

Sunday, June 2, 2024 pm

**STUDIES IN 2 PETER (13)**  
**The Fate of False Teachers AND Their Followers**  
**2 Peter 2:18-22**

As we continue our study through 2 Peter, we have found in chapter 1 Peter's attempt to strengthen his audience so that they would not be overcome by false influences. In chapter 2 Peter has addressed false teachers. In the past few lessons we have noted that there will be false teachers who will seek to exploit the vulnerable. We have noted their fate (unless they repent) as well as their character – both toward God's word and often within their own lives. Today, we conclude this warning about false teachers by noting more of the results of their efforts both in this life and as they face God in judgment.

**I. False promises (18-19)**

- a. In our text thus far we have already seen this –
  - i. Vs. 2-3 – many will follow their destructive ways
  - ii. Vs. 3 - By covetousness they exploit with deceptive words
  - iii. Vs. 14 – they entice unstable souls.
- b. **Great swelling words of emptiness** –
  - i. Be reminded of vs. 17 in our last lesson, “wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest...” – things that offer great promise but disappoint and fail to deliver.
  - ii. Great swelling words of emptiness – they talk a great game but they fail to deliver anything. They are just words, like a politician making empty promises, or even more, evading the direct question with a vague answer. Jude 16 describes them as “*they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.*”
  - iii. NOTE: Just because something sounds convincing, doesn't mean it is! E.g., talk to a crooked car salesman or a timeshare representative.
  - iv. Such situations are indeed tragic but imagine when it involves God's word and your soul is at stake!
- c. **Luring through lusts and lewdness** – in previous lessons we addressed this as they appeal to “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life.” (1 John 2:15-16)
- d. **Promising liberty** – the word “liberty” means *freedom*. This is the same word that describes our freedom in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17, Galatians 5:1, 13, James 1:25). These teachers KNOW that this is ultimately what we want and deceptively promise that what they are teaching gives us freedom in Christ. NOTE: This is a danger of watering down the gospel and preaching that God tolerates certain types of sins (e.g., a modified ‘once saved always saved’). In essence the message is, you may continue in certain sins or sinful relationships.
- e. **They themselves slaves of corruption.** Again, we have seen this throughout our text. Vs. 10 speaks of them walking according to the flesh in their lusts of uncleanness and despising authority; Vs. 13-14 they are carousing in their own deceptions while feasting with you; Having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin... hearts trained in covetous practices, vs. 15 following the ways of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness. BE reminded of Matthew 7:16 where Jesus noted, “You will know them by their fruits...” Given enough time, if you are looking, you will see their corrupt lifestyles.
- f. **For by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.**

- i. Textual note: The NASB says, “*For by **what** a man is overcome, by **this** he is enslaved.*” The words can be either masculine or neuter (a person or a thing). BOTH apply as we can be overcome by someone (their charismatic teaching and nature) OR something (various behaviors).
- ii. **Overcome and in bondage** – this is addressing someone who has been defeated and is now enslaved to another entity (person or thing). The history of the first century world was that a conquering nation would enslave those whom they had defeated.
- iii. We have addressed the concept of bondage to sin – Romans 6:16-18, Hebrews 2:15, etc.
- iv. When one who is false teaches the tolerance of sinful behaviors (either by word or example) – lusts of various sorts – it is not long before one returns to such former behaviors. Christians are supposed to have put to death the man of sin and cleansed their lives (Romans 6:4-6, Colossians 3:9-10).
- v. What happens when they return to their old lifestyle?
  1. It typically gains an even stronger hold and becomes increasingly more difficult to overcome again.
  2. Consider the parable of cast out demon (Matthew 12:43-45) – he is cast out and wanders seeking a home. When he returns to his former “host”, he finds nothing there – the place is clean and swept. So he takes 7 more spirits even more wicked than himself and dwells within the man. He is worse off.
  3. Anyone who has tried to overcome an addiction, be it substance or behavior, who returns to that former lifestyle finds it increasingly more difficult to quit it again.
  4. In our text we find a young convert who left the ways of the world and finds a false teacher who tells him his former lifestyle was acceptable (I think of many “comfort doctrines” – OSAS, no hell, “continuous cleansing”, God overlooks sins of weakness or ignorance, “As long as I am sincere”, etc.) if he reverts to that former life, who is going to talk him out of it.
  5. Consider Hebrews 6:4-6 & 10:26-31 as examples of this.

## II. **The latter end is worse than the beginning (20-22)**

- a. Peter is very blunt in describing the deplorable state of these individuals. There is a question about these verses: Is Peter speaking of the false teachers or those who they have taught?
  - i. It is possible for a true teacher to abandon God – Acts 20:29-30 – Paul warned that from among them men would rise up teaching perverse things; 2 Peter 1:1 speaks of these false teachers “*even denying the Lord who bought them,*” 2:15, referring to the way of Balaam, “They have forsaken the right way and gone astray...” Certainly what is said here would apply to such false teachers.
  - ii. Whether a teacher or his “victims”, the result would be the same. I believe it applies to BOTH, but note that Peter in this letter has been warning these brethren to be aware of these false teachers. It is only fitting to apply this warning to them as well.
- b. First, he notes that these were TRUE believers (20)–
  - i. They have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. WHAT could this phrase describe BUT one who had obeyed the gospel properly. His/her sins had been washed away (Acts 22:16. 2:38, 1 Corinthians 6:11, etc.)

- ii. They are AGAIN ENTANGLED implies there was a former state when they were entangled in the ways of the world (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3).
  - iii. They had been OVERCOME, another word implying a past condition that was different.
  - iv. "... the BEGINNING" also implies there was a time when they BAGAN a walk of freedom – Romans 6:4 speaks of "newness of life."
  - v. Vs. 21 also strengthens this with the phrases, they knew "the way of righteousness" and "the holy commandment delivered to them."
- c. They returned to the world
- i. Both the words entangled and overcome show they are retuning to a former way of life.
  - ii. Vs. 21 also notes that they "**had known** the way of righteousness" and "turn **from** the holy commandment delivered to them."
  - iii. What else could this be describing?
- d. The latter end is worse than the beginning.
- i. The latter end is worse... - literally, they are worse off than before they became Christians.
  - ii. A dog returns to its own vomit – note that this is a reference to Proverbs 26:11, *As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.*
  - iii. A sow to wallowing in the mire. A second illustration of returning to an environment of filth.
  - iv. BOTH of these expressions illustrate a return to their former condition BEFORE they had obeyed the gospel.
- e. Consider the doctrine, *Once Saved, Always saved.*
- i. This is a very popular doctrine advocated by most in the denominational world, though some are now beginning to rethink and modify this (and so are our brethren – modifying this TOWARD this teaching).
  - ii. HOW is it possible for this statement if one cannot forfeit their salvation? How can one be worse off than before they obeyed the gospel when they were lost, IF they cannot forfeit their salvation? This text clearly teaching the possibility of apostasy AND its consequences.
  - iii. This accords with numerous other passages of scripture:
    1. 1 Corinthians 10:12, Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."
    2. Hebrews 2:1 – give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard lest we drift away.
    3. Hebrews 3:12, beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.
    4. Hebrews 4:1, a promise of that rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
    5. Galatians 5:4, "you have fallen from grace."
    6. Acts 8:20-23 – Simon was told to repent and pray for forgiveness...

And thus we find Peter's warnings against false teachers. We have noted their presence, their ways, their demeanor, their destiny and the results of letting such influence us. Let us resolve that we will do all that we can to ensure that we are not carried away by such. Think about it!