

# 2 Peter 2 • A Warning about False Teachers

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Second Peter, chapter two. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for giving us this time this morning to dig into the Scriptures. And we pray that you would lead us in them today, and lead us into truth and understanding. Lord, we look to you as the source of all the things that we need. And we come before you today, Lord, that you might fill us with your Holy Spirit and with grace. To lay hold of what you're saying in this passage and really minister to our hearts. We're living in challenging times, Lord, and we ask you to guide us in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

I'm going to go ahead and read through. We're going to actually do the whole chapter. I know that might be a shock to some of you since it took us four weeks to get through chapter one. But the reason I'm doing it all together here is because chapter two is really all the same thing. This entire chapter is the apostle or Peter talking about false teachers and the difficulties that come from that and how we can recognize them. So let's just go ahead and read through the chapter. It says,

*<sup>1</sup> "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

*<sup>4</sup> For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; <sup>5</sup> if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup> if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup> and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup> (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); <sup>9</sup> then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from*

trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup> and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, <sup>13</sup> suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. <sup>14</sup> They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! <sup>15</sup> Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, <sup>16</sup> but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

<sup>17</sup> These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. <sup>18</sup> For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. <sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. <sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

Wow. I feel like I need to pray again. I mean, wow! This just, you can tell that Peter was pretty passionate about this whole issue of false teachers that had, obviously, made their way into the church. In the last study that we dealt with here, as we finished out chapter two, Peter was talking to us about prophets who speak through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and speak according to the Spirit in, what we referred to or talked about last week, as biblical inspiration.

And we defined that so that you would have a better grasp of what Biblical inspiration is. And of course, that's a wonderful thing when it's true Biblical inspiration.

But whenever we talk about things that aren't true, we always have to back up. And that's the unfortunate thing, we always have to kind of back up and say, yeah but there's this other stuff that, that isn't true. There are these other things that we have to watch out for.

And that's what Peter's doing. He's sounding a warning here, related to the enemy's attempts to create counterfeits. And do you know Christians that it is the work of the enemy to bring about counterfeits. And a counterfeit is an imitation. You've heard of a counterfeit dollar bill. I don't know who'd want a counterfeit, a dollar bill. I'd go for a, like a 500 or something like that, if you're going to go to the trouble.

But a counterfeit is something that's fake. It's not real. It's a knockoff of the real item. And the enemy does that, in terms of the truth that God has revealed to man. People I've said this before, people ask all the time, why do you think there's so many world religions?

Because there's an enemy. And the enemy likes to bring counterfeits to confuse, and to cause deception. And that is his goal. To lure people into a place of deception with counterfeit truths. And that's what this chapter's all about. That's what Peter is writing about in this chapter.

And it's difficult for us to read through some of these verses only because the way that false teachers probably interacted with the body of Christ back in Peter's day are probably somewhat different than the way they interact with the church today. And we have to kind of understand that reading it. People, false teachers had to come into your building usually. And you'd hear them teach and so forth.

Today, all you have to do is turn on the radio or the TV and you may never personally interact with those people, but they may still be false teachers and you still may be on the receiving end of their counterfeit ministry. So that's one of the things that you kind of have to think about as you read through these verses.

But the first thing that Peter says about false teachers is, you'll notice, they're inevitable. And that's in verse one. Look with me again in your Bible where he says, "*but false prophets, as they arose among the people,*" and he's talking about the people of Israel. And he says, "*just as there will be.*" Notice he's very definite about that. He doesn't say, there might be, or you might run into a false teacher along the way.

He says, no, there will be false teachers that will appear in the church and will rise up among you. And it's still happening today. There were false teachers in Peter's day. There are false teachers today. There have been false teachers all along the way. And it has provided great difficulty for many people in the body of Christ.

This was not something, a warning that only Peter talked about. The Apostle Paul sounded a similar warning. Let me put this on the screen for you from Acts Chapter 20. Paul writes, you'll remember he was talking to the elders in Ephesus at the time and he says:

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**Acts 20:29-31 (ESV)**

*I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (Notice that. Not sparing the flock) and from among your own selves (In other words, from your own numbers) will arise men speaking twisted things, (And then he tells us what their goal is) to draw away the disciples after them. (And so he says, you've got to be alert. Be alert) Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.*

I want you to notice on that passage from Acts chapter 20, what the Apostle Paul refers to, or how he describes what those false teachers come to do. They come to speak "twisted things." Isn't that an interesting phrase? Twisted things. Well, what Peter uses is a different term here as he begins this section of chapter two, but he refers to them as "destructive heresies."

