

The Seed of Apostasy

by Chip Brogden

The sermon explores how unrealistic expectations can lead to apostasy and emphasizes the importance of unconditional love and faith in God amidst trials.

Scripture: Job 1:21, Matthew 5:44, Luke 8:13, John 15:18, Philippians 2:5

Topics: "Unconditional Love", "Self Denial"

Description

Chip Brogden delivers a powerful sermon on managing expectations, emphasizing the danger of setting unrealistic and unbiblical expectations on God and others, leading to frustration, disappointment, and even apostasy. He highlights the importance of loving unconditionally without expecting anything in return, just as Jesus did, and warns against keeping a mental ledger of debits and credits in relationships. Brogden challenges Christians to shift their focus from what God and others have not done to embracing self-denial and conforming to the image of Christ, even in the face of unmet expectations and trials.

Transcript

"...these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation become offended and fall away (Luke 8:13b)."

"What Did You Expect?" is more than the rhetorical question of an alleged cynic, but an axiom for determining just why you get so frustrated and disappointed with others. In every case, it is because you expect something from them that you did not get. If we were to love, as Christ, we would expect nothing, and be pleasantly surprised in the event we do receive "a little drop of kindness" in return. But such times are rare.

Jesus told us instead to expect persecution, excommunication, and tribulation. Since Christians today expect blessing, acceptance, and prosperity, it's easy to see why so many are setting themselves up for a big disappointment when GOD does not meet their expectation. Ultimately, you will apply the same expectations upon God as you do upon people, holding Him personally responsible for what THEY did or did not do to you. The seed for apostasy and falling away is planted in my heart, in your heart, in every Christian heart: that is, the unrealistic and unbiblical perception of how we expect God and other people to treat us.

Jesus knew what was in the heart of men. He could perceive their reasonings and murmurings against Him. This is why He could love unconditionally - He expected nothing in return. Why should He? People

were and are intrinsically self-centered, self-serving and self-preserving. It is the nature of Adam, and it is our nature. True, Christians now have a new nature, but most only know of that new nature in theory, not by experience.

Jesus did not expect His disciples to remain faithful to Him simply because He washed their feet. His knowledge of people gave Him the liberty to just love them and not expect anything in return. He could wash the disciples' feet knowing they would all forsake Him. It was not as if He became angry when they left, "after all I've done for them." That's OUR way. We keep a mental ledger of debits and credits and EXPECT others to treat us fairly, or support us, etc. just because we applied the Golden Rule to them. If we were in His place, our line of reasoning would be: I can count on Peter, James and John; the rest I am not as sure of; Judas will likely betray me; but, if I show them unconditional love, wash their feet, and pray for them, surely they will stand with me during my time of suffering.

O Christian, how many times have you reasoned thusly, adding up your debits and credits with others and expecting them to treat you as you have treated them? How many times have you expected the preacher to visit you, the neighbor be kind to you, the friend to listen to you, the husband to love you, the wife to honor you, the children to obey you, the parents to understand you? What did you expect? To be applauded? To be affirmed? To be understood? To be appreciated?

O preacher, what did you expect? The praise of the masses? The universal recognition of your special gift? The outward trappings of a successful ministry, with a one hundred-fold return of luscious fruit? Did you expect to be consulted as a dauntless leader, hailed as a church-growth expert, lauded as God's man or woman of the hour?

Yes, you expected it, I expected it, we all expected just a little something from others - and therein lies the problem: no, not in what others did to you, whether it was just or unjust, or what they failed to do, whether in negligence, forgetfulness, or spite. The crux of the matter, the point of stumbling, is your unrealistic expectation that people will behave in a predictable, godly, Biblical, Christ-like, loving manner. Because more times than not, they don't.

