

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ

An Expository Journey Through 2Peter 9- When Ignorance of the Way of Righteousness Would Be Better

July 12, 2020

2Peter 2:11-22

11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

12 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,

13 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,

14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, *for* a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

18 For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

20 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in

them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

21 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 commandment handed on to them.

22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A *DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*," and, "A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire."

To the Glory of God

Now Peter has only a few more months to live. The Roman Emperor, Nero has captured the Apostle and imprisoned him- probably alongside of Paul. Nero sees himself as the man, who will finally rid the world of this upstart new religion- that has plagued not only the entire Roman Empire- but which has literally "upset the world" (The Acts 17:6). Now, before Nero had come into power- King Herod had already killed James, John's brother (**The Acts 12:2**)- who, at that time, was probably recognized as the most "dangerous" man in the Church. And so, Nero had reasoned to himself that, by killing the two most visible Leaders who remain (Peter and Paul)- Christianity will surely collapse.

So, what do you think about when you are imprisoned on death row? What Issues occupy your mind? What would you find most urgent to write down? What do you wish to leave behind for others? What would you put into your Last Will and Testament?

Well, what we read here in **2Peter** is what was foremost on the old fisherman's mind- as he awaited martyrdom. The Issues that Peter put into this 2nd Epistle- are the Issues that *dominated* his thinking; and his prayers; his heart; and his mind- just before being crucified upside down. So, this Epistle is Peter's "Last Will and Testament." *This* is what Peter wants believers to know and to understand and to fear and to rejoice over- as he enters into the fulfillment of the Prophecy that Jesus gave him back in **John 21:18&19a**:

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you [Peter] were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where

you do not wish to go." Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he [Peter] would glorify God.

And even though Peter still cannot bequeath any silver or gold to those who will live after him- what he *does* have- he gives to the fledgling Church.

Now there is no doubt that Peter loves Jesus. But this Apostle also loves the Church. And so, Peter sees the need to *equip* the Church to continue to grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of God- after his death- by identifying one of the most *dangerous* things the Church will face on this earth- false Teachers. And by doing that here in the 2nd Chapter- Peter forces us to ask several Questions:

- Does God have a Purpose for deceptive Signs and Wonders?
- Does God have a Purpose for Heresies and false Teaching?

From the very beginning to the end of Human History- this has been and will *continue* to be an Issue. False Teaching and deceptive Signs and Wonders will exist on the earth; and will plague the people of the Church until Jesus finally puts an end to them when He comes back.

Jesus Himself promised that

“false Christs” (Messiahs) and “false Prophets” (Teachers) will arise and will show *great signs and wonders*, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:24).

... so, these are NOT insignificant “Parlor Tricks”. This is NOT “sleight of hand”. This is NOT a “difference of opinion”. This is NOT simply a “different way of looking at something”. No, Jesus said these will be “*great signs and wonders*.” Great; Large; Significant; Impressive; and Prevailing; Yet their Goal is to mislead or to deceive people into “buying into” a way of life; or a worldview; or a belief system that will end with their eternal Destruction.

The Apostle Paul was “moved” by the Holy Spirit (in the same way that wind moves a sailboat across the water) to say to believers in the Church at Thessalonica that the...

2Thessalonians 2:8b&9

... lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His

mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

Now many people have an opinion about what Paul was saying here- but let us agree that at *some* point after Paul made this Statement, someone called, “The Lawless One” will be revealed; or be made known; or be manifested. Now the KJV renders this person as “that Wicked”. But then Paul says that Jesus Himself will “slay; kill; destroy; or consume” this person with “the *breath* of His Mouth” or with “the *spirit* of His Mouth”- which is clearly referring to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

Then Paul goes onto prophesy that the “coming”; or the “appearing”; or the “revealing” of the “Lawless One” will be in “accord with” or “be liken unto”; or will be “in league with” satan himself. How?

... with all power and signs and false wonders,

... so, three things:

- Supernatural/Miraculous Power
- Signs
- False Wonders

... will identify this “Lawless One”.

But then Paul added a clarifying remark about how this all works in the very next verse,

and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

So, there *is* such a thing as “**Wickedness**”. And Wickedness has a *deceptive* Quality to it. So, the overall Goal of Wickedness is to deceive; to mislead; to cause people to *believe* in something that *isn't* true; or to *disbelieve* something that *is* true.

