Empty Promises, Dark Futures

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[0:00] If you've got your Bibles, you can open with me to 2 Peter 2.

So I'm just reporting on what I've seen and heard.
2 Peter 2 will be in verses 17 through 22 this evening. In the 12th century, so that's the 1100s, England had a king by the name of King Henry I.
And he had a brother by the name of Robert who tried to take the kingdom from him violently. As a brother does. And you older brothers in the room are like, I could definitely see my younger brother doing that to me.
And if you're a younger brother, you're like, yeah, I could see it too. But actually, Robert was the older brother trying to take the kingdom from his younger brother. And King Henry imprisoned his older brother indefinitely.
[1:24] There was no end on his sentence. But he knew how much his brother Robert loved to eat. And so he was quite a large man.

And so the cell he was placed in actually didn't have a door. It was just an open doorway. And so Robert was free to go whenever he wanted to. Except, as long as he was in the room, he could order any food he wanted from the king's palace.
And they just kept the food coming. And he died there because he was never able to fit through the doorway. He was technically free. He could have walked out at any moment.
But he was enslaved by his own desires. He was a slave, not by law necessarily, but by his own desires.
And when we think about freedom, what does it mean to be free? How would you define freedom? What does freedom look like?
[2:29] And I think in the United States we'd say freedom is the ability to do whatever I want. If I can do whatever I want, I'm free. And I would argue that based on kind of a legal definition and also a biblical definition of freedom, freedom is not simply the ability to do whatever you want.

Freedom to do whatever you want actually just ends up in you being enslaved to your own desires. You being enslaved and held captive by what your flesh wants.
True freedom is the ability to do what's right. Freedom is the ability to do what's right. That's true in the United States.
That's true spiritually for sure. Christ has set us free from sin and death, not to do whatever we want, but to do what is right.
And as we've been looking at 2 Peter, Peter's writing against these false teachers. And we'll see tonight these false teachers were proclaiming that they were free men.
[3:40] They were promising to these churches that they too could be free if they followed their teaching. But while the false teachers were claiming that they were free, they were actually slaves of their own sinful desires.

And so as we continue to think about false teachers this week, Peter's emphasis shifts slightly from who they are to the effect they have on other people.
He's starting to focus more now on how they deceive and the damage that they cause and the judgment that they will receive because of it. And ultimately we can just sum it up as they don't keep their promises.
They are promising to others something that they themselves don't have. They're promising freedom. They're promising joy. But they don't have either one of those things.
They don't deliver on their promises. I have a couple of friends who used to work for Chick-fil-A, the finest dining establishment in the land. And I had a friend years ago who worked for them and I was waiting on some nuggets.

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[4:54] You know, because I like nuggets. And they were like, okay, that'll be just like five minutes. And I was like, really, Chick-fil-A, five minutes? And my friend was like, no, no, no. They under-promise and over-deliver.

That's kind of the M.O. So they'll say five minutes, but it'll actually be like two minutes. So you get it and you're like, Chick-fil-A is the best actually. So Chick-fil-A under-promises and over-delivers. These false teachers are over-promising and not delivering at all.
They're saying, if you follow us, you'll be free. If you follow us, you'll have joy. And they don't have the ability to carry out those promises because they don't possess them themselves. And if you remember back in chapter 2, verse 12, how does Peter describe these false teachers?
He says, they're like irrational animals. Creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed. So our title tonight is Empty Promises, Dark Futures.
These false teachers made empty promises and because of that, what awaited them was a dark future of judgment. We'll cover these verses in two sections tonight.
[6:02] Number one is who they are. Who they are. Who these false teachers are in verses 17 through 19. Peter starts to describe them.

He says, these are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.
So he describes them using imagery from nature. They're waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. What does Peter mean by calling them these things?
Well, they promise refreshment. They promise water. Water. But all they do is continue the drought that people are in.
They promise to bring life. They promise to bring joy. They promise to give life. And while their appearances seem promising, while on the outside it seems promising, those looks can be deceiving.
[7:04] In the ancient world, as it is today, water was an incredibly important resource. Really the most important resource. It also at times could be really scarce in the Middle East and even at times in the Roman Empire during certain phases and in certain places.

