
FROM THE MINISTRY OF



THRUthe**BIBLE**

Living for God

IN A WORLD THAT HAS FORGOTTEN HIM



DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

LIVING FOR GOD IN A WORLD THAT HAS FORGOTTEN HIM

This booklet could very easily be called, “What’s Wrong with the Church Today?”—because we all know something is very right ... and also very wrong with the body that claims the name of Jesus Christ. But the real question to ask when a particular church or teacher seems off is—*Do they know and follow the real Jesus Christ?* If the answer is no, then they are apostate.

Dr. McGee uses the word “apostate” a lot in this booklet. It refers to, simply, those who have “departed from the faith.” They have forgotten God. They might do all the religious types of things, but they’re not worshipping God. They might even call themselves Christians, but they don’t know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. With that in mind, let’s dive in and learn from Dr. McGee what this all means. He gives us a historical review of how the church got in this place and then seven timely words of instruction from the book of Jude of how God’s people can survive these “latter” days in which we now live.

The church today is in a very sad state. Most alarming is that the church seems to be satisfied with it. Having settled down into and accepted this deplorable state we’re in, most people in churches today feel that nothing can be done about it.

This, friends, is apostasy.

Before we dig in, I want to define our terms so we don't get lost in the labyrinth of bewildering theological nomenclature. We need to understand exactly what the apostasy is before we can know what to do about it.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. –1 Timothy 4:1

The verse begins with the little Greek word *de*, which is translated here as “now.” It's better translated as “but,” since it indicates a contrast with the early doctrinal creed given in the verse that immediately precedes it:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. –1 Timothy 3:16

“Latter times” in 1 Timothy 4:1 is a technical expression. In the Bible you find the terms “last days,” “last times,” or “the time of the end.” The Bible doesn't use the expression “the end of time” because the world doesn't come to an end. (Although “the end of the world” appears in the Authorized Version, it's more accurately “the end of the age.”) Oh, I know there will be a new heaven and a new earth, but that doesn't mean we get rid of the earth. It's here for eternity. Therefore, there is no such thing—as far as the Word of God is concerned—as the end of the world or the end of time. But there is such a thing as the last days, the latter times, and the end of the age. When you find this expression occurring in the Scriptures, you need to discern to what it refers. It can refer to the nation Israel (as in Genesis 49:1) or it can refer to the church. Those “last days” refer to a very definite technical period that the Lord Jesus in the Olivet Discourse labeled the Great Tribulation Period.

Now when Paul uses it here, speaking to the young preacher Timothy, he is referring to the latter days of the church—that is, those days immediately preceding the Rapture. This is the way the church will conclude its earthly career: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith.” In other words, the Spirit of God emphasizes to believers that in the latter days some will depart from the faith.

The expression “depart from the faith” is where we want to center our attention. The word “depart” is the Greek *aphistemi*, formed by the little preposition *apo* (which means “away from”) and *histemi* (meaning “to stand”). Brought over into English, then, apostasy means “to stand away from.” It means to one time profess something and another time deny that which you once professed. Webster, who always does a good job of defining words, says apostasy is the “abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; total desertion of the principles of faith.”

Abandonment of that which was voluntarily professed. Our Lord used that expression when He was giving the parable of the sower. Referring to the seed that fell on the rock, He said,

“But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.”—Luke 8:13

“Fall away” is the Greek *aphistemi*—they apostatize. They professed to believe, then they moved away from it. They no longer believe; they have departed from the faith. Apostasy would be impossible among unevangelized tribes who have never heard the gospel. An apostate is one who has not only heard the gospel, but who has professed to believe it, and then departs from it. That’s apostasy.

This word also occurs in Hebrews:

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. —Hebrews 3:12

Here are those who have professed to believe, and then they no longer believe. They have departed from it. Time and time again I have heard this among preachers. There are today thousands in the ministry (and they're an unhappy lot) who can say, "I once professed it, but I no longer believe it."

I want to give an example that ought to cause us to bow our heads in humility before God and ask for His help. We're told to examine ourselves to make sure we're in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5), and these are days when God's people need to examine their relationship with Christ.

