

The Wake of Destruction

1 **The Destruction of False Teaching**

2 PETER 2:17-22

2 **Where we were...**

- ▶ In the preceding verses of 2 Peter, we have seen the characteristics of false teachers. Peter taught us how to recognize the wolves among the sheep.
- ▶ Peter is still focused on those false teachers in 2 Peter 2:17-22 but now turns his attention to the destruction that these teachers leave in their wake.

3 **2 Peter 2:17-22**

These people are waterless springs and mists driven by a hurricane, for whom the gloom of darkness has been reserved. For by speaking high-sounding but empty words, they entice with desires of the flesh and with licentiousness those who are scarcely escaping from those who live in error, promising them freedom although they themselves are slaves of depravity. For to whatever someone succumbs, by this he is also enslaved. For if, after they have escaped from the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and they are again entangled in these things and succumb to them, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. The statement of the true proverb has happened to them, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow, after washing herself, returns to wallowing in the mud." (2 Peter 2:17–22, LEB)

4 **The targets of destruction**

2 PETER 2:17-18

5 **How the targets are impacted**

- ▶ 2:17–18. The "accursed brood" (v. 14) of false teachers is able to make an impact because of:
 - ▶ the deceptive nature of its approach
 - ▶ the vulnerability of its targets (immature believers or gullible unbelievers)

6 **How do Christians become a target for false teachers?**

- ▶ By not being founded in sound doctrine
 - ▶ *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed.*
 - ▶ "Target" Christians elevate their feelings above the Word of God
 - ▶ They refuse some Bible teaching because it does not fit their experience. But instead, they should interpret their experience in light of God's Word. This is why some people cannot except the security of the believer – because they have seen some people "fall away."
 - ▶ They "feel" that there is something more beyond the word – some mystical experience – rather than realizing the Word has everything we need for life and godliness.

7 **Springs without water**

- ▶ False teachers are *springs without water and mists driven by a storm* (cf. Jude 12–13).
- ▶ In both cases one would look for some benefit or blessing (a cool drink from the spring; a refreshing shower from the clouds) but in each case he is disappointed.
- ▶ The very nature of hypocrisy is that one does not have what he pretends to have.
 - ▶ The pretense is intentional.
 - ▶ This condition is not the same as a believer struggling with taking positional faith and making it real in his daily life.

8 **Coming judgment for false teachers**

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- ▶ Once again (cf. 2 Peter 2:1, 3, 9, 12–13) Peter wrote of their coming judgment.
- ▶ The blackest darkness (lit., “blackness” or “gloominess” [*zophos*; cf. “gloomy” in v. 4] of darkness) is reserved for them (cf. Jude 13).
 - ▶ This blackness is presumably hell.

9 **The weapon of words**

- ▶ As in the propagation of all heresy, human speech is the weapon that false teachers aim at their targets: they mouth (*phthengomenoi*, “make a sound”; also used in 2 Peter 2:16) empty (*mataiotētos*, “futile, worthless, without results”; cf. Eph. 4:17) boastful (*hyperonka*, “swollen”; another *hapax legomenon* by Peter) words.
 - ▶ Such high-sounding words by which they sought to impress and deceive people were actually worthless, being no different from the sound a donkey makes!
- ▶ These false teachers sought to lure the unstable by appealing to (*deleazousin*, *baiting*, *enticing* also used in 2 Peter 2:14) the lustful (*aselgeiais*; cf. v. 7) desires of sinful human nature. The teachers themselves were licentious and they tried to encourage Christians to be the same.

10 **Who are the vulnerable targets?**

- ▶ Two groups of people are in view here:
 - ▶ Some people are just beginning to consider the claims of the Gospel but have not yet received Christ. They are vulnerable because the false teachers claim these individuals can have a relationship with God that leads them to heaven, but also continue a sensual lifestyle. These individuals may make a religious commitment but never truly repent.
 - ▶ The second group are believers who have recently been converted and escaped their pagan companions but who are not yet grounded in the faith. They are easily led back into sensual habits by the false teachers.
 - ▶ This group does not have the foundation in the Bible to discern false theology.
 - ▶ They are easily led astray by intellectual arguments.

