

According to pastor and author John Ortberg... Peace Corp volunteers who are headed for South America... used to be given a spoof manual... that offered advice on how to handle a chance encounter... with an anaconda snake... (a large type of boa constrictor). This is the list of instructions under the heading "What to Do If Attacked by an Anaconda":

- 1. If you're attacked by an anaconda, do not run; the snake is faster than you are.
- 2. Lie flat on the ground.
- 3. Put your arms tight at your sides and your legs tight against one another.
- 4. The snake will begin to climb over your body.
- 5. Do not panic.
- 6. The snake will begin to swallow you from the feet end.
- 7. Step 6 will take a long time.
- 8. After awhile, slowly and with as little movement as possible, reach down, take your knife, and very gently slide it into the snake's mouth. Then suddenly sever the snake's head.
- 9. Be sure your knife is sharp.
- 10. Be sure you have your knife.

Obviously... steps 9 and 10 come a little late. ... With any crisis... if we wait until it hits us... our preparation is too late. Every one of us will experience a crisis from time to time... and frequently it is because we were not prepared first.

Church! We do not know what lies around the corner for us. ... As I said last week... when 2nd Peter took us to the topic of false teachers... I told you that I do not see any evidence of this danger in our midst right now. ... But you know... as well as I do... that this is a snake... that really does exist... Watch the supposed Christian television station and you will see all

sorts of false teachers who blatantly tickle the ears of their listeners with such things as... God wants to give you everything you want... all that your self-centered heart desires... Focus on yourself... what you want... “*You really are master... here is how you can get all you want out of God...*”

Right now... you may be able to spot the phoniness of this... it might even disgust you. ... But what if someone who appears to know their Bible comes along side of you with lots of personal encouragement. Perhaps they come over and help tremendously with one of your home projects... You share some meals together... eating out – *they* pay(!)... you discuss all kinds of personal struggles... they offer what seems like sound advice... and even provide you with some materials... resources... or contacts with other people that you’ve been needing or wanted. Time and time again they have been there for you... helped you... provided what you needed. Then... one day... they have a little concern... just a little concern... mind you. ...But you’re friends... and what concerns them... will definitely be a concern of yours. So you listen... and don’t see it as gossip... even though it (subtly, at first) turns your heart against a person who has been a godly influencer in your life... (A pastor... the elders... the person who discipled you... or Bible Study leader...) And... once your heart more fully is turned against your former godly influence... you aren’t sure who or what to believe... except for your supportive friend... and now you are open to start questioning doctrinal truth itself.

We saw last week... Peter’s warning that such apostates were in the church... and like a snake that swallows very slowly... they gradually perform their destructive work. ... Jesus warned of them coming into the

church... when He told the parable of the wheat and the tares... and so did the Apostle Paul... in an emotional farewell speech to the elders of the church at Ephesus.

There is no reason for us to be paranoid... but there is strong reason for us to be prepared. ... We would be foolish to read such a passage that we come to this morning in 2nd Peter... and think... *“OK... this is something for other ministries... not us... because we are a Bible teaching church... and there are no false teachers among us...”*

This morning... last week... and next week are all to help prepare us. We don't want it creeping in. Peter continues his warning about false prophets by describing them in detail to show how wicked they are. ... The description of the false teachers is like describing much of our contemporary society.

The moral climate of American society worsens so gradually... and so pervasively... that believers may not immediately notice when that "spirit-of-the-age-atmosphere" begins to seep into the church. ... Among believers we hear an argument for "tolerance"... "openness"... and hear the cry: "don't be so dogmatic!" (as if dogmatism is to be assumed "bad.")
"...Lighten-up! Don't be so legalistic"...

We have seen more and more immoralities codified into acceptable attitudes and lifestyles... with our modern society dictating to us... that these popular attitudes and lifestyles are to be considered beyond criticism or question. ... Tired of restraining a society that is becoming more

lawless... false teachers get people to cave-in... twisting Scriptures to support their position and practices...

To guard against this Peter paints a picture of these religious frauds that will make their presence among the people of God obvious. Peter reminds us to be on the lookout for two things in general: we can recognize them by their crude contempt of supernatural realities (vv. 10-13), and, secondly by their self-indulgence and greed (vv. 13-16).