It may surprise you to know that Karl Marx—the man who wrote *Das Capital*, the basis of Communism and world revolution—was brought up in a Christian home. His father, who descended from a long line of rabbis, accepted Christian baptism for himself and his family when Karl was six years old. At the age of 17 in 1835, Marx wrote a theological essay on the union of the faithful in Christ according to John 15:1-14, portrayed in its origin and essence, in its unconditional necessity and in its effect. That is quite a subject for a young fellow! It was marked by the teacher as a thoughtful, copious, and powerful presentation of the theme. This is the man who went on to write the ideology for godless states. He was an apostate. He once professed to believe something, there came a day when he stood away from it, and then he no longer believed it.

In my own lifetime I have known man after man who once preached the faith, then later on repudiated it entirely. They are apostates. The Word of God warns that this will happen: "In latter times some will depart from the faith"—they will apostatize.

All the New Testament writers speak of the approaching apostasy. To them it was just a little cloud on the horizon the size of a man's hand. But that cloud has now darkened and covered the sky. Today you and I are in the storm. We are seeing one of the greatest departures from the faith in the history of the church.

How did we get here?

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

When the church was young, it thought of itself as a pilgrim and stranger in this world. It was true to the Lord. It preached the gospel, as defined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. Had it continued in that direction, there would have been worldwide evangelism in the first 500 years. But in A.D. 313, Constantine was converted. He issued the Edict of Toleration, which meant persecution ceased. No longer was the church a martyr church. Five million Christians had shed their blood and laid down their lives gladly for Jesus Christ. But suddenly the church came up out of the catacombs and found itself in power. Augustine, a great man with a keen mind, wrote *The City of God*, which gave the church a vision of building the kingdom of God down here on this earth. Actually, this explains Roman Catholicism today. They have attempted to do what Augustine said the church should do—build the kingdom of God here on earth.

But God never intended that His church should do that. Its mission was to preach the Word of God and win people to Jesus Christ. But it got away from that. By the end of the nineteenth century, with the tremendous expansion of the British Empire, the most optimistic ideas and notions entered the church. Let me



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give you two illustrations of this. Ernest Naville in his book, *The Problem of Evil*, pointed out that the civilization of Europe (which he characterized as Christian civilization) “is visibly making the conquest of the world. Its triumph is only a matter of time. No one doubts it.” Also, Justin Smith wrote in 1883:

It has been said that in twenty-five years more, if the present rate of progress continues, India will become as thoroughly Christian as Great Britain is today. There will be 30,000,000 Christians in China, and Japan will be as thoroughly Christianized as America is now. The old systems, they tell us, are honeycombed through and through by Christian influence. It looks as if a day may soon come when these systems, struck by vigorous blows, will fall in tremendous collapse. Meantime, every weapon formed against Christianity breaks in the hand that holds it. Already the Lord's right hand has gotten Him the victory.

How absurd these statements sound today!

A line of demarcation runs through the organized church, irrespective of denomination, that is as deep and wide as the Grand Canyon. This breach cannot be resolved, and it cannot be reconciled. It has passed the point of no return. This bifurcation in the church began years ago in Germany in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Its origin was with what is known as higher criticism. First the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis made its attack upon the integrity of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible written by Moses), questioning its Mosaic authorship. Then there was the Bauer-Tubingen hypothesis that made its attack upon the New Testament. These started the assault upon the integrity of the Word of God. Also during that century, Darwin wrote his *Origin of the Species*, and the theory of evolution was introduced into the church and accepted by many. Also it was at this time that Karl Marx wrote *Das Capital*.

At the turn of the twentieth century, these philosophies were splitting the church. The protagonists espousing these viewpoints boastfully took the name of “modernism.” They were progressive, modern, and intellectual, according to their own estimation.

Those who did not adopt their viewpoint were called “intellectual obscurantists.” Today modernism has pretty much gone out of style, and the tag it bears now is “liberalism.” That covers a multitude of sins, let me tell you! It covers a wide range of those who hold various viewpoints in the church today.

Those who adhered to the old creedal statements of the church and defended the fundamentals of the faith were designated as “fundamentalists.” This was an honorable and proud name in the old days. Under this banner marched an array of brilliant scholars and fine Christian gentlemen of the past. The outstanding Hebrew and Greek scholars (who still stand head and shoulders above any we have today) were called fundamentalists, for that is exactly what they were. They believed in the *integrity* of the Word of God.

As time went on, “fighting fundamentalists” appeared in the ranks. They were more interested in attacking than in defending the faith. Many of them were unlovely in their conduct and questionable in their ethics. Also there appeared among the fundamentalists religious racketeers, making merchandise out of those who loved the Word of God.

