

2 Peter

Lesson 3 Chapter 2:1-22

Leader Guide

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Lesson 3

2 Peter 2:1-22

False Teachers

They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Peter 2:1

Prayers

Read 2 Peter 2:1-14, False Teachers and Their Destruction

^{2Pe 2:1} But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.

^{2Pe 2:2} Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.

^{2Pe 2:3} In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

^{2Pe 2:4} For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

^{2Pe 2:5} if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;

^{2Pe 2:6} if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;

^{2Pe 2:7} and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men

^{2Pe 2:8} (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)—

^{2Pe 2:9} if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

^{2Pe 2:10} This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;

^{2Pe 2:11} yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

^{2Pe 2:12} But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

^{2Pe 2:13} They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.

^{2Pe 2:14} With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed —an accursed brood!

Discuss

1. What false teachings and destructive heresies does Peter address in verses 1-14

a. Verse 1 **Destructive heresies**

b. Verse 1 **Deny Jesus as Savior / Redeemer**

- c. Verse 3 **Made up stories used for greed and exploitation**
- d. Verse 10 **Follow their sinful nature, despise authority, and slander angels**
- e. Verse 13-14 **Sexual immorality, adultery, seduction, and carousing are OK**

1. What parallels do you see between false teaching and heresy today?

- a. The destructive heresy of salvation by being “good enough”

Mk 10:17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”^v

Mk 10:18 **“Why do you call me good?”** Jesus answered. **“No one is good—except God alone.**

Mk 10:19 **You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”**

Mk 10:20 “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

Mk 10:21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. **“One thing you lack,”** he said. **“Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”**

I think the most destructive heresy of our time is the idea of being “Good enough,” salvation based on good things we do. Most notional Christians, who make up 42% of the American population, have adopted this view, no longer looking to Christ as their Savior but to their own view of morality. In Matthew 19:16-30, Jesus showed that self-justification is never the way to eternal life. One example is Jesus teaching the rich young man who wanted to earn salvation by keeping the commandments. Jesus told him if he wanted to justify himself before God, he should sell everything he owned and give it to the poor, a perfect standard of righteousness he could not do. Faith in Christ is our only claim to righteousness before God.

A second heresy that goes hand in hand with self-justification is that God does not judge or condemn anyone to hell because he is a God of love. Peter addresses this false idea in his letter to the churches in Asia Minor in verses 2:4-8.

- b. Heresies about Jesus?

Jesus claimed he was the way and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him (John 15:6). Critics attack the claims of scripture about Jesus because he is the only way to salvation. The most common attacks deny he was a real man born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23), he was divine and claimed to be divine (John 6:38, John 10:30), or he lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15) so that his death could be for the forgiveness of sin of all people (Hebrews 10:10). Some critics even claim Jesus never existed.

Others look to their own logic – and claim that all religions lead to God. We wish this was true and that no one would perish, but Jesus said, “I am the the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

- c. Made-up stories and promises to be healthy, wealthy, and wise

I am completely skeptical of any televangelist who claims to be a miracle worker or who promotes a blessing of financial prosperity for anyone who contributes money to their ministry. As Peter says, they are men of greed bound for destruction.

d. Following sinful nature or slandering angels?

Ro 8:8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

1Co 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

Gal 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; Gal 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions Gal 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul leaves no doubt when talking about acts of the sinful nature or their consequences. Those that live controlled by their sinful nature will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. This does not mean they are beyond salvation. It does mean they are called to faith in Christ, repentance, and are to leave their debauched lifestyle behind.

a. Indulging in sexual immorality or adultery?

1Co 6:9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 1Co 6:10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Heb 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

I remember the Sexual Revolution as a teenager in the late 60s, accompanied by war, rising drug use, civil unrest, and a fascination with eastern mysticism. The 60s profoundly impacted American views of premarital sex, extramarital sex, and gender sexuality. Today, 65% of Americans agree that cohabitation before marriage is synonymous with dating and view it as a passage into marriage. Averages do not tell the whole story. Among religious skeptics and those unaffiliated with faith, 88% believe cohabitation is a good idea. Evangelical Christians are at the other end of the spectrum, with only 6% believing cohabitation is OK. Among mainstream denominations, 35-40% of Christians approve of cohabitation before marriage.

