

2 Peter 2

Overview

- Numerous false teachers had infiltrated the Church and were teaching dangerous, false doctrines; the key message in 2 Peter is that the best way to defend against spiritual error is to know the truth
- **MacArthur¹**: Peter described false teachers in detail in this chapter so that Christians would recognize their characteristics and methods. . . He informs us that they teach destructive heresies. They deny Christ and twist the Scriptures. They bring true faith into dispute. And they mock the second coming of Christ. But Peter was just as concerned with showing the immoral character of these teachers as he was with exposing their teaching. Thus he describes them in more detail than he describes their doctrines. . . The greatest sin of Christ-rejecters & the most damning work of Satan is misrepresentation of the truth and its consequent deception. Nothing is more wicked than to claim to speak for God to the salvation for souls when in reality he speaks for Satan to the damnation of souls

2 Peter 2:1-3 *False Teachers have always been in the church*

- *v1 Among the people*--Satan has always endeavored to infiltrate groups of believers with deception
 - *Destructive*--leading to ultimate damnation; *heresies*--self-designed religious lies
 - By teaching & practicing immorality they prove their profession of faith to be false
 - *Denying the Lord*--rejecting His sovereignty & His right to rule their lives
 - False teachers lead others further from God instead of closer to Him (**Deuteronomy 13:1-5**)
 - A prime cause of false teaching is evil ambition for wealth, power or popularity, or seeking for concurrence in support of false ideas stemming from an unwillingness to accept the truth
 - Many people are glad to hear what they wish to believe rather than the truth God has revealed
 - **Jeremiah 6:13-14** “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. ¹⁴They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say, when there is no peace.
 - Zedekiah, the false prophet, donned horns of iron & said that Israel would push the Syrians out of the way as he pushed with these horns; Micaiah the true prophet foretold disaster if Jehosaphat went to war. Of course, Zedekiah was popular, and his message was accepted; but Jehosaphat went forth to war with the Syrians and perished tragically (**1Kings 22**)
 - To discern what is true versus what is false: 1) be thoroughly familiar with the truth by studying Scripture; 2) review those books of the Bible specifically written to combat false teaching in the church: **Galatians, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John & Jude**
 - Teachings of those who deny Jesus as God, Lord & Savior will not fit Scriptural truth--reject them
 - **1 John 2:22** Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son.
 - How should we deal with false prophets? How will God deal with them?
 - **Titus 3:10** Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.
 - **Galatians 1:9** If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!
 - **Barclay²**: There is no more certain way to ultimate condemnation than to teach another to sin.
- *v2 Many will follow*--false teachers will successfully recruit vast numbers of nominal believers

¹ John MacArthur: *1 & 2 Peter; Courage in Times of Trouble*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 2007; page 85-86.

² William Barclay: *The Letters of James and Peter*, Revised Edition; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976; page 318.

- **Matthew 24:11** And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray.
 - *Depraved conduct*--one heresy taught that people were free to sin since grace would abound
 - *Disrepute*--every Christian is a good or bad advertisement for Christianity
 - **Romans 2:24** As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”
- v3 *Fabricated stories*--cunningly forged arguments disguised as truth are the most menacing
 - Any teacher's teaching must be tested by the words and presence of Jesus Christ himself
 - *Slumber*--God, in His perfect time, will act against these liars & deceivers

2 Peter 2:4-8 God’s Nature is Loving, but it also Requires that He Judge the Wicked

- v4 *Angels*--may refer to angels cast out of heaven with Satan (**Rev 12:7-9**) or to the “sons of God” who lusted after women (**Gen 6**) (scholars disagree whether “sons” of Gen 6 were angels or men)
 - *Hell*--Greek *Tartarus*, a level far below Hades
 - *Chains*--Greek word may actually be “pits”, which would fit with a level below Hades
- v5 *Flood*--In the midst of a sinning generation, Noah remained faithful to God
 - **Antiquities 1.2.1 (Josephus)** Many angels of God lay with women and begat sons, who were violent and who despised all good, on account of their reliance on their own strength.... But Noah displeased and distressed at their behavior, tried to induce them to alter their dispositions and conduct for the better.
 - We also must resist conforming to the wickedness around us in the world
 - **Romans 12:2** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- v6-8 *Sodom & Gomorrah*--wickedly abused hospitality, insulted angels & showed unnatural lust
 - *Righteous*--Lot had spiritual weaknesses, but righteousness was imputed to him, as it is to all the saved, by faith in God, whose grace provides an antiseptic against the infection of sin
 - Often when confronted by evil, good people are shocked, but grow accustomed to it over time