2 Peter 2:10-16

Verse 10 marks a distinction saying... *“and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion...”* Sometimes they are able to hide this somewhat. You might not be able to see their lustful passion... especially at first.

A number of years ago... I encountered a man in ministry whose behavior was consistent with what Peter describes throughout 2 Peter chapter 2. However... a particular lust of his defiling passion was not obvious to many... nor was it known to me... until I developed a friendship with someone who knew him during his college years... He knew that I was developing this friendship with his former associate from college... so one day he confessed his wrongful sexual activity to me... which his former college associate knew all about... This is why I put forth to you... that it might be hidden for a while... and from many... But Peter does mention “lustful defiling passion” as a distinction.

Lets also recognize that “lustful defiling passion” is not limited to sexual behavior. One can lust for power... recognition... honor... freedom...

livelihood... security... or anything good and respectable. (It is all in how we seek to obtain them...)

False teachers seek to obtain their passions... in a defiling way... It is all out and by all means... in their own effort... without regard to God's will. They simply go for it... primarily by self-effort. They are often energetic people with definite... recognizable... perhaps even eccentric passions. (Now please don't think that I am wanting you to be careful of anyone who displays strong passion in life.) No... The way those we are cautioned about... go after their passions... often with a little wink... while trying to do away with godly restraints or demands. "... *This may be a little out of bounds for me to be doing it this way*" (wink-wink) "*But I sure do need this... .. We will ask forgiveness later...*" ... Peter is saying here that they walk after the flesh... not the Spirit. A passion for doing things God's way... simply is not found... nor is there respect for God's established authority.

Verse 10 also says that false teachers despise authority. ... They are not afraid to attack and defame people in positions of authority where God has placed them.

God has established authority in this world... and when we resist authority... we are resisting God (according to Rom. 13:1ff). ... Parents have authority over their children (Eph. 6:1-4)... employers are over their employees (Eph. 6:5-8) ... And God has placed leaders in the church who Scripture says are to be honored (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-6.) Behavior toward all authority must be that which seeks to glorify God... even when there is disagreement.

When the murderous and obviously corrupt King Saul had chased David around the wilderness... David (twice) had opportunity to kill King Saul... who was trying to murder him... If anyone had reason to take matters of defying authority into his own hands... it was David. David had a justifiable reason... but he would not touch God's anointed. He waited for **God** to invoke His punishment on King Saul.

Christians are to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-4)... show respect even to those with whom they disagree (1 Peter 2:11-17)... and confront errant Spiritual leaders in a Biblically prescribed manner. ... False teachers ignore Scripture's clear teaching about how to correct a spiritual leader in the church. Instead... they divisively turn the hearts of others... as a step toward further apostasy. ... Watch out for those who try to turn yours... or the hearts of others away from Spiritual authority... by ignoring the Biblically prescribed manner for treating an erring spiritual leader. 1 Timothy 5:19 says, "Do not receive a charge against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses..." Don't receive it... don't listen to it... unless it has the credible evidence of multiple witnesses. False teachers bypass this instruction. They despise authority.

These men are called "bold and willfull"... Other translations of the New testament translate this Greek word, " **τολμηται** " as arrogant. They are boldly arrogant... presumptuous... daring to intrude where no one has the right to be.

And they are “ αυθαδειζ “ which means to delight in oneself. They have a self-loving spirit. They live to please themselves. ... they would even defy God to get what they want.

Outwardly... they appear to serve God and minister to others... but inwardly... they feed their own egos. They feather their own nests.

Now this next phrase – “they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones...” does not have complete agreement among Bible scholars and commentators... as to who “the glorious ones” speaks of...

Is Peter referring to the authorities that God has ordained as “the glorious ones”...? Does this refer to legitimate church leaders...? (I tend to think not.) Nowhere else in Scripture are spiritual authorities referred to in this manner. ... Does the phrase reference the glories surrounding Christ’s return...? In the very next chapter... Peter mentions how the false teachers mock the glorious second coming of Christ. John Piper seems to think that it refers to the glories of God and Christ... especially associated with the second coming.

But I tend to go with a more immediate context than the next chapter in Peter. I think it has to do with Peter’s immediate thoughts expressed in his next phrase... look at the very next verse.