They are destructive, but they are heresies. And what's interesting to me about that word heresies is that it comes from a Greek word that is actually literally translated, "chosen beliefs." Think about that for a minute. "Chosen beliefs." In other words, they simply choose what they're going to believe because it's either comfortable or it makes better sense to them. And they decide that's what they're going to teach.

But it's just something that they chose and that is what Paul told us was going to happen, particularly as the days drew further on. Let me show you this passage from Second Timothy. He says:

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## **2 Timothy 4:3-4 (ESV)**

*For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

In other words, they will have “chosen beliefs.” We have kind of a different word for what Paul's talking about here in Second Timothy. We call it opinion. And in our culture, it's considered to be a good thing. Yeah. In fact, in a society and a culture where truth has essentially been trampled in the mud, pretty much all we're left with is opinion.

Have you ever noticed that? And people elevate their opinions to the place of objective truth because they don't believe in objective truth from any other source. And so, they believe that if there's any truth at all, it's going to be really relative to themselves and they are their own objective proof truth, if that even makes sense. Which it doesn't.

But that's the world that we live in today. And so, opinion has become a very, very dangerous thing. Honestly, I got to tell you, one of the most dangerous questions that I get as a pastor is Pastor Paul, what is your opinion on, fill in the blank. And then they give some particular topic or subject or issue or concern or something like that. Pastor Paul, I'd really like to know your opinion on that.

Why? My opinion means less than nothing. The only thing that matters is God's Word. God's Truth. God says my Word is Truth. He doesn't say that about our opinions. Far from it. So, honestly, I think Christians need to scrub the word “opinion” from their vocabulary in terms of understanding it as an important thing.

I don't know, maybe you have an opinion about cars or houses or something like that. That's not a problem. But when it comes to opinions concerning the truth of the realities of God's kingdom and the world that we live in and all the other stuff that goes with it, our opinions just frankly don't matter.

So, Peter says at the end of verse one, concerning these false teachers, if you look with me again, right at the end of verse one he says, they even deny the master who bought them bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And he says, this is one of the characteristics of false teachers. They will deny Jesus as a redeemer and the one who purchased us from death to life. They will deny that.

They'll talk about Jesus in a different light. It'll be a different Jesus from the standpoint of, you know what he did for us on the cross. They'll deny His redemptive work, and thus, bring destruction on themselves. Now, notice, I want you to notice in verse two how Peter says these false teachers will be in terms of their effectiveness.

Look at verse two, he says, “and many will follow their sensuality.” Isn't that something? “Many will follow.” Jesus told us that the way to destruction is a very easy and broad path. The way to life is narrow. Because the truth is fairly narrow. We like to think of ourselves as broad minded and it's considered a positive thing if I have a broad mind and I consider all options and that sort of thing.

Well, when it comes to the Truth related to salvation and God, it is a fairly narrow thing, and that means that since the truth is narrow, the way is narrow. And that's what Jesus said. The way to life is narrow. And it's hard. It's hard. Now, the way to destruction, that's broad. That's easy. Anybody can go there.

And Peter's telling us here that many are going to follow these false teachers. Jesus said the same thing. Let me show you this from Matthew 24. He says:

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**Mathew 24:11 (ESV)**

*“...many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.”*

So, you can see that this is not a small impact. And that's one of the reasons why there are so many warnings in the word of God related to this. And you'll notice that Peter goes on there in that verse to say that the way of Truth will be blasphemed.

In other words, it will be spoken against in a destructive and irreverent manner, which is what it means to blasphemed. So, the way of Truth will be blasphemed. Have you ever heard someone who claimed to be a Christian, misspeaking the Truth in a way that was irreverent and even ungodly, not to mention incorrect.

