

Depravity & Deception

2 Peter 2:12-22

Intro

When we were last in 2 Peter, we focused on ***the reality of judgment*** within the larger context of ***the danger of false teachers...***

- And though the reality of judgment is a very difficult subject, it is a vitally important one...

To illustrate this subject, Peter brought up three OT examples of God's judgment...

Peter wrote about angels who had sinned and whom God has chained up and reserved for judgment...

Peter wrote about the world that perished in the global flood in the days of Noah...

And Peter wrote about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of the judgment that will fall on the unrepentant...

Peter also wrote of the fact that the Lord is able to ***deliver the godly out of judgment...***

*And anyone who places their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation **joins the ranks of the godly** and will escape the judgment to come...*

The Lord Jesus spoke of this wonderful reality in...

John 5:24 (NKJV)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Finally, we were also reminded of the ***full and final judgment*** that will take place at the ***Great White Throne...***

At that judgment there will be a final separation between those who have ***placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*** and those who have ***refused the salvation that the Lord Jesus provides...***

This brings us to our next section of 2 Peter 2...

*In this section, Peter will continue to warn believers about the dangers of false teachers and he will focus on the subjects of ***depravity and deception...****

depravity — *moral corruption; extremely wicked behavior...*

deception — *the act of causing someone to believe something that is not true, typically in order to gain some personal advantage...*

Depravity and deception are two of the hallmarks of false teachers and if we are to be ***wise and discerning believers*** then we must ***beware of those self-proclaimed teachers who engage in depravity and deception...***

With this in mind, would you please follow along as I read the passage that we will be studying this morning...

2 Peter 2:12-22 (NKJV)

12 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,

13 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,

14 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.

15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

18 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.

19 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.

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 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.

22 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."

I have divided this passage into two simple sections...

1) *The Depravity of False Teachers (vs 12-17)*

2) *The Deception of False Teachers (vs 18-22)*

Let's move into our first section...

1) The Depravity of False Teachers (vs 12-17)

12 But these,

Here Peter is referring to the false teachers who are the main subject of this short letter...

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed,

The idea is that these ***depraved false teachers*** have fallen to the level of **brute beasts...**

In other words, they had become like destructive animals — no better than unreasonable wild animals who are hunted down and killed because they are dangerous to human beings...

- [ex. Wild Hog problem in Texas — conservative estimates — 3m wild hogs cause \$500m in damages yearly...]

Continuing on in vs 12 we are told that these depraved false teachers...

Speak evil of the things they do not understand,

These false teachers **Speak evil** — they speak blasphemously — because **they do not understand** the truth of the word of God...

- You see, because false teachers reject the truth of the gospel they of course they reject the Lord Jesus Christ as He really is...

And because they reject the Lord Jesus Christ, they do not have the Holy Spirit indwelling them to open their understanding so they might comprehend the Scriptures...

- As a result, they reject the doctrines that they don't understand — they reject anything that runs contrary to their animalistic desires...

*Depraved false teachers can't understand the point of **sexual purity** so they **reject it**...*

*They can't understand the point of the **incarnation** so they **reject it...***

*They find the idea of the **Trinity** ridiculous so they **reject it...***

And on and on it goes...

And because these *depraved teachers* refuse to submit themselves to the authority of *God Himself* they view themselves as *their own authority...*

- And this reduces them to the level of **brute beasts...**

Peter writes of their end in the last part of vs 12...

and will utterly perish in their own corruption,

If these depraved false teachers refuse to repent, they will be utterly destroyed in Hell — they will be eternally ruined...

- Because they continually choose to reject God and His ways, they are left to their own devices and will be eternally lost...

This is a terrifying thought — but it is the reality of judgment...

As we move into vs 13 Peter lets us know that these depraved false teachers will get what's coming to them...

13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness,

In other words, these false teachers will receive the payment that is due for the way that they lived their lives...

For more on this subject, would you please turn to...

Romans 6:21-23 (NKJV)

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22 But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You see, a life lived for the *lust of the flesh* earns **the wages of sin, which is death** — but a *life of faith* enables us to receive the **gift of eternal life**...

