

Title: Of Dogs and Pigs?
Date: 2/2/25
Subject: False teachers character, conduct, impact and outcome
Scripture: 2 Peter 2:10 - 22

Our text this morning unfolds like layers of an onion – one that's rotten on the outside. Hope that by peeling back layer after layer you'll finally get to the part of it that's good. However, the more layers of this onion you peel back, the more you see how the rot has spread into layer after layer after layer.

We were introduced to false teachers in 2:1. Last week we saw the rot in their character, conduct, destructive impact and outcome. Now we reveal more layers as each kind of rot is mixed with the others.

You may wonder why we spend time looking at the rot. The short, but not snarky, answer is God spends time, a lot of time, talking about it in His word. It's certainly not to glorify what false teachers do and teach. It's so we get enough of a whiff so that we want to stay away from that which is harmful to us.

READ 2 Peter 2:10-12

The keyword is translated as slander, heap abuse, or reviling and demeaning judgment in 10 & 11 and in v. 12 as blaspheme. It's defined as "to speak with contempt about God or to be defiantly irreverent. Blasphemy is verbal or written reproach of God's name, character, work, or attributes" (gotquestions.org).

False teachers slander and blaspheme because they're bold and arrogant, full of themselves and headstrong. Therefore, they malign celestial beings. In light of the next verse, it appears that these beings are fallen angels. False teachers speak disrespectfully about them and state or infer that they wouldn't have done what the fallen angels did. They wouldn't have rebelled. No sireeee.

Their conduct is contrasted with God's angels who are far more powerful than these human teachers. They don't bring accusations against evil angels. A companion passage says that even the Archangel Michael didn't dare to bring a slanderous accusation against the devil but left judging up to God (Jude 9).

False teachers don't let a little thing like a dreadful ignorance of truth and what's right get in their way. They authoritatively pontificate in all matters spiritual. They claim special knowledge, but don't have a clue. They lack understanding because they have the mental acuity of brute beasts, irrational creatures without a conscience or moral guidance. False teachers operate by base instinct and impulse rather than a mind which has absorbed God's truth. They'll perish like beasts destined for slaughter. They'll be judged by God.

Quick note: God created us with glands, instincts, natural passions and desires, including physical desires, sexual desires, emotional desires, intellectual desires. There's nothing wrong with these desires. God says there are right ways to fulfill our desires and passions. What's wrong is the improper feeding of these desires, seeking alternative ways to fulfill them.

The next layer of the rotten onion. Read vv. 13-16.

False teachers will be punished for the harm they've done. What harm have they done?

False teachers have a perverse spin on pleasure. They and many others operate by the motto “Whatever feels good do it.” Usually people reserve some kinds of sins for the cover of darkness. Not these guys. They get a kick of indulging in their pleasure in broad daylight. They openly flaunt their perversions and sin. The ones Peter writes about even engaged in such deplorable activity during church meals with Christians. “During” could mean it was while the feast was happening or that they have a split personality - associate with Christians at the meal and do their sins when not together. The more likely scenario is they’d incorporate their carousing into their participation in the feast.

Bob Deffinbaugh raises a troubling indictment: “In spite of their openly fleshly lifestyle, even in the church gatherings, the saints seem oblivious to their sin, failing to recognize these people to be false teachers (Jude 4), and thus these false teachers feel free to continue in sin without any fear of rebuke or correction (without fear, Jude 12). Rather than expose and expel these heretics, the saints seem content to embrace them as fellow-believers, and in the process provide them with prestige and a platform from which they subvert the faith of others, especially the weak and vulnerable (2:13-14, 18-19).”

False teachers are blots and blemishes. They cause the name of Jesus to be dragged through the mud. Carousing means they’re loud, boisterous, drunk while proclaiming their ideas. It also includes a sexual component. It could have been that the false teachers of Peter’s concern adopted shrine prostitution as part of their worship. It says these men had eyes full of adultery meaning they saw every woman as a potential conquest.

They never stop sinning. They persist in it without any remorse or repentance. They’re enslaved by it and unashamed of their activity. They seduce the unstable, the naive, the vulnerable - those who aren't firmly rooted in their faith in Christ. It can also be seen as spiritual seduction by their teaching.