Well, that's exactly what Peter's talking about. Now in verse three, this is important too, he says, <sup>3</sup>“*And in their greed (and that's their motive) they will exploit you...*”

And you might want to consider highlighting or circling the words in your Bible – “exploit you,” because those are important words. And that means these false teachers are going to take advantage of certain tendencies that people have to believe just about anything.

And there are Christians who will believe just about anything. If somebody gets up and uses the word Lord, enough. And talks about what God told them or what God showed them. And if they have just the right inflection in their voice, and if there's somebody that people like to listen to and that sort of thing, they'll pretty much be vulnerable to that sort of thing, potentially.

And that's why he tells us here. And this is something that I call the gullibility factor. And as Christians, we have to recognize that when somebody starts using the God talk, we normally put our sensors down, we turn our sensors on low. And I'm talking about those sensors that would otherwise detect perhaps false teaching and bad fruit and other things that might tip you off that you're dealing with a problem situation.

If somebody starts talking about, oh man, Jesus and Lord, and talking all this, the Lord, and God and they're doing all this stuff and it sounds all good, and we just kind of, we power down, we take, to use a Star Trek, we take our shields down.

Yeah. Okay. I didn't figure it, I'm about the only sci-fi person probably in the room. No, there's a few others. I saw some smiles. Thank you for that. We'll have a meeting afterwards and we'll talk about how cool we are.

But anyway, it's something that we do. We tend to power down when we hear certain things, and we become more, we become gullible. And gullible means having a tendency to be easily persuaded about something as to its reality or truth.

And that is why it is vital for us to know the Word of God. It is vital for us to know what the Word of God says. Let me show you what Paul said to Timothy, 2 Timothy. He wrote something. It's not there, isn't it there? I didn't, okay. I didn't put it in there. Forget it then. Oh, it's in my notes. I can read it for you. He said, "<sup>15</sup>*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*"

What does that take, to rightly handle the Word of Truth? It takes a knowledge of the Truth and an understanding of the balance of the Truth.

We need to know how to rightly handle it so that we can recognize those who aren't rightly handling it right? Because there are all kinds of people. Teachers, not rightly handling the Word. And if we don't know how to rightly handle it, we're going to get sucked into those deceptions.

Peter says at the end of verse four, (2 Peter 2:3) he says, <sup>3</sup> “...*their condemnation from long ago is not idle and their destruction is not asleep.*”

And then, in verses four through nine, he does kind of one of those contrasting things where he contrasts God's judgment of the ungodly and the wicked, with his deliverance of those who belong to Him. And so, I'll just tell you before we get lost in these verses, it's easy to read through some of these verses because they're kind of interesting. But it's easy to lose the point.

And the point is, at the very end. And so that's in verse nine. So look, skip down to verse nine. Here's the point of everything he's saying in verses four through nine, he says,

<sup>9</sup> “Then *the Lord knows how to rescue the Godly from trials and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.*”

Now I'm not going to skip over those other verses, we'll go back and look at them. But, I wanted to hit the point with you first, the point of what he's saying. Because he's telling us that God has proven Himself able, to not only move against sin, but also spare his people while moving against sin.

In other words, while judgment is being brought, He has the ability to protect and deliver His own people, those who are His and who are trusting in Him. And the reason, and he's going to give some examples and we'll deal with it. But the reason that Peter is doing this is because he wanted to comfort the saints. And hopefully this is a truth that should bring comfort to us as believers.

The fact that God is able, and has proven His ability to judge the wicked, while rescuing His children. That's something that is a great source of comfort for you and me because it reminds us that God doesn't just sweep evil under the rug, like we have the ability to do. God doesn't do that.

He is going to take care of it. He's not going to ignore it. Right? And he's going to do that because He's a God of justice. And that ought to be a huge comfort to you, that God is a God of justice. I know that justice can make us uncomfortable.



It's that same feeling you get I suppose, when you're driving a little over the speed limit and there's a police officer then you see, you come over the crest of a hill and he's hiding along the, side of the road or whatever, and he's got that little thing pointed out toward the road.

Don't you love that? It just, it's so, so fun. And you get uncomfortable because you know that you're about to be judged. And judgment always kind of makes us uncomfortable. And when we talk about the judgment of God, our comfort or discomfort level, I should say, can go off the charts. It's just, it's very, very challenging.

