

3 Problems With Glenn Beck's Message From 2 Peter 1

Love him or hate him, it's hard to deny that there has been incredible change in Glenn Beck's life lately.

On Monday, Beck outlined his latest theory about the degeneration of American culture—the “new chalkboard,” as he dubbed it on his program.

Beck believes that as regular citizens feel increasingly marginalized, they will give in to doubt. When that happens, some will be tempted to buck the rule of law rather than endure.

The solution, Beck believes, comes directly out of the New Testament book of 2 Peter.

“Is this the most controversial thing Glenn has ever said?” his website's headline asked.

Beck then proceeded to break down 2 Peter 1:5-7, which reads in the ESV translation:

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

“We have to start just increasing our faith,” Beck expounded. “Have enough faith to be able to say, ‘Okay, I know God's got it under control, and I'm just going to be a virtuous person.’”

Beck then proceeded to outline the virtues listed, showing how each step can progressively restore our society—ending with

love or charity.

The principle is true, and the values Beck commended are needed now more than ever. Beck isn't too far off from the truth on this passage, but he missed two crucial facts.

Consider verses 1-4 immediately prior (emphasis added):

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

And verses 8-9 immediately after (emphasis added again):

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

What's the point?

1. Faith Is Only a Virtue if It Is Placed in the Right Thing.

The first virtue that the passage mentioned (which Beck also mentions first) is faith. Beck rightly called his viewers to recognize God's sovereign control over all things. But is that

the only type of “faith” meant in the text?

Peter defines it: “...a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Is this splitting hairs? Definitely not.

When we learn that the eternal God, in human form in Christ (see verse 1), has granted us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” through the knowledge of *him*, it means that without Christ, these fruits can’t be ours.

The virtues are not just great ideas about how to live life; they’re the direct result of someone who has been given the ability *through Christ’s power* to share in God’s very nature.

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