

February 5th, 2012

Description of False Teachers

2 Peter 2:10b-22

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Heavenly Father, how glorious, and kind, and gracious you are to us, Lord you are so faithful and loving, and we thank You first and foremost for the salvation that we have in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Lord we thank You for the word that You have imparted to us, that you have granted to us. And we thank you Lord for the desires that have You have given to us to pursue You. Indeed Lord we love You because You first loved us and apart from Your grace Lord we would have no hope. And Lord as this morning as we peer into Your word, help our minds and our hearts to be renewed. Lord help us to prize these things more greatly than we do and to apply them in our lives by power of the Holy Spirit. Lord as I proclaim these things, I ask that You would be with me and guide that what I say that I teach all that is in accord with the Truth, that You might be honored, that Your people might be blessed, and that the Gospel may go forth in power and grace. And we ask all of this Lord in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Well when we think of something and we perceive it as being too perfect it is common for us to remark that is “too good to be true”. And it seems to something built into our nature that causes us to question things that seem too good or perfect. And describing as something too good to be true may never of been more applicable than it was to the doctrines of the false teachers in Peter’s day. These teachers denied the return of Christ as well as His judgment and were enticing others to live sensual lives free from the fear of retribution. They promised all the benefits of authentic Christianity but without the difficulty of denying the flesh and walking in righteousness. Thus Peter describes them as “waterless springs” for they promised much but delivered nothing. (2 Peter 2:17) Their arrogant boasts were indeed too good to be true and as we’ll see their words and deeds revealed their true nature as ones driven by the flesh, bound for destruction, and seeking to take as many souls with them as possible. So with this in mind please open your Bibles now to 2 Peter.

Now the last time we were in this Epistle we studied the first half of Chapter 2, where Peter discusses the destruction of these false teachers. And by the way of review let's briefly look at a few of those verses. 2 Peter 2:4-10a, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes He condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if He rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. (2 Peter 2:4-10a ESV)

Now Peter uses three historical examples here—the angels, the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah to show that these false teachers will be destroyed like all those who rebelled before them. The examples of Noah and Lot highlight that God does not judge the righteous and the wicked the same. Rather throughout history God has consistently judged the wicked while preserving the righteous and He will do so again in the future. The example of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates that God hates sexual sin and this was something that the false teachers vehemently promoted. Peter says these cities were left in ashes (2 Peter 2:6) to emphasize their complete destruction. Yet even the midst of the great devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah, we are reminded God spared righteous Lot. After giving examples of judgment, Peter concludes in verse 9 (2 Peter 2:9) that, "God knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and hold the unrighteous for judgment". Now Peter is not saying here that God keeps Christians from trials, but rather that He preserves us through trials and keeps us from apostasy, as He did for Noah and Lot. In contrast, His wrath will be poured out on those who indulge on the lust of defiling passions and despise authority.

Now after declaring the certain destruction of the false teachers, in our text this week Peter will now describe the characteristic traits that describe these cursed children. 2 Peter 2:10b-14, "Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them

before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!” (2 Peter 2:10b-14 ESV)

Now in the second half of verse 10, Peter says the false teachers are “bold and willful which is demonstrated by the “blaspheming of the glorious ones”. Now the “glorious ones” are likely fallen angels or demons for verse 11 says that “angels” meaning holy angels refrained from pronouncing judgment against them. Now an example of a holy angel restraining from judging a fallen angel is seen in Jude 9 which says “But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” (Jude 1:9 ESV) Now Michael, a holy angel, refrained from judging the devil, a fallen angel, which demonstrates his humility for he left judgment to God. In contrast the fallen teachers arrogantly blasphemed the fallen angels. They were like irrational animals who were going to be caught and destroyed.

