

Empty Vessels

© Tim Dubberly, June 18, 2000

Text: II Peter 2:18-22

Introduction:

Many today claim to be children of the Most High God. However, they don't live like children of God. They live like they want to live and call it pleasing to God. They justify their sin and then teach it to others. These are sinners who once were saved but believe that they still are. They are like Samson, who when the spirit left he did not even notice.

g Spurgeon states on this subject: "The other day, when I was inquiring about the welfare of a certain congregation, my informant told me that there had been few additions to the church, although the minister was a man of ability and industry. Furthermore, he let me see the reason of the failure, for he added, 'I have attended there for several years, and during all that time I do not remember hearing a sermon upon the sacrifice of Christ. The atonement is not denied, but it is left out.' If this be so, what is to become of our churches?"

If the light of the atonement is put under a bushel, the darkness will be dense. In omitting the cross you have cut the Achilles tendon of the church: it cannot move, nor even stand, when this is gone. Holy work falls to the ground: it faints and dies when the blood of Jesus is taken away. The cross must be put in the front more than ever by the faithful, because so many are unfaithful."

May CD

We must remember that God hates sin. He wants His children to preach against it and make an open show of it. He does not want us to condone sin so we can fill our churches. Sin is going to hell not to heaven. And those who practice that sin and teach it to God's people as truth will receive a greater damnation.

Let's us look at some "truths" perpetuated in this text.

- I. Backsliders lure true Christians through the lust of the flesh. (18)
- A. False teachers or false Christians speak about God and His word as if they know Him personally. The truth is they maybe once knew Him, but now they only know about Him.
 - B. They have become teachers with itching ears. They want to please their flesh and please the people. They try to picture God as some marshmallow God loving us and our sin.
 - C. These backsliders have begun to take up what they once laid down and now they teach that it's all right. The old adage "if it feels good then it can't be wrong." My friend, the bible teaches us that there is pleasure in sin but it doesn't last.

g You and I live in a world that is obsessed with the elimination of pain. Just take a stroll down the medicine aisle next time you are in the grocery store. You will see what I mean. When we have a headache, we take two aspirin, take a nap, and wake up feeling better. We forget the pain.

Face it, we do not like pain. But is that entirely healthy? Could it be that in some matter of my life, there is room for pain? Can it be at times I should feel some pain? The question pleads for affirmation.

Along with solutions to our physical pains, I am afraid we have mistakenly found a cure for our spiritual pain. Sadly, this is a deadly cure! To avoid the pain of sin, we have taken a deadly pill which diminishes the impact and consequence of sin in our lives. We have closed our eyes to the destruction of sin and swallowed a pill of deception. We do not feel the burdensome ache of sin.

For Israel, it was not enough for a prophet to forecast impending doom as a consequence of sin to get them to repent. More often than not, Israel had to face the consequence of sin to come to repentance; they had to feel pain. In Joel 2:12, 13, we see Israel's pain manifested: "Return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments."

To rend something means to rip or tear in grief, anger, rage, etc. We must ask ourselves when we last felt the need to tear our hearts because of sin. Feel the injury of sin and avoid the problem of pain! Let us rend our hearts today and feel the pain.

We must return to God.

May CD

- II. These false teachers promised liberty but lived in bondage. (19-20)
- A. Peter said, “by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” Either God or this world will rule in your heart and the choice is yours. Becoming a Christian doesn’t mean your worries are over; it just means that God will be there to help you to handle it.
 - B. These false teachers are backsliders who once had an experience with God. They once knew God, “having escaped through the knowledge of Christ they become entangled once again.” Now they are practicing sinners and trying to convince others that they are saved and what they are doing is acceptable with God.
 - C. They are allowing the devil to inspire them once again. They no longer listen to God. They have stopped spending time in prayer and now they spend time justifying their actions.
- III. These false teachers believed that they would gain the palace while they played in the pigpen.
- A. They picked up the sins they once laid down. When a person stops spending time in the altars, he will usually start picking up those sinful things that he gave up for God.
 - B. They have seared their conscience believing they are saved no matter what they do. There are two women who are married and are pastoring a church in Huntsville. These women are damned and they are teaching what the bible calls a damnable heresy to their congregation.
 - C. These backslidden Christians have, like the dog, returned to their own vomit. Like Paul said of Demas, “Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world.”

Conclusion:

God is more than good feelings and faith. His teachings are more than hope and harmony. His will is more than love and unlimited blessings. Serving God is all about getting sin out of your life and keeping it out. The Bible teaches us to not allow sin to dwell in our mortal bodies that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. He that serves sin becomes the servant of sin and the servant will not abide in the house forever, only the son.

We need to live Godly and Holy before God. Let your yea be yea and your nays be nays. Live what you preach and make sure what you preach is the truth in Christ.

g Through its laws, our country declares it a crime to lie about the contents in a box of cereal. These laws demand that the outside of the package tell the truth about what is on the inside. Deceptive packaging is illegal. "Truth in advertising" regulations are another way to protect the public. A good example of this is the warning on a pack of cigarettes: "Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy."

Unfortunately, there are no such laws about people. We require no one to tell what really lies behind the packaging--the clothes, facial expressions, mannerisms, speech patterns, or affected behavior. No one is forced to tell you what he or she is really feeling, thinking, or planning to do.

Our packaging--the way we appear to others--is an accepted, even an expected part of our way of life. We have become experts in this type of trickery. Before we are going to get the help we need, we need to confess this sin of hypocrisy. Only then can we go on the path of discovering and knowing our real selves.

May CD

Today, are you living the Christian life. Are you living a life that is pure and holy? Have you put away sin from your life? Are you one of these false teachers who have taken back up your sin and become like a sow wallowing in the mire?

Peter has given us some wonderful "truths" concerning false teachers and how a person can truly backslide and lose out on God.

References

May, Steve (1999) 1001 Contemporary Illustrations. Raleigh, North Carolina: Heaven Word Inc.