

INFECTION

Scripture Reading: Read 2 Peter 2

Infections invade our physical bodies and tax our immune systems. They can be as simple as a cold from which most people can recover in about a week to 10 days or they can be as deadly as Ebola and AIDS which usually prove fatal. Infections of false teaching can invade Christ's body, the church, as well, and prove just as fatal in the spiritual realm as biological infections are in the physical realm.

Such spiritual infections are at the heart of why Peter penned today's chapter reading. False teachers were propagating infectious teachings (2 Peter 2:1) contrary to the truth and were on the verge of invading and overwhelming Christ's body scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

At the heart of the infection was a perversion of the biblical doctrine of grace. The false teachers apparently twisted and distorted Paul's teaching on freedom (2 Peter 3:15-16) to mean that believers could live any way they wish and they would still be fine with God (2 Peter 2:18-19). They were arrogant, boastful, unteachable and they despised authority (2 Peter 2:10, 18). Their hearts were filled with greed and they exploited the people they taught (2 Peter 2:3, 14-15).

If left unchecked, this infection would spread and harm the church and the church's witness (2 Peter 2:2, 13). It is for this reason that Peter, like a good doctor, sought to identify the infection, list its symptoms and isolate it so that the church could remain healthy and not succumb to the deadly disease. He pulls no punches in his description of those spreading the dangerous infection and makes use of multiple analogies, metaphors and similes to drive home his point (2 Peter 2:12-17). Nor does he soft-pedal the judgment awaiting these false teachers (2 Peter 2:1, 3-9, 12-13, 17). From what we can tell from church history, Dr. Peter's prescription worked. Although the infection persisted for another century or two, the church survived and truth won out. The gospel message was preserved.

Unfortunately, the infection was not completely eradicated. Throughout church history, there have been occasions when the infection resurfaced and the body of Christ suffered an outbreak of the disease. It's fairly easy to spot. Just listen to what is preached and look at the lifestyle of those who follow it. You will hear grace without truth, love without righteousness, benefits without discipleship, acceptance without repentance. You will see grace abused, immorality rampant and an unwillingness to be corrected. The disease is still deadly. Be careful. Grace and freedom are gifts given to you by God so that you can live holy; not so that you can sin to your heart's content in a lifestyle that will cost you your freedom and life. Take Peter's words to heart.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Check your spiritual life to make sure you haven't been infected with the deadly disease described in today's chapter reading. If you have any of the symptoms of the infection, then go to Christ, the great physician, and receive treatment immediately. Don't let the infection spread one more day through disobedience. Receive treatment in prayer through repentance today!

Take-a-way: *Like a deadly infection, grace abused will kill you.*