

TITLE: "Armed for Suffering" (Part 4)*The Error of Universalism*

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 4:6

THEME: *The Error of Universalism*

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{{Read Passage}}

I'm going to let you know right off - I have a 2-fold purp. in covering t/last v. of this passage. 1st - Do exegetical justice to v. 6 which has at times been brutally misused. 2nd - Address a particular false-teaching that dates to t/time of t/3rd c. Alexandrian theologian, Origen ==> Error of Universalism.

[i] What is "Universalism?"

Doctrine that maintains - every single person who ever lived will eventually be saved & inherit t/KD of heaven. No eternal hell, at least not for humans, anyway. Regardless of whether you have heard t/Gospel, accepted it, or rejected it. Regardless of whether you are an atheist, a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Hindu, or an agnostic, you will ultimately be saved. Everyone w/o exception, goes to heaven in t/end.

[ii] Basically two forms of universalism

Type that comes from Faustus Socinius. Socinius was a 16th c. heretic who denied the Deity X and the Trinity. He is often called the father of modern Unitarianism ("Unitarianism" coming from the word "unity" or "unit of one" which was a denial of t/Triunity of God).

Socinius declared that the deity of Christ "is repugnant not only to sound reason, but also to the Holy Scriptures." In that regard, he has much in common w/ancient heresy of Arianism & t/modern day heresy of t/JWs, both of which deny that JC & t/HS are equally God along w/the Father.

T/Universalists, as a CH group, were organized in 1795. They joined w/the Unitarians who were organized in 1825. In 1961 t/two groups became t/Universalist-Unitarian CH which today numbers some 600k adherents w.w.

This is a completely liberal group that contends that, if God exists & if heaven is real, everyone will one day be saved (universalist part).

They are liberal theologically & ethically. Theologically in that they deny not only t/Trinity, but t/doctrines of sin & t/need for a Savior. Ethically, in that they are all for things such as gay marriage, abortion on demand, & euthanasia.

That's one type of universalism. It's theologically & ethically liberal & really doesn't have much of anything in common with Xnty.

A 2nd type comes from t/CH father, Origen. Origen is an interesting character. He lived from 185 to 254 AD & was a native of Alexandria. And Alexandria was notorious for being neg. influenced by pagan Greek thot.

Origen's view of t/Trinity was lacking, to say t/least.

He believed in t/pre-existence of souls.

He appears to have held to a form of universalism, although some think his followers were the ones who perfected it.

But those who follow in t/footsteps of Origen claim to be genuinely Xn. This is in juxtaposition to t/universalist-unitarians who don't make any such claim.

This is a pseudo-Xn form of universalism. That's t/kind that I'm going to address this week and next.

I don't want to imply that these two types of universalism are hard and fast categories. IOW - there's all sorts of gradients between them.

You will find universalists who claim to be Xn. They study t/Bible. They say they believe in X. Yet, you will also find that universalism isn't their only problem. Their heresy spills over into other areas & they compound their error & seal their doom by denying t/deity of JC and t/Gospel itself.

There are other universalists who are, I'm speaking very loosely, for t/most part, orthodox in their other beliefs. They claim to be evangelicals. These are very rare. I can't find a perfect example.

But, a back-door example would be Tony Campolo who is Sociology professor at Eastern College in PA. I say "back-door" example, because gushes over the idea of universalism and all but embraces it.

Campolo is a self-professed Evangelical who many believe has much more in common with neo-orthodox liberalism than orthodox Xnty.

In chapt 6 of his book, "Speaking my Mind" Campolo addresses t/? "Is there a second chance for those who die without X?"

He talks about an occasion when he was on t/show "Crossfire" w/Jerry Falwell. Falwell asked him, point blank,, if those who don't know X will go to heaven anyway.

