

17. The Epistle of 2Peter—2:14-22

(2/27/19)

For the last few weeks we have been studying 2Peter chapter 2 where Peter has been exposing and denouncing false prophets (teachers) who infiltrated the church posing as men of God to then destroy it and those in it with their damning heresies.

Peter goes on to describe their carnality and their coming destruction using some very graphic language and imagery—

2 Peter 2:12-14 (NKJV)

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...**

Peter is saying that false teachers infiltrate churches for two reasons—1) *to satisfy their own sexual lusts*; 2) *to capture converts for their perverted cause*.

Why can't these wicked people “**cease from sin**”?—because they are in bondage to their fallen nature and only Jesus can set them free!

“**enticing unstable souls**” means ‘*preying upon the spiritually weak*’.

One pastor said—

“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 by various 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.”

Maybe you've heard about one of these wolves masquerading as a 'man of God'—a man who goes by the title "John of God".

"For over 40 years, spiritual healer Joao Teixeira de Faria drew people from all over the world to this small city in central Brazil, offering treatment for everything from depression to cancer. Oprah Winfrey called de Faria "inspiring" while visiting in 2012. Now, de Faria, who goes by the name "Joao de Deus," or "John of God," is in trouble with the law.

Since December, more than 250 women including his daughter have come forward to allege abuse that ranged from being felt up during treatments to rape. The mounting accusations are turning the 77-year-old spiritual guru into Brazil's first major figure to go down in the #metoo era, which has been slow to take off in Latin America's largest nation despite myriad problems with gender equality.

By some estimates, his "casa spiritual," or "spiritual house," attended to 10,000 patients a week. It was there that de Faria, who over the decades came under sharp scrutiny from critics who deemed him a charlatan, performed "psychic" surgeries that he said could heal a wide range of maladies..."

So, here's one of those Peter was referring to—a man who claims to represent God but then used and abused women for sex.

This week at the Vatican the Catholic Church is holding a 'Sex Abuse Summit' to deal with priests and other Catholic clergy from all over the world who have sexually abused women and children. (Finish)

"...having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls..."
(v.14)

One pastor said—

*"The word **enticing** (deleazō) literally means "to catch with bait," and the apostle's word picture is unmistakable. The false teachers, like fishermen using a lure, tricked their victims to believe their deceptions. Under the guise of authentic ministry, they targeted the unsuspecting (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6–8)—the spiritually immature, undiscerning, or unbelieving. Peter knew that the only sure defense against their tactics was a strong foundation in God's Word (1 Peter 2:1–3; cf. Eph. 4:14; 1 John 2:13)."*

Peter goes on to give another warning about false teachers in the church—first they are often **menacing sexual predators**, and secondly, they are **greedy for money**:

2 Peter 2:14b (NKJV)

¹⁴ ...*They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.*

The word ‘**covetous**’ means having ‘*a strong desire for something or someone*’ (sometimes translated ‘lust’)—

Exodus 20:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbor's."

Peter further intensifies this idea when he said that these individuals have ‘*trained their hearts in covetous practices.*’

The Greek word for **trained** is the word we get the English word *gymnasium* from—an athletic term meaning “*exercise,*” or “*discipline.*”

Commentator and historian William Barclay explains:

*“The picture is a terrible one. The word which is used for “**trained**” is the word which is used for an athlete, exercising and training himself for the games. These people have actually trained and equipped and taught their minds and hearts to concentrate on nothing but the forbidden desire. They have deliberately fought with conscience until they have destroyed it; they have deliberately wrestled with God until they have thrown God out of [their] life; they have deliberately struggled with their finer feelings until they have strangled them; they have deliberately trained themselves to concentrate on the forbidden things. Their lives have been a dreadful battle to destroy virtue and to train themselves in the techniques of sin.”*

Peter calls them ‘**accursed children**’ meaning—they are children of the devil who were bound for hell (like Judas, the Pharisees and the Antichrist).