2 Peter 2:11

Here is what I think the point is that Peter is making: These opponents are *not afraid to slander celestial beings*. This slander is contemptuous language directed toward the power of spirit beings; they dare to belittle or mock the powers of evil. ... In a parallel passage to the one we are

studying in 2nd Peter... this is made more clear. ... Look at the similarities in Jude... to our passage this morning... and how Jude makes it more clear.

Jude 8-13

Peter and Jude discuss the same issue and use the same terms and references. Jude is more clear that blaspheming the glorious ones means misspeaking about celestial beings... talking out of ignorance.

The false teachers slandered the spiritual realities they did not understand... taking Satan's power lightly... and pretending to have the ability to judge unseen realities. ... Many in our world today mock the supernatural. They deny the reality of the spiritual world and claim that only what can be seen and felt is real. ... They are like the false teachers that Peter writes about. ... They simply laugh at the very idea of Satan.

Don't take Satan and his supernatural powers of evil lightly... and don't become arrogant about how defeated he will (one day) be. ... Although Satan will be destroyed completely... he is at work now trying to render you and I complacent and ineffective as Christians.

The idea of an unseen spiritual world or some other dimension... of principalities... and powers... and rulers... in a spiritual world... is mocked today by many. ... So is the idea of Christ being exalted to the right hand of God... and of believers someday ruling and serving and ministering for Christ in a new heavens and earth. But you and I must never give in to the effects of this false teaching.

Verse 11 again... *whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.*

Peter pointed out the false teachers' audacity in scoffing at the glorious ones (verse 10) by explaining that even the good angels in heaven, though far greater in power and strength than evil angels, never speak out disrespectfully against the glorious ones. Again... let me refer back to our parallel passage in Jude for some clarification.

Jude tells us that Michael would not bring a railing accusation against the Devil, but he simply said, "...the Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1:9). This is a spirit that we need to manifest today, a spirit of humility, in the sense that we turn all of this over to God. It is pride that causes us to speak as we do. When I hear someone, sometimes even a Christian, talking about the Devil, ridiculing him and calling him names, I have to say that Michael the archangel wouldn't do that, and if Michael, exalted as he is, wouldn't do it, a little man down here on earth needs to be very careful.

Now... let's consider once again how false teachers often try to get us to speak evil about God's people in authority. We may not respect a person in a certain position... but I believe Peter wants us to see that defiance... even if it is rallied against unholy angelic beings... should be avoided.

Titus 3:1-2 (ESV)

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

When Daniel refused the king's food... he did it in a gracious way that did not get his guard into trouble (Dan. 1). ... Even when the Apostles refused to obey the Sanhedrin's order that they stop preaching in the name of

Jesus... they acted like gentlemen. ... They respected the authority even though they disobeyed the order. ... Contemptuous attitudes and defiance are the result of what false teachers inspire. ... And once contemptuous attitudes take over... wherever it reigns... the person is driven by instinct... like an unthinking animal.

2 Peter 2:12

Peter illustrates the nature of false teachers by comparing them to animals that have no reason. They are driven by instinct rather than understanding. Animals don't think it over, they just do what comes naturally. Like animals these false teachers are slaves to their instinct.

I love animals... especially our dogs. They bring such joy to my family and I. The only drawback is... that we cannot have visitors to our home... who are not dog-lovers. My oldest daughter has a black lab... that is a rescue dog. As a puppy... he had been dumped out in the forest. After months of surviving with his pup sister... they were rescued... in a very emaciated state. It has taken Emmett a long time to trust humans. He still lives by his instincts from living in the wild. When friends come by our house... Emmett will bark and bark... as if they have come to rob us of all our belongings. We put up with a lot of loud barking... because we know that Emmett is acting purely on instinct. He makes a lot of noise about something he knows nothing about!

So with these apostates: they make a lot of noise about things they know nothing about! They sound authoritative... as if they know exactly what the facts are. ...And they are intimidating to anyone who doesn't recognize what they are actually doing.

Such people condemn the Bible, good morals and godly thinking though they are ignorant of the truth of these matters.

The last phrase of verse 12 (“*They will be destroyed in their destruction*”) reminds us what Peter wrote in the verses we studied last week... There is definite destruction ahead of them. They will be destroyed by their own pursuits. ... 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... as verse 13 goes on to declare...

