

2 Peter 2 Notes

Warning Against False Teachers (2:1-22)

- Their conduct described (2:1-3).
 - False teachers arise when the church begins to embrace the worldly culture around it. While true prophets speak for God, false teachers secretly bring in heresies which condemn people's souls. This also brings to them "swift destruction." "Destructive" means "utter ruin" and speaks of the final and eternal condemnation of the wicked. "Heresies" denotes "an opinion, especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects."
 - Unfortunately, many people follow false teaching and this brings reproach upon the truth (Matthew 7:13-14; cf. 24:10-12). The word "pernicious" means "lascivious," and it agrees well with the character of these men as described elsewhere. It is a habitual sexual immorality and unrestrained, debauched conduct. Their sexual lewdness came in many forms and extremes.
 - A very strong influence in the lives of these men is covetousness. They use deceitful words to try and make money from the ones they are endeavoring to teach. The English word "plastic" is derived from the term "feigned." "Plastic" originally had the connotation of something not completely authentic. Plastic, at first glance, "deceives" consumers. Although justice may have seemed to slumber or to linger, it was not really so. The false teachers had on them always an ever-watchful eye and God would do that which is right in regard to them.
- Their judgment pronounced (2:4-11).
 - The first example of divine judgment is that which came upon angels who sinned. If God reserved them for judgment, He would certainly do the same for those who teach false doctrines. "Hell," in the Greek, only occurs here in the New Testament. "Tartarus" was the name in classical mythology for the subterranean abyss in which rebellious gods and other such beings as the Titans were punished. The word was, however, taken over into Hellenistic Judaism and used in connection with fallen angels. Thayer describes the word as "the name of a subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds; it answers to the Gehenna of the Jews." As seen in Luke 16, Hades is composed of two realms: one for the righteous ("Abraham's bosom," vs. 22) and one for the wicked ("place of torment," vs. 28). Just as "Abraham's bosom" is analogous

to "paradise" (Luke 23:43), representing the abode of the righteous dead, "hell" (2 Peter 2:4) is analogous to "place of torment" which represents the place of the wicked dead.

- Peter's second example is the flood. With Noah, seven others were saved. They were protected by God from the flood that wiped out that ungodly generation. "Flood" is *katakulsmos*, from which the English "cataclysm" derives.
- The third example of judgment is the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Destruction" is from *katastrophe*, indicating a complete overthrow and total ruin. The Lord turned those cities to ashes, but in the middle of His judgment, he delivered "just" Lot who was deeply disturbed by the unrighteousness he saw. At times, Lot may have been materialistic and morally weak, but he did not want any part of the sensual conduct that characterized Sodom's unprincipled culture. "Vexed" means "to torture," and demonstrates the sheer excruciation Lot experienced as he was exposed to the lewdness of Sodom.
- Suffering Christians anywhere and at any time can find consolation in the fact that their Lord knows all about their plight. Likewise, He will punish the evildoers (cf. Malachi 3:16-4:3). Like the wicked contemporaries of Noah and Lot, false teachers are slaves to sin. They are dishonest, disrespectful, and displeasing to God -- actively pursuing their sensual fantasies.
- Their sinful ways denounced (2:12-22).
 - The false teachers are presumptuous and arrogant. They respect no one and nothing restrains them. As to when they slandered or what kind of slander was involved, one can only surmise. But their arrogance is demonstrated by their brazen mouths. In contrast to these audacious men, angels themselves, even though they are stronger and more powerful, do not indict the celestial beings in the presence of the Lord.
 - The false teachers act like irrational animals without the restraint that angels and righteous people have. They may claim a special knowledge, but then blaspheme out of their ignorance. Like wild beasts who are slaves to their instincts and are born to be slaughtered, they too are destined for destruction.
 - The false teachers will suffer harm as a wage of injury. This is a word play characteristic of Peter's style in this letter. Normally one thinks of carousing as a nighttime activity because of its shameful nature (1 Thessalonians 5:7), but these people carouse in daylight. "Spots" and "blemishes" speak of filthy spots, defects, scabs, and things diseased.

- "Having eyes full of adultery" indicates that these false teachers no longer possessed any moral self-control; they could not even look at a woman without viewing her as a potential object of their adultery or fornication. Their lust was overpowering and insatiable.
- The false teachers resemble Balaam, the son of Beor, in that Balaam loved money and was willing to pursue it instead of obeying God (Numbers 22:5-24:25). Balaam also taught immortality (Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14). Balaam knew better, but allowed fleshly impulses to guide his choices. These men have left the Bible and pursued the same course.
- Peter is now reaching a climax in his writing about false teachers. He describes them as "wells without water." Christ provides a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:13-14), and from those who believe in Him flow streams of living water (John 7:37-38). But the false teachers give nothing because they have nothing to give. "Clouds carried with a tempest" is a metaphor of their instability.
- Sadly, these false teachers allure people through sensuality, the basest of desires. They take as their target those who are just coming from worldliness themselves. This is one of the best arguments to make sure new converts are grounded in the faith. The stronger they are, the less likely they are to be pulled away from Christ.
- The false teachers promised "liberty," perhaps from any law of restraint of the flesh. Paul ran into the same teaching (1 Corinthians 6:12-13; Galatians 5:13). Yet, Peter says that the very ones who speak of freedom are "servants of corruption." This is parallel to the teaching of Jesus (John 8:34-36).
- Vss. 20-21 give some of the strongest arguments against the doctrine of "once saved, always saved." "Pollutions" mean "a vaporous exhalation formerly believed to cause disease ... an influence or atmosphere that tends to deplete or corrupt." We escape the pollutions of the world by obeying the gospel. But when we fall back into sin, our last end is worse than the beginning. These verses have been problematic for many expositors because they either believe the verses teach the possibility of apostasy or different degrees of punishment in the judgment.
- However, these verses merely teach that if someone falls away and returns to sin, that return results in them acting worse than they were before they repented. For example, a drunkard who returns to drinking will usually drink more than ever. It is best for them never to have been righteous because they would not be so wicked now and they would not have dishonored the cause of Christ.

- Peter concludes his strong denunciation of the false teachers by citing two proverbs. The first is found in the Bible (Proverbs 26:11); the second is extrabiblical. Both dogs and pigs were considered vile by the Jews. Jesus also used the designation “dogs” and “pigs” in speaking of those who opposed God and His word (Matthew 7:6). So the false teachers and those who follow them are unclean and return to the pagan corruption; i.e., they fall away.