But then Paul tells us *who* is going to be deceived:

... for those who perish ...

And that group of people have at least two different characteristics:

- They are NOT saved- and they *know* they're not
- They are NOT saved- but they *think* they are

... and the word that was translated here as “perish” comes from a Greek word (*apollumi*; Strong's #622), that means: “*to destroy; to put out of the way entirely; to put an end to; or to utterly ruin*”. So, these are people who end up in Hell- for all Eternity.

So, these people, who are deceived by the “Lawless One” are those “who perish”. But why? *Why* are these people deceived? And *why* does the Lawless One ultimately triumph over them? Paul gives us the Answer at the end of verse 10,

... because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Now notice that the Apostle doesn't say that these people were *ignorant* of the Truth. He doesn't say that they were *unaware* of the Truth; or they didn't *understand* the Truth; or they had never been *exposed* to the Truth. No, he very *narrowly* says that these people did not LOVE the Truth. And this tells us at least five things:

- It is possible for people to *possess* the Truth; and *understand* it; and be *familiar* with it; and *know* that it is the Truth- and yet not *love* the Truth.
- Those who do not love the Truth- are NOT saved
- Those who do not love the Truth- WILL be deceived
- Those who are deceived- WILL perish eternally
- Humans CANNOT *cause* themselves to love the Truth. We do NOT have the ability to simply “choose” to love the Truth. The Bible says that we must RECEIVE a love for the Truth.

So, being able to love the Truth is a Gift from God. And so, by definition- everybody doesn't have this Gift- even some who think they are saved. A love for the Truth must be graciously *given* by God (by Grace) and must be *received* by us (through Faith)- or else we will NOT have it. And this love for the Truth- once given and received- leads us into Salvation. So,

if we don't have a love for the Truth- we WILL ultimately NOT be saved; We WILL ultimately be deceived; and we WILL ultimately perish.

But now look at what Paul said next:

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Here, Paul teaches that God sovereignly sends upon these people what the NASB calls, a "deluding influence". The KJV says, God sends them a "*strong* Delusion". Now *why* does God do this?

... so that they will believe what is false ...

... and this is in the Imperative tense, which means that those who perish- WILL believe what is false. In other words, this is Judgment upon those who do not love the Truth. So, this deluding Influence that God sends- will CAUSE these people to believe what is false.

Now what is the ultimate Goal of God sending these people this strong deluding Influence so that they will believe what is false?

... in order that they all may be judged ...

... and the word "judged" here is *best* understood as being eternally "damned" by God. So, this is not corrective Judgment- in that God is making things hard so these people will repent. No, this is God *damning* unrepentant people.

Now why in the world would a Good God do this? Paul tells us in the very next phrase,

... who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Now this is very frightening- but it is also very true. This tells us that *understanding* the Truth; and *believing* the Truth; and *loving* the Truth and *striving to obey* the Truth has much more to do with God sovereignly gracing you with that desire and ability than it does with how much effort or energy you are putting into it. If God does not grant you Repentance- you won't repent. If God doesn't give you a love for the Truth- you will not love the

Truth.

Now some may ask, “*How can I be sure that I don’t fit in with this kind of damnation?*” And the answer lies in whether or not you have received from God- a love for the Truth. So, do you love the Truth? If so, then rejoice at what God has done for you. But if not- then fall on your face and cry out to God that He would be merciful to you to grant you this kind of love.

Now keep in mind that the “falseness” of the Signs and Wonders of the Lawless One is NOT that these Signs and Wonders aren’t real- it isn’t that these wicked people don’t actually perform real Miracles. They do. The “falseness” in these things lies in what their Goal is; and in what their Results are. So, these are *real* Miracles that lead people to *disbelieve* in what God has actually spoken in Scripture; or to “buy into” a completely different “gospel” that can’t forgive Sin or save souls.

So, all throughout human history; even now; and *especially* as we get closer and closer to Jesus’ Return to this earth- false Teaching; Heresies; and lying Signs and Wonders will attack the Church. Paul said in **2Timothy 4:3&4**:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

Now you don’t see this so much in the English- but in the Greek- the last phrase here is very similar to what Paul taught back in **2Thessaloninas 2**. Paul says that accumulating Teachers, who will gladly say things in accordance to the carnal and worldly desires of the people produces two different responses. Paul said the people will:

- **turn away their ears from the truth**
- **will turn aside to myths**

So, they “turn away” their ears from the Truth. And this is indicative of people who do not love the Truth. They don’t want to even hear it. So, these people, *voluntarily; willfully; with delight and joy*- turn away their ears from the Truth due to their lack of love for the Truth. And that’s real bad.

