

7. The truth of false teachers

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In last twenty one years in Christ, I've seen enough so-called Christian TV preachers that I can mimic their typical behaviors and monologues. I must say though, not all the TV preachers are bad. Some are solid in their doctrines and teach the truth without begging for money from the viewers.

In my opinion, there are two common denominators among the TV preachers who are off the truth:

- 1) They, as individuals, are very well to do financially while they are begging for money.
- 2) They don't like it when people challenge them to show their integrity and book-keeping.

Obviously, these people do not want their viewers to see what they do with the money people send. That is wrong. It is not only the TV preachers have the problem with other people's challenges, but also cults are the same way – Jim Jones in Jones Town, David Koresh in Waco, Texas, Joseph Smith of Mormonism and the list goes on. By the way, our church book is always open for anyone to examine.

All these false teachers insist that their authorities come from God Himself and can not and should not be questioned.

Tonight apostle Peter is going to teach us about the truth of false teachers of his time as well as our time. Even though there is a two thousand years gap, the false teachers are made out of the same cookie cutter – satan.

I don't think that I've ever seen any more detailed description of the nature and judgment the false teachers would receive at the end anywhere else in the Bible than this portion.

A. THE JUDGMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS' REVILING

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption,

NASB translate 'natural brute beasts' as 'unreasoning animals'. Animals have life, but they live purely by instinct. I am sure you, too, have noticed that the majority of the Hollywood celebrities live like these animals and they get praised from media.

These 'brute beasts' are destined for destruction. As they seek to destroy the faith, they themselves shall be destroyed. Unfortunately, before that event takes place, these people can do a great deal of moral and spiritual damage in the society.

False teachers' future is less than bleak. They will be judged not only for their own ungodly actions and words, but also how many people's lives they destroy and lead astray from the Lord Jesus and the truth of God.

B. COVETOUSNESS AND SENSUALITY OF FALSE TEACHERS

2 Peter 2:13-14 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, 14 having eyes

full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

What makes me wonder is that people still support these phony TV preachers with their hard earned money. Can they not see their deceptions? In front of TV camera, they pretend to be very spiritual and have a direct link to God like none other. But in reality, they are nothing more than con-artists who want nothing but money, fame and power over spiritually ignorant people.

Please don't ever think that God is with them because they have big ministries or jet airplanes.

Not only do they deceive others, but they even deceive themselves. A person can become so accustomed to his deceptions that he sees them as truth. False doctrine inevitably leads to false living, and false living then encourages false doctrine.

To authenticate their ungodly lifestyle they adjust the Word of God. They brainwash their followers with their new doctrines and make it easier for them to sin just like them. Have you not heard, "Misery loves company"?

They are spots and blemishes that defile the body of Christ. They are like hidden diseases that spread through the body without a notice. These teachers chose to ignore what the Holy Spirit says through James, a half brother of Jesus.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Their heart is set on the flesh and their eyes on adultery, both spiritual and sexual. They prey on the unstable people to join them in their ways.

C. A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE UNGODLY

2 Peter 2:15-17 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. 17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

It is not like these false teachers do not know the truth. Actually they do, but because of their ungodly carnal desires they choose to ignore and deliberately abandon God's way like Balaam did. Covetous people always have a price at which they would be willing to stray from the truth.

According to Num. 22-25, Balaam is a mysterious character, a Gentile prophet who tried to curse the Jews. Balak, the king of the Moabites, was afraid of Israel, so he turned to Balaam for help. Balaam knew it was wrong to cooperate with Balak, but his heart was covetous and he wanted the money and honor that Balak promised him. Balaam knew the truth of God and the will of God, yet he deliberately abandoned the right way and went astray. He is a perfect illustration of the apostates in their covetous practices.

From the beginning, God told Balaam not to help Balak and, Balaam obeyed and sent the messengers home. But when Balak sent more princes and promised more money and honor, Balaam decided to "pray about it again" and reconsider the matter. The second time, God tested Balaam and permitted him to go with the princes.

This was not God's direct will; it was His permissive will, designed to see what the prophet would do.