Now don’t misunderstand me, I am a fundamentalist in the true sense of the word, but today the label of “fundamentalism” is almost in disuse. The press uses it as a term of aspersion and derision, and it’s applied to peculiar sects of all sorts of groups and religions. The term “fundamentalist” was dropped by a great many, and the broader term “evangelical” was adopted. Under this banner march many speckled birds. It is a catch-all for those who make some attempt to stand for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. Today the term we use more often to designate one who stands for the fundamentals of the faith is “conservative.”

RECOGNIZING APOSTASY

When I entered the ministry in the 1930s, apostasy was something way out yonder in the future. That has changed; the storm has now broken with all of its fury. Though I am not a pessimist, I don't think the apostasy should take us by surprise. We ought to be able to meet it in this hour in which we are living and recognize it for what it is.

Our Lord Jesus never predicted phenomenal success for His church. What He did say is,

"... When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" –Luke 18:8

In the Greek it is "*the* faith," and *the* faith is that body of truth which the apostles handed down to us. It's not a reference to personal faith, but to belief in the whole body of revealed truth.

The question, "Will He really find faith on the earth?" is couched in such a way in the Greek that it demands a negative answer. No, He frankly says He will *not* find faith on the earth when He returns. Now I recognize He is referring to the day when

He returns to establish His kingdom, but this hour in which we live is the beginning of that apostasy. So we need to recognize it. We should not let it take us by surprise.

The New Testament book of Jude deals almost exclusively with the apostasy, and he gets right to his subject in verse 4:

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men

Jude warns against “certain men” who have crept in unawares. “Marked out” here means they were written of beforehand. This is not something new, Jude says. They were “long beforehand marked out for this condemnation.” We went through a period when theologians said God was dead. Of course they would say that, because they were “ungodly men” and God was not even in their thinking.

... Who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

A better understood translation would be, “They turned the grace of our God into blatant immorality.” You see, the difference today is the fact that sin, which before was carried on undercover is today blatant. Immorality has come out in the open. Ministers in our great denominations are saying adultery, lying, and stealing are perfectly permissible. They have turned the grace of our God into blatant immorality.

A few years ago in Washington, D.C., a minister said, “So far as we are concerned, it makes no difference whether Christ was born of a virgin or not. We don’t even bother to form an opinion on the subject.”

An Arlington, Virginia, minister said, “We have closed our minds to such trivial consideration as the question of the resurrection of Christ. If you fundamentalists wish to believe that nonsense, we have no objection, but we have more important things to preach than the presence or absence of an empty tomb twenty centuries ago.”

Another leading minister in Washington, D.C., said flatly, “In our denomination what you call the ‘faith of our fathers’ is approaching total extinction. Of course, a few of the older ministers still cling to the Bible. But among the younger men, the real leaders of our denomination today, I do not know a single one who believes in Christ, or any of the things you classify as fundamentals.”

Another man said,

We are interested in human life and human destiny on earth. We don't know or care whether there is a life beyond the grave. We presume there is a God, but we know He will ever be a mystery to us. We do not know or care whether God possesses personality or not. He may be just an impersonal force. Religion means very little, if anything. In the modern world, religion has no vital place. The function of the modern ministers is to guide thinking people along social and economic lines. Morals, like religion, are out of date. The world today requires a new social order. The younger generation won't need either morals or religion if we create a social order without ignorance or poverty. We are moving in the direction of the elimination of prayer from our services entirely. We still include it occasionally, to please those who are accustomed to it, for prayer is a sort of habit with folks. It takes time to educate them to a realization that it is a hangover from the superstitious past. We do not teach Bible to our young people. We do not teach them to pray. Our youth program is centered around recreation.

Friends, at the present moment and for some time now the church has been engaged in a great brainwashing program to absolutely get rid of the Word of God.

Believers, now is the time to wake up to the reality of the world we live in—one that has forgotten God. Actually, it's a wonderful hour in which to live! We can still be intelligent and believe the Word of God, that Jesus Christ nearly 2000 years ago intruded into history and died on a cross, that He arose again the third day bodily, ascended back to heaven, and that He is alive today. He has sent the Holy Spirit into the world, and the Holy Spirit

A man with white hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is sitting on a beach and reading a Bible. The background shows the ocean and a sandy shore. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

To STAND in
days like these,
you NEED to be
ROOTED in the
WORD OF GOD.