The lax view of premarital sex is carried into marriage with a lax view of extramarital sex. Surveys of Christians and Americans indicate that about 35% of married couples have had extramarital affairs. The number rises to 70% among singles in “committed” relationships. Ashley Madison is a website founded with the slogan, “life is short, have an affair.” Seventy percent of its clients are married Christians.

American views of gender sexuality are also changing. In 2010, about 3% of the population viewed themselves as homosexual. Today, 21% of Gen Z (born after 1997) view themselves as homosexual.

Solomon was right when he wrote that there is nothing new under the sun. Peter addressed the sin and sexual immorality prevalent in the ancient Roman and Greek cultures. We are heartbroken over the changing trends in our culture, but in contrast, “the word of the Lord stands forever” (1 Peter 1:25).

2. What examples does Peter cite that make God’s judgment a certainty?
 - a. Verse 4 **Judgment of the angels who followed Satan, placed in dungeons of hell**
 - b. Verse 5 **Noah and the flood, humanity destroyed for its wickedness**
 - c. Verse 6 **Destruction of wicked and sexually immoral in Sodom and Gomorrah**

Read 2 Peter 2:15-22, Balaam Son of Beor

^{2Pe 2:15} They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

^{2Pe 2:16} But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

^{2Pe 2:17} These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

^{2Pe 2:18} For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

^{2Pe 2:19} They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

^{2Pe 2:20} If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

^{2Pe 2:21} It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

^{2Pe 2:22} Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

3. What was the sin of Balaam son of Beor that made it relevant to Peter’s discussion on false teachers? See also Numbers 22:4-6

^{Nu 22:4} The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, “This horde [of Israelites coming out of Egypt] is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.” So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, ^{Nu 22:5} sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said:

“A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me.

^{Nu 22:6} Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.”

^{Nu 22:7} The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination.

Balaam was a prophet for hire. The king of Midian hired him to curse the Israelites as they came into Midian. Peter condemned the greed of false teachers. Perhaps their greed was for money, or it could have only been for pride, power, and influence.

I can think of examples where Evangelists interpreted disasters as God's punishment for sin, perhaps to further their ministry. But I can think of many more who promise healing and prosperity to those who will – give a little more money.

4. In verses 17–19, Peter describes false teachers in terms of opposites -by the promises they offer and by the consequences that follow:
 - a. Verse 17, they promise to be a spring of water but: **are empty and will suffer the blackest darkness of judgment.**
 - b. Verse 18, They make boastful promises but: **lead people astray by appealing to their sinful desires**
 - c. Verse 19, they promise freedom but: **are slaves to sin and depravity**
5. What do verses 20-22 reveal about the background of some false teachers?

The false teachers were once Christians who accepted the gospel but returned to their former lifestyle controlled by their sinful nature and sexual immorality – and they wanted believers to follow them.

6. After working through this lesson, I think, “Yuck, how depressing.” We may not like the statistic trends in our country but let's face it, the people behind the numbers are our friends, children, and grandchildren, so we are still very much in the spiritual battle being waged in our country and the world. How can you cultivate a Godly spiritual heritage for others?

Pray – tell your loved one you are praying for their situation. Hug them and revisit the issues with them. Teach them to pray by praying with them, not just for them.

Remember and share. You have a lifetime of experience with God's faithfulness through hardship and loss and in good times too. Recount your blessings with your loved ones and praise God for his faithfulness.

Invite – invite your loved ones to come along as you volunteer in local charities or respond to disasters in your community (I live in Texas; we have a ready supply of disasters). They will see faith in action.

Cast a vision - In his book The Blessing, Gary Smalley writes of the importance of expressing a spiritual future of God's blessings for your child (or grandchild). Hug them and let them know you have confidence God will use them to do great things.

Love and fellowship. Jesus modeled love for the lost throughout his ministry. He enjoyed their fellowship and wanted them to experience the love of God.

Closing Prayer