

## A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF DOCTRINE DISTORTERS

Please take your Bibles and turn to II Peter 2, chapter 2. As you're turning there, I want to remind you what the book is **about**—and **why** we are studying it. We know from **Chapter 1**, verses 14 and 15, that somehow Peter knew his life would be ending soon so he was giving fellow believers his “farewell address.”

--**What** did he want to remind them about? “Right out of the gate,” he reminds them of God’s desire for them to **pursue spiritual growth**. Although **God’s divine power has provided everything** they needed for eternal life and growth in godliness—as stated in vss 3-4—spiritual growth **wouldn’t happen** automatically. It requires that we **diligently work at** lavishly supplying to our Christian life the ingredients listed in vss 5-7.

--**What** are the incentives—the rewards—for doing that? According to vs 11, a lavish, **rich, abundantly supplied**, “well-done-thou good and faithful servant’s” welcome into Christ’s **everlasting kingdom!**

But having an abundant, heroes’ welcome kind of entrance into heaven **isn’t the only reason** we should pursue spiritual growth. **A 2<sup>nd</sup> reason**—found in Chapter 2—is because “**there shall be false teachers among.**”

Spiritual growth will equip us to **identify false** teachers so we can avoid being **influenced by them**. Peter warns us of their infiltration...and how to identify them...and the kind of influence they can have in vss 1-3. In vss 4-9, we have **the solemn warning** that God will judge false teachers, just like He judged angels that sinned...and the world with a flood during the time of Noah...and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But in those same verses, we have **a promise**—stated in the first part of vs 9—that God will **deliver the godly**—meaning His children—“out of temptations.”

Does that mean we will never be **tempted**—or that we will never have **trials**? No; it doesn’t mean that at all! No place in the Bible is the child of God guaranteed a **trial-free**—or a **temptation-free**—life! But we **are promised this**: God **will not bring the same ruin**—the same judgment—on **His children** that He will someday bring upon those who are **not His children!**

We have **the promise of that** here in vs 9, but also in other verses like I Thessalonians 5:9 “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And we have **the proof** of God’s deliverance in the examples Peter gives us in vss 5-8. God protected Noah **in the midst of the judgment**, but He **removed Lot from the judgment** before turning Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes! In fact, one angel said to Lot in Genesis 19:22 “Haste thee, escape thither; **for I cannot do anything** till thou be come thither.” In other words, ‘I cannot destroy the city until you are **out** of the city!’

That’s a pretty good argument and precedent for a Pre-Tribulation Rapture—in my opinion, anyway!

And that brings us to the next section; please follow along as I read verses 10-16. **Similar to** verse 4-9, there are a lot of things in these verses that pique our interest and raise questions. For example, what does Peter mean when he says the angels “bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord”? And what does he mean when he says false teachers are like “natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed”? And who is this guy called Balaam that was rebuked by a mule?

These verses **are unlike verses 4-9**, however, in that it is a little more difficult to see the **progression of Peter’s thought** and how all the verses correlate to one another.

This much is easy to see, though—Peter gives us a **very detailed description** of false teachers—way more than can be covered in one sermon! MacArthur—using the analogy of a portrait—suggests that Peter provides merely an **outward sketch** of false teachers in verses 1-3, then “colors it in” for us in verses 10-16.

How does **Peter describe** the false teachers? If you count up the descriptions, vs 10 lists **five**; vs 12 has **one**; vs 13 has between **three and four**; vs 14 has **four**; vs 15 has **two or three**; and vs 17 has **two** for a total of between **17 and 19** characteristics. To merely go through a list of almost 20 characteristics would be a bit clunky—and probably not overly helpful. So I tried to lump them into categories.

I also want to give a disclaimer as we get started here this morning and it is this: “I’m not writing a commentary!” **Why** do I say such a thing? Because I know that I have a tendency to try to elaborate on every “jot and tittle” contained in the text—which is what a commentary does! So...if you wonder why I didn’t explain every part of every verse, now you know why!

As we go through **three major descriptions** of false teachers found here in this passage, I want you to ask yourselves this question: do these questions **describe you?**

‘But Pastor, we aren’t teachers! We should be asking ourselves if they describe **you** (meaning, me!)’