Another area where they never stop sinning is greed. They’re experts in greed. It's a term used for athletes who train to achieve their goal. These teachers train themselves to want and possess people and possessions including what they don't have any right to and shouldn't even think about claiming as their own. Another conclusion is reached. They’re an accursed brood - under a curse because of what they do.

They've left the straight way to wander off along the crooked path. This brings us to an accursed and crooked anti-hero of the Old Testament - Balaam. He was hired by the Moabite king who wanted him to curse Israel to stop them from coming through his country. The Lord didn't allow Balaam to do that. The prophet could only bless them. However, there's more to the story. Balaam found a way to get his money. He advised the Moabite women how they could get the Israelite men to engage in physical adultery which led to spiritual adultery. They turned away from God and worshiped false gods.

Balaam was motivated by greed. He had zero spiritual sense. The one who had some was his donkey. The Lord miraculously gave the beast the ability to speak and restrained Balaam’s madness, temporarily. He later was punished when Israel conquered Moab. He was killed. The Bible says nothing about the donkey but I’m guessing the Lord spared the animal.

Read vv. 17-19.

Emptiness leads to emptiness. False teachers are springs without water. As the American West was settled, people often built towns near a spring. If it had the markings of having water but there wasn't any, the location was useless. An empty spring was a cruel deception to a thirsty traveler – an empty promise.

False teachers are mists driven by a storm. It's water vapor driven ahead of a storm but it never drops a drop on land that desperately needs moisture. It's useless. Another empty promise.

Blackest darkness is reserved for false teachers because they mouth empty boastful words. They're big talkers with big words that sound impressive but have no substance. They're spiritual charlatans. They appear to be sincere Christians and claim to be in the know, but don't have the knowledge they claim to have. They tell others they can be free when they themselves aren't free.

False teachers target people who are just escaping from those who live in error. It's those who've just become Christians. They've broken from the old lifestyle and those who participate in it. But as the NIV Study Bible notes (2:18): they “have not yet had a chance to develop spiritual resistance.”

False teachers promise freedom. It's an empty promise as they themselves aren't free from their depravity. They're enslaved to it, yet promise that people can be morally free and have no restraints on how they live. They teach that people are free from God's moral law, saying that salvation, the initial act of being saved, is all that matters, since the covenant tie to God is so strong that nothing can break it, not even the habitual sin of immorality. The Jewish people found this wasn't true as they didn't enter the Promised Land. The cult The Children of God was begun by a guy who believed that way. All these people use their freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Freedom becomes a license to engage in whatever a person wants to do. Bob Deffinbaugh succinctly states the situation: “these false teachers have distorted the grace of God through the gospel so that, rather than seeing the gospel as God's provision for man's freedom *from* sin, it is viewed as God's provision for man's freedom *to* sin” (bible.org/seriespage/teachers%E2%80%99-hall-shame-2-peter-210-22).

In contrast we're told in the Bible: “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love” (Galatians 5:13), “Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves” (1 Peter 2:16).

These verses and the position of false prophets point out a problem. False teachers, and sadly sometimes Christians, change their theology and doctrine to fit their lifestyle and way they act. Our theology and beliefs should dictate our lifestyle and morality. Are we turned off by the filth of the world or playing fire, allowing ourselves to be enticed? Be tempted isn't wrong, but it's not wise to wander close to it.

We come to some perplexing verses that are a little bit more difficult to interpret.

Read 2:20-22.

What does it mean to escape the corruption of the world? What's meant by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? What's meant by being again entangled and overcome? What's meant by they're worse off at the end than they were at the beginning? What's meant by it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness and turn their backs on the sacred command?

There are two ways to understand these verses. NIV Study Bible note presents the views (2:20-22): “Some point to this passage as clear proof that a genuinely saved person may lose his salvation. He knows the Lord; he escapes the world's corruption; he knows the way of righteousness. Then he turns away from the message and goes back to his old way of life. His knowledge is said to have been genuine; his change of life was real; and his return to his old way of life was not superficial. Others insist that the knowledge of the Lord and of the way of righteousness could not have been genuine. If the person had been truly regenerated, he would have persevered in his faith. It is argued that the teaching of John 10:27-30 (especially v. 28) and Romans 8:28-39 makes it clear that no genuinely saved person can be lost. Thus, according to this view, the person described here could not have been genuinely saved.”

I believe the second is the better interpretation. The false teachers in these verses never had a true and real relationship with Christ. They had escaped the corruption of the world and found some shelter under the label of Christian. They knew our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in that they associated with the truth. However, they're pretenders. The false teachers are merely externally reformed, kinda, sorta.