I'll quote his answer: "My mind immediately went to all those parents who had lost babies at childbirth. Would a simple 'no' not turn them against God? While I have not biblical support for my belief, I am inwardly convinced that He does not send such infants to hell." (77)

He goes on to speak of those with Down's Syndrome (and others who are unable to reason) in his effective building of a straw man that enables him to avoid the plain intent of t/? that he avoids.

I'm sure Jerry Falwell believed that in t/providence of God those who died as infants were covered by t/blood of X.

Aside from that, Campolo's answer is telling. He as much says that the problem is one of turning people against God. Sorry, men are inherently against God & we don't base our teaching and preaching on what men may think, but on what God has revealed.

Secondly, he says that he has no "biblical support" for what he thinks, but he is "inwardly convinced."

He goes on from that weak foundation to appeal to George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis. I understand MacDonald was a universalist, Lewis is harder to pin down.

MacDonald, however, clearly denied t/substitutionary atonement of X. He believed that it raised serious questions about the character and nature of God. So, he taught that Christ had come to save people from their sins, and not from a Divine penalty for their sins. The problem was not the need to appease a wrathful God but, what he called t/disease of cosmic evil. [Wikipedia]

Campolo likes George MacDonald and quotes him quite favorably. MacDonald believed that the doctrine of eternal hell makes God a tyrant and that [quote] "theologians have done more to hide the Gospel of Christ than any of its adversaries." So, God will give a second chance to everyone or else he is an unfair judge.

Let me give you a few direct quotes out of the book==>

"For those who live in hell, MacDonald believed that they will eventually come to a desperate state wherein they will do anything to escape their painful condition of total alienation from God. He asserted that though they endeavor to flee from God's presence, they will learn the hard way that there is no escape from Him . . . They will learn the truth of Paul's declaration that no one can separate them from "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). . . . Then . . . the consuming fire will begin to do His work. At that desperate point in the afterlife, not only will the lost yield to the purging, but they will surrender to the One who once said "If I be lifted up, I will draw a ll men unto myself." . . . I find myself drawn to MacDonald's theology about the destinies of the lost. That sort of thinking appealed to me before I ever read his novels or his sermons." [82-83]

"It is very enticing to be a universalist. First of all, universalism delivers Christians from having to answer the question of how a loving God could punish people endlessly for sin that was limited to time and history." [88]

In answering the question, "Why evangelize?" ==> "we evangelize because we ought to declare "the good news of what God is doing in this world. Even today . . . people can, through faith in Christ, find deliverance from the devastating effects of sin and the fear of death. . . . the evangelist can claim that the salvation experience is essential for anyone who wants to become what Abraham Maslow called 'a Self-actualized human being.'"

Very little Scripture. Lot's of appeals to human reasoning and to famous authors.

When Campolo does appeal to Scripture, he butchers it.

He considers "faith" a "work" and says,

"If salvation is by grace isn't it right to believe that there is nothing that anyone has to do to gain it?" (Eph. 2:8-9). How can we turn around and say, "There's something we have to do to be saved," right after we say that salvation is a free gift that we can do nothing to earn?" [87]

IOW - to tell men that they are to believe, much less repent, is to tell them that they have to do something that is tantamount to a human work. Totally ignores the fact that t/Scripture names faith/repentance as a condition for salvation & also teaches that both F&R are gifts from God. If they are gifts of His grace, they're not works.

Campolo falsely interprets 1 Cor. 3:13-15 ==>

13 each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14 If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

And using this passage as some sort of "proof" he writes ==>

" . . . until we are purified . . . we will not know or be the person God mean for us to be when He created us. The identities to which the lost cling so desperately are false identities. The lost will never know their true selves until the lies about themselves are burned away. All that is in them that should be destroyed will be destroyed if only they will surrender to 'the consuming fire.' They would then become the actualized sons and daughters of God that He predestined them to be (Rom. 8:29-30)."

What we have is Evangelical purgatory!

