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2 Peter 2:10-16

"A Brutal Honest Assessment"

January 17, 2016

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to 2 Peter 2:10, as we continue our study through Peter's last letter that he wrote to the scattered churches that were running for their lives, at this point through Turkey (Asia Minor), that were suffering tremendously from the first wave of national persecution that had come from Nero and his Roman forces.

Peter had written, two or three years earlier, this first letter that we had studied when the horror began, and, now, three years later, he's on death row. He's going to die (verse 14 tells us in chapter 1), and so Peter writes this short letter - dying words of a dying man to a church that he loves; majors on the majors. He speaks to them about three things of importance - their relationship with God, the truth (in chapter 1); the liars, the false teachers that were gaining a foothold everywhere (in chapter 2); and then (in chapter 3) the coming of the Lord and God coming to make things right.

So we've gone through chapter 1 already. We've looked at our relationship with the Lord being the most important thing and how we have to "add" to our faith what we've learned. So growing means learning and then doing; and that we can depend totally upon God's Word to fulfill that which God has promised. And then a couple of weeks ago, we began chapter 2, looking at the false. Peter was deeply concerned about the inroads made by the false teachers. So we spent our first week looking at the first three verses and learned that false teachers are always around, they distort the truth, they secretly seek to bring in heresy, they deny Jesus is Lord, they broaden the way to heaven, they cover their true motives of carnal gain, and they are headed for swift judgment. I think we ended that first week by saying, yeah, not swift enough. But the Lord is patient. Then last week, from verses 4 through 9, we looked at the judgment of God and how, even after great longsuffering, God has the final word. So, with the angels that fell, with the ancient world in the days of Noah, with Sodom and Gomorrah, judgment did come. It didn't come quick. Not as quick as we might like. God waits for souls. But it did come. And then yet, in the judgment, God delivered His own. So Noah was delivered with his family. Lot was delivered as well. And yet the judgment came. So "God knows how to deliver" (that's what verse 9 says) "the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment."

Spurgeon's magazine, years ago, had a picture of a trowel and a sword. Nehemiah had men working on the wall with an armament in hand, if you will, to protect, and yet they worked on the wall. I guess that's kind of like Peter. You have to build, but you also have to defend. And sometimes to be on the defense means you've got to be careful about what you're facing. You need to have that balance. When Jude wrote to the church, he said we should "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (verse 3), speaking of just the basics of our faith in Christ. So I see Peter there as well.

This chapter 2 is a very discouraging chapter but yet obviously very important to this dying apostle who wanted very much to have the church be ready to go. So he speaks a lot about these false teachers, and his words are not politically correct. But he's on death row. What does he care? He wants to tell you like it is, and so he warns the church about what they're up against, what the consequences are of not being careful. And with this week and next week, we will finish this chapter as Peter gives to us, in these last several verses, a brutal honest assessment of the enemy; and these are enemies. You could call these verses, from verse 10 to the end of the chapter, a catalog of warnings or a rant. If Peter was a rapper, this would make a good song. This is a checklist and a word picture and a stern warning, and it's important that you hear what he has to say. But he's not messing around because eternity is far too valuable.

So we ended up, there in verse 9, "to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." And then verse 10 says this, "and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." Listen to what Peter says about these false teachers. Look at the words he uses: fleshly, lustful, hating authority, presumptuous, self-willed, evil speaking, no respect for anyone - even so unlike the angels that know when to bow their knee and to shut their mouths. He will go on and say in the verses that follow (that we will look at this morning) they are "like natural brute beasts," like animals with rabies. You can't cure them, but you can destroy them. Peter's pretty upset. They share about things they don't know anything about, they perish in their own corruption, they live their sins out in the daylight, they're like spots and blemishes among the saints. He really goes after them, and he says they're filled with immorality and sin, and they just want. So

Peter, in facing death, was serious about these folks who would come against man, and then against the church, who would market religion and take advantage of you.

