

12. 2 Peter 2 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

Peter introduces his focus on false teachers and teaching in chapter 2. His condemnation of the teachers follows the presentation of his credentials as one speaking for God, presented in chapter 1. He first had established that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ (1:1). Next, he asserted that it was right for him to teach and to remind them (1:12-13). He did not follow cleverly devised stories, but he was an eyewitness to the majesty of Christ. By the appearance of Christ, affirmed by God to be his son, the one that we are to hear, the prophecies were made more certain. All of this places Peter in a position to criticize the false teachers in chapter 2 in the most direct and condemning words.

The Certainty That False Teachers Will Exploit the Faithful

2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Peter outlines the nature of the false teaching and doctrine in chapter 2. Just as there arose false prophets in olden times, there shall arise false teachers among the people to whom the letter is addressed. Note the comparison involves false prophets and false teachers. This distinction is evidently because the miraculous gift of prophecy was to cease in the not too distant future. (1 Cor. 13:8). With the advent of the inspired book—the faith once delivered according to Jude 3—the inspired man would cease. Whether teacher or prophet, if they be false, they are a great danger to the church. In Acts 20:29-30 and I Tim. 4:1-4, Paul describes these false prophets and teachers.

Peter describes these false teachers and prophets as those who *secretly introduce destructive heresies*. They are secretive. This has to do with the deception of false teachers and expresses the same idea as wolves in sheep's' clothing. *Destructive heresies* indicates the end of those who either teach or accept false doctrine. Vine describes heresies:

. . . denotes a choosing or choice; then, that which is chosen, and therefore, an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects. Gal. 5:20 . . . ; such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage. Vine, *Expositors Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Vol. II, p. 217.

Denying the sovereign Lord who bought them can come by action as well as a voiced denial. In this case, the denial is the propagating of false doctrine, and the following of immoral ways under the cloak of religion. Any contradiction of Christ or his doctrine is a denial. Jude agrees with Peter in a firm statement on the nature and character of false teaching in Jude 4:

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

Of course, if we deny Christ, he will deny us. 2 Tim. 2:12. *The sovereign Lord who bought them* refers to the sacrifice made—“with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Pet. 1: 18). In spite of this great sacrifice, false teachers and prophets turn directly to their destructive ways.

Many will follow their shameful ways describes the very nature of the false religion in contrast to the true religion described in chapter 1. The direct contrast is between the adding of the Christians virtues and the adding of shameful ways. Shameful ways connotes excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness. To many, the ways of the world are attractive. A religion that allows them to practice such immorality offers a great attraction. Those not Christian will see the false teachers and their followers and judge true believers by them. The world will tend to associate all believers with these immoral ones, and therefore, they would *bring the way of truth into disrepute*.

In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up shows that the aim of the false teachers is to make profit from their followers. *Greed* means a desire to have more, and it is always used in a bad sense; in this case, of material possessions. *Stories they have made up* are fabricated. Compare this with the words that Peter used of the apostles: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories." (2 Peter 1:16).

The Certainty of God's Judgment against the Ungodly

4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; 6 if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) – 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. 10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.

Destruction is sure for those who teach and follow false doctrine, as illustrated in the examples of the fallen angels (Jude 6), the destruction of the wicked in the time of Noah, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We may be sure that the Lord will deliver the godly out of temptation (1 Cor. 10:13). He will keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment (2:4; Luke 16:19-31).

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority shows the certainty of God's wrath against these false teachers.

Characteristics of False Teachers

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. 12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16 But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey – a beast without speech – who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

Peter lays out the characteristics of bold and arrogant false teachers. False teachers are not afraid to slander celestial being which, by definition, includes God. Even the angels will not do this. They rail and speak against the revealed mystery of God, which includes matters that they do not understand. Peter describes the nature of the ones who are false teachers in the most unequivocal terms possible. Like *brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed* is a simile, which shows their complete degradation and lack of understanding what is right. Railing in matters whereof they are ignorant. Blaspheme means to revile or to speak evil of.

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done echoes the teaching of Paul in Gal 6:7-8: "7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction." That they carouse in broad daylight shows their lack of shame and implies a nature worse than the worldly, who reserve their excesses for the night and darkness. *Blots and blemishes* are moral spots and blemishes (Eph. 5:26-27).

Reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you – reveling here is from a word used nowhere else and means sporting. Even as the false teachers ate with them, they sported at the deception. *With eyes full of adultery* (Mt. 5:28), they could not cease from sin. They seduce the unstable by approaching them

with their false doctrine. They are experts in greed and in how to take advantage. Having a heart exercised in covetousness (See 2:3); they are an accursed brood. They turn away from the right way of truth (2:2), and they go astray as Balaam (Jude 11: Num. 22:1-41). *To fall from the right way of truth* shows that there is a possibility of apostasy.

The Enticing Power of the False Teacher

17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. 18 For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity – for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. 20 If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 21 It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. 22 Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Verse 17 illustrates the emptiness of these false teachers and their doctrine. The attack made by these false teachers used *boastful words of vanity*, great promises; great words, but vain, empty, and hollow. They entice people by offering fleshly indulgences without restraint. They attack those that have just come out of the world or newborn babes in Christ (verse 14). They promise them freedom and make them slaves of corruption (Rom. 6:16-17).

A description of the destiny of all those who turn away from the Savior concludes chapter 2. For ones that escape the corruption of the world and then turn again, the latter end is worse than the first. *Knowing* here is full knowledge spoken of in 1:3; therefore, there is no excuse. It is better not to know the right way than to know and turn back. They compare to the dog turning to his vomit and the sow turning to the mire after a washing. Study this passage with Heb. 6:4-6 and Heb. 10:26.

The last passage of this chapter is undisputable proof that a child of God can so sin as to be eternally lost:

They escaped the defilement of the world; thus, they were cleansed.

They had full knowledge of the Lord.

They knew the way of righteousness.

Then they turned back, or they fell away from the way of righteousness.

The following parallel shows the truth of the passage: Man is polluted and sinful; man gets rid of sin; man takes on sin again. Dog has that in him that is corrupt; dog gets rid of corruption; dog takes it on again. Sow is filthy; sow is cleansed; sow takes on filth again.

The latter end is worse than the first; therefore, man is lost in the first and last states; but for the last, there remains no more sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26), seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame Heb. 6:4-6.