

Pigs and Dogs

2 Peter 2:17-22

There is an illustration used in our text today that I wouldn't dare to use myself, except that it is found in the Bible. Peter uses an insult to describe the wicked. He calls them pigs. And dogs, which in that day, was probably a bigger insult than pigs. He describes the wicked as dogs who lick up their own vomit. And pigs who wallow in the mud.

Can you imagine such a thing today? Those words are terribly offensive, aren't they? Could you imagine an evening newscaster describing a group of people as pigs. Or a newspaper report describing some people as dogs licking up their own vomit. Our sensitive age wouldn't put up with such insults. Those things just aren't said today. But maybe they should be, for they are accurate descriptions of the wicked, and we have plenty of wicked people around today, people accurately illustrated by pigs and dogs.

Wickedness needs to be called what it is, and Peter does an extremely good job of doing that. He has already described the activities of the ungodly, in verses we studied last week.

2Pet. 2:12 "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, 13 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, 14 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."

That's a description of their outward behavior. Today, we see his evaluation of that behavior. How should we evaluate the lives of ungodly people? First, it is empty. Meaningless.

I. THE UNGODLY LIVE A LIFE OF EMPTINESS.

Vanity, futility, without purpose. Meaningless.

Such emptiness is at the heart of the frustration expressed by the opening words of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Ecl. 1:2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." 3 What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun? 4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 7 All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again. 8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. 9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun."

For some people, that's all there is. Particularly, those without Christ. Unbelievers. Those we might call the ungodly. Nothing new under the sun. Nothing.

And how does Peter illustrate that emptiness of life?
v.17

Springs without water. Can you imagine of anything more futile? The picture is of a traveler in a desert, desperately

searching for water. When he discovers a spring, he finds to his dismay that it is dry. Similarly, these false teachers have nothing to offer the members of the Christian community. They are like dry wells.

They have a great outward show, but have nothing behind it. A spring draws men by its very appearance because it promises water both for drinking and for the other necessities of life. Peter describes these people as springs because they make great boasts and give some appearance of charm in their words, but within they are dry and barren. The appearance of the spring is deceptive. They are empty. They offer only futility, vanity and meaninglessness. And therefore they produce only disillusionment to the thirsty traveller or anxious farmer.

Similarly, Peter says that they are “clouds carried by a tempest.” What a disappointment to people who, having endured a drought, finally see storm clouds from which they expect abundant rain. As soon as clouds appear they give a hope of rain approaching to water the earth. But the storm pushes along swirling clouds that are unproductive, waterless. Just a mist, a haze with no water. So these false teachers cause excitement in the community but offer nothing that is substantial and worthwhile. In a sense, they bring dejection.

If all there is to life is these false teachers, then those words of Ecclesiastes are accurate. Meaningless, meaningless, all is meaningless.

Some people have reached that conclusion themselves. And some people make that judgment with regard to the things of the Lord and the church of Jesus Christ.

That sense of vanity and emptiness is the eventual consequence of those who are wicked, ungodly, those who can rightly be called false prophets.

But they produce a great threat of danger, because they hide their emptiness. They appear as a refreshing spring in the desert and a great storm cloud in the midst of a drought. But they hide their emptiness with pride, arrogance. We could observe that pattern often.

A. Arrogance is used to cover up emptiness.

v.18

Why is it that those who have the least to say, often say it with the most confidence and fortitude? Why is it? Arrogance.

People who do have something worthwhile to say, that is people who are wise, are also by definition, humble!

True wisdom is joined inseparably with humility. So the opposite is also true. Almost as inseparably, empty foolishness is joined with arrogance.

Notice how Peter joins those things together in verse 18. Empty, boastful, vain, meaningless words. Spoken with great arrogance, as if they really were important. Boastful, puffed up, haughty, exaggerated by a sense of their own importance.

As Calvin explains, “they dazzle the eyes of the simple by bombasts of words...They have an inflated using of words and way of speaking, by the admiration of which they trap the unwary.”

You will see the same thing often today. Arrogance covering up that which is essentially empty and meaningless.

And also a second cover. A second way that the wicked cover up their basic emptiness and meaningless.

v.18b “They allure through the lusts of the flesh.”

They appeal to the sensual desires, sensuality. To physical desires and pleasures. Very often, sexual. We see a very general and universal observation here is Peter’s description of the wicked.

B. Sensuality is used to cover up emptiness.

If someone is appealing primarily to your senses, to your sense of feeling good, to your pursuit of pleasure, then most likely, the message is empty!

