The Religious Apostate

2 Peter 2:17-22
4/26/09

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Introduction:

Simon came to “believe” under false pretense. He believed intellectually as demons do (Ja. 2:19), yet was never released from his bitter poison and chains of sin (cp. Acts 8:13 & 23).

Sometimes the unreal can look very much like the real. EX: counterfeit, phony money.

Satan tried to slip a counterfeit into the Samaritan church. Simon looked good externally (see v. 13). He had Philip fooled. Philip was convinced that Simon was saved, so he baptized him.

There are 3 things about one who is saved: 1) he believes 2) he obeys & 3) he continues. and Simon had all three! He "believed", was baptized in obedience, and continued.

Simon looked good (like Judas). From all outward appearances he seemed real. V. 13 - he was always hanging around with the preacher (Philip), and was an attentive observer.

What were your motives in coming to God for salvation?

Some make a profession of faith for the following wrong reasons:

1) to please someone (ex. girlfriend)
2) to get someone off your back (ex. pressure from a soulwinner)
3) to see what you can get out of it. This amounts to <u>using God</u>, making His salvation like pagan magic.

Some use God for the following <u>selfish</u> reasons:

--fortune (financial gain) (thinking that "gain is godliness")

--fame (use Christianity to make a name for themselves)

--power (ILLUS: Ron Stravel - a Satanic cult leader we met in 1984, who wanted to be baptized, sot hat he might link up with God so that he would have power over Satan and demons)

God warns us of the dangers of apostasy in the last days.

1 Timothy 4:1
Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Thessalonians 2:3
Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

Basically, a religious apostate does not stand where he used to stand. He does not believe what he used to profess. The look of his outcome is uglier than the appearance of his pre-conversion state.

Peter in verses 17 – 22 continues his warning regarding false teachers and their departure (apostasy) from their professed faith.

1. **Their <u>pride</u> resists <u>authority</u>** (v.10-11)
   (They "despise government (authority)..speak evil of dignities)

2. **Their <u>mouth</u> speaks <u>ignorance</u>** (v.12)
   (They "speak evil of the things they understand not")

3. **Their <u>fun</u> is wild <u>partying</u>** (v.13a)
   (They "count it pleasure to riot in the day time")

4. **Their <u>appearance</u> is <u>deceitful</u>** (v.13b, 14b)
   (They are "sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you")

5. **Their <u>eyes</u> are <u>adulterous</u>** (v.14a)
   (They have "eyes full of adultery")

6. **Their <u>time</u> is consumed with <u>sinning</u>** (v.14c)
   (They "cannot cease from sin")

7. **Their <u>heart</u> is <u>greedy</u>** (v.14d-15)
   (They have a "heart they have exercised with covetous practices")

8. **Their <u>mind</u> is <u>madness</u>** (v.16)
   (When rebuked, they still don't get it; "the dumb donkey speaking…forbad the madness")

"Three main features have always characterized the ministry style of false teachers. First, they are authoritarian (Jer. 5:31), invariably ruling over their churches in a domineering fashion (cf. 3 John 9-10), and strongly denouncing any who question their authority. To make matters worse, they almost always lack formal training or reputable ordination, operating beyond any legitimate biblical or theological accountability.

"Second, false teachers minister in a man-centered way (Jer. 23:16, 26; Ezek. 13:2), pandering to what they think people want to hear and accept (cf. Isa. 30:10; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). As a result, they preach their own visions (Lam. 2:14; Ezek. 13:9; Zech. 10:2; Col. 2:18) of health wealth, prosperity, and false peace (Jer. 6:14; 23:17; Ezek. 13:10, 16). . .

"Third, they treat the historic, Scripture-based doctrines of the church with contempt (cf. Jer. 6:16). Instead of proclaiming biblical orthodoxy, they promote their own self-styled novelties, methods, and doctrines." (MacArthur, p. 103-104).

What are the characteristics of a religious apostate?

I. *A Religious Apostate* **Advertises Much, but Delivers Nothing** (v.17)

The thirsty come to them to drink refreshing water to quench their dry, parched souls, only to find that these false teachers are **"wells without water"** – or waterless springs.