But the second response is even *worse*. Because in the original Greek-

Paul was saying that since these people *voluntarily* turn their ears away from the Truth- God will judge them- and He WILL then *sovereignly* turn their ears to myths. So, the second thing that happens to these people is predicated on the first. So, the best way to understand the *second* part is to know that these people WILL BE TURNED to myths. So, those who perish- *willfully* turn their ears away from the Truth. Not just once- but as a way of life. And because they do not *love* the Truth- God then damns them by *sovereignly* removing any ability they have to hear; or to love the Truth from them- and the result is they WILL BE TURNED to myths. So, this is Sovereign Judgment.

Now we need to understand that things have been this way from the time of Moses. And it is Moses who answers our two Questions: “*Does God have a Purpose for deceptive Signs and Wonders?*” And “*Does God have a Purpose for Heresies?*” And here’s the key Passage:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now notice five things:

First, Moses tells us that Signs and Wonders- ***in the service of Heresy***- really happen. They are not tricks. “**If a prophet . . . gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to pass. . . .**” So, they really *do* come to pass. It’s NOT smoke and mirrors. These things are supernatural- they are “above the natural”- but they are NOT in the service of Truth.

Second, some Miracle workers aim to draw believers away from the true God. “**If he says, ‘Let us go after other gods . . .’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet.**” In other words, some Heresies (“let us go after other gods”) are endorsed with miraculous Signs and Wonders.

Third, God has a Purpose in these deceptive Signs and Wonders, and He has a Purpose for the Heresies they support. And He mentions one of these Purposes: “**For the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you**

love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” So, when *Temptation* happens from man, a *Test* is happening from God. This is one of God’s Purposes in the deceptive Signs and Heresies.

Fourth, Love for God is what God is testing. “Your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Fifth, I conclude from this- that the heart that loves God sees *through* miraculous Deception. Love for God is not based mainly on miraculous Power. It is based on seeing *through* miraculous Power to true Divine Beauty and Worth. Therefore, any genuine Love for God is a powerful Protection against Heresy- even when that Hersey comes with miraculous Confirmation.

Now understanding these five things from **Deuteronomy 13:1-3**-helps to protect us from deceptive Signs and Wonders and from Heresies. Yet I will tell you that *understanding* is not enough. *Love for God* is both the Goal of God’s Testing and the “Means” by which His Tests are passed. *Understanding* awakens us to our need to love God. But genuine *Love for God* sees *through* deceptive Signs and Wonders to the falsehood they support and flees to Christ. *Love for God* sees through the Heresies and holds fast to Jesus. So, may God deepen our love for Him so that it has this kind of penetrating, protecting Power.

Now maybe it would be helpful to step back first and get the *bigger* picture of the New Testament response to those who live and teach in ways that lead others into Error and Ruin, and then zero back into what Peter said in **2Peter**. So, let’s begin with Jesus:

Matthew 7:15

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Now the word, “*beware*” means all of us should be alert, but *especially* Shepherds, to identify not just false Teaching- but also the false Teachers, whose ways are subtle. They’re clothing themselves with lamb’s wool while they’re wolves.

And Paul used the same Greek word for *beware* in **The Acts 20:28& 29**, when he said,

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

So, in order to “be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock”- we must expose false Teachers and *minimize* the spread of the “spiritual gangrene.”

Now Jesus used the very same word again in **Matthew 16:6**- but He got more specific:

“Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Paul had the same kind of group in mind and the same kind of error in mind in **Philippians 3:2** and **3:18**:

“Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision”

And then verse 18:

For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* enemies of the cross of Christ,

Then in **Romans 16:17**, he warned,

keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

And to actually be obedient to this verse and “turn away from them”- we have to know who they are. We can’t turn away from somebody if we don’t know who they are. And this same idea of “identifying” false Teachers and “turning away from them” shows up in **1Corinthians 5:11**; **2Thessalonians 3:6, 14**; **2Timothy 3:5**; and **2John 10**.

