

Preachers Who Abandon God and His Word

2 Peter 2:10b-22

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Last Sunday, we looked at 2 Peter 2:1-10a and examined the strategies of false teachers. Just like last Sunday, this morning's text is not an easy text to read and study. Peter's purpose is to warn us and equip us to stand firm when false teaching comes into the church. He is equipping us to recognize their strategies and remind us that God will judge false teachers.

Peter is not equipping us how to work with people who have been deceived and broken by their teaching. So, while we need to recognize false teaching and false teachers, we must also firmly and lovingly speak the truth in love to those trapped in false teaching.

Think about it this way. Jesus said He came to set the captives free. Jesus showed mercy to those trapped in the lies of the enemy. However, He was hardest on the Pharisees and Sadducees for misleading God's people. So, when it comes to false teachers, we must hold them accountable for the damage they do. We must warn, rebuke, and call them to repent. Yet, with those who have been deceived by them, we should warn them and, at the same time, *deal firmly and gently with them*.

I want to front-load this sermon with the mercy and grace of Jesus for those who struggle with or have stumbled into these false teachings or deadly worldviews. I want you to know that GABC loves you. We want to help you get free from these deadly worldviews. We want to help you understand the life-giving hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, listen to me. One of the most loving messages we can give you is to warn you that false teachers exist, and they teach deadly social theories and deadly worldviews. *Their cancerous messages* do not come with a warning label like cigarettes. False teachers promise liberty, but their message is really poison. They promise solutions to your problems that are really prisons. They promise you heaven, but it is really hell.

So, if you are drowning in the waters of false teaching, I am glad you are here. You are in the right place this morning. We want to throw you the lifeline of the gospel.

Now, let's dig into 2 Peter 2:10b-22. Remember, our series is titled: *Tough Love. Trigger warning!* Peter does not coddle us with gentle, soft language in chapter 2. His words admonish us to sharpen our minds and thicken our emotional and spiritual skin. His words exhort us to toughen up and stand firm. He sounds like the author of Hebrews when he says in chapter 12, vv. 12-13:

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

In the same manner, the Apostle Paul charges us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to be prepared to:

Destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ."

So, with these gracious words of exhortations on the front end of this message, let's get to work on this text. *I have three simple points this morning:* the character of false teachers is depraved; the content of their teaching is depraved, and the doom of false teachers is sure.

I. The character of false teachers is depraved (vv. 10b-16)

In v. 10b, Peter continues his blistering attack of false teachers. He continues to strip the layers of veneer off of their lives to reveal that what is underneath it is really rotten wood. Let's just walk through the text. Look in vv. 10b-11:

*Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,
¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a
 blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.*

The first characteristic we see in false teachers is that they are boldly arrogant. Peter illustrates his point by saying that the false teachers slander the "*glorious ones*." The "*glorious ones*" are good angels. So, in v. 11, Peter says that *good angels* did not slander the *false teachers* or even *fallen angels* before the Lord. Instead, they left judgment to the Lord.

Peter's point is that these false teachers had no fear of the supernatural or authority. Peter says these false teachers did not mind deriding *good or evil angels*. Most commentators believe that these false teachers did not believe in the supernatural, and as a result of this belief, they were arrogant.

However, their greatest error was not submitting to the authority of Scripture. They arrogantly disregarded the teachings of God's word, which taught that there are angels and demons. *Like many false prophets* in the Old Testament, these false teachers didn't believe the Day of the Lord would come. Bottom line: they disregarded the teaching and authority of God's word.

Friends, when preachers abandon God and His word, then it means they have thrown off all restraints. When this happens, everyone does what is right in their own eyes. So, to teach that that Jesus will not return and that He will not judge sinners undercuts the gospel and does great damage to the church. The fact is the Day of the Lord will come, and the question is: *will you be ready?*

Peter continues his scathing condemnation of the false teachers in vv. 12-13a:

*¹² But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and
 destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be
 destroyed in their destruction ¹³ suffering wrong as the wage for their
 wrongdoing.*

Griffith Thomas was a 19th-century English pastor, and he said these false teachers were reckless brutes. They were self-indulgent men who did not care for God's word or God's people. They only wanted to have their cravings satisfied.¹

So, here is what these false teachers would do. In order to build an audience, they taught new captivating ideas. Their teaching held these young Christians spellbound. These men twisted the word of God to make it say what they wanted it to say in order to get what they wanted. Does this sound familiar? It should because false teachers do this today.

In v. 12, Peter calls these teachers "*irrational*." The Greek word for *irrational* is "*a-logos*." The Greek word "*logos*" means "*word*." When the letter "*alpha*" is added as a prefix, we get the word "*a-logos*." The Greek letter "*alpha*" is added for the same reason we put "*a*" in front of words like "*atypical*" or "*amoral*."

¹ Robert Leighton & Griffith Thomas, *The Crossway Classic Commentaries: 1 & 2 Peter*, Alister McGrath & J.I. Packer series editors, 278.

“Atypical” means non-typical, and “amoral” means “no morals.” Peter is saying that these teachers are “a-logos.” They do not teach the word of God; not do they have any understanding of God’s word. So, what happens when a teacher is “a-logos” not teaching the word of God but things from his or her own imagination or things they dream up?

