

The Awful Judgement of False Teachers¹

(The following text is taken from a sermon preached by Gil Rugh on October 27, 1996)

2 Peter 2:20-22

I will be concluding our study of 2 Peter 2 today looking at the closing three verses. This has been a serious and rather unpleasant look at false teachers and the impact of their lives and ministry among God's people. It has not been pleasant to consider that the Church of Jesus Christ will be infiltrated by those who will corrupt the purity of the doctrine that God has revealed in His Word. That they will corrupt the purity of life that God requires of those who are His people. And yet, nonetheless, it is an accurate picture. You want to keep the picture of these false teachers in the perspective of the Word of God. The focus of the Word of God is not on false teachers. In fact, the focus of the Word of God is not on God's people primarily. The focus of the Word of God is on the God who has given this Word. He is behind and above and over all that is going on in the world and in all that is revealed in His Word. The God of the Bible is clearly presented as holy and righteous in all of His ways. It's the majesty of His person that forms the backdrop for the consideration even of the doctrine of false teachers. It is the complete holiness of His person that puts the sinfulness of mankind into proper perspective.

When you have a proper perspective, a proper view of the holiness of God, then you can appreciate what Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** It's God's glory, the majesty of His person before which, and by which, all must be measured. All are found to come short, to be vile, corrupt and sinful. Now we praise God that the Scripture not only reveals Him as holy and righteous but also as loving and kind and gracious. This is seen in the fact that He provides a way for sinners who fall so far short of His glory, to be cleansed and forgiven and made new; to be declared righteous by a holy God in His sight. That's why a verse like Romans 5:8 is so beautiful. **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** God did not say maybe if you can clean up your life, maybe if you can close the gap between your sin and My holiness we will be able to do business. No, while we were so fallen and depraved and lost in sin, He displayed an infinite love in having His Son go to the cross to die for us.

It's in this context that the sin of those who reject the truth of God must be seen. They are rejecting the love and kindness and patience that God has so graciously and freely shown in having His Son die on the cross to pay the penalty for sin. This perspective of the character of God, the majesty of His holiness, and the depth of His love is what makes the sin of those who would corrupt His glorious truth and lead others astray so awful, hideous and worthy of judgment.

Repeatedly through the Scripture those who have been exposed to the Word of God, have heard its teaching, have professed to believe it, and have even risen up to declare themselves teachers and leaders on God's behalf are then found to be false and deceitful. In Romans chapter 2 Paul has to deal with the same kind of issue. The chapter begins, **"Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgement, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."** So those who would try to set themselves up as righteous and condemn others are condemning themselves because there are none who are not sinners. In chapter 2 he is particularly going to deal with those who are of Jewish background. They thought because they were of Jewish descent, had the Old Testament Scriptures, and were meticulous in the study of those Old Testament Scriptures, they were righteous before God. But verse 13 will warn them, **"for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified."**

He goes on in Romans 2:3 to say, **"Do you suppose this, 'O man, when you pass judgement on those who practice such things and do the same yourself...'"** Remember, that's what Paul said about the false teachers he was dealing with in 2 Peter 2. They promised freedom to people but they themselves were enslaved to sin. Continue on in the verse, **"...that you will escape the judgement of God?"** That is the same thing that Peter emphasizes here in 2 Peter 2 - judgement, and condemnation. Now note verses 4 and 5, **"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God"**. What a picture of people who fail to understand and appreciate the purpose of the kindness, tolerance, and patience of God. The purpose of it is that His kindness would draw you to repentance, to see yourself as a sinner, turn from your sin, cast yourself upon His loving mercy and experience the forgiveness that only He can give. But instead of responding that way, these false teachers are storing up wrath for themselves in a coming day of judgement.

This is the picture of the false teachers that Peter is presenting in 2 Peter 2. These are men who have heard the truth as we will see again, who have professed to believe the truth, but reveal in their teaching and in their actions that they have never been born again. Not only does this bring judgement on themselves, but they work to delude and deceive people to keep them from believing the truth as well. In chapter 2, verse 14, Peter wrote, **"having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls,"** The work of the false teachers is to entice unstable people away from the living God. It is repeated in verse 18, **"For speaking out arrogant words of vanity, they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error"**. It is an awful picture of the false teachers claiming to represent the living God, claiming to serve Him when in reality they are deceitfully luring

¹ C:\My Documents\SCHOOLofLocalChurch\Lessons\19Judgement\Articles\Judgment1.doc

people away from God, away from the salvation that is only found in Jesus Christ, away from a life of purity, of devotion to the God who provides redemption. These are men who are slaves of sin themselves as verse 19 concluded.

