

## EXPOSITION OF II PETER

### Message #10

### II Peter 2:15-22

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He spoke of a group of religious people who had done seemingly impressive religious things, who would one day get before Him and call Him “Lord” but would be cast into hell.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 these words: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”

What Jesus says is that there will be many people who were religious and who used His name who did not have a real relationship with Him at all. Shortly before the Apostle Peter died, he saw exactly the same thing. He saw a bunch of religious imposters and he wanted God’s people to be able to spot them so they could avoid them and their teaching.

**FALSE RELIGIOUS TEACHERS ARE THOSE WHO HAVE FORSAKEN THE RIGHT WAY AND GONE ASTRAY FROM TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD AND FROM TRUTH OF JESUS CHRIST, AND GOD WILL ONE DAY JUDGE THEM TO THE DARKEST PLACES IN HELL.**

To claim to be a teacher for God is very serious business. James said, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1). I want to point out from this verse that the admonition is given to “brethren.” This refers to those who are in the family of God. This warning was to believers. Now if God would give a very strict judgment to those actually in His family, think how seriously He will judge the teacher who pretends to be in His family.

Now some have taken the position that this text in II Peter is referring to religious teachers who were one time really saved, but somehow lost their salvation. This is not true. **This text is referring to religious leaders who do not know Jesus Christ.** Two things prove the point:

- 1) Theologically once one believes in Jesus Christ, he is forever saved and cannot lose it (John 10:28). Even if a believer became faithless and worthless, God is still faithful to His Word and to the salvation of one who has believed in His Son (Romans 4:5; II Timothy 2:13).
- 2) The two final illustrations used in **II Peter 2:22** - of the dog returning to his own vomit and a sow wallowing in the mire, prove these teacher never had a new nature. They were never actually born again even though they were very religious. They did not have a new Divine nature and only had their old nature, which eventually revealed itself.

Peter was about to die and he wanted God’s people to be able to spot fraudulent unsaved religious teachers. He spends a great deal of time pointing out very specific details. In this section there are two specific details he develops:

**SPECIFIC DETAIL #1** – The actual direction false teachers and false ministers are moving.  
**2:15-16**

Now as we look at these two verses, false teachers specifically move in two wrong directions:

**Wrong Direction #1** - False religious teachers have continually forsaken the right way. **2:15a**

The participle “forsaking” (καταλειποντες) is a present tense participle. The word actually means to forsake something or abandon something and leave it behind (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 235). The present tense indicates this is their continual, habitual pattern of life. They continually and habitually abandon what is “right” before God. The word “right” means they continually abandon the way that is straight and direct (*Ibid.*, p. 186). This is not talking about a moment in time in which they trip; this is their habitual pattern. Their lifestyle and their doctrine is continually crooked and corrupt.

False religious teachers continually move away from the straight Scriptures and from the straight truth. They abandon a straight and direct handling of God’s Word and doctrines. They continually abandon any path God deems as right and true. They are not interested in carefully and accurately understanding God’s Word and applying it to their lives.

A few years ago, Hank Hanegraaff, who is president of the Christian Research Institute, set up a meeting with Benny Hinn to confront him with many of his heretical teachings. Benny Hinn is a master religious con artist. He points to the fact that he was born and raised in Israel and he tries to convince people that he is a real Biblical scholar, when in all reality he is anything but that. One of the heresies that he was teaching was that there were nine members to the Trinity. When he was confronted with this, Benny Hinn said that he had made a “dumb statement.” Hinn promised Hanegraaff that he would not say that again. Within weeks, Benny Hinn was back to his old ways and his faulty doctrine (*Christianity in Crisis*, pp. 343-344).

These false religious teachers cannot teach straight or walk straight for very long because their continual pattern is to move away from what is straight.

**Wrong Direction #2** - False religious teachers have continually gone the wrong way.  
**2:15b-16**

The participle “having followed” (εξακολουθησαντες) is aorist tense which means false religious teachers have a moment or point of time when they decide they are going to move away from a focus on God’s Word and follow the religious ways of Balaam. This is a specific point of time in which the minister makes a decision to actually “love” the wages of unrighteousness like Balaam did. That word “love” is the highest form of love which refers to mental calculation or choice. False religious teachers make a specific mental calculation to move away from Scripture and love it.

