

2 Peter Chapter 2:10-22

Explanation of Present Characteristics

Hymns: #83 O Come, O Come Immanuel

I think most of us are familiar with the story of The Wizard of Oz. When a tornado rips through Kansas, Dorothy and her dog, Toto, are whisked away in their house to the magical Land of Oz. There she meets a Scarecrow that needs a brain, a Tin Man missing a heart, and a Cowardly Lion who wants courage. They're told to follow the Yellow Brick Road toward the Emerald City to meet the Wizard who can help Dorothy get home and help her friends find a brain, heart and courage. There they encounter "the great and powerful" Wizard of Oz. But he refuses to help them until they bring him what he wants, the broomstick of the Wicked Witch of the West. After many misadventures they return to the Wizard of Oz only to discover that behind the curtain in the corner of the audience chamber is nothing more than an old man who resembles Professor Marvel pulling levers and speaking into a microphone.

This story sets us up with a mental picture of what Peter is going to reveal to us this morning in Chapter 2:10-21. Over the past two weeks Peter has given an Expectation for Future Apostasy, Examples of Past Judgements and this morning he is going to give us the Explanation of Present Characteristics. I must warn you that the characteristics of false teachers and their apostate following are shocking, bizarre and hard to believe. But Peter is going to take us into the audience chamber of the Wizard of Oz and there he is going to swap the builder's trowel in one hand for the sword in the other. He is going to wield that sword like a Samurai and cut away the curtain that false teachers are hiding behind and expose them for you to see exactly what they are and what they do. They are nothing more than lever-pulling con men speaking boastfully into a microphone, deceiving those who come to them looking for spiritual brains, hearts or courage. The language Peter uses to condemn these men and to tell us exactly what is going to happen to them is some of the most forceful language used in the NT. He's not nice to them; he shreds their pretence and exposes their shamefulness for us to see. He shows us what they revile, what they revel in, what they revolt against, the false promises they make and the false professors who listen to them. It's not nice to see or hear, but it is the Word of God through Peter being carried along by the Holy Spirit; and it is a warning to us. Remember, Peter's dying words to us were "Grow in the grace and knowledge of God". If you want to grow you have to know. So "buckle your seat belt Dorothy because Kansas is about to go bye-bye".

1. Revile Authority (v. 10-13a) "This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. 11 Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. 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. 13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done.

The first characteristic Peter shows us of false teachers is that they revile and despise authority. And the first kind of authority we see they despise is God's unseen, created, spiritual and angelic order. These men are bold, daring, arrogant, presumptuous and even contemptuous of the authority God has established in the unseen. These men are not afraid to slander celestial beings, 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 passage alerts us to the fact that within God's unseen created order exists a hierarchy that is to be respected. The "celestial beings" referred to here are clearly of a different order than "angels". The Bible reveals the names of at least three of these "celestial beings" as Cherubim, Seraphim and Living Creatures. Cherubim appear to have a guardian

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role as seen in Gen. 3:24 where they were placed by God to guard the way to the Tree of Life after the Fall. Satan himself is described as a “guardian cherub” in Ezek. 28:14. Seraphim appear to have a role associated with the unceasing worship of God and the consecration of those who draw near to worship him (Is. 6:1-7). And the Living Creatures appear to be associated with the Throne of God manifesting the fullness of divine life, unceasing activity and seeing all things (Ezekiel Ch. 1).

Angels on the other hand appear to be of a lower hierarchical level and they respect the order of God’s creation. This applies to even the archangel Michael who respects his lower level in God’s order and doesn’t dare bring a slanderous accusation against a Cherub, no matter how justified it is. We see this clearly in Jude 9 where we read “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Apparently when God sent Michael to resurrect Moses there was a dispute with Satan over who had right to his body. But Michael simply said “The Lord rebuke you!” for Satan, even though fallen, was still a Cherub and Michael respected God’s created authority.

But false teachers are ignorant of this order and blaspheme in things they do not understand. This is seen in the flippant, slanderous and accusatory manner in which false teachers carry out their supposed “spiritual warfare”. Slanderous name calling of the devil; mocking of demons (who incidentally appear to be associated with fallen “cherubim”); boasting of their authority over fallen angels; this is characteristic of false teachers. I shudder at the spiritual abuse they are inviting, not only upon themselves, but upon their unsuspecting hearers. I don’t think the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies worry too much about a bit of name calling, so long as it is coming from one whom they already have captured. But when the naïve, unstable, ignorant and unsuspecting follow their lead and start “binding the strongman” and blundering unclothed and uncovered into areas of spiritual warfare, I shudder for them.

