

2 Peter 2:12-14
October 8, 2017

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

In case you weren't here last week, let me bring you up to speed. We acknowledged that Peter is going into great detail in his warning to beware of false teachers. Peter has already unpacked the overall danger of false teachers. He spent time on assuring his readers that false teachers or prophets are destined for destruction. Now he is illuminating the attributes of false teachers. You might think of it as a "profile."

Transition: So we are picking up where we left off from last week. We covered four attributes that were presented in v.10 and 11. Today, we will learn more attributes or descriptors starting at v.12. By time we leave class today, **we should be able to detect a false teacher BY recognizing their ATTRIBUTES.** Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.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.

V.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.

V.14:

- With **eyes full of adultery,** they **never stop sinning;** they **seduce the unstable;** they are **experts in greed**—an accursed brood!

Process Observations/Questions:

Q V.12: What is the next ATTRIBUTE of a false teacher? [Blaspheme in matters they do not understand]

Q: What does he mean by that? [Peter compared these false teachers to "unreasoning animals" whose only destiny is to be slaughtered! Animals live purely by instinct, which was locked into their sin nature, rather than from rational choice. Jesus warned us not to waste precious things on unappreciative brute beasts (Matt. 7:6).]

Q V.13: What is the next ATTRIBUTE of a false teacher? [Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight]

Q: What does Peter mean by that? [Carousing = "sensual reveling." It contains the idea of luxury, softness, and extravagance. At the expense of those who support them (2 Peter 2:3), the apostates enjoy luxurious living.]

Q: What do you think Peter meant when he said, “They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.” [Though the false teachers tried to pass themselves off as spiritual leaders possessing a special level of knowledge, they did not even hide their orgies under the cover of darkness but would **carouse in broad daylight**, while **reveling in their pleasures** (*apatais*, perhaps better translated “deceptions”). And they did all this while obviously joining in the love feasts of the church cf. Jude 12). They marred the Lord’s Supper by their presence.]

Q V.14: This verse contains four attributes of false teachers. Let’s take them one by one and explore what Peter means by each ATTRIBUTE?

- Their eyes are full of adultery [they only think of adultery when they see women. They look for “loose” women whom they can entice into sin. What’s worse is that they are looking for these women in a church fellowship setting!]
- They never stop sinning [When they feed their flesh, satisfying their lusts is the false teachers’ main ambition. Why can’t they stop? They are in bondage]
- They seduce the unstable [This is different from “loose.” There are some women who are unsuspecting. The enemy knows our weaknesses, so he knows where to set his traps.]
- They are experts (“exercised, gymnasium”) in greed [He has perfected the skill of getting what he wants, and it’s never enough.]

LOOK:

Beware of false teachers who are experts in greed. Their technique of getting what they want is, through long practice, highly developed. They know exactly how to motivate people to give. While the true servant of God trusts the Father to meet his needs and seeks to help people grow through their giving, the apostate trusts his “fund-raising skills” and leaves people in worse shape than he found them. He knows how to exploit the unstable and the innocent.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 452–454). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

2 Peter 2:12–14a

Their Reviling (2 Peter 2:10–12)

The judgment of their reviling (v. 12). Peter compared these false teachers to “unreasoning animals” whose only destiny is to be slaughtered! At the end of this chapter, they are pictured as pigs and dogs! Animals have life, but they live purely by instinct. They lack the finer sensibilities that humans possess. Jesus warned us not to waste precious things on unappreciative brute beasts (Matt. 7:6).

I once made a pastoral visit at a home where a death had occurred, and even before I made it up the stairs to the door, a huge dog began to bark and carry on as though I were there to rob everybody. I ignored his threats because I knew he was acting purely on instinct. He was making a lot of noise about something he knew nothing about! His master had to take him to the basement before it was safe for me to enter the home and minister to the bereaved family.

So with these apostates: they make a lot of noise about things they know nothing about! The Phillips translation of 2 Peter 2:12 says they “scoff at things outside their own experience.” The *New International Version* reads, “But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand.” Whenever her pupils were noisy in class, one of my teachers used to say, “Empty barrels make the most noise!” And so they do!

