

Peter's Farewell Testament #5 How Can We Avoid Being Led Astray?

Intro: We might call 2 Peter Peter's Farewell Testament. Peter knows by revelation that his time on earth is drawing near; so he writes out of concern for the saints that he will soon leave behind. He wants the Lord's people to remain true to the faith that he has had a part in revealing to them. He wants them to be sure about their faith. So he answers some of the fundamental questions Christians need to ask:

**How can we know that we will enter the eternal kingdom?
How can we know that the gospel is true?**

But now after giving these assurances, he warns them of the danger of false teachers who might lead them astray from the truth. Disciples need to prepare for them. Thus Peter answers another important question, "How can we avoid being led astray?"

Peter begins the discussion by warning of the rise of false teachers and describing them in unmistakable terms. They will be factious, apostate, self-condemned, popular, destructive, covetous, and doomed for destruction.

In that connection he shows that they will partake of that destruction that God has already demonstrated in the past in His judgment of angels, of the ancient world, and of Sodom and Gomorrah while He at the same time delivered the righteous like Noah and Lot.

Now that it is clear that their judgment is certain, Peter continues his discussion of the false teachers by further describing their characteristics. His language is passionate, pointed, and with colorful metaphors as He seeks to educate and warn His audience to the reality of the danger that lurks before them.

Now that he has shown the judgment of God upon the wicked, he returns to the description of the false teacher as those...

...who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a

rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. (2 Peter 2:10-16)

In this section it is hard to perceive an organized outline in Peter's mind; but we might broadly take our clues from Peter's last expression--"those who indulge the flesh and despise authority." Peter appears to take these themes up in reverse order:

The False Teachers' Attitude toward God's Authority

Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

What becomes clear to us is that the false teacher has abandoned his commitment to the authority of God as it was manifested first in the giving of the Law and then in the teaching of Jesus and His apostles which appeals to the divine origin of that Law.

They despise authority

Peter acknowledges that "lordship" is inherent in God and those He send to reveal and serve the truth.

The false teachers "despise" such rule or lordship; and it is manifested in their actions:

They are daring

They reveal a reckless defiance of God.

They are self-willed

they are stubbornly determined to do their own will rather than God's.

They are fearless

they have no fear of the consequences when they speak the angels or against the truths that have come through angels.

"Angelic majesties" is a difficult and obscure expression; but perhaps Peter refers to idea that God's original written manifestation of authority in the Law came through the angels (Cf. Gal. 3:16). These false teachers revile those glorious ones God used to reveal His glorious law.

They dare to do angels what the angels themselves would not dare do to the false teacher before the Lord.

If Peter is generalizing Jude's description of the false teacher, he may be referring to Michael's reluctance to revile Satan himself; but instead said to him, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan."

To depart from the truth, one must have ultimately an underlying disrespect for the authority of God. These false teachers wanted to have it their way, so they despised any source that reflected the authority of God, denying even the as Peter said earlier, the Master who bought them..

The False Teachers' Attitude toward God's Ethics

It usually becomes clear that those who reject the authority of God often have an underlying desire to practice some God-forbidden evil. So it is with the false teachers. They are drawn to debauchery, sexual immorality and luxurious living.

But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.

They act like animals

If one rejects the spiritual direction of God, what is left but the impulse of the flesh? Here Peter takes up the second them of verse 10--"*those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires.*"

No animal acts on the basis of moral principle; but rather on the basis of natural instinct. And so these false teachers are like them not only in their fleshly living, but also in their destiny. Like the brute beast who is captured and killed, so they will be destroyed.

Sin brings its own punishment--"*suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.*"

They revel even in the daytime

They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

Even in the Greco-Roman society it was expected that people show some restraint in the pursuit of revelry, such things being reserved for the night-time hours and hidden away from public view.

However these false teachers exercise no such restraints. And while they sit in the social company of others, they could only be called "spots or blemishes" upon the gathering.

Bauckham thinks based on Jude's use of the word "agapais" (love feasts), which were charitable meals that Christians shared with one another, that Peter has made a play on words. The true Christians ate with love in their "agapais;" but the false teacher ate with lust in their "apatais," that is, in their deceptions. There was no love in what they are doing!

They have eyes full of adultery

having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls,

So captured by their lust, they are unable to have a pure thought about any woman at the gathering. As they look about the table, they are actively fantasizing about who they'll will next commit adultery, looking among the morally unstable for their next victim.

They are motivated by covetousness

having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

The NT often speaks about the important of training or discipline in righteous conduct, but these false teachers have worked out in the "gym" of materialism and brought the curse of God upon themselves for their sin.

They find a ready prototype in the false prophet Balaam who at least was willing to come for a price to the King Barak in order to curse the Israelites.

Of course Peter pokes fun at the false teacher implying that he is no smarter than Balaam's dumb donkey who miraculously spoke to warn the prophet of the destructive path he was taking.

What becomes clear to us from this section is that the false teacher's ethics reveals his attitude toward God's authority. He is in rebellion against God both spiritually and morally.

The kind of false teachers Peter has in mind is filled out by his description. He teaches under the assumption that these teachers have known the truth and have deliberate turned from the authority of God to live a morally destitute life while using religious as a cloak of their ungodliness.

Lessons for us

Peter's description gives us an important starting point in identifying those who are of danger to the church.

When people begin to question the authority of God and His word look out.

When people begin to justify manifestly sinful conduct look out.

We are seeing Peter's prophecy being lived out in our own day!

While thinking about the dangers of false teachers, it is always important let these descriptions search out our own hearts to see if we imbibe the spirit of the rebel.

Do we have inclinations to resist the authority of God?

Are we looking for a work-around for something we like that the Scriptures just don't seem to support?

One of the best ways to protect ourselves from false teachers is to love God and respect His truth so much that we have no inclination to change it.

Conclusion: Do you love the truth more than anything else? Are you willing to obey it?