**True—but** you also need to see if they describe you. Why? Because God **does not just condemn** these characteristics/traits when they are found in **false teachers**—He **condemns them** if they are found in **anyone!**

Stated another way, these things are **always disapproved by God**, whether they are in false teachers—or whether they **are in us!**

**The application** this morning, then, is **more than** “I better watch out for teachers that fit this description.” It should **also be**—“I better make sure these things don’t describe **my life!**”

### **1. An attitude of arrogance (vss 10-12)**

The arrogance of false teachers is seen in at least 3 different ways.

A. They despise government. We see that in vs 10 – “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and **despise government.**”

‘Pastor, are you saying we have to **do everything our government says**—no questions asked—and that if we **disagree with**—or are **disgusted by**—what the government does, we are doing wrong?’

We could certainly get that impression, but as you may have already guessed—or saw on your outline—the word “government” doesn’t mean what we usually think of when we hear the word.

**Government** comes from the Greek word “koo-ree-ot’-ace” and is used 3 other times in the Greek NT. In the other 3 instances, it is translated “dominion.” It refers **to angels** in Ephesians 1:21 and Colossian 1:16, but probably doesn’t here because it is **in the singular**. It is also important to realize that this particular Greek word comes from another Greek word “koo’-ree-os” which means “lord, master, sir, and the Lord.”

So “despise government” more than likely refers to their **disdain for the authority and rulership** of Christ Himself! “We will not have this man rule over us” was their attitude.

Not only do they despise authority... B. They are daring—in a bad sort of way!

We see that in vs 10 in the word “presumptuous.” I found this **definition** rather interesting: “very bold people who foolishly ignore what should make them afraid.”

**What** aren’t they afraid of that they should be—besides the Lord?

Notice the end of vs 10 “...they are not afraid to speak evil of **dignities.**” There are a number of **challenges**—and differences of opinion—in trying to determine what the “dignities” refer to in vs 10—and what verse 11 is all about. We can’t spend too much time on it, but I don’t want to skip over it either.

“Dignities” comes from the Greek word “doxas” and literally means “glorious ones.” Context, of course, determines the meaning of the words so let’s walk through this and see if we can understand what Peter is saying. For now, we **won’t try to identify** “dignities”—we will just call them “glorious ones.”

Vs 11 “Whereas angels, which are **greater in power and might**, bring not railing accusation against **them** before the Lord.”

--**Easy** question: **Are angels** greater in power and might than **false teachers?** Yes, they are!

--Here’s a **harder** question: Are **good** angels more powerful than **evil** angels? Yes! **How** do we know? Because a good angel “lays hold of” Satan and throws him into the bottomless pit just before the 1000-year reign of Christ!

--According to vs 11, **who do the good angels** not accuse before the Lord? **“Them”!** Who does “them” refer to? “Them” refers back to the “dignities”—the “glorious ones”—mentioned in the end of vs 10.

**So who** are these “glorious ones” that **false teachers** will speak evil of—but **good angels** will not? Most commentators suggest that the “glorious ones” are **fallen angels**—meaning demons!

**How can a demon** be called “glorious”? “Glorious” doesn’t always mean **praise-worthy**; it can simply mean **awe-inspiring**. All angels—whether good or bad—are immaterial beings that are quite different from us! **I agree with Schreiner** when he suggests that Peter means this: “Good angels do not venture to announce judgment over evil angels. They leave such judgment to the Lord.” (The New American Commentary, Thomas Schreiner, pg 348).

**False teachers**, on the other hand, are **not afraid of demonic powers** and arrogantly speak against them. In Acts 19, we have a rather **humorous example** of seven false prophets **trying to command** a demon to come out of a man. Please know that I’m calling it “humorous” only because of how it turned out!

It was **anything but humorous** to those who were there. In fact, **great fear fell** on those who heard about this incident according to Acts 19:17. For sake of time, here’s a summary.

Seven sons of a Jewish man named Sceva—a “chief of the priests”—were self-proclaimed exorcists. They went to a demon-possessed man and said “We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth” to come out of the man! **Acts 19:15-16** “And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? <sup>16</sup> And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on **them**, and overcame **them**, and prevailed against **them**, so that **they fled** out of that house naked and wounded.”