So many within professing Christianity, who have a reputation for helping sinners, do nothing to meet the spiritual needs of the lost who come to them and their churches to drink.

They are in need of the "Living Water"—Jesus Christ—but do not find him in many denominations who have so many distractions and substitutes for the Lord, that the spiritual needs of the lost, thirsty souls go unmet.

Are you a "well without water"? Does Christ dwell in you? If not, He desires to dos o today!

Paul further describes the false teachers as **"clouds that are carried with a tempest."**

Here are clouds that blow through without delivering the needed rain. Picture an ancient farmer in Israel, who longed for some rain to help his dry and thirsty field, and gray skies appear on the horizon. He gets his hopes up anticipating a needed soaking, only to see a misty cloud blow through while delivering absolutely nothing.

"Jude 12 . . . promise of refreshing rain but instead are blowing away without leaving a drop." (Hiebert, p. 123).

Two key lessons:

1) You can't give to others what you yourself do not possess.

2) Some will wear a religious label of professing Christ, yet do not have Him, and therefore can't truly offer Him to others.

These teachers produce "disillusionment. . . great expectations which they do not fulfill. . . when the weary traveler came to them seeking refreshment. . . (Hiebert, p. 123).

What is on reserve for such false teachers? The same black, gloomy darkness which they offered others will be their fate for all of eternity.

God has sovereignly reserved the gloom of darkness for those who chose to live in darkness in this life. They wanted darkness for a lifetime, and God will give I to them for all eternity! Can you imagine existing inescapable darkness forever and ever! For those who reject the light of the world, their lot will be the darkness they wanted!

"The black darkness mentioned here refers to hell—the place of eternal punishment where both fire (Matt. 13:42, 25:41) and darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13) coexist." (MacArthur, p. 104-105).

"1 Peter 1:4 pictures the heavenly inheritance of the faithful children of God as firmly preserved for them." (Hiebert, p. 124).

II. *A Religious Apostate* **Impresses with His Words, while Luring others into Sin** (v.18)

They speak big, unnaturally swollen verbiage to impress their listeners with their ability to articulate. Like the empty speeches of politicians, they speak much but say little.

People are so impressed by <u>how</u> they speak that they really are not paying attention to <u>what</u> they speak, and end up being led astray by their verbal manipulation.

Eloquent verbosity was their "weapon to ensnare the unwary and licentiousness was the bait on the hook" (Green, cited by Rogers, p. 587).

Their appeal is to the "lusts of the flesh." They entice with an appeal to fleshly appetites. They are smooth talkers who literally can talk someone into sensual, unrestrained, immoral living.

"They posed as the heralds of that true liberty which a deeper understanding of the new life offered, and they assured those who submitting to their leadership that they would conduct them into a life unhindered by restraints. The freedom they offered was a freedom from the obligation to serve Christ and grow in Him in the way set out in 1:3-11.) ((Wheaton, quoted by Hiebert, p. 126) They advocated an antinomianism which insisted that Christians had been freed from the Law and its unnecessary restrictions, leaving them to follow the promptings and desires of their own being." (Hiebert, p. 126).

"They do not care about bringing the truth to people's minds; instead, they target people's lusts—offering a carnal, feelings-oriented message that feeds the sensual instincts of its hearers. Often such teachers possess a personal charm and charismatic appeal that other people, especially vulnerable women, find attractive (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-6; 4:3-4). " (MacArthur, p. 105).

Ladies, look out for such smooth talkers. I recall a man who came to our church years ago, who through his smooth talking seduced a woman who had recently professed faith in Christ. He was run over by a subway train in what appeared to be a suicide.

Who do they hunt for? Answer: Those who have just escaped from others who held them in some sort of bondage! People used to being held in bondage are more susceptible to it. The seductress hunts for the "precious life." The young person, the new convert, those who are just on the road toward Christ.

"Healthy Christian living comes when God's commands are seen as the kerbstones on His highway of love, the hedge encompassing His garden of grace" (Green, quoted by Hiebert, p. 126). We should embrace God's standards as being good for us, not something to escape from.