But that appeal often works, doesn’t it? It is the appeal of so much current advertising, so much of what you see on television, because more than anything else, your sight is what stimulates what Peter calls “the lusts of the flesh.” What you see is what you want. And what you want is what you get. Peter describes the success of that sensual appeal.

v.18c “...they allure... the ones who have actually escaped [or, barely escaped] from those who live in error.”

They entice, or seduce, the most vulnerable. Those whom Peter identifies as the new believers, those who have just escaped from their previous way of life. So often, those who have just recently professed their faith are actually lured back to the ways of the world.

Beware of sensual appeals in the name of Christ. Beware of appeals simply to your emotions or primarily addressed as a satisfaction for your own needs. And we have so many of them today, offered by the church. Sensual appeals, designed to make people feel something good in an effort to get them to come to church. However, such sensual appeals are often empty in content.

Back to Peter’s main point. The ungodly live a life of emptiness, a mile wide and an inch deep, as we say today. And they desperately cover up the meaningless of their lives with arrogance and sensuality.

And what are the consequences? Ultimately, slavery.

II. THE UNGODLY LIVE A LIFE OF SLAVERY.

That certainly isn’t what they set out to do, however. They actually proclaim freedom. They promise freedom to others. Freedom from the obligations and responsibilities which God assigns to his covenant people.

Freedom to do whatever they want.

v.19a “They promise them liberty.”

We have that promise issued in abundance today. The freedom of choice, a horrible expression used to defend the killing of unborn babies. The freedom of choice.

The freedom to do with our own bodies whatever we choose, including the grossest forms of sexual immorality. The freedom to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong, whether that means fornication, breaking the sabbath day, or what elements we ought to include in our worship services. The buzzword for today, as it

obviously was in Peter's day, is choice. You have the freedom to choose to do whatever you want to do.

But the question comes, "Is that freedom?"

Is freedom defined by indulgence? That is, if you are free to do whatever you want, if you are free to do whatever you feel like doing, are you free?

As strong and as powerfully as I can state it, the answer is NO.

A. Indulgence does not define freedom.

Suppose you enjoy getting drunk, and you determine that you aren't going to hurt anyone. You aren't going to drive. You aren't going to bother anyone else. And your work won't suffer.

So, you exercise your freedom, and drink to excess and get drunk? Now, I ask you, is that freedom? Is drunkenness freedom? Or is it slavery?

Ask a drunkard if he is free or if he is a slave?

Suppose you believe that marriage is not a necessary prerequisite for an intimate relationship. You determine that you aren't going to hurt anyone, and you are committed to an apparently loving relationship. So you exercise your freedom, and involve yourself.

Ask someone who has gone through a series of five of those relationships before finally getting married, and ask that person if he is free from his past experiences, or if they have enslaved him, and permanently harmed his ability to related to his own spouse.

Ask someone who indulges in pornography if that is freedom or slavery. Ask someone who has had an abortion if she really thinks that she is free as a result.

Ask someone who indulges himself in all the riches of this life, accumulating money and material things to satisfy his own desires and pleasures. Ask him if he is free, or a slave to those things which he is seeking.

The point is, that,

B. Indulgence brings about slavery.

v.19

That's a simple idea, isn't it?

Because of our sinful nature, self-control really is the measure of freedom, isn't it? The ability to say NO is the measure of freedom. The ability to do what you know is right, the ability to resist doing what you know is wrong--that is freedom.

Ironically, the path to freedom is self-discipline, put in these words by the apostle Paul,

1 Cor.9:27 "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age."

That's freedom. Saying no to ungodliness and worldly passions. And making your own body your slave. That's

freedom. Controlling your own body and your own lusts and desires. That's freedom.

Indulgence does not bring freedom. Just the opposite. Indulgence brings about slavery.

My friends, there are things that you simply ought not to do. God has specified them in his law. Freedom is the ability NOT to do those things, for the law brings freedom.

As James exhorts God's people,
James 1:22 "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

God's law is described as "the perfect law of liberty." "The perfect law that gives freedom!"

Similarly,
James 2:12 "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

Or in Peter's words,
1Peter 2:16 "[Living] as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God."

So freedom does not mean that you are free to engage in that which God's law defines as evil.

Paul's powerful words to the church at Rome stand out at this point. Having declared that no one will be justified by the law, but by grace, he asks the appropriate question,

Rom. 6:1 "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

He explains,

Rom. 6:11 "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."

