

2Peter Chapter 2 Verses 12-17

NKJV study notes by Pastor Mike Sasso

The Heart of a False Teacher

Introduction

Peter started out chapter 2 warning us that there would be false teachers among us who would introduce very destructive and harmful doctrines to the church. Peter has revealed to us the method and motive of the false teacher. Now, Peter continues to reveal the depth of wickedness behind false teachers. As we read Peter's description of the false teacher it becomes apparent that he is not merely describing a Christian who holds to a variant doctrine. These false teachers are wicked to the core. They are so wicked that Peter says they are like "brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed" (2:12). To get the proper flow of the text we will be studying today, you should read the context out loud before your small group. I would recommend that you at least read verses 1-3 and 9-11 before beginning your study at verse 12.

Notes

V:12 But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed,

- Peter compares false teachers to wild animals that are so far beyond taming that they must be destroyed to prevent them from doing deadly damage to others.

speaking evil of the things they do not understand, - This phrase reveals to us that false teachers may not always fully understand the depth of the blasphemy they are teaching. But ignorance is not the same as innocence. A wild animal would not understand the hurt it is causing to family and friends when it hunts and kills a human child. But that ignorance should not stir in our hearts an attitude of pity towards that animal. It must be destroyed. For it will continue in its ways and kill again if not put down.

and will utterly perish in their own corruption, - Just in case you are thinking that it is your job to eliminate the false teacher, Peter informs us that false teachers will "utterly perish in their own corruption". Peter uses a common Greek idiom here "shall in their destroying surely be destroyed". There is a sowing and reaping process in all of life. And ultimately, God will destroy all the wicked at the final judgment. Rev. 20:10-15 The Christian Church is never instructed under the New Testament scriptures to put to death

false teachers. The Catholic Church in history past did much harm in taking this job on rather than leaving this in God's hands. Throughout the rest of this epistle Peter continues to talk about false teachers and false doctrines. But never does he tell us to lift a finger against them. Instead, he instructs us to "be mindful" of God's truth (3:1-3) and "beware lest we fall" (3:17) and "grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" (3:18). Remember, those who will ultimately inherit the earth are "the meek" (Mat 5:5)!

V:13 and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, - See Ezek 18:4,20; Rom 6:23; 1Co 6:9,10; Gal 3:10; 6:7,8; Rev 21:8

as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. – It seems that these false teachers that Peter is describing are so far from proper sensitivities that they take pleasure in sinning out in the open in broad daylight for all to see, in contrast to those who at least have enough sense of shame as to do their sinful living "at night" or under cover of darkness. Compare Rom 13:13 & 1Thes 5:7-8.

They are spots and blemishes, - As the next phrase indicates, these false teachers often mingle in with true Christians and try to blend into the Body of believers. The church is called the bride of Christ. And Christ's bride is to be found spotless and without blemish (Eph 5:27). Peter describes these false teachers as unsightly disfigurements on the bride of Christ.

carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, - We have already seen that these false teachers openly take pleasure in their sinful ways. We have seen that they deceive and are being deceived. Now we see that they also "feast" in our very midst. This "feasting" could be referring to their taking of the Lord's Supper with us (1Cor 11:20-22). Or it could refer to their celebrating of some of the same "Christian" festivals with us (Jude 1:12).

V:14 having eyes full of adultery – This is a picture of an unfaithful spouse. Though they may be married, their eyes are always wandering, searching for another. Looking around with lustful appetite.

and that cannot cease from sin, - These people have an incurable obsession with sin.

enticing unstable souls. – This is the type of person who makes prey of the spiritually vulnerable. The NLT puts it – "*They make a game of luring unstable people into sin.*"

They have a heart trained in covetous practices, - There is an old saying, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” The people Peter is describing are so steeped in sin that they have trained their hearts in covetous practices. Covetous means greedy, selfish desires.

and are accursed children. – See John 8:44. There are only two kinds of people according to scripture. There are children of God and there are children of the Devil. See also Eph 2:2,3; 5:6,8.

V:15 They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, - Here again is a picture of one starting at the right place and ending up at the wrong place. To “go astray” can be either intentionally or accidentally. The word “forsaken” is definitely a deliberate act.

following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; - Continuing with the thought of starting at the right place and ending up at the wrong place, Peter uses Balaam as an example. Balaam was a prophet of God who went astray. You can read about this wayward prophet in Numbers chapters 22 through 24. Moses made mention of him again in Numbers 31:16 and he is also mentioned in Revelation 2:14 as one who set a stumbling block before God’s people. To commit sin is bad enough. But to cause others to sin is even worse. He “*loved the wages of unrighteousness*” - he was willing to cause God’s people to fall into sin for his own monetary profit.

V:16 but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice restrained the madness of the prophet. – See Numbers 22:27-34. In a very bizarre and humorous story, God actually used an ass to make an ass out of this wayward prophet.

V:17 These are wells without water, - What a stinging description of a false prophet! The purpose of a well is to hold water. A well without water is useless. In some cases people of old would use broken cisterns and wells that no longer held water to dispose of dead bodies. So, a well without water can actually be turned into a trash dump or a gravesite. Can you imagine the disappointment and horror of a thirsty traveler looking for water when he discovers such a site? The newer versions translate this “Springs without water”. This also would be a disappointment to the thirsty.

clouds carried by a tempest, - We have here another illustration of something that should bring water and refreshment but only brings disappointment as it blows by without delivering.

for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. – The future is indeed dark for a false teacher. Peter has made much effort to make his readers know both the severity of the present condition of a false teacher and the dreadfulness of his future. Jesus used similar language in describing the place for those cast out of God's kingdom Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30.

Truths applied

1. This is has been a very negative section of scripture. We certainly could use some positive input at this point. Discuss what you think a true teacher of righteousness should look like and how you would recognize him.
2. According to the second part of verse 12, what will happen to false teachers? How and when will this happen?
3. Carefully go back through today's text and review the many things you have learned about false teachers. Let everyone have a chance to express his or her input.
4. In what ways can today's false teachers be like Balaam of old?
5. According to verse 17, what is the final consequence of the false teacher? What does this mean?

6. Can you name some false teachers from history past who have risen up out of the Christian church and deceived many?

7. Take some time to pray for the Pastors, teachers and elders in your fellowship. Mention them by name before the Lord and pray protection and discernment over their lives. Pray that God would protect your fellowship of believers from false teachers and heresies.

Conclusion

No one is immune from deception. Humbly bow before God and ask Him to give you a heart that loves Him and hates sin and falsehood. Ps 119:163; Am 5:15; Mt 6:24; Ro 12:9; Heb 1:9

Seeking God's discernment with you,

Mike Sasso