

The Final Word

Week 7 – 2 Peter 2:18-22

In the passage we are studying, Peter continues his warning about false teachers. They are not merely mistaken or misguided; they are willfully intent on distorting the Word of God, deceiving their hearers, and gathering converts with their false doctrines. They are apostates – a person who renounces a religious or political belief or principle (Webster’s Dictionary).

An apostate is somebody who has known the gospel—in a sense, tried the gospel, although he has never been saved—refuses the gospel, and then, tries to replace the gospel. An apostate is not just neutral about this thing. . . This is a person who deliberately makes a decision, an anti-gospel decision (Adrian Rogers “Sick Hogs and Dirty Dogs” sermon archives).

Peter compares false teachers to “wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (2 Peter 2:17, NKJV). Abraham and Isaac were great well diggers, leaving a trail of blessing to all who would follow. Isaiah wrote, “Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3). The Lord Jesus told the woman at Jacob’s well that He could give her a well of water deep within her that would spring up to eternal life (John 4:14). Wells speak of salvation in Christ. True Bible preachers and teachers point others to Jesus, the Well of Living Water. False teachers and false prophets pretend to have found salvation and satisfaction, but all they can offer are “wells without water.”

False prophets and false teachers are “mists driven by a storm” (2 Peter 2:17, NASB). They are like dust clouds, created when high winds draw up particles of dust into the churning atmosphere of a storm. Through deception and distortion of the Word of God, apostate teachers and preachers leave ruin and destruction in their wake. Many will be drawn into their persuasive rhetoric only to discover in the end they have been deceived by the lies of the devil. Peter interjects this somber note of judgment on them and their followers, “for whom the black darkness has been reserved” (2 Peter 2:17). All who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be “cast out into outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12). Somber words indeed.

I. The Enticement of False Teachers – 2 Peter 2:18-19

False teachers entice by “fleshly desires [and] by sensuality.” The word *entice* means “to catch by a bait” (Strong’s Concordance). False teachers appeal to the base nature of mankind, using manipulation and misdirection while excusing sin and abolishing

shame. This is the basis of their false doctrines! This is how they are so easily able to ensnare those who were on the verge of making an escape from “the ones who live in error.”

The false teachers promise “freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption.” Such a paradox. Only in Christ are we set free. In Galatians 5:1, Paul wrote, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.”

The freedom that Jesus gives is not freedom to do as you want; it is freedom to do as you ought. (Rogers, A. (1992). Sick Hogs and Dirty Dogs, in *Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive* (2 Peter 2:17-22)

II. The Endangerment of False Teachers – 2 Peter 2:20-22

Peter is referring here to those who have tasted Christianity for a season but never been genuinely converted. In time, they return to their former lifestyle. This is not a person who simply drifts away. This is one who deliberately make a decision to reject Jesus and “the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy command handed on to them.” When they chose against the truth, they went deeper and deeper into sin, resulting in ever-increasing bondage. Jesus told a parable of a man who had a demon and freed himself of it for a short season. The demon returned, found the space “unoccupied, swept, and put in order.” The demon “takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first” (see Matthew 12:43-45).

Reformation without transformation leads to greater degradation and final condemnation. (Rogers, A. (1992). Sick Hogs and Dirty Dogs, in *Adrian Rogers Sermon Archive* (2 Peter 2:17-22)

Peter’s text refers to people who were never saved. They were exposed to the truth, got a dose of religion void of a personal relationship with Christ, may have temporarily changed their behavior by adhering to rules and regulations, but were never born again and ultimately returned to their uncleanness. First John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”

Peter closes this section by referring to the nature of dogs (see Proverbs 26:11) and hogs. A dog can be trained and groomed and brought into the house to sleep on the bed, but he is still a dog. It is possible to fluff and cut and curl a pig's coif, but changing the pig's appearance does nothing to change the pig's nature. A dog will do what comes naturally and a pig, even a pretty one, will return to wallowing in the mire. The true nature of an animal cannot be changed by external measures alone. The dog and the pig do what they do because of what they are. The same is true of a man (or woman) without God. If he has never repented of his sins, believed on Jesus, and received Him by faith; then his true nature will be revealed even if, for a time, he confesses Christ and appears to be a follower.

A great deal of difference exists between an apostate and a backslider. A backslider is genuinely saved. He might get away from the Lord, but he is not happy in his worldly wanderings. Eventually, either he will be brought back to the Lord by means of the rod of divine chastisement or he will die a premature death. An apostate, however, despite his profession of faith, has never been saved at all, so he has nothing to which to return. Peter was a backslider. Judas was an apostate. (John Philips, *Exploring the Epistles of Peter*)

True change results after genuine conversion. When the heart is changed by faith in the Lord Jesus, the life will be changed from the inside out. When you believe right, you will behave right!

III. The Entanglement of Sin – Hebrews 12:1, Ephesians 4:22-24

A point of clarity. In context, our passage (2 Peter 2:18-22) describes apostates, not believers. These apostates left their sinful lifestyle for a season only to be “again entangled in them.” But before we leave this passage, I want us to consider the ways in which we, as Christians, can become entangled in sinful habit patterns of our life prior to our conversion.

Hebrews 12:1-2 says, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and **the sin which so easily entangles us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (emphasis mine).

Beloved, learn this about sin. Sin entices. Sin entangles. The flesh remains in us after conversion (see Romans 6, 7, 8 for more insight). Satan's attacks target our flesh. He suits his temptations to our "tempt-able" flesh in an effort to entice us to sin.

The writer of Hebrews uses an athletic illustration to warn us of the snares of the devil. Athletes in training often used (use) weights which were set aside for the actual competition, giving them a decided advantage in speed and endurance. We must guard against any encumbrances that would slow down our spiritual progress in sanctification. These are typically things that distract us, not necessarily bad things. And we must lay aside any sin, every sin, that would entangle us. Paul wrote, "Lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lust of deceit, and that you **be renewed in the spirit of your mind**, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:22-24 emphasis mine). Renewing the mind is the key to our success. We need to "renew our mind" to replace the old sinful patterns of thinking with the truth of God's Word. We need to saturate our soul with the true knowledge of Christ through personal intentional study of the Word to learn to appropriate and apply what is already ours in Christ. He has made us "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) and given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Hallelujah! What a Savior!!

Beloved, when the enemy shoots a fiery dart at you, you must be armored up (see Ephesians 6:10-17). **Recognize** it as a lie from the devil. **Refuse** to receive it. **Resist** the devil and draw near to God. **Replace** the lies of Satan with God's Word. This is why you must renew your mind with the Word (see Romans 12:1-2). And then run. **Run** with your eyes fixed on Jesus!