

2Peter 2:10-13 "A Profile Of A False Teacher"

We live in a day where the electronic media catapults itself daily into the home of every person who has a radio, television or computer. For the Christian this is of critical importance because we place ourselves in a situation of taking in all types of information from all types of people and the philosophies they espouse.

For those of you on the Internet this becomes abundantly clear as families run the risk of being assaulted by pornography and other leud information without even looking for it. I received an e-mail recently which invited me to go to this website which was purely pornographic.

At the end of the message it gave you an opportunity to e-mail them back and remove yourself from their mailing list. But, every time I tried to e-mail them it always comes back as undeliverable due to their mailbox being full. Evidently, this mass mailing has resulted in myriad's of people trying to get off of their list.

But, this type of stuff is blatant and self-evident. What Peter is writing about is information and philosophies which are disguised in religious garb, particularly "Christian-looking" clothing. And the people who wear this disguise are of course wolves in sheep's clothing.

Unfortunately, many Christians think themselves discerning when they can recognize blatant attacks or teachings contrary to the word of God. But being discerning is not a matter of recognizing the obvious but the not so obvious.

Spurgeon sums it up best with this quote. Discernment is not simply a matter of telling the difference between what is right and wrong; rather it is the difference between right and almost right." –

In the apostle Peter's day the means of accessing information may have been different, but the final outcome of bad information certainly was present as it put many Christians at risk of falling into deceptive teachings which most certainly, if followed, would affect their ability to glorify their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And yet, as we saw last week the Lord is always there for us, as we seek Him and follow Him, to bring us through so that we don't become a statistic. This is what Peter essentially wrote concerning Lot.

2PE 2:7-9 "and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) - 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment."

God is the ultimate judge from whom no one will escape. And in our context the false teachers who promote their own agenda at the expense of God's truth will find themselves on the receiving end of His wrath. This, of course, is for anyone who rejects the grace and mercy of God's gospel, but in particular Peter lays heavy emphasis on those in the church who try and take advantage of Christ's sheep.

This is meant to comfort the church, knowing that the Lord will rescue the righteous while being faithful to deliver His sure judgment on those rebels. And this is where Peter continues this thought in our text.

2PE 2:10 "This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord."

This is very descriptive of the attitude that these particular false teachers had concerning spiritual matters. And Peter takes it personally because they are messing with Christ's sheep whom Peter was commanded, by our Lord, to feed and tend.

He doesn't mince words here. He is very graphic in his attempt to describe them. He says in verse 10, "... [they] follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority."

Here the idea is that they have purposefully set themselves on a path which leads them in the ways of the flesh, or the sinful nature. This is a conscious choice to follow after their base desires, which includes deceiving and manipulating the church.

This has been going on long before the N.T. church came into existence. But it's also going on today. It wasn't that long ago when men like Joseph Smith and later Brigham Young created a

cult with Christian overtones that has led many astray, following after a false god and doing it in the name of Christ. Today Mormonism, also known as the church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints, is using a marketing strategy to snare people into its grip while claiming to be Christian.

The same is true of Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Watch Tower. These institutions clothe themselves in Christian garb, but they are societies of death, following the corrupt desire of the sinful nature. A nature which wants to go its own way, despising authority.

In more recent times we see the same phenomena in cults like Heaven's Gate or those who followed after David Koresh in Waco Texas. And of course, one of the most famous, the Jim Jones group who followed that man to their death, some unwillingly.

But there is a pattern and Peter is pointing it out together with the underlying heart condition which pushes these people to such lengths. These leaders are parasites who attach themselves to a host which more times than not is the true Church of Christ.

Peter says they despise authority. What authority is being referred to here has been called into question because of the structure of the Greek language at this point. Some believe it to be the authority of leaders in the Church including the apostles of Peter's day.

Still others believe it to be the authority of Jesus Christ. This has some validity since the beginning of chapter two addresses this when it says of these false teachers, "... They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -bringing swift destruction on themselves."