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

has made Him real to multitudes in every walk of life. This is our message, and it is still pertinent for this hour to meet the needs of the human heart.

I feel sorry for the men and women who have departed from the faith. My heart goes out to apostates, because they are lost in the dark without a compass, not knowing where they're going.

Have you ever been lost?

I used to hunt up in the Tehachapi mountains of California. Once, a friend and I went up to the Kelso Valley to hunt quail. We parked the car and walked two or three miles before coming to a covey of quail. I'd never seen such a large covey—there must have been 200 birds in it—and, believe me, we were excited. My companion had a heart condition and overdid it, so he returned to the car. But I stayed on and followed that covey as they scattered in every direction. As I followed them, I lost sense of time and direction. All of a sudden it occurred to me that I was lost. I did not know which direction to go. The foothills of the Tehachapis are rugged country. I climbed to the top of one of the hills and looked around to see if I could recognize some spot. I give you my word, I couldn't see a hill, a tree, or anything that looked familiar. At a time like that one has a feeling of fright, so I started out rather hurriedly and walked, I'm sure, for thirty minutes. Suddenly it occurred to me that I must be going in the wrong direction. I could see nothing familiar. I turned around and started off in the opposite direction, thinking I would see something familiar. Without a compass, without knowing where I was, I became absolutely frightened. Believe me, I prayed to the Lord to get me out of that situation. And as I stood there, I thought how tragic it is to be lost in this world and not know where you are going—to have no compass, no map, nothing. Just lost.

I eventually found my way back to our car, where my buddy was waiting, eating his lunch as if nothing had happened. But, my friend, today multitudes in this world are *lost*. And the tragedy of it is they have wrecked their compass, they have mutilated their map, and they don't know which way to go.

Maybe you are lost.

Well, I am delighted to tell you that this book, the Bible, is a compass and a map. It clearly reveals the way to God. In it the Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Multitudes who have been lost in this world have come to Him and found it to be true, and *you* can find it to be true even in these days of apostasy.

WHAT CAN BELIEVERS DO?

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. –Jude 20-25

When Jude began to write his epistle, his intention was to write on some theme that pertained to our common salvation. I imagine he could have been writing on repentance or redemption or sanctification or even the coming of Christ. But he was detoured by the Holy Spirit to write on the forthcoming apostasy, and he uses frightful terms to speak of it. I am of the opinion that folk in the early church, as they read the Epistle of Jude, found it difficult to believe the days would come when there would be that kind of an apostasy in the church.

You see, the apostasy is not outside the church. The severest attack on the Word of God, on the Christian faith, and on the church comes from the *inside*. So much so that Charles Lee Smith, a renowned American atheist, said: “The pulpit is doing a much better job than we are doing!” You will no longer see the greatest attack on the Word of God coming from soapbox orators. No, the Bible is being discredited in churches all across America every Sunday morning.

It was Horatius Bonar, a great saint of the past, who made this statement in light of the little Epistle of Jude: “In some ages evil seems to sleep. In the last days it will awake to full life and activity. It will seize every instrument: the press, the pulpit, the platform.” Today evil has taken over the press, the pulpit, and the platform. Bonar continues, “It will enlist every science and art—music, sculpture, painting, portrait, philosophy—making them all subservient to its development. The multiplication of crimes, contempt of laws, blasphemies—these are the specimens of the energy of evil.” These are the things that fill our morning newspapers today. There is no use for me to recount *ad nauseum* the things that are happening in our contemporary society. We are now in the midst of the apostasy.

It irritates me a little when I’m aboard an airplane, especially when I’m flying over water, to be given those long instructions about what I’m to do in case we ditch. As you know, the flight attendants go through a demonstration, explaining what to do. I was complaining about this to a pilot friend of mine, and he said, “If you don’t follow them, you’ll never get out alive. But you have a chance if you will follow the instructions.”

Jude gives believers instructions, detailing seven things God’s people can do in days of apostasy. We are flying over dangerous territory. Frankly, these are things we *must* do if we want to survive these days in which we’re living.

Beginning with verse 20, he says, “But you, beloved” Up to this point he has described the apostasy. And, believe me, he paints a dark picture. But now he is speaking to believers. But you, beloved, do these things:

#1: “BUILDING YOURSELVES UP ON
YOUR MOST HOLY FAITH ...”

