

THE DECEPTION AND DEMISE OF FALSE TEACHERS

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to II Peter 2, chapter 2. If you were to sit down and read through these 22 verses a couple of times—not to “dig into the weeds,” but just to get **an overview**—I believe you would notice at least these three things:

- 1) The danger of false teachers.
- 2) The description of false teachers.
- 3) The destruction of false teachers.

In way of review, let's consider first...the **danger** of false teachers.

--Vs 1 “there **shall be** false teachers among you...” Does that mean they are here in **this church**?

Not necessarily! But...they certainly have **infiltrated Christianity** as a whole!

--Vs 2 says “And **many shall** follow their pernicious ways...” As a reminder, **pernicious** means “shocking to public decency, immoral, impure.” Are there denominations—and so-called “pastors”—who teach that **immoral and impure** things are “okay?” Sadly, there are! Many—far too many—so-called “Christian” churches teach that God approves of abortion...and gay “marriages” ...and the LGBTQ+ lifestyle!

So, yes—false teachers have crept into Christianity—and many follow their evil ways.

--Vs 3 says they will “make merchandise of you....” In other words, they will take advantage of people.

--Vs 13 says they will “feast with you...” In Peter's day, false teachers would show up where **true believers** were gathered and would pretend that they, too, were believers.

As I thought about the reality—and danger—of false teachers, I was struck by this thought—**we** are in **more danger now than the people** that Peter was writing to! **How so?**

In Peter's day, false teachers had to come to **where the believers were**—or believers had to go where the **false teachers were!** That's not necessarily the case now! We can **buy a book**—or turn on the radio...or TV... or watch YouTube videos, and come across false teachers—from all over **the world—every day; all day!**

That's true, isn't it? And because that's true, we need to be **more cautious** and **more careful** than the believers that Peter first wrote to! So even though I'm **not going to purposely invite** false teachers into **our church**, you might inadvertently invite them **into your homes** through radio, TV, Facebook, or YouTube!

How do we **guard ourselves against** this very real danger? One way is **to grow spiritually**, right? In fact, that was what chapter 1 was all about! But God also wants us to be **able to identify them** and uses Peter to give us a **detailed description** of false teachers. There are nearly 20 character-traits listed for us in verses 10-17 alone! Two weeks ago, I gave you 3 broad categories:

- 1) In verses 10-12, we noted they have an **attitude of arrogance**.
- 2) From verses 13-14, we see that their priority is to **pursue sinful pleasure**.
- 3) And from verses 15-16, we learned that they are **greedy for gain**.

In other words, they loved money—and **knowingly taught lies** in order to get money!

This goes **without saying**—but I'm going to say it anyway: An individual doesn't have **to display all 20-plus** of these characteristics to be a false teacher! You get my point, right? It is not a “scoring” system where they are **“okay”** if only 1 to 9 descriptions apply, but they are **a false teacher** if they exhibit 10 or more!

With that as an intro—and review—please follow along as I read verses 17-22. This morning, we will be focusing on “The Deception—and Demise—of False Teachers.”

1. The deception of false teachers

It is pretty difficult to miss Peter's emphasis on the **deception** of false teachers. It is like a thread woven throughout this entire chapter. A. The proof of their deception

What is the **proof** that false teachers are being deceptive? What is the evidence that Peter gives us?

--Vs 3. They used **“feigned words....”** What does that mean? It means what they say is “fabricated.”

It is “made up;” it is molded to suit their imagination. They are words that are “spun by a pretender.”

--Mid of vs 13. “Spots they are and blemishes, **sporting themselves** with their own deceivings...”

“Sporting themselves” means “reveling in.” In other words, they took great pleasure in—they delighted in—their deceitfulness. But their deceitfulness **had a purpose**. It was **not just deceit** for the sake of **being deceitful**; they **had a motive** behind their deceit. What was **their motive**? To lure **people into sin**!