That's not what this passage is teaching at all. It has nothing to do w/carnal Christians or purgatory. Paul is referring to leaders in t/CH (that's the context). The "work" is the work of ministry. Some leaders build a ministry of wood, hay, and stubble. Others (like Paul) build on a solid foundation. But even for those genuine believers who build a ministry that equates to a wooden lean-to, that work will suffer total loss, but t/worker's soul will not.

After quoting the favorable nature of universalism, Campolo goes on to say that as much as he would like to be an "evangelical universalist," he can't because he's faced w/the Bible's teaching on hell.

He says that Hell is necessary because men must be able to make choices; But even his admission of hell is tainted by doubts and in the end you're really not sure what it is he believes. That's no surprised since his beliefs are molded more by human reason than biblical revelation.

[iii] So you have two basic kinds of universalism

One makes no pretensions of being Christian, the other tries to be.

The one that tries to be is based on ==>

- * Misuse of Scripture; * A false view of God; Reasoning of fallen men;
- * Age-old heresy of Pelagianism.

Yet, if we appeal to what the Bible teaches, we agree with S. Lewis Johnson who said ==>

"It is doubtful that there is a doctrine in the Bible easier to prove than that of eternal punishment."

[iv] Why address this now? What does it have to do w/our study?

[v] Shortly after we started this study in 1 Peter I received a small booklet in the mail

Entitled: "*A Proposed Correction of a Source of Misunderstanding in the Westminster Confession of Faith.*" Written by a man who adds Ph.D. after his name (academic credibility), but whom I have been unable to find anything about.

Think about that title {cite}

The Westminster Confession was written in 1646 and has been a doctrinal standard, especially for Presbyterians, for over three centuries. Here's a guy, writing today, who's going to correct it.

I'm not saying it's inspired or inerrant, but it is one of the standards of Protestantism written 350 years ago.

I get this booklet in the mail and started to look it over and it caught my interest because he cites two passages out of 1 Peter to support his contentions (chapter 3:18 and 4:6). So, even though we were in chapter one at the time (and chapter 4 looked a long way off) I put it aside until the time came that we would be in this passage.

[vi] What are his contentions?

Boil it down to a nutshell, he cites the confession's position on unconditional election, that God freely chooses B4 foun. of t/world whom He will save, & he says that, "no, this is wrong, it contradicts John 3:16 and must be changed."

Quite silly. If you're an Arminian and deny t/doctrine of predestination, write your own creed, don't expect the Calvinists' to bow to your theology. Guy even calls himself a "non-calvinist" (Duh!).

Maybe I'll follow his example and propose a correction to the RC Council of Trent. Here's my correction: "The Reformers were right. You were wrong and here's my biblical argument." I'm going to mail that to t/Vatican.

That's t/height of ignorance. Yeah, I can imagine some secretary opening t/mail at t/Vatican and she brings it to the Pope. "Hey, Benedict, we have a proposed correction to Trent." "Yeah, who's proposing it - a Cardinal, a Bishop, an influential priest?" "No. Some Evangelical Protestant."

[vii] It gets worse . . .

This unknown writer denies that God has absolute foreknowledge (he's an open theist - God doesn't know all of future events). At least he's being consistent with his denial of God's sovereignty.

Then, he concludes his paper by appealing to 1 Peter 3:18 and 4:6 in saying that these verses prove that those who die o/s the Christian faith will one day get a second chance and be saved.

This really is his main contention. Here's a direct quote ==>

" . . . the WCF doctrine that everyone is condemned to hell who died without having truly come to Christ before their death has been proved to be wrong by [these] Bible passages. The inspired WOG stands forever firm again the shallow human theories that presume that though God is omnipotent, his power of save is nonetheless limited to the earthly lifespan of human beings."

Why do I bring this issue up now? Because universalists commonly appeal to these two passages in 1 Peter to support their bad theology.

Mentioned Tony Campolo earlier.

He cites these same 2 passages and says that they are "*clear references to the claim that Jesus goes to preach to those now are imprisoned . . .*" – implication, some 2nd chance at salv. for those who have died.