But look at verse 10, and we'll kind of just take some highlights here. He says of the false teachers that they "walk according to the flesh," and they are driven by a "lust of uncleanness and despise authority." It's an interesting picture, isn't it, that false teachers are characterized by an unwillingness to submit to anyone. In fact, there's no humility in their heart. They do their own thing. God is not their God. Their flesh rules their heart. And you will find it to be true that most false teachers - most of them, not all - find themselves without much denominational affiliation or accountability to a church. I've always said it's very interesting pastors, if they teach every week to a congregation, have to come back on Monday and live with their teaching. They have to face up to what they taught. People have to put it into practice. If it's really weird, they're coming, "Hey, Pastor, that's really weird!" But the guy who runs in and collects your offering and runs out doesn't have to do that at all. He just dumps his junk, and he goes to the next town, unwilling, really, to submit or to be accountable, if you will. And Peter describes these false teachers that way. There's no accountability in their hearts. There's no reverence for the authority of God's Word. These false teachers tend to be the source of their own inspiration. They claim to have heard from God. They answer to no one. They're masters of their own ship. They're unsaved and carnal. They're headed for judgment. And Peter uses the word, here in verse 10, "they are presumptuous." It's a word that means to be bold without any hesitancy or fear. It is almost that description of someone that believes their own lies. "This is what it is. I know God's spoken to me, and I'm just going to spit it out. It's not in the Bible, but boy, it's working." And he's arrogant or "self-willed." He lives to have his own way, believing his way is best. Now that's quite a combination - to be hateful and spiteful of authority, to be driven by your flesh, and yet to be very bold and presuming you're right. You're righter than the Bible. You're righter than the Scriptures. You're righter than what God has to say. "I'm just right!" Peter says - watch out for those guys. I am not willing to name names. Oh, I'm willing, but I'm not wise to name names. The minute I name a name, that guy's going to repent, and I'm going to have to come back and apologize. But you know who they are. And if you don't, come ask me. No. Don't do that either. (Laughing) So, because of what we read in verse 10, at the end of verse 10 it's not surprising to read that "they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries." Now the word "dignitary" is the Greek word "*doxa*," which means glory, and it is almost always applied to God and the angels or to the heavenly authority, if you will. So, they are

so arrogant that they are even willing to speak against angels and ranks of angels. But because there's no respect, not for God or His angels, they can just speak evil even of those more powerful than they.

And that's what it says in verse 11. The angels are far more powerful than man. But not these guys. These guys just have their own understanding of who they are. They are cocky, they are self-important, they believe that they've got nothing to fear and no one to answer to. Here's what Jude wrote in his little books about these fellows. In verse 8 he said, "These dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries" (same word). "Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' But these speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 9-10). It sounds like Jude and Peter had a meeting, doesn't it? It does trouble me sometimes to hear Christians talk to the devil as if they could withstand him on their own. "I rebuke you!" Really? Good luck with that. I think he'll devour you. That's pretty much what the Bible teaches. I think your wisest move is to make sure you keep Jesus between you and the devil. You know? If you want to make faces, do it behind the skirt of Jesus. Hide back there. And notice what Jude tells us - that even powerful Michael, and I'm pretty sure there isn't any more powerful angel in the Bible than he - he's like the warrior angel, he's like the guy who you want to have your back, he's a tough guy. And yet, when it came to the devil, he didn't say anything but, "The Lord deal with you. The Lord deal with you. Now I'm not going to even take you on." And Michael may very well have had the power, but he didn't feel he had the authority to speak that way. He submitted himself to the Lord. So, to speak evil of those in authority is a way of the flesh. The believer is instructed to do just the opposite. Paul writes to Titus in chapter 3:1-2, "Remind them" (the people) "to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men." Well that's exactly the difference that you see between the man of God or the woman of God and these false teachers. They are just arrogant and self-confident, and they don't know where their limits are, and they're driven by the flesh, and nothing has authority. They don't answer to anyone for anything. It's an uncontrolled life, if you will. When Daniel sought to refuse the food of the king (in captivity) when he was in Babylon, he did so with such respect that even his guard didn't get in trouble. Daniel was very careful. He didn't feel he could eat it and serve the Lord, but he asked in such a way that he brought honor. When the

apostles disobeyed the Sanhedrin's call to stop preaching in Jesus' name, they were very respectful and said, "We can't do that, but we're willing to pay the price for the disobedience, the choice that we've made." When Nehemiah wanted to go to Jerusalem and build (a place he had never been), and he didn't see any way out (he worked for an unbelieving, powerful king who ruled the world), he didn't show any disrespect at all. He prayed, he submitted himself to the authority of the king, he cried out for God to move hearts, and God did. But here're these false teachers, and the flesh is what drives them. And there's an immediate loss of respect for authority, and it extends immediately to God and to His Word and to the angels because sin and self have taken center stage. We read in Psalm 36 this morning - you might remember - verse 1, "There is no fear of God before his eyes." They're driven by just a self-confidence. "For he flatters himself in his own eyes," we read, "when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates." There's always an excuse, right? He's not willing to be taught or to be directed or to be helped. So, self-ruling, no submitted heart, no respect for God's authority - which is exactly what distinguishes you and me from the heart of the false teacher. You should be submitted to the Lord, His Word, His will, His ways.