He begins verse 20 where we will pick up our study with the word **"for."** He's going to give further confirmation of the wretched, hopeless condition of these false teachers who are still enslaved to their sin. **"For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For 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."** This is a very crucial and important passage. It is important for us who week by week hear the Word of God. This passage makes clear that it is far better that you never hear a verse of Scripture than you hear and do not submit and believe. So it is a very pertinent passage for each one of us.

He identifies these false teachers as, **"those who after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."** Now some take this to mean that these individuals are saved and are going to give up their salvation, go back to sin and thus will be lost forever. That would be a doctrine that is totally contrary to the clear teaching of the Word of God. It is out of context of what Peter has made clear in chapter 2 and will continue to make clear in chapter 3. These are individuals who are not truly born again, but they have made a profession. They have **"escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."** They have come into a knowledge of the Word of God. They have heard the gospel. They have heard the proclamation of deliverance of sin and newness of life. They have professed to have laid hold of it for themselves. They have cleaned up their lives externally so that there is a certain attractiveness to these false teachers. In one sense they have escaped the defilements of the world because they have come to the knowledge of the gospel, the true knowledge of the gospel. In fact, they know it so well that they are able to give it forth.

Recently, I walked you through the writings of one of these current false teachers. We saw clearly how he twists and distorts the Scriptures. He takes the words of Truth, the words of Scripture and gives them different meaning so he is no longer saying what the Scripture says. I have listened to this man and he can give as clear an unfolding of the truths of the Word of God as anyone could. I listened to him say some people think he doesn't know Bible doctrine. He walked through the Scriptural doctrine of justification by faith. He explained clearly the Scriptural doctrine of sanctification. He would have a life that externally in many ways would seem to conform to one who has escaped the defilements of the world, who has really come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. And he would use that terminology. But he knows nothing of it.

That is what is portrayed in verse 20. We will see more of this as we move on to some other passages of Scripture. They have come to the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. They have come to know that Jesus Christ is the Savior from sin. He is the Lord or Master of life. Yet 2 Peter 2:1 told us these false teachers deny the Master who bought them. He uses a different word for Master or Lord but conveys the same idea. **"For if , after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."** They have gone back to their old ways. They are entangled again in both false doctrine and a corrupt life. They deny the Master who bought them. Their doctrine is defiled and their lives are defiled. When they started out they gave some evidence that they were genuine. But there was a corruption that became evident in their lives that revealed their true character.

I want to look at a number of passages of Scripture beginning with Titus 1. Paul writes to Titus to tell him he has to deal with the false teachers present in the church at Crete. Look at verse 10, **"For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision"**. In New Testament time the particular problem that the apostles faced was those who came out of the Jewish background, who professed to believe in Jesus Christ, but created an unbiblical mix of the Mosaic Law and the message of Christ. It corrupted the gospel and confused people. Note he said in verse 11, **"who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families"**. Remember, we saw in the opening three verses of 2 Peter 2 these false teachers will be effective. Many will follow them. They are teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. Jump down to verse 16, **"They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."** Their true character is revealed. They profess one thing. But they reveal something else. They reveal their true character in what they do. If you analyze their doctrine in some detail and if you analyze their lives in some detail you will find out they are not new creatures in Christ.

In 2 Peter 2:20, Peter said, **"they are again entangled by them [by the defilements of the world] and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."** The phrase, **"the last state has become worse than the first"**, is almost an exact quote Jesus made in Matthew 12. Jesus shows in Matthew 12:43-45 the worthlessness of personal reformation. **"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation."** Here is a man who had been indwelt by a demon. That would have moved him to all kinds of vile and corrupt practices. That demon leaves the man. **"It passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it."** The demon leaves this person, goes out and goes around but finds no place suitable to settle down, if you will. Then it says I will return to my house from which I came, back to that man that he left, where he had

been dwelling. And when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept and put in order. The fact this demon has left this man has provided the occasion for this man to clean up his life. We say to people to clean up your act. This man has cleaned up his life. There has been moral reformation. He's swept it clean. He's stopped drinking. He quit running around on his wife. He started spending time with his kids, or whatever the case may be. **"Then it goes and takes along with it seven spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there"**. Now here's Peter's statement. He draws the same conclusion, **"...the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."** Peter is making the same point that Jesus did. Moral reformation accomplishes nothing. You are worse off being a religious person who has cleaned up their life than you are being a drunk or an immoral person. Is that not what Jesus said to the most religious people of His day? What did He say? The harlots, and the tax collectors are going into the kingdom and you are being closed out. The religious people had cleaned up their lives. They saw themselves as okay.

