

LIVING ON EARTH WITH A DIVINE NATURE - Part eleven

Studies in 2 Peter - Sunday, April 28th, 2019 - Teaching #2128

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket

WHEN SIN BECOMES FATAL

2 Peter 2:10-16 - "...and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, [11] whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. [12] But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, ["...having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" - 2 Peter 1:4] born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, [13] suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. [14] They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls [Ephes. 4:14 - "...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."]. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! [15] Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, [16] but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness."

Peter continues to unfold this horribly descriptive passage about false teachers who secretly will arise in the church and the many who will follow them. In our text today, he begins to articulate just exactly what it is that makes their actions so wretched and deserving of God's wrath.

There have always been sinners in the church. God has always been in the salvage business with people like we. But anyone can tell by the tone of Peter's words that there is a specific *kind* of sin being dealt with. He's warning of an *attitude of heart* that defiles people in a way that makes them *past reclaiming*. He's dealing with an attitude that just *ripens people for divine judgment*. Peter is reaching for words to describe a situation where *sin becomes fatal*.

We will study four ideas in this text. We will do one today and three in our next teaching time.

1) THE MOST DESTRUCTIVE SINS ARE SINS COMMITTED AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH

2 Peter 2:10-11 - "...and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, [11] whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord."

Notice those first two words, "*and especially*." They link up with the idea of God preserving people for judgement at the end of **verse 9** - "...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, [10] *and especially* those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones...."

"These people *especially* will God hold for stern judgement," says Peter. Which people? People who *commit to a path of sin and despise authority while doing it*. How do they despise authority? By ignoring leaders who give correction. By ignoring the advice and rebuke and counsel of others. By not *heeding* that "*...something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention....*" (2 Peter 1:19). There is literally no voice that will change their minds. They are committed to rebellion.

There are two similar, yet different ideas here. There's *committing sin*, and then there's *hating the convicting voice of truth*. It's the second of those two that Peter describes here. This is what Peter means when he says they are "*bold and willful*." They don't tremble when they revile authorities and angelic majesties (10).

He's trying to show the difference between *sin* and *high-handed sin*. It's the difference between sin as *an act of disobedience or weakness or stupidity*, and sin as *intentional, willful persistence against every check and warning of the Word and Spirit of God*.

Nothing is as damning as committing yourself to a *course of sin - a way of sin - a pattern of actions that perpetuates itself - feeds itself into future corruption*. All sin *stains* the sinner. Persistent sin *hardens the sinner against repentance*. The lights start to go out in the soul. Sin becomes fatal.

So in these verses Peter says that God will reserve sinful people for judgement (9b). **Especially** for doing two things:

- a) Especially for those who **“indulge in the lust of defiling passion...”**(10). This is not a fight **against** sin. This is not a **Romans 7** situation - **Romans 7:22-24** - **“For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, [23] but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. [24] Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**

No. Our text from 2 Peter is a different situation entirely. It describes a commitment to **persist** in sin. This is not a fight **against** sin. This has become a calculated effort to **prolong** and **deepen** sin’s pleasure.

And the second reason God will reserve these people for judgment is they **“despise authority”**(10).

- b) Especially for those who **“despise authority”** (10). This is the **calculated evasion of correction**. This is the **justification of sin** - the covering up of guilt. Peter says this is the worst thing people do with their sin. They **calculate their future in it**. They become **stubborn** in it. Sometimes they **pretend** and tell themselves they’ll repent sometime later on - down the road. They **scheme** in their sin.

Now, let me hold up some other passages of Scripture along side of these words of Peter so we can get a clearer picture of this principle:

James 1:21 - **“Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”**

The subject of this verse is clear. It’s a verse about becoming **clean**. It’s a verse about how **filthiness and wickedness** can be put aside. James says these people can be made clean. God has made abundant provision for that with His Word. James says God’s Word has the power to actually **save their souls**.