Peter says these men are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

Around my house the Mina Birds have been out in full this spring. Their incessant and monotonous chirping is punctuated with what sounds like a neighbourhood of house alarms going off every time I step outside. They don’t understand that I’m not a threat, but their animal instincts say otherwise. So they squawk like it’s the end of the world and make so much noise that I do then become a threat to them. I must confess that various kinds of projectiles have been known to leave my hand and find their way to their noise making beaks as a result of their instinctual provocation. False teachers are just like these mina birds. Noisy, ignorant unreasoning animals engaged in flippant and accusatory spiritual warfare driven purely by animal instinct.

These men also revile Biblical authority as we have seen in their secretly introducing destructive heresies. That being the case, they also revile Governmental authority and reject the God given order of human government as outlined in Romans 13. Peter says they will perish and be paid back for all the harm they have done.

2. Revel in Sensual Indulgence (v. 13b-14a) “Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, revelling in their pleasures while they feast with you. 14With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable;”

Peter says another distinguishing characteristic of false teachers is the pleasure they find in shameless and public carousing. The Greek word translated here as carousing is the word τρυφήν-truphé. It means softness; daintiness; effeminate luxury; it means to break down morally and spiritually from overindulgence in delicate and dainty things. The “co-dependent” relationship that

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exists between false teachers and the cultural moment of our day is seen in their mutual effeminization of each other. Since like begets like, it's no wonder that more and more boys are growing into metrosexuals instead of God fearing, women respecting, MEN.

They also revel in their pleasures, literally their ἡδονήν –hédoné. This is the same word we get the English word "hedonistic" from. It means the natural, sensual pleasures of the flesh; it's the satisfaction of bodily desires at the expense of other things; where pleasure seeking has become an end in itself.

Paul Harvey paints a clear picture of hedonism when tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of this kind of hedonism. First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood. Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his OWN warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more and more until the dawn finds him dead in the snow! It is a fearful thing that people can be "consumed by their own lusts." This is exactly what false teachers do.

Peter calls these false teachers "blots and blemishes" and notice where their staining carousing and hedonistic pleasure are...they are in your midst; while they feast with you. Jude 12 clarifies this saying "These men are blemishes at your **love feasts**, eating with you without the slightest qualm--shepherds who feed only themselves." In other words, they are at the Lord's Table; The Eucharist; at Communion and at the fellowship meals in your own homes. Peter says they are stains on you by their presence and participation. The Bread and Wine of the Eucharist is, among other things, a sign of our unity, for we who are many are one body for we all share in the one bread. Thus anyone, false teachers especially, whose beliefs and behaviour are contrary to the word of God, should not be permitted to share in the Eucharist or minister in the assembly.¹ But, rarely is this kind of godly piety and corporate discipline exercised in today's professing church.

I can speak from personal experience of the stain these men leave behind. Several years ago we had a celebration feast in our home. Quite a few people attended including a man who held high position in the church we attended at the time and whose teaching we sat under for a season. He was an "overseer". Also in attendance was his wife and several other single women from the church. You can't imagine the grief we felt and the stain left upon us when we later learned that he had been having an affair with one of these single women. Right under our noses, neither he nor the women had slightest qualm about continuing their illicit affair in the midst of our feast. This grief was only surpassed by the shock of later discovering he had gone on to write a glowing endorsement for homosexuality within the pages of a book that butchered the Word of God.