In other words, Christians, and Shepherds in particular, should be discerning and alert to both Behavior and Teaching that *dishonors* Jesus Christ and destroys people- and not treat it in a casual or harmless way.

And then in **1Timothy 5:19&20**, Paul went beyond just “turn away

from them” to “rebuke them publicly.” So, speaking of Elders who persist in Error, he said,

Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful *of sinning*.

... and then Paul went on and actually named some of the destructive false Teachers:

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; (2Timothy 4:10b)

You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. (2Timothy 1:15)

1Timothy 1:18-20

This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, (2Timothy 2:17)

... Paul named at least six false Teachers that the Church needed to watch out for.

So, I infer from Jesus, Paul, Dr. Luke, and John that false Teaching and destructive Behavior are present Dangers in this fallen world for the Church. And all of us- *especially* Shepherds, Pastors, and Elders — should be alert and discerning to *identify* and, in appropriate ways, *expose*.

And about the time we think we have that down pat- we read what Paul wrote in **1Corinthians 4:5**, where Paul is talking about how the Corinthians should assess Paul, Cephas (Peter), and Apollos, because the people are choosing sides and boasting in their favorite Teacher. He says, **Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait until the***

Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

Now, many people have taken the phrase, “**do not go on passing judgment before the time**” as a Commandment to stop us from identifying false Teachers or from naming them. I don't think so. This verse has to do with which *good* Teacher to follow. He isn't talking about heretics here. So, that verse simply means: “*Don't you do what only Christ can do at that last Day — on the Day of Judgment. So, don't presume to know anyone's heart like Jesus will know the heart on that Day.*” Only Jesus will **both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts**”

But for now, our job is indeed to do “*mouth* Judgment”; “*writing* Judgment”; “*belief* Judgment”; and “*behavior* Judgment”. Yet, we are NEVER to engage in a “*heart* Judgment”.

So, when a mouth speaks unbiblical, destructive Teaching; or when a blog or an article or a book publishes unbiblical and destructive Teaching; or when a body- a human body, a physical body- behaves with unbiblical and destructive behavior; or when someone teaches you with destructive and unbiblical things- in all these cases, we are to be discerning. And according to **Ephesians 5:11**, we are to expose the Error.

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

... and the word that was translated into English as, “**expose**” (*elengchoo*; Strong's #1651) means: *to convict; to refute; to find fault with; and correct.*

So, the Issue is *how* and *when* we publicly rebuke heretics- not *if*. And here I think the Bible calls for Wisdom, rather than telling us specifically *who* and *when* and *how*. The Question we ask is this: “*How can we best- in our situation, with our gifts and our responsibilities- help the most people believe and live the most Truth, and how can we protect the most people from destructive Beliefs and Behaviors?*”

And here are five factors perhaps to consider when deciding whether to name a false Teacher publicly:

- The seriousness and deceitfulness of the Error.
- The size of the audience. Is it growing?

- The duration of their Ministry. Did they make one blunder or are they constantly doing it?
- The vulnerability of the people for whom you are responsible.
- The role you have in influencing Shepherds who really need to be discerning for who the false Teachers are.

When we do name a false Teacher, it's best to do it in a setting where we do more than just "name-drop." We should get involved and explain the Error; give reasons for rejecting it; communicate the various complexities; and then set a tone for longing for Truth and Love- rather than simply "slinging mud."

But what is most effective is for us to allow our own Teaching be so powerful in clarifying the Greatness and the Beauty and the Worth of God's Truth- that the people we have influence on- will smell and see Error- way before it infects their lives.

But we have to understand one thing- the shape of Error is always changing. And so, we simply can't preach enough negative sermons to stay ahead of it. But we don't have to. Because the *best* protection against the *darkness* of Error is the *light* of Truth.

And that brings us to our Passage this morning. Now Chapter 1 of **2Peter** is a positive, encouraging Summons for us to confirm our Calling and Election by availing ourselves of God's Power for Godliness through Faith in His precious and magnificent Promises.

But Chapter 2 is a very bleak portrayal of the false Teachers in the Churches- who do not avail themselves of God's Power and give themselves over to sexual Indulgences "in the name of" Christian Liberty. And the main point of the Chapter is that these false Teachers and those enticed by them- will, in the end, experience Divine Condemnation and eternal Destruction. So, the 2nd Chapter intends to do, in a negative way, what the 1st Chapter aims to do in a positive way- and that is- to make us dead- earnest about the business of confirming our Calling and Election.