Look in vv. 13b-15. Peter lists six characteristics of “a-logos” teachers. The first characteristic we see is hedonism. In v. 13b, Peter says, “*They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.*”

The word for *pleasure* is hedonism. Hedonism says, “*Isn’t sin wonderful!*” False teachers are hedonistic in their pursuit of pleasure. False teachers begin by hiding their sin, but eventually, they come out in the open. They will flaunt their sinning in the daytime and especially on social media. They believe they are above it all. They do not believe God will hold them accountable because they do not believe in the *Day of the Lord*.

Next, Peter says they are hypocrites. He says, “*They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions.*” In other words, they are like pimples on the face of a person that cannot be covered up with makeup. These teachers pretended they had clear complexions, but they knew there were pimples, warts, and blemishes hidden underneath the surface of the makeup.

The third depraved characteristic is sensuality. Peter says, “*while they feast with you.*” Their *hypocrisy* led to *sensuality*. Peter is most likely referring to the *Love Feasts* of the early church. *Love Feasts* were when the church would gather and enjoy a meal together, kind of like a pitch-in-dinner. Then at some point during the gathering, the church would celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

At these feasts, the false teachers began to pervert the feasts with their false doctrines, which eventually perverted the Lord’s Supper. The Apostle Paul addressed this same problem in the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11. Listen to what he says in vv. 20-22:

When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you?

Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

Friends, the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance we take with much care, preparation, and solemnity. It is the on-going, visual proclamation of the gospel. It is a time of remembrance of the person and work of Christ. It is a time of repentance and remembering the grace given in the gospel. It is a time of renewal of our covenant with Jesus and with the church. It is not to be taken lightly but with the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Christ.

If false teachers can water down or pervert the Lord’s Supper, they have a foothold in the church’s gospel remembrance and covenant renewal.

The fourth depraved characteristic is adultery. He says, “*They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.*” Their *sensuality* led to *adultery*.

So, what is happening here is that the false teachers had introduced sexual immorality in the church’s feasts. In essence, they had turned the feast into a Greco-Roman sex feast.²

These teachers most likely preyed on young believers. They were easy pickings to get them to participate in their sin. This is why it is so important for young and new believers to increase in their

² Matthew S. Harmon, *ESV Expository Commentary: Hebrews-Revelation*, 394.

knowledge of Scripture and their salvation. The enemy knows young people, and immature believers are easy pickings for sexual sins.

The fifth depraved characteristic is greed. Look in the middle of v. 14. We see that these teachers *“Have hearts trained in greed.”*

This is amazing! It is the first century; the church is not even 75 years old, and yet false teachers are already skilled at leading the church astray through sex and money. These teachers not only loved money, but they were also skilled in fleecing the flock of their money.

Finally, the sixth depraved characteristic is apostasy. Look in vv. 14d-15a. Peter says false teachers are *“Accursed children! ¹⁵ Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.”*

In other words, these false teachers began with the gospel but, at some point, abandoned it in order to pursue their own preferred doctrine. As a result, they stand under divine condemnation.

Peter concludes his unmasking the depraved character of the false teachers with the Old Testament example of Balaam. He says in vv. 15b-16:

They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, ¹⁶ but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

In Numbers 22, the Moabite King, Balak, paid the prophet Balaam to curse Israel as they traveled through their land to the Promise Land. Peter’s point is that like Balaam loved money and prophesied for greedy purposes, so also do these false teachers propagate their lies and sexual immorality in order to line their own pockets.³

Peter does not want us to be deceived by false teachers who teach false doctrine and lead sexually immoral lives in order to make a buck.

Bottom line: God’s word must always be our great treasure. It must always be the foundation of our lives. Jesus, when tempted by Satan, said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* There is life in God’s word and especially in the embodiment of God’s word—the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The content of their false teaching is depraved (vv. 17-19)

Peter uses two metaphors to paint a picture of the depraved doctrine of false teachers. He says:

[They] are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

These are intense metaphors that define the depraved doctrine of false teachers. Next, Peter unpacks the metaphors. Look in v. 18:

¹⁸ For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

First, these teachers are *dry wells*. They have nothing of value to say. Peter says their doctrine it is like traveling in the desert and you are dying of thirst. Then your hopes are raised because you have found a well in an oasis only to discover the well is dry. What a tragic disappointment is the doctrine of false teachers. It sounds like it is thirst-quenching water but is it only a mouth full of sand and leaves you dying of thirst.

³ Ibid, 395.

In Jeremiah 2, God confronted His people for abandoning Him for dry wells. He said, *“My people . . . have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug for themselves their own cisterns (wells), broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”*

This is what false teachers do. They dig empty wells for people. They offer hope in these dry wells, but they are really empty solutions. The truth is only Jesus, the Living Water, can quench our thirst.

I want our young Christians, college students, and young adults to listen closely. *False teachers* know you are easy prey. They offer innovative and even sensual answers to the problem of your struggle with sin. They trap young Christians and young adults by appealing to those areas of their lives that are hardest to change, which is usually sexual struggles. They will tell you if you follow their teaching, then you can have the best of both worlds. These promises are empty wells.