It is sad when the media concentrates on the “big mouths” of the false teachers instead of the “still small voice” of the Lord as He ministers through those who are true to Him. It is sadder still when innocent people become fascinated by these “great swelling words of vanity” (2 Peter 2:18) and cannot discern between truth and propaganda. The truth of the Word of God leads to salvation, but the arrogant words of the apostates lead only to condemnation.

These “brute beasts” are destined for destruction, a truth Peter mentioned often in 2 Peter 2 (vv. 3–4, 9, 12, 17, 20). As they seek to destroy the faith, they themselves shall be destroyed. They will be “corrupted in their own corruption.” Their very nature will drag them down into destruction, like the pig returning to the mire and the dog to its vomit (2 Peter 2:22). Unfortunately, before that event takes place, these people can do a great deal of moral and spiritual damage.

Their Reveling (2 Peter 2:13–14a)

The words translated “riot” and “sporting” carry the meaning of “sensual reveling.” They also contain the idea of luxury, softness, and extravagance. At the expense of those who support them (2 Peter 2:3), the apostates enjoy luxurious living. In our own society, there are those who plead for funds for their “ministries,” yet live in expensive houses, drive luxury cars, and wear costly clothes. When we remember that Jesus became poor in order to make us rich, their garish lifestyle seems out of step with New Testament Christianity.

Not only do they deceive others, but they even deceive themselves! They can “prove” from the Bible that their lifestyle is right. In ancient times, it was expected that people would revel at

night, but these people dared to revel in the daytime, so convinced were they of their practices. A person can become so accustomed to his vices that he sees them as virtues.

If they kept their way of life out of the church, we would not have to be as concerned—but they are a part of the fellowship! They were even sharing in the “love feasts” that the early church used to enjoy in connection with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:20–34). It was a time when the poorer believers could enjoy a decent meal because of the generosity of the Christians who were better off economically. But the apostates only used the “love feast” as a time for displaying their wealth and impressing ignorant people who lacked discernment.

Instead of bringing blessing to the fellowship, these false teachers were “spots” and “blemishes” that defiled the assembly. Somehow their behavior at the feasts defiled others and brought disgrace to the name of the Lord. It is the Word of God that helps to remove the spots and blemishes (Eph. 5:27), but these teachers do not minister the truth of the Word. They twist Scripture to make it say what they want it to say (2 Peter 3:16).

This “unconscious defilement” is a deadly thing. The Pharisees were also guilty of it (Matt. 23:25–28). False doctrine inevitably leads to false living, and false living then encourages false doctrine. The apostate must “adjust” God’s Word or change his way of life, and he is not about to change his lifestyle! So, wherever he goes, he secretly defiles people and makes it easier for them to sin. It is possible to go to a church fellowship and be defiled!

Certainly our churches need to exercise authority and practice discipline. Christian love does not mean that we tolerate every false doctrine and every so-called “lifestyle.” The Bible makes it clear that some things are right and some things are wrong. No Christian whose belief and behavior are contrary to the Word of God should be permitted to share in the Lord’s Supper or to have a spiritual ministry in the church. His defiling influence may not be seen immediately, but ultimately it will create serious problems.

Second Peter 2:14 makes it clear that the apostates attend these church meetings for two reasons: first, to satisfy their own lusts; second, to capture converts for their cause.

They keep their eyes open, looking for “loose women” whom they can entice into sin. Paul warned about similar apostates who “creep into houses and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts” (2 Tim. 3:6). More than one “minister” has used religion as a cloak to cover his own lusts. Some women, in particular, are vulnerable in “counseling sessions,” and these men take advantage of them.

In one of the churches I pastored, I noticed that a young man in the choir was doing his utmost to appear a “spiritual giant” to the other choir members, especially the younger women. He prayed with fervency and often talked about his walk with the Lord. Some of the people were impressed by him, but I felt that something was wrong and that danger was in the air. Sure enough, he began to date one of the fine young ladies who happened to be a new believer. In spite of my warnings, she continued the friendship, which ended in her being seduced. I praise God that she was rescued and is now faithfully serving God, but she could have avoided that terrible experience.

