

False Teacher Denounced

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Date: 28 March 2018

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[0 : 00] Three weeks ago, we covered 2 Peter 2, verses 4 through the first part of verse 10.

! And the verses are part of Peter's rather long denouncement of false teachers, and their one long if-then statements. To sum it up, Peter said that if God has done certain things in the past, then he will operate the same way in the future.

And Peter used three different examples to show how God deals with creatures who rebel against him. In verse 4, he talked about how God condemned the sinning angels to the chains of gloomy darkness while they were awaiting final judgment.

And of course, they're still awaiting that final judgment today. We know that God severely judges all those who oppose him and his truth, and like those angels, the rebellious false teachers will face divine wrath as well.

The second example of judgment was the flood of Noah's day. Of course, we know that God destroyed everyone alive at the time, except for the eight people inside Noah's ark.

[1 : 11] And the third example of judgment was Sodom and Gomorrah. But we saw more than judgment as we went through the verses the last time we were in 2 Peter. We also saw examples of God's mercy on the people whom God declares righteous.

And in addition to highlighting how God saved Noah from the flood, Peter also emphasized God's salvation of Lot. And the examples of judgment and salvation in verses 4 through 8 led up to the main point of Peter's argument.

And we saw that in verse 9 in the first part of verse 10. Peter wrote, Tonight we're going to cover the second half of 2 Peter 2, verse 10, all the way through the end of the chapter.

And we know from the beginning of verse 10 that Peter is focusing on those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and those who despise authority. And those are characteristics of false teachers. And Peter introduced those characteristics in 2 Peter 2, verses 1 through 3. And those are verses that we looked at several weeks ago. For a little bit of review, just look at those first three verses of chapter 2 again.

[2 : 47] Peter wrote, So we see from these verses that the false teachers teach heresy.

They deny God and Jesus as described in the Bible. And they actually follow their sensuality.

They're greedy and they exploit people through their lives. And with those first three verses of the chapter in mind, let's go ahead and read our text for tonight.

So jump back down to the second part of verse 10 and we'll read through verse 22. Starting in the last half of verse 10, Peter says, These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm.

For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

[5 : 25] For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after having known it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them.

The dog returns to its own vomit and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire. We saw just a minute ago that verses 1 through 3 of the chapter focused on the adverse effect the false teachers had on others.

And tonight's passage then will zero in on the evil of the false teachers. And tonight's verses are more graphic and descriptive so that the readers would have no doubt about the evil of the false

teachers.

We'll see from these verses that Peter had a pastor's heart and he was demonstrating a pattern that all godly pastors are called to do. A book published in the 1850s included a quote from John Owen, the Puritan pastor.

And to put it in perspective, Owen died in 1683. So that gives you an idea of how old this quote is. He wrote, And if pastors in the 1800s were quoting pastors in the 1600s who were talking about the damage of false teachers, how important is it for us to recognize the effect of false teachers today? [7 : 13] And in tonight's passage, Peter is going to expand on three characteristics of the false teachers. And the first one we see is their defiant blaspheming. So defiant blaspheming is your first blanks.

And we typically use the word blaspheme in the context of speaking evil against sacred things. So your next blank there is another blaspheme.

Once again, we typically use blaspheme in the context of speaking evil against sacred things. But the word originally meant to revile or reproach anyone. And that use of the word is more consistent with how Peter uses it in verses 10 through 12 of chapter 2.

So keep in mind in his context that blaspheme means to revile or reproach anyone. And then listen to verses 10 through the first part of verse 13 again. All the way back to Satan's initial rebellion, pride has been the primary characteristic of God's enemies.

And false teachers, of course, are no exception to this. Both their words and their actions betray attitudes of self-centered arrogance and self-willed presumption, typical of the unregenerate who are actually the devil's children.

[8 : 55] We know that they're brazen and audacious. Peter calls it bold. And bold there means bearers or reckless ones. So bearers or reckless ones is one way to look at that.

And they're bold enough to defy God in exalting themselves no matter what the consequences are. And they're determined to have their own way at any cost, being stubborn and willful.

And willful there is a term that connotes a self-pleasing conceit and obstinacy. So they're doing it on purpose to please themselves is what Peter is saying.

And they proclaim with pride that what they are teaching is the only right understanding of things. And in doing so, they put down orthodox teaching with great arrogance. And the end of verse 10 says that they don't tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.