[viii] This is the false doctrine of universalism

In the end every single person who has ever lived (and some would include not only men, but demons) will be restored and saved unto E.L.

Many, included the individual who wrote this paper, appeal to 1 Peter as slam dunk evidence that this is true. Fact is, those who appeal to 1 Peter don't have the foggiest idea of what they're talking about.

[ix] These are classic instances of "eisegesis"

(theol. word of the day - more coming). We want to be exegetes. To be a good exegete is to draw the truth out of a passage. The opposite of an exegete is an eisetegete. An eisetegete reads things into a passage. An exegete uncovers truth. An eisetegete obscures it.

In my research over past few wks, I have found in t/writings of universalists little more than blatant eisegesis. In short, very, very bad scholarship.

[x] It's a pseudo or feigned scholarship

These folks will quote their sources & appeal to t/original languages of t/Bible in order to look like they're scholarly. And t/avg person who has little or no ability to relate to t/Bible in a scholarly way buys into it.

I don't claim to be t/best scholar in t/world - but I do have the background & ability to interact with good scholarship and recognize that which is bogus.

Among those who try to support universalism from t/Bible I have found a sometimes embarrassingly bad attempt to look academic.

One 19th c. writer has a book still popular among universalists that's t/subtitle of which is *"Universalism Asserted as the Hope of the Gospel on the Authority of Reason, the Fathers, and Holy Scripture."*
[the Authority of reason, t/Fathers, and Holy Scripture]

That sounds more RC than orthodox! For one thing, reason doesn't have inherent authority, neither to the early church fathers.

It is true that a few of the Fathers proposed the possibility, most notably those from Alexandria who were greatly influenced by Greek and Gnostic thought and who were in error on many points.

Go back to Origen (whom we've mentioned earlier). Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa. The heretical Gnostics also proposed a form of universalism.

Yet, in spite of the facts, one universalist makes the bold statement that "[universalism] . . . not only has never been condemned by the Church, but is, far more than any other view, in harmony with the ancient catholic Creeds." [Thomas Allin, *Christ Triumphant*]

That's simply wrong. As far as orthodoxy is concerned, it was by no means the accepted view of t/CH & universalism was condemned as heresy at the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553 AD).

Dr. Richard Mayhue, Senior Vice President and Dean, Professor of Theology and Pastoral Ministries, The Master's Seminary ==>
"A belief in the eternal, conscious torment of the lost in hell has been the almost unbroken testimony of the church, as has been the doctrine of the certain immortality of mankind." [TMS 9/2 (Fall 1998), 131]

Scholar JND Kelly wrote ==>

"As regards the fate of the wicked ..., the general view was that their punishment would be eternal, without any possibility of remission."

[J.N.D. Kelly, "Early Christian Doctrines," 483]

Great theologian and historian of the nineteenth c., William Shedd==>

"The punishment inflicted upon the lost was regarded by the Fathers of the Ancient Church, with very few exceptions, as endless." [William G.T.

Shedd "A History of Christian Doctrine," Vol. 2, 414]

Arguably the greatest of all church historians, Philip Schaff==>

"Everlasting punishment of the wicked always was ... the orthodox theory." [Philip Schaff, "The History of the Christian Church," Vol. 2, 273-74]

From the 6th c. universalism was virtually unheard of until after the 16th c. Reformation with a small group of radicals, spiritualists and fringe Anabaptists, that espoused forms of it.

It was condemned in 17th chapter of the Augsburg Confession (1530), the first major Protestant Confession.

It was revived again in the early 19th c. by Schleiermacher, the German theologian who is considered the father of theological liberalism.

Schleiermacher argued that the sovereign love of God is bound to save all eventually and that heaven would be less than heaven if others were suffering perpetually.

It's still around today, in part because false teaching never seems to ever be finally extinguished & in part because, as one writer puts it,

". . . universalism has spread further . . . due to a relaxing of biblical authority."