What **kind of sin**? Based on the beginning of vs 14, it certainly seems to be pointing **to immorality**.

--Mid of vs 14. “...beguiling unstable souls...” To **beguile** means to lure; to “bait a hook or set a trap with bait.” Most fishermen—or fisherwomen—don’t expect to catch fish by using a bare hook! **Bait** is added to **entice the fish** to bite—or the **lure itself is designed** to imitate what it is that that particular fish likes to eat!

In a similar way, the false teacher tries **to lure people** into sin by “baiting” them with what they **naturally desire**. We’ll talk about that more in a little bit.

--Vs 17. “These are wells without water...” Although I spent 4 months in the desert of Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Storm, I have never **really experienced** what we call “dying of thirst.” My guess is that very few of us have. But let’s try to imagine what it would be like.

You are lost in the desert and run out of water. Your body is overheated...your lips are chapped...your tongue feels swollen...and your head is pounding. You are walking...then falling...then crawling. Off in the distance, you see what looks like a well. You know **your mind could be playing tricks** on you, but you head that way anyway. As you get closer, you realize it **really is a well**! You see the crank, you see the rope, you see the bucket used to pull the water up from the bottom of the well.

You pull yourself up from the ground and look down into the well—but it’s empty! **A well without water**! How is a **false teacher** like a well without water? **Schreiner** puts it like this: “They promised satisfaction for thirsty souls, but in the end they left people parched and in need.” (The New American Commentary (1, 2nd Peter, Jude), Thomas Schreiner, pg 356). Simply put, they **don’t deliver** what **they say** they are **going to deliver**! Some promote the “Prosperity Gospel”: ‘Give **me** all your money and God will make you rich!’

Far worse than being **swindled out of money**, though, is **losing your soul**. Thirsty souls—people longing for forgiveness...and peace...and freedom from guilt—come to false teachers for relief. They want to be **shown God’s way** to have their spiritual thirst quenched. But the teacher they come to is a **well without water**.

Jesus is the One—the **only One**—who can **truly quench** that thirst! Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4:14 “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him **shall never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall be **in him a well of water** springing up into everlasting life.”

But false teachers **don’t point people to Jesus**! Instead, they teach that you need to **be baptized**...and join a certain church...and say certain prayers...and take **communion**...and go to confession...and get confirmed...and give money to the poor...and try to be a good person—and then—**maybe**—God will forgive you. That, my friends, is a **well without water**!

You will **never**—and I mean **never**—sense **the peace of forgiveness** and the assurance of a relationship with God by things that **you do**! We know that from **Titus 3:5** “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...” And from **Ephesians 2:8-9** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Back to the text; look at vs 18. “They speak great swelling words of vanity...” Their words sound great—they sound intellectual and sophisticated—but they are **empty**. They are meaningless...they do no good—just like a well without water! **MacArthur writes**: “High sounding words and supposed insights are **meant to dazzle**, not instruct. Their goal is **seduction**—not instruction.” (GTU.org; Creatures Born to be Killed, Part 3).

Now notice what comes next: “they **allure through** the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness...” “Allure” comes from the same Greek word that “beguile” comes from in vs 14—and that “enticed” comes from in James 1:14 “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and **enticed**.”

Let's make sure we understand what God through Peter is telling us. What kind of words—what kind of message—from a so-called “religious” person—would entice people to follow their selfish, sinful lusts—their strong fleshly desires? Here are a few:

--‘More than anything, God wants you to be happy.’

--‘There is no future judgment, so it doesn’t matter how you live.’

--‘You can indulge in everything that *pleases you* and *makes you feel good*—and still be a Christian.’

That is some of the messages of false teachers—but it is not the message of the Bible!

I Peter 1:15-16 “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” We see a *similar thought* in II Peter 3:11.

In II Peter 2:19 we again see the deceptive, empty promises promoted by false teachers.

Next let's consider... B. The people they try to deceive

Who do the false teachers go after? **Who** is the target of their deception?

