

## **How Can I Avoid Being Led Astray? 2 Peter 2:1-22**

Intro: It may be helpful at this point in our study of 2 Peter to think through the logic of Peter's second epistle. Peter's purpose it appears is to give assurance to Christians so that they will not turn away from the faith. He tells us that God has given us the true knowledge of Himself to inform us and His great promises to motivate us so that we can escape the defilement of the world through faith. He then tells us how that if we add to our faith the divine nature we can be sure that we will gain entrance in the everlasting kingdom. This is how we can be sure. However if we don't do these things, we will fall away.

In the second section he shows us how that our knowledge of Christ is based on unalterable messianic prophecy and the credible eyewitness testimony of the apostles. This is how we can be sure that the gospel is true and by continuing in it we can be sure that we are right. Now in chapter two he shows us that false teachers will arise and if we listen to them, we will fall away from the Lord and lose the great promises God has made.

So the question tonight is how can we know a false teacher and what are the consequences of following them? (Read the text together)

It would be difficult in an expository sermon to consider all the features of this text that fills out the details of a false prophet or false teacher. Peter's words are not easily subjected to analysis as if he were working from a structured outline. Instead he by the Holy Spirit simply pours out his passion against those in his own generation who cast doubt upon the apostolic message and undermined by their false words the holy life it was intended to produce. He spares no words to impress upon his hearers the characteristics of the false teacher and the consequences to them and those they influence.

### **Who were these false teachers to which Peter refers?**

*Evidence from several NT books as well as second century writers points to a morally dangerous Christian philosophy called "Gnosticism". It receives its name from the claim that these teachers made that they possessed a special enlightened view, knowledge that others did not have. It was based on a philosophical view of the gospel that attacked it on two points:*

**The first was the nature of Jesus Himself. Gnosticism denied the fundamental truths about Jesus being the son of God who lived in a fleshly body on earth and gave his life for the sins of the world.**

**The second was the lifestyle a Christian should live. Gnostic teachers gave their disciples encouragement to practice sins like involvement in pagan worship, sexual immorality, and revelry.**

*In Peter's second letter we see his righteous indignation toward these false teachers.*

### **The false teacher's message**

#### ***Denies the great truths about Jesus and His redemption***

**Destructive heresies denying the Master, v. 1**

The reference may be the denial that Christ as God came in the flesh and died on the cross for the sins of man. This may be why Peter refers to the great truth of Jesus' divine sonship in chapter one. His divine majesty was expressed by God Himself!

#### ***Defies the holy life to which Christians are called***

To pervert the gospel truths about Jesus' nature led to false doctrines about Christian living. Gnostics taught that the flesh was evil and consequently it did not matter how they lived in the body.

**Encouraged the practice of sin under the guise of "liberty", v. 19**

It may be that these teachers encouraged the practice of the works of the flesh as a supposed means of escaping their grip. Of course, the opposite was the result, that those who did so would be entangled and overcome by sin.

Or it may be that they argued that since the flesh was inherently evil and that the Christian was not subject to God's judgment for fleshly living; hence it did not matter what one did with the body.

### **The false teacher's mindset**

#### ***They are rebels at heart to the authority of God, v. 10***

**Daring—reckless daring that defies God and man**

**Self-willed—obstinacy that pleases oneself at all costs**

**They do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties—it could refer based on a parallel text in Jude to an argument made concerning the sin of angels and used to justify sinful conduct among their disciples, or the reference may be to human sources of revelation like the apostles and other church leaders who are reviled by false teachers**

**Reviles the truth, v. 12**

***In sum, they are unprincipled men! (2 Pet. 3:17-18)***

### **The false teacher's lifestyle**

#### ***Lascivious, v. 2 (a reference to a wanton life, a life unrestrained by the morality of God, reckless and hardened immorality)***

**They live on the animal level**

**They are revelers, carousing (Peter describes a daytime debauchery that did not even characterize the Roman world in general)**

**They are fornicators (having eyes full of adultery) They are depicted as enjoying attending Christian gatherings while harboring the most lustful and improper thoughts of their sisters in Christ**

*Peter's description fills out the Lord's statement: "By their fruit you shall know them."*

#### **The false teacher's motivation**

*Greed results in exploitation, v. 3*

*A heart trained in greed, v. 14 (the word from which we get gymnasium and the word for greed conveys the idea of unbridled desire for more and more)*

*Like Balaam, loving the wages of unrighteousness, v. 15-16*

#### **The false teacher's mode of operation**

*Works secretly, v. 1*

*Uses sensuality to gain adherents, v. 18*

*Preys on weak members, entices unstable souls, v. 14*

#### **The false teacher's damage**

*v. 2 Popular, leads many to turn away from the truth, v. 2*

*Often those outside the church spurn the truth because of sinners they see in it, v. 2*

*They offer what cannot bless, v. 17*

*Wells without water (cannot satisfy)*

*Clouds without rain and driven by storms (cannot refresh)*

*Lead people back into the sins from which they have been saved. For them the latter condition of people led back into sin is worse than the first, v. 20-22*

#### **The false teacher's destruction**

*Cursed children (under God's curse), v.*

*Swift--v. 1*

*The same as that which has come to other rebels against God's authority--v. 4-9.*

#### **Observations**

*It is important to make a bright line distinction between false teachers of the type Peter is describing and sincere brethren committing to the authority of the apostolic word and practicing a holy life who differ on the meaning and application of the scriptures. It is not that uncommon for Christians to label someone who they disagree with on some point, even in their own congregation, as a false teacher. If the NT makes anything clear at all, even here in 2 Peter, the Christian life is a process of growth that presumes that we all increase in our understanding and knowledge of the truth with time and hard study. God makes provision for sincere believers to accept and help each other grow in understanding rather than label each other as false teachers and fomenting endless divisions as the consequence. However, saying this does not in any way invalidate the point that false teachers may exist today just as they did in Peter's day. We can see in our society teachers whose viewpoints invite the practice of the works of the flesh.*

**Embracing all religions**  
**Practice of fornication in homosexual relationships**  
**Legitimizing abortion, drunkenness, lascivious conduct**  
**Justifying unscriptural divorce and remarriage**

**Conclusion: The church should beware of unprincipled men who destroy God's cause. The church should love and support principled men who seek to build it rather than villainize them as "false teachers". The criteria Peter gives will help us avoid being led astray while learning from those who may teach us more perfectly God's way.**