[xi] This is no mean issue

It's certainly a complicated one. We cannot take the time to address each and every issue and passage in total detail. We could spend a week on each one & turn this into a 20 week study. Obv. we don't want to do that.

[xii] I'd like to address this issue in three ways

First, I want to point out things that are common with false teaching.

Second, I am going to give you what I'll call "A Reformational Response to Universalism" and we will look at some of the arguments and passages that universalists use.

Third, we will wrap it up by showing exegetically that 1 Peter 4:6, like 3:18, has nothing to do w/Second chance salvation or universalism. So we'll bring t/passage back into its context & show that to make it say what universalists want it to say is to engage in Scripture twisting.

[xiii] On further clarification . . .

I'm not addressing annihilationism (doctrine that those who are not redeemed by X are simply put out of existence. There's a hell, but it's not eternal. You are simply burned up and no longer exist). Not addressing that. Annihilationists such as John Stott and Clark Pinnock bring a different set of arguments and passages to the table, so we'll save that for another time.

I. Common Threads Among False Teachers

No matter what heretical or cultic group may be in our sights, there are threads of commonality with each. Should be no surprise that we would, in fact, find things in common. All heresy has a common source according to 1 Timothy 4:1. That common source is demonic.

A common source would demonstrate a similar MO. Just like a crime scene. Same MO. There are theological crime scenes.

I. Common Threads Among False Teachers

A. Strand # 1: False teachers mimic truth

They imitate scholarship.

1. I mentioned that earlier: There's an attempt to be studious

To look like, "We really have the truth and everyone else has been duped."

A year or so ago I mentioned a phone call I got on a Monday afternoon from a man who denied the Trinity. He called me under the guise of wanting a Bible question answered, but he really wanted to debate where JC was God. He cited all sorts of Greek words and tried to sound like a scholar. When I tried to point out a grammatical point from t/Greek text in John 1:1, he told me, "*No, that's not correct.*" I didn't get anywhere and had to hang up on him, but I checked AT Robertson's monstrous Grammar to the Greek New Testament and I was in fact right. He was wrong.

There's an attempt to look scholarly.

2. Bad scholarship shows itself for what it is

It looks impressive to those who don't know any better. It melts like butter before the truth.

A century ago, The North American Review asked t/American theologian W.G.T. Shedd, to write an article defending t/doctrine of eternal punishment. In turn, they asked Henry Ward Beecher to answer it. Written debate.

Shedd wrote his thesis first and a copy was sent to Mr. Beecher. He read it. Then, he sent a telegraph from Denver to the publisher's office: *"Cancel engagement, Shedd is too much for me. I half believe in eternal punishment now myself. Get somebody else."*

Shedd's article was published & no rebuttal was never written. [cited in Augustus Strong's Systematic Theology, 1052-53]

a. I see this all the time

About 10 years ago, former Protestant-turned-Catholic Robert Sungenis wrote a large book entitled, "Not by Faith Alone." The title is indicative of his main point: The justification is not by faith alone.

Dr. Robert Raymond, professor of Systematic Theology at Knox Theological Seminary, wrote a sharp review of the book in which he wrote==>

"I cannot remember ever reading a more transparently eisegetical treatment of any biblical doctrine in my professional life. While Sungenis reflects a broad general knowledge of contemporary theology currents, what surface scholarship this book exhibits serves only as a cover for his prejudice . . ."

b. I'm not trying to say that it's all about the head

IOW - just show people how illogical they are and how bad their attempts at handling t/Bible are, and they will be convinced. I'm not that naive. We have to deal with indwelling sin.

(1) Why it's never been about the head - It's about the heart

I'm old enough now to have developed some personal opinions that have become truisms for me. For example, I'm a fanatic when it comes to loyalty and decision-making..

Another one of those truisms that I've learned over t/years is that people will believe what they want to believe.

That's especially true for those who are unregenerate. No amount of logic, teaching, biblical scholarship, is going to overthrow heresy and all t/cults once for all.