But we ought to be comforted by the fact that God is a God of justice and because of His justice, people face judgment. Some people have said, I've heard people say, how can God of love be also a God of judgment? If God were not a God of judgment, if He were not just, he would not be loving at all because judgment is necessary for peace and order to prevail. Good grief. We know this in our own country.

Our law courts were put together, with judges sitting on the bench to do what? To uphold justice. Why? Why were justices and judges put in their place? So that we would have a peaceful, orderly society. Right? That's why we have police officers, law enforcement, who are given authority. They're given that authority to protect the peace and the order of society, because we know what happens from other countries when justice is ignored.

What do you get when you ignore justice? Good grief. You get rampant corruption. You get cruelty to people taking people, taking advantage of other people. You get exploitation and ultimately you have tyranny when there's no justice. And we've seen it happen in other nations.

We see little pockets of it happening in our own country where justice gets ignored. And so, we should be comforted by the fact that our God is able, well, that He is just, and that He's able to bring to judgment those who deserve that judgment. It's not ours to determine whether that's deserved, it's His.

And all the things that we talked about, corruption, cruelty, exploitation. Those are all contrary to His nature. And so, He can't be other than just, He cannot be other than just, and that's why Peter comforts us, knowing that even at the same time where God is fulfilling that justice and bringing judgment, He is able, at the same time, to protect those who are trusting in Him.

And look at how he kind of says it here. Look at verse four. Go back up to verse four. He says, <sup>4</sup>“*for if God did not spare angels when they sinned,*” (so we start off talking about the judgment that came to celestial beings. He says), “*but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.*”

And then he says, <sup>5</sup>“*if he did not spare the ancient world,* (But notice, He judged the ancient world with the global flood, but at the same time), *but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others,* (in his family) *when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

And then he brings up in verse six, the example of Sodom and Gomorrah.

He says, <sup>6</sup>“*if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction,* (So God is able to do that. And we're told that is an example right there in the next few words), *making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;*”

But you'll notice he then brought out Lot and we'll see that here in just a minute.

But these are all references to God's righteous judgment and God's deliverance, at the same time, of His people. Now, I, some of you might be looking for some insight into what Peter said here earlier when he talked about not sparing angels when they sinned and stuff like that. Whenever we talk about what happened to the angels, we're talking about something about which we have precious little information.

In fact, what we have here is really important. But because we're made aware here in these verses that apparently the angelic beings also experienced some kind of a time of testing much like mankind did. And were also made aware that some of them failed miserably and became the demons that we hear about and read about in the Scripture. The details are kind of sketchy, but did I put Jude six on there? Here's what Jude has to say. He says:

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### **Jude 6 (ESV)**

*...the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left*

*their proper dwelling, (He says) has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day -*

So, this idea that Jude gives us alongside Peter, that some of the angels left their proper dwelling, as Jude puts it, suggests that they became discontent, and sought some kind of elevation in their authority or position or whatever.

We don't really know. We don't really know how it all came to pass. We know Lucifer was involved in some sort of a rebellion, but we know very little. But Peter goes on to reference the global flood in the days of Noah, and again, both examples, judgment alongside deliverance. Judgment alongside deliverance. Global flood, Noah's family spared. Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his family spared. As he says in verse seven,

*”and if he rescued Lot..”* And God knows how to rescue His people, right? Then He knows how to take care of us. Now, since we've read now through verse nine, let's go to verse 10, and he speaks in verse 10 of those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion. In other words, those who run after the flesh. And he's talking about these false teachers again. And he says this is more of their characteristic.

And he goes on here, they despise authority. <sup>10</sup>“...*They're bold and willful. They don't even tremble as they blasphemed the glorious ones.*” <sup>11</sup>“*whereas angels, (which seems to be different from glorious ones) though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.*”

And you're like, who are the glorious ones that he references here in verse 10? Well, we don't really know. This is one single word in the Greek. Let me show you how Bible translators have struggled with this.

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**ESV:** “glorious ones”

**NASB:** “angelic majesties”

**NKJV:** “dignitaries”

**NIV:** “celestial beings”

The ESV, as we just read, says “glorious ones.” The New American Standard Bible says “angelic majesties” with the word angelic in italics, which tells you in your New American standard Bible, that that word isn't in the text. They

threw it in. The new King James says, they just said, we're just going to go with dignitaries. We just don't really don't know. And the NIV says, celestial beings.