And the original Greek that the ESV translates as glorious ones literally is just glories. So there's some debate over what Peter was really talking about there.

[9 : 57] He could be referring to human beings, either church leaders or civil authorities. But it seems more likely that angels are the ones designated as glorious beings here.

The King James and the New King James actually translate the Greek word glories as dignitaries. And the NASB translates it as angelic majesties.

So you can see how the English translations are split on how best to translate the Greek word. But regardless, we can tell that the false teachers are unafraid to revile or approach anything that opposes them.

And verse 11 is one of the reasons why many of our translations think that Peter is talking about good angels in verse 10. Because in verse 11, Peter contrasts the good angels' behavior with the false teachers' behavior.

Peter simply says there, Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. So, of course, the implication is that the angels would be right to pronounce a blasphemous judgment against the false teachers.

[11 : 03] But even they don't do that. The angels know better than to pronounce judgment, even against people and things that deserve it. And we can look at that, too, by cross-referencing to Jude.

And so listen to how Jude chastised the false teachers for their blasphemy. And he also contrasted their behavior with the archangel Michael's behavior. And these verses are Jude, verses 8 through 10.

Jude wrote, So notice how Jude says that false teachers blaspheme all that they do not understand. So Jude also is using the word blaspheme in its more general sense. In other words, he's saying that the false teachers revile or denounce all that they do not understand.

And, of course, we still see that from false teachers today. Think about the modern false prophets in the extreme sectors of the charismatic movement. Because they make their fortunes by supposedly binding and flippantly damning demons, as if they had real power over them.

[12:38] And they're actually false exorcists like the Sons of Schema in Acts 19. And they fit perfectly with Peter and Jude's descriptions. So pagans develop elaborate schemes to appease their gods.

But false Christian teachers and preachers proclaim that they can declare authority over even the forces of hell. And, of course, we're seeing here that that actually is a sign that they're a false teacher.

So instead of being impressed by the false teacher's claims of authority over Satan and demons, we should remember Peter's words in our text for tonight.

And listen again to verse 12 in the first part of 13. Peter says, The false teachers prided themselves on their insight and wisdom.

But Peter compared them to irrational animals. And the irrationality of the teachers is emphasized by the phrase, Creatures of instinct. And the comparison of the false teachers and prophets with irrational animals is a dramatic one.

[13:55] Because irrational animals don't have a spiritual understanding. They don't understand the will of the Lord for his people. They don't understand the place of the angels or the need for behavior that is godly.

They don't understand about judgment and salvation or about sexual immorality and arrogance. Rather, they live like animals according to their natural instincts.

And that's what the false teachers are really like. And like animals, they react only to their present circumstances without giving much thought to the consequences of their actions.

So they pour abuse on things which they don't understand. Like an angered dog will attack someone it thinks is threatening him. And because they act like animals, Peter says they're going to end up like animals.

Their inner corruption will be the cause of their destruction. Just like a mad dog is sometimes shot to death to keep him from harming others. You know, when you think about it, as much as we like to have them as pets today, animals make no intellectual contributions to society.

[14:57] In fact, for most of them, their primary role in the ecosystem is to be captured and killed to provide food for others up the food chain.

You know, we're fairly recent in having a lot of animals as pets. But spiritual pretenders then, dishonestly presenting themselves as true teachers, show an animal-like ignorance and they revile where they have no knowledge.

They ridicule divine truth and heavenly authority, including things that they don't understand. And so like animals, they make no positive contribution to society. And the end of verse 12 predicts that they will be destroyed and they won't escape God's future wrath.

And when God's fire consumes the entire world and all of its creatures, we'll see that happen. And as God's enemies, having intentionally distorted the message of his word, they will all face that eternal punishment.

And of course, we saw the reality of that punishment in the verses from our previous 2 Peter study. But defiant blaspheming is just one way to describe false teachers.

[16:10] In the second section of our lesson tonight, Peter summarizes more of their disgusting behavior. So disgusting behavior is our second lesson heading.

In the last part of verse 13 all the way through verse 16, Peter describes that behavior. So listen to the last part of verse 13 all the way through 16 again.

Peter said, As a general rule, sinners tend to engage in misbehavior at night.

But the false teachers of Peter's day were so consumed with greed, lust, and vice that they considered it a pleasure to revel in the daytime, not even waiting for nightfall to get here.

