

of lawless men and fall from our secure position. This report on how those who believe in Jesus felt about their faith should be a wake-up call to all of us. Sooner or later we will all have to stand before God and give an account for ourselves. What will our answer be? What is your choice?

By Bill Davis



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Faithful Sayings

Olsen Park Church of Christ

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Services

Sunday: 9:30 a.m.
10:20 a.m.
6:00 p.m.
Wednesday: 7:00 p.m.

Elders:

Ken Ford
Charles Kelley
Pat Ledbetter

Deacons:

Dean Bowers
Eddie Cook
Bill Davis
Pat Goguen
Neil Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Fred Perez
Rusty Scott

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

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In the Name of Tolerance

A few weeks ago the news media released a survey done in the United States among those who call themselves Christians. This survey revealed that many who believe in Jesus do not feel that their religion is the only way to eternal life, even if their faith tradition teaches otherwise. By the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life these were the results: 57% of evangelical churchgoers said that they believe many religions can lead to eternal life even though this is in conflict with their traditional teachings. By many measures Americans are strongly religious with 92% who say they believe in God, 74% who believe in life after death and 63% who say they believe that their respective scriptures are the words of God. Upon deeper investigation, however, it was found that 1 in 4 Roman Catholics, mainline protestants and orthodox believers expressed some doubts about God's existence. 6 in 10 expressed doubts about Jesus existence. Another finding almost defies explanation. 21% of self-identified atheists said they believed in God or a "universal spirit" with 8% "absolutely certain" of it. Nearly across the board the majority of religious Americans believe that many religions can lead to eternal life. Mainline protestants (83%),

members of historic black protestant churches (59%), Roman Catholics (79%), Jews (82%) and Muslims (56%). A poll was also taken in which the question was asked, "What is the main reason that most people no longer believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation?" The answers given may surprise some of us. However, we have seen a growing trend over the years in which the belief that there is absolute truth has been questioned. Often it has been said that we cannot understand the Bible alike. Sadly, many even doubt the authoritative nature of the Bible. Jesus says in **John 14:6**: "*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" Do we really believe Jesus is telling us the truth?

Let's look at the results of the poll which asked why most no longer believe that Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Tolerance (38.48%). Tolerance has become the god of our culture. It seems that we must be tolerant of sin and those who choose a life of sin. We will change the wording of the Bible and the meaning of the Bible so that we do not offend those whose beliefs or actions are in violation of God's word. We are told that all religions are the same and it doesn't really matter. Tolerance so that all may do as they please, breeds a lack of reverence for God and who He is. (Eccl. 12:13-14; Psalm 1; Psalm 119:9-10, 101-105; Jer. 10:23; II Tim. 3:16-17; I John 5:3).

Social Gospel (22.87%). The social gospel as it's called is given greater priority over the message of salvation. Too many times in our churches today we water down God's word so that we won't offend anyone when we teach them the way of salvation. The word "baptism" (though found in scripture) has be-

come taboo today. The social gospel can be the feel good message that says, "God loves us all, therefore we will all be saved. Obedience to God is unimportant." The social gospel can also be the message that says we will concentrate upon making life on this Earth better; meeting the physical, social and entertainment needs of mankind while we try to slip in a little religion on the side. The emphasis is taken away from the need of the soul.

People Pleasers (38.85%). Today many elders and preachers are more interested in pleasing the congregations than in preaching the very words of God according to our poll. In many churches today in this country we hear preachers who tell warm, fuzzy, feel-good sermons. We hear that sin is not sin, it is just a mistake or comes from being misguided. We hear that adultery is not sin, it is just a bad choice in marriage. We have watered down God's word to a point in which we have spoken a lie so long we ourselves have started believing the lie. The churches in this country don't take God very seriously as to what His word says about our living in sin, about salvation and about repentance and grace. It seems we spend more time defending our belief on evolution than we do on defending the way of salvation for mankind. (The sinner's prayer won't work. Read once again about conversions in the book of Acts. None were given such a prayer to pray.) We see Christians who don't read their Bible anymore but will prefer to read books about the Bible with fictitious tales or stories. There are many good books which help us with our Bible study and encourage us to grow as Christians. However, we must be on guard for those books which simply have feel-good messages that water down God's word. We also need to guard our hearts.

Should we ever prefer reading a book about the Bible written by a human author more than we prefer reading the Bible itself, which is inspired by God?

The first step in walking away from God can be seen when our hearts and minds no longer desire His word. It has reached a point in which we see Christians who are closet Christians, that is those coming out only when it makes them look good or seem righteous. Today's attitude of tolerance has reached a point in which speaking of God and Jesus in public is frowned upon. Consider the debate over whether or not our school children can say the Pledge of Allegiance with "one nation under God" in it. My friend, as a "Christian nation" we are dying due to the lack of knowledge of God, His Son Jesus and why Jesus died on the cross for our sins. As Christians we have watered down why we meet with the church, why we must be baptized to have salvation and why we are to take the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, not once a quarter. My friends we are dying due to our complacent attitude toward our worship and relationship with God. In fact, our attitude toward worship is a big joke if we worship God only when we are in trouble or want something. Many times we read of those in the Bible who were faithful at first but in time they fell back into the world as a result of their lack of faith or lack of obedience toward God. Many times we read about the Israelites' spiritual decline in their worship toward God when they would turn to idols and themselves. Some good examples in the Bible of those who turned back into the world are found in Exodus 32 and Numbers 14. The Israelites had turned back to idols and false

worship. In I Samuel 15:26 we read that Saul did not carry out all the commands that God told him to do. Instead he became rebellious and arrogant. In II Chronicles 25:14, 27 we read where Amaziah brought back the gods of the people of Seir and set them up as his own gods. In I Timothy 1:19-20 we read where Paul handed Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme; that is to teach false doctrine.

You see, apostasy from the faith one has in God or His Son is nothing new. We had it back in Paul's day and yes we have it today as well. **II Timothy 4:3-5** describes our world today to a "T", "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*" In Paul's and Timothy's day they were besieged by false teachers and false religions with the inevitable pressures of a growing ministry. Here Timothy could have easily abandoned his faith or modified Christ's words to fit the times. Yet Paul counseled Timothy to look to his past and to hold to the basic teachings about Jesus which are faithful and true. Today, like Timothy, we are surrounded by false teachings and false religions that say all roads lead to heaven. As Christians we must not allow our society to distort or crowd out God's eternal truth. We must always study God's word to grow and be strong in the faith. If we as Christians don't study God's word we will be carried away by the error