And so being near a source of fresh water was essential and necessary for life. And we need water today as well. So if all you drink is Alani, like drink some water, dude.
Like calm down. You got to have some water in your system. But it's much easier to come by. We've got water at multiple places in our house. And so we kind of lose how important water is from rain and from springs and things like that.
But in the ancient world, they would have understood how important these things were. And so springs were really important. They're just pumping up cold, fresh water out of the ground that you can just drink straight from the source.
And I've had the privilege of going to Israel before. And there's a place called En Gedi. We'll show you a couple of pictures here in just a minute. But around En Gedi, which is a spring in Israel, there's just complete wasteland, complete wilderness, complete desert.
[8:22] We've got a picture of that. Tyson, if you want to put the first one up there. So this is En Gedi. It's just dry. There's some random weeds growing. But super dry, barren.

Hardly any animals are there. This is kind of where David was on the run from King Saul. So it's kind of scarce in terms of resources. As you get closer to En Gedi, you kind of climb this mountain and you can start to hear water running.
You can start to see some erosion. So this is what the whole region looks like. And then you get to En Gedi itself. Next picture, Tyson. And this is what it looks like. And if you don't cause too much disturbance in the water, you can go out there and just fill up your water bottle from that.
It is pure water. This is like one of the only water sources around there and it's drinkable. And so this is incredibly useful. And so people would come here expecting water.
And so a waterless spring is like saying, hey, we're going to En Gedi and getting up there in the heat and there being no more water. The spring's gone dry. It would be really crushing.
[9:29] It would be really dangerous even. Or it would be like your friend in July saying like, hey, come over. I've got a pool. And you show up and the pool has no water in it. And you're like, that's the most important part of having a pool is the water in it.

It's just disappointing. It doesn't give life. It leads to the death that they're already in. Thank you, Tyson. Round of applause for Tyson. Great job with the graphics. And then, so he calls them

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waterless springs.
He also calls them mists driven by a storm. These are storm clouds that look like they're going to bring rain that refreshes crops and refreshes the land. But they don't actually produce anything.
We kind of feel this a little bit when meteorologists get it wrong. They're like, hey, there's going to be storms and there are no storms. Or the storms split around mussing like they sometimes do. But these false teachers seemed promising.
They made great promises. They made great offers. But they couldn't give life. They're just clouds that are being tossed around by the wind.
[10:34] And the reason this is the case is because sin is always disappointing. Sin always makes promises that it will never keep.

Sin will tempt you to indulge just this one more time. And it will not give you life. Sin is always disappointing.
It's like when we go to Falls Creek and it's hot. And someone's like, my head kind of hurts. And like I've had three ICs. Maybe just one more will get rid of my headache. Like maybe just one more little taste of IC.
That's what sin is like. It makes promises to you. It seems enticing to you. But it doesn't keep its word. And this is true of Satan himself. Satan brags about the great promises that sin holds.
But in the end, sin bites like a serpent. And if you think back to the Garden of Eden when the serpent was tempting Eve, he was making all kinds of promises. You'll be like God.
[11:38] Your eyes will be opened. You'll have this same status that God himself does. And in the end, he did not keep his promises.

This is true of Satan. This is true of sin. This is true of any workers that Satan has within the church as well. And so compare what Peter says about these false teachers. They're waterless springs. They're mist driven by a storm. Compare those to the words of Jesus himself. If you want to write these references down, I'll read them for you.
But John 4 verses 13 and 14. Jesus says to a woman standing by a well, everyone who drinks this water, the water that's in the well, will be thirsty again.
In other words, this water will not satisfy in a lasting way. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.
[12:39] And then John 7, 37 and 38. He says, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Jesus keeps his promises. Jesus gives life. These false teachers only take and take and take and never keep their promises. And so because of that, because of their deception and empty promises, Peter says, For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.
A dark future awaits them because of their sin. Because of their rebellion, because of their deception, they have no future to look forward to other than darkness and judgment that's been reserved for them.
And then verse 18 says, For, and so here's an explanation of the imagery. Here's why Peter called them these things, and here's why they will be judged.
For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely or recently escaping from those who live in error.
[13:59] Speaking loud boasts of folly. False teachers are loud and confident, which to those who don't know the truth like they should, that seems persuasive.

