

GD24 - "Be Not Deceived, but Continue in Steadfastness"  
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake  
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This lesson is about apostasy. It specifically addresses personal apostasy and uses a number of passages from the D&C dealing with that matter to illustrate various dealings on this subject.

When I first started preparing this lesson I started writing down the names of the people who are addressed in the various revelations this lesson is supposed to cover. I was going to cover the history of the events that transpired and then talk about the text of the revelations. As I started writing the various names down I realized the lesson could very easily turn negative if it turns into a series of case and point examples where apostates are held up for examination. This isn't uplifting, its potentially just a lot of rather unpleasant fault-finding.

Rather than do this, I am going to focus on how the D&C tells us to avoid personal apostasy. First, I will establish the context of the quote, and then I move into the "Do's" and "Don'ts" when it comes to avoiding apostasy.

To make these passages contemporary, and also to get people thinking, consider the psychology of the person who is engaging in the various behaviors being discussed.

### **Context of the Title Quote**

The text of the title is taken from a passage in D&C 49. In this section the Lord is addressing a number of points of doctrine of the "Shakers", or "Shaking Quakers", who call themselves "The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing". One of their beliefs was the Second Coming has occurred in that the Spirit of Christ had come upon Ann Lee. Here, the Lord comments on that doctrine:

D&C 49:22 And again, verily I say unto you, that the Son of Man cometh not in the form of a woman, neither of a man traveling on the earth. 23 Wherefore, **be not deceived, but continue in steadfastness**, looking forth for the heavens to be shaken, and the earth to tremble and to reel to and fro as a drunken man, and for the valleys to be exalted, and for the mountains to be made low, and for the rough places to become smooth--and all this when the angel shall sound his trumpet. 24 But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. 25 Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed.

The Lord points out the signs which were predicted to occur prior

to the Second Coming had not occurred yet, so it is quite plain Ann Lee does not represent the Second Coming. Those who believe she does are deceiving themselves.

Avoiding deception in this case is a matter of studying the Scriptures. The more familiar you are with the Scriptures the more difficult it is for you to be deceived in plain matters of doctrine.

#### **Don'ts** - behaviors to avoid

D&C 3:4 For although a man may have many revelations, and have power to do many mighty works, yet if he **boasts in his own strength**, and **sets at naught the counsels of God**, and **follows after the dictates of his own will and carnal desires**, he must fall and incur the vengeance of a just God upon him.

This passage follows the same theme as that of Matt. 7:21-23. There are people who profess to be of the kingdom and have testified in the name of Christ and have cast out devils in the name of Christ, yet the Lord rejects them.

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Why does the Lord reject them? Because they "work iniquity". They have selectively ignored the counsels of God, setting aside the ones that did not get them where they wanted to be. They wanted a prominent position in the Kingdom so they did the things that made them prominent, but Jesus rejects them because their motives were not pure.

What is the psychology here? You have a person who appears superficially to be religious because they do seeming spiritual things. But, they are so impressed with their accomplishments they start doing their own thing and ignore what God says.

D&C 28:6 And **thou shalt not command him who is at thy head,**

and at the head of the church; 7 For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.

The Lord indicates it is against the order of the Kingdom for a person to tell someone chosen by God they are out of line. God chooses a mouthpiece, and when that person is acting as the Lord's mouthpiece it is the same as the Lord speaking.

Would someone who confesses Jesus is their Lord and Savior reject Him if He spoke to them? Then why do people reject His chosen servants who speak for Him?

What are some of the reasons people would counsel the Prophet or their spiritual leader? Perhaps things like "Well, the Prophet speaks to the Church in general, but not in this specific case" or "The Prophet is detached from us off in SLC, we know what is better for us here" or "The Prophet is just a man and he was responding to social norms or old traditions when he said that, he wasn't speaking for the Lord". Why do people want to say things like this? Because they don't like what the Prophet has said, so they come up with excuses or rationalizations to ignore him.

D&C 40:2 And he received the word with gladness, but straightway Satan tempted him; and the **fear of persecution and the cares of the world** caused him to reject the word.

Just like in the Parable of the Sower:

Matthew 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some [seeds] fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: 5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: 6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Some people initially accept the Gospel, but they are persuaded and deceived by pop culture and the current trends. They go with the flow and are swept away.

Why do people do this? Family pressure, peer pressure, all kinds of social pressures to conform and fit in. The desire for acceptance and the desire to avoid being preeminently different drives people to do what

everyone else is doing.

D&C 121:36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. 37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to **cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men**, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

Here, the Lord is primarily addressing the human desire to control or influence others. The discussion ties together a host of sins all related to abuse of the Priesthood. Why would Priesthood holders be particularly prone to these particular sins?