Peter goes on to say these men have "eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable". In other words, they are full of lust (Matt. 5:28) for unstable women and look to seduce them. For these false teachers, the church gathering is no different than a "pick-up bar" on Friday night; both are full of others their eyes can lust for and potential targets of seduction. The sinning they never stop doing here is looking lustfully upon women. I don't think Peter could ever have

¹ Warren Wiersbe; *Be Alert*; Victor Books; 1987 (p. 50)

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envisioned the internet and the pornography there, but I doubt he would have been surprised by these statistics:

“Of the 1,351 pastors that Rick Warren’s website, Pastors.com, surveyed on porn use, 54% (more than half) said they had viewed internet pornography within the last year and 30% (one in three) of those had visited it within the last 30 days.” (<http://www.expastors.com/how-many-pastors-are-addicted-to-porn-the-stats-are-surprising/>)

Psychologist Richard Blackmon (with ties to Fuller Seminary and Dr. Archibald Heart), surveyed one thousand pastors from four major denominations in California. His research, found that 31.75% (more than one in three) of the clergy surveyed had sexual intercourse with a church member—who was not their spouse! (<http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/?articleid=36562>—Ministry founded by Francis Schaeffer)

A Pastoral care clinic based in Oklahoma reports:

- 81% of pastors have been tempted to have inappropriate sexual thoughts or behaviour with someone in the church but have resisted.
- 17% (nearly one in five) of pastors report inappropriately texting with a church member at some time in their ministry.
- 34% (more than one in three) of pastors wrestle with the temptation of pornography or visits pornographic sites. (<http://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>)

The recurring statistical number here is about 30%. One in three! What Peter warned of 2,000 years ago is real folks.

3. Revolt In Greed (v.14b- 16) “they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! 15They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.”

This is now the second reference to the greed of false teachers in this chapter. Here, Peter says they are experts at it. The word Peter uses here for “experts” is the word we get the English word gymnasium from. These guys, pumped up on the steroids of lust, go to the gym of greed and work out how to exploit money from people. They have left the straight way of Jesus and have wandered off to follow Balaam son of Beor as their hero and mentor.

Do you remember Balaam? Balaam was a false gentile prophet who engaged in divination and sorcery and had quite the reputation for results. Balaam colluded with Balak, King of Moab, to destroy Israel by enticing the men of Israel into sexual immorality with foreign women and thus turn Israel from God to sacrificing to false gods (Num. 22:4-8, 28; 24: 1; 25:1-2; 31:15-16). Peter says Balaam loved “the wage” singular of wickedness. To get a wage, you have to be hired. So Balaam was a hireling. False teachers are nothing but hirelings Peter says. And Jesus himself had a fair bit to say about hirelings in John 10:11-13 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hireling is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13The man runs away because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.”

It’s all about the money for these hirelings. Warren Wiersbe says “They know how to motivate people to give, while the true servant of God trusts the Father to meet his needs and seeks to help people grow through their giving. The apostate trusts his “fundraising skills” and leaves people in worse shape than he found them. He knows how to exploit the unstable and the innocent.”² These

² Warren Wiersbe; *Be Alert*; Victor Books; 1987 (p. 58)

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hirelings are more dependent on their tax free status as not-for-profits or on government handouts than they are on God and His Word.

4. Make False Promises (v.17-19) "These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

These false teachers promise a drink of water to the spiritually thirsty, but they are springs without water. They're dry wells. People walk away from false teaching just as thirsty for life's thirst quenching drink, as when they arrived. They are deceived. This is just the opposite of what Jesus offered the woman at the well of Sychar. Jesus said ""Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."(John 4:13).

These false teachers promise health, wealth and prosperity and whatever else the lustful desires of sinful flesh can come up with; if you can name it you can claim it...that is provided you send them "your seed money of faith" first. The number of these false teachers on cable television is truly staggering. But what is even more staggering to me is the number of people who believe them and their shameless lies and give them money.

These false teachers promise freedom to people, while they themselves are slaves to depravity. They promise you freedom to choose you sexual identity under the Orwellian newspeak of "gender fluidity". They promise you freedom to practice homosexuality without the consequences of Romans 1:26-27. They promise you freedom to redefine marriage without the Divine and sociological consequences. They promise you freedom to ignore the reality of Hell as an eternal consequence of ignoring or rejecting God's provided Righteousness. The freedom that false teachers offer is nothing but slavery in both time and eternity.

Again, I speak from personal experience. Several years ago, while seeking accountability and spiritual direction with a well know and visible church leader, he asked me, to my surprise, "What's all this talk about "righteousness" you keep mentioning in our conversations?" My initial thought was, "What do you mean, 'What do you mean'". So I asked a question in reply. I said, "Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God and the sole basis for belief, life and conduct?" He said "No, not like you do". I went on to ask if he believed that Satan was a real being and adversary. His reply was shocking. He said no and that in fact Satan was just the "shadow-self" of Jesus that he was coming to grips with. This leader was a False Teacher! And I told him so!

