

1 John 2:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Analysis

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. John explains the antichrists' origin—they emerged from within the Christian community. "They went out from us" (ex hēmōn exēlthan)—these false teachers were once part of the church, professing believers who departed. This wasn't external attack but internal defection. The repetition of "out from" emphasizes deliberate separation.

"But they were not of us" (all' ouk ēsan ex hēmōn)—despite outward association, they never truly belonged to the believing community. Ex hēmōn (of us) indicates essential identity and origin, not mere association. True believers are "born of God" (1 John 3:9, 5:1); these were not, despite temporary affiliation. "For if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us" (ei gar ēsan ex hēmōn, memenēkeisan an meth' hēmōn)—the pluperfect "would have continued" (memenēkeisan) indicates ongoing, settled remaining. Genuine believers persevere; apostates depart. Continuing in fellowship evidences genuine regeneration; departure reveals its absence.

"But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (all' hina phanerōthōsin hoti ouk eisin pantes ex hēmōn)—their departure served divine purpose: revealing true spiritual state. Phanerōthōsin (be made manifest)

means to be revealed, exposed, brought to light. What was hidden (false profession) became visible (apostasy). This guards believers against false security—not everyone who associates with the church is genuinely regenerated. Perseverance distinguishes true faith from temporary profession.

Historical Context

The problem of apostasy troubled the early church. Many professed faith under persecution or hardship only to fall away. The question arose: were they ever truly saved, or did they lose salvation? John provides clarity: those who apostatize were never genuinely "of us"—never truly regenerated, despite outward profession and temporary association. True believers persevere by God's keeping power (John 10:28-29, 1 Peter 1:5).

This verse became foundational for the doctrine of perseverance of the saints. Augustine taught that true believers, whom God elected and regenerated, will persevere to the end by God's grace. Those who finally apostatize demonstrate they were never truly saved. The Reformers affirmed this: genuine faith endures; temporary faith proves false. Calvin distinguished between temporary faith (convincing but not saving) and saving faith (granted to the elect, enduring to glorification).

Historically, movements like Gnosticism, Arianism, and various heresies began with those who were "from us"—initially within orthodox Christianity but departing into error. Their departure served to "make manifest" their true state. Contemporary application remains relevant: those departing from essential Christian truth, regardless of past profession or current influence, reveal they were never genuinely regenerated.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this verse provide both warning (not all who profess are genuine) and assurance (true believers will persevere)?
2. What's the difference between struggling with doubt or sin (while remaining in fellowship) and apostatizing from the faith?
3. How should churches respond when members depart into serious doctrinal error or moral apostasy?

Interlinear Text

Ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθον, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν εἰ
from us They went out but not they had been from us if
G1537 G2257 G1831 G235 G3756 G2258 G1537 G2257 G1487

γὰρ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν μεμενήκεισαν ἀν μεθ'
for they had been from us no doubt have continued they would with
G1063 G2258 G1537 G2257 G3306 G302 G3326

ἡμῶν ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ
us but they went out that they might be made manifest that not
G2257 G235 G2443 G5319 G3754 G3756

εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν
they were all from us
G1526 G3956 G1537 G2257

Additional Cross-References

Acts 20:30 (Parallel theme): Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

1 Corinthians 11:19 (Creation): For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

Jude 1:19 (Parallel theme): These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

Luke 8:13 (Parallel theme): They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

Matthew 24:24 (Parallel theme): For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

Acts 15:24 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

Mark 13:22 (Parallel theme): For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.

Deuteronomy 13:13 (Parallel theme): Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

Job 17:9 (Parallel theme): The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

Hebrews 10:39 (Parallel theme): But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.