“How to Be a Big Picture Christian”

2 Peter 2:18-22

It’s important to continually keep in mind the most significant truth of this chapter

Truth matters and God takes this very seriously

One third of Peter’s letter is devoted to addressing false teachers and their evil characteristics and sinister tactics

If this mattered so much to Peter, then it should matter just as much to us

There’s always a battle for the truth

Throughout this chapter it’s evident these false teachers were having a significant influence

This is why Peter continues to expose them for who they truly are – nothing more than imposters

“They brag about themselves with empty, foolish boasting. With an appeal to twisted sexual desires, they lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception” (NLT, v.18)

It’s abundantly clear that these false teachers were all about “what is now” rather than about “what is later”

Their desires and actions were centred around immediate, temporal satisfaction, especially in the realm of immorality

2

They cared little about ultimate accountability and God’s future judgment

Their perspective was so opposite to authentic Christianity

Listen to what the apostles Paul and John wrote regarding this

2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

Philippians 3:12-14: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

1 John 3:1-3: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us,  because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”

3

There’s a significant connection between falsehood and temporal, deviant sensuality

Revisiting the story of Balaam gives clear evidence to this

What he could not accomplish for Balak through directly proclaiming curses upon the Israelites, he accomplished instead through sexual temptation

Numbers 25:1-3: “Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.”

Furthermore, notice how these false teachers take advantage of those who are most vulnerable

In this case, it is those who have not found a solid foundation in their faith

They are thus more easily manipulated and drawn back into a web of lies and intentional deception

How do these false teachers gain such a strong foothold?

The first part of verse 19 provides the answer

4

Through promising great freedoms to those who believe and support them

However, true freedom is to live as we should (according to God’s truths) and not as we please (according to our agendas)

What Peter writes in this verse is especially true of cult leaders

They promise those who follow them with devotion will experience only liberty and love in their life

However, once they have such people under their control, freedoms are increasingly, systematically taken away

What is true of their followers is ironically also true of them because they are actually slaves to their own corruptive ideologies and lifestyles

“They themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” (NLT, v. 19b)

Thus, the deceiver is a slave to his own deception

He unwittingly has been captured within his own web

The final outcome has no redemptive reality for either false teachers or their loyal disciples

5

“And when people escape from the wickedness of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and then get tangled up and enslaved by sin again, they are worse off than before.” (NLT, v. 20)

Now the big question here is whether Peter’s referring to genuine believers

Turn with me to Hebrews 6:1-6

There’s a major difference between “knowledge” and “regeneration”

Once a person has entered into a true saving relationship through belief in Christ as Savior, they can never be eternally lost

Many Scriptures substantiate this, e.g. John 5:24; Philippians 1:6; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 Peter 1:3-5

He further intensifies his point by writing this in the following verse: “for it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” (NLT, v. 21)

With more revelation comes greater responsibility

Psalm 78 vividly illustrates this

God’s judgment was much more severe because the Israelites had seen great manifestations of His supernatural power

6

This speaks to how vitally important responding humbly and obediently to God’s truths is in any person’s life

Isaiah 55:6-7: “Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon.”

“It would be better if they had never known the way to righteousness than to know it and then reject the command they were given to live a holy life.” (NLT, v. 22)

These are very sobering, unsettling words

The last verse in this chapter concludes with a stark comparison of how false teachers and those who follow them are like animals who typically live according to their most basic instincts

There’s a pull to go right back to what’s most natural

Without true repentance there’s no hope for change

Having a humble, teachable heart is of vast importance

I cannot think of a better way to finish this sermon than with the words of this song

7

“I Give You My Heart”

This is my desire  
To honor You  
Lord, with all my heart  
I worship You  
All I have within me  
I give You praise  
All that I adore  
Is in You

Lord, I give You my heart  
I give You my soul  
I live for you alone  
And every breath that I take  
Every moment I'm awake  
Lord, have Your way in me

Songwriters: Reuben Timothy Morgan, © Universal Music Publishing Group

What step of obedience is God urging you and I to take in this moment of time?