
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 2 Peter

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2 Peter 2: 17-22: "False Teachers are Deceptive!"

General idea: The false teacher is depicted as absolutely useless and downright dangerous! In an arid environment where thirst is great, there is nothing worse than coming upon an expected stream of fresh water and finding that it has dried up. The trek and energy wasted can be insurmountable. A false teacher is someone who has a clever plan and show, seeking to water those who thirst, but their water is bitter and dangerous. The real, needed water is absent. The people of God need to be watered and fed upon the precepts of His incredible Word. When we teach what is wrong, we waste not only good opportunities, but we contribute nothing of real value. We only deceive, harm the flock, and bring ill repute to God's glory and reputation.

In Peter's day, the real, sincere philosophers were often overshadowed by uneducated, whimsical, and manipulative people called "pseudo-philosophers" who claimed and propagated ideas, using rhetoric and sensationalism to move the people in debauchery. These are the people who led in the downfall of the Roman Empire! Goodness was ridiculed while sin was upheld. Virtue was scoffed at while indulgence was taught and sought by conniving men. These manipulative men put down knowledge, goodness, virtue, and the real philosophers who proclaimed them. Socrates, who taught ethical knowledge and confronted the loose mores of his day, was accused of immorality and corrupting others; then, he was sentenced to death. He was teaching virtue when the governing leaders were living in extreme "un-virtuous" lives. The Jews and Christians were attacked for the same reasons. They stood for virtue and morality in a society that abhorred it. How little has changed since 400 B.C.!

Vs. 17-19: When we deliver *nothing* to the people in our churches, we miss not only His call, but we forsake our own faith and obligations. We have to see the seriousness of this. God's Word tells us that false teachers are doomed to the blackest darkness of Hell. Why would anyone want to tread on such thin and dangerous ice?

- *Springs without water/waterless springs* means barren wells that the parched traveler, expecting water, would have trekked hard and far for, only to be deceived by finding them empty. Water in the Palestine area is a precious resource; a dried-up well is useless and frustrating. Referring to water to feed our physical body, our spiritual life needs to be watered by what is nutritious and good for us, and that is the truth of God's uncorrupted Word. Living Water is a continual theme used in Scripture and by John in particular. A false teacher will promise fulfilling truth, but he can only offer cruel deceptions by misleading, disappointing, and frustrating people, giving them dried-up and

useless water (Prov. 13:14; Jer. 14:3; John 4:13-15).

- *Mists* refers to the fine water a storm blows that is so dispersed it can't be caught or used. This also means storm clouds that in a time before irrigation just go overhead and never drop their water to the needy people below. False teachers cannot provide needed spiritual nourishment (Jude 12).
- *Blackest darkness/gloom of utter/outer darkness* was sometimes a symbol of Hell and torment. Here the false teacher's destiny is Hell!
- *They mouth empty words/loud boasts of folly* means that they may use words to persuade, but, under careful examination, the words are empty and meaningless.
- *Entice people*. This is referring to luring people back to sin after they have escaped it by turning to Jesus. When we are new to the faith or not grounded enough in the faith to know His principles, we can be easily deceived.
- *Promise freedom*. The false teachers were twisting the concept and reality of grace, saying that because of it, we are no longer bound to the Law but rather have the liberty to do as we please and God will forgive. But, the point is that we are *not* free from His moral law and we *do* have responsibility and obligations. True freedom is to flee indulgences and sin not seek and engage them (Rom. 6:15-18; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 3:25; 5:13-18; 2 Pet. 3:16).
- *Slaves of depravity/corruption* means that we can become too entrenched in our passions and sin so that we see no way out and even do not desire to come out of it. The slave here refers to the captives of an invading army, who desperately desire freedom. The theme is ironic, as they do not want their freedom. Passions that drive us will soon overtake us. The passion of exploiting others is evil; this is *prostitution*. Sin captivates us when we seek freedom from God. Rather, we should be joyful slaves to God so we can be freed from sin (Rom. 6:15-18).

Have you ever actually seen a dog vomit and then go back and try to eat it? How is this like sin? This is disgusting, but Scripture uses this metaphor as a Proverb for a reason. Returning to sin or to bad ideas that we escaped from is the same. False teachers will lure you with sin or corruption, telling you it is liberty. They even lure those who turned away from the pagan practices to return to them, saying it is OK. They trip them up, right back into the prison from which they made their escape by God's jailbreak. The irony is these false teachers who teach about knowledge and freedom are themselves trapped in their own prison of nonsense, empty of God's instruction.

Vs. 20-22: What enslaves you? What enslaves us is what controls us, whether it is a bad codependent relationship, an actual jail sentence, or following

sensationalism and faulty ideas. It will all trap and blind us. If we leave it, it is still there following us at a distance, seeking to lure us back. The devil will use this powerful means as well as your will and desires. We must be strong and hold onto our faith with assurance and confidence, or we will be like the dog that returns to its vomit!