The word “faith” is actually *the* faith, the body of truth that has been given to us in the Word of God. When the first church came into existence, they “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42), which was the body of truth that has come down to us in the Word of God. We must build ourselves up in that if we are to stand.

In other words, study the Word of God. Since God gave 66 books, He meant for us to study all 66 of them—not only our three or four favorites. How many Bible classes go back and forth, teaching John, Romans, and oh, maybe they’ll teach Revelation—but what about the other 63 books in the Bible? Why don’t we study *all* of them? My friend, if you are going to build yourself up in your most holy faith, you must have the total Word of God. You can’t build a house without a foundation. And when you get the foundation laid, you need to put up timbers to hold the roof, you’ll need sides on it, and of course you’ll want to fix it up on the inside. Friend, you need all 66 books of the Bible if you are going to build yourself up on your most holy faith.

Paul and Peter urge us to study the Word of God. Paul in his “swan song” said:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

–2 Timothy 2:15

A photograph of a man in a red robe, likely a monk or priest, with his head bowed in prayer. He is resting his head on a thick, old book. His hands are clasped near his face. The background is a blurred interior with large windows. The text is overlaid on the image.

WE NEED PEOPLE OF GOD
WHO WILL PRAY IN THE
HOLY SPIRIT.

We need prayer that reaches through
and touches the heart of God—
prayer to which He *listens*.

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We are to *study!* And he added:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. –2 Timothy 3:16

In other words, the recourse you and I have in these days is the Word of God.

The reason many fall by the wayside is that the Seed falls among stones. It doesn't get deeply rooted. The Word of God is the Seed, and unless you study all the Word of God, getting down in the good rich soil, you are not going to become a very healthy plant. It won't be long until you are trampled down and burned out by the sun. To stand in days like these, you need to be rooted in the Word of God.

Don't pull out just one or two verses and think you have it, my friend. Peter, also writing about apostasy, says:

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.

–2 Peter 1:19, 20

The tragedy of Bible study today is the practice of drawing out a few verses here and there and building a system around them. Why not take it all? Certainly, there are parts of the Word of God you're not going to like. It steps on your toes, or it runs counter to current philosophy, but it is necessary to build ourselves up on our most holy faith.

In other words, when you get into days of apostasy, our compass and chart is the Word of God. This is the reason I have built my ministry entirely on teaching the *whole* Word of God. I believe it is our only hope.

In spite of days of apostasy, I find there is a great heart-hunger for the Word of God. People want a sure word from God Himself in this hour of uncertainty. They want to know what *He* says.

At the turn of the century there was a movement in the church away from preaching and teaching the Bible. I remember as a boy going to church I knew nothing, and I knew nothing after I'd been to church because the Word of God was never preached. It was always a service built on emotion or a book review or it had to do with some sort of an entertainment. As a result, we have in America a "Christian" civilization of biblically illiterate people. The common man in Germany after the Reformation knew more about the Word of God than does the average man in America today.

The tragedy is that even believers are ignorant of the Bible. In this hour of apostasy, God's people need not only to say they believe in the Word of God from cover to cover, but they need to know what is *between* the covers. In this day of confusion and compromise, you need to build yourself up in the most holy faith by a serious study of the Word of God.

Let me remind you that the Bible is unique. It is different from any other. It is written by men who include in it their own personalities—God did not disturb that at all—but He so guided them that when they had finished, God had gotten through His message to man without error.

Not only is it without error, but this Book still has power. Paul writes to the Thessalonians:

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

-1 Thessalonians 1:5

This book has a message for those who will hear it, a message that will transform hearts and lives. The Word of God is not only a chart and compass, but it is our powerhouse. My friend, you cannot be ignorant of the Word of God and live the Christian life!

#2: "PRAYING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT ..."

This is a little different from saying your prayers at night. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, told them to take up the armor of God. With the exception of two, every piece of that armor is for defense. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" is an offensive weapon. The other item for offense is "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17-18). This is the type of prayer that touches the throne of God. It is the type of prayer that gets things from God.

It was my theory in my early years of ministry that what we needed was to multiply numbers in a prayer meeting. I do not hold that view any longer. If you have 10 people attending a prayer meeting and they are more or less spiritually asleep, it is not a very effective prayer meeting, I can tell you. But to multiply that number from 10 to 100 doesn't help if you've just brought in 90 more spiritually dull people. All you have then is 100 dead people instead of 10 dead people.