That seems like they know what they're talking about. It seems like they've got it figured out. And confidence, you may have figured this out, confidence makes it seem like you know what you're talking about, even when you don't.
If you say it confidently, reading those names in the Bible, just say it loud, and people are like, Oh, I didn't know that's how you pronounce that. That's cool. But you can be confidently wrong. One time when I was six, I had become a basketball fan, liked the Oklahoma State Cowboys, loyal and true, even when times are rough.
And I was trying to convince a friend to be an OSU fan, you know, as a good young man would do. And he was like, why would I cheer for OSU? And I said, because Michael Jordan played for OSU. Not true. I lied to try to convince him to be an OSU fan. But it was before I was saved, okay? So go easy on me. It was a lie, but I said it with such confidence.

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[15:08] He was like, are you serious? I was like, yeah, you didn't know that? Like, yeah. And so he was like, I'm an OSU fan, then I guess that's so cool. So you can say something with confidence that's completely wrong, completely false.

There was also one time in college, I was a math major, and so I was in advanced calculus, which wasn't as hard as it sounded. But the first test, I walked out and I was like, I feel like I did okay. You know, that was a little bit of a struggle, but not too bad. Got a 48. It was a little, my confidence exceeded my actual ability, but I passed in the end. These false teachers were loud, they were confident, they talked a lot, but there was no substance to what they said.
What they said was wrong. It was just empty bragging. It was just foolishness. And in their foolishness, in their loud boasting, they enticed or kind of trapped.
That's the same, it's a fishing term actually. They baited with sensual passions or sexual immorality of the flesh. Those who are, I think this word can, it can be barely, I think more accurately here would be recently, they've recently escaped from those who live in error.
[16:18] And so they tempt these people to indulge in sexual immorality. And these false teachers themselves have been overtaken by this sin. They have not escaped this sin.

And so what has enslaved them, what's overtaken them, is now the bait that they use for others. And who are their targets? It's those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.
And that word barely can be translated as barely here or recently, which I think is more helpful and accurate in this case. But basically what they're doing is they're going after new believers.
People that have just converted from paganism to Christianity who don't have a super firm foundation yet in their knowledge of the Bible and their knowledge of Christ. And so the people these false teachers are targeting are people who love Christ and know that they have a lot to learn. And the reason that new believers are susceptible to being deceived is because as a new Christian, you're kind of like, I need to learn a lot. Like I need to be taught. I need to be helped in reading the Bible and knowing what's right and what's wrong.
[17:26] And so new Christians can get in a lot of trouble if they start listening to the wrong people. And so these false teachers are intentionally targeting these new believers who know they need to learn a lot and aren't able to discern truth from error as well as they should be.

And instead of encouraging these believers to be righteous, to love Christ, the false teachers are increasing their taste for sin. They're coaxing them into the deep end of sin.
In verse 19, here's the message that they give them. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. It's ironic.
They speak of what true freedom is, but they themselves are slaves. And this is just like, as we mentioned already about Satan. He always promises freedom.
He always promises joy. He always promises that sin is fun. But the freedom that's promised is just a mirage in the desert.
[18:34] It's not there. It's not real. And so don't believe in Satan's lies. And one of those lies that I think is very prevalent today is that God does not want you to enjoy life.