- *Escaped the corruption* refers to professing Christ and then retuning to the ways of the flesh, seeking falsehoods and not righteousness. They were being superficial and naïve at best and blatantly evil and manipulative at worst. Both the false teachers, if they were really saved, and the people they infected jumped from the frying pan of sin into Jesus loving lap, only to go ahead and jump into the fire below! They had His freedom, grace, and knowledge, but rejected it for that which is dark, foolish, and foreboding.
- *Better not to have known*. It is better not to have known real truth than to know it and then reject it. This is the ultimate idiocy—to have something great and true, then to trade it in for what is fallacious and evil. We have responsibly as Christians. We know the truth and we are responsible to follow the truth (Luke 12:47-48).
- *The way* was the original name for Christians and the Church. The name Christian, once a derogatory term, did not take hold until many years later.
- *Turn their backs*. We are called to persevere in the faith and preserve the faith (John 10:26-30; 1 John 2:19).
- *A dog...pig*. Dogs in the first century were not the beloved pets we have now. They were mostly wild, mangy, roamed the streets, and were regarded with contempt. Some dogs were used for guarding homes, and pigs were for feeding Gentile travelers. Pigs were considered the most filthy and unclean of all animals. These animals preferred the filth to cleanliness. This was casting a very derogatory picture of how bad false teachers were, calling them utter fools because they were enticing others to be in filth (Ex. 22:31; Lev. 11:7; Prov. 26:11; Isa. 65:4; Math. 7:6; Rev. 22:15).
- *Washed* means that just because we appear clean on the outside, that is no guarantee that we are clean on the inside—unless Jesus has washed us clean! Religious traditions, rituals, and piety are no real proof of a person's faith, whereas one's character and visible fruit is.

Many of Peter's people knew the truth of Christ and remained in His truth, but some of them decided to reject the truth for new, more exciting teachings that gave them comfort and excitement without personal responsibility or obedience. They sought the honor of their own thoughts and teachings and rejected the real honor of being in Christ. When we claim to be Christians and do not act like it we will hinder the Gospel's message and lead others astray from The Way. This

gives Christianity a bad name and reputation. We are called to practice exceptional behavior and excellence so we can show Christ through our lifestyles without even using words. Then, when we do use words, they will have impact (1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:5-10).

A false teaching is anything proclaimed that compromises the Person and Nature of God or His teachings. We do this by seeking our own insights and ungrounded rationales, and not the precepts of Scripture. By relying on intuitions rather than realities and facts, people are led astray. We must always compare what we think to the principles of Scripture, never to others who may be of like minds, because “group-think” will take over. Groupthink absorbs the decisions made by a group or charismatic leader, manipulating all to think alike. It is exemplified by the gullible approval and conformity to the “group’s” popular opinion and not facts or rationale. This type of thinking minimizes individual responsibility and is used to rationalize one another’s faulty views as well as sin. We are also to pay attention to Balaam’s error in the previous passage and not make our ministry and life a game or get caught up in sin. Rather, we are to see the importance of who Christ is and what He taught so we can emulate Him and His ways, not ours.

False doctrines usually come to us in the disguise of new nuances and revelations that others in the past just did not see before. This could be something like a new or deeper understanding of a Greek word, or a meaning that was hidden, but is now fully revealed to us. Such counterfeit new ideas are false because they contradict or pervert. We do get new insights and applications from understanding customs, history, word meanings, exegetical insights, and the like, but they never twist or contradict what is already clearly revealed. The bottom line is there has been nothing new since the close of the Canon of Scripture. What has been new is how many ways people have been deceived and led astray! The Bible says what it says and means what it means; there is nothing new under the Son. It is only our pride that needs to be fed by what is new so to point to the good fortune and insights of what we have found. However, if you pay attention, these new insights usually do not last long and lead many, many astray. The fruit is noise and strife, not trust and obedience. If the greatest Christian minds who ever lived in an eighteen hundred year period of time did not find what you think you have, pray carefully that it is not your pride that is being revealed. If you think you have something new, oh my, what pride lays inside you; my, oh my, how you have been deceived by it. Please don’t deceive others, too!

Teaching what is clearly wrong is wrong! It is corruption at its worst; it is prostitution as in atrocious sin. The root of all this, and what is most scandalous before our God of grace, is our heinous pride! What comes from a person who is a false teacher who is based on pride? It is absurdity! A person grounded in the Word should be able to detect and discourage others from following him or her. However, we succumb to the emotionalism and slick enticement and forget about

our God of Truth.

Never think that popularity or the numbers of followers are signs of authenticity, as people can easily be swayed to believe lies. There is no real comfort in crowds, only in the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ! Do not let false teachers prey upon the people in your church! Name them and claim them as being of Satan and boot them out of your church, because they are not of God. Use their words against them and show them the door!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever actually seen a dog vomit and then go back and try to eat it? Yes, this is disgusting. How is this like sin? Sin is disgusting!
2. How does being very thirsty compare to the desire and thirst for God's real and true Word? How have you seen people exploit the passions of others?
3. How are false teachers dangerous? How do personal responsibility and/or obedience come into play?
4. Why do you think some people will ridicule goodness? Why would someone scoff at virtue while teaching indulgence?
5. Can you name some ways of sensationalism and how and/or why it is appealing to some people? How does discernment play a role here?
6. How does it make you feel that false teachers taught and were sought by conniving men in ancient times just as in our day? How and why does what Socrates went through typify what goes on in some churches that seek to destroy good teachers and bring in false teachers?

7. How can you tell a false promise or a mistaken or half-truth? Why is it that false teachers cannot provide the needed spiritual nourishment?
8. How and why are people who have escaped sin and turned to Jesus lured back to their old ways? How and why are they so easily deceived?
9. What enslaves or controls you? What do you have to watch out for that can trap and blind you?
10. Why is it better not to have known real truth than to know it and then reject it?
11. Why would someone profess Christ and then return to the ways of the flesh? What can your church do to make sure this does not happen in your church?
12. What can you do to be fed and watered with the precepts of His incredible Word? How can you be on guard against faulty and misguided sensationalism?

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