

Key Text: Hebrews 3:12-19

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

SHIPWRECKS HAPPEN

If there is one heart-rending fact in Christianity today, it is the multitude of men and women all about us who have once served the Lord in church, professed a vital experience of salvation, given evidence of having received the baptism with the Holy Spirit-many even having preached the Word of God-who today never darken the door of the church, nor make any pretense of serving the God whom they once professed to love with all their hearts. This is what the Bible would describe as "Shipwrecked" faith. (1 Tim. 1:19) Paul spoke prophetically of a time when many people would "Fall Away" from faith. (1 Tim. 4:1) The threat of apostasy is something that every believer must understand and guard against. The Bible also gives multiple warnings about sliding backwards (Matt. 24:10-13; 1 Corinthians 10:12)

Shipwrecks do not happen suddenly and you can be aware of the subtle ways in which a believer might start down a path toward a "shipwrecked" faith. Know the reasons for leaving faith in Christ and take meaningful steps toward guarding your faith in Christ. Remember that if you are holding firmly to your faith, **NOTHING CAN TAKE YOU OUT OF GODS HAND.** You are eternally secure. (2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5; John 10:28-30)

APOSTASY

"An abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; a total desertion of departure from one's faith, principles; esp., the renunciation of a religious faith."

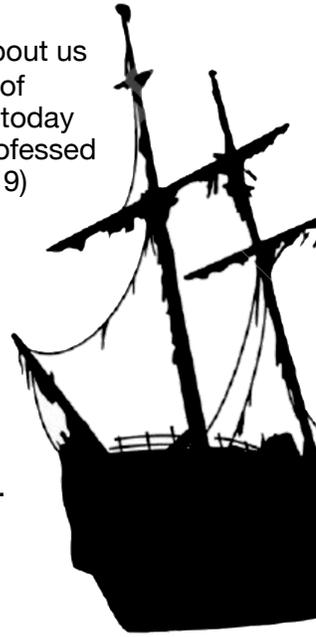
HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

At the root of all the following reasons for shipwrecking ones faith lies "**Unbelief**". If this sounds simplistic that might be because everyone can identify with little doubts or unsure feelings. A person may dismiss the doubts as reasonable or even harmless. It seems almost natural to feel like Thomas who expressed his doubt in *John 20:25...* "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." So you might say there is room for some doubt...right? This kind of doubt which leads a person to clarify a confusion will result in even greater confidence in the Bible and so it actually serves our faith. The Bible teaches that the person who seeks for God with all their heart will find Him. (Deuteronomy 4:29) The other kind of doubt is based on a critical spirit, and it reveals a resistance to the truth and it seems to have a fault-finding tone.

One strengthens faith and the other destroys it!

Here are five things which lead to shipwrecked faith:

- **Doubt & Unbelief:** (2 Peter 1:10; 1 Timothy 1:19)
- **Iniquity & Temptation:** Sinful iniquity creates a "callous" over the heart towards God and The Bible. (Heb. 3:12-19; MATT. 24:12; 2 Thess. 2:7)
- **Persecution & testing:** Difficulties reveal a lack of "Depth" or "No Root" to faith. The Goal should always be...ABIDE IN CHRIST = YOU CAN DO ALL THINGS. (Mark 4:17; John 15)
- **Deception & Traps:** False teaching and Demonic traps can all be avoided if you remain alert. (2 Peter 3:16-18; Mark 13:5)
- **BAD Momentum:** Both Sin and Righteousness are progressive. There is a "Snowball" effect with regard to our "spiritual life" which illustrates how sin gains both mass and speed. We become increasingly sinful or increasingly righteous. (Romans 6:19; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 1:9)



TWO STUDIES THAT HELP US LEARN THE PROGRESSION OF “FALLING AWAY”

THE WAY OF WICKEDNESS

(Warnings from Hebrews)

- ◆ **Drifting:** *Heb. 2:1-4* becoming lazy in the word and influenced by other things.
- ◆ **Doubting:** *Heb. 3:7-4:13* The Word has no profit because it is not mixed with faith.
- ◆ **Dullness:** *Heb. 5:11-6:20* Because the word is not practiced or acted upon, there is a dull-disregard of it.
- ◆ **Despising the Bible:** *Heb. 10:26-39; John 12:48.* This is a rejection of the central message of the Bible...The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The message itself now distasteful and even shameful.
- ◆ **Defying the Bible:** *Heb. 12:25-29.* A rejection of the Holy Spirit and the Word which culminates in the final statement...God is a consuming fire!
- ◆ **DIVINE WRATH:** *Heb 10:27 Rom. 11:21; 2 Peter 2:4*

FIVE INCREASING LEVELS OF SIN

(A Study of Psalm 19:12-13)

- **UNAWARE:** *We do not yet see the error in our ways. The mirror of the word and the conviction of the holy spirit gently draw us at this stage to an awareness of sin.*
- **HIDDEN:** *Sins which are mostly unnoticed by the world and reside in the mind, will and emotions. (i.e. looking with lust in your heart...Matt. 5:28).*
- **OPEN SIN:** *Actions and attitudes which are plainly against the will of God and can be seen by people in our life. What was once hidden can no longer be kept inside and so it is acted upon.*
- **ENSLAVEMENT:** *Sin now has mastery over you. This person is now in need of deliverance from strongholds and healing in addition to forgiveness. (John 8:34; Rom. 1:32; 6:16)*
- **GREAT TRANSGRESSION:** *This is that point when a person becomes full of sin...this is a person who wouldn't accept forgiveness or repent no matter the consequence. APOSTASY & Reprobation. (Rom. 1:28)*

IS THERE HOPE FOR A REBEL????? YES! What if you wander far from grace and are even like the prodigal son? The Bible is very clear in giving hope for any rebellious person who humbles themselves and returns to God. It is never too late to repent or turn around. Hebrews 7:25 shares how God can save to the “**UTTERMOST**”. You can never go too far to turn around.

Romans 11:23. A person can be “**Grafted**” back into the vine which is Christ,

Luke 15:11-24. The rebel can be accepted home and **restored to right relationship**.

James 4:5-10. Come humbly before the God of mercy and Grace and **He will lift you up**.

BECOME YOUR “BROTHERS KEEPER”!

In view of all this teaching what is a caring brother or sister in Christ to do if they see someone starting on the path toward apostasy? **James 5:19** **My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.** Here are some great ways for you to respond:

- **“Encourage”** the person “Daily”. Heb. 3:13. The word here covers various ideas that range from “**CALLING** and **INVITING**”, to “**WINNING**” the person over and also “**COMFORTING**”.
- **“Restore”**. Galatians 6:1 uses this word which means to show the person the mirror. Sounds more like a rebuke but is gently using the Bible to retrain the mind, will, and emotions of someone else.
- **“PRAYER”**. 1 John 5:16,17 shows us the power of a praying brother or sister in Christ. Praying for someone to return to God and be repentant works.