And Peter described these people as blots and blemishes. And blots and blemishes are two terms that speak of filthy spots, defects, scabs, and things diseased.

[17:41] So you know, Peter wasn't pulling any punches here. He was telling it exactly like what he thought. And of course, that's in keeping with his character. He's really saying that like malignant sores, the false teachers were reveling in their deceptions and openly enjoying the fruit of their sin.

And at the same time, they deceived those under their teaching influence. And they did that by actively promoting wickedness in the lives of their followers. And to make matters worse, the false teachers brought their lewdness into the church.

Peter said that the false teachers were feasting with the church members. And verse 14 lists several disgusting behaviors of the false teachers. And we see those in quick succession.

Peter said that they were habitual sinners, their eyes consistently looking toward sinning. And the phrase translated eyes full of adultery is literally having eyes full of an adulteress.

And what that means is they think only of adultery when they see women. And insatiable for sin is literally unceasing in sin. And that probably refers to sinning with their eyes as well as sinning with their actions.

[18 : 53] The adverse effect that teachers had on others is expressed in the words, they entice unsteady souls. And the word entice there comes from the world of fishing and hunting where bait is used to snare an unsuspecting fish or animal.

And in verse 18 we'll see the word occur again to indicate the influence of false teachers on others. And we still see that today, don't we? Do we still see people who go about trying to entice unsteady people to their way of thinking?

And because the verse directs our attention to sexual sin and greed, perhaps the teachers entice people by promising them that they could live for sexual pleasure and the material comforts of this life without any thought of a future judgment.

And of course, people like to hear that. So such a theology seemed like too good thing to pass up for the unstable. And they swallowed up the bait real eagerly. How many people today swallow up that same bait really eagerly too?

You know, it's interesting. I just did a quick Google search. I was going to put in a couple of examples of the false teachers doing that today.

[20 : 03] And they were so disgusting I left all of them out. But the heading was bad enough on one of them that I couldn't resist reading it. And he said, well, if you have a financial problem, the answer is to give a sacrificial gift to him so that God could turn your financial problem around.

So, you know, he was bad enough to say, well, you should just give more money to me rather than giving it to somebody else. And so you see now that they're still unscrupulous and fraying upon the weak people to do that.

I heard a radio broadcast on the East Coast years ago that goes on tonight, an evangelist. And literally his theme song is, Praise the Lord and Pass Me Ammunition.

And he would always say, Hey, do you know what the ammunition is? Yeah. It was nice and bold. Well, you know, it's no coincidence that Creflo Dollar may be the most appropriately named false teacher out there too.

I don't know what Creflo means in agreement. Yeah. I don't know what it does mean, but it probably should mean more dollars or something. But Peter's reference to that greed is interesting because he said that the false teachers have their hearts trained in greed.

[21 : 26] And the word trained comes from the Greek word from which we get our word gymnasium. And so these people devoted energy and practice to greed so much so that it was a well-developed habit, just like exercise and working out is for people who spend a lot of time in a gym.

So having listed all of these sins, Peter returned to the consequence of such behavior. He said they were accursed children. In other words, they were under God's curse.

So again and again, the theme of judgment surfaces. And this judgment is the reality that the false teachers denied. And Peter wanted to stir his readers so that they would take it seriously and repudiate those false teachers.

Then if we look at verses 15 and 16, we see Peter use Balaam as an example. And remember Balaam, he was an Old Testament prophet for sale to whomever paid him.

He preferred wealth and popularity over faithfulness and obedience to God. And through a talking donkey, God kept him from cursing Israel. If you want to flip over to Numbers 22, we'll look at verses 21 through 33, just to remind ourselves of Balaam.

[22 : 39] So that's Numbers 22, verses 21 through 33. And here are those verses. It says, So Balaam rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab.

But God's anger was kindled because he went, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. And the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with the sword drawn in his hand. And the donkey turned aside out of the road and went into the field. And Balaam struck the donkey to turn her into the road.

Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards with the wall on either side. And when the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pushed against the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall.

So he struck her again. Then the angel of the Lord went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam.

[23 : 46] And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?

And Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have made a fool of me, I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you. And the donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life long to this day?

Is it my habit to treat you this way? And he said, No. You would think that that would be enough conversation right there to tell him something was different, but he still didn't understand what was going on.

And if you look at verse 31 then, we see what finally happened to get Balaam's attention. Verse 31 says, Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand.

And he bowed down and fell on his face. And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out to oppose you, because your way is perverse before me.