Now the story of Balaam comes from three chapters in the book of Numbers (22, 23, 24) to illustrate the way of false teachers and false ministers. Balaam was a Gentile prophet who was commissioned by Balak, the king of the Moabites, to pronounce a curse on the Israelites in

exchange for money and honor from Balak. **God told Balaam do not go with the Moabites and do not curse the Israelites (Num. 22:12). Ultimately Balaam disregarded the Word of God for money (Num. 22:17, 22) and God prevented him from being able to go by using his donkey.** So a false teacher begins by disregarding the Word of God for money.

I want you to carefully notice that God says a donkey restrained the “madness” of this evil prophet (**II Peter 2:16**). Don’t miss this; a false teacher or prophet is given to “madness” (παράφρονεω), which means from God’s perspective he is deranged and out of his mind (*Ibid.*, p. 343). False religious teachers move to teaching that is insane.

But even after Balaam saw God speak through a donkey, he never turned from his greedy arrogance. What Balaam actually did was to promote the idea that the Israelite men could be involved in immorality with Moabite women (Num. 25:1-2; 31:16; Rev. 2:14). He promoted idolatry and immorality. **Balaam was a minister who loved money and immoral sex.**

Peter says false religious teachers and ministers have moved in the way of Balaam. They will not study to rightly divide the Scriptures and they will not turn from their evil. They love money, lots of it, and they love immoral sex. They promote their insane doctrine and lifestyle and they do influence many people.

Balaam was a false prophet, and he was a man who led Israel into immorality. Balaam was a man who knew a great deal about the Word of God and will of God and he made a decision to rebel against it, and religious frauds do the same thing today.

J. Vernon McGee said that he thought you could judge the “religious racketeer” by his standard of living (*Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 740). Joyce Meyer purchased five homes. One she purchased for \$795,000, one for \$400,000, one for \$725,000, one for \$350,000, and one for \$200,000. At her headquarters is a \$23,000 marble-topped commode, a \$30,000 conference table and an \$11,219 French clock. She is a self-help con artist who has convinced people to send her \$124 million a year, and just like Dr. McGee said, a “religious racketeer” (Carol Brooks, *Tele-Evangelist Lifestyles*, pp. 33-36).

In the Mormon Church, there are phony religious leaders, who are promoting exactly the same objectives as Balaam. They have invented an evil concept that justifies immoral behavior based on a fictitious future celestial existence that they have completely fabricated. Mike Murdock presents the idea that the blessings of God are for sale. Murdock does what all false teachers have done; he appeals to the greed and covetousness of people, telling them they can become millionaires. He tells people Satan wants to rob them of their money when, in fact, it is Murdock who wants to rob them of their money.

**SPECIFIC DETAIL #2** – God’s assessment of what these false teachers actually are.  
**2:17-22**

There are **three key realities** brought out in these verses:

**Reality #1** - False teachers use words that are empty. **2:17**

What I find so amazing about false teachers is that they will say things like, “God is leading me to say this” or that “I just got a revelation from God” or “I just got a word of knowledge.” God says their words are meaningless and empty.

Let me illustrate the point. Almost all of the false teachers use the noun “seed” in a context that says your money is the seed and if you sow it with them you will get God’s blessings. Yet when we examine the teachings of Jesus, the “seed” was not money but the Word of God (Matthew 13:4, 19). So a true interpretation is that as you and I share God’s Word with others, God will save some. False teachers do not tell the truth. To them seed is money, not God’s Word.

False teachers are empty of any words that can actually give life to people. They are “springs without water” and they are “mists driven by a storm.”

In ancient times in the Middle East, wells and springs and rain were critical for survival. If you failed to find fresh water you could die. Just imagine that you are thirsty and there is a sign that says there is a spring or well ahead, and you go to it only to discover there is no water there. Without water you die.

False teachers are like that. They promise revival and blessings of God, but they offer you nothing because their words are empty. They do not study to “rightly divide” Scripture. False teachers use words that are empty. They make promises that are empty.

Their teaching is “flimsy” and worthless. Just imagine that you are in need of rain and one day you get up and see the black clouds coming in and you are expecting a downpour, but what you discover is the clouds bring nothing but a little mist. You would never be nourished by this at all.

What Peter is stressing here is that false teachers give people the impression they really have something to say that is significant, but they are nothing and they say nothing. **They are headed for the deepest, darkest pits of hell.**

True teachers of God have the responsibility to communicate the life-quenching truth of the books of the Bible and the doctrines of the faith. It is the responsibility of true teachers to feed people the Word of God and the doctrines of God at a thirst-quenching level. God does not want His people shallow.

J. Vernon McGee, back in the 1980s, said that he believed that people were thirsting for God’s Word and there was such a drought in churches that most people were not actually given the thirst-quenching Word of God. He said that in the 80s; think where we are today. Most churches are “springs without water.”

