

Denouncing False Teachers

2 Peter 2

2 Peter 2:1-3 - *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ 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.”*

Background Notes

In Old Testament times, there were both true prophets of God, and there were false prophets as well. Many of the false prophets were able to live in the midst of God’s people because they preached what the people wanted to hear. They proclaimed peace and prosperity when the true prophets were preaching fiery sermons, warning of judgment to come because of the nation’s sin. No wonder the false prophets were able to get a hearing in Israel! People love to hear about prosperity - then and today.

In verse 1 Peter said that just as false prophets were able to creep into the midst of the people of Israel, so false teachers would infiltrate the early Church. *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.”* Peter predicted that this would take place in the near future - *“there will be false teachers among you...and many will follow their destructive ways...they will exploit you.”*

Most likely 2 Peter was written in the mid-60s AD. By the time the epistle of Jude was written, probably in the early 70s, the false teachers about whom Peter warned had already infiltrated the church. Jude verse 4: *“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Peter warned that the false teachers **would** infiltrate the Church; Jude wrote that they **had already** infiltrated the Church.

Peter said that these false teachers *“deny the Lord who bought them.”* What does this mean? Does this mean that these men were once saved but had lost their salvation? No – they had not “lost their salvation.” They were never saved. Notice that it does not say that they denied the Lord who **redeemed** them – it says they denied the Lord who **bought** them.

When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He died for the sins of the entire world. He paid the full price of the penalty of sin. Thus there is unlimited **provision** for atonement. In that sense, even unbelievers are “bought,” because the Lord Jesus paid the price for all the sins of the world. But the **effects** of the atonement are limited only to those who believe. ***The work of Christ on the cross is sufficient for all but it is only effective for those who believe.*** Verse 3 leaves no doubt that these false teachers were on their way to judgment and eternal destruction.

Doctrinal Points

1. God honors righteous attitudes.

Verses 4-9: *“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly;⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)⁹ then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”*

In these verses Peter gave three examples from the Old Testament to show God’s judgment on apostasy - His judgment on those who deliberately turn away from the truth. The three examples he used were a certain group of fallen angels, the people who perished in the Flood at the time of Noah, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We believe that the angels of verse 4 were the fallen angels mentioned in Genesis 6, who wrongly left their angelic realm and in some way cohabited with women. Jude 6 speaks about these same fallen angels: *“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”* All fallen angels are not yet bound, but these particular fallen angels are in chains, awaiting their final consignment to hell - the final abode for all fallen angels.

God’s judgment at the time of the Flood and His judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah are well known. But God preserved Noah and his family from the Flood, and God rescued Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God honors righteous attitudes.

If we did not have this New Testament Scripture about Lot, we wouldn’t have known that Lot was a believer, would we? Lot is an example of a worldly believer. We know that Lot did not move into Sodom as a missionary – he moved to Sodom for worldly gain. But he was a believer. Peter said that Lot was “righteous,” and he was greatly bothered by the filthy conduct and gross sin in Sodom and Gomorrah, and God graciously rescued Lot out of that situation. God can do

that today as well. Verse 9: *“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations.”* God honors righteous attitudes.

Maybe you’re coping in a situation where sin and temptation are all around you. God will never leave you in a situation that you can’t handle. He will give you a way of escape. Read these promises in 1 Corinthians 10:13: *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

2. God hates religious apostasy.

Verses 10-22: *“And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries,¹¹ whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.*

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.”

Apostasy is not the same as backsliding. A backslider is a true believer, but because of sin in his life he is out of true fellowship with the Lord. An apostate never was a true believer. Apostates may have made a “profession” of faith, but they have turned away from the truth.

The false teachers Peter mentioned were not backsliders – they were apostates. Notice that these false teachers and their followers had made a profession of faith. As a result they were participating in the Christian community, and thus they had escaped the bad fallout of living a sinful life (v20). But notice - they had turned away from the truth and had gone back to their lives of sin (v21-22). They never were converted - and now they were in a worse situation. They were hardened to the truth, and they were subject to greater punishment. God hates religious apostasy.

After reading the description of the 1st century false teachers, think of the false teachers today who operate in the same way within Christendom: indulging in the corrupt desires of the flesh (v10), despising authority (v10), slandering celestial beings - something even angels don't dare to do (v11), behaving like animals (v12), reveling in their own deceptions while they participate in the Christian love feast with you (v13), thinking immoral thoughts (v14), enticing unstable souls (v14&18), following the way of Balaam, by using religion to make money (v15), and promising their followers spiritual help but delivering nothing (v17&19).

These verses described the deceptive and immoral false teachers of the 1st century – and they describe the deceptive and immoral false teachers within the church today. Notice how immorality and false teaching go hand in hand - then and today.

Turning away from God's truth is serious sin. God hates religious apostasy.

Practical Application

Try to see it God's way.

How does God view apostate false teachers? Look once again at 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."* That's a very unpleasant verse of Scripture, but that's how God views false teachers, who have deliberately turned away from the truth.

How do we see them? Think of the well-educated, sophisticated false teachers in Christian churches, seminaries and denominational leadership today. They are polished speakers, they are well published, and they are well respected in society - but they deny the bodily resurrection of Christ, they deny the full deity of Jesus Christ, they deny the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners on the cross, and they deny the full inspiration of the Scriptures. They've turned away from the truth.

They are apostates - and God sees them as dogs returning to their own vomit and as pigs returning to their own mire. And yet, true believers continue to attend their churches, and continue to take courses from them at seminaries, and read their writings! Sadly, these Christians are seeking credibility and "correctness" by the *world's standards*. How sad - how pathetic. Read verse 22 again - and try to see it God's way.