2 Peter 2:9-11 God Will Rescue the Godly and Punish the Wicked

- v9 Hold the unrighteous--the wicked are kept like prisoners awaiting their final sentencing
- v10 *Despise authority*--false teachers claimed to profess Christ but wouldn’t submit to Him as Lord
 - Righteous living requires the correct mixture of spiritual and physical nature; the desire-dominated person has allowed his/her animal nature to usurp a place it should not have
 - Selfishness is the root evil of the lust-dominated life, where all that matters is self-gratification
- v11 *Do not heap abuse*--Holy angels so revere the Lord that they dare not speak insults against any other authority, even when bringing judgment
 - Some were teaching that the behavior of angels (v4) was justification for their own immorality
 - **Jude 9** But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

2 Peter 2:12-14 Deluding Self and Deluding Others

- v12 *Animals*—like brute beasts, slaves of their animal instincts
 - *Utterly perish*--the unrighteous will be destroyed by the folly of their wicked passions
- v13 *Daytime*--sinning without the cover of darkness was indicative of their brazen perversity
 - *Blots & blemishes*--the antithesis of the character of Christ; blemishes on Christian fellowship
- v14 *Trained*--they had trained, prepared, & equipped their minds to focus on what was forbidden

- *Enticing unstable souls*--a fishing metaphor; literally, to beguile or catch with bait
- *Eyes full of adultery*--literally, see a possible adulteress in every woman
- They have deliberately struggled with their finer feelings until they have strangled them

2 Peter 2:15-16 On the Wrong Road

- v15 Balaam--prophet (Num 22-24) for sale to whomever paid him; sought wealth & popularity over faithfulness & obedience to God; Jews viewed him as the example of all false prophets
 - Jewish tradition held that he was behind the seduction of Israelites to Baal worship (**Numbers 25**)
 - Just like the false prophets of Peter's day, Balaam was covetous and taught others to sin
- v16 Balaam's donkey showed more sense than Balaam
 - **Numbers 22:30** The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said.

2 Peter 2:17-22 The Perils of Relapse

- v17 *Springs*--they claim to be able to quench spiritual thirsts of souls but have nothing to give
 - Like a mirage or dry oasis to a parched traveler in the desert
 - v18 *Empty words*--high-sounding words that masquerade as scholarship or profound insights
 - Seneca: "To be enslaved to oneself is the heaviest of all servitudes."
 - v19 These false teachers offered freedom, but it was freedom to sin as much as one liked
 - **Barclay:**³ Their message was arrogant because it was the contradiction of the message of Christ; it was futile because he who followed it would find himself a slave. Here again in the background is the fundamental heresy which makes grace a justification for sin instead of a power and a summons to nobility.
 - v20 One that has once known the right way and has then deliberately chosen the other way sins against the light; the knowledge of the truth is a key element in that person's condemnation
 - *Pollutions*--conveys the idea of putrid or poisonous vapors; the world's deadly influence
 - v21 *Turn their backs*--a reference to the perversion and defection of the false teachers
 - v22 They have seen Christ but are so morally degraded by their own choice that they prefer to wallow in the depths of sin rather than to climb the heights of virtue
 - Mere religious profession or even outward change does not change a person's heart
 - **Barclay:**⁴ It is a dreadful warning that a man can make himself such that in the end the tentacles of sin are inextricably around him and virtue for him has lost its beauty.
- ⇒ Sadly, many Christians hesitate to confront false teaching in our culture
- ⇒ To stand firm on the truth we must study Scripture & review the books written to combat false teaching
- ⇒ Teachings of those who deny Jesus as God, Lord & Savior **will not** fit Scriptural truth--**reject them**
- ⇒ **MacArthur:**⁵ When people's eternal souls are at stake, the church cannot be passive and indifferent. Nor can it hide behind false humility that fears being judgmental or behind false love that fears offending. Christ was supremely humble, yet He never called evil anything but what it was: evil. Christ was supremely loving, yet He never withheld a warning that might save His hearers from hell. And he had nothing but intense anger for those who by their false teachings led people away from God and directly toward hell.

³ William Barclay: *The Letters of James and Peter*, Revised Edition; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976; page 335.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John MacArthur: *1 & 2 Peter; Courage in Times of Trouble*; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 2007; page 92.