Now, last time, we saw from verses 1–10 that the Heresy of the false Teachers that Peter is referring to- is a *moral* Heresy- rather than a *doctrinal* or *theological* Hersey. They deny the Master who bought them, by promoting sexual License. So, instead of submitting to God's Design for sexual Purity- they despise all Authority and they teach that "by Grace" we are "free" (autonomous) in Christ to use our bodies as we please.

Now make no mistake about it, dear friends, God Plan for Human

Sexuality is all about *limiting* or *restricting* the desires of our flesh. All expressions of Human Sexuality are forbidden- except that which takes place underneath the Covenant of Holy Matrimony. So, these false Teachers say that the more people rise above these “limitations” that God has placed on us- we magnify the Grace of God. So, this is classic “Antinomianism” or “Lawlessness”. This is exactly what Paul had in mind when he said,

Romans 6:1-7

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

So, faithful Peter warns us, in verse 10 that God will hold such people under Punishment until the Day of Judgment. And this tells us that both Heaven and Hell are at stake in whether we rely on Christ for our Hope and obey His Word, or whether we deny Him by our Disobedience.

So, today we hear the Apostle in the rest of Chapter 2 to try to see what Lessons are there for us. And I want to go through verses 10–22 in four different sections.

- In verses 10b–13a the focus is on the brazen Willfulness; Arrogance; Pride; and Self-Sufficiency of the false Teachers.
- In verses 13b–16 the focus is on their unashamed Indulgence in Sex and their love of money.
- In verse 17 the *emptiness* of their Teaching is exposed
- In verses 18–22 Peter warns how these false Teachers entice new and unstable Christians into *moral* Apostasy- where their *last* Condition is *worse* than if they had never known the Way of Righteousness.

So, let's look at these sections briefly, one at a time.

2 Peter 2:10-13a

and especially 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.

Now this is a complicated Passage. But it is *possible* that the "**angelic majesties**" mentioned in verse 10 are the "fallen angels" of verse 4- and that Peter is, in effect, saying:

"These false Teachers are so brazen and cocky and self-assured that they revile the evil Spirits as though they themselves are safe from any supernatural evil influence at all."

... and then to show the Arrogance of such an Attitude of false Security, Peter then says:

whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

In other words, Peter *may* have been saying that even the "good angels" who, unlike the false Teachers, are stronger than the evil angels, nevertheless- they do not presume to pronounce a reviling Judgment on them. So, even angels humble themselves and leave that Judgment to God.

But it seems to be very unlikely to me that Peter would have used the phrase "angelic majesties" to refer to fallen Angels. Now literally, the term is simply "**glories**" and was used in **1Peter 1:11** to refer to *all* the Glories surrounding Jesus Christ in His Exaltation and Second Coming. In **2Peter** the word "**glory**" is associated with the future of Christ's Second Coming (1:3, 17, where the transfigured Christ foreshadows the glorious returning Christ, 3:18). And in **2Peter 3:3&4**- the false Teachers are pictured as mocking Jesus' glorious Second Coming.

So, I am inclined to think that the "**glories**" which the false Teachers revile are the Glories of God and Christ- *especially* associated with the Second Coming. Then, when it says in verse 11, that "the angels (notice it does not say 'good' angels since there is probably no contrast with the bad angels in view), **who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord**" it probably means that the angels don't revile the false Teachers, even though they deserve it and the angels are in an exalted position to give it. And this contrast shows how incredibly puffed up the false Teachers are that even angels yield to the Authority of God to pass just Judgment. But the false Teachers despise all Authority and they seek to rise above the angels to scorn the Glories of the holy God- probably by denying the Second Coming.

Verse 12 adds that the false Teachers are like animals in two senses:

- They are utterly ignorant of what they speak. Their reviling at the Glories of Christ is like a wolf howling at the sunrise.
- They will be destroyed like the animals. They will come to an end in Judgment, and all their howling will be silenced.

This admonishes us to always beware of spiritual Pride. As Paul says,

1Corinthians 10:12

... let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.

We are utterly dependent on the Grace of God and so, we are never to boast in any perceived Self-sufficiency.