In either case, they ultimately despise the authority of Christ who has placed such leaders in His church. But, the implications are clear. They deem themselves an authority unto themselves. They will not recognize the proper authority in the Church which comes from Christ as they assume themselves to be above it all.

As such they are haughty and proud and they entice people to follow after them, claiming to be the true authority. If you followed any of the news reports of David Koresh this is exactly what you saw. He set himself up as the final authority, as did Joseph Smith, as did Mary Baker Eddy of Christian Science fame, along with every other false teacher who has ever broken from Christ's authority found exclusively in His word.

This should be a warning to every Christian to test all things according to the infallible word of God. This is exactly what Paul told the Thessalonians.

1TH 5:21-22 "Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil."

There would be fewer opportunities for these false teachers if God's people in Christ were more discerning and able to put to the test the false teachings they bring. It is so important to make a concerted effort to seek the things above and be renewed in the Spirit. Paul also brings this out in Romans.

ROM 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Another trait Peter brings out in our text is that these false teachers are "... Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;..."

The two words, bold and arrogant are very descriptive. In the Greek the word bold, as is used in the NIV, comes from a word which means to dare. This is why the NAS uses the word daring. The idea here is one who dares any authority to come against him. It's a total disregard for God. Michael Green makes the comment that this is a "reckless daring that defies God and man."

But Peter also uses another word which is translated in the NIV as arrogant. Again, this is a word which is more descriptive in the Greek. It's the word *authades* and is actually derived from two words: *autos* which means self and *hadon* which means pleasing.

And so the idea here is of a "man who has no idea of anything other than pleasing himself." And so it carries with it the idea of obstinacy (William Barclay), or as the NIV puts it, arrogant.

And this would make sense. If they have no regard for the authority of Christ they only have their own self-interest in mind. And they will say anything to deceive people into following after them. What this does is to open them up to all sorts of deception. And many times they will actually begin to believe their own lies, which is why they often come off as really sincere and believable.

This doesn't make them any less a false teacher or any less culpable. It simply makes them much more dangerous. This is Peter's point as he continues to show that they have no regard for anyone but themselves as he says of them, "these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;..." (verse 10b)

What does this mean?

Interestingly enough the word celestial beings, or angels as it is translated in some bibles, does not appear in the original Greek text. The Greek word is *doxa* and depending on the context it can mean praise, glory, honor, brightness and majesty.

Slandering or blaspheming such glories, as a literal rendering would put it, could certainly include those who would be considered glorious or majestic, such as angels, which is why it is translated as angels or celestial beings, as the NIV puts it.

It is reasonable to consider angels here in this context of 2Peter as the recipients of blasphemy since blaspheming or slandering is not directed at mere inanimate objects such as a glorious sun or moon. And so, the interpreters of the Greek text assumed that the only glories or majesties that could be on the receiving end of this slandering would be angels.

That, together with the context, would certainly lend itself to that interpretation since verse 11 juxtaposes angels in this context, who we are told would not dare do what these false teachers do in bringing blasphemies against this particular group of glorious ones.

But if the angels themselves would not do this, it must be assumed that the group in question being slandered is either a different class of glorious being or a subset of the group of angels. This would then beg the question, if these are angels, and yet not even angels bring a slanderous word against them, are these angels fallen angels or demons?

Simon Kistemaker in his commentary on 2Peter struggles with the same question when he agrees that these glorious one's are probably demons but then says, "granted that [though] the text appears to suggest this interpretation, numerous questions remain. Here are two of them. Why are fallen angels called glorious when obviously they are condemned? What were the accusations that were hurled against Satan and his followers?"

And if you're still on the edge of your seat here's the answer he gives to the questions. "We are unable to answer these questions because the text itself provides no further clues."

Though we may not have a plethora of clues in the immediate text it doesn't mean we are without biblical clues. And the Lord Jesus' half brother, Jude, begins to fill in some of the clues as he also is addressing false teachers in his letter.

In fact, he uses the exact same language in describing the false teachers as blaspheming glories in precisely the same way Peter does.