Well then let's continue. It doesn't get any better. Verse 12, "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed," (now if you wonder if Peter's beating around the bush, read that again; he's not) "speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children." Pretty tough words. Back to verse 12, the simile. They are like animals out of control, overcome by their sin, and Peter describes them as rabid animals. They are incurable. Incurable. They have written God off. But most importantly, they are a threat to the well-being of others. So Peter finds no tolerant heart towards this kind of stuff. He just says these are folks that God is just going to have to deal with. But it's interesting to me that once people reject God and His Word, he quickly begins to see man as a descendant of the animal kingdom. It isn't until you know the Lord that you see yourself for who you truly are. The Bible says we're made in God's image, that it was sin and rebellion that made us behave like animals to begin with. Peter describes these guys as overcome with sin, with a hunger so great that, like animals driven by instinct, Peter says it's going to kill them. This is going to drive them to their own corruption. Now, look,

these are not men that have been born again. These are wicked men - no repentance, no forgiveness, no humility, no surrender. And notice what he says of them besides the fact that they're rabid. He says they "speak evil of the things they do not understand." Interesting to me that these men, who are not teachable, driven by lust and the darkness of sin, answer to no authority, are continuing to spew out their opinions about things, and they have no clue. They speak like they have authority, they share like they understand. Even the basics of salvation. I don't know if you've heard some of these weirdos on television or on the radio, but I mean, it can get pretty bad. Everyone has an opinion. These guys are no exception except that they bring forth their opinion as the authorities from God, and yet they don't know Him at all. It's the old expression - the empty barrel makes the most noise. These guys are just rattling, right? And you can watch how these false teachers are so confident, and yet what they teach you is absolutely untrue. I watched a guy the other night - because I was going over these notes - talk for an hour and a half about how a friend of his, a Christian pastor, had become possessed by the devil and how they had to go through three days of exorcism. "They finally delivered him by the power of Jesus!" And I thought - you're an idiot. If Jesus is in you, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). You could have stopped this in two seconds. Either you're saved or you're not, but the Lord doesn't rent out apartments in your life. He doesn't sublease a room. You're either His or you're not. But this guy went on, and, "Oh, people, if we collect some money, we're going to get this message out," and the guy raised a half a million dollars. Yep. Headed for destruction. Headed for destruction. Oh, he has a big following. They "speak evil of the things they do not understand." "Sow your seed of faith with me so you can be rich." I hate them. And then you read this. They "will utterly perish in their own corruption." This is going to bring their destruction. They think they're making progress, making success. They're blessed, and they're filled with joy. They think we've got the world by the tail. But the Bible says they're dying a slow death that's imperceptible. As they move from God, their future holds only an utter perishing in their own corruption.

In fact, notice what verse 13 says, that God will pay them the wages of not doing the things He wants. The pay or reward of a life which God hates is on par with (notice the rest of the verse) "those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime." Now I want you to think about the comparison because what Peter is saying is the false teacher openly parades himself out as a phony guy who's devoted to God. "I'm a religious man. I pray all the time. I'm a holy guy. I just want

