

A Study of Second Peter

Knowing the Reality of Disobedience (2 Peter 2:10b-22)

*“The devil loves to fish in troubled waters.”
~ Puritan John Trapp*

I. Introduction

In this section of his letter, Peter will condemn the false teachers. In verses 10 through 16, the apostle focuses on their arrogance, greed, sexual desires, and insatiable desire for pleasure. Peter then shifts to highlight the false teachers' adverse effect on others in verses 17 through 22. Such actions warrant the judgment of these heretics—a judgment that will occur despite their denial of it!

II. The Condemnation of the False Teachers (2:10b-22)

A. The Vices of the False Teachers (vv. 10b-16)

vv. 10-11 - “glorious ones” - Hard and contentious (see Prov 21:24; Titus 1:7), the false teachers have no issue with slandering evil angels. As noted by Peter, even good angels do not dare pronounce judgement against these evil angels (also, see Jude 8-9).

Two possible reasons why the false teachers did not fear demonic powers include:

- The false teachers disbelieved the existence of angels.
- The false teachers ridiculed the notion that their sins would make them the prey of evil angels (see Schreiner, *1, 2, Peter, Jude*, 348).

vv. 12-13a - Observe that the heretics' ignorance does not excuse them. As seen elsewhere in Scripture, ignorance is often a willful refusal to know God's truth (see Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 123). One commentator aptly observes, “These people speak great, bombastic nonsense (2:18), but in the end they are no more well informed than the beasts and hence are proper objects of retribution” (Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 277).

vv. 13b-16 - Peter notes eight characteristics of the false teachers' behavior:

- *Hedonistic*. They are completely shameless in fulfilling their pleasures (Isa 5:11).
- *Spotted and Blemished*. Unlike the saints (3:14), the false teachers defile the Gospel.
- *Polluted*. They bring their evil even into the Church's celebrations (see 1 Cor 11:17-34).
- *Lustful*. Addicted to sex, they look at every woman as a potential candidate for adultery (see Matt 5:28).
- *Seducers*. The Greek term is used of fishing and hunting (James 1:14). The false teachers targeted those who were not “firmly established” in the truth (1:12).
- *Greedy*. This term denotes desire for any possession or pleasure (2:3).

- *Accursed.* While the false teachers deny a future judgment, they are ironically under God's curse.
- *Wanders from the truth.* Peter equates the false teachers with Balaam—a prophet who sought to curse Israel but was hindered by his own donkey. Balaam became known as a person who was driven by greed and provoked the Israelites to sin with the Moabite women (see Num 22-24; 31:16; Neh 13:1-2; Jude 11; Rev 2:14). Jewish rabbinic writings described a disciple of Balaam as one who has “an evil eye, a proud soul, and a haughty spirit” (*m. 'Abot* 5.14).

B. The Adverse Impact of the False Teachers (vv. 17-22)

v. 17 - The apostle uses three metaphors to describe these false teachers. They are a hopeful spring that produces nothing (Jer 14:3), mists that produce foreboding darkness (Amos 4:13; Zeph 1:15), and dwellers in a vast sea of darkness (i.e., the realm of punishment, see Matt 8:12).

vv. 18-19 - Peter identifies the following three ways in which the false teachers have seduced individuals:

- *Spoke eloquently.* Ironically, even Balaam's donkey spoke better doctrine than these false teachers!
- *Appealed to sinful human desires.* As one commentator notes concerning the practice of the false teachers: “Grandiose sophistry is the hook, filthy lust the bait” (Biggs, *The Epistles of Peter and Jude*, 285).
- *Promised freedom.* The false teachers offer freedom from any moral constraint (see 1 Peter 2:16). The irony is that the false teachers are far from “free,” but enslaved to their own depravity!

vv. 20-21 - References to “escaping” and “knowing” indicate a conversion. From all outside appearances, these teachers seem to be true converts. However, these false teachers have committed apostasy. The term “apostasy” means “to fall away” or “a decisive turning away from truth that one once declared”. At the end of the day, these false teachers demonstrated that they never belonged to God (1 Jn 2:19).

Peter raises two important questions:

- *Why was their last state worse than the first?* “It was worse because those who had experienced the Christian faith and then rejected it were unlikely to return to it again” (Schreiner, 361). See Matthew 12:43-45 in light of Peter's words.
- *Why is better that they never knew the truth?* The reason this lack of knowledge is better than apostasy is based upon the following reasons: (1) the uninformed individual can be taught; (2) those who do not know possess far less influence than the learned; and (3) those who are uninformed receive less punishment than those who have committed apostasy (see Lk 12:41-48) (Swindoll, *Conquering through Conflict: A Study of 2 Peter*, 58).

v. 22 - Both dogs (1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; Phil 3:2) and pigs (Deut 14:8) were unclean animals. Both animals return to their filthy, disgusting ways. Similar to these beasts, the false teachers have returned to their very nature—a state of uncleanness. Indeed, a dog is a dog; and a pig is a pig.

III. The Intersect

- A. We need to guard our hearts so that the pleasures of this world do not become our dominating goal.

Philippians 4:11-

- B. We need to love and train the saints. Those who are not solidly grounded in the faith can easily fall prey to false teaching.

Acts 20:20, 26-27 -

- C. We must be careful NOT to judge a Christian leader by his appearance or a conference by the slickness of the presentation. As noted by one commentator, “We need to judge ministries by the truth they present and by the spiritual reality seen in the lives of the ministers and people who sit under those ministries” (Moo, *2 Peter, Jude*, 159).

2 Corinthians 12:9 -

“Arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written word of God . . . neglect your Bible and nothing that I know of can prevent you from error . . . you are the man that is unlikely to come established in the truth.” ~ J. C. Ryle

For further thought . . .

Based upon our study this morning, I invite you to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:

Peter provides a detailed description of the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:12-22. Contrast this description with the fruit of the good teachers in 1 Timothy 4:6-5:2?

2 Peter 2:12-22

1 Timothy 4:6-5:2

Take some time reflecting on those who serve as your teacher(s)/pastor(s). How do these individuals compare with the above mentioned lists?

How would you describe the truth you are receiving from your teacher(s)/pastor(s)?