**Reality #2** - False teachers live lives that are immoral . **2:18-19**

False religious ministers entice people through their arrogant, vain, empty words and they pursue the fulfillment of their carnal fleshly desires. They are and will continue to be slaves of their own depravity.

Back in the first century, there were many religious ceremonies that actually taught people to express their religion sexually. The first century world was a world without scruples and without morals, and many of the “simpleminded” people were lured into this. Back in the third century, Clement of Alexandria attacked the religious heretics who were promoting sexual immorality and calling it “mystic communion” (S. L. Johnson, *II Peter 2:17-22*, p. 5).

Filthy lusts were the bait to lure people into the religion and get their money. The unstable and the young bought into this hook, line and sinker.

Now we are given some key information at the end of **verse 18**, which describes the kind of person who is potentially susceptible to this evil; **specifically those who are recent to the faith and are trying to escape the trappings of lustful depravity**. Those are the ones who are ripe to become prey to these false teachers.

It is critical that newborn babes get the right Biblical food to eat. All healthy people love good food and usually when someone does not have any appetite for good food, they are sick. The same is true spiritually. When a person does not have an appetite for good, solid, food from God’s Word, they are sick. False teachers know this and they trying to mislead the spiritually naïve.

Now notice **verse 19** that these false teachers promise these people freedom, but the teachers themselves are enslaved to their own flesh and their own sin. If you could get behind the scenes of a false teacher’s life, you would discover they have an outward form of godliness, but behind the scenes they are slaves of corruption. These are not disciplined men of God’s Word; they are undisciplined, lust-driven men who are enslaved to their greed and their immorality.

Now there is no doubt that when you believe on Jesus Christ you are free. The truth will set you free. However, we need to understand freedom theologically and Biblically. The O.T. law boxes us in and shows us our need to believe on Jesus Christ for our justification and our salvation. The moment we believe on Jesus Christ we are free. Free from all the condemnation of the law and free from all our sin. However, this freedom does not mean we now start preaching or believing a libertine philosophy of life that says you are free to live out your days as a lust-crazed, sinful, idolatrous maniac. It is true that the O.T. law condemns us and sends us to N.T. grace for salvation. However, N.T. grace salvation sends us to the grace Scriptures so we may live out our justification in a way that pleases God.

**Any religious teacher who tells you it does not matter how you govern your life after you have been saved is a false teacher.** Any teacher who tells you that it doesn’t matter if you live your life in sin, when you have the Spirit of God in you, is a teacher that is leading you astray.

False teachers promise and promote freedom and liberty, but the end result is that many are bound and enslaved to sin.

**Reality #3** - False teachers have minds that are knowledgeable . **2:20-22**

False teachers know things from Scripture and they know how to twist things from Scripture. Peter brings out two specific facts about these false teachers:

**(Fact #1)** - They do have the character and quality of deep knowledge . **2:20-21**

**The word “knowledge” is deep knowledge, but in verse 20 and verse 21, all uses are an anarthrous (without article “the”) construction. What this means is that they have the character and quality of deep knowledge, but they do not have the specific deep knowledge of God and His Word.**

In other words, these false teachers give the impression that they really have the character and quality of deep Biblical knowledge, but in all reality they don't have it at all.

**(Fact #2)** - They do know the way of righteousness . **2:21**

These false teachers actually know the truth of Jesus Christ. They have heard He is God. They know He is the Lord and Savior and they know He is the Christ, the Messiah. They know all of that. They know that Jesus died to save sinners, but they do not have a real relationship with Jesus Christ, and they are defeated and entangled in their sin over and over again.

**They seem to have a tremendous amount of knowledge, but they do not have saving faith. What these false religious leaders have had is religious reformation but not real salvation.** They are not living the life of a pagan, but they do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. You can always eventually spot a false teacher because he will always return to his filth, like a dog to his vomit or like a pig to mud. He will not change because all he has is his old nature and not a new one. He will not ever be transformed by the renewing of his mind on the Word of God. He has never been born again and he is heading to the deepest, darkest reservoirs of hell.

Dr. A. C. Gaebelien used to say, if you are in this service and do not know Jesus Christ, and then you leave this service in the same condition, then I have just become your worst enemy that you have ever had. Because when you go into the presence of God, you cannot ever tell Him you didn't hear the truth; and God will judge you to hell worse than any heathen who never heard.

For a phony, false, religious person, the future is very dark and very scary. Do not leave here today without knowing that you have a relationship with Jesus Christ.