

2 Peter 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Analysis

And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. Peter exposes false teachers' motivation: "through covetousness" (en pleonexia, ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ), greedy desire for more—money, power, status, pleasure. They exploit followers "with feigned words" (plastois logois, πλαστοῖς λόγοις, "fabricated words" or "molded arguments")—skillfully crafted rhetoric designed to deceive. "Make merchandise of you" (hymas emporeusomai, ὑμᾶς ἐμπορεύσομαι) depicts commercial exploitation, treating people as commodities for profit.

This characterizes much false teaching throughout history: religious hucksters selling blessings, indulgences, healings, prophecies, or prosperity for financial gain. The motivation isn't truth but profit; the method is manipulation; the result is exploitation. Jesus cleansed the temple of such merchants (John 2:13-16), and Paul warned of those preaching for financial gain (Phil 1:15-17; 1 Tim 6:5; Titus 1:11).

Despite apparent success, their fate is certain: "whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not" (hois to krima ekpalai ouk argei)—their condemnation from long ago is not idle. "Their damnation slumbereth not" (kai hē apōleia autōn ou nystazei, καὶ ἡ ἀπώλεια αὐτῶν οὐ νυστάζει)—their destruction doesn't sleep. God's judgment may seem delayed but is certain and approaching. The following verses (4-10) provide historical examples of divine judgment's certainty.

Historical Context

Religious hucksterism wasn't unique to Christianity. Ancient world had itinerant philosophers, magicians, and religious teachers who exploited followers financially. Some Sophists taught rhetoric for hire regardless of truth. Greco-Roman temples often involved economic exploitation. Judaism had corrupt priests and false prophets profiting from their position (Jer 6:13; Mic 3:11).

Early church fathers condemned those teaching for money. The Didache (early Christian manual) warned against apostles staying too long or asking for money. Paul supported himself through tent-making to avoid such accusations (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Cor 9:12-18). The medieval Catholic sale of indulgences, a major Reformation grievance, exemplified religious exploitation. Modern examples abound: prosperity gospel teachers living lavishly while promising donors financial blessing; cult leaders demanding members' resources; televangelists using manipulation tactics for donations.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What warning signs might indicate a teacher or ministry is motivated by greed rather than genuine concern for people's souls?
2. How can churches structure leadership compensation and financial accountability to avoid both exploitation and inadequate support?
3. What practices help you discern between legitimate ministry funding needs and manipulative exploitation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἐν	πλεονεξία	πλαστοῖς	λόγοις	ὑμᾶς	
And	through	covetousness	shall they with feigned	words	of you	
G2532	G1722	G4124	G4112	G3056	G5209	
ἐμπορεύσονται	οἷς	τὸ	κρίμα	ἔκπαλαι	οὐ	ἀργεῖ
make merchandise	whose	G3588	judgment	now of a long time	not	lingereth
G1710	G3739		G2917	G1597	G3756	G691
καὶ	ἡ	ἀπώλεια	αὐτῶν	οὐ	νυστάζει	
And	G3588	damnation	their	not	slumbereth	
G2532		G684	G846	G3756	G3573	

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 2:17 (Word): For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:5 (Word): For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

Deuteronomy 32:35 (Parallel theme): To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Romans 16:18 (Word): For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

1 Timothy 6:5 (Parallel theme): Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Titus 1:11 (Parallel theme): Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Jude 1:15 (Judgment): To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

2 Peter 2:1 (Parallel theme): But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 Peter 1:16 (Parallel theme): For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 Peter 2:9 (Judgment): The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

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