11 **Types of false teachers**

- ▶ There are those who deliberately teach falsehood for personal profit. Peter has dealt with this group previously.
- ▶ There are also teachers who simply have wrong theology that appeals to their intellect and then lead others astray into that same idea.
- ▶ Either group can damage vulnerable and undiscerning people.

12 **Modern-day heretics**

- ▶ Heresy is a denial of a Bible truth
 - ▶ Jimmy Swaggart publicly denied the Trinity
 - ▶ Benny Hinn recently rejected the “prosperity Gospel” which he himself preached for years. He still claims to be a healer in spite of the fact that God’s Word shows that he is not one. He made false prophecies – claiming that God would destroy the homosexual community in America by fire “no later than 1995.” He claims to be a healer, but only heals where there is “money, music, and atmosphere.” (Costi Hinn – Benny Hinn’s nephew)
 - ▶ There are countless other examples of an intentional perversion of the Gospel for prophet
 - ▶

13 **C.S. Lewis – well-intentioned intellectual**

- ▶ A profound and gifted writer
- ▶ Our children loved the *Chronicles of Narnia*

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- ▶ In *Mere Christianity*, Lewis points out a lot of modern hypocrisy among Christians
- ▶ The *Screwtape Letters* are a vivid description of how Satan attacks us.

14 **The theological errors of C.S. Lewis**

- ▶ He did not believe the Bible to be inerrant
- ▶ He viewed the Protestant Reformation as avoidable
- ▶ He remained in the Church of England in spite of largely Protestant beliefs
- ▶ He allowed for some in other cultures to be saved by imperfect representations of Christ without really knowing Christ
- ▶ Lewis opposed the substitutionary and penal view of the Atonement (that Christ bore the penalty for our sins in our place).
- ▶ Lewis believed that you could “reason” yourself into Christianity while Christ said that a Spirit must draw a man to Christ.

15 **Reading for those with biblical discernment**

- ▶ Kenneth Magnuson, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Seminary, sees the same errors in Lewis’ writings as other evangelicals. He requires students to read Lewis’ *Mere Christianity* for his introduction to ethics course.
- ▶ *To be sure, Lewis is not orthodox on some important matters. I assign reading from a range of authors who are worth engaging; I am happy to have students read one of the most important apologists of the 20th century. Lewis is not always right, but he is nearly always worth considering and engaging.*
- ▶ Question: Do you have biblical discernment? Have you become thoroughly familiar with God’s Word and is it part of your daily life?
- ▶

16 **John Piper on C.S. Lewis**

- ▶ Piper enjoys reading C.S. Lewis but cautions against referring to Lewis for truth or doctrine.
- ▶ *Lewis is not a writer to which we should turn for growth in a careful biblical understanding of Christian doctrine. There is almost no passage of Scripture on which I would turn to Lewis for exegetical illumination. ... His value is not in his biblical exegesis. Lewis is not the kind of writer who provides substance for a pastor’s sermons.*

17 **Just one example from many**

- ▶ Lewis is just one example of an influential voice to which many Christians give heed.
- ▶ But with any human speaker, writer, or teacher, you need to evaluate each thing that the person says in light of the Word of God.
- ▶ Men are flawed and sinners. Anything we produce will not be without error. Only the Word of God is inerrant and infallible and we should FOCUS our attention on that Word, first and foremost!

18 **The techniques of destruction**

2 PETER 2:19

19 **The naïve are vulnerable**

- ▶ *...promising them freedom although they themselves are slaves of depravity. For to whatever someone succumbs, by this he is also enslaved. (2 Peter 2:19, LEB)*
- ▶ 2:19. The techniques of false teachers are only workable with the naïve, for the heretics are like a 300-pound man selling diet books—they promise ... freedom but are themselves hopelessly enslaved by depravity (John 8:34–36).