Satan wants us as Christians to think that God is restrictive and is against our fun. And so do you think that obeying God and enjoying life are opposite things?
Satan would love to tempt us to think that. To think, I can either enjoy my life or I can obey God. What we see in the Bible is that the only path to true joy, the only path to true freedom is through obeying what God says.
That's the only way to lasting joy. And in Psalm 16, 11, it says, in your presence, speaking of the Lord, in your presence, there is fullness of joy. And at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. God is the supremely happy being in all of existence. And those who follow him share in his joy, share in his happiness.
[19:52] Lacey and I want our kids to have fun. We want our kids to enjoy life. But what we try to teach them is that true happiness, true enjoyment of life comes through obeying what we say.

We want them to learn from a young age that when we obey the authorities over us, life is enjoyable. And so we let them do fun stuff. They can jump off the playhouse, but they can't hit each other.
So, we want to have rules in place, obviously, and structure in place, but we want to teach them that there is enjoyment in life that comes through obedience. And that's true in following Christ as well.

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God is not opposed to our joy. He is the most joyous being in all of existence. These false teachers claim that they are free, but they're slaves to their sin.
They don't have freedom from their sin. sin. And Peter says, for whatever overcomes a person, whatever defeats a person, to that he is enslaved.
[21:10] And so what Peter is saying here is that if you cannot stop thinking about sin, if you cannot stop sinning, you are a slave to sin. Whatever the sin is, if it dominates your life, you are a slave to it.

And so as we look at the lives of these false teachers, we saw last week that three traits of false teachers are pride, lust, and greed. They are slaves to those sins.
But Paul says in Romans 6, do not let sin reign, or don't let it rule in your bodies to make you obey its passions.
sins. But these people are completely enslaved to their sin. Now when we think about false teachers, I think it's helpful to ask, how did they get like this?
Like, did they start out being like, I'm just going to enter the church and try to trick people. I'm going to go in, pretend to be a Christian for a while, and start to try to bring the house down. They seem to have had a conversion experience.
[22:14] They seem to have started out genuinely. They seem to have joined the church because they heard the gospel and wanted to participate in this way of life. They seem to have been baptized.

And as I've mentioned several times, these false teachers arose from within the church. These aren't outsiders coming in. These are people that were homegrown and started to deceive people.
And so Peter's going to describe them starting in verse 20 in Christian terms.
Because that's who they've publicly presented themselves to be. That's who the church has accepted them as. That's what everyone thought they were. Everyone thought these are Christians. These are brothers or sisters in our community with us.
But Peter will be very clear on this. While their words were correct, their hearts were never changed. They said the right things, but their lives never matched up with the words that they spoke.
work. And so as we think about this, it is possible to say all the right things and be spiritually dead on the inside. If you've grown up in church here, you know a lot of Bible.
[23:31] You know a lot of answers. It is possible to know what the Bible says without actually being saved, without actually being changed from the inside.

are you spiritually alive? Do you love Christ? Do you love His Word? Or do you just say the right things? Do you just go to church?
And so we see the warning for us as we consider these false teachers is we need to remember that following Christ is more than just making a decision or getting baptized or saying the right things. Endurance is the true proof of legitimacy. Being faithful to the end is the true test, the true evidence of being legitimate.
And so some people will talk to me about things like Falls Creek or D-NOW or something like that and they're like man so many decisions were made.
[24:40] Isn't that wonderful? And I don't actually say this because I don't want to shock them but I'm thinking like yeah we'll see. Like we'll see. Time will tell.

Time will bear this out. Time will reveal whether this person was actually saved or not. They're saying the right things and I'm praising God for that. They seem to love Christ.
We'll see where they're at ten years from now. I hope they're walking with the Lord then. And like Peter said in verses 5-11 of chapter 1 some of the first text we looked at.
Only those who continue to follow Jesus until the end will be saved. Heaven and hell are at stake with this. Let's look at our lives and see if we're spiritually alive.
But what happened to them? How did they get like this? So secondly what happened to them? So we've seen who they are. Now let's look at what happened to them in verses 20 through 22.
[25:46] Peter goes on to describe the false teachers in this way. He says for if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they are again entangled in them and overcome or defeated the last state has become worse for them than the first.