2Peter 2:13b-16

... 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 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 mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

Here the brazen Willfulness of the false Teachers is seen in them

doing in the daytime (v. 13) what other sinners only dare to do at night.

Now the phrase, "**carouse with you**" in verse 13 literally means, "**eating feasts with you.**" And this gives us insight in to how the early Church operated. After every Lord's Day Service- the church had what were called, "Love Feasts". And this was an opportunity for godly Fellowship and Questions and Answers. So, what we do on the 1st Lord's Day of every month- they did every Lord's Day. And so, as these Love Feasts were going on- Peter says these Heretics show up as spots and blemishes (contrast 3:14) with their eyes full of adultery (v. 14). So, they are so consumed with lust- they can't function normally. Peter also says their hearts are well-trained in greed- showing us that the love for money is huge with them. But they're not content with simply being wrong themselves. No, these heretics try to isolate the unstable new-comers and draw them away in licentiousness (v. 2).

Now Peter didn't tell us just how these false Teachers plan to make money- but the analogy of Balaam (in vv. 15, 16) gives us a clue. Back in **Numbers 22**- when the Israelites were approaching the land of Moab, Balak, the king, was afraid of them and sent for a Prophet named Balaam and offered him money to come and curse the Israelites. This is what Peter zeroes in on in verse 15: Balaam loved gain from wrongdoing- specifically, gain from someone willing to pay for his prophetic Services. So, probably, then, the false Teachers are not only luring young converts away into sexual license, but they were actually charging them money to receive their "special Teaching." Because, after all- if you pay for something, you take it more seriously!

But notice who the false Teachers go after in verse 14: "**unstable souls.**" And we get an even *clearer* picture in verse 18:

2Peter 2:18

For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,

... in other words, new converts- people who are unstable in their grasp of Truth. So, this is a strong Admonition, first, to establish our own doctrinal Stability in the Word; but then, also to labor seriously to ground our children and all new converts quickly in the Truth of Scripture. So, may we be a Church where we are constantly helping each other to send our roots ever deeper into the Rock of God's Truth.

2Peter 2:17

These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.

Now try to imagine yourself in a desert with a parched tongue, longing for water to satisfy your thirst. And as you are about to die- you look and see an oasis with trees and grass just ahead. And so, you run, and throw yourself down by the spring to drink- but you find it to be as dry as a bone. These false Teachers offer thrills and insight and freedom, but in reality they are empty and barren. They are like mists that seem to promise rain for the land, but are quickly blown away. O what a need there is in the Church for Discernment between waterless springs and springs of living water! The one bubbles up unto Eternal Life. But the other sinks down into the Gloom where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. We must become a deeply discerning people!

2Peter 2:18-22

For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, 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 commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "*A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT*," and, "*A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.*"

The way the false Teachers entice new and unstable converts is by promising them Freedom, according to verse 19. And I think it's possible to get a pretty good idea just how they argued. In **1Peter 2:16**, the old fisherman says,

Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

The false Teachers were correct to promise people Freedom. The Call to Freedom is at the very Heart of New Testament Faith. But when we see the word or use the word, "Freedom"- we ALWAYS must ask a Question: "*Freedom from what?*" Or, "*Freedom for what?*" Or, "*Freedom to what?*"

The Bible NEVER teaches that we are "free" to do whatever we want to- period. We are NOT "free" to live or act or believe whatever is in our hearts. Certainly, the biblical Call to "Freedom" is NEVER a Call to give free reign to our sinful passions. Because that makes us a genuine slave of Sin. No, the apostolic Call to Freedom recognizes

- Jesus had to die to "free" us from both the Guilt (Condemnation) and Power of Sin
- We are "free" from the Law- only in the sense that we need no longer strive to keep it in our own strength- *in order to earn Favor with God*
- We are given new hearts by the Holy Spirit so that "freely" we delight in Holiness.