This is one little four letter Greek word. And it's very, very difficult. And what the translators are doing in those different renderings is they're trying to render it according to the context. Because there's a lot of words in the Bible, we're not sure what they mean. And so the Bible translators are tasked with the job of rendering it according to the context of the passage.

So, it could be that he's talking about false teachers who are blaspheming or speaking abusively to demonic principalities and powers. And that's the way a lot of people kind of understand this passage. Whereas, even angels don't do that. Angels don't speak abusively against their fallen counterparts.

But even though we don't know exactly what Peter is saying in terms of who these glorious ones were. We do know about the point he's making, and the point is that these false teachers display a presumptuous pride, spiritual pride that emboldens them to speak abusively against these beings, whoever they are.

And spiritual pride, I believe, is one of the most dangerous things that a person can have. I really do. I mean spiritual pride. It emboldens them to do and say things that might impress people who are immature in the Lord, but it's all very carnal, even though it may appear spiritual. So, Peter goes on, he tells us what they're really like. He says they might be really impressive, but actually he says verse 12, they're actually like irrational animals. And that means unreasonable unthinking animals.

I know that you think your dog is really smart. But he's not. He operates based on what food he happens to think you might give him at any particular moment. And that's about it. And I know they, we, people call their animals, their family members and that's fine. You knock yourself out. But the Bible over and over and over again, speaks of animals to contrast them with humans, because we have been given the ability by God to reason and to make a reasonable determination based on facts.

Paul, or excuse me, Peter, is using this reference to false teachers, to say in essence, that these men are acting like animals. They are literally governed by their senses like an animal. Like your dog is governed by his stomach. Right? And that's the point of what he's saying here. He says, <sup>12</sup>“...*born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they're ignorant, suffering wrong for the wage of their wrongdoing.*”

He continues the character sketch here in the middle of verse 13, he says, <sup>13</sup> “... *they count it pleasure to revel in the daytime* (And again, this is where some of these descriptions of the false teachers might not line up with your interaction with the false teacher today. He says) *they are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.* <sup>14</sup> *They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.* (That's an interesting phrase. What is an unsteady soul? He's talking about taking advantage of those people who just don't have a strong foundation in the Word. Simple as that.)

He says “*They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!* <sup>15</sup> *Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.* (And then he goes on to say) *They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor,*

You remember the story of Balaam Numbers chapter 22. That's when the King of Moab hired Balaam, who was a seer to curse the children of Israel. We talked about this in our Wednesday night study as well. And Balaam was moved by money and the glory that goes along with it. And this is what Peter is saying, that these false teachers have followed the way of Balaam or the error, if you will, of Balaam.

<sup>15c</sup> “...*who loved gain from wrongdoing,* (but got rebuked by a donkey. It's a pretty interesting story. You should go back to Numbers chapter 22 and read it)

Verse 17 is particularly enlightening about these false teachers. He says, <sup>17</sup> “*they're waterless springs and mists driven by a storm.*” And these are both pictures of a promise of water that didn't deliver. Imagine in your mind, picture, in your mind, a thirsty man walking through a very dry and arid place and he sees a well off in the distance and he thinks, “I'm saved,” and he gets to the well and he realizes it's dry. There's no water in it.

Peter says that's what these guys are like. And then he says they're mists driven by a storm, and that's a picture of rain clouds. Imagine a people who are living in a time of drought and suddenly these beautiful rain clouds appear on the horizon. And they think, oh, it's wonderful, it's finally going to rain. But then a windstorm comes through and blows those clouds away from them so that nothing, not a drop of rain falls on them.

That's what Peter is saying. That's what these false teachers are like. They promise things but they don't deliver. And therefore he says, for them, we're at the end of verse 17 “*gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.*”

He goes on in verse 18, <sup>18</sup>*“For, speaking loud boasts of folly, (in other words, through empty boastful promises), they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.”* (And) <sup>19</sup>*They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.* (And this is probably their most serious crime).

