with what pleases men, or what is the most “soothing” message for men to hear, then we are on the road to apostasy. As brother Otey said, the “seeds of error” are finding

“congenial soil.”

It Is Time For Self-Examination.

As Christians, let us first examine ourselves to make sure we are right in the sight of God. The second letter to the Corinthians commands Christians to, “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*” (II Cor. 13:5). In self-examination, let us ask whether or not the seeds of error are finding that “congenial soil” in our hearts. Be honest! Does Bible study mean what it once did to us? (The “blessed man” **delights** in God’s word, Ps. 1:1-2.) Is spending time in God’s word **our** delight? How is our prayer-life? Paul said, “*Pray without ceasing*” (I Thess. 5:17). When do we pray? Further, when it is time to assemble with the saints, whether on Sunday, Wednesday, during a gospel meeting, etc., do we have the attitude of David who said, “*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.*” (Ps. 122:1)? Is our first love still our first love? For those who left their first love, Christ warned that they needed to return to it, “*or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place*” (Rev. 2:5).

The Seeds Of Error Work Quickly And Quietly To Produce Apostasy.

Apostasy, the end result (i.e., fruit) of sin and error, is not something that happens overnight. It is not like a bomb or a tornado, which wreaks havoc in a matter of seconds and is gone. Yet, the destruction is just as real. Also, the consequences of apostasy are more deadly than a tornado or bomb, for eternal consequences must be faced when we

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16)

fall prey to error and its "seed." In contrast to a tornado or a bomb, apostasy often starts unnoticed. The seeds of error work like a weed in a garden. It is as silent as a vine growing up a corn stalk, and it eats away at one's soul like a cancer eats away at the body. Because error, sin, and ultimately apostasy, do not begin like a bomb blast, or tornado, it makes it all the more dangerous.

A practical example of this can be seen in the people we have already studied. Those at Ephesus had left their first love (Rev. 2:4). Yet, they didn't start out that way! They had been warned about this apostasy for at least three years by the apostle Paul (Acts 20:31). Not only this, but in his final message to the elders at Ephesus, he told them, "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). In a matter of time though, they had left their first love! Brethren, don't think for a moment that we are immune to this! God's words of warning, and brother Otey's comments to G.H.P. Showalter ought to be heeded. We need to learn the lesson from history before we are also "doomed to repeat it."

Conclusion

Let us examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). Could it be that my money, my striving for popularity, my fascination with friends, or simply a drive for "numbers" is planting the seeds of error within this church? May it never be! Let us stay vigilant, let us keep our minds and bodies pure, and keep our eyes on the goal of Heaven (I Tim. 5:22; Phil. 3:13-14)!

What We Know Is Right

Benjamin Franklin (1812-1878)

We know it is right to "Let the word of Christ dwell in us rightly; and with all wisdom *teach* and *admonish* each other by *psalms* and *hymns* and *spiritual songs*; *singing* with gratitude in our hearts to the Lord" — to be "filled with the Spirit; *speaking* to one another in *psalms* and *hymns* and *spiritual songs*; *singing* and making melody in our hearts to the Lord." This *can* be done, and *we know* it is right; but that a man can make melody in his heart to the Lord "with an organ," a fiddle, banjo, clarinet, lute, fife, or jew's-harp, we do not know, nor do we believe it. We want to do what is written, and enjoin it on others, to do it. What is not written we do not want to do. When the Lord so minutely describes *how* we are to do anything, we want to do it in that *way*. The *way* he prescribes will do the thing commanded; some other *way* might not do what is commanded at all.

(From: *Book of Gems*, p. 107)

Betrayed

Friend, I stand in judgment now
And feel that you're to blame somehow.
On earth, I waited with you day by day,
And never did you point the way.

You knew the Lord in truth and glory
But never did you tell His story,
My knowledge then was very dim,
You could have led me safe to Him.

Yes, I knew He'd made the earth,
But knew not of that second birth.
And now I stand this day condemned,
Because you failed to mention Him.

You taught me many things that's true.
I called you "friend" and trusted you.

I learn, now that it's too late,
You could have kept me from this fate.

We walked by day and talked by night,
And yet you showed me not the Light.

You let me live, and love, and die,
And knew I'd never live on high.

Yes, I called you "friend" in life,
And trusted you in joy and strife.

And yet, on coming to this end,
I cannot, now call you "my friend."

Brethren, are we truly being a "friend"
to those who do not know the Lord?

[See: II Timothy 2:2; I Timothy 4:6;
I Peter 4:11]

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