Jude 1:8-10 ⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ⁹ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" ¹⁰ But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.

It is clear that the slandering or blaspheming of glories in Jude places Michael the archangel in the same position of either pronouncing a railing or blasphemous judgment against the devil or not.

Michael chooses not to because in doing so he knows that it is not his position to declare such judgment and he leaves that to the Lord. The clear implication is that the false teachers assume a judging position of such a being which is out of accord with their authority and jurisdiction.

But if you reject authority, as Jude points out that these false teachers are doing and as Peter clearly agrees the same, then you have no problem assuming an authority that does not belong to you and yet in your teaching in the church you have given yourself this authority to intimidate and ultimately to manipulate the sheep of Christ.

This is precisely what Peter is saying when he accuses these false teacher as despising authority. daring, self-willed.

Now, when we think of slandering someone today we usually put it in the context of a court of law where we can prove malicious intent. Peter is clearly saying that these false teachers are

malicious in their attitude of such majesties or celestial beings, by either denying their existence or of not recognizing their power and influence, in turn placing themselves above them.

You talk about being presumptuous. These false teachers were full of themselves. And yet when we look around today we see the same presumptuous attitude in the Kenneth Copeland's and Kenneth Hagin's and Benny Hinn's as they would teach that we can have the same authority over sickness and disease and demons by simply claiming our power in Christ through their teachings, many of which are contrary to the word of God.

Not even God's angels presume to bring judgment against the rebel angels, or demons, by not recognizing their power and authority.

2PE 2:11 "yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord."

The point Peter is making is not that we should be spending our waking moments trying to figure out the power of the devil, but that these false teachers are doing things that not even God's angels are willing to do. God is more than capable of dealing with satan and his demons.

Again, what we see is that the pride of these false teachers tries to produce an authority and power which does not belong to them. And yet, they assume it and in the process produce an environment which leads many people astray as they come across with an authoritative attitude.

I don't know if you notice it but Peter is coming across in a very aggressive way. If he were speaking to the church today he would probably be accused of being insensitive or overbearing or simply out of line when it comes to taking such a hard line.

But don't ever forget it is the Holy Spirit who is speaking to us today through this letter, who has inspired Peter to write these things. This gives us a sense of God's attitude toward false teachers. In fact, Peter goes on to describe what their fate is in God's hands.

2PE 2:12 "But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish."

The NIV places the middle of this verse at the beginning. It doesn't change the thought it just makes it a little more difficult for those of you who have the NAS or the NKJV who are trying to follow along.

The first part of this verse in the NIV is connected with the previous thought. Peter goes so far as to say they blaspheme in matters they do not understand...", or as the NKJV puts it, "they speak evil of things they do not understand." This is in connection with reviling angelic majesties as they set themselves up as those who are above such majesties whether real or imagined. They come across as though they do understand, but they truly don't.

They have deceived themselves. They are the blind leading those who don't seem to want to open their eyes.

Notice how Peter describes them in verse 12. "They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish."

In other words, they are acting like animals whose only concern is their own appetite. Animals, by and large, aren't concerned for the feelings of other animals. When a lion takes down an antelope it's nothing personal. They have no bad feelings for that antelope any more than we have bad feelings for frozen pizzas. They're simply going shopping for dinner.

In like manner, these false teachers are no more concerned for other human beings when it comes to advancing their agenda. As such Peter is clearly saying that God will judge them accordingly. And like an unreasoning animal, the end for the false teacher, together with anyone who rebels against the Creator, is that they will likewise perish.

Jude also addresses this same problem when he raises the issue of false teachers.

JUD 1:10 "Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals - these are the very things that destroy them."

What they think is that their "salvation", or their ability to get ahead through selfish motives, will be the very thing which will save them. That's how deceiving sin is. People then and today

believe they will beat the odds or that sin doesn't matter. They pursue it with a passion thinking that it will set them free. But, it will destroy them.

Sin is not free. It comes with a price tag. The wages of sin is death. That's where Peter is going in the next verse.