Now verse 13 (2 Peter 2:13) says “they will suffer wrong as a wage for their wrongdoing”. Meaning the false teachers will reap what they sow, those who live un-righteously will be judged by God and suffer destruction for their wickedness. And this truth is clearly seen throughout the Scriptures as it is in Psalm 145:20 which promises, “The LORD preserves all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.” Now that these false teachers were so consumed by evil that they practiced it even during the day, and this emphasizes the degree of their wickedness, for sensual living was typically practiced at night according to 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (Correction 1 Thessalonians 5:7) which says, “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.” And further Isaiah 5:11 warns, “Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink”. Peter calls them “blots and blemishes” which is the exact opposite to what he desires for his readers according to 2 Peter 3:14 which says, “Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace.”

These false teachers pursued their own interests even as they feasted with those in the church which may be a reference to communion or normal meals or both. Verse 15 (2 Peter 2:15) says that they have “eyes full of adultery” meaning they looked on every woman as a potential candidate for adultery. Their desire for sin was so great that it could not be satisfied and in their lust and greed they enticed others to sin. The Greek word translated here “enticed” was used to describe hunters who used bait to ensnare their prey. The false teachers likely enticed others by telling them that their immorality would never be judged therefore they could indulge in it as much as they saw fit.

2 Peter:15-16, “Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.” (2 Peter 2:15-16 ESV)

The false teachers had forsaken the right way and were following the way of Balaam and Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who was hired to curse the nation of Israel. And so we have a better context of this event, please turn in your Bibles now to Numbers 22. Numbers 22. Now in the first part of this chapter, Balaam is approached by the King of Moab to curse Israel and initially the Lord tells Balaam not to go before later telling him to go, but only to do what He tells him. Now starting in verse 22 of Numbers 22 we read, “But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the road. Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall. So he struck her again. Then the angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?” And Balaam said to the donkey, “Because you have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.” And the

donkey said to Balaam, “Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Is it my habit to treat you this way?” And he said, “No.” Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. And he bowed down and fell on his face. (Numbers 22:22-31 ESV)

Now there are several parallels here between Balaam and the false teachers. First, the false teachers were like irrational animals according to Peter and they were bound for destruction. And here Balaam acts irrationally in the face of destruction by the angel of Lord. And interestingly it is Baalam’s donkey, an irrational beast, whose rational behavior spares Baalam’s life. Second Balaam was motivated by greed just as the false teachers in Peter’s day. And third, the false teachers were enemies of God’s people, as Baalam was, who was killed while fighting against Israel in Numbers 31:8. Balaam is called here the “son of Beor” (2 Peter 2:15) who was his biological father according to Numbers 22 (Numbers 22:5). However, what Peter actually wrote was not son of Beor, but actually “son of Bosor” which is how some versions translate this verse. And Bosor is likely a derivative for “basar” which is the Hebrew word for flesh. Peter is telling us here that Balaam was a “son of the flesh” and he was characterized by fleshly desires. Thus the way of Balaam is the way of the flesh, indicating that these false teachers were motivated only by sensual desires. Those who motivated by the flesh live lives characterized by greed and sensuality and, like Balaam, will be destroyed.

Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” For all of mankind there are really only these two ways. The way of Christ and the way of Balaam, one leads to eternal life, the other to eternal destruction. This is because when our first parents fell in the garden (Genesis 3) they plunged all of mankind into sin and transferred on that sinful nature unto all of their descendants. Thus we are not sinners because we sin, but rather we sin because we are born sinners. In the wake of the fall, God promised Eve, that one would come along from her line that would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). This One, Jesus Christ, was born of a virgin, and entirely free of the sinful nature. He lived a sinless life and fulfilled all the righteous acts that God commands before going to Cross to die for His people. On the third day, God raised Christ from the dead proving that He was God and that He had conquered both sin and death. Jesus appeared to many witnesses before ascending into Heaven to take His seat at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus Christ is coming again to judge all of mankind and if you have not done so, today, repent

of your sins, turn from them, turn from the way of the flesh, the way of Balaam, and believe the Gospel. If you do, you shall inherit eternal life and avoid the wrath that is coming upon the world.

