

2 Peter 2:10b-22

As Peter continues his discussion regarding the need to be alert, he further highlights the danger of failing to recognize false teachers. This section follows a natural progression from the profile of false teachers established in 2:1-10a and adds to that profile the inner character and ultimate demise of these heretics.

The ultimate application of this passage is simple:

Be Alert. Do not be afraid to point out that someone falls into the category of Balaam if indeed he or she does so. In fact, Peter—an elder, a pastor, a shepherd in both heart and action—presupposes that calling these folk out is not hostile, mean, or “judgmental,” but rather loving and compassionate. The rescue of someone who might otherwise fall prey to the false teacher’s clever speech is the rescue of someone for whom Jesus died.

So, as you proceed through this passage, keep these meta-applications in mind:

1. It is okay to call false teaching and false practice what it is...
...the way of Balaam
... *waterless springs and mists driven by a storm*. (That is just as empty, dry, and worthless as it can get.)
2. It is okay to question the salvation of those who “fellowship” among the sheep, but continue in the “way of Balaam.”
3. It is not okay to fall into the trap of the American Church that cries out “change is not required or expected of someone who has been born again.”

Question: Before we tackle the text, how do these three points of application make you feel? Why?

Read 2 Peter 2:10b-22

Come back and read vss. 10b-13

I. The character of false teachers is marked by arrogance.

Quick Commentary from Sunday’s Message:

First “bold and arrogant” mean presumptuous/reckless and willful/stubborn. They refer to someone who is bent on his or her own way and pleasure

Second, the NIV translation “*celestial beings*” is an interpretation. The literal translation is “glorious ones.” It comes from the Greek word *doxa* from which we get doxology. The Greek word *doxa* refers to praise and glory.

Third, the phrases “*whereas angels, though greater in might and power*” are not immediately understandable from the grammar. While we certainly know what the words mean, the grammar does not explicitly help us know the identity of those less mighty and powerful than the angels.

Grammatically it could refer to...

- ...the false teachers themselves
- ...to angels (if “glorious ones” refers to celestial beings)
- ...to church leaders (if “glorious ones” refers to Peter and others...quite likely since Peter’s warning about false teachers in 2:1-22 is immediately preceded by 1:12-21—the marks of solid teachers and leaders—and 3:1,2—yet another reminder of godly teachers.

Fourth, the first part of verse thirteen--*They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done*—if read in some other translation can be difficult to understand. For example, the more literal English Standard Version (ESV) translates it this way:

suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.

At first glance, this appears to say that the false teachers will eventually be treated wrong. However the problem is cleared up when we recognize that Peter is making a play on words. In both the NIV and ESV it can be seen that two of the words in Greek are either just the same or at least similar (i.e. NIV, harm and harm; ESV wrong and wrongdoing). The Greek words are similar. Peter wanted to convey that the false teachers will reap what they sowed. He was saying, “for these guys what goes around comes around.” They did wrong they will reap what will be utterly wrong...not in the literal sense of “actually being wrong or unethical,” but wrong as in “Oh Momma, what have I done!?”

Application:

1. Do you think the Body of Christ should wait for secular authorities or news agencies to expose these folks or do you think we should do this ourselves?
2. How can we go about this? What do we need to know?
3. What are the negative consequences of failing to expose people like this within the Body of Christ?

Read 2:13b-16

II. The character of false teachers is marked by license.

License: intentional disregard of or deviation from conventional rules, excessive freedom, taking advantage of one's liberty, taking advantage of the grace of others

List the seven descriptions of this license as found in 13b-14. Here's the first...

1. *Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight*
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

and here's the last...

7. they are experts in greed

Application:

1. What might this look like if and when it happens at a local church?
2. What kind of impact does this have on a local community?
3. If we take serious the purpose statement of West Sound C.C.—We want to glorify God by producing followers of Jesus Christ who are passionate about God, His Word, His Church and the Lost—how will what we just learned change us?

Read 2:17-22

III. The character of false teachers is marked by slavery to sin.

Exercise: As you read through this section underline the parts that point to the lost condition of these false teachers?

These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Quick Commentary from Sunday's Message:

1. This passage makes it clear these folks are not saved. Like Romans 6, the object of one's slavery is the indicator of one's nature. If we are born again, we are slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:15-18). If we are not born again, we are slaves of sin (Romans 6:15-18) and slaves of depravity (2 Peter 2:19).

2. This passage does not teach that people can trust Christ by faith and then lose their salvation. Like Hebrews 6:1-6, the issue here concerns those who come to know the life-changing message about Jesus Christ and all of its surrounding implications, participate within the church, and even acknowledge (and perhaps teach) some of its truth, but fail to truly trust Christ for salvation. Their participation is consumer oriented. They use Christ and his church for various purposes.

Question: What is involved with slavery? If one is enslaved to depravity is there any chance he or she can be freed while still enslaved?

Question: If one is enslaved to righteousness, can one still be a slave to sin?

No, he or she may slip into old habits, but it will not be slavery. Slavery explicitly indicates no escape. It indicates that the person fundamentally identifies with that to which he or she is enslaved. Like Peter, who failed Jesus those three times and suffered deeply inside as a result, Christians do not always live out the God-ordained values of their heart and spirit. In contrast, the folks Peter was talking about in chapter two of his second letter have no such tension. They are taking advantage of God's grace and household. They know it and they should be exposed for it.

Application:

1. What are two things you as an individual can do to increase your level of expertise regarding these issues?
2. Is there anyone you have been looking to "Christendom" for knowledge and wisdom that you now need to give a second thought?