And that upsets us. We expect people to approve of our writings, our music, our "word", our ministry, our insight, our revelation, our values, our doctrinal position. And they expect the same of us, and God help the one who fails to render credit where credit is due! The "I" is always hidden behind such a desire, so it is no wonder that we become upset when we are not afforded the appreciation and respect we think we deserve. If they are not Christians, we could shrug and say, "What do you expect? They don't even know the Lord." Ah, but then, people who claim to know the Lord (maybe some who really do) fail to meet your expectations too. We can align our expectations such that we do not expect compassion from a sinner, but what about when compassion is lacking from a saint? My, what a test this is! We can overlook the insults and offenses and misdeeds of the lost and make excuse for them because they are not saved. How then do you make excuse for those who mistreat you while claiming to be on God's side? I maintain that the "like-minded brethren" are the most difficult to get along with.

Then of course, one of those "well-meaning" preachers will tell you that you can expect to be prosperous, healed, and victorious. Hope rises, and you believe. "Expect a miracle!" they shout. And the prosperity you expected does not materialize; the healing does not "manifest"; and victory seems to be way out on the horizon, well beyond your outstretched hands.

The time it takes varies from individual to individual, but each one of us facing the cumulative effect of unmet expectations reaches the same fork in the road. Eventually the focus of our attention shifts from what people have done, to what God has NOT done. It seems to us in such a place that God seldom, if ever, intervenes on our behalf, defends our cause, or solicits what we want from other people. Just once, just ONCE, we'd like to see that gossip struck dumb. Just once we'd like to see that lustful fellow made blind, if only for a season! Perhaps those who stretch forth their hand against us would get leprosy - then they will listen! Maybe one little angel to come down from heaven in the middle of it all and tell your adversaries, "All of you are wrong, and this child of God is right." It would be so easy for God to wave His hand and make everything just so, set you on high among the people, and proclaim His unwavering support of you and His eternal disdain for them!

But such an awesome display of power never comes. And it probably never will. Much intercession is centered around this unrealistic expectation that we can control people, events, nations, and God Himself through fasting, prayer, travail, and tears. How often the "me, me, me" is hidden behind our requests, even our holiest and most spiritual intercessions. We expect that God will answer us in a particular way, according to our limited thought and human reasoning - which, again, is largely self-serving.

We worship God, and expect that He will afford us with some tangible evidence or feeling of joy, peace, strength or nearness of His presence. It is in a sense much like Pavlov's dog, who learned how to press a button in order to get a treat. Is this Spirit and Truth?

We read and study the Bible, expecting that God will grant us revelation into His Word, that we may grow in spiritual knowledge and Christian maturity. Or, preacher, you expect to get your Sunday sermon or midweek lesson out of the text before you. But there comes a time when, as Nee says, the Bible looms before you as a massive rock from which you cannot obtain nourishment. What then?

What do we do when He doesn't answer as we expect Him? What then, O Christian? What will you do? What will you believe? Perhaps you will be like Job's wife. Curse God and die, she spat. Why retain your integrity any longer? Not just die, but CURSE GOD first, then go ahead and die! Don't just roll over, Job! You've got some anger going on in there, don't you? You've got a little bitterness in your heart, huh? God blessed you once, but today you are cursed! God prospered you once, but today you are bankrupt! God healed you once, but today the flesh hangs off your bones! You are a stinking mess. You are a bum, a loser, a has-been. This is the result of your life of faith! This is how God eventually treats all His children, by sending them to a cruel cross and crucifying them on it, naked before the world, helpless before the religious mafia, powerless before the devil! You were mistaken somewhere, Job. You had God all wrong. You messed up somewhere along the line. Give up Job. Curse God and die!

Isn't it interesting? When God behaves as we expect Him to - the raise comes, the transfer goes through, the cancer is healed, the marriage is restored, the storm passes us by - we do not protest that we are unworthy, or argue with God's decision to bless us. Unless it is an unusual display of grace we may scarcely give God the credit. Ah, but let God delay Himself, or "fail" to deliver as expected, and behold how quickly our countenance is darkened against Him!

Are people your problem? No. Is God your problem? No! YOU are your problem, and specifically, your expectation is your downfall. Sure, expect great things of God - but qualify what you mean by great. Don't think great things means likeable things, pleasant things, easy things. I tell you plainly that you can expect the opposite. Since you and I were born with an Adamic nature which makes us inherently selfish,

stubborn, and greedy, it behooves God to lead us along a path that of self-denial, foregoing what we "like" in favor of conformity to the image of His Son, who is anything but self-ish.