2 Peter 2:17-19, "These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved." (2 Peter 2:17-19 ESV)

Now Peter likens the false teachers here to waterless springs and mists driven by a storm and both ideas really make the same point, that these false teachers were not what they appeared to be. Springs were a very welcomed sight to those traveling in the dry climate of the Middle East, and to come upon one where the water had been dried would have been very disappointing. Similarly, those that follow these false teachers will be eternally disappointed. And similar language is used to describe false teachers in Jude 12 which says, "These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted."

Now verse 18 (2 Peter 2:18) says they speak of loud boasts of folly to entice others to live by passions of the flesh, they entice those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. And the word translated here as "barely" is better translated as "recently", as Peter likely means that recent Christian converts were the ones being enticed by these false teachers. Now at this time, many converts to Christianity were coming out of very sensual cultures and teachings that did not require them to give up their immorality would have been very enticing. These false teachers denied the judgment that was coming and thus removed any reason for moral living. Additionally, recent converts would not yet have been grounded in the doctrines of the faith or fully be aware of what would be required to live a godly life. Ironically, these teachers promise freedom while they themselves were slaves of corruption. And true freedom is not found in sinning as we please but rather in slavery to righteousness according to Romans 6:20-23 which says, "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are

now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:20-23 ESV) These teachers enticed others to follow them by promising freedom and joy, but in reality their teachings only brought slavery and destruction.

2 Peter 2:20-22 “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.” (2 Peter 2:20-22 ESV)

Now as we saw earlier in this chapter, Peter seems to be saying that it is possible for those who are saved to lose their salvation, and if that happens, their last state will be worse than their first. However, as we previously discussed, it is not possible according to the Holy Scripture for a true believer to lose his or her salvation. And since that is the case, what is Peter trying to tell us here in these verses? Now what Peter is likely doing here is talking about people who appear to be saved but ultimately show they are not because they reject the word of God. Those who follow the false teachers appeared to be Christians, but they like a dog returning to its own vomit (2 Peter 2:22) revealed that their true nature had never changed.

And this is significant in light of 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Those who confess Christ but return to unrepentant immorality prove that their confession was not valid because their nature has not changed. This is because when we are converted our lives will show evidence of our conversion. Our outward actions will bear witness to the inward work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Though we continue to sin after our conversion, if we profess Christ as Lord yet fail to grow in righteousness, it is likely that we profess a faith that we do not actually possess. Those who commit apostasy prove that they were never truly saved to begin with and are like those described in 1 John 2:19 which says, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went

out, that it might become plain that they are not of us.” For these Peter says that their last state is worse than their first because they rejected the Gospel and the Gospel is the only thing that can save them. Additionally, those that hear the Gospel and are a part of the visible church will experience greater judgment for their unbelief because they received greater light. That is why Peter says it would have been better for them to have never known the way of righteousness, than to know it and to turn from it, because now their judgment will be greater. (2 Peter 2:21)

Now similar to what we saw last week in Ryan’s sermon on Hebrews 10 (CKF Sermon 1-29-2012 – Hebrews 10:19-39), we have here another warning that believers should heed. Peter is saying that apostasy has dire and eternal consequences and therefore we should never entertain it in our minds. Instead, we should obey 1 Peter 2:2 which says, “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation”.

Now at the end of the passage here, Peter quotes two proverbs, both really teaching the same truth, that those who completely return to unclean things are themselves unclean. Now we do not know the origin of the Proverb regarding the sow, but the Proverb regarding the dog is taken from 26:11 (Proverbs 26:11) which says, “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” Now both dogs and pigs were unclean animals under the Old Covenant, and thus they are fitting examples to describe these false teachers who claim to know the Lord, but they were revealed by their lives they were truly unclean.

