

Week 4 | “Make Every Effort..” | 1/26/2020

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Today’s Focus: Christ calls to us to stand firm in truth, testing lies and false teachers we are tempted to believe.

Passage (NIV) : 2 Peter 2:1-22 : **1** But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. **2** Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. **3** In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. **4** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell,^[a] putting them in chains of darkness^[b] to be held for judgment; **5** if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; **6** if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; **7** and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless **8** (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— **9** if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment. **10** This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh^[c] and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; **11** yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from^[d] the Lord. **12** But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish. **13** They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.^[e] **14** With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! **15** They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer,^[f] who loved the wages of wickedness. **16** But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness. **17** These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. **18** For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. **19** They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.” **20** If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. **21** It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. **22** Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,”^[g] and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

THIS WEEK’S REFLECTION FOR YOU & YOUR ASC SMALL GROUP

1. **(2 Peter 2:1-3):** How do you tell the difference between “false prophets” and credible teachers?
2. **(2 Peter 2:4-10):** What other stories - personal or in scripture - help you remember and remain confident in God’s faithfulness to God’s people?
3. **(2 Peter 2:11-22):** Have you, like in the story of Balaam and the donkey, ever experienced a clear or surprising direction from God? What made the revelation so vivid or shocking? How did it clarify things for you?
4. **(2 Peter 2:17-22):** How can your ASC community, with the grace and guidance of God, embody an alternative to the falsehoods and empty pleasures we feel tempted to return to?

APPLICATION: ONE NEXT STEP THIS WEEK

1. Pray each day for God’s wisdom and insight to discern the difference between His truth and lies otherwise.