But everywhere this Gospel of Freedom was preached- false Teachers distorted it. And **2Peter 3:15b&16** shows that the writings of the Apostle Paul were a sitting duck for this distortion. It says,

... just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

The false Teachers take the unstable souls (of 2:14) and teach how to use the writings of Paul to justify their view of sexual Freedom. And Paul already knew that his Teaching about Freedom was open to this abuse- and so, he warned against it. For example, in **Galatians 5:13** he says:

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

... yet the false Teachers were doing just that, using their Freedom as an opportunity to indulge their love for money and their love for praise and their love for sexual pleasure. And they probably quoted **Galatians 5:1** with great

power among the new and unstable converts:

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

No doubt the heretics said, *"Away with the enslaving rules that govern the life of the body! You are not under law; you are under grace!"* And this is exactly what modern Antinomians will say. Yet they always neglect the other Teachings of Paul like,

Romans 8:13

for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

So, Peter blasts the trumpet of Warning: *"These false Teachers are twisting the Scriptures to their own Destruction, and their promised Freedom is a Bondage to Corruption!"*

Then in verses 20 and 21 the decisive Word of Warning rings out to the Church in danger of being enticed:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, 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 commandment handed on to them.

If you turn away from the Holy Commandment; and forsake the Way of Righteousness; and by your actions deny the Master Who bought you (v.1), then you prove that you are not saved and your spiritual condition is worse than when you had never even known the Way.

Now we need to acknowledge that Peter describes the very real possibility in verse 20 that by learning about Jesus- some people make a start in the Christian life. And by all outward appearances- they have escaped from the defilements of the world. But then then the cares and riches and pleasures of life (as Jesus says) choke the young plant, and it withers and bears no fruit and dies (**Luke 8:14**).

Now two parts need to be stressed from these verses. First, notice the

Principle that the more you know about Jesus and His Way- the more severe will be your Judgment for not trusting and obeying Him. So, in that sense- it is better for those people to have never known the Way. Now all Peter is doing by saying this- is to preserve the Teaching of Jesus, where He said in **Matthew 11:21&22**,

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the* day of judgment than for you.

The more Evidence you have of Christ's Reality- the more severe your Judgment will be- for not repenting.

... From everyone who has been given much, much will be required ...
(Luke 12:48b)

So, Peter warns the new converts: *"If you forsake the Way now, after all you have learned and experienced, your Doom will be more miserable than the pagans."* Back in February, when I was sick- the doctor gave me ten days worth of antibiotics and he told me, *"Don't stop taking them after five days just because you feel better. Because, if you do- it will flare up all the worse."*

So, it is in the Christian life: if you stop trusting the heavenly Doctor and disobey His Prescription for your Redemption- your latter state will be worse than the former.

The second point that needs to be stressed is that Peter is not teaching that God's elect can lose their Salvation. But he is, most definitely, teaching that Church Members can be lost, and people who make outward professions of Faith and who even begin to "clean up their act" can absolutely turn away from Jesus and be lost. But in verse 22 he explains to us in a Proverb that we should not be overly surprised at this: Dogs characteristically return to their vomit. That's what they do. And no matter how clean you make a pig on the outside- if it is still a pig- it will, *eventually* return to the mire. In other words, those who leave the Way of Righteousness, never to return, simply show that their inner nature had never been changed to begin with.

This was Peter's way of saying what **1John 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.

... or as Jesus Himself said,

... it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (Matthew 10:22b)

... or as the **Book of Hebrews** puts it,

Hebrews 3:14

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

... or as Paul says,

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (1Corinthians 15:1&2)

The whole New Testament is agreed: there is no Salvation apart from "Persevering Faith." And Persevering Faith always works itself out- in the "Way of Righteousness." Therefore, to abandon the Way of Righteousness is to exclude oneself from Salvation.

But this can never happen to God's elect. If it could, verse 10 of Chapter 1 would be nonsense. There Peter says,

... be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you;

... but if the elect could be lost, there would be no advantage in confirming our Election. The point of verse 10 is that the elect will never *ultimately* fall-but will, *finally*, enter into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! And therefore, we should be utterly earnest about *confirming* our Calling and Election.

And **2Peter 2** was written to help us do just that. It aims to help us confirm our Election by *warning* us not to “deny the Master Who bought us” (v. 1) , and by strengthening us to “resist the Temptations of spiritual Pride and Self-sufficiency” (11–13), the “love of money” and all its destructive tendencies (14–16), and the summons to “unbridled sexual License” (2, 7, 14, 18).

Now I realize that this is not the kind of chapter we enjoy reading. But not all medicine tastes good. God, the great Physician, knows our need. And every word is profitable. If it increases our Earnestness in realizing the full Assurance of Hope to the end- it will have succeeded. May God make it so.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