III. *A Religious Apostate* **Promises Freedom, but Lives as a Slave** (v.19)

They promise that they have the desire and power to free people from corruption, yet they themselves are slaves to corruption.

There is a "contradiction between their talk and their walk" (Hiebert, p. 127).

You can't successfully free someone from something that you yourself are addicted to.

The blind cannot lead the blind, and the corrupt cannot free others from corruption. The answer is: You get freed from moral corruption and you will have the power to help others get out of theirs.

Peter ends the verse with a proverbial statement: Whatever conquers you, controls you; whatever defeats you, enslaves you; whatever it is that you give in to, becomes a ruling force in your life! When you choose a sin, you do not merely choose an act, you choose a master!

"Sew a thought, reap an act…Sew an act, reap a habit…Sew a habit, reap a character… Sew a character, reap a destiny."

"It is in accord with the teaching of Jesus, 'Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin' (John 8:34), and also with the teaching of Paul (Rom. 6:16; 1 Cor. 6:12b). Barclay quotes the Stoic philosopher Seneca as saying, 'To be enslaved to oneself is the heaviest of all servitudes'." (Hiebert, p. 128).

IV. *A Religious Apostate* **Possesses Full Knowledge of Christ, but Lacks True Faith in Christ** (v.20a)

"Entangled therein" – "Entangled (emplakentes) may be another fishing metaphor, using the image of fish effectively caught in the meshes of a net, unable to free themselves." (Hiebert, p. 130).

To be re-tied up into the web of the world's corruption after having escaped this web earlier in life leaves the entangled creature in a greater state of bondage than previously experienced.

Why is this so?

1) To come into direct knowledge about Christ but to refuse to know Him personally, brings on God's judgment.

2) There tends to be <u>less desire</u> the second time around. The incentive or motivation is not there. You've been there and tried that and feel that it didn't "work." You found that you were not satisfied with knowing about Christ, but thought that you came to Him for real and were self-deceived. Head knowledge does not equal heart knowledge. To0 know about Him is not the same as to know Him.

They are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

This sad reality reminds me of the parable of Jesus in Matthew 12:43-45.

Matthew 12:43-45
When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

NOTE: *"I will return into <u>my</u> house"* (v. 44). The house never was turned over to anyone else; it was still the devil's property.

Whose house are you?
Had this man invited Christ into his life, had he surrendered to Christ to take charge of his life, the evil spirit and his evil companions could not have entered the man. A man indwelt by the Spirit of Christ (Ro. 8:9) cannot also be indwelt by a demon.

"It is not enough to clean house; we must also invite in the right tenant" (Wiersbe, p. 44).
Jesus Christ is knocking! (Rev. 3:20).

V. *A Religious Apostate* **Knows the Truth, but Turns from It to his own Peril** (v.20b-21)

Why is it better never to have known the path or road of righteousness than to have known it and to turn from it? Answer: Heightened accountability and condemnation.

SEE Luke 12:42-48.

Luke 12:47-48
And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

There are more terrible degrees of punishment in hell for those who knew the truth, but rejected it and lived hypocritically.

Luke 20:46-47
Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

James 3:1
My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

Regarding Judas Iscariot, the Lord Jesus said:

Matthew 26:24
The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

VI. *A Religious Apostate* **Does What his Nature Dictates** (v. 22)

Nothing is quite as pathetic as a sick dog vomiting all over the living room carpet and ten going back to lick it all up again. (Proverbs 26:11)

You can clean up a pig, get it all squeaky clean, but the moment you release it to the back yard, it heads right for the sloppy mud pit again.

Both dogs and pigs are unclean animals (by this I mean, they were not kosher food for the Jews).

Why does a dog return to its vomit and a pig to its mud? Because it is a dog and it is a pig. That is the nature of the animal.

Unless God changes our nature and puts His Holy Spirit in us, we will be right back to the filth of the old, former life.

Pigs love filth, slime and mud. It is their nature to do so. The pig was washed, but its nature was not changed. You can through social programs clean up people's environment, but unless there is a real inner change, the people will live the way they always have (ILLUS: the renovation of "Mount Pleasant").