20 **We can choose to live in slavery**

- ▶ When we yield to sin, we become its slave.
 - ▶ Slavery is not merely being owned by another.
- ▶ Slavery is the mastery of one's will by any person, idea, or substance (Rom. 6:16; 1 Cor. 6:12b).
 - ▶ *Do you not know that to whomever you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whomever you obey, whether sin, leading to death, or obedience, leading to righteousness?* (Romans 6:16, LEB)
- ▶ Jesus wants to free us from that slavery each day.
 - ▶ *Jesus replied to them, "Truly, truly I say to you, that everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. And the slave does not remain in the household forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.* (John 8:34–36, LEB)

21 **The termination of destruction**

2 PETER 2:20-22

22 **2 Peter 2:20-22**

For if, after they have escaped from the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and they are again entangled in these things and succumb to them, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. The statement of the true proverb has happened to them, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and "A sow, after washing herself, returns to wallowing in the mud." (2 Peter 2:20–22, LEB)

23 **What is this destruction?**

- ▶ One view is that this destruction is being sent to Hell.
- ▶ However, there is no clear reference to eternal punishment in these verses.
- ▶ Peter uses 2 examples in nature of animal behavior that people find gross:
 - ▶ A washed pig jumps back into the mud
 - ▶ A dog will go back later and lick up its own vomit
 - ▶ For a Jew to be called a dog or a pig was the lowest form of insult
- ▶ Peter is saying that when a person *who is just escaping from those living in error* or who *have escaped the corruption of the world* go back to the very thing that they escaped, they are showing a gross, carnal nature. In both cases, the "animal" has simply returned to the true state of what they are.

24 **So what is the end of such a person?**

- ▶ People who were just considering the Gospel and turn to a sensual religion instead are more than ever slaves to their sensuality.
 - ▶ If these people made a confession of faith as a religious act (without true repentance), then they become ever more in bondage to their sin. They become less able to hear the Word of God and respond to it because their heart has been hardened. Indeed their latter state is worse than the former.
 - ▶ When that knowledge of the true Gospel was rejected, their end was deeper corruption (again entangled in it and overcome) and presumably a more severe degree of punishment. Indeed, they would have been better off never to have known the gospel, the way of righteousness, and the sacred (holy) commandment (i.e., the apostolic message) than to have known the truth and have deliberately violated it.

25 **What about new believers who are deceived?**

- ▶ Immature Christians who do not know the Word well and are easily deceived might:
 - ▶ Turn to an intellectual but unbiblical faith
 - ▶ Or turn to a set of doctrines that excuse and endorse sensuality.
 - ▶ These new believers will find even less pleasure and fulfillment in their sins than before they were saved.
- ▶ This group has available to them the knowledge about Jesus Christ, which could produce liberty and life.
- ▶ By returning to the sensuality of their former lives, they lose their testimony and lose many eternal rewards. While they still go to heaven as Christians, they are more miserable than before their salvation because they cannot find the same pleasure in sin that they used to find.
- ▶ They get in great spiritual bondage and fail to enjoy their freedom in Christ. And they continue to seek only those ideas that support their return to a sinful lifestyle. These people would do well to consider whether they were ever saved.

26 **The end is coming**

- ▶ The false teachers will themselves meet destruction and others will be destroyed by them.
- ▶ But Christians can wage spiritual warfare more effectively if they know their spiritual enemies, the techniques that heretics use, and the end result of their deception.
- ▶ The description of that end is in our next message.

27 **What should we do?**

- ▶ Learn to discern between truth and error – even in the writings of well-known and well-respected teachers. Check every idea with the Word of God.
- ▶ Believers should focus intently on the study of God's Word rather than the musings and thoughts of man. Then we can more easily discern error because we have been handling truth. Only the Word of God is perfect.
- ▶ Prepare to teach others and disciple others.