2 Peter 2:13

These wicked false prophets celebrate their achievements by engaging in unholy reveling... because of their achievements. “Look at our crowds!... Look at all the wealth we accumulate! ... See all of our admirers...?” They are not ashamed of their deceitful ways but revel in the gains from deceitfulness. ...”while they feast with you...” They break bread with you... in your home or theirs... at a nice restaurant... they’ll even pay. They’ll look like good friends.

But they have an insatiable desire for sin. It cannot be satisfied. Even worse – they entice others into their debauchery.

2 Peter 2:14

Satisfying their lusts is the false teacher’s main ambition. They are in bondage. Interestingly... they consider themselves to be free... yet they are in the most terrible kind of slavery.

“They entice unstable souls.” Stability is a key factor in a successful Christian’s life. I pray that you are building onto a strong foundation that knows God’s word better each and every day!

They have hearts trained in greed for things such as popularity... attention... recognition... security... a position... worldly status... possessions... and money. Their hearts are set on worldly ambitions. In fact their hearts are trained to focus only on their ambition.

Now notice what verse 15 says. They have forsaken the right way.

You have to know the right way... before you can forsake it. In other words... these people knew the truth... but they choose to turn away from it. They know that they are doing wrong. It isn’t a mistake. It is a willful choice that they make. Why? Peter explains by using Balaam as an example. They are controlled by a desire for personal gain. They are controlled by covetousness... they are in bondage to lust for pleasure and money. ...And what an example Balaam is!

The story of Balaam is found in Numbers 22-25.

Balaam is a mysterious character, a Gentile prophet who tried to curse the Jews. Balak, the king of the Moabites, was afraid of Israel, so he turned to Balaam for help. Balaam knew it was wrong to cooperate with Balak, but his heart was covetous and he wanted the money and honor that Balak promised him. Balaam knew the truth of God and the will of God, yet he deliberately abandoned the right way and went astray. He is a perfect illustration of the apostates in their covetous practices.

From the outset, God told Balaam not to help Balak and, at first, Balaam obeyed and sent the messengers home. But when Balak sent more princes and promised more money and honor, Balaam decided to "pray about it again" and reconsider the matter. The second time, God tested Balaam and permitted him to go with the princes. This was not God's direct will; it was His permissive will, designed to see what the prophet would do.

Balaam jumped at the chance! But when he started to go astray, God rebuked the disobedient prophet through the mouth of his don-key. How remarkable that the animals obey God, even when their masters do not! (read Isa. 1:3) God permitted Balaam to set up his altars and offer his sacrifices, but God did not permit him to curse Israel. Instead, God turned Balaam's curse into a blessing (Deut. 23:4-5; Neh. 13:2).

Balaam was not able to curse Israel, but he was able to tell Balak how to defeat Israel. All the Moabites had to do was invite the Jews to be "friendly neighbors" and share in their feasts (Num. 25). Instead of maintaining its separated position, Israel compromised and joined the pagan orgies of the Moabites. God had to discipline the people and thousands of them died.

You can see in Balaam the two aspects of apostasy that Peter emphasized in this chapter: sensual lust and covetousness. He loved money and he led Israel into lustful sin. He was a man who could get messages from God, yet he led people away from God! When you read his oracles, you cannot help but be impressed with his eloquence; yet he deliberately disobeyed God!

Because Balaam counseled Balak to seduce Israel, God saw to it that Balaam was judged. He was slain by the sword when Israel defeated the Midianites (Num. 31:8.)

Balaam was a rebel against the will of God. Like the false teachers that Peter described, Balaam knew the right way, but deliberately chose the wrong way because he wanted to make money. He kept "playing with the will of God" by trying to get "a different viewpoint" (Num. 22:41; 23:13, 27). He no doubt had a true gift from God because he uttered some beautiful prophecies about Jesus Christ, but he prostituted that gift to base uses just to gain honor and wealth.

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We may not have any blatant false teachers among us right now... but that does not mean we will never have their destructive consequences among us.

A wise general once said: "Every battle is won or lost before it is fought."

If that is true... and Scripture's warnings are true... we need to be prepared! In these last days... there is an abundance of false teachers trying to get into our homes and our church.