

Sunday, May 5, 2024 pm

## STUDIES IN 2 PETER

### The Character of False Teachers (2)

#### 2 Peter 2:10-19

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we are dealing with the meat of this letter, Peter's warning about false teachers. We have noted the presence of false teachers and what makes a false teacher. In our last lesson we began to discuss the characteristics of false teachers. We focused on their rejection of authority and how brazen they conduct themselves. In this lesson, we continue to address their character noting their moral depravity.

NOTE: It needs to be understood that the character described here does not apply to all false teachers, but often we do find moral flaws which affect how serious one really is.

#### I. **Moral corruption**

- a. ***They walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness*** – we noted in our last lesson that sometimes false teachers are also living corrupt and immoral lives. If they do not respect the boundaries of God's word in what they teach, why would it be surprised if they did not respect the standard of living God has given for the way they live their lives. The sad reality is that we have heard of leaders whose lifestyles were immoral and when they get exposed, it does great damage to their work and the Lord's cause.
- b. ***The carouse even in the daytime*** – descriptive of one whose life is out of control. Typically, immoral behaviors are associated with darkness (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-7, Romans 13:11-13). Here is one who is openly engaged in sinful conduct and doesn't care if others see it. I think of the man in the adulterous relationship of 1 Corinthians 5:1-2. He has his father's wife (an adulterous relationship).
- c. ***Spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions*** – they are lying to themselves and lying to others (while they feast with you) and exploiting them. They take advantage of the gullible (cf. 2 Timothy 3:6). 2 Peter 2:18 will again describe these individuals.
- d. ***Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin.***
  - i. The expression literally means, "eyes full of an adulteress." This is descriptive of those who are looking to engage in immoral practices. They are looking for the adulterous woman. I am reminded of Proverbs 7:4ff finds Solomon warning his son that wisdom will keep him from the adulterous woman. He then proceeds to describe this woman who seduces him because he is LOOKING for her. She ends up trapping him.
  - ii. The expression "enticing unstable souls" is the same idea as exploiting the gullible. The word is actually only used 3x. Here & in vs. 18 speaking of alluring through the lusts of the flesh, AND in James 1:14 describing the BAITING of Satan to sin. Think of a lure and how it is used to catch its prey. Satan uses whatever "lure" he has to entrap us. And sadly, he is very good at knowing which ones to use.
  - iii. They are also so caught up in their lusts and sins that they cannot (or will not) stop.
  - iv. The Bible warns against lusts continually. 1 John 2:15-17. Typically, sin begins in the heart and if not controlled it is carried out. That is the very process James warned about in James 1:12-15. Jesus warned against sensual lusts in Matthew 5:27-30 where He spoke of the one who looks upon a woman to lust after her has committed adultery in

his heart. This is a big concern today in our society as sources of lust are found everywhere around us – in our homes and even as engage in society.

**e. Hearts trained in covetous practices**

- i. Another “lust” that is at the heart of the false teacher is often covetousness. The desire to have more, especially that of which he is not entitled to, OR desiring something at the expense of the legitimate owner.
- ii. This too is strongly warned against in scripture. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 warns of the one who desires to be rich falling into temptation and a snare (a trap). Colossians 3:1-7 which among others things describes covetousness as idolatry.
- iii. Jesus too taught about this in the Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 6:19-21 – do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... where you treasure is, there your heart will also be. On another occasion, Jesus warned, And He said to them, “*Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*” (Luke 12:15)
- iv. Often times, covetousness is the primary motive behind a false teacher. He is selfishly wanting something. He is willing to compromise truth for his material gain. While many examples of this could be given, I consider the example of many “health and wealth” preachers today who live lavish lifestyles and often offer gimmick to exploit the desperate and “gullible.” When I hear one of these preachers explain why he owns a Lear jet it gets the point across.
- v. **They are accursed** – a statement simply meaning they stand condemned before God. AND they stand condemned before the godly who see through their corruptions (elders, preachers, teachers, grounded members, etc.)
- vi. **Vs. 15-16 describe the account of Balaam.**
  1. Recorded in Numbers 22-25 we find how greedy Balaam was. Recall the account as Balak, king of Moab seeks to hire Balaam, whom he knows to be a prophet of God to come and curse the Israelites. He offers to pay him well. We know from the account that Balaam WANTED to go, but he was warned by the LORD to only speak what he was told (and being a prophet he was limited to that). It is clear the LORD would have preferred that he not go at all, but when he does go, 4 times he blesses Israel instead of cursing them.
  2. BUT, if that was not bad enough, Balaam found a “work around” which is recorded in Numbers 25. The Israelites committed harlotry with the women of Moab. The scene seems to be somewhat unrestrained. God sends a plague throughout the camp of Israel and 24,000 die. The plague is stopped by the righteous act of Phineas, the priest.
  3. BUT Balaam was complicit – **Numbers 31:16** tells us that they acted through the counsel of Balaam. He is again mentioned in **Revelation 2:14** in a passage addressing those who were tolerating error in their midst (looking to the example of Balaam) who taught Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.
  4. Balaam *loved the wages of unrighteousness*, as we have just seen.
  5. *But he was rebuked for his iniquity; a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet.* This is based on Numbers 22:22-30 as he was on his way to see Balak (after the second attempt to hire Balaam). Why

is this mentioned here? Because it is descriptive of the lengths to which these false teachers will go AND an example of their blindness (recall vs. 10 – they are presumptuous and self-willed)

## II. Further described

- a. **They are wells without water, clouds** (mists – NASU, ESV, LSB) **carried about by a tempest**, etc. These are descriptive of things that offer promise but deliver nothing. Jude 12-13 add to the list, *These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.*
- b. **They speak great swelling words of emptiness** – comparing these false teachers to the various useless things, we note what they say may SOUND good, but when it is weighed it is found to be worthless. Proverbs 18:17 says, *The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.* God has no use for them, and neither should we! (Ephesians 5:11)

So how do we protect ourselves from such teachers? The only answer to that is we must continually study God's word for ourselves (2 Timothy 2:15) and put their teachings to the test (1 John 4:1). If you are young in the faith, find someone who has PROVEN that they are interested in pleasing God and Jesus more than themselves and study TOGETHER with them (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16). It is my hope that we can see the danger of false teachers in these lessons. We have one more lesson dealing with them and then we will continue our study through this final letter of Peter's. Are you firmly grounded in God's word?