Matthew 23:27, 28 addresses the scribes and the Pharisees. The scribes were the experts in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Pharisees were meticulous in observing the fine points of those Old Testament Scriptures. **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like white washed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but on the inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."** Their true character is seen by God. They fool people into thinking they are godly, righteous people. But if you examine carefully their doctrine and their life, they do not conform to the standard set down for a person who has been redeemed.

Those are the people that Peter has in mind in 2 Peter 2:20. They have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are like the Pharisees who had in their possession the marvelous proof of the treasure of God's Scriptures. That's why Paul wrote in Romans 3 that being a Jew had great privileges. They were entrusted with the Word of God but it did not bring about the new birth. These false teachers had an empty proclamation of righteousness. Note what Peter says in 2 Peter 2:21, **"For 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."** **"...the way of righteousness"**, refers to the fact that it is God's plan that true saving faith will result in a life of righteousness. Just as he referred in chapter 2 verse 2 to **"the way of the truth"**. Remember Jesus talked about the narrow gate that leads to the narrow way versus the broad gate that leads to the broad way. We are talking about a road that is traveled. Those who come through the narrow gate travel the narrow road. We are trying to have some within the church today tell us you can enter the narrow gate and travel the wide road. That is not true. Here we are told it would have been better not to have known the way of righteousness, not to have known about the life that God says must characterize those who have been born into His family than to have known the holy commandment and then turned away from it, **"...to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them."**

The holy commandment handed on to them is the commandment that relates to holiness. In 1 Peter 1:14-16, Peter referred to that fact, **"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY FOR I AM HOLY'."** You see the holy commandment is the commandment to believe in Jesus Christ and thus become holy. God provides His righteousness for those who come to believe in His Son. And now His character is to characterize their lives in the way that they live. These people have claimed to come to know Christ. They profess to have made a decision; they profess to know and understand the Scriptures but their lives don't manifest a holiness that is required by God of those who have truly come to know Him because He has made the provision for that holiness by the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have been born again. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, **"...the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."** There is a radical transformation.

Peter says here it is worse to have known the truth and rejected it than it is to have never known the truth. You know that we who gather like this and hear the Word of God are in a far more serious position before God than those in part of the world who have never heard the Word of God or the truth concerning Christ.

Look at Matthew 11:20 and following. Jesus is speaking. **"Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent."** And He mentions Chorazin, Bethsaida in contrast to Tyre and Sidon from Old Testament history. If Jesus had done the miracles in Tyre and Sidon that had been done in Bethsaida and Chorazin, He says those cities would have repented long ago. Note what He says in verse 22, **"Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day."** Now look at verse 24, **"Nevertheless I say to you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgement than for you."** You know Sodom and Gomorrah became the epitome of vileness and the recipients of the wrath of God in the Old Testament. But do you know that at the Great White Throne judgement in Revelation 20, it will be more tolerable for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah at that judgement than for you who have sat under the ministry of the Word of God and not believed it? That's a frightening thought. We look at Sodom and Gomorrah and say, "Oh, how wretched!" And yet, Jesus said the cities of His day were exposed to a greater truth. You and I have the completed revelation of the eternal God and His plan of salvation set down in black and white. We hear it. We read it and if we do not believe in it, someday we will stand before God as our judge and be judged with a more severe judgment than cities like Sodom and Gomorrah.

It's an awesome thing to be exposed to the truth of the living God. Look over again in Matthew 23:13. It shows the seriousness of the issue of false teachers and those who would corrupt the truth of God and delude the people of God. **"But woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shake off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."** This sounds like Peter, doesn't it, where the false teachers he was writing about were enticing those who were escaping from the error of sin? So here, these Pharisees, these scribes, religious leaders, won't go into heaven. They won't believe in Christ and experience His salvation. They are doing all they can to keep others from responding as well. We are told in John's gospel they had a rule that they would throw you out of the synagogue if you believed in Christ and became a follower of His. That put intense pressure on people to realize that if they came to believe in Christ they would be cut off and ostracized from their family. They would be cut off and ostracized from all social life. They would be removed from their jobs. They would be, as Paul said the apostles were, the outcasts of society and the scum of the earth.