We need people of God who will pray in the Holy Spirit. We need prayer that reaches through and touches the heart of God—prayer to which He *listens*.

I love the prayer in the ninth chapter of Daniel:

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession

—Daniel 9:3, 4

God dispatched an angel with an answer to his prayer. I think God said, "You go down and answer his prayer, but I'm going to listen to him." Daniel went on praying, and he touched the very heart of God.

Have you ever read any of Martin Luther's prayers? Oh, when that man prayed it was like storming the battlements of heaven! We hear very little praying like that today. But that is the type of prayer that absolutely transformed Europe—prayer in the Holy Spirit.

There are many times when we don't know what to pray for. I'll be honest with you—in my lifetime, I have encountered problems for which I have no solution. I used to be able to give the Lord the best advice He'd ever received on just how He ought to handle things. But I've learned that instead of going to Him with a program all outlined and saying, "Look here, Lord, this is the course You should follow," now I am more inclined to say, "Lord, I don't know the answer, but You do; if we get the right answer, it will have to come from You." Therefore, we can throw this back—and I say it reverently—into the lap of God. That's the way He wants it.

Years ago, a missionary in Venezuela sent me a little card on which was a definition of prayer: "Prayer is the Holy Spirit, speaking in the believer, through Christ, to the Father." Friend, that is a very good definition of prayer.

Praying in the Holy Spirit means the Spirit of God leads and guides us in our prayer life. A great many folk say, "I pray for a certain thing, and I don't get an answer." That ought to tell you something! You are not praying in the will of God. My grandson can ask for more things that he shouldn't have than any little fellow I've ever met! I take him with me to the store sometimes, and he wants everything he shouldn't have. I think to myself, *My, that's the way I pray!* Just like a little child, I say, "Lord, give me this and give me that," and He doesn't do it. Why? Because I am not praying in the Holy Spirit. Oh, to cast ourselves upon Him in days like these! In times of apostasy, how we need to pray in the Holy Spirit.

#3: "KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD ..."

The precise language here is important. Jude doesn't say we are to do something to *win* the love of God. You are already *in* the love of God—just keep yourself there.

Friend, you cannot do anything to merit the love of God, neither can you keep Him from loving you. Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanting to know what he should do to inherit eternal life. The record tells us:

Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. –Mark 10:21, 22

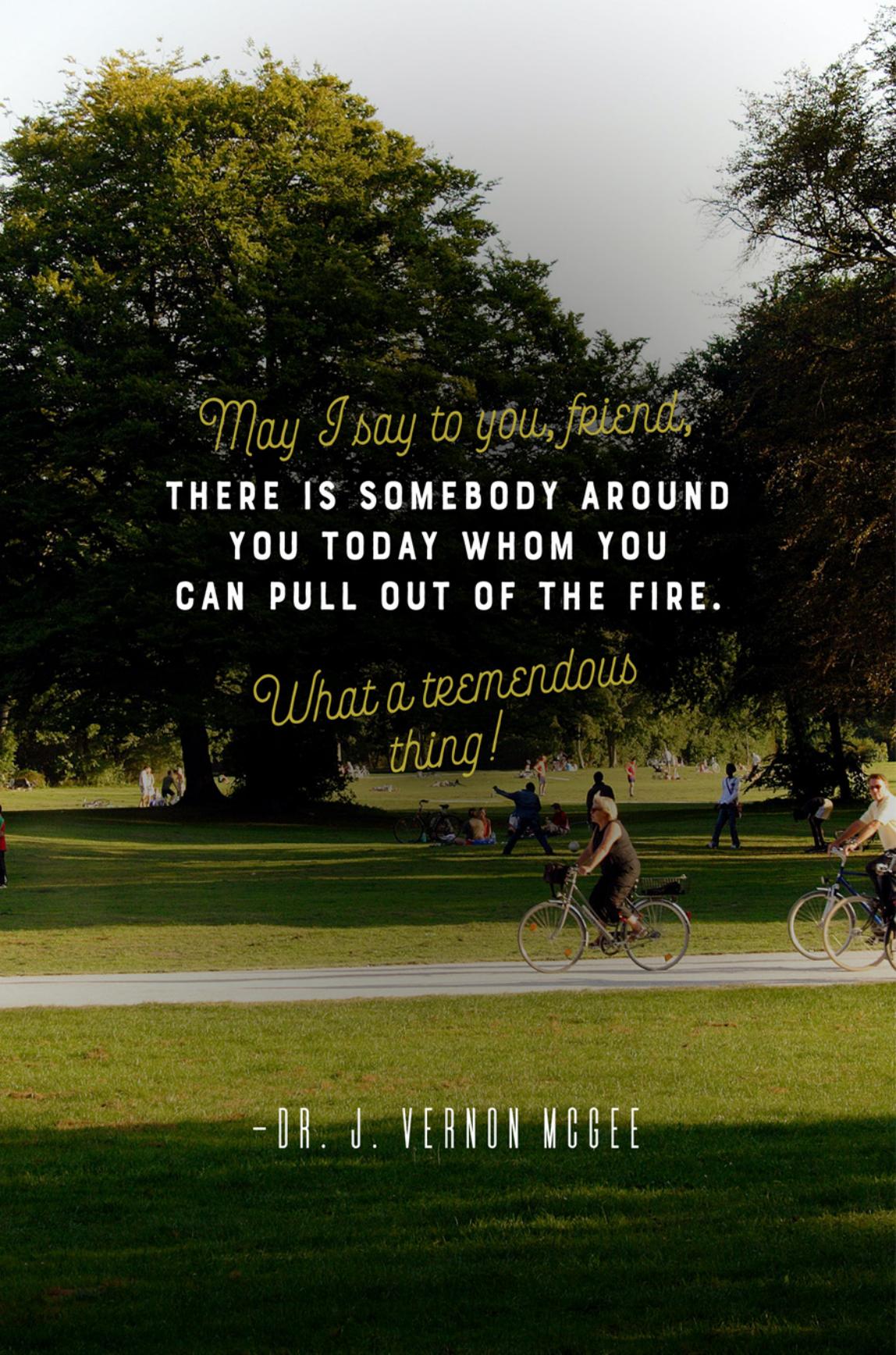
He turned and walked away from Christ, but God still loved him!

Believer, God *loves* you. All through the Epistle of Jude he calls believers "beloved." That doesn't mean Jude loves them or that they love him. It simply means they are beloved of God.

You can't keep God from loving you, but you can get out of that love. Where I am today the sun is shining brightly; it's a beautiful California day. I can't keep the sun from shining, but I'm not *in* the sunshine—I'm inside a building. It is possible to put over yourself a roof of sin or indifference. You can step out of the will of God so that you will not feel the warmth of God's love in your life, but you cannot keep Him from loving you. So Jude says in effect, "Keep yourselves out there in the sunshine of His love." Let His love flood your heart and life. That is needed in days of apostasy.

Many people today are going through severe trials. Perhaps you are one of them. I knew a Christian family that was called upon to bear more than its share of trouble. The father said to me, "If it were not for the fact that I am persuaded that the Lord Jesus loves me, I'd give up the whole thing and walk out." But he didn't walk out, because he kept himself in the love of God.

How you and I need to keep ourselves in the light and warmth of God's love in these days!



May I say to you, friend,
**THERE IS SOMEBODY AROUND
YOU TODAY WHOM YOU
CAN PULL OUT OF THE FIRE.**

*What a tremendous
thing!*

- DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

#4: "LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."

The mercy of God is His concern and care for you. Because of His mercy, He was able to save you. And He is rich in mercy, He has plenty of it. We need all we can get, because it is by mercy that God would even put up with us.

"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" refers, I believe, to the coming of Christ for His church, the event we know as the Rapture of the church. The reason I believe the church is not going to go through the Great Tribulation is that we are told to look for mercy, not judgment. I am not looking for judgment or the Great Tribulation. I am looking for the mercy of God.

A long time ago when God saved me, He did it by His mercy. And the very fact that He keeps holding on to me is evidence of His mercy. One of these days He will take His church out of this world. Believe it or not, I'll be going along, and I'll be going because of His mercy. If you meet me a million years from today in eternity and you find I'm still in heaven (and I will be there), I will tell you now what I'll tell you then: I've been here a million years, because He is merciful to me.

My beloved, in this day of apostasy, of failure, of compromise, and of discouragement, we are to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

#5: "AND ON SOME HAVE COMPASSION, MAKING A DISTINCTION ..."