Now this morning I have two applications for us. And the first is to devote yourself to the word of God. Devote yourself to the teaching of God’s word. Matthew 28:18-20; “And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Now these verses commonly known as the “Great Commission” have been at the heart of Christian evangelism for almost 2,000 years. And the church has been commissioned by Christ to proclaim the Gospel to the very ends of the earth that all nations might repent and believe. However the second half part of this commission is that we teach those that respond in faith to

the Gospel, all that Jesus has commanded. Just as every Christian has been commissioned to share the Gospel, every Christian is also been commissioned to teach God's word. False teachers continue to exist within the church today and thus the need for pure sound teaching also continues.

While we are all at various levels of our understanding of God's word, whatever knowledge we do have, has been given to us that we might give it to others. We have opportunities to do this in numerous ways including teaching God's word in our home, participating in Bible studies, discussing the word with family and friends, and joining a teaching ministry. And the Lord has placed many people in our lives that need to hear the truth of God's word. Therefore we should devote ourselves to teaching God's word wherever we have the opportunity.

My second application is pray that you grow in your subjective desire for Christ. Pray that you grow subjective desire for Christ. Ephesians 3:14-19, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in Heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14-19 ESV)

Now the false teachers were appealing to the people's fleshly desires to entice them. And the antidote to the flesh is to grow in our desire for Christ, for as we grow in our desire for Christ, our desire for sin will be crowded out. Certainly this principle could be twisted to reduce the Christian faith to merely a positive emotional experience. And to be sure, the Christian faith is far more than that for we are called to renew our mind through God's word according Romans 12:2 which commands, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Even so, God has created us as emotional beings. And our emotions like every good gift are given glorify Christ. Though Christians shouldn't blindly follow their emotions, we should remember the reason for which why they are given and find our full fulfillment in our emotions

through our Lord and Savior. Thus, as we renew our minds in the word and apply it in our lives, let us also pray that God would grant us a greater emotional desire for Christ. This will lead to greater objective obedience, for our subjective emotions will carry out what our minds, informed by the word, know we should do. This principle is clearly seen in earthly relationships as well. If you're married, your service to your spouse is not only objectively rooted in the knowledge of who they are, but also subjectively motivated by how you feel about them, the greater subjective feelings of love, the greater objective service. Similarly, as our subjective desire for Christ grows, our objective obedience to Him will grow as well. Now obviously we should obey Christ regardless of how we feel. And our emotions should never govern our obedience. However as our desire becomes more sanctified these desires will increasingly motivate and fuel our obedience to the Lord.

Well, this week we have seen that the false teachers that Peter was confronting were characterized by arrogance, sensuality, and greed. They were like irrational animals (2 Peter 2:12) who had rejected the right way and were following the way of the flesh. They enticed others with their seductive teachings and those who followed them were like dogs returning to their own vomit (2 Peter 2:22), revealing that their true nature had never changed. Therefore as believers we should devote ourselves to the teaching of God's holy word and pray that our desire for Christ would grow, that we might put to death the appetites of the flesh. As we do, let us hold fast to the wonderful promise of 1 John 3:2 which says "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is." Amen? Amen. To God and to God alone be the glory.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father what a privilege it is to peer into these things that You have granted to us. To remember the salvation that we have in Christ and glorious things which lie ahead for all those who love the Lord. Lord we thank You for Your patience and Your kindness with us. And Lord we confess that we often sin and in our own way return to our own vomit, and Lord we ask that You forgive us of that and cause us to hate the sin which remains in our lives and to love our Lord all the more. Lord may we be consumed by a passion for Him and for His righteousness and for the good works which You have prepared for us in advance for us to do. May You conform us oh Lord to His image through the word, through prayer, and through fellowship until that glorious day when we see Him in the sky and we are gathered to

Him. Lord we long for this day and we pray that we will be faithful every day until then by Your grace and for Your glory. And we ask all these things in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, our wonderful and glorious Conquering King, Amen.

Sermon By

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