Look at verse 15, **"Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."** A proselyte is a convert. What a statement! The Pharisees would go to great lengths to get someone to convert to their beliefs. But you know what they had when they had him converted? He was twice as much the son of hell as he was before they got him. And you have experienced that. Ever try to talk to someone who has become immersed in a cult, like Mormonism or Jehovah's Witnesses? Is it not much more difficult to carry the simplicity of the gospel with clarity to them than it is to a person who spends his days in the bar, on the golf course, or doing other things? It indeed is much more difficult. A person who gets ensnared by a false teacher is twice as hard to reach as a person who never knew anything about the Word of God.

We ought to take this warning of God seriously. We have the church today that wants to become some kind of washed out, soft, cushy, comfortable place. We want to look all right, and we all want to agree. Sure, there are false teachers, but do you have to bring them up all the time? Do you have to mention them by name? I do not know how many times I have had people tell me it's all right if I want to preach against false teachers - just do not name them. Why do we want to protect them? You think I want to help with their disguise? I mean, if they're false, they're false. Well, you know, we all want to get along. I don't get the idea Jesus was trying to get along with the Pharisees. Read Matthew 23 sometime. You don't look them in the face and say repeatedly, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Is it any wonder the disciples say to Him, "Do you know the Pharisees were offended by what You said?" Jesus wasn't out to make friends and influence people. He was out to present the truth. We have to understand heaven and hell are the issues here. Do I want to be soft and tolerant about those who would want to lure my children and grandchildren to an eternal hell? Do I want to act like we have something in common? Not on your life.

I used to be on a local radio talk show periodically, to represent the biblical position. A liberal minister represented the unbiblical position. The last time we were together on the program, the program hosts were constantly trying to make it look like we were friends. I said, "Before this program is over I want to make one thing clear for everybody who has been listening, that so-and-so and I have absolutely nothing in common spiritually. We are mortal enemies when it comes to the truth of the living God." When the program went off the air, he got up and stormed out the door and we have never been together again on a program. That's fine. We have nothing in common. I don't want anybody to misunderstand that we just have some minor differences like how you get to heaven and how you avoid hell, but nothing would keep us from putting our arms around each other in ministry. That's not the way Jesus deals with it. I'm on a side track but there's no extra charge. It's all included!

Look at Hebrews 6:4, 5 where Paul is talking about the same kind of people. **"For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come"**. I take it that is a description of Jews who have stopped short of faith in Christ. They have experienced the Word of God in their lives and they have experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You can not be exposed to the Word of God and not experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You may reject it, but you experience it. Look at verse 6, **"and then have fallen away..."** You see what's happening with these Jews in Hebrews? They had heard the gospel. Some of them had made a profession of faith. But some of them were contemplating a return to Judaism. It was a tremendously costly thing to be a follower of Christ. They were thinking, maybe they could be a follower of Christ but stay within Judaism, go back to the sacrificial system, go back to the Jewish priesthood and so on. Verse 6 says for those who turn back from Christ, **"it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame."** You know what he's saying? If you have all this information of Christ and the clarity of the gospel and you decide it's too costly to submit and believe in Him and go back to your old religion, there is no way for you to be saved. Where are you going to go for salvation when you have decided you will not bow before Jesus Christ? Every other road is a road to hell. He wants them to understand that if they have been exposed to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and then turn and walk away, they are not going to find salvation anywhere else. That's an awesome thought.

He goes on to use a comparison of the thorns and thistles of the field that are only fit for burning, in Hebrews 6:8. This describes those who hear the Word of God, turn and walk away and will not believe. They may decide that their religion, and that their church is just as good, but that's not the issue. The issue is, you stand before the living God and His Son and you must bow before Him and let go of everything else. You must submit to Him believing He alone is the

Savior. In doing so you commit your life to follow Him. If you decide that is too costly, you ought to know that when you walk away, whatever road you take will lead to an eternal hell.

Look in Hebrews 10:26 for another warning. There are five warnings in Hebrews. I've just picked up two of them, but there are five spread through the book of Hebrews. **"For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins"**. You receive the knowledge of the truth, the message concerning salvation in Christ, and you continue to sin by refusing to believe. There is no other sacrifice for sins. If you are depending upon the Mosaic sacrifices, you are sadly mistaken. If you are depending upon the sacrifice of the Mass, you are sadly mistaken. If you are depending upon anything else, there is no other sacrifice for sins. All that awaits you is a terrifying expectation of judgement and the fury of the fire which will consume God's adversaries. Verse 28, **"Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?"** We have to have God's perspective on this. For a person to be confronted with the gospel of Jesus Christ and His death in payment for sin and His glorious resurrection and decide against it, God says that's just like you have wiped your feet on the death of His Son. You have insulted the Spirit of grace. It is like you have spit in His face. All that awaits you is the full fury of the vengeance of the living God.