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For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. In verse 22 what the true proverb says has happened to them.
The dog returns to its own vomit and the sow after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire.
So again Peter is using pretty strong language to describe them here. Definitely at the end that is graphic language but even before they became false teachers he is describing them in Christian terms.
Peter is saying they had all the experiences they became Christians as far as anyone could tell they heard the gospel they received the holy commandment that was delivered to them.
[27:05] They knew who Christ was. They got baptized. Would have been a logical step for them to take. By everything that everyone could see they seemed to be legitimate until they weren't.

They seemed to be true Christians until they made it plain that they weren't. And Peter says the last state has become worse for them than the first because it would have been better for them never to have known the gospel than after knowing it to leave it and go back to their sin.
Why does Peter say the last state is worse for them than the first? It's because they will face a harsher judgment because they know the gospel.
They have heard the gospel. And now not only have they heard it but they've rejected it and now they're deceiving other people from listening to it. And so to follow Peter's logic he's saying that if you take someone who has never heard the gospel doesn't know who Christ is when they die they will be judged for their sins but their judgment will be less severe because of their ignorance.
They did not know the truth. They will be judged but it will be less severely compared to someone who grew up in church, knows what the Bible says, has heard about Christ and has rejected the truth.
[28:38] That person will face a much harsher judgment because they were not ignorant. They were not in the dark. They knew what the truth was. Those who follow Christ for a time and then leave him will face a very severe judgment for all eternity.

Of a very severe judgment for the rest of their existence after this life. They knew the truth and rejected it.
And I think verse 22 is really helpful for us in thinking through how to think about these false teachers. And even in thinking about friends who maybe you've grown up with that now don't claim to be Christians.
We thought they were the real deal. They seemed to be converted and now they don't seem to be anymore. And that sort of thing will happen as you continue to live life.
How do you think about people like that? Were they Christians who lost their salvation? Were they never legitimate in the first place but it seemed to be by outward appearances?
[29:55] I think verse 22 is really helpful for us. The first part of this proverb about the dog comes from Proverbs 22. The second proverb about the pig, we don't know where it comes from but probably had Gentile origins because pigs were unclean to Jews.

So this is what the true proverb says has happened to them. So this proverb's teaching reveals what has gone on with the false teachers. The dog returns to its own vomit and the sow or the pig after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire.
The dog returns to its own vomit. Dogs were not viewed kindly in the ancient world. Much of the ancient world hated dogs. They traveled in packs.
They were scavengers. They were dangerous. They were not pets. And so if you think about dogs in the Bible, you can kind of think about them like coyotes in our world. Like everyone recognizes that they're canines and no one wants them in their house.
They're just dirty, dangerous, on the run. And dogs do a lot of gross things. I don't have a dog currently. I had dogs growing up and they do a lot of gross things.
[31:04] If you've got dogs, you know. But I had a beagle. His name was Buddy. I got him when I was five and he died when I was a junior in high school so he was there for a large part of my childhood. One of the grossest things he would do though is he would go outside and he would eat grass like he was some cow or something.

He would eat grass and like ten minutes later he would start gagging and he would throw up the grass that he just ate into the grass. It's good fertilizer. It's like all life. And if that wasn't gross enough he would walk away and a few minutes later come back and just lick it all up.

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It was absolutely disgusting. Like what are you doing dog? That's dumb. Peter is saying just like that these false teachers have done the same thing spiritually.
They've returned to what's disgusting and vile. They've returned to their sin. But that's what they want. That's what they desire more than righteousness.
More than following Christ. They want their sin. In all of its filth and all of its disgustingness. Not sure if that's a word. Do you view sin that way?
[32:18] Do you view sin that way? And I think fiction can be really helpful here. Any Lord of the Rings fans or Narnia fans like those movies and books.