These diabolical offers of supposed freedom are being taught outright by false teaching Priests, Pastors, and Preachers. But they are also being taught covertly by the silence of many Priests, Pastors, and Preachers who out of fear of offending their income base won't tell people the Truth. Jesus said in John 8:31-32 ""If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." If you want freedom, then you must know the Truth. And if you want truth you must know Jesus Christ personally for he is "the Way the truth and The Life and no man comes to father except through Him (John 14:6). And if you want to know Jesus Christ personally, you must know His Word, the Bible (John 17:17). If whoever you are sitting under is not teaching you the Word of God, you are being offered a false freedom.

5. Received by False Professors (v. 20-22) "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse

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off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit, and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Who actually buys this stuff from false teachers? And who are the "they" Peter is referring to in this last section? Believe it or not there is some debate among students of the Bible as to who the "they" are. Some think Peter is still referring to the false teachers. Others think he is referring to saved, but immature believers. Still others believe Peter is referring to neither of those groups, but rather to false professors of the faith. I see three clues in the text that lead me and others to this last conclusion.

First, we see back in v. 14 that false teachers seduce "the unstable"; lit. the "unestablished souls". These are the inquirers at our churches. People who are "dabbling" in "spirituality" by the world's definition. They're just checking things out and decide to have a look for themselves at the claims of Christians and of Christ. They are undecided souls.

Second we see in v. 18 that false teachers entice people "who are just escaping from those who live in error." These are the ones who have literally just "barely" escaped from those who live in constant error. They have just barely taken a step away from a network of carnal and worldly unbelieving friends who are not good for them. Becoming aware of a spiritual thirst, they look to the church for answers. But what do these souls find? Sadly and shamefully, it appears as if they have a one in three chance of finding a false teacher who will lock them into their sin by offering them a false freedom.

Third we see in v. 20 that these people get entangled in the world all over again after having escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. However, when Peter speaks of the corruption they have escaped he uses the word μιάσματα- miasmata which means pollution; defilement or stain on the outside. But when speaking about the corruption that true believers have escaped in Ch. 1:4 he uses the word φθοράς- phthoras meaning destruction or decay on the inside. In other words, this third clue is of people who have cleaned up their outward appearance, but have not yet been born again, regenerated on the inside. They have no new nature within them.

These people come to "know the way of righteousness", but they turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed onto them and never are truly born again. Their back turning and re-entanglement in the world is a result of encountering false teachers. But it is also because they still retain their old nature. They have not the new nature of Christ indwelling them by His Holy Spirit, therefore, "Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit, and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud." That's just the nature of dogs and pigs. A prodigal son may end up with the pigs, but he won't stay there because he's not a pig by nature. He has the nature of a son and will repent and go home.

Peter says it would have been better for these back turning unestablished souls, barely escaped and cleaned up on the outside not to have ever known the way of righteousness. Why is this? I believe we find the answer in the book of Hebrews Ch. 10 where we read "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and

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who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people."31It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:26-31)

And again in Heb. 6: 4-6 we read "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." While repentance is not "categorically impossible" for someone like this it is unlikely and indeed impossible while they continue to crucify to themselves the Son of God all over again and subject Him to public disgrace.

Finally, having seen what false teacher Reville, Revel in and Reject, with great sobriety let us note the strong condemnation Peter and the Word of God have for these false teachers in this chapter alone. They bring destruction upon themselves; they are condemned to destruction; they will no more be spared than sinning angles, the ancient pre-flood world or Sodom and Gomorrah; they will perish; they will be paid back; they are accursed; blackest darkness is reserved for them. Unlike the Wizard of Oz, they are not going back to Kansas in a hot air balloon. They are going to hell.

This is has been a dark and heavy message. But one we need to know in order to grow. Now, let us close with the comfort and certainty of Jesus' own words regarding His own:

"The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a strangers voice." (John 10:3)

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27)

Knowing His Voice let us now follow our Good Shepherd who has gone ahead of us; let us follow him OUT of any and all apostatising situations and away from false teachers; and let us rejoice in the eternal life and security of His Hand.

Let us pray...