We have these false teachers who infiltrate and disseminate their corrupted doctrine and corrupted life. Are they to be tolerated? Am I to be looking for points of agreement with them? Not at all. The issue is too serious. Can I cuddle up to someone who is wiping his feet on the death of the Son of God and who would spit in the face of the Spirit of the living God? And yet I would indicate that we share anything in common in the ministry of the living God? God forbid that that kind of attitude would be at all tolerated in the church of living God.

Look at Hebrews 10:39, **"But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.."** Those who turn back from Christ show they never had His salvation and they go back to destruction. True believers persevere and ultimately experience the full salvation of their soul.

There are two proverbs that close out 2 Peter 2. They are not pretty and not one that you like to look at before lunch. **"It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to it's vomit,' and 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'"** These two proverbs give the same point. They show the repulsiveness of false teachers. They show the true character of false teachers. A cleaned out dog and a cleaned up pig are still a dog and a pig. Their conduct reveals their character. I could have made this really repulsive by bringing a slide, but I didn't, so you can appreciate what I don't do! We've all experienced the dog that throws up and turns around and laps it up. If it's your dog, you grab on to him and try to get him away - how sickening! Now you see how God sees false teachers. Where does the church get its tolerance? It doesn't get it from God. False teachers make God sick. In the picture here, we can be revolted by the dog that turns and eats its own vomit but we can find reasons to be tolerant of false teachers. Are we reflecting the character of God in His body or aren't we? False teachers ought to be every bit as revolting to us as the picture that's drawn here. You wash up the pig. He looks nice and clean. Give him a chance and he'll make his way back to the mud. Why? Because he's still a pig. That's the point.

Jesus compared the religious people and the false teachers of his day to dogs and pigs. He warned about not casting your pearls before the pigs. He wasn't talking about literal, physical pigs. He was talking about false teachers. Paul said in Philippians 3:2, **"Beware of the dogs..."** He wasn't talking about the scavenger dogs of the Mid-East. He was talking about false teachers. He goes on in the context to make that clear. In Revelation 22:15 we are told of the new Jerusalem, the dwelling place of the saints. Outside will be the dogs. Peter has used the analogy already in verse 12 of this chapter. They are like unreasoning animals. It's not a pretty picture. This unfolding of false teachers was not meant to be a pretty picture. Somehow it seems out of place in our cultured, accepting, tolerant environment today. It even seems out of place in the professing church of Jesus Christ. We ought to be able to get along. We ought to be able to find points of agreement. False teachers are just marching through, luring people after themselves. A weak, tolerant ministry finds ways to get along with them.

Let me summarize in three points what we have seen in these verses. Number one: There is great danger in moral reformation. We don't need reformation. We need regeneration. Keep that in mind. The church loses sight of this as it loses its hold on its responsibility to be the pillar and support of the truth. It gets caught up in all kinds of movements of moral reformation to clean up a life. But, do you realize we are making that person more a convert of hell? If I talk to a drunk, I don't tell him he ought to clean up his life and stop drinking. It would make his relationship with his wife better, it would make his relationship with his children better. It would give him a better job. No. My goal is not so sweep clean the house. Do you realize that before, he was a drunk on his way to hell, and now he is a non-drunk on his way to hell. He is harder to reach now because he'll go around and give testimonials about how he cleaned up his life. He may acknowledge that you have to believe in God, whatever that God is to you, as a higher power. We as Christians would be more comfortable living in a world where sin was not so openly displayed. Do I want to get in an argument with someone over abortion? Do you realize people who are pro-life, or whatever you want to call them, are on their way to hell just like those who practice abortion? I'm not minimizing the ugliness of the murdering of unborn babies any more than I am minimizing the seriousness of the sin of drunkenness. I am saying people become anti-abortion, parade against abortion, and when it is all said and done and life is over, they will go to an eternal hell. What is the church doing giving some kind of idea through the political process or whatever that if we can only clean up this country...?