Did you catch that? **One** demon-possessed man **beats up seven** other men and they flee the scene naked and wounded. Demons **are real**...and demons are **powerful**...and **the demonic world** is not something to play around with! **1 Cor 14:20** “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in **malice be ye children**, but in understanding be men.”

Paul is telling them to grow up—to be mature—in understanding, but in malice (meaning evil) **they are to be children**. In other words, we should **not be experts** in evil—we should be **somewhat naïve** about it and we should **certainly avoid it!** To dabble in the occult is just plain foolishness—and **may indicate an attitude** that you believe you are **stronger than** demonic forces. **Good** angels are stronger than **the fallen** angels—but human beings are not!

False teachers are arrogant. What is the evidence of that? They despise authority...and are foolishly daring against the demonic world...and they... **C. Denounce what they don’t understand (vs 12)**

We see that in the middle of vs 12 “...speak evil of things they understand not...”

Although we are not told specifically **what it was** they denounced, we can be fairly certain of at least **two things**: the demonic world and the return of Christ.

We know it includes their arrogance—and ignorance—regarding the **power of demons** because we just looked at that. And we know they scoff at **the return of Christ** because **it says that in** chapter 3, vss 3-4.

**Notice what it says**: “Knowing this first, that there shall come in **the last days scoffers**, walking after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> And **saying, Where is the promise of His coming?**”

They mock...they ridicule...they sneer at the idea that Jesus rose from the dead...and ascended back into heaven...and will return some day to judge and rule the world. They **don’t understand it**...so they don’t **believe** it...and they **speak evil** against it!

What about you? **Do you** believe Jesus will return some day? Blood-bought, born-again children of God **believe it** because **Jesus said it!** **Scoffers don’t** believe it, though. We will talk much more about the **return of Christ** when we get to chapter 3, but for now **please keep in mind** this truth: If you **deny the return** of Christ, you are a scoffer! And if you **are a scoffer**, you are not a child of God!

Not only do false teachers have an **attitude of arrogance**, **2. Their priority is to pursue sinful pleasure (13-14)** We obviously can’t spend as much time on this characteristic as we did the last one, but look at the second phrase in vs 13 where it says: “...they count it pleasure to riot in day time.”

**“Riot”** is not referring to some kind of political protest—it has to do with **overly indulgent living**. And **how high of a priority was it** for them to carouse and revel in sin? They did it in the day time!

**Schreiner** puts it like this: “The opponents were so consumed by and fascinated with evil that they could not even wait until dark, the time when evil is typically practiced.” (pg 351)

And their evil was not relegated to just **evil speaking** like it says in vs 12—it was also about **evil doing!** --Notice the beginning of vs 14 “Having eyes full of adultery.” The literal Greek is even more pointed: “having eyes full of an adulteress.” These men were **so enflamed with lust** that every woman they looked at was a candidate to commit immorality with! Although you may be thinking, ‘Pastor, aren’t you being a bit extreme,’ I want to remind you that these are **God’s Words** through Peter—not my words!

And let’s not forget that **David Koresh** wasn’t the only cult leader who had a compound full of women! --Vs 14 continues “and that cannot cease from sin.” Let that sink in! “Cannot cease—cannot stop—sinning! It was their “full-time” job, so to speak! It is hard to know for sure if Peter is referring to **all sin in general**...or the sin of immorality...or the **sin of covetousness** that is mentioned at the end of the verse. One thing is for certain—their priority was to pursue sin!

We’re going to look at one more characteristic, but before we do that, I think it is important to ponder this truth: Peter is not just **describing them** so that we can identify and **avoid** them. I believe he also wants us to see just **how evil** false teachers are—and that **they deserve to be judged!**

Description #1 that God through Peter gives us for false teachers? They have an **attitude of arrogance**.

Description #2? Their priority is to **pursue sinful pleasure**. Description #3? **3. They are greedy of gain (15-16)**

--Go back to vs 3; notice what it says: “And through **covetousness** shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” The Greek word that “covetousness” comes from means: “a greedy desire to have more; lusting for a greater number of temporal things that go beyond what is necessary.”