The satisfying of their lusts is the false teachers’ main ambition: they *cannot cease from sin*. The verb suggests “they are unable to stop.” Why? Because they are in bondage (2 Peter 2:18–19). The apostates consider themselves to be “free,” yet they are in the most terrible kind of slavery. Whatever they touch, they defile; whoever they enlist, they enslave.

“Beguiling unstable souls” presents the picture of a fisherman baiting a hook or a hunter baiting a trap. The same image is used in James 1:14 where James presents temptation as “the baiting of the trap.” Satan knows that he could never trap us unless there is some fine bait to

attract us in the first place. Satan promised Eve that she and Adam would become “like gods” if they ate of the forbidden tree (Gen. 3:4–5), and they “took the bait” and were trapped.

What kind of “bait” do the apostates use to catch people? For one thing, they offer them “liberty” (2 Peter 2:19). This probably means a perversion of the grace of God, “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4). “Since you are saved by grace,” they argued, “then you have the freedom to sin. The more you sin, the more of God’s grace you will experience!” Paul answered their false arguments in Romans 6, a portion of Scripture that every believer ought to master.

Along with “freedom” they also bait the trap with “fulfillment.” This is one of the “buzz words” of our generation, and it goes right along with “doing your own thing” and “having it your way.” They say, “The Christian life that the church offers is old-fashioned and outdated. We have a new lifestyle that makes you feel fulfilled and helps you find your true self!” Alas, like the prodigal son, these unstable souls try to find themselves, but they end up *losing* themselves (Luke 15:11–24). In their search for fulfillment they become very self-centered and lose the opportunities for growth that come from serving others.

There can be no freedom or fulfillment apart from submission to Jesus Christ. “The purpose of life,” said P.T. Forsyth, “is not to find your freedom, but to find your master.” Just as a gifted musician finds freedom and fulfillment putting himself or herself under the discipline of a great artist, or an athlete under the discipline of a great coach, so the believer finds true freedom and fulfillment under the authority of Jesus Christ.

Who are the people who “take the bait” that the apostates put into their subtle traps? Peter called them “unstable souls.” Stability is an important factor in a successful Christian life. Just as a child must learn to stand before he can walk or run, so the Christian must learn to “stand firm in the Lord.” Paul and the other Apostles sought to establish their converts in the faith (Rom. 1:11; 16:25; 1 Thes. 3:2, 13). Peter was certain that his readers were “established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12), but he still warned them.

Raymer, R. M. (1985). 1 Peter. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 872-873). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

B. Description of false teachers (2:10–14)

False teachers will be judged by God, as certainly as were the angels, the world in Noah’s day, and the sinful people of Sodom and Gomorrah. In verses 10–16 (also v. 17) Peter described the true nature of the false teachers plaguing the church in the first century.

1. THEY ARE REBELLIOUS (2:10–12a)

2:10–12a. The apostles and teachers emphasized purity and cleanliness before God. But the false teachers in the church who denied these standards demonstrated their desire to be indulging the flesh (**follow the corrupt** [*miasmou*, “pollution, defilement”] **desire of the sinful nature**), like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and did so in a spirit which held **authority** in contempt (cf. Jude 16, 18). But this was not just any authority; these reckless antinomians **despise** (d) (*kataphronountas*, “think down on”) “lordship.” *Kyriotētos*, “authority,” refers either to angelic powers (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) or perhaps more likely, to the authority of the Lord (*kyrios*) Himself (cf. 2 Peter 2:1).

B. Description of false teachers (2:10–14)

False teachers will be judged by God, as certainly as were the angels, the world in Noah’s day, and the sinful people of Sodom and Gomorrah. In verses 10–16 (also v. 17) Peter described the true nature of the false teachers plaguing the church in the first century.