The church is becoming more like the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They are telling people to clean it up. Stop doing these vile things. God is unhappy because of those vile things. Do you realize that if they stop doing those vile things they will be like the Pharisees who cleaned up the outside? We as Christians go around and say, "My, haven't we done something? We stopped abortion. We did away with drinking. We got laws passed so you can only have sex within marriage. We have really done something." We have turned our country into a country of Pharisees, twice the subjects of hell than when we began. You want to stand before the bema seat and tell God that's what we did? There's great danger in moral reformation. The true believer has no part of it. And this is where false teachers are infiltrating the church. They are great reformers. I could give you a list of some of the false teachers. What they do is they come in and they lead the church astray by saying, "Let's reform people. Let's reform society. Let's make a difference. Your vote can count. We can clean up our country and turn it back to God." But this will happen only by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and nothing else. When sinners are born again the drunkenness will be taken care of. When they are born again the abortion stance will be taken care of. When they are born again the immorality will be taken care of. Moral reformation brings great danger.

Number two: Increased knowledge brings increased responsibility. You can not escape. You may sit here and say if you had known that, you would have never come to this church. Too late. Increased responsibility comes with increased knowledge. To know and reject is worse than to have never known. Look at Luke 12:47, 48. Jesus gave an account of the servant who did not know his master's will and did wrong. He deserved punishment. He will be beaten with few stripes. The servant who knew his master's will and did wrong will be beaten with many stripes. The servant here refers to everyone. Jesus is talking in the context of Israel, but the point being made is there will be distinctions in judgement. All unbelievers are going to an eternal hell, but even in hell there will be degrees of suffering. There will be people in the world who lived and died without ever hearing the name of Jesus Christ. They will not suffer in hell like those who have walked through the doors of this church and heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every time you share the gospel it ought to be with a passion for that person you are sharing with. Do you realize that the Word of God is having an impact on their eternal destiny? Not only if they hear and believe, but even if they hear and don't believe they are further confirmed and hardened in their lost condition. Every time the Word of God goes forward it either softens and draws or hardens and creates greater distance. Something always happens with the Word of God.

Number three: Conduct reveals character. All attempts to disassociate character from conduct are a distortion of the Word of God. This is another error that is infiltrating the church. I am not saying everybody confused by this error is a false teacher like in 2 Peter chapter two, but they are opening the door for the false teachers. Jesus gave an extensive discussion of this in Matthew 7:15. There He warned about false prophets - wolves in sheep' clothing. He told us that you know a tree by its fruit. If that tree is bearing apples, don't try to tell me it's a grape vine, it's an apple tree. So He goes on to say in verse 22, "**Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord...'**", "**and then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**"

There is great blessing in hearing the Word of God. How honored we are to open this glorious book and to benefit from its truths. There also is great danger in hearing the Word of God. To hear and not believe is to become further hardened in unbelief. Where are you? You know we are not just studying about a third party. Where are you in your relationship to the living God? James warned in James 1:22, "**But prove yourself doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**" Look at your life over the time that you have claimed to be a believer. Is there a growing depth in that relationship, and a growing passion for our God? I find often with people, in the passing of time there is a smaller and smaller window for God. My life gets filled. No longer is it Sunday school, morning worship, Sunday evening and Bible studies during the week. It's Sunday morning worship and then, boy, I've just got a lot of other things I pack in. I must come back and examine myself. Do I have the character of a true believer? What is going on in my life? I have two great fears for this church - number one, that we would depart from the Word, and number two, that there would be people who would sit here week after week and month after month and year after year, having deluded themselves, equating hearing the Word with doing the Word. Have you responded in faith to this truth in such a way that your life has been radically changed and you have become a fanatic follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it evident in all you do because it's all you are? Let's pray together.

Thank you Lord for the greatness of Your grace. Only Your marvelous grace could bring about a radical and complete change in those who are born sinners. Lord, what a privilege it is to be born again, to be born a second time, to be born from above. To know that if anyone is in Christ that one is a new creation, a new creature. The old things are gone. They've passed away. New things have come. Lord we praise You for Your wonderful salvation. We praise You for Your Word that enables us to feed our souls and grow and mature. May we be a church that delights in our God and is completely intolerant of those who would corrupt Your glorious truth and glorious plan of salvation. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

INDIAN HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH

1000 South 84th St., Lincoln, NE 68510-4499...Phone: 402-483-4541...Fax: 402-483-6716

Web site: <http://www.ihcc.org>...E-Mail: ihcc@ihcc.org