

2 Peter 2:10-16

The Follies of False Prophets

In 2 Peter 2:10-16, we are given a more complete picture of what a false prophet looks like so that we might be able to identify them and be warned against allowing them to influence us. While they might maintain an appearance of godliness, inwardly they are consumed with pride, lust, and greed.

I. The Sin of _____ (2 Peter 2:10-12)

- False teachers have such a high view of themselves that they do not think they should have to submit to _____.
- There are many levels of authority that God expects us to _____. There is the authority structure of the home (*Ephesians 5:23; 6:1*), human government (*Romans 13:7*), and the church (*Hebrews 13:7, 17*).
- The Word of God is the ultimate authority which they reject. They slander God by _____ His Word. (2 Peter 3:16)
- Even the angels of God, who are _____ than man in power and knowledge, dare not defy the authority structures that God has established. (*Jude 1:9; Zechariah 3:1-2*)
- Their understanding is the _____ by which they judge the truth of something, so if they don't understand it, they declare it must be false.

II. The Sin of _____ (2 Peter 2:13-14a)

- They also indulge those fleshly lusts by which they walk by indulging in a hedonistic lifestyle of _____. (2 Peter 2:3; 1 Timothy 6:5)
- They even bring their indulgence into the church by reveling at church dinners. They _____ the potluck with their poisonous propaganda. (*Jude 1:12*)
- False teachers, because they are driven by their flesh, are often _____ to lustful images and ideas. (*Matthew 5:28*)
- You cannot be “steadfast and unmoveable” when we are following your fleshly _____. (*Proverbs 24:21*)

III. The Sin of _____ (2 Peter 2:14b-16)

- False teachers forsake the right way and follow the path of greedy _____. (*Numbers 22-24*)
- The mute donkey spoke with a man's voice and demonstrated more sanity and _____ than the prophet of God. (*Numbers 22:28-31*)
- Balaam never cursed the Israelites and he never spoke a _____ word. What Balaam did for the love of money was much worse. He taught Balak how to entice the Israelites to bring God's curse upon themselves. (*Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16; Revelation 2:14*)

Conclusion

False teachers would willingly sell you out to pad their own pockets. It is of the utmost importance that we develop godly discernment and not allow false teachers to _____ us with their deeds or their doctrines.

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The Follies of False Prophets

False doctrine is a major hindrance to Christian growth. That is why Peter took time to warn the believers against the false teachers they would inevitably encounter. We cannot assume that we would know a false teacher when we see them. They are very crafty and can often seem like the kind of people that we would like to follow. But their end is destruction, because they have denied the Lord and corrupted the gospel.

Peter pointed to many Old Testament stories to prove his statement that the destruction of the ungodly was sure and swift. The angels who were cast out of heaven, the global flood in Noah's day and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah all prove that God knows how to punish the wicked and save the righteous. In 2 Peter 2:10-16, we are given a more complete picture of what a false prophet looks like so that we might be able to identify them and be warned against allowing them to influence us. While they might maintain an appearance of godliness, inwardly they are consumed with pride, lust, and greed. We must develop godly discernment and not allow false teachers to influence us with their deeds or their doctrines.

I. The Sin of Pride

2 Peter 2:10-12 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. [11] Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. [12] But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

At the end of verse nine, Peter states that God knows how "to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Beginning in verse ten, he describes in detail the sins of the unjust to whom he is "chiefly" referring. He starts with an overview of their spirituality in the phrase "them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." False teachers are not Spirit filled. They follow their flesh instead. And one of the first ways that that comes out is by the arrogance and pride seen in the way that they talk about higher powers. They "despise government" and "speak evil of dignities." They slander and disrespect those to whom they should show honor, from earthly government all the way up to spiritual powers.

False teachers have such a high view of themselves that they do not think they should have to submit to authority. They are "presumptuous" in that they dare to defy God-given authority. They are "self-willed" in that they will not be told by others what to do but will only do what they want. They demand respect from others, but they do not demonstrate it. There are many levels of authority that God expects us to respect.

There is the authority structure of the home. The husband is the Christ-like head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23) and the children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1).

There is the authority structure of human government, which God expects Christians to submit to as long as it does not contradict the Word of God.

Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

There is an authority structure in the church. God has appointed spiritual leaders to guide the flock and Christians should follow their guidance for their own benefit.

Hebrews 13:7, 17 Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. [17] Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

The Word of God is the ultimate authority which they reject, and in so doing, they reject the authority of God Himself. They slander God by mistreating His Word.

2 Peter 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

There can be but one motive for their slander and disrespect and it is pride. In their pride they put others down to raise themselves up. But even the angels of God, who are higher than man in power and knowledge, dare not defy the authority structures that God has established. They “bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.” Jude gives an example of this in a story that the Holy Spirit inspired and preserved through his pen.

