

The Deceptions Of False Teachers

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2 Pet. 2:18-22

Peter's warning against "false teachers" previously in this chapter of his second epistle included a description of:

The destructiveness of false teachers.

2 Pet. 2:1-3, "*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*"

The doom of false teachers.

2 Pet. 2:4-9, "*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*"

The depravity of false teachers.

2 Pet. 2:10-17, "*But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings*

while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

Verse 17 summarizes their depravity by describing them as...

"Wells without water".

"Clouds that are carried with a tempest".

Indicating that while they promise much, they do not truly deliver what they promise.

Thus they are "deceptive"; and the deceptions of false teachers become even more apparent as we consider the last section of chapter two.

2 Pet. 2:18-22, "For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 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. 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. 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."

Verses 18-22 vividly depict the manner in which these "false teachers" are deceptive, beginning with...

They are deceptive in their methods.

They use deceptive words.

Peter had warned earlier:

2 Pet. 2:3, "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

“They will exploit you with deceptive words”.

Now he says:

2 Pet. 2:18, “*For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*”

“They speak great swelling words of emptiness”.

Using eloquent speech that sounds impressive and promising, but lacking true substance.

They actually appeal to the flesh.

So deceiving are these teachers, one may think that they are winning others over to their way through their sound doctrines.

But their true allurements are through “*the lusts of the flesh*”.

Which could include such things as immorality, materialism, envy, pride.

- Gal. 5:19-21, “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*”
- 1 John 2:15-17, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*”

Thus, they offer promises that really have their appeal to what the flesh will gain.

Is this not the case with those who promise “health and wealth” with the gospel?

It is even “*through licentiousness*” that these teachers entice unstable souls.

Licentiousness in the Greek is *aselgeia* {as-elg'-i-a} which means “unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence”

They shamelessly flaunt their fleshly appeals, while passing it off as something proper.

They display excessive wealth as something one might expect to receive as a follower of their teaching.

Through such deceptive methods, they seek to allure those who have “escaped from those who live in error”.

2 Pet. 2:18, *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.”*

This leads us to Peter’s next point...

They are deceptive in their promises.

They promise “*liberty*”, but they don’t deliver.

2 Pet. 2:19, *“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”*

Especially, if it is liberty from the “lusts of the flesh”.

For as we have seen, they make their allurements through the “lusts of the flesh”.

- 2 Pet. 2:1, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*
- 2 Pet. 2:18, *“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.”*

Thus, they enslave through the very thing they promise deliverance from!

They promise “*liberty*”, while they themselves are slaves.

They are “slaves of corruption” trying to promise what they don’t have.

As evidence of their “corruption”, we have already seen...

They attempt to exploit through covetousness.

2 Pet. 2:3, *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”*

They “walk according to the flesh”.

2 Pet. 2:10, “*But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*”

They “despise authority”.

2 Pet. 2:10 (see above).

They “speak evil of the things they do not understand”.

2 Pet. 2:12, “*But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*”

They “count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime”.

2 Pet. 2:13, “*And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;*”

They have “eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin”.

2 Pet. 2:14, “*Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.*”

They have “a heart trained in covetous practices”.

2 Pet. 2:14 (see above).

Thus, these teachers who promise liberty are themselves...

- “overcome”.
- “brought into bondage”.

Indeed, they are worse off now than before.

2 Pet. 2:20-22, “*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. 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. 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.*”

Their latter end is worse than their beginning.

It would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness. Luke 12:47-48, “*And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever*

much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

They have become like the dog returning to his vomit, and the washed sow wallowing again in the mire!

These last three verses raise a question that will be answered below:

Deceptive in both method and promise, we can appreciate why Peter would spend so much time warning about them.

Before concluding this lesson, it might be prudent to attempt answer two questions that are commonly raised by Peter’s discourse on false teachers.

Concluding questions.

Were these false teachers once true Christians?

2 Pet. 2:1, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*

They were “denying the Lord who bought them”.

These are souls who at one time had been “bought by the Lord”.

Peter had written in his first epistle that we are redeemed (bought back) by the precious blood of Christ.

1 Pet. 1:18-19, *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Thus, these are souls who at one time were “blood bought individuals”.

2 Pet. 2:15, *“Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;”*

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray.

The implication here is that they were once on the right way.

For it is impossible to forsake something you never had, or to go astray if you were always lost.

2 Pet. 2:20, *“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.”*

They had once escaped the pollutions of the world, but were now called false teachers.

Remember that this “knowledge” includes such things as listed in:

2 Pet. 1:5-8, *“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Through such “saving” knowledge, then, they had escaped, but are now enslaved again.

2 Pet. 2:22, *“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.”*

They, like dogs, have returned to what they had gotten rid of at one point, and are like a washed sow returning to wallowing in the mire.

Some try to say these proverbs reveal that these false teachers were always “dogs” and “hogs”, never truly changed on the inside, which explains their returning to the vomit and mire.

But in the overall context of this chapter, that seems to be straining the purpose of the proverbs.

Of course, the question about these false teachers having been true Christians at one time leads right into another question...

Can Christians sin so as to be lost?

If these “false teachers” were once true Christians, the answer is clearly “yes”, for consider their end:

- 2 Pet. 2:1, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*
- 2 Pet. 2:3, *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”* (“for a long time their judgment has not been idle”)
- 2 Pet. 2:17, *“These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.”*

If the answer is “no”, then why the warning by Peter in this epistle?

Why warn those who have “escaped from those who live in error”, if there is no real danger of becoming “overcome” and “brought into bondage” again? (2 Pet. 2:18-19).

Why the concluding warning to “beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked”, if it is impossible for Christians to fall away? (2 Pet. 3:17).

But what about those verses that promise the security of the believer?

John 10:28-29, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”*

Such passages are promising assurance for the “believer”, (one who remains a believer; if we remain faithful, our salvation is secure).

Rev. 2:10, *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

But the Bible clearly warns that a “believer” can develop an evil heart of “unbelief”; should that happen, the promises of assurance do not apply.

Heb. 3:12-4:2, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”*

Conclusion.

The very real possibility of apostasy and losing one's salvation helps us to understand the grave concern expressed by Peter in his epistle.

- He believes Christians can “fall from your own steadfastness”.
- He believes Christians can be “led away with the error of the wicked”.

For these reasons he takes so much time describing the “false teachers” who are losing their salvation and trying to take others with them!

But if we can remember what Peter says about...

- The destructiveness of false teachers.
- The doom of false teachers.
- The depravity of false teachers.
- The deceptions of false teachers.

...then we are not likely to be swayed by such individuals.