2PE 2:13 "They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you."

The NAS puts it, "suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong." The point here is that God will punish the wicked. They will not escape His justice. Like unreasoning animals these people will find themselves trapped and killed, in a judgment sense, by their own rebellion.

They may think they're getting away with sin, but they won't. This should send a clear message to the church that there is no room to flirt with rebellious men who would bring us a false gospel. The entire ecumenical movement is built on the premise that our unity is based on tolerance of differing opinions, even when those opinions would promote a false gospel.

There is no unity without truth. There is no common bond simply by naming the name of Christ. All of the false teachers in the church name the name of Christ. The question needs to be asked, which Christ?

Is it the Christ who is revealed in both the Old and New Testament, or is it the Christ who is made up in the minds of people who use His name as a springboard for their own damnable heresies? There I go sounding like Peter.

The Robert Schuller's of this world who preach a gospel of "self" and "feel good" are not doing any favors for people who are on a road to everlasting damnation, separated from God. These false teachers will themselves suffer wrong as the wages of doing wrong.

Peter goes on to say how many of these false teachers in his day revealed how "their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you." (Some manuscripts in their love feasts)

This is very revealing. All throughout Scripture we see this contrast between light and darkness. Darkness is associated with hiding our sin. Paul brings this out in a couple of places.

1TH 5:7 "For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night."

ROM 13:13 "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

What Peter is intimating when he says, "Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight.", is meant to show the utter contempt they have for any decency at all. It is no less decent to carouse at night, but to carouse in broad daylight where you don't care what anybody sees is to show that they have no conscience or regard for authority or God.

Peter says they are stains, or blots and blemishes. This is kind of a play on words as Peter himself makes the distinction a little later on in this letter when he addresses believers in Christ.

2PE 3:14 "So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him."

We are to be spotless and blameless in the righteousness of Christ as we are then conformed to His image in the power of the Spirit. These false teachers have proven that they are not of the fold of Christ as they are not spotless, but stains and blots. They are not blameless, they are blemishes who tarnish the name of Christ.

They "revel in their pleasures while they feast with you", Peter says at the end of verse 13. The idea here is that these professing Christians have now joined these false teachers in feasting together. These Christians are placing pleasure before truth and using pleasure as an end in itself.

In this way their guard is down and these false teachers can influence them away from Christ to the fleshly and carnal. Some manuscripts read, "while they feast with you in their love feasts."

Some believe this to be a reference to a common practice among the early church to have large fellowships with lots of food and then at the end of the feast, or love feast, they would celebrate the Lord's Supper as this feast then took on a worship setting.

What ended up happening in some places is that these feasts turned into excuses to eat, drink and be merry, not unlike how these people used to party. And then they would celebrate the Lord's Supper while some were drunk, or not waiting for those who wanted to partake of the Lord's Supper because many became impatient and excluded other believers who didn't make it for the fellowship time.

Paul even addresses this very problem when writing to the church in Corinth.

1CO 11:20-22 "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!"

Paul rebukes the Corinthians in this and Peter is, in a sense, rebuking his readers as well who would fall into the trap of not being discerning and blameless as representatives of Christ.

You see, Peter is not simply making the case that false teachers are the only one's to blame. He's warning the church and making it clear that none of us are above falling into the same trap. Next week we'll see how this trap effects the saints and why.

I hope we all see the importance of having our spiritual eyes open and our spiritual ears sharp. There are many false teachers both inside and outside the church jockeying for position to lead many astray. They come in through T.V., radio, internet, books and tapes.

We don't want to become a casualty. And the way we can be assured we won't is by being active soldiers in the army of God who follow only the orders of our commander, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

EPH 6:10-13 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may

be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

We may be battling false teachers in this world. But ultimately our battle is not against flesh and blood. May we never think that we can enter this battle in our strength or in our own wisdom.

I like the way the late Keith Green put it. In fact, he had an album entitled, "No Compromise." That's the stand we need to take. No compromise for the truth. And may we always give that truth to the world and the church in love to the glory of God.