

Don't Turn Back

16 - 2 Peter: A Blazing Faith
Church on the Park | Sunday, 04 Aug 2013

Text: 2 Peter 2:17-22; cf. Exo. 13:17-18

Theme: On our spiritual journey there is constant temptation to turn back, but doing so has devastating consequences. The promises ahead are much greater than our present pain.

Intro: Last week we saw that false teachers and teaching tempt us to take shortcuts on our spiritual journey. These shortcuts eventually have a devastating effect on our faith, short circuiting our spiritual lives. This week we read Peter's warning for us to not turn back. Turning back may seem like the easy way out, but in the end we will end up like the prodigal son, sleeping with the pigs.

1) The Word of God warns us not to turn back to our old lives (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

- God **knows** our hearts; he realizes that when we face certain **hardships** we will be **tempted** to turn back to the world (Exo. 13:17-18)
- Throughout **Pilgrim's Progress**, Christian is tempted to turn back.
- On God's way is constant signs saying, "**No U-Turns**," "One Way," "Do Not Turn Back." (Gold Coast signs; ***Heb. 10:32-39**)
- Israel facing **hardship** - *Exodus 13:17-18
 - (In the Kingdom, the short way is often the long way and the long way is the short way.)
- They were ready **outwardly** to fight the battle, but **inwardly** God knew better
 - We often think we are more ready than we really are.
- The key to staying on God's path is continually being **led** by him (**Exo. 13:21-22**)
 - God's **Word** is like a pillar of **fire**, giving light to our path (Psa. 119:11; Jer. 23:29)
 - God's **Spirit** is like a **cloud**, showing us where to go (Rom. 8:14)
- God will protect us from **needless hardships** if we let him lead us.
- What are the signs of turning back (see end notes)

2) We can learn from Israel's example the things that will tempt us to turn back (1 Cor. 10:6, 11-12).

- God uses **Israel's deliverance** from Pharaoh and their travel experiences as an **analogy** of our faith journey. (1 Cor. 10:6, 11-12)
 - The analogy of **Egypt** (a type of the world)
 - All of us were at one time in bondage to **Satan**. We were **slaves to sin** and **unable to save ourselves** just like the Jews in Egypt (2 Pet. 2:20).
 - Notice how Peter describes **the world**: a place to escape from, corrupted, a place of entanglement

- When we came to **know Christ** we were **set free** from sin and Satan so that we could come into Christ's freedom and enter his Promised Land (that is the place where his promises are fulfilled in our lives).
 - We live in **in-between** times where we experience both the wilderness and the Promised Land in our lives.
- **Going back** means returning to a life of **sin or dead religion. False freedom or fake formalism**—both are bondage.
 - First, the turning back happens in our **hearts**, and then in our **actions**.
- *Why was Israel tempted to turn back? And what can we learn from their temptation? (Numbers 14, vv. 1-4, 11-12, 20-25, 30-34)*
 - Why? The journey was different from what they **expected**. God not meeting their expectations tempted them to turn back. The same thing can happen to us.
 - The Israelites are in despair because of the **extreme difficulties ahead**.
 - The journey is **impossible** in our human flesh; it is only possible through God's **miraculous help** and **power**.
 - The journey will be naturally beyond the bounds of **possibility** and **contrary to reason**
 - It will be laughable, like **Isaac** (Gen. 18:1-15)
 - Unless you know God, **intimately** and **personally**, you will not have the **courage** to step forward
 - As a result of looking with their **eyes**, rather than **faith**, Israel **despairs** and **desires** to go back to Egypt.
 - There will always be **leaders** that are willing to be elected to lead people back to Egypt (2 Pet. 2:18-19)
 - Leaders that give people what **they want**, rather than what **God wants**.
 - A pastor gives you what you **need**, not what you **want** (2 Tim. 4:1-5)
 - However, they will not call it going back to **Egypt!** They will call it **freedom**, the blessed life, peace, prosperity. In other words, they will **steal** God's words to increase the temptation (2 Pet. 2:19)
 - **False promises** are offered by false teachers
 - **Young believers** are particularly susceptible to false teaching and the temptation to turn back to either dead religion or decadent living

3) Jesus gives us the key to living in authentic freedom (John 8:31-47)

- Notice who he is speaking to: "the Jews who had believed him". Not those who were about to believe, but those who already made the choice of faith.
- The key to freedom is **abiding** in Jesus' word, holding fast to his teaching, being devoted to his truth.
 - "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- Most people who are **slaves** don't even realize they are
 - They are **trusting** in something: their heritage, a religion, their job, money in the bank, family; something other than God himself.

- Jesus makes it clear that those who sin are a slave to sin. **Sin always leads to more sin**; it has a **snowball** effect.
 - True freedom comes from the **Son** and **Scripture**
- Their response shows their **deception**.
 - They think they are God's children; "The only Father we have is God himself."
 - Our attitude toward God, the real Creator, is seen by our attitude toward Jesus, his Son.
 - There are lots of people who say they believe in God and they are God's children, but what is their relationship with Jesus, God's Son? If it's bad then they are shown for who they are, illegitimate children.

4) Going back to the old life is like going back to our own vomit—it's disgusting.

- We need to see the **old life** for what it is—**vomit and mud**. It's sickening, smelly, ugly and dirty. God does not want us to live in the pig pen like the prodigal son.
- "People are slaves to whatever has mastered them" - What masters you? Is it Jesus or is it some other things? At issue is Christ's Lordship over every area of your life? Are you continually surrendering every area of your life to the Lordship of Christ?
- ***Heb. 10:32-39**

Conclusion: There's a real temptation to turn back to the world—to run back to seemingly satisfying sin or the safety of a dead religious systems. God warns us not to turn back and to see the old life as it truly is: vomit and mud. When we listen to Jesus and his way we will be kept safe from falling away.

END NOTES

Numbers 11:4-6 - Remembering the food of the past. Remembering the pleasures and benefits of the past, without remembering the bondage of it.

The example of the prodigal son. The example of Jonah

Signs of turning back: 1) Putting up with Personal sin 2) Withdrawing from fellowship 3) Seeking Comfort through Religion rather than Relationship 4) More at home with the world than God's people 5) Laziness about your own spiritual growth 6) Lack of servanthood 7) Complaining and grumbling