--“Make merchandise” means to “make a gain by exchanging or trading.” It is **used only** here and in **James 4:13** where it is translated “buy and sell.” “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and **buy and sell**, and get gain:”

It’s not a bad thing to buy and sell and trade to make a profit—unless it is **motivated by a strong, greedy desire!** And theirs was obviously a **greedy desire** because they were using “feigned” words—meaning **false, made-up words**—to get “gain” from those they were deceiving

Remember **Jesse Duplantis?** “God told me to ‘bleed you’ for a 54-million-dollar Falcon 7X airplane!” And yet, I’m fairly confident that he is not the only TV preacher who has “fleeced” his flock in order to live an over-the-top life-style!

--Notice now the mid of vs 14 “an heart they have exercised with covetousness practices...” “Covetous practices” comes from the same Greek word as “covetousness” in vs 3—“a greedy desire to have more.” “Exercised” comes from the word that we get our word “gymnasium” from. So instead of training their **physical hearts** with physical activity, they trained **their desires** to be more and more greedy!

--In vs 15, we see that they have forsaken the right way—God’s way—and gone astray, following the way of Balaam. Balaam “talked the talk” of being a man of God. When bribed by the king of the Moabites to curse God’s people, Balaam said in Numbers 22:18b “...If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.”

Although that is what came out of **his mouth**, that is not what was in **his heart**. In the end of vs 15, we see that Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteous”—meaning he would **do wrong for money**. Both Peter—in I Peter 5:2; and Paul—in I Timothy 3:3 and Titus 1:7—warn that pastors are **not to be greedy** for money.

But...as mentioned earlier, God is not just against preachers and teachers being greedy of gain and doing wrong to make money or obtain “things.” We need to **ask ourselves**: “does this apply to me? **Am I** willing to do wrong for money or things?”

--Judas was willing to betray Jesus for money, wasn’t he? I found it interesting to learn that Peter—when talking about Judas in Acts 1:18—used the same Greek words to describe Judas purchasing a field with the “reward of iniquity;” meaning, “unrighteousness.”

--The **abortion doctor** is willing to do wrong for money, isn't he?

--Drug dealers obviously do wrong to gain money; so do "women of the night."

'But Pastor, we're not doctors...or drug dealers...or one of those kinds of women. And we certainly aren't like Judas!'

--But do you **cheat on your taxes**?

--Do you ring up **all the items** at the self-check-out—or do you forget one once in awhile?

--Do you disclose **everything that is wrong** with the vehicle you are selling—or only if the buyer asks the right questions?

--And I dare not leave out the **young people**. Would you let someone **copy your homework** if they paid you money? Will you **steal something** from a friend—or **from a store**—because **you really want it** and don't have the money to buy it?

--Not too long ago my wife and I were watching "True Crime," and one episode was about high school boys going into garages to **steal beer** and whatever else they could find in the refrigerator. Unfortunately, one of the homeowners decided to **shoot first**—and ask questions later.

**The result?** The homeowner ended up **killing** a foreign exchange student from Germany!

**Why** did that happen? Because the **willingness to do wrong** in order to fulfill greed is not just found in false teachers—it is sometimes found **in us**. And so is the desire for **sinful pleasure**—and an **attitude of arrogance**. It may not be at the extreme that it is in false teachers, but it is still there.

So it's not just about avoiding false teachers who demonstrate these traits—it's also about guarding against these things in our own lives.

So what would God have us do in light of what we've heard this morning?

1. First, are you **arrogant**? I don't want to preach **another sermon** after the sermon, but you must know this:

--If you are counting on getting to heaven by your own actions...your own efforts...your works, you are arrogant! You are saying "No; I don't need God's way to get to God's heaven—I can get there on my own!"

--Is there anything more arrogant than that?

--You need to **have** Christ—you need to **possess** Him—not just know about Him!

But God's children can also be arrogant. We can have the attitude of "Thank you Jesus for saving me—but I want to live my life the way I want to live my life!" Don't be like that.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God!"

2. Second, seeking sinful pleasure is the priority of false teachers—but shouldn't be the priority of the child of God! What should our priority be? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..."

3. Lastly, are you greedy for gain? Are you willing to **do wrong** to get what you want? If so, **stop doing the action**—and ask God to change **your attitude** toward things that you will leave behind when God calls you home!