While the claims of the false teachers may sound impressive and spiritual, particularly to those who are wanting to escape the corruption of the world and the corruption of sin. The reality is, what the false teachers offer them is just as carnal as the stuff these people are already tangled in. It's just deception in a new packaging.

And so, we deal with these final verses, verse 20, and these are challenging verses I'll tell you ahead of time.

<sup>20</sup>*For if, after they (and they appears to be those wishing to escape corruption. If, after they) have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.*

<sup>21</sup>*“For it would have been better (he says in verse 21) for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.*

Now these are, like I said, these are challenging verses and the big question of course that people have. Is Peter talking about believers here or unbelievers? And I have to tell you, that this passage and others like it, have created incredible fodder for debate.

Is Peter referring to a genuine believer who has walked away from the Lord? Or is he talking about someone who is desiring the Lord, or desiring the things of the Lord, but then was caught up in this deception and drawn away, and so on and so on.

And the difficulty of this passage is that there are elements that seem to go both ways. For example, you have to confess that some part of what he describes sounds like a very true believer. Especially when he says, *“for somebody who has already escaped,”* past tense, *“the corruption of the world.”* And then he tells us how they escaped the corruption of the world. It wasn't by gritting their teeth.

He says, *“through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”* Yeah, that sounds like a believer to me. But then in the final verse, Peter seems to be describing an unbeliever. When he says in verse 22, <sup>22</sup>*“What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to his own vomit and the sow after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire.”*

That seems to be saying the opposite, because what he's saying here is ultimately, because there was never a transformation of their nature they're going to go back and do what is in their nature. A dog, and I don't want to give you any graphic pictures. But you read it. We'll just do the pig.

The pig is fine. The pig, even after washing yourself, goes back and just plops down in the mud. Why? It's what pigs do. That's why, that's why they do that. And so he seems to be suggesting that there's been no transformation in these people. So, you're kind of, you, you say, well, which is it then?

Is Peter writing about believers or are you writing about non-believers? Well, if you're waiting for me to settle to the debate, you've got a long wait ahead of you. Because it is my belief that we're, when we enter into that argument, it is my personal belief that we are arguing about things which exceed our understanding.

We are arguing about things for which we have not the full understanding. And we take our sides, and we defend our sides to the death. But, oh, there's so much we don't know. There's so much. One of the most powerful passages about this is Paul, when he wrote the book of Romans, of course, as you know.

The first eleven chapters of the book of Romans are absolutely amazing from the standpoint that it is a treatise on salvation that is unmatched in the Bible. Okay? The first eleven chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans is so amazing, that we're still sifting through it today trying to figure out what he said okay? That's how deep it is. That's how incredible it is. He had great insight, and yet, do you know what he wrote at the very end of Romans chapter 11? Let me show you.

(slide)

### **Romans 11:33-36 (ESV)**

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!* (Look at what he says) *How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* *“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”* (Whoever said, Hey, God, I'd like to give you some advice) *“Or who has given*

*a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

That is what Paul said at the end of his most incredible writing on our eternal salvation. He ended it by saying, yeah, but I don't get it. That's a paraphrase of what we just read.

Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom. Who knows? And there's so much. So, when people write to me and they ask me whether or not a believer could possibly lose their salvation, I don't usually do it, but I, you know what? I want to reply by going, why are you asking? I really want to know why. I want to know what motivates people to ask the question.

Because sometimes they'll say, is it possible for a believer to sin so much that they lose their salvation? And I go, why, are you planning to play with sin around the edge and you want to know how far you can get? Is that why you're asking? Were you kind of thinking, well, if I just know where the line is, I'll just go up to that line and I won't go any further. Is that what's going on?

Or questions like, I had an uncle, pastor Paul, who confessed Christ, but he never really lived in a way that showed any Christian fruits. So, is he saved? I'm like, what are you asking me for? That is the domain of God. And He reserves those judgements for Himself, and he does not share them.

When I was a new believer, new in the sense of started seriously walking with the Lord, I've told you before. I embraced Christ and His sacrifice, about at the age of 15, took me 10 years to start walking with Him. But when I started walking with Him, I got involved in the church that we were attending.