2 Peter 2:15-16 (NKJV)

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.**

Balaam was a prophet of God who was greedy for money. (Numbers 22-24—Explain)

2 Peter 2:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Jude 1:12-13 (NKJV)

¹² These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving *only* themselves. *They are* clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; ¹³ raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Warren Wiersbe—

Raging waves of the sea—Jude may have had Isaiah 57:20 in mind: “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” All that the “great swelling words” of the apostates can produce is foam and flotsam! The true teachers of the Word bring up the treasures of the deep, but the false teachers produce only refuse. And what they boast about, they really ought to be ashamed of! (see Phil. 3:19)

Wandering stars (v. 13b). Jude was not referring to fixed stars, planets, or comets, because they have definite positions and orbits. He was referring to meteors, falling stars that suddenly appear and then vanish into the darkness, never to be seen again. Our Lord is compared to a star (Rev. 2:28; 22:16), and Christians are to shine as stars in this dark world (Phil. 2:15). Fixed stars can be depended on to guide the traveler through the darkness but wandering stars can only lead him astray.

God has reserved chains of darkness for the rebellious angels (Jude 6), and He has reserved “the blackness of darkness forever” for apostate teachers. Beware of following a falling star! It will lead you into eternal blackness!”

2 Peter 2:18 (NKJV)

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.

Jude echoes Peter’s sentiment but elaborates—

Jude 1:16-19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. ¹⁷ But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁸ how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

¹⁹ These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.

The devil's strategy has always been 'divide and conquer'.

Proverbs 6:16-19 (NKJV)

¹⁶ These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Titus 3:10-11 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

Romans 16:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. ¹⁸ For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

William MacDonald comments on Peter's statement about false teachers—

“They speak great swelling words of emptiness, or as Knox translates it, they use “fine phrases that have no meaning.” This is an accurate description of the words of many liberal preachers and false cultists. They are accomplished orators, holding audiences spellbound by their grandiose rhetoric. Their erudite vocabulary attracts undiscerning people. What their sermons lack in content, they make up for in a dogmatic, forceful presentation. But when they have finished they have said nothing.”

Listen to this quote by false teacher Lenard Sweet who spoke at the Catalyst Conference in Atlanta a few years ago, attended by thousands of evangelical leaders from across the nation.

Lenard Sweet is an Emerging Church author and speaker who is really a New Ager dressed in sheep's clothing.

“The first of these five untheorized observations is that New Light embodiment means to be “in connection” and ‘in-formation’ with other Christians. Deeper feeling and higher relating go together. The church is fundamentally one being, one person, a comm-union whose cells are connected to one another within the information network called the Christ consciousness. New Lights offer up themselves as the cosmions of a mind-of-Christ consciousness. As a cosmion incarnating the cells of a new body, New Lights will function as transitional vessels through which transforming energy can renew the divine image in the world, moving postmoderns from one state of embodiment to another.”

If that isn't the epitome of "great swelling words of emptiness" I don't know what is!

When Peter says, "they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error." (v.18)—he could have in mind new Christians these false teachers target since they haven't had time to get grounded in the Word and therefore are still easy prey for false doctrine.

Or Peter could have in mind those who hadn't yet made a real commitment to Jesus but had moved away from old friends and sinful behavior as they were now attending church and hanging around Christians—'checking out Christ' to possibly receive Him as Lord and Savior.

They would fall into the category of 'John the Baptist disciples' but not yet Jesus' disciples. (Explain)

This is the difference between 'reformation' and 'regeneration.'

2 Peter 2:19 (NKJV)

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.

2 Peter 2:19 (NLT2)

¹⁹ They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you.

2 Peter 2:20-22 (NKJV)

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."

Before we look at these verses—let's first turn to Matthew 12 because Jesus says something that very much parallels what Peter said in v.20-22—

Matthew 12:43-45 (NKJV)

⁴³ "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first...

This passage troubles people because it's difficult to understand what Jesus is talking about here—of course seeing the passage in its context will greatly help us to understand.

The context is the conclusion of a confrontation that Jesus had with the Scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 12:22-24 (NKJV)

²² Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. ²³ And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" ²⁴ Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

Jesus responded by rebutting the logic that Satan would do things that would undermine and destroy his own kingdom.