So when we look at Job we see that he was righteous, but he was ignorant. All he knew was blessing, prosperity, and living in the "hedge." Yes, it's lovely to live there in the hedge. Everything he touched was blessed; he was protected from failure. Did Job worship God as a result? You bet! And like most, thought that the blessing was a result of his own righteousness and servitude. But Satan pointed out that that the hedge of blessing and protection was the very thing that kept Job so faithful.

Therefore the testing of Job was a valid test, a crucial one, and a crucible through which each Christian will be purged, sifted, and tried. To what end? It is summed up in the words of Job himself as he neared the end of his ordeal: "I have heard Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye seeth Thee." BUT NOW! BUT NOW! BUT NOW! Before he heard about Him, but now he sees Him, and falls to the ground. Before he worshipped Him having heard, now he worships having seen, and known. I submit that God set him up for such experiential knowledge by allowing him to be subjected to the assaults of the devil, the harshness of his environment, the misunderstanding of his friends, the loss of his family and material possessions, and his physical infirmity. I submit that if anyone desires to take up the cross and follow Christ such testing is the only realistic expectation His disciple can entertain.

Many quickly point out that Job was blessed more in the end than in the beginning; but if getting doubly blessed is our purpose for enduring such affliction then we have failed the very purpose of such a test, and such an attitude only proves man's capacity for being self-serving, even in the worst of circumstances.

I am writing to you, O Christian, who is so full of expectation of what the spiritual life should be like, you who are so sure that you know God, so acquainted you are with His Word! Have you seen God? Or are you worshipping what you have heard, bowing to an invisible force in the clouds, expecting some blessing or feeling or voice or gift? Where will you be, when there is no "Blessed Assurance", when all the evidence points to your failure as a Christian, when "peace like a river" is no longer "attending" your way?

I am writing to that individual who is on the slippery slope of apostasy, ready to renounce their faith (not openly of course, but inwardly) because of some unrealized dream or hope or wish or expectation that after ALL you've been through, surely God will bless you or compensate you or reward you or answer you! Beware! It is more likely that God wishes to know if you worship Him for His gifts, or for Himself; and of course you know that HE knows, it is YOU that must know. The Lord knew, and Peter thought he knew, but by cock's crow Peter knew he didn't know, and we know he didn't know either. Some of you think you know, but you don't know, not yet. Perhaps you need a lion's den to be brought face to face with God. Perhaps a flaming furnace to encounter the Fourth Man. Perhaps you need a cross of splintery wood instead of shiny gold electroplate.

How easy and grandiose it is to speak of martyrdom and dying for Christ. But anyone can DIE for Him: how many will LIVE for Him? The test is not in the dying, but in the living; not in one ultimate act of sacrifice, but in a million little obediences every day! Yes! If you cannot, if you will not, take up the cross and die in the mundane and hum-drum of Today, in the HERE and NOW, you are not fit to die the martyr's death in the unknown darkness of some future persecution.

People do not turn away from their faith and become apostate when threatened with death. They fall away when they become bitter against people, angry with God, and offended with His manner of dealing with them. It isn't a sudden decision you are confronted with, but an invisible thing which starts from the core of

your being and works its way into your soul. It is certainly a clear and present danger, and it is within you now, maybe in an inert, embryonic form, maybe in a full-blown disillusionment and anger against God, but it is THERE, waiting for you to succumb to it, feeding itself on your expectation.

Let us draw near to God, and ask to be reduced to Christ. Let us accept whatever He deems beneficial to us, whether it is according to our expectation or not. Know that by the time the rooster crows you may curse and swear that you don't know the Man. Blessed is the one who finds no occasion for stumbling in Him. Love people, but expect nothing from them. Enjoy God, love Him, obey Him: be content with that.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/chip-brogden/the-seed-of-apostasy/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net