

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF SECOND PETER

### BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHERS!

Read 2 Peter 2

#### **Introduction**

In 2 Peter chapter 2, Peter describes and harshly condemns the false teachers who had entered the church. He promises their destruction, which will be brought by God. Peter also shows the impact of their lies on those who might believe them. Who are these false teachers? They were not strangers who showed up spouting false doctrine in a full-frontal attack against the community of Christians. Instead, they came from within the church. They were sneaky. They "secretly" introduced their destructive heresies, or "lies about the truth."

Peter does highlight three main aspects of these deceptions. First, these false teachers denied the sovereignty of Christ. They taught that He was not Lord, even though He bought them with His blood. Second, they openly indulged in sexual sin and taught others to do the same. Finally, they used lies to exploit the Christians for their own gain. They were greedy.

#### **Destructive Doctrines**

*“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time, their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.” (vv1-3)*

Even as there were holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), so also there were false prophets and false teachers then and today. False teachers work secretly. No false teacher ever announces himself as a false teacher.

False teachers bring in destructive heresies that destroy by telling lies about Jesus Christ and His work for us and in us. By these heresies people are hurt and destroyed. Heresy isn't harmless. False teachers deny the Lord who bought them.

The most distressing fact is that so many Christians will follow their destructive ways. When false teachers are at work and when crowds are following them, the way of truth is blasphemed. God's holy name and honour are disgraced. Peter mentioned "covetousness" — both their own and in their followers as their underlying motive.

Peter assured us that false teachers will be judged. Even though it seems they prosper, their judgment is not idle. God's wrath pours out on them even in allowing them to continue, thus heaping up more and more condemnation and hardness of heart in themselves.

#### **Judgment of the Ungodly**

*“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly...” (vv4-6)*

God judged these wicked angels, setting them in chains of darkness. Apparently, some fallen angels are in bondage while others are unbound and active in the earth as demons. The sin of these fallen angels can be thought of in two main ways: in the original rebellion of some angels against God, and in the sin of the “sons of God” described in Genesis 6:1-2. God cast them into hell. The ancient Greek word translated hell is literally Tartarus. In Greek mythology, Tartarus was the lowest hell, a place of punishment for rebellious gods. Peter borrowed this word to speak of the place of punishment for the fallen angels who sinned.

God judged the ancient world, the world before Noah’s Flood, because the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). God also judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, making them an example of His judgment, because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave (Genesis 18:20).

These three examples of judgment show us the important principle that Peter wants to highlight.

- God judged **the angels who sinned**, so *no one is too high to be judged*.
- God judged **the ancient world** before the flood, so *God doesn’t grade on a curve*, only comparing man among other men. (Grading on a curve is a term that describes a variety of different methods that a teacher uses to adjust the scores her students received on a test in some way.)
- God judged **Sodom and Gomorrah**, so *even the prosperous can be judged*.

Therefore, the **ungodly** have no reason to think they can escape God’s judgment. Their coming judgment is certain. As Jesus said in Luke 10:10-12, for those who reject the truth “*it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom.*”

### **The righteous will be delivered.**

*“...and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” (vv7-9)*

Peter already told us how the Lord delivered Noah (2 Peter 2:5). Now, he shows us that the Lord delivered righteous Lot. Lot was righteous in God’s eyes, though perhaps it was hard for others to see his righteousness. Yet the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah tormented his righteous soul from day to day.

Lot’s soul was tormented, but he failed to follow through with godly actions and separate himself and his family from the ungodliness of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord delivered Lot because of his righteous soul; yet Lot lost everything else because of his too-close association with those wicked cities.

Even as the Lord delivered Lot, He knows how to deliver us from the temptations we face, and He knows how to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment. We can trust in God’s deliverance of the godly because it is just as certain as His judgment of the ungodly. The unjust have reservation made for them: they are reserved for the day of judgment. But believers have no such reservation. God will deliver us from the very day of judgment, from the very time of wrath that He pours out on the earth (Revelation 3:10).

## The Fleshy and Proud

*“... and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.” (vv10-11)*

These ungodly ones are especially reserved for judgment. They live according to the flesh, not the spirit, and are marked by uncleanness. These ungodly ones are proud, despising authority. In their presumption they will even speak ill of those in authority that the angels themselves do not speak evil of, but the angels will be ready to do the bidding of the Lord with compassion. Peter contrasted the behaviour of those who walk according to the flesh with angels, that is, faithful angels. The faithful angels did not slander or exaggerate in what they said or how they represented the sins of others; these who walked according to the flesh did.

### Their spiritual doom is sealed.

*“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you...” (vv12-13)*

Since they function in the flesh, not the spirit, they are like animals. They are fit only for destruction (made to be caught and destroyed) and they are ignorant. The ungodly will be “paid” for their evil — and their fleshly lives will be paid the wages of unrighteousness.

### A list of the sins of the false teachers

*“They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” (vv13b-17)*

- **Carousing in their own deceptions:** These ungodly false teachers are a dangerous and corrupting presence in the body of Christ, not only deceiving others but deceiving themselves also.
- **Having eyes full of adultery:** Their heart is set on the flesh, and their eyes on adultery, both spiritual and sexual. They prey on the unstable to join them in their ways (enticing unstable souls).
- **They have a heart trained in covetous practices:** They are equipped, but not for ministry, only for selfish gain — they are truly accursed. We all train our hearts in something, either training them in covetousness and lust, or in godliness.
- **Following the way of Balaam:** They are like Balaam, who was guilty of the greatest of sins — leading others into sin, and that for the sake of his own gain. Balaam had to be restrained by a dumb donkey because he would not listen to God.
- **These are wells without water:** These ungodly false teachers are empty — as useless as wells without water — and like clouds that bring only darkness, and no nourishing rain.

### The allure of the false teachers.

*“For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty,*

*they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” (vv18-19)*

The message of the ungodly false teachers is empty of real spiritual content, though it is swollen big with words. Their allure is to the lusts of the flesh in their audience, just as the crowds who wanted bread from Jesus, but didn't want Jesus Himself (John 6:25-27, 6:47-66).

They promise freedom, but freedom can never be found in the flesh, only in God's Spirit. Freedom isn't found in what Jesus can give us, but only in Jesus Himself. When we seek freedom in the wrong way, we become slaves of corruption (decay and death). In being overcome by the flesh and the false teachers, these unfortunates became slaves to both.

### **The danger of falling away and following after false teachers**

*“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”” (vv20-22)*

It is better for a person to have never known a thing about Jesus than to hear some truth, hold to it for a season, and then later reject it. Greater revelation has a greater accountability. Their end is worse ... than the beginning because they have returned to the pollutions of the world. “These [pollutions] are called “miasmata”, things that infect, pollute, and defile...

Peter described a picture that certainly has the appearance of people losing their salvation.

- He speaks of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world.
- He speaks of those who did this through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- He speaks of those who at one time had known the way of righteousness.

Christians warmly debate the issue of whether or not it is possible for a true Christian to ever lose their status as a true Christian and fall away to damnation. Perhaps the best way of understanding the issue is to say that it is certainly true that those who appear saved — those who fit the description of Peter here — can end up in a place where it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.

The nature as dogs is displayed by the way he returns to the vomit of the flesh and the world. He is like the brute beasts described in 2 Peter 2:12, more animal than godly because he lives for the flesh.