False teachers will appeal to the lusts of young Christians and young people by telling them that pornography, sex before marriage, sex outside of marriage, adultery, same-sex desires, same-sex relationships, same-sex marriage, transgender, gender fluidity, gender is a psychological and social construct. They will tell you that the sexual revolution promises sexual freedom. They will tell you that God gave you these desires, so it is okay to practice them. They will tell you these practices are not a big deal or not sin at all. They will build large followings and make lots of money off of your lusts and desires.

Trigger warning: Here is the truth. These practices are sin. It is true that sexual sins are sins, among many other sins. However, sexual sins are also different than other sins. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6:18, *“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”* Sexual sins do more damage and have more consequences.

So, here is the deal. If you are struggling with sexual sin, that is normal. Most people struggle with sexual thoughts and temptations. However, it is not okay to simply give up and give in. We must fight sin. We must fight for holiness without which we will not see the Lord.

Friends, there is hope, and there is a victory over sexual sin. If you keep turning to the Living Water of Jesus through a life of repentance, you will find hope, help, and strength to overcome sin.

Jesus purchased power of His Holy Spirit for you on the cross to help you to grow in holiness. He has given you His supernatural word. Finally, Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to establish the church so that you and I have a spiritual home on this earth in order to fellowship with people who love you and want to help you. The church wants to encourage you to keep drinking from the well of the Living Water of Jesus.

Now, let's unpack the second metaphor in v. 19:

¹⁹ They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

The second metaphor is the verdict of the doctrine of false teachers. *Their doctrine is powerless in the face of sin.* They promise freedom, but it actually leads us to be slaves to sin, *“For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.”*

You have heard the old adage, *“Misery loves company.”* This is what is going on here. These false teachers were enslaved to their sin, so they wanted others to join them in their prison.

Peter says there is a special place in Hell for false teachers. Look back at the end of v. 17, *“For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.”* This leads us to our last point in vv. 20-22.

III. The doom of false teachers is sure (vv. 20-22)

Remember, this whole chapter is tough love for the church. It identified and indicted false teachers. Now Peter spells out their doom. Look in v. 20:

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Verse 20 creates some confusion for some Christians. It sounds like Peter says that these false teachers were true believers who eventually gave in to their sin only to lose their salvation.

We need to consider a couple of things here. First, if this was the only text we had on professions of faith, then we might be inclined to conclude that a person can lose their salvation. However, we have many other texts that teach that true believers persevere in their faith until the end.

What this verse is teaching is what a false profession of faith looks like. We have other verses in Scripture that teach us that there will be people who give false professions of faith in Christ.

In the Parable of the Seeds, Jesus taught us that there was only one seed that was truly saved, and that was the seed that bore fruit. The seeds that sprung up in the weeds and among the rocks looked like true faith, but they were not. They eventually withered and died.

The Apostle John teaches us about false professions of faith in 1 John 2:19. He said, *“They [meaning people they thought were true believers] went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.”*

So, what Peter describes in v. 20 is a false profession of faith made by these false teachers. Whatever their *public profession of faith* was, it ended with a *public rejection of faith*.

Next, Peter continues to ratchet up the language. He said it would have been better if these teachers had never even known of the gospel.

²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

These are the people Jesus described as putting their hands to the plow and then turning back. Jesus says they are unfit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter warns us that the judgment on false teachers will be more severe than on those who never made any profession of faith in Christ. However, just to be clear, ignorance of the gospel of Jesus Christ does not excuse anyone’s sin, and the sin of unbelief will send you to hell. Yet, *those who claim to believe the gospel* and then return to their old lives of a habitual pattern of unrepentant sin and rejection of the gospel will be far worse off on the Day of the Lord.

Finally, in v. 22, Peter gives his strongest condemnation of false teachers in two short proverbs.

²² What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

What does Peter mean by dogs and hogs? In Philippians 3:2, the Apostle Paul called the *false teachers: legalistic dogs*. They wanted young, immature Christians to return to living by the Law. Likewise, the whole letter of Galatians is a warning against the *dogs of legalism*.

The other group is the *hogs of hedonism*. Look, you can give a pig a bath, blow-dry her hair, put a bow on her tail, and blush on her face, but it will not matter. She may look good for a little while, but eventually, she will make her way back to the mud that she so much enjoys.

Friends, we must beware of the *dogs of legalism* and the *hogs of hedonism*. The *dogs of legalism* promise freedom if we will just add all of their laws to Jesus. The *hogs of hedonism* teach us that sin is really no big deal, and we should simply enjoy our sin. Satan does not care which ditch you are in just as long as you are stuck in one of these ditches.

So, I want to conclude where Peter began, “*Bold and willful, [the false teachers] do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.*” These false teachers stared into God’s word, and they could not recognize the glory of God. Their hearts are callous and hardened. They missed the splendor of the holiness of God.

What is the condition of your heart? Do you love the glory of God, or do you dread it? Do you love the glory of God, or are you indifferent to it? Do you desire to look into the word of God and see the glory of God for which you were created? If not, then please talk with me before you leave.