They had me helping new believers. Stupidest thing they ever did. I was a new believer. I needed help, serious help, and yet I was helping people that were just coming to the Lord and I was praying for this one particular young guy, and he had a lot of questions. And I had no answers for this guy. And I was praying for him one night before I went to sleep and I just said, I said, Lord, is he going to make it?

And the Lord says, why? If I say no, you're going to give up on him. That's what he spoke to me. It's like, you're right. I'm an idiot. It's your domain. It's your business. It's your business. My business, your business is just to be faithful. Guys, we're dancing on the head of a pin when we're asking questions that are God's judgment.



Paul, do you think we're going to see Solomon in heaven? God knows. I don't know. And I'm glad I'm not the one who has to decide. What we need to know has been made plain to us. Can I say that again? What we need to know has been made plain to us. We need to know that we are sinners. We need to know that Jesus paid the penalty of our sin. We need to know that if we confess our sin and turn to the Lord, we will be saved.

We need to know that salvation is a free gift from God and is not by works. We need to know that we are saved and kept through faith by the finished work of Jesus on the cross. And the rest of it is just learning to walk with God. And there's a whole bunch that we just don't need to know, and yet we ask the questions now.

So, concerning false teachers, let's kind of wrap this up. What's the best defense against getting sucked in by a false teacher? Well, it's to be a Berean. Acts chapter 17 on the screen.

(slide)

### **Acts 17:10-11 (ESV)**

*The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word (of God) with all eagerness, (Look at this next word) examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.*

It's funny, we think of the Apostle Paul as, wow, the Apostle Paul, I mean, if he came, if he was here today, right now, we'd all kind of go, whoa. And we'd probably hang on every word. But he was just a man. And these people, in Berea, knew it. And they said, well, we're going to check and see if he's telling us the truth here. If he's shooting straight or if he's, you know. And then what does Paul say to the Thessalonians who weren't of more noble character?

### **1 Thessalonians 5:21 (ESV)**

*...test everything; (Test everything. Test everything. And then) hold fast what is good. (after you're done testing)*

Because some of it is not going to come out good. Some of it's going to come out bad. Pitch the bad, hold on to the good, but test everything. How do you test it? By the Word of God. Does it match up to the Word of God? If it doesn't, get rid of it.

And be careful because there are false teachers who know how to twist the Word of God in such a way to make it sound like they have a biblical foundation for what they're telling you, but they don't at all. And you would know that if you had a more comprehensive understanding of the Word of God.

So, and in addition to this, I would say this. Pray and trust God. If something seems a little off, pray about it. I have gotten so many emails from people who've been saved out of a very deceptive, dangerous situation. Even when they didn't have the ability to understand the Word of God, just because they were trusting the Lord.

You know what I mean? Because they trusted God. They basically said to God, I don't personally possess the ability to figure this thing out, so you're going to have to show me. And God is faithful. Can I just tell you that? I mean, I've heard from so many people who got involved in this church, or that church, or that cult or whatever, and they're just, "something just seemed a little off. And so I started praying about it and the Lord showed me this or showed me that."

And I got out of there, and now I'm worshiping the one true God and Jesus Christ, His Son. And it's very encouraging to see that God takes care of His children when we trust in Him. He is faithful. Amen. Let's have our worship team come on back up.

We're going to, we're going to end with a worship, final worship song. I'll have you guys go ahead and stand with me since you're probably getting tired of sitting. And we're going to pray, and we're just going to, we're going to worship the Lord here as we kind of get ready to close. A lot of interesting sort of information in this chapter.

A lot of descriptive, sort of references to these false teachers. But just know this. It's a dangerous thing. It's, and it's being communicated to us as the dangerous thing that it is by how many passages in the Bible actually reference false teachers. So, let's pray.

Heavenly Father, it is our earnest desire to hold to the Truth. So heavenly Lord, we pray that you would help us, strengthen us to examine the scriptures daily, to know what is in the Word of God, to know how to discern through the Word and how to test through the Word, what is good and what is bad. What is truly consistent with your character and your truth and your revelation, and what is not.

And help us Lord, to stay on the narrow path. We know that it is the enemy's desire to bring deception and to bring darkness. But we ask, Lord God, that you'd be faithful to keep us where we need to be. Hearing the Word, the right Word, the truth of your Word, that will never fade. We ask it in Jesus' precious name.