[24 : 51] The donkey saw me and turned aside before me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let her live. So the donkey speaking to Balaam indicates that Balaam had less insight into what God was doing than his animals did.

And Peter earlier compared the false prophets to irrational animals. And here he gives us an example of a false prophet who was even enlightened less than his animal was.

So, so far we have seen that false teachers are defiant blasphemers who exhibit disgusting behaviors. And the last section of our lesson highlights one of those disgusting behaviors in detail. In verses 17 through 22, we'll see that the false teachers are characterized by doomed boasting. So doomed boasting is what Peter focuses on in the last part.

Let's look at that boasting in verses 17 through 22. Peter says, In the first sentence of verse 17,

[26 : 51] Peter chose two metaphors that represent water. And water was the most essential natural commodity of the Middle East. And due to its scarcity and vital importance, water provided the perfect illustration of spiritual sustenance.

Peter says that the false teachers are springs without water. They offer the spiritually thirsty nothing more than false hopes of relief. He says there are mist driven by a storm.

And in that Mediterranean region, sea breezes typically brought in mist and fog that appeared to signal rain. But sometimes the atmosphere would drive it away.

And so that the moisture stayed only briefly and produced no significant rainfall. So that in reality leaves the land dry and parched. And so the inhabitants are left disappointed. And like those mist, false teachers are without substance and provide no life changing refreshment.

The end of verse 17 reminds us of the harsh but deserved judgment that awaits these false teachers. Despite the fact that they have no spiritual sustenance to offer, false teachers invariably claim great wisdom and knowledge, speaking loud boast of folly, as verse 18 puts it.

[28 : 09] And through their flamboyant style and high sounding rhetoric, they fool their followers into believing that they possess deep theological scholarship, profound spiritual insight, and often even direct revelations from God.

Because if somebody points out they conflict with the Bible, one of the things that they say is that they have new revelation. So they have something different. It also says that they use fleshly desires to entice their victims.

And this follows along with the disgusting behaviors that we saw earlier. And individuals who follow false teachers are those who barely escape from the ones who live in error. In other words, there are men and women who through moral resolution are trying to better themselves.

They're trying to earn their way to God. And they include people who struggle with broken relationships, wrestle with emotional felt needs and spiritual problems, and desperately desire relief from guilt, anxiety, and stress.

We really should feel for the people that are drawn in by these false teachers. And that's why it's so important for us to be sure to get the true gospel out. Because what happens is that these people become dissatisfied with the lifestyle of living in error.

[29 : 25] And they become dissatisfied with the way unregenerate humanity lives. And they're trying to find a better way to live. And they're trying to do it themselves by finding some form of religious experience.

But that doesn't mean they're truly redeemed. In fact, in their dissatisfaction, loneliness, and self-betterment attempts, they're highly vulnerable to the false teachers that are out there.

They really are the types of people who will be convinced that the proper way to get more money when they don't have it is to give money to the false teachers. And in appealing to these people, the false teachers promise freedom and victory while they themselves are slaves of corruption.

And their empty guarantees include liberation, purpose, prosperity, peace, and happiness, that the false teachers don't even possess those blessings themselves.

And the last sentence of verse 19 explains why the false teachers are slaves of corruption. It says, For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. We've already seen that false teachers are overcome by sin.

[30 : 32] So, therefore, the false teachers are enslaved to that sin. Verses 20 and 21 can sometimes be controversial. And here are those verses again.

It says, For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. And to understand what Peter is saying in these verses, it's helpful to look back at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7.

So, if you want to, go ahead and flip over to Matthew 7, verses 15 through 23. And Matthew 7, verses 15 through 23 is what we'll look at.

And again, in these verses, Jesus is the one speaking. Starting in Matthew 7, 15, Jesus says, Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

[31 : 40] You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? So every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. Jesus' description there well fits the type of false prophets and teachers that Peter was facing, and that we still face today.

Those false teachers will appear to be full Christians, and they will know in their head at least the whole truth of salvation. And for a while they may have even generally moved to a moral stance in which they could have been said to escape the corruption of the world.

[32 : 55] And indeed, by mixing among Christians, they would have done that. Surely they would have escaped it for a little bit anyway. But now their true colors are emerging, and they're known by their real fruit.

And the reality of their apparent commitment to following Christ will be seen in the way they live and the teachings that they put forward, not simply by their claim. And Peter says then that these people have become entangled again in the corruption and have been overcome.