This is a no-brainer decision — by faith receive the gift of eternal life and you will not receive the wages of sin which is death...

Turning back to 2 Peter 2 let's move on in vs 13...

and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.

These false teachers will receive the same **wages of unrighteousness** as those who live *luxurious, extravagant, and defiant party lifestyles*...[expand]

They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you,

The idea behind the phrase **spots and blemishes** is that of *morally flawed and disgraceful people...*

- These false teachers revel in their depraved and deceptive practices while they feast with believers...

In other words, false teachers get a perverse joy out of lying to people and taking advantage of them even as they pretend to be their friends...[expand]

14 having eyes full of adultery

These false teachers are consumed by their desire for *sexual sin* — they are continually looking for an opportunity to engage in sexual immorality...[expand]

Matthew 6:22-23 (NKJV)

22 “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”

- [ex. think of the *eye as a gate* — we should be discerning regarding what we allow in the gate — we should be proactive on what we usher into the gate...]

Once again we are reminded of Paul’s exhortation in...

Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Now let's see what the Apostle John has to say on this subject in...

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Please turn back to 2 Peter 2 as we continue on in vs 14...

having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.

Because these ungodly false teachers have given themselves over to ungodliness they, cannot stop sinning — they are slaves of sin — and they lure unstable people into joining them...

- [expand — those who live a lifestyle of depravity **always** seek to entice the gullible into joining them...]

This is because the Devil is a **defiler** — he is a **destroyer** — he is a **liar** and a **murderer** — and all who follow his ways inevitably become like him...[expand]

They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.

Here Peter warns that these false teachers are ***disciplined*** in the ways of covetousness...

- In other words, they are well-trained in the ways of *separating a person from their money — they are con-men...*

And because these false teachers are predatory — Peter tells us that they are **accursed children** — *they are under judgment...*

Peter made this clear in...

2 Peter 2:3 (NKJV)

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.

Continuing on in 2 Peter 2 to vs...

15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray,

The false teachers *willfully abandoned* **the right way** — *the narrow road* — and purposefully went astray...

- If you do a study of false teachers you will see that they wanted to go astray — they wanted to leave the way of righteousness...
[expand]

We see this heart illustrated in...

Jeremiah 6:16 (NKJV)

Thus says the LORD:

"Stand in the ways and see,

And ask for the old paths, where the good way is,

And walk in it;

Then you will find rest for your souls.

But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'"

Continuing on in 2 Peter 2:15-16 we read...

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

*You can read this story in **Numbers 22**...*

But for our purposes we simply want to focus on the fact that *Balaam was a prophet for hire...*

- He was a mercenary — he was willing to bless or curse anyone for the right price...

And God caused Balaam's donkey to speak to bring Balaam to his senses...

- Tragically, Balaam soon turned back to his wicked ways and his story ended tragically for himself, for the Moabites who hired him and for the Israelites who were led astray by him...[expand]

17 These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

These false teachers are **wells without water** — they give the appearance of something that will bring life and refreshment but in reality they are empty...

- [expand — David Guzik — *wells without water are **useless** and they are **dangerous**...*]

Peter also tells us that false teachers are storm **clouds** that bring destruction...[expand]

- And the judgment of these false teachers is terrifying — they have a reservation with **the blackness of darkness forever**...

This will be the tragic end of *every depraved false teacher* who fails to repent and trust in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins...[expand]

With this in mind, let's move now to our second section...

2) The Deception of False Teachers (vs 18-22)

18 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.

Let's take this verse a piece at a time...

For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness,

In other words, *false teachers sound good* — what they say has the *appearance of importance...*

- But in reality their words are *empty, vain, meaningless...*

The words of these false teachers are like **cotton candy** — **big and colorful but there is nothing of substance...**

Continuing on in vs 18, Peter writes...

they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness,

False teachers **allure** or *entice* followers through *an appeal to their flesh...*

- It's really very simple — false teachers find out what people want and then they tell the people that they can have that thing and then the false teachers charge the people for helping them get it...[expand]

Beware of teachers who tell you that **God wants what you want...**

Instead, find teachers who tell you **what the God of the Bible wants** — **from what the Bible says** — and then follow those teachers...[expand]

And please be sure to heed the instruction of the Apostle John...

