

2 Peter 2:19-22 False Teachers 7/30/17

They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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. ²² 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.”

(Pastor prays)

Today we turn our attention once again to the quagmire of false teachers. I often hear it said, “It doesn’t really matter where you go to church as long as you are going to church.” Or I hear parents say, “We go to that church because our kids love it there.” That is a great thing if what they are teaching there is Biblical, doctrinal, Christ-centered and God-honoring. And part of my scriptural mandate is to expose some of the false teaching wolves dressed as *really* charismatic sheep.

These false teachers are feeding people a delicious poison...tickling ears while rotting souls. I’m using the end of Peter’s warning in the hopes that our eyes will be sharpened and our ears alerted to the friendly heresies that masquerade in our city as honorable and entertaining truths.

Like anti-freeze to a dog, those things taste sweet but they are deadly. We must chain ourselves to the Gospel that saves, the perfect life, atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. We must declare that God loves people and hates sin and will only save those who are in Christ. And we must move away from a decisional Christianity that puts the empowerment of people over the saving power of God’s grace. (We must) Bathe in His grace; saturate our souls in the saving grace of God and reject the cheap religion of self-help because it’s a false and nefarious gospel that saves no one and only makes them *worse*. Like the parable Jesus told in Luke 11:24-26, “*When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it*

says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

False Teaching Makes You Worse Than You Were Before

Christ *always* makes you better. Let's finish out this passage and take a look at what Peter says about false teachers.

False Teachers are Deceitful

Deceitful. To deceive someone, you've got to look and sound enough like the real thing so that people will think it's true when it's actually a lie. Let me show you what I mean.

Still speaking of false teachers, Peter says in verse 19, *They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* Empty promises. The psychological insight here is profound. False teachers promise freedom and that's the very thing they don't have. Remember what Peter said about himself in 2 Peter 1:1, "I am a slave of Jesus Christ." By contrast, in this passage, a false teacher is a slave to corruption. Slave, a word that means the lifting off of moral restraint including views of sexuality and money. Their lifestyle contradicted their message.

A false teacher really needs to express himself. And in the quest for self-expression he ends up falling into bondage to self. A false teacher needs to control, needs to dictate, needs to be revered. A Bible teacher is thankful that God controls. They believe that God dictates and wants Christ to be revered. A false teacher's ministry is built around *him*. A Bible teacher's ministry is built around *Christ*; and you can always spot the difference. Peter as much as says so at the end of verse 19, *For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.*

Here's the dichotomy Peter has set up: You are either a slave to *Christ* or you are a slave to *self*. If Christ overcomes you, if by grace through faith in Jesus, you become a Christian, then it's a glorious freeing, a joyful state of service. But if, like false teachers, you are overcome by self, then to yourself you are enslaved. You are enslaved to the

passions and whims and degradations that selfishness demands. There is an aphorism that is true: No man or woman can serve two masters but all men will serve one. Don't be deceived. Lay down your arms. Stop fighting and surrender to the gracious, kind, loving forgiveness of God found at the cross of Jesus Christ. Be a slave of sin no more. Be freed by the blood of Jesus. False teachers are deceitful.

False Teachers are Doomed

I'm going to read verses 20 and 21 and you listen to the language, especially the words "escape" and "knowledge" and "the way to righteousness." These are all terms for Christianity, and for a false teacher, it feels like the real thing.

Let's read it and feel the intensity. *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. ²¹ 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.*

That's disturbing. Because now it's not just splitting hairs doctrinally; Heaven and Hell are at stake. Peter tells us when he is talking about false teachers that they have all the marks of Christianity. They confessed Christ as Lord and Savior. They were baptized and, in verse 20, they escaped the defilements of the world. Defilement – *miasma* – poisonous vapor, putrid organic material, rottenness. They've gotten out of all of that in the world by professing a religion. But there is no real power over sin. There is no Holy Spirit indwelling. No grace operating. What you have in verses 20 and 21 are people making a moral reform, but moral reform can't change your heart without the Spirit of God. The church is filled with people who wanted to get some religion and pull themselves up out of the *miasma* and get clean. And yet, they don't have Christ. And some of them become preachers.

Let's be clear here. Peter is not teaching that Christians can lose their salvation. He is teaching that church *members* can be lost. Walking an aisle, making a profession of faith, being baptized, joining a church, these things don't ensure a future destiny in Heaven. Only those who continue to live a life of godliness will receive the reward of

eternal life and that's done by God's *grace* and not our *works*. Perseverance is the mark of genuineness.

There are a couple of passages that substantiate this:

Matthew 10:22, *and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

Hebrews 3:14, *For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.*

These verses remind us not to presume on God's grace but to praise God for His preserving grace that serves as the mark of you being in Christ. Our confidence in salvation is not placed in any *acts* we have done or will do but in the finished work of Christ on the cross. But the way we live our lives each day, the joy we find in worship, and the things of the Lord give evidence of whether or not we are filled with the Spirit and indeed in the faith.

Remember what John said in 1 John 2:19 about those falling away: *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 all are not of us.*

Perseverance of the Saints. I think the interpretive key for this whole passage is in verse 22. I hate to end a sermon with the verse that has the word "vomit" in it but that's where we are. Let's read and consider it. *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."*

Here's the point. A dog vomits but goes back and sniffs around the refuse because it's a dog and, no matter how well you train it, it's still a dog. You can wash a pig and clean it up nice, but as soon as opportunity arises, it goes right back to the mud/mire because it is still a pig. Its nature hasn't changed.

Becoming a Christian is not you cleaning up or changing behavior or acting nicer. That's a cheap view. Becoming a Christian is God reaching into your life and removing your heart of stone and giving you a heart of flesh. It's through His Spirit that dead men live.

It's a changed nature that prompts you to hate sin, love Christ and want to live for God's glory alone.

It is said like this by Paul: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come and "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by sinful flesh, could not do. By sending his own son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to His Spirit."

We turn *from* false teaching. We turn *to* Jesus, the true teacher.

(Pastor prays)