But here’s the trick. All of the power of the Word will lie dormant and useless until it becomes **“implanted”** in their souls. Just reading the Word won’t get the job done. Just memorizing the Word won’t cut it. Just knowing what’s in the Word will leave their lives dirty and chained to sin.

James says the Word has to be received with **meekness**. It takes no humility to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. It takes no humility to believe that God created the heavens and the earth. It takes no humility to believe that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of a virgin. **What does James mean when he says the Word must be received - implanted - with meekness?**

He means there will be specific times when the Word of God confronts me with truth that is specifically **against the grain of my rebellion**. Not just theological truths, but **truths that confront the way I’m living, truths that force me to admit I’ve been wrong**.

Here’s the point. **Not** receiving God’s correcting word with meekness is the specific **kind of wickedness** James is addressing in this text. It’s a horrible sin **not** to listen meekly to God’s correcting truth. And James is saying it’s what I do with the Word at that point - it’s how I respond, either with **pride and evasion**, or **meekness and repentance**, that determines whether or not the Word will save my soul.

That’s exactly where Peter says these false teachers, and those who followed them, were going to miss the boat, and would be **especially reserved** for God’s wrath and judgement.

Let me give you another of my favorite passages of Scripture on this same subject:

Psalms 19:11-14 - **“Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. [12] Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. [13] Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. [14] Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”**

Notice that word, **“blameless”** in **verse 13**. Can that be right? Is David claiming **sinlessness**? No. But he’s describing a state of being **constantly made pure**. He talking about living **stain free**. He’s describing a condition where no inward sin is left to turn **carcinogenic** in his soul.

When David says, “**Moreover, by them is your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward,**” he is talking about the great protecting and keeping work of the Word of God. But as he writes of these great blessings, he realizes there is a way this whole inner soundness can be nullified - short-circuited - in his daily experience. There are errors - sins that lie hidden just under the surface of our lives - which, if we’re not alert to the Word, we won’t even see growing until it’s too late.

David says, if we’re not careful, **sins** can turn into **great transgressions (13)**. And the clue to what that means is found in the beginning of that thirteenth verse - “**Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins.**” Those are the sins that **rule** the perpetrator. Presumptuous sins are sins committed with a **stubborn, rebellious heart**. Presumptuous sinners scheme their way into continuing in sin **presuming** they’ll be just fine. Presumptuous sins are sins against all advice, counsel and reason. They’re sins that **set the will on a course that is committed to future sin**. That’s exactly the kind of sin Peter is warning about.

David says the same thing as James about the place of the Word in all of this: **Psalm 19:14** - “**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart** [that’s the planning of my future actions either yielding to my ingrained habits or the freeing revealed will of my Creator] **be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**”

The things **said** - admitted, and the things **meditated on** - planned in the heart, must be shaped and molded by the Word of God. God’s Word - the Law - must regulate every part of the life, **especially when it points out areas needing change and correction and alignment**. You must instantly say “**yes**” with your lips. And God will know the truthfulness of what you say with your lips by the way you **stop planning any further rebellion** in your mind and heart. Your **meditation must be pure**.

Remember where we are. Peter says people who **indulge the lust of defiling passions** and then **despise the correcting voice of authority** are in a hopeless situation indeed (10). The only thing that keeps a **single sin** from growing into a **chain of sins** is an instantly humble response to the Word of God.

That’s why Peter says, with reference to God’s sure Word, “**And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts....**” (2 Peter 1:19).

A humble, open, honest, immediate response to God’s Word will keep the light on in your heart. If you can always make sure that the **thinking** you bring to God’s Word is **unbiased** thinking - if you can make sure there’s absolutely no part of your inner person that’s **dodging** what God’s Word says - if there’s absolutely no **self-justification** in your soul - no **scheming** - then you will find your walk with Jesus empowered by the full glory of the Holy Spirit’s joyful presence. Peter says it’s like that wonderful moment when the darkness of night starts to fade because the sun is crowding it out with it’s glorious, warm rising. Walk as children of the light.