Rom. 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God,

you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Those words are an extended commentary on this verse in 2 Peter, condemning the wicked false teachers who promise freedom,
v.19

But there is even something worse than slavery, something worse for the ungodly. It is a by-product of that slavery. Hopelessness.

III. THE UNGODLY LIVE A LIFE OF HOPELESSNESS.

There is nothing for them to look forward to. Nothing that will be an improvement. Nothing that will be beneficial. Nothing to give them hope. Particularly those who turn away from the truth after some knowledge of it.

A. Those who turn back from the truth await God’s severe judgment.

We read the chilling words at the end of,
v.17 “...for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”

And more descriptively,
v.20-21

Now, let me say right at the outset, there is plenty of biblical evidence to demonstrate that those who are truly regenerated, whose hearts are made new by the sovereign, saving power of God’s Holy Spirit, they will be saved. Those whom God has justified he will glorify. Jesus says, “No one can snatch them out of my hand.”

But, there are people who, on the surface, seem to contradict that principle. That is, there are people who fall away. People whom Peter describes as having “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

They knew enough of Christ to escape the corruption of the world. That is, it had some effect upon their lives. They knew our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But not unto salvation. It’s possible to know Christ, to know of him, to know of his word, and to follow it, to a certain degree, all with an unregenerate heart. In Jesus’ parable of the sower, we read of,

In Jesus’ parables, we have a similar situation,

Matt. 13:20 "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.”

There was some initial fruit, but it didn’t last. We find the same understanding described in,

Hebr. 6:4 “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.”

We have Jesus’ words to describe a similar situation also.

Matt. 12:43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. 44 "Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. 45 "Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

The warning is to the presumptuous, the ones who fail to exercise due caution in faithfulness and obedience to the Lord. It is a severe warning, with a severe judgment. "They are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning." "It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness." "Blackest darkness is reserved for them."

But don't think that this God passes this judgment upon those really wanting to repent, but won't be let back into the fellowship of God's family. Don't think that this means there are those with broken hearts because of their sin, confessing their sins, pleading for forgiveness, only to find God's rejection.

That's the wrong perception. For these people whom Peter describes, the same ones described in Hebrews 6, are those who turn away from the truth permanently. They return to their former way of life with a vengeance. Deliberate, willful, and permanent apostasy. As we read in,

Hebr. 10:26 "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you

suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

It's not that they wanted to repent and God wouldn't let them, but that they turned from God and went back to their sin. Awful sin. What Peter describes is that,

B. Those who turn back from the truth live in horrible degradation.

Here are those offensive illustrations.

v.22

Illus: Have you ever seen a dog do exactly what this verse describes? I have. The dog I had as a child would do that every time he got sick. It is really gross, and as I said at the beginning, I wouldn't use this illustration except that Peter used it when he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And he's quoted the OT.

Prov. 26:11 "As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly."

It's not a very pleasant thought, is it? Especially as we think about leaving here in a few moments and going to eat our noon meal. So what's the point? Why is Peter being so earthy? Even so distasteful to our senses?

Because it ought to be just as distasteful for one who professes to know God to return to his past sins. Such a thing as Peter describes here is unthinkable disgusting for us. None of us

would return to our own vomit like a dog. Just as surely, the thought of returning to our former sins ought to be just as disgusting. Just as revolting.

It ought to be a disgusting thought that a man who claims to know Christ would return to the filth of that which is illustrated by a dog's vomit.

Similarly, the pig. The truth of this proverb is evident, though Peter is not quoting the OT. A pig seeks relief from the pesky insects and the heat of the sun by wallowing in the mud. And even after being washed, by nature the pig returns to the mud from which it has come. It rolls around in slime and grunts contentedly.

It's not hard to realize how accurately these illustrations reflect the lives of the wicked. Horrible degradation. Horrible sinfulness.

What's the application of all that? Clearly, the godly are warned to beware of these dangers, if they do not want to be included in the ranks of the dogs and the pigs. The warning begins chapter three, which we'll study next week,

2Pet. 3:1 "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

In other words, Peter seems to be saying, "Let me gross you out with a description of a dog and his vomit as a reminder to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."

And Peter goes right back to the truth of Scripture. "I want you to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

People of God, the life of the ungodly is the empty and hopeless life of a slave, one subjected to the dominion of bondage by his own sins and awaiting God's severe judgment. Therefore, don't let the boastful or sensual appeals of the ungodly distract you. Don't search for freedom or purpose in life apart from God. Instead, turn to God.

Titus 2:11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."