

Text: 2 Pt 2.10b-22

Tom Constable has two headers for the part of 2 Pt 2 that we hope to cover tonight:

1. The Conduct of False Teachers (2.10b-19)
2. The Condemnation of False Teachers (2.20-22)

I've summed that all up in our title,

What God Thinks about False Teachers

I've also labeled this chapter, "the gruesome chapter," in keeping with its subject matter.

It is not pleasant to focus on this. So much of the New Testament and the Christian life is truly positive and beautiful. The gospel remakes depraved men. We learn to walk in the Spirit, display the fruit of the Spirit, overcome the effects of the fall (though not totally), and grow in grace.

All of that creates an image of Christianity that we think ought to prevail. We don't like to think about corruption, and perhaps would rather look away.

The devil uses this tendency to get Christians to tolerate or allow false teachers to arise in their midst without much check on their teaching or behaviour.

This is as true today as in any day of church history.

- How many sermons do we hear on this topic?
- How often do preachers turn to 2 Peter, or Jude, or any of the other "distasteful" passages in Paul where he addresses false teachers?

Peter was concerned enough about the matter to make it the centerpiece of his final exhortation to the church. 2 Peter "bookends" with "Grace and peace be multiplied to you" (1.2) and "but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (3.18).

In the middle is "there will also be false teachers among you" (2.1)

This forms a chiasm:

A Prayer-wish: "may grace multiply"

B Reality check: "there will be false teachers"

A' Final exhortation: "grow in grace"

Peter thinks this topic is important, and so should we, even though it is distasteful.

I. Their spirits (10b-16)

A. Boldness in evil: They do not tremble (10b-11)

Lit. “do not tremble in slandering glories”

“glories” could refer to human authorities, but NAU gives “angelic majesties,” and NIV gives “celestial beings” — compare KJV “dignities,” ESV “glorious ones”

Commentaries side with NAU/NIV, but I think this is too narrow

Verse 11 illustrates the restraint of good angels who do not revile them (*i.e.*, “dignities”) — shows the lack of restraint in false teachers

B. Enslaved by depravity (instinct): They will be destroyed (12-13a)

“Like animals, the opponents operated on the basis of desires and feelings instead of reason.”¹

“The fate of hunted animals is a picture of the fate of the wicked.”²

C. Delighting in desires: They revel in lusts (13b-16)

“The faithful Christians did not carouse. The false teachers did the carousing, but they did it as members of the Christian community.”³

“Peter emphasized that they stained and defiled the church. At the conclusion of the letter Peter exhorted his readers to be precisely the opposite of the teachers; instead of being ‘blots and blemishes,’ they should be ‘spotless’ (*aspiloi*) and ‘blameless’ (*amōmētoi*) before God (2 Pet 3:14).”⁴

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, v. 37 (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 349.

² Schreiner, 350.

³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), 2 Pt 2.13.

⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 351.

“And so the orator said the shameless person had not [girls] in his eyes but harlots.”⁵

“Since the verse directs our attention to sexual sin and greed, perhaps the teachers enticed people to sin by promising them that they could live for sexual pleasure and the material comforts of this life without any thought of judgment. Such a theology seemed too good to pass up for the unstable, and they swallowed the bait quite eagerly.”⁶

D. Illustration: Balaam (15-16)

“The best textual evidence suggests that Peter wrote, ‘Balaam, the son of Bosor,’ Bosor being a play on the Hebrew word *basar*, flesh. Thus Peter indicated Balaam’s immoral character by calling him the son of flesh”⁷

A play on words, Balaam is the son of Beor, as our versions say, but likely scribes thought Peter’s *bosor* was an error.

II. Their teaching

A. They are empty springs (17)

B. They speak empty words (18-19)

“The false teachers appealed to people who were barely escaping from those who live in error. This group probably included new Christians and/or older carnal ones who were still in the process of making a final break with their pagan past.”⁸

“The average person does not know how to listen to and analyze the kind of propaganda that pours out of the mouths and printing presses of the apostates. Many people cannot tell the difference between a religious huckster and a sincere servant of Jesus Christ.”⁹

⁵ Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Morals*, trans. A. R. Shilleto, Project Gutenberg ebook (London: George Bell & Sons - Project Gutenberg, 1898), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/23639/23639-h/23639-h.htm>.

⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 352.

⁷ Constable, *Expository Notes*, 2 Pt 2.15.

⁸ Constable, 2 Pt 2.18.

⁹ Warren W Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 458.

“They promised freedom, particularly by removing moral restraints—especially, it seems, in the realm of sexuality. Such teaching may have arisen through a distortion of Paul’s gospel of freedom, since we know from 3:15–16 that some were perverting his teaching. Freedom from any moral constraints also fits nicely with the notion that there was no future judgment.”¹⁰

III. Their victims (20-22)

A. Identity of “they” — the victims, not the teachers (20)

1. Not clear, Schreiner gives good reasons for identifying “victims” here
2. Problem: what about “again entangled” — are they really Christians?

It is possible for true believers to be entangled in grievous sins, especially if they listen to false teachers.

Called “unstable” in v. 14

B. They are worse off now (21)

1. If, as new believers they really never got “the way of righteousness” they would have less condemnation
2. Now, having learned of the way of righteousness, and returning to their old ways, they are in a worse state

C. The proverb applies to them, and to false teachers

“Most of the false teachers in view seem to be non-Christians, but Christians have become false teachers too (e.g., cultists). In reading chapter 2, I believe that we should concentrate on what Peter stressed in evaluating the false teachers rather than focusing mainly on their saved or lost status. Ask: Is what this teacher is saying contrary to Scripture? rather than: Is he or she unsaved?”¹¹

Conclusion:

We’ve covered this briefly, but I want to remind you of one of our earlier sessions in 2 Peter, where I taught about “The Fundamentals of Sanctification.”

¹⁰ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 359.

¹¹ Constable, *Expository Notes*, 2 Pt 2.22.

I believe sincere Christians earnestly desire to follow the fundamentals of sanctification. They tend to turn their steps toward righteousness.

However, I've known some who seemed to have a clear Christian testimony, yet something happened. Maybe they weren't really believers to begin with, but...

- Maybe they got mad about something
- Maybe someone hurt them in some way
- Maybe they listened to a smooth-tongued false teacher and were deceived

And the evil way seemed to be the easy way...

This is why it is so important to keep turning to righteousness, especially when it costs us something and is the *hard thing to do*. We do not want to be trapped again where we used to be.

God is quite clear in what he thinks about false teachers. We need to stay as far from the thinking of false teachers as we can!