Covering one's sins would be a particularly common problem because in positions of leadership people are subject to greater public scrutiny and bear the responsibility of being a good example. If a person has to lie to hide things in order to avoid being caught, then how much easier is it to rationalize they have to lie in order to prevent their image from being tarnished in the public eye and therefore set a bad example.

Selfish worldly ambitions would naturally creep in when in a position of Church authority because with the calling comes influence. That influence can be abused.

Manipulating people could also be very tempting in a position of Church authority. Personality cults can spring up with people's faith being abused or their naivety causing them to be easily led astray.

**Do's** - behaviors to engage in

D&C 20:32 But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God; 33 Therefore let the church **take heed and pray always**, lest they fall into temptation;

The Lord wants us to pay attention and pray frequently and consistently. How would this help us avoid apostasy? Paying attention to what the Lord is saying, as well as to what is going on around you is of obvious

importance. If you don't pay attention then you are being deliberately ignorant.

To take heed means to pay especially close attention, it's a more deliberate form of paying attention. The Lord wants us to be deliberate. Don't just do things as they come, and let the circumstances dictate your actions. Be thoughtful and deliberate about spiritual things.

Praying frequently and consistently keeps people thinking about God, it reminds them who they are, it breaks them from secular routines, it gets them talking to the Lord. The more our minds dwell on spiritual things the less carnal our minds will be. If we pray only sporadically and rarely pay attention to our prayers, the Spirit, or anything spiritual around us then we are predominantly carnal in nature.

D&C 26:2 And all things shall be done **by common consent** in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen.

The Lord teaches very plainly that the Church is not a democracy or a popularity contest. It is to be governed by common consent, unanimous common consent. Individual members cannot steer the congregation with their private notions and appeal to popular notions.

What is the psychological effect of such a doctrine? It flatly rejects the notion of competing views on any subject within the congregation, it de-politicizes the religious experience. Consider what various Churches are going through now as they address politically charged issues such as abortion and homosexuality within their own congregations. It is tearing them apart and spreading contention. Common consent eliminates any possibility for such things.

D&C 50:44 Wherefore, I am in your midst, and I am the good shepherd, and the stone of Israel. **He that buildeth upon this rock shall never fall.**

This passage invokes the theme of Matt. 7:24-25.

Matthew 7:24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that

house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Those who do what Jesus taught are founded upon the rock. Anyone who is doing, and not just talking about, what Jesus taught cannot be overthrown. If you act on the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, then you develop a godly walk that keeps you out of the paths of sin, as King Benjamin taught:

Mosiah 4:26 And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you--that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God--I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

A person who is doing the teachings of Christ is walking blameless before God. They are retaining a remission of their sins because they are no longer sinning. The psychological and behavioral aspect of this is plain. If one changes their walk such that they do good work, then they are not committing sin.

D&C 52:14 And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations-- 15 Wherefore he that prayeth, **whose spirit is contrite**, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances. 16 He that speaketh, **whose spirit is contrite**, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances. 17 And again, **he that trembleth under my power** shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you. 18 And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me. 19 Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens.

Having a contrite, or penitent and humble, spirit is essential to having a godly walk. To be contrite in the theological sense means to show sorrow over sin, to detest sin and be sickened by it, and to truly make amends for any sins committed.

The Lord indicated those who are genuinely repentant

and who encourage genuine repentance are of His Spirit. Those who fail to repent and are overcome by sin are not humble before the Lord, so they do not have His Spirit.

The person who is contrite before the Lord will do what the Spirit tells them, will be teachable, and will make amends for wrongs committed. This person is submitting to God, where the unrepentant sinner refuses to submit.

D&C 84:43 And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life. 44 For **you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.** 45 For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 46 And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit. 47 And **every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God,** even the Father.

Here the Lord invokes the subject of Deut. 8:3-4

Deuteronomy 8:2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, [and] to prove thee, to know what [was] in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every [word] that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Here the Lord equates life with both spiritual and physical things. A person cannot live on physical bread, there must be spiritual food as well or the people will die.

The Lord is not speaking strictly figuratively and spiritually here. Consider the consequences of sin, how many of them are lethal or lead to early demise? How many wars have been started by sinners and how many have died because of it? Those who are spiritually starved to death are headed for physical death as well.

Those who consume the word of the Lord as much and as

consistently as they consume physical food are the most spiritually healthy people. If we feed our minds secular carnal filth then we will spiritually die just as surely as we would die if we ate rotted filth from garbage cans.

What is the psychological consequence of consistently feeding yourself spiritually? Your mind is in spiritual places, your tastes are different, you know what is bad when you see it.

### **Conclusion**

These things are really very simple. If we heed the Lord's counsel to reject the evil behaviors and embrace the good ones then we will certainly not fall.