IOW - as bad and illogical and non-scholarly and unbiblical as some group may be, I'd be fooling myself if I thought I could simply get the greatest biblical scholars in the world to write a book then that group will be gone once and for all time.

We're warned that there will always be those who will "twist the Scriptures."

Peter wrote about how false teachers twisted Paul's words even as they did t/rest of the Scriptures, even to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

c. In many ways, this is a matter of presuppositions

My presupposition is that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant Word and that all of reality is informed by Scripture.

People have different presuppositions . . .

Some have the presupposition that t/RC Church is the true church and cannot err. If that's their presupposition, they have to defend that even if it means flying in t/face of logic.

Others have t/presupposition that God does not exist. We, therefore, live in a closed universe. Any evidence to t/contrary will be filtered through that grid. God created everything. Nope, can't happen.

Proof from Intelligent design? Nope, can't happen. Miracles? Nope, can't happen. If God were to appear to such a person would explain it away by saying that he had a bad dream or it was the work of magician trying to dupe him.

So it's largely a matter of what we presuppose. That's foundational.

That's what I means when I say, "People will believe what they want to believe." If my presupposition is that Mormonism is the true restored church of Christ, it won't matter what kind of evidence you throw my way. Anything that contradicts my foundational philosophical presupposition must be wrong by virtue of that presupposition.

That is a dangerous place to be IF your presupp. is false. If your presupp. is false, everything you build upon it is going to be false as well.

This is the nature of heresy. There are those who presuppose that JC isn't God incarnate. No amt. of evidence is going to change their mind.

"Well your presupposition is that He is God incarnate." No, my presupp. is that God's Word is inspired and inerrant & foundational for truth. And among t/truths that it teaches is that JC is God.

Well, there are also those who presuppose that a loving God cannot possibly condemn men to an eternal hell, but they will all be saved in the end.

And if that's my presupposition, then I have to force that into the Bible like stuffing square pegs into round holes. And I will do my best to look scholarly in doing so. That's t/ultimate subterfuge.

I. Common Threads Among False Teachers

A. A. Strand # 1: False teachers mimic truth

They imitate scholarship.

B. Strand #2: False Teachers claim that they have the truth that the church has missed for centuries

We all have man-made traditions and beliefs. We've been influenced by Greek philosophy and paganism.

BUT - Their group has it right.

Sometimes this looks like the claims of Mormonism - Rem. story of Joseph Smith. A teenage boy who's looking for answers and wonders why there are so many different groups out there claiming to be Christian. And so he claims he has a vision whereby an angel appears and says, *"None of them have the truth. They've all become corrupt. But I'm going to raise you up to restore the truth."*

Sometimes it looks like the claims of tiny splinter groups who say, *"We've got the truth that has been missed or overlooked."*

Often there's extra-biblical revelations. An angel came to me. God spoke to me. Jesus appeared to me. With the revelation is some new truth. *"You all have it wrong. That's not the Gospel, this is." "God's not Triune, JC isn't God." "There's no real hell." "Our group is the restored church." "Our group has the truth."*

And these are always at odds with historic Christianity - esp. that which was revived during the 16th c. Reformation.

I had someone once who told me that his view on the Trinity was that there was one God in eternity. But after He created man he broke into three parts as part of His mission to save sinners. The second part,

Jesus, then could come to earth to die. Really a bizarre and strange attempt to find something novel. And this person said to me, "What if I'm right. What if God revealed this to me?" My reply was that, first of all, it's not at all biblical or logical. Second, why would God hide this from millions of Xns over hundreds of years and reveal it to your little pea brain?!

I've said it B4 - there are thousands of people and groups out there that think that the KD of God has come with them or their particular new views.

I got a letter in the mail about a month ago from a guy who thinks he's Jesus and that the book of Revelation will be fulfilled this year.