everything to be 'of the Lord.' " Liar. But he's going to get the same reward as the person who lives outwardly in a party life, doesn't care at all what anybody thinks about him; just lives his sin out in public. And that's the comparison that Peter makes. He's going to receive the wages just like "those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime." This guy comes out and wants to be outwardly religious, openly sinful and proud, claiming God; and yet the other guy doesn't care about God, he's living in the flesh, he's living in the world, he's partying it up. They're both going to get the same reward. That's what Peter's saying. He may look religious, but his reward is going to be just like if he didn't know God at all because he doesn't. The problem is that so often, for a time, it appears like there's no consequence. But you should know from God's Word - in the end, the price is far greater than you can afford. So, don't get too close to rabid dogs. They'll infect you. Stay away from these guys. I can't tell you enough. Turn off the TV, turn away, don't listen, change the channel. Go listen to KLOS. You'll be better off. You'll have a dumb song in your head, but you won't be eternally led astray. Because these guys will infect you. Not only that. They deceive others, but they also deceive themselves. Notice what it says. "They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you." The problem is they live this spiritual life out totally believing their own lies. And notice where they're found - in the church. Among you is what we read - "while they feast with you." And that's, I think, maybe the problem. They're operation base is usually the body of Christ. They're hanging around sometimes on the fringes, but they're lumped in with us; and yet they're rabid. They serve themselves at our expense. "They are spots and blemishes," both of which would say they bring disgrace to the true church. I don't know if you've ever run into somebody that you've shared with and tried to tell them about Jesus and hear these words, "Oh, you Christians are only after our money." And you're thinking - well, you didn't get that from us, but I can guess where you might have gotten it from. And now the blemish sticks out because their appearance in the world is among us. The love feasts, if you will, or the feasts that you read about here (and you'll read about them a lot in the book of Acts as well), the early church established potlucks, if you will (I guess that would be the best way to describe them), that were always intended to bring people together so that they could feed the poor without the poor having to ask for food. So potluck. "Just bring what you want, and then just eat what we have." And it allowed a place for people that were struggling not to be embarrassed or to need to ask for help. They were just blessed. And you'll read about them, not only in early church history, but in the book of Acts as well. Study often came, worship, communion. But here come these false prophets, and they operate in their own

deceit, and they use your place of gathering as a place to make themselves and their sensual lifestyles and their pride - they come to network, they come to sell, they come to gain, they come to work the crowds. And a place of meeting where the family gathers to help the poor becomes their place of operation. So we need to be careful of folks like this. Look, the church is no place for a fashion show. It's also no place for you to sell your insurance in the foyer. God's people. We catch you doing that, you're leaving. Because this isn't a place for marketing, man. This is a place for serving. And yet, here come the false teachers, and they're always working the crowds. It's their marketplace. It's God's gathering for His kids, but it's their marketplace. And so Peter warns them, and, man, I can just hear this old timer from prison in tears, writing this down. "Be careful. Watch out! Not kidding around."

He says in verse 14 that they have "eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin." In other words, their whole motivation in heart is sinfulness, and their target audience is they look to "entice unstable souls." In other words, loose morals, if you will, will dominate them, but they use religion to cover their ways. And they've got no control, and there's no freedom, and they're bound to these wicked desires. Sounds more like a singles bar than a singles fellowship, doesn't it? But notice who their target is - "enticing unstable souls." The word "enticing" is fishermen putting bait on a hook. They know how to go after people who aren't really established in their faith. You know, most of these guys that are false teachers pick off young Christians who are just learning. And that's their hope. They deceive young people. That's their target audience. And notice what it says at the end of verse 14, that "they have a heart trained in covetous practices." They are good at raising money, getting greedy, fundraising skills, luring the unwitting, a new way to get at you, a new vision, a new plan, a new idea, a new book, a new strategy. But it works, man, and it's going to take you out. We actually, thirty-five years ago when I was at Calvary Downey working as a young pastor, had a couple of guys who sat outside our prayer room. And when people would get saved, they'd follow them to the car and start to go, "Hey, here's our flyer. Here's our deal." And we were fortunate enough to catch up with them. But that's pretty much the way it works. The winds of false doctrine find their way into the Christian mainstream through the lives of the young saints, more often than not; or old saints that aren't very well-versed in the Scriptures. But these guys are experts. It's almost like a frustration. Peter cries out, "They are accursed children." Accursed. God has cursed them. Jesus said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the

things he possesses." That's not you, but that's these guys. That's these guys. You've probably heard the story of the North African practice, for years, of catching monkeys by cutting holes in coconuts large enough to get your hand through; and then to stick some nuts inside so the monkey grabs the nuts. But if he grabs the nuts, he can't get his hand out. He doesn't want to let go of the nuts. So he starts banging the thing trying to get it off. But he's not letting go of the nuts. So they're easily found and easily caught. Just listen for the banging of the coconut. That's what you'll find with these guys. They're great at greed, but they can't let go.