I haven't read the Lord of the Rings books but they do a great job at presenting sin as truly disgusting. Truly disturbing. It really distorts the people that it enslaves.
And we need to have a view of sin that's like that. That views returning to a life of sin as a dog returning to its vomit. Any very similar proverb here but changes the animal to a pig after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire or in the muck, in the mud.
Pigs love the mud. I've not grown up around pigs, praise God. But one time we went on a vacation in Kentucky and our daughter Amelia was like two.
And the Airbnb we stayed at was like on this farm. It was really pretty, really beautiful. But they had a pig farm. And so we're like, oh let's go see the pigs. That was the worst smell I've smelled in my life.
[33:24] Like I've got a picture of Amelia she's got both pinkies shoved all the way up her nose like trying to not smell it. Pigs are disgusting. And if they get cleaned off they will immediately go back to the filth.

But I want you, the reason these proverbs are helpful is because as we pay attention to them, the dog was always a dog.
The pig was always a pig. Its nature did not change. It did not change on the inside. And their nature as animals, the dog's nature as a dog leads him to act in a certain way.
The pig, being a pig, acts in a certain way, who they are determined how they acted. And so as I'm disgusted by my dog Buddy, I would be way more concerned if one of my friends did the same thing.
Like, you need to get some help, man. But with a dog it's like, he's just a dog, we'll just leave him outside for a couple more days. If a pig gets washed off and returns immediately to the mud, we're like, what was the point of the bath?
[34:33] Like that doesn't make any sense. But again, if your friend did that, you'd be way more concerned about his thinking skills. These animals do by nature what they want to.

And that's what the false teachers have done as well. They took a bath, they washed up, but their nature did not change. They were never truly changed on the inside.
And do you remember how Peter described false teachers? Irrational animals. Born to be caught and destroyed. These false teachers are like dogs and pigs.
They've returned to the muck of their sinful lives. And so, they did not get saved and then lose their salvation. They were never saved to begin with, even though they were able to deceive those around them.
And maybe themselves were even deceived about it. And so, false teachers naturally act in accordance with their nature. Just like a pig acts like a pig, a dog acts like a dog, a false teacher acts like a false teacher, and we also act in accordance with our nature.
[35:49] What you do is determined by who you are. That's true about you, that's true about me as well. What do your actions say about who you are?

That's the truest indication of what's in your heart, is how you live your life. Are you born again? Do you have spiritual life inside of you?
Do you live in the freedom that Christ gives to his people? Or are you just a pig or a dog that on the outside may look cleaned up, but on the inside are full of death and love for sin?
We all struggle with sin to be sure, but as Christians we have victory over sin. We've been given power through the spirit over sin so that we don't have to be its slaves anymore.
And whether you're a Christian who recognizes your struggle with sin on the inside or you're a non-Christian who is a complete slave to sin, Christ is a perfect Savior.
[36:57] Christ washes us clean. He does not make promises that he's not able to keep. He keeps his word.

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And I want to read a couple of verses for you. You can just write these down. You don't have to turn there, but Isaiah 55 verses 1 through 3.
I want you to note the similarity to themes in 2 Peter, but also the similarities of these two references I'm about to read for you. So Isaiah 55 verses 1 through 3, the Lord speaks to Israel and says, Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has no money, come buy and eat.
Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to me, hear that your soul may live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
[38:13] That's Isaiah 55. Next, I want to read Revelation 21 verses 5 through 7. the Lord speaking once again says, Behold, I am making all things new.

And he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true. And he said to me, It is done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.
Listen to this. To the thirsty, I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. the one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he will be my son.
Christ died on the cross for sinners. And because of that, if you want to be righteous, if you desire to have eternal life, you can come and drink without cost because Christ has paid everything.
He makes promises and he keeps them. And so make your choice. You can follow the way of sin and false teaching and you will believe empty promises and share in their dark future or follow Christ.
[39:30] He will keep all of his promises and your future with him will be as bright as the sun. Following Christ is true freedom. Our Father, we thank you for this evening.

Thank you for time to fellowship around your word and now to fellowship in small groups. So I pray as students go to small groups that their discussions tonight would be helpful in thinking through this passage.
I pray also we'd all search our hearts to see what do my actions say about me as a person? What are my actions, what evidence do those give that I may be a Christian or may not be?
So Father, be with these students as they go and it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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