

Sent: Wednesday, December 16, 2015 3:11 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on II Peter 2:17-22

In our lesson last nite on II Peter 2:17-22, Peter--writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit--continues to expose the character and "damnable heresies" being introduced by false teachers within the early church! His message is just as relevant for us today, as the "way of truth" continues to be misrepresented and "maligned" by many who profess to be followers of Christ, and to speak for the Christian faith!

Peter likens these imposters to "springs without water" and "mists driven by a storm"--those who offer only empty promises to quench the thirsting souls of those living in a hot and barren land (in contrast with the "living water" offered by Jesus to those who come to Him)! He notes how they use "arrogant words of vanity to 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." Whew!

According to MacArthur, these "victims" are examples of people who are tired of the consequences of sin and want to escape the moral contamination of the world system and so seek a "brand of religion" and the freedom promised by these false teachers, but--like them--ultimately reject the Christ of the Bible. Presumably because they want to go on living a life of sin! And the analogies of the "dog returning to its own vomit," and of the pig "returning to wallowing in the mire" only demonstrate and confirm their continued "lost" condition!

In fact, the text illustrates the very kind of "apostasy" Peter is warning about in his letter--people who "profess" the Christian faith and "even know the way of righteousness" but then reject and turn away from His grace and truth! Judas Iscariot exemplifies such a one who had no lack of knowledge, but lacked redeeming faith and became the arch apostate!

Peter concludes, in 2:20-21, that the state of such a person is "worse for them than the first...and 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!" Why is this, we ask? Well it certainly indicates how serious it is to hear and know the truth--and then to reject it! To reject the only hope one has only seals ones doom--although I don't think Peter is suggesting that such a person cannot at some point (if God so calls) return, repent, and be saved!

This interpretation is also consistent with other Scripture, including Peter's writing that a "saved" person doesn't "lose" his or her salvation. And they're certainly never referred to as "dog" or "pigs"! They are referred to as "sheep"! For example, in John 10:17-18, Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." Peter himself wrote (in I Peter 1:3-5): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you; who are kept (NAS says "protected") by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time!"

There are many other verses in the Bible confirming the "eternal security of the believer." For example, Romans 8:1 states that "...there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." And, in John 5:24, Jesus says: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who hears My word, and believes on Him who sent Me, has eternal life and does not come into judgment (KJ says "shall not come into condemnation") but has passed from death into life"!

It doesn't mean, of course, that true believers--like sheep--don't tend to "stray," and need lots of direction and help! That's why Peter ends his letter with the admonition for believers to "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ..." And Jude ends his letter with the great reassuring benedictory prayer: "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen!"

Well, on to Lesson #4, covering II Peter 3, with yet another case of false teachers denying and even "scoffing" at some other very critical Biblical truths concerning the person and work of Christ--this time concerning the promise of His second coming and the "judgment" (and "glory"!) to come!

Merry Christmas! And Happy New Year to all!

Lowell