1 John 4:1 (NKJV)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Continuing on in 2 Peter 2:18 we read...

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.

- [expand — debate as to whether this is speaking of *true believers* or those who only *give the appearance of being believers...*]

I would argue that it doesn't really matter — because we understand that both **true believers** and **false believers** are susceptible to the deceptions of false teachers...[expand]

REMEMBER — The best way to safeguard yourself against the deceptions of false teachers is to understand the Bible for yourself...[expand]

Moving on in 2 Peter 2 we come to vs...

19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption;

Tragically, false teachers are *slaves of their own corruption* — they are slaves of their own depravity...

And even though their sin is enslaving and destroying them these false teachers *promise liberty* — they *promise freedom* — to those who join them in their corruption...

This is how it has been since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden...

Satan fell and was enslaved in his own corruption and he convinced Adam and Eve to follow his lead...

- In a similar manner, false teachers promise that doing ***whatever you want*** will give you freedom — but it always ***enslaves***...

And that is what Peter writes at the end of vs 19...

for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.

When a person follows the lead of false teachers, that person is **brought into bondage** — the *bondage of sin* and the *bondage of false teachers*...

The Lord Jesus warned about this in...

John 8:34-36 (NKJV)

34 ...“Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.

35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.

36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

No matter what false teachers may say, the only true freedom is found in the Lord Jesus Christ...

- And every true teacher will encourage you to follow the Lord Jesus and enjoy the freedom that we found in obedience to Him...

Unfortunately, every false teacher will encourage you to *do what you want to do* or to *do what the false teacher wants you to do...*

Moving on in 2 Peter 2 to vs...

20 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

This verse brings us back to the debate among Christians as to whether or not a born-again believer can lose their salvation...

- As I have made it abundantly clear in the past, ***I do not believe*** that a born-again believer can lose their salvation — I do not believe that a person can become ***un-born again...***

Once you are physically born there is no undoing it and I believe that the same is true regarding spiritual birth...

John 5:24 (NKJV)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

The true believer is held by the Father and Son and is sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption...

- And if you are struggling with this idea of losing your salvation, I would be glad to sit down and talk with you...[expand]

With that said, what is Peter talking about in vs 20 if he is not talking about a person losing their salvation?...

I believe that Peter is writing of the person who begins to clean up their life by obeying the words of scripture but who does not truly enter into a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ...

- [ex. a New Year's Resolution sort of thing...]

The Lord Jesus spoke about this sort of situation in...

Luke 11:24-26 (NKJV)

24 “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’

25 And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order.

26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

I believe that Peter is writing of the danger of coming close to trusting in Christ but stopping short and then falling away...

Peter continues this thought in vs...

21 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.

This is a radical statement but it ties in perfectly with the example of Judas Iscariot...

- Because let's be honest — everyone but Jesus thought that Judas was a true believer...

None of the disciples suspected that he was the betrayer — none of the disciples thought he was a pretender...

And the Lord Jesus shared these terrifying words about Judas in...

Matthew 26:24 (NKJV)

“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

You see, the Scriptures make it clear that people will be held accountable for ***what they did*** with ***what they knew***...

- The more a person knows of the truth of God and His ways and yet fails to respond to that knowledge results in a greater judgment...

This is a frightening thought — but it is easily remedied — ***simply respond to the light that you have been given***...

As the **Word of God** reveals to you the **Will of God** — *simply obey* — *simply do those things that God wants you to do...*

This brings us to our final verse...

22 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."

This is the reality of those who, like the Pharisees, have an **outward reformation** without an **inward renovation** — eventually they return to the vomit and the mire...[expand]

Conclusion

*Before we move into our time of communion, I will simply remind you that **false teachers are going to be a problem for as long as we are in this fallen world...***

- *But we do not have to fall prey to false teachers...*

*Because false teachers are revealed by their **depravity** and their **deceit** — by their **lewdness** and their **lies**...*

- *And you and I can avoid them by **studying the Word of God for ourselves** and by only listening to teachers who are interested in **what God wants from us** and **for us**...*