And so this picture reminds us of the people that Jesus described in the parable of the sower, who, when they were swamped with the thorns of this world, which of course are the worries of life, the

deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for other things, they fell away.

And what Peter is saying is that because they at least intellectually had been exposed to the truth, such people are worse off than those who had never known anything about the way of righteousness.

And Peter uses almost the same words that Jesus did when he was talking about the judgment that was going to face them. Back in Matthew 12, verse 45, Jesus was talking of a demon being cast out of a person.

[34 : 08] And when nothing replaces it, Jesus said that it returns with seven other spirits, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. And so judgment will surely be worse for those who hear and know the truth and then deliberately turn their backs on the holy commandment delivered to them than it will be to the pagan who has never known.

And when he talks about the holy commandment delivered to them, he's talking about the whole gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ that has been passed to them. So the false teachers of Peter's day were outwardly religious people.

They had professed faith in Christ and probably even convinced the people that they knew far more about him than they actually did. In other words, they wouldn't have been able to infiltrate the church so effectively if they hadn't done that.

But they ultimately renounced Christ and his saving truth. So they spurn the only way of salvation and are left without any hope for what's facing them. And like Judas Iscariot, they breed in close proximity to Jesus Christ and his word.

And they clothe themselves in false righteousness, but they really live lives of hypocrisy. And ultimately, they use the church for their own selfish purposes like spiritual parasites.

[35 : 23] And they try to drag down as many people with them as they can. And Peter concludes the chapter by making once again a comparison between false teachers and animals.

Look at verse 22 one more time. He said, What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.

Today we have dogs and even some pigs as pets. But to get the full impact of these verses, we need to understand that Peter's original readers viewed dogs and pigs much differently than what we do today.

Because in biblical times, dogs and pigs were both contemptible animals. Dogs, for instance, were rarely kept as household pets because they were usually half-wild mongrels, and they were often dirty, diseased, and dangerous.

And they lived on garbage and trash, and they were even willing to eat their vomit if needed. And the Jews treated dogs with such contempt and disgust that being compared to a dog was one of the worst insults you can make to somebody.

[36 : 34] And of course, we know how the Jews felt about swine. And swine similarly represented filth because they were the ultimate in uncleanness to the Jews.

And this was primarily, of course, because of the Mosaic Law and its prohibition against the pigs because they were ceremonially unclean. So Peter's comparison then is unmistakable.

He says that false teachers are the epitome of spiritual uncleanness and smut. And so his warning is clear. We should stay away from false teachers, and instead we should expose them.

And believers are to listen to the true apostles and prophets, not the false ones. And those last two sentences are really the summary application of the passage tonight.

Stay away from false teachers and expose them, and at the same time listen to the true apostles and prophets rather than the false ones. So in our passage tonight, Peter has given us several ways to recognize the false teachers, and he's reminded us that ultimately those false teachers are no better than muddy pigs or diseased dogs who eat their own vomit.

[37 : 42] Fortunately, the Bible does more than just warn us about these pigs and dogs. The Bible also clearly spells out the true gospel, and we've been studying that on Sunday nights.

And we know that Jesus came to earth as a man to rescue us from the brokenness caused by sin. And when we repent of our sins and have faith in him, we can recover and pursue God's design for our lives again.

And in the passage tonight, we saw Peter compare false teachers to springs without water and misty clouds that promise rain but never deliver. And believers know that the real source of life-giving water comes from somewhere else.

And here are just two cross-references to remind us of that. The first is John 4, 13 and 14, and these are part of Jesus' exchange with the Samaritan woman at the well.

And in John 4, 13 and 14, we see this. Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

[38 : 47] The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life. And then here are John 7, 37 and 38.

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

So how do we guard against the false teachers? Well, we can actually sum it up by what Jesus said. He said it best when he said, Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

With that, let's close in prayer. Father, we thank you for the reminder that we do need to be on guard against false teachers, and we should always compare what we hear taught against the truth of your word.

Also, though, thank you that for true believers, you will enlighten us through the Holy Spirit, and through the Holy Spirit, so that we will be able to recognize those false teachers.

[39 : 57] So although we need to be wary of those teachers, let us not be afraid of them. Instead, help us be empowered to rescue the people who are entangled with them. Go with us this weekend as we engage our community and also as we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

And in his name we pray. Amen.