They never really, truly left the world system. It's only a matter of time before they again become entangled in the world and it overcomes them. They're worse off than they were before. Those who have more knowledge will be judged based on having more knowledge. It would have been better for the false teachers to not have been oh so close - to have known the way of righteousness, to be familiar with the gospel of Christ, and then reject it.

Jesus warned the cities where his miracles were performed that they'd be judged more harshly than cities that didn't have the advantage of seeing them (Mt 11:20-24). He told the Pharisees and other religious leaders who had an abundance of knowledge and access to God's word that they were blind guides (Jn 9:39-41). They didn't pay attention to the truth and lead astray other people. He gave a parable about a servant who knows his master's will and doesn't do it will be judged more harshly than a servant who doesn't know the master's will (Lk 12:47, 48). He taught about an evil spirit that came out of man (Mt 12:43-45). It later returned with seven other spirits more wicked than itself and found that the man was still empty. The final condition of the man was worse than at the beginning. He used that teaching to say how it'll be worse for that wicked generation because they had Jesus with them while others didn't. Another scripture tells us it's not merely enough for people to say they believe (James 2:18, 19). There needs to be supporting evidence - lifestyle of obedience to God - as even the demons believe in one God - and shudder.

There are people who make professions of faith, are church members, and clean up their lives a little bit. They give the appearance -- but they've never truly been born again.

Bob Deffinbaugh again: “Only the last state of the false teachers can be worse than the first. If a Christian falls into sin and is judged for it, he still remains a believer with the assurance of eternal life. Even when physically destroyed, he has the sure hope of heaven (1 Corinthians 5:5). The unbeliever never did have the hope of heaven. His last state of unbelief is worse than his first state because he has come to know “the

commandment” (the gospel) and has rejected it. It is better to be judged in ignorance than in willful rebellion....This text in 2 Peter was not written to make the Christian question their salvation or their eternal security. Peter has already indicated how the saints can avoid stumbling—through the appropriation of God’s provisions and through the pursuit of godly character (see 2 Peter 1:1-21)” (bible.org/seriespage/teachers%E2%80%99-hall-shame-2-peter-210-22).

Steven J. Cole (bible.org/seriespage/lesson-10-sad-portrait-study-2-peter-210b-22): “to ask if a believer can lose his salvation is really the wrong question. The right question is, “What does it mean to be a true believer in Jesus Christ?” Or, “what is true saving faith?” In a nutshell, when God saves you, He changes your heart. He imparts new life to you so that your desires are changed. You now love God and seek to please Him. You want to grow to know Him. You love His Word. You hate your sin and strive against it. In other words, genuine saving faith always results in a life of growing godliness and obedience to Christ (see James 2 & 1 John). If that is not your experience, you may need to go back and make sure that God has truly changed your heart through faith in Christ.”

The passage ends with two uncharitable comparisons. My apologies to dogs and pigs. Dogs in the ancient world weren't thought of as man's best friend. They were viewed as ugly diseased critters. Pigs were ceremonially unclean animals to Jews. Peter reaches back to the book of Proverbs (26:11) and only gives the first part of the proverb. The rest of the proverb is: “so a fool repeats his folly.” He writes, false teachers are like a dog that returns to its vomit. Gross. The second comparison is of unknown origin. False teachers are like a sow that's washed and then goes back to wallowing in the mud.

You’ve probably heard people say, “You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig.” Not sure what the corresponding saying would be for dogs. The point is: false teachers can undergo cosmetic changes and dress up in Christianese - but they're still unchanged. They only have head knowledge, if that. They’ll return to their true selves as false, deceptive. They’re dogs and pigs.

Change the analogy to see the danger of false teachers. If something looks like dynamite, smells like dynamite, feels like dynamite, tastes like dynamite and kabooms like dynamite - it's probably dynamite. If it looks like a false teacher, smells like a false teacher, feels like a false teacher and the teaching tastes like that of a false teacher - it probably kabooms like a false teacher.

How’s that for a rotten onion?

Positive note of hope for those who've placed their trust in Christ. Continue to fully and completely put our trust in him. Persevere in the faith. Jesus is to be our Master, not money or desires of any kind. Show what we know. Exhibit godly fruit of obedience.