1. THEY ARE REBELLIOUS (2:10–12a)

2:10–12a. The apostles and teachers emphasized purity and cleanliness before God. But the false teachers in the church who denied these standards demonstrated their desire to be indulging the flesh (**follow the corrupt** [*miasmou*, “pollution, defilement”] **desire of the sinful nature**), like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and did so in a spirit which held **authority** in contempt (cf. Jude 16, 18). But this was not just any authority; these reckless antinomians **despise** (δ) (*kataphronountas*, “think down on”) “lordship.” *Kyriotētos*, “authority,” refers either to angelic powers (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) or perhaps more likely, to the authority of the Lord (*kyrios*) Himself (cf. 2 Peter 2:1). One would expect people of this mentality—who are **bold** (*tolmētai*, “presumptuous”) **and arrogant** (*authadeis*, “self-willed”; cf. Titus 1:7)—**to slander** (*blasphēmountes*) even to the point of deliberately speaking untruth about **celestial beings** (*doxas*, possibly fallen angels). It is possible that their blaspheming was the teaching that lustful indulgence is angelic and that God wills man to live under no restraints whatever.

False teachers were doing things **even angels** would not do, namely, slander **such beings**. One might expect **stronger and more powerful** beings (good angels) to criticize less powerful beings (fallen angels), but that is simply not allowed **in the presence of the Lord** (cf. Jude 8–9). Yet so great was the pride of these slanderers that it knew no bounds in their attack on all who disagreed with their teachings. Even so, they were totally ignorant of the very things they blasphemed (2 Peter 2:12a; cf. Jude 10).

2. THEY ARE ANIMALISTIC (2:12a)

2:12b. The false teachers of the first century were **like brute beasts**. They operated from instinct, which was locked into their sin nature, rather than from rational choice. **Creatures of instinct** translates the one Greek word *physika*, “belonging to nature.” They followed their natural desires. Like animals in a jungle, their only value was in being **caught and destroyed** (cf. Jude 10). This harsh language from Peter is an indication of how serious he considered these heresies to be. **Like beasts they too will perish** is literally, “in their corruption (*phthora*) they too shall be corrupted” (*phtharēsontai*), an interesting play on words (cf. “corrupted” in Eph. 4:22). Corruption here probably means eternal punishment.

3. THEY ARE DECEITFUL (2:13)

2:13. The wordplay in verse 12b sets up Peter’s point in verse 13a, namely, that these false teachers will be caught in their own webs. **They will be paid back with harm** (*adikoumenoi* [“being damaged,” or “suffering injustice”] *misthon* [“wages”]) **for the harm** (*adikias*, “injustice” or “wickedness”; cf. v. 15) **they have done**. God will give them what they have done to others (cf. Gal. 6:7). Though the false teachers tried to pass themselves off as spiritual leaders possessing a special level of knowledge, they did not even hide their orgies under the cover of darkness but would **carouse in broad daylight**, while **reveling in their pleasures** (*apatais*,

perhaps better translated “deceptions”). And they did all this while obviously joining in the love feasts of the church cf. Jude 12). **They were blots** (*spiloi*) **and blemishes** (*mōmoi*; cf. 2 Peter 3:14). Like a stain on a clean shirt or a scratch on a tiny ring, they marred the Lord’s Supper by their very presence. This was one of the injustices they did to others.

4. THEY ARE CHRONIC SINNERS (2:14)

2:14. Invective poured from Peter’s pen as he summoned staccato phrases to condemn these heretics. Had there been any doubt up to this point about the salvation of these false teachers, Peter closed the door by indicating they were habitual sinners, their eyes consistently looking toward sinning. **With eyes full of adultery** is literally, “having eyes full of an adulteress,” that is, thinking only of adultery when they see women. **They never stop sinning** is literally, “unceasing in sin,” probably referring to their sinning with their eyes (Matt. 5:28). That such persons should be viewed as believers is diametrically opposed to the Johannine idea that habitual sinning does not mark one who is born of God (1 John 3:9).

Their deceit was aimed at seducing (from *deleazō*, “bait, entice”; used only here and in 2 Peter 2:18) **the** unwary or unsteadfast (cf. 3:16), and **they** had become specialists **in greed** (cf. 2:3; lit., “having a heart exercised in greed”). **Experts** (“exercised,”) translates *gegymnasmēnēn*, from which comes “gymnasium.” They “work out” in covetousness, practicing and sharpening greedy skills. Yet they never have enough. No wonder Peter called them **an accursed brood** (lit., “children of a curse,” a Hebraism denoting certain destruction from the hand of God). Sensuality, deception, greed—all are deserving of God’s wrath.