You can line them up from here to NYC. "What's your take?" I believe this. // "What's your take?" I think this

All stuff that the church has rejected t/o its history on t/basis of Scripture.

And if I come up with some novel doctrine, or something that has been deemed heretical by God's people t/o history, included gifted, Spirit-filled, intelligent men, then something's wrong.

C. Strand #3: False teachers often have their own corrected version of the Bible or they demand adherence to a particular translation

1. Often there's some sort of a conspiracy

"The church highjacked the Bible translations. Modern versions are all about defending the status quo of Christendom."

Reminds me of the time that I heard a man on the radio defend homosexuality from t/Bible with the claim that various translations have deceived us by mistranslating the word "homosexual" in 1 Cor. 6. The word doesn't mean homosexual at all, it means something else. Most people don't own a standard Greek Lexicon. I do. I looked the word up! The translators got it right!

Again, we can point out the Watchtower group that has its particular Bible version taylor-made to prove their false theology.

D. Strand #4: False teachers are almost always corrupt in more than one area of their theology

Heresy rarely occurs in a vacuum. If you're heretical in one area of your theology, you are going to be heretical in other areas.

Satan is the master of all false teaching even as the Triune God is the master of all truth.

There's a reason why millions of born again believers t/o history have believed in heaven // hell // Trinity // sin // authority of t/Bible // Salvation by grace thru faith in X // virgin birth // and the resurrection.

We tend to focus on all of our disagreements. We may not agree on t/end times or on CH govt. But we are in vast agreement on so many other things, those things that must be believed if one is a real Christian.

On the other hand, Satan is an angel of light. He's out to deceive.

I have found this principle to be a truism.

Heresy rarely occurs in a vacuum. It's like a bad apple.

What did your mother tell you when you were a kid: *"One bad apple spoils the bunch."* When one area of someone's theology is rotten and heretical, you can be sure that there are other areas that are rotten also.

Perfect example is a man who proudly declares that since he became a universalist he no longer believes in Christianity's three gods.

I read that and I thought, "What in the world!" Is this t/height of ignorance or what?!

That's like someone saying, *"I used to be a member of PETA (Ppl. for ethical treatment of animals) but I no longer believe in eating puppies and kittens."*

To say that you "no longer believe in Christianity's 3 gods" is an illogical statement. It's false because the premise is false.

Christianity has always been monotheistic. Christianity has never believed in 3 gods. That's ludicrous. In t/end, it's just a smoke-screen to cover t/man's heretical denial of God's Triunity.

You can see how heresy is a slippery slope to nowhere.

Two more points and we're low on time so I'll just touch on them.

E. Strand #5: False teachers deny God's Nature and Sovereignty

We're talking about God's essential nature. Who He is which forms the basis of what He does. In that regard, false teachers deny God's essential nature by rejecting or redefining the Trinity.

Part of denying God's nature includes a denial of His sovereignty. I'll touch on this next week.

It's amazing to me how all heretical groups and cults have one thing in common: They all are into free-will theism. Man is a tabula rasa, he's a blank slate with a free-will. That has always been a heretical belief.

These false teachers to a man reject t/biblical doctrines of election, predestination, and God's providence. They're all Pelagian. That's a term we will explore more next week.

F. Strand #6: False teachers ultimately pervert the Gospel

When you pull the thread you find that at the end of it is a perversion of t/Gospel. All false teaching leads to that ultimate end.

A rejection of the Trinity is a rejection of the Gospel for it posits a man dying on the cross, rather than God-incarnate.

On top of that, false teachers either pervert grace by adding works, or going to the opposite extreme - turning the grace of God into licentiousness, as Jude puts it.

This is the tactic of Satan. He lives to pervert the voice of God. To convince men that hell does not exist. To convince them that they can be saved by anything other than the sovereign grace of God poured on richly in the provision of JC received by faith and repentance.

Next time ==>

I. A Reformational Response to Universalism

We will be spending a lot of time in various passages before we come back to 1 Peter to wrap it all up.