Now we have a caution.

Allow me to clarify that translation just a little: "And on some have compassion who are in doubt." There are a great many good sincere people today who do have their doubts, and we need to be patient with them.

In our evening Bible study years ago, for six weeks straight a woman came to me after every service with some question. I began to wonder if she was trying to trap me or trick me, and, frankly, I grew a little impatient with her. One of our church members always accompanied her. So one night I answered the woman's question rather sharply, and she turned and walked out. The lady with her came to me and said, "Dr. McGee, be patient with her. She is a very brilliant woman, and she has been in practically every cult there is. She is really mixed up, but now she's trying to make her way out. Please be patient with her." So, after that I answered her questions carefully and the best I could. About three months later, she accepted Christ as her Savior. Later I had a wonderful letter from her telling me of how the Lord was leading her.

We are living in days when there is so much doubt cast upon the Word of God. Don't forget we are *in* the apostasy right now. Though the creeds of all the great denominations were founded on sound creeds (they differ a little in some points, but on the great basics there was no difference at all), the church has been taken over by those who totally reject the great doctrines. We would do well to be patient with the men and women in these churches who want to believe.

#6: "BUT OTHERS SAVE WITH FEAR,
PULLING THEM OUT OF THE FIRE ..."

These are the people we would judge to be hopeless sinners—those who, it seems to us, nobody could reach. I have been amazed at some of the people who have come to the Lord through the medium of radio. People that I, frankly, had given up on come to Christ by hearing the Word taught on radio.

May I say to you, friend, there is somebody around you today whom you can pull out of the fire. What a tremendous thing! If there were a house on fire with somebody inside of it, you would do your best to get him out. But just think of the people around you today who are on the way to a lost eternity. Some

of them you can reach. I don't think you can reach them all. I don't recommend you go out on the street and hand a tract to everybody who comes along. But I do believe there is somebody you can reach. And maybe you are the only one who can reach them—they would never listen to this old preacher, but they will listen to you because they respect and have confidence in you. Yet you have never told them about the Savior who has saved you. That is the type of witnessing we need in days of apostasy.

#7: "HATING EVEN THE GARMENT DEFILED BY THE FLESH."

The word "flesh" does not necessarily mean only that which is licentious, although it includes that. The "flesh" refers to the old nature we all have. There are a great many people today who are art lovers and music lovers. There are cultured folk who would never rob anyone or engage in immorality. But without Christ they are lost people, and they are living in the flesh—as much in the flesh as any drunkard. In God's sight they are just as lost. God says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All come under that category.

You and I today are to hate the garment that is spotted by the flesh. May I make it personal? *Pride* is of the flesh. *Gossip* is of the flesh. *Harsh criticism* is of the flesh. And there is a lot of the flesh manifested in our churches. This pious pose many have toward "spirituality" is of the flesh and not of God at all. Even Paul the apostle, a religious man who was converted to Christ, said, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). This is not a lost man asking for salvation. This is the cry of a saved man who was living in the flesh. Anything Vernon McGee produces of the flesh, God hates. Regardless of how religious it is or how pious it might be or how much Bible it has in it—if it is of the flesh, He hates it. Only that which the Spirit of God produces through us can He use. We should learn to hate "even the garment defiled by the flesh."

Dwight L. Moody said, "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. Its ruin is getting nearer and nearer. God said to me, 'Moody, here's a lifeboat. Go out and rescue as many as you can before the crash comes.'" And up until the ministry of Billy Graham, Moody looked into the faces of more people than any man who ever lived, and he reduced the population of hell by 200,000. My friend, if God could use Moody, He can use you and He can use me in these days of apostasy.

The little book of Jude concludes with a glorious benediction.

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.

–Jude 24-25

REVIEW: READ JUDE 1:20-25

Dr. McGee said, "Beloved, we are flying over dangerous territory, and we must do these seven things from Jude if we want to survive these days of apostasy:"

- #1 **"Building yourselves up on your most holy faith ..."**
- #2 **"Praying in the Holy Spirit ..."**
- #3 **"Keep yourselves in the love of God ..."**
- #4 **"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."**
- #5 **"And on some have compassion, making a distinction ..."**
- #6 **"But others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire ..."**
- #7 **"Hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."**

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and greenery.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from the TTB.org website. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden table.

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