

Hotline For Atheists?

by Wayne Goff

There is a new “crisis hotline” for those struggling between faith and atheism here in Kansas City. It is a project of “Recovering From Religion.” The *supposed* purpose of this hotline is to be **neutral** with people who are considering leaving their religion behind. But the number is **184-I-DOUBTIT** which leads me to believe that they are definitely an atheistic bunch.

Now **why** would anyone need such a hotline? Because for some, leaving their “faith” behind costs them their families, spouses and jobs. Actually, it might cost them their families, and I think that is a great deterrent in religion. Think of the “shunning” of the Amish, or the “excommunicating” of the Catholic Church, or the “*withdrawing*” fellowship of the Lord’s church (2 Thess. 3:6). When families **stand up** against the erring sinner, there is a greater chance that they will repent, change their mind, and return to the Lord. In the eyes of the world this is a most unpopular concept. It is associated with **being forced** to do something against your will. But people need to realize that there are always consequences associated with wrong-doing.

Departing From God

What people need to realize is the **severity** of giving up their religious faith. The New Testament constantly warns believers against the possibility of apostasy. “*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 Tim. 4:11). Yes, we are in such times as that and Satan is hard at work trying to destroy the faith of the Lord’s disciples.

The Hebrew writer wrote, “*Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief in departing from the living God***” (Heb. 3:12). Notice that he did not say that one was “quitting the church,” or “being set free from the shackles of organized religion”! His evil heart of unbelief is causing him to **depart from the living God!** What a horrible predicament in which to be! Naturally, the naysayers will accuse the religious of using scare tactics. But the honest heart had better double-check and **make sure** there is no God before leaving Him! You will *quickly* learn that there **is** a God, that He **has revealed** Himself in the Bible, and that “*it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” come Judgment Day (Heb. 10:31)! Wishing God didn’t exist won’t make it so. The real culprit in our society today is our own **selfish selves** who want to have everything go our way without any consequences when things go bad. Dear friend, that world has *never* existed, and it surely doesn’t exist today.

Free Choice

Do not misunderstand me — I am not saying that you do **not** have the choice to choose. You most certainly do, and that loving God that you are trying to ignore has *given* you that ability. God doesn’t want you to serve Him against your will. He doesn’t want you to be a mindless robot who has no choice in the matter. He wants you to serve Him out of loving obedience, believing with all your heart that serving God is the best thing for you to do. So before you *mindlessly* run headlong in the opposite direction, stop and ask yourself what is so bad about believing in God, obeying the gospel, and being a member of the Lord’s church, God’s family. In other words, as Jesus said, “*count the cost*” (Lk. 14:28).

The apostle Paul spent the entire fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians “*counting the cost*” if the dead do not rise to eternal life! If this is the only life we have, then he said, “*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!*” (v. 32). But in the very next breath he stated, “*Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’*”

Serving God

Like Joshua of old, my proclamation based upon an intelligent faith which has reasons: “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!*” (Josh. 24:15).