--In the mid of vs 14 we see “unstable souls...”

--**What** is an “unstable soul”? It's not about someone's *mental* stability; it is about their “steadiness” in the faith. They are *not established*...they are *not principled*...they are *not well grounded*. Instead, they are still waffling about *what to believe* and how to apply what they believe. They have not been taught—or haven't yet embraced—the *doctrine of holiness* so they are easily drawn *into sin*.

In vs 18, Peter refers to another group that false teachers prey on. In essence, it is the same group just described in a slightly different way. Notice again what it says.

--**Who** are these false teachers trying to allure/bait/entice? “...those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.” “**Them who live in error**” is a reference to someone *who is not born again*; they are not saved...they are not a child of God...and consequently they are an unbeliever.

--So, the person the false teacher tries to entice is one who has “clean escaped from” the unbeliever.

I'm not sure *how to say* it other than to say it: “clean escaped” is *not the best translation!* Here's why:

1) If they were “clean escaped”—which would carry the idea of *completely* escaped—they would not “cave in” to being enticed! The allurement and bait—presented by the false teachers in their empty but boastful words—*would not entice them* in the least.

2) “Clean escaped” doesn't correspond with the context of being “unstable” like it says in vs 14.

3) Without getting too technical, some Greek manuscripts have the word “*ontos*,” others have the word “*oligos*”. That being said, most English translations have something like “just escaping” or “barely escaped.”

The idea, then, is someone who has just escaped “recently”—meaning they have *not been saved for a long time*. You can go to Biblehub.com and wrestle with that a little bit more if you'd like.

We've seen the deception of the false teachers; let's consider next... **2. The demise of the false teachers**

I'm using the word *demise*—instead of doom—because it means “the end of something that was previously considered to be powerful.” Unfortunately, false teachers *have a lot of sway*. We already noted in vs 2 that *many* follow their ways. We also know from Jesus' words in **Mt 7:13-14** that false teachers are persuasive in *leading people astray*. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and **broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction**, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few there be** that find it.”

What is *their demise*? What is *their end*? As stated in a sermon a few weeks ago, it *logically follows* that those who *lead people to hell* will end up there themselves! We don't have to depend *on logic, though*, because God *declares* what their fate will be! A. The pronounced punishment

--The end of vs 1 says they “bring upon themselves swift destruction”—meaning eternal ruin.

--“Damnation” in vs 3 certainly suggests more than just bodily death

--In vs 4, angels being cast down to hell refers to eternal doom—not bodily destruction!

--In vs 9, the wicked are reserved for the day of judgment to be punished—which is after their body dies!

--End of vs 12 “shall utterly **perish** in their own corruption”

--Vs 13. "And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness." What is the reward of unrighteousness?

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death" is not a reference to just bodily, physical death—it refers to **eternal separation from God**.

--Vs 17. "The mist of darkness is reserved for ever." The idea is probably more in line with the **gloom** of darkness—rather than something **refreshing** like a mist. How long will they endure darkness? **For ever!**

--Mt 22:13—and 25:30—both refer to "outer darkness" where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!

In addition to their **pronounced punishment**, we also have.... B. A puzzling proclamation

Notice again verses 20-21: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹ For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

Here's why I'm calling this a puzzling proclamation:

--First, some commentators suggest that Peter is teaching a person can lose their salvation. Why else would the "latter end" be "worse with them than the beginning?"

--Second, how—or why—is it better **not to know** the way of righteousness—than to turn away from it once you know it?

--And who exactly is Peter referring to: **the false teachers**—or **the recent converts** that the false prophets are trying to entice back into their sinful habits and ways? We'll start with the last one first.

1) Who Peter is referring to.

--Vs 19 is obviously talking about the false teachers. "While they"—the false teachers—"promise them"—the recently saved—"liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption."