Finally, and I'm glad finally, verse 15 says, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Remember what we read in verse 13, they'll "receive the wages of unrighteousness." Well this guy loved them, "but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet." Peter was sure well-versed in the Old Testament, wasn't he? I guess he should have been. He's talked about fallen angels and Noah and Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. And now he goes right to the classic story of Balaam, Numbers 22-25, to teach or to illustrate those who were controlled by greed and how greed and sin make you lose all perspective. You're just caught. And how wise they are in the wages of unrighteousness. You might remember the story, but I can quickly go over it for you. As the children of Israel were passing through Moab, coming out of Egypt, there was a king named Balak, who was the king of the Moabites, who saw these 2½ million people coming in his direction, and it terrified him. Now they had no threat, really. They weren't an army. They were a vagabond people being led about by their God, food falling from the heavens and all. But he was worried, and so he hired this would-be prophet, a Gentile guy, to curse them - Balaam. And he offered Balaam a lot of money, a big honorarium check. "Just come curse these guys so they'll go away." And Balaam, in the worst way, wanted that money, but he knew it was wrong. In fact, when he said to God, "Can I go?" God said, "No. You cannot go and curse My people. No. You will not go." And Balaam went to bed and went, "Yeah, but that's a big check. I've got to go." He went back to God, and he said, "I've got to go!" And the Lord said, "No. You don't go." He said, "No, no, God. I've got to go!" And finally the Lord went, "All right. You go. But be careful because you're headed for disaster." And he went anyway, figuring disaster and a big check, it's going to be all right. And you might remember the story about how, on the way, the donkey upon which he was riding was able to see spiritual things that this false prophet couldn't see - an Angel standing with a flaming sword in the

way and all. And finally the donkey kind of caught the guy's foot on the right, as they were passing through a bridge, and then on the left; and finally, the thing just laid down. And Balaam just started beating on this donkey. "Get up!" And the donkey spoke back. "Hey, what are you doing hitting me?! I'm trying to save your hide, pal." And then the Lord showed him. But here's a guy that is so locked into sin and the honorarium check, he's not even phased when a donkey starts talking! I mean, wouldn't that stop you? "Hey, Mr. Ed?" (Laughing) You would be moved, wouldn't you, a little bit? Balaam wasn't moved. There's a Scripture in Isaiah 1:3 that says, "The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, My people do not consider." Well that was Balaam. He was just so tied into his sin, he couldn't turn around. When he finally arrived, and the guy showed him the check, and, "Okay, let's go up here where you can see everybody and maybe curse them," he started to curse, and out of his mouth just came nice things - about how good God was and how good His people were and how God was going to bless them and how He was going to care for them, how one day the Moabites were going to be destroyed. Finally the king just slapped him. "Stop! I asked you to curse them, and you're blessing them altogether. This check's going to be staying with me." And Balaam says this. "Take me somewhere else where I can see them at a different angle." That same thing happened twice. Third time, same thing happened. And Balaam was so frustrated because he saw the loot so close, and he didn't care about God or His people or obedience. He was a man enticing and enticed. And he finally said to Balak in a meeting that night, "Look, God is not going to let me curse them. But if you'll pay me, I'll give you the secret of how God will curse them for you." And Balak said, "Deal. Here's the check." And Balaam said this. "Send down your young girls and boys into the camp, and let them begin to introduce their false gods and their sensuous ways, and God will be angry with His own people, and He'll deal with them. You won't have to." And he did it, and they did it, and God did it; and 24,000 people died in this valley as a result of Balaam's counsel. He could have cared less. He went home to cash the check because he didn't care about the people. He was just like these false teachers. They've "forsaken the right way and gone the way of Balaam, they love the wages of unrighteousness." Now, all you have to do is read the rest of the chapter, there in Numbers. Balaam's wealth was very short-lived because, as soon as this judgment from God came, God directed the children of Israel to go and fight against the children of Moab, and both Balak the king and Balaam the creep (I don't believe that's what he was called there, but...) were killed. Peter calls it, verse 16, "the madness of the prophet." This is when you've lost your mind. But Balaam's descendants are still with us. They're on your radio, they're on your TV show,

they're on the cable. Just watch. No, don't watch. Watch anything else. It won't hurt you as much as this junk that they're putting out.

Well, I have good news. We only have one more week of this, and then we're going to go to the best chapter of all - the last one - where we're going to get the day of the Lord. So, I want you to read ahead if you would, for me. Next week, verse 17 down to the end of the chapter. And may the Lord remind you often that, in God's perspective, false teachers are dangerous, man. They're not to be trifled with. Don't even bother reading their books, sending for their tapes, entertaining their thoughts. Just go read your Bible, and let God speak to you.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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