Balaam jumped at the chance. But when he started to go astray, God rebuked the disobedient prophet through the mouth of his donkey. How remarkable that the animals obey God, even when their masters do not. God permitted Balaam to set up his altars and offer his sacrifices, but God did not permit him to curse Israel. Instead, God turned Balaam's curse into a blessing.

Balaam was not able to curse Israel, but he was able to tell Balak how to defeat Israel. All the Moabites had to do was dispatching their loose women in the midst of the Israel. Instead of maintaining its separated position, Israel men compromised and joined the pagan orgies of the Moabites. God had to discipline the Israel people and thousands of them died.

You can see in Balaam the two aspects of apostasy that Peter emphasized in this chapter: sensual lust and covetousness. He loved money and he led Israel into lustful sin. He was a man who could get messages from God, yet he led people away from God. When you read his oracles, you cannot help but be impressed with his eloquence. Yet he deliberately disobeyed God!

There is absolutely nothing wrong with a ministry sharing its opportunities and need with its praying friends and congregation. While the true servant of God trusts the Father to meet his needs and seeks to help people grow through their giving, the false teachers trust their "fund-raising gimmicks" and leave people in worse shape than they found them. They know how to exploit the unstable and the innocent.

The descriptions of these false teachers' future in v17 are more than vivid, more than real and more than terrifying.

D. SLAVES OF CORRUPTION INSTEAD OF LIBERTY

2 Peter 2:18-19 For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

Freedom or liberty is a concept that is very important in today's world, yet not everybody really understands what the word means. In fact, everybody from the communist to the sleaziest person in the world seems to have his own definition.

Nobody is completely free in the sense of having the ability and the opportunity to do whatever he wants to do. As long as we are born as human beings, we have limitations one way or another that we can not possibly overcome.

Freedom isn't found in what Jesus can give us, but only in Jesus Himself. When we seek freedom in the wrong way, we become slaves of corruption which ends up in death.

Faith is only as good as the object. A pagan may have great faith in his idol, but the idol can do nothing for him. But when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, that faith will accomplish something special, because God always keeps His promises.

E. BETTER FOR THEM NOT TO HAVE KNOWN CHRIST

2 Peter 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

False teachers know about Jesus Christ intellectually. They use His words invoke His name, and carry His Book. But they do not know Him personally. Theirs is an academic knowledge, not a saving faith. In other words, spiritual ignorance is better than spiritual apostasy any day.

Holiness is not simply refusing to do evil things, because even unsaved people can practice self-control. True holiness is more than conquering temptation. It is conquering even the desire to disobey God.

At the beginning of this study, apostle Peter called these false teachers 'natural brute beasts', notice how it ends by describing them as pigs and dogs.

Dogs in Peter's day were regarded with contempt, unlike today's dog which is bathed, groomed, and pampered as a beloved pet. Underneath it all, however, a dog's nature stays the same – a dog is a dog. And most dogs have the repulsive habit of returning to their own vomit, just as a freshly bathed pig will wallow in mud the first chance it gets.

In the same manner, false teachers may wear clerical collars, religious robes or suit and tie and standing behind pulpit, but they, too, have the repulsive habit of returning to wallow in defilements. Because underneath of their religious garb, their true nature remains unchanged. They are counterfeit to the core.

In the final judgment, there will be less punishment for the ignorant than for those who heard the truth but turned away. Certainly everyone who rejects the Lord Jesus will spend eternity in hell.

Luke 12:47-48 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Those who have been in the Lord must take heed from this study. If anyone thinks that he or she is too spiritual to get into the devil's trap, I have news for them. With that arrogant thought, they are already in.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) There can be no freedom or fulfillment apart from submission to Jesus Christ.

The purpose of life is not to find freedom, but to find the Master Jesus. Just as a gifted musician finds freedom and fulfillment putting himself or herself under the discipline of a great master musician, so the believer finds true freedom and fulfillment under the authority of Jesus Christ.

2) Since knowledge brings responsibility, we should put into action what we already know.

Many of us already know far more than what we're practicing. Knowledge alone tends to puff up our pride, not necessarily strengthen our obedience. The more we learn, the more God expects us to apply it.