From there He went on to teach that a good tree is known by the good fruit it produces; while a bad tree is known by the bad fruit it produces.

He said the same is true with the human heart and that since the Scribes and Pharisees only spoke lies and untruths it proved their hearts were bad (unredeemed) and that they were children of the devil and not of God.

Now in verses 43-45 He seems to be expanding on that teaching with a section that is dealing with the danger of reformation that stops short of regeneration—let me explain.

Even though, inwardly, the Scribes and Pharisees were unredeemed or unregenerated in their hearts—outwardly their lives seemed righteous and holy.

In Matthew 23 Jesus would pick up on this and compare them to white-washed tombs...

But what the Lord is acknowledging here is that often a person can 'reform' or 'clean up' their life by going to church, hanging out with Christians and staying away from the things of the world.

These things can drive out of their lives whatever evil spirits (demons) that were working to influence them to live in rebellion and sin against God.

Just like Paul said in I Corinthians 15:33 that "*evil company can corrupt moral living*" by the same token good company can drive out immoral living.

However, the danger of religious reformation which stops short of true regeneration is that—it gives people a false sense that they have a relationship with God simply because they're going to church and staying away from some of their old sins (alcohol, drugs, pornography etc.).

J. Vernon McGee—

"In other words, reformation is no good. My friend, you can quit doing many things, but that won't make you a Christian. If everyone in the world would quit sinning right now, there wouldn't be any more Christians in the next minute or in the next day, because quitting sin doesn't make Christians. Reformation is not what we need".

No, what a person needs is *repentance* (change of mind) followed by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Master of your life) which brings regeneration (salvation).

And Jesus goes on to warn what happens to the person who *doesn't* go all the way with God—

Matthew 12:43-44 (NKJV)

⁴³ "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds *it empty*, swept, and put in order.

The key word here is “**empty**”—in other words you can “sweep” the house of your heart clean from some sins through reformation—but a clean house is not enough.

J.Vernon McGee—

“The hardest people in the world [to reach for Christ] are unsaved church members because they think they are all right [have a relationship with God]. They have undergone self-reformation—their lives have been swept clean and put in order by religion—but they are like a vacant house, and all the evil spirits have to do is move back in. The Devil owns them, and they don’t recognize this fact...””.

Warren Wiersbe—

“It is not enough to clean house; we must also invite in the right tenant. The Pharisees were proud of their “clean houses,” but their hearts were empty! Mere religion, or reformation, will not save. There must be regeneration, the receiving of Christ into the heart””.

Again, here is the danger of someone cleaning up their life a little through *religion* but stopping short of inviting Jesus to come in and live in their heart bringing a vital *relationship* with Him.

If Jesus, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, isn’t living in their heart—their heart is susceptible to being filled with other spirits—evil spirits.

You see, the real problem with reformation is that the thrill and novelty of going to church and hanging out with Christian people—eventually wears off!

When that happens, the unregenerate person goes back to the old life because—they’re not a new creation in Christ which means they don’t have the nature of God within them!

But here’s the problem—once they know God’s truth and then willingly turn from it, the end result is that they are in a worse place than before—much worse!

And that’s what Jesus goes on to warn about—

Matthew 12:45 (NKJV)

⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first...

Peter echoes the same thought—

2 Peter 2:20-22 (NKJV)

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."

The reason a dog eats its own vomit and a pig, even though it's been washed and cleaned up, returns to wallow in the mud hole because—it's the nature of dogs and pigs to act this way.

The reason people who come to church for a while and stop doing some of the sinful things they use to do eventually return to the filth of the world is because—that's their nature!

These people experienced some *reformation*, but it stopped short of genuine *regeneration* (salvation) which would have given them a new nature with new desires.

When we accepted Jesus into our hearts we received a new nature ('the divine nature' -2Peter 1:4) and as such—"*old things passed away and all things became new*". (2Corinthians 5:17)

The evidence of this began immediately in that the things we used to love to do (sin) we no longer desired to do; and the things we didn't want to do (church, Bible study, prayer, worship) now we love to do!

This is one of the most powerful evidences whereby we know that Jesus has moved in!