--Now vs 20: "For if after **they** have escaped..." Since we **ended** vs 19 talking about the false teachers, it seems that the "they" in vs 20 also has to refer to the false teachers of vs 19—not the new converts.

Next, let's consider... **2) Were the false teachers saved—or lost?**

a) Arguments for them being saved. Vs 20 "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world" sounds a lot like what happened to the new converts in the end of vs 18—and what Peter **says about believers** in 1 Peter 1:4! There he says that they had been made "partakers of the divine nature" and had "escaped the corruption in the world through lust."

b) Arguments for them not being saved. Peter pronounces their punishment multiple times in this chapter: vs 1 refers to their destruction, vs 3 their damnation, vs 9 they are reserved for judgment, vs 12 they will utterly perish, vs 13 they shall receive the reward of unrighteousness and in vs 17 darkness is reserved for them!

So...either vs 20 teaches they **were saved**—and they **lost** their salvation; **or** they really weren't saved to begin with! **Which is it?** In my mind it's pretty simple—since **we can't lose our salvation**, it has to mean they were **never saved** in the first place! Why am I so **dogmatic** about eternal security? Because the Bible is!

3) Five reasons we cannot lose our salvation

a) The kind of "life" God gives us is everlasting and eternal—not probationary or temporary (John 3:16, 36; 5:24; 10:28).

b) When we are born again, we pass from one state to another:

--From being condemned already to not being condemned (John 3:18)

--From having the wrath of God hanging over us to not having it hanging over us (John 3:36)

--From death (spiritual) unto life (John 5:24)

c) We will **never** perish and no one—not even ourselves—can pluck us out of our Father's hand (John 10:28-29).

d) God is the One who has begun a good work in us and will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6)

e) We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest (down payment) until we get our full inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).

4) How can the end state be worse than the first? There are a number of reasons, but here are two:

a) Jesus said in Luke 12:48 "...unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." **Steven Cole** explains it like this: "...everyone will be judged on the amount of light which **they rejected** (Mt 11:21-24; Luke

12:47-48). These people had been exposed to a lot of truth, but they turned their backs on it to pursue their own sinful lusts. They will be judged accordingly.” (Bible.org; Lesson 10: A Sad Portrait to Study (II Pet 2:10-22) b) They not only rejected the way of salvation for themselves, they stop others from pursuing salvation!

They brought in damnable—destructive heresies—that denied what Jesus’ death accomplished on the cross. Jesus said of the Pharisees in Mt 23:15 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the **child of hell** than yourselves.”

5) The significance of dogs and hogs

Notice vs 22: “But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The **dog** is turned to his own vomit again; and the **sow** that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

What is Peter saying? Simply this: a **dog is still a dog**; its nature has not changed. And a **hog is still a hog**; its nature has not changed. And—by application—a false teacher **never was a child of God**; their nature was never changed!

By **departing from Christ**, they showed that they **never belonged to Christ**. I John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

Before I close in prayer, let’s consider what God **would have us do** based on what we’ve heard. God’s Word is meant to instruct—but it is also to be **applied and obeyed**. Here are 3 things I believe we need to consider:

1. First, do you have a **thirsty soul**? Do you long for freedom from guilt—and the peace of forgiveness? If so, you need to receive God’s way to be forgiven—His Son, Jesus! If God is tugging on your heart and you sense that need, I would be glad to take the Bible and show you what it says about receiving Jesus as your Savior.

2. Who are your **spiritual teachers**? Are you careful about who you are listening to in the way of spiritual advice? There are false teachers—lots of them—so we need to be careful. If what they are teaching is not Biblical—or if the Holy Spirit is giving you “red flags”—you need to **stop listening** to what they are saying.

3. Lastly, are you **burdened for your friends and relatives**? Many of them are listening to false teachers. They are in churches where **lies are being taught** instead of the truth of God’s Word. Ask God to give you a burden for them—and wisdom in how to approach them. And ask God to really stir their hearts to make them thirsty for the truth.