Jude 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Even Michael, who is the head of the Holy angelic host, when contending with Satan, the head of the unholy host, over the body of Moses, did not slander him, but deferred to the ultimate authority, God, to do the rebuking. If anyone had a "right" to speak evil of someone, Michael had the right to speak evil of the Devil. But yet he didn't, recognizing that it was God's place.

Zechariah 3:1-2 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan...

False teachers consistently elevate themselves and denigrate God-ordained authorities. They behave like wild animals who fight for dominance. And they are as ignorant as those same animals when it comes to the truth of God. They are ignorant concerning those things which are holy and honorable, so all they can do is ridicule and slander those things. Their understanding is the standard by which they judge the truth of something, so if they don't understand it, they declare it must be false. They “speak evil of the things that they understand not.” That is the height of arrogance.

And so they will “utterly perish in their corruption.” Like the fallen angels, like the ungodly world of Noah's day and like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, they will be judged by God for their ungodliness.

II. The Sin of Lust

2 Peter 2:13-14a And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; [14] Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls:

Their sin does not stop at pride. They also indulge those fleshly lusts by which they walk. They do so by indulging in a hedonistic lifestyle of luxury. The word translated “riot” doesn't mean a violent protest like we think of today, but “softness, effeminate, luxurious living.” (Thayer's) Remember, they make merchandise of the believers with false words. (2 Peter 2:3) They use that ill-gotten gain to live in the lap of luxury. These Kenneth Copelands and Joel Osteens of the world even point to their wealth as “proof” of the truth of their teaching. They suppose that “gain is

godliness” and Paul says we are to withdraw ourselves from those kinds of false teachers. (1 Timothy 6:5)

They even bring their indulgence into the church by reveling at church dinners. They are there fellowshiping among the believers and taking the opportunity to spread their false teachings, as if it were some kind of a game to them to lead people astray. They pollute the potluck with their poisonous propaganda.

Jude 1:12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

Still their lusts go farther. 2 Peter 2:14 tells us that its not just luxury that their live for, but licentiousness as well. Their “eyes [are] full of adultery.” This was written long before the modern scourge of pornography, but it is exactly that kind of thing that Peter was referring to. False teachers, because they are driven by their flesh, are often addicted to lustful images and ideas. They “cannot cease from sin.” This is no minor problem. The harm done by viewing pornography and dwelling on immoral thoughts cannot be overstated.

Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Naturally, they are unstable people. You cannot be “steadfast and unmoveable” when we are following your fleshly impulses. Their inconsistency is a huge red flag that their doctrine is false and we should avoid them.

Proverbs 24:21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

False Teachers live according to their lusts. They exploit others to fund their luxurious living and view other people as objects to be used for their immoral pleasure.

III. The Sin of Greed

2 Peter 2:14b-16 an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: [15] Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; [16] But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

False teachers are prideful and lust driven, so it should come as no surprise that they are also covetous and greedy. The one thing that they have gotten really good at is practicing covetousness. It is their favorite form of exercise. They jump at the chance to get money out of people and they run here and there collecting their ill-gotten gains all while refusing to lift a finger to do any real ministry. They are children of greediness. The word translated children can be used “metaphorically of [anyone] who depends upon [a thing], is possessed by a desire or affection for it, is addicted to it.” (Thayer’s)

Peter then brings up another Old Testament example of a false prophet to illustrate the kind of greediness that New Testament false teachers are guilty of. The prophet he mentions is the infamous Balaam. False teacher forsake the right way and follow the path of greedy Balaam.

This story is a very interesting case study recorded in Numbers 22-24. Israel was encamped near the Moabites and they were afraid that the Israelites would do to them what they had done to the Amorites. Balak, their king, sent word to Balaam, a prophet of the Lord, asking him to curse the Israelites. In exchange, Balak promised to give him fame and fortune.

Initially, Balaam refused, but Balak persisted. Finally, Balaam agreed to consult with Balak, and on the way to the meeting, an angel of judgment met Balaam in the way. Only Balaam was too blind to see it. His donkey, however, was not too blind. Twice the donkey turned out of the way to avoid the angel and twice Balaam took his frustration out on the poor animal. On the second occasion, the Lord gave the donkey the ability to speak back to Balaam.

Numbers 22:28-31 And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? [29] And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. [30] And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. [31] Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

The mute donkey spoke with a man's voice and demonstrated more sanity and reason than the prophet of God. What astounds me about that account is that Balaam didn't seem to think being outwitted by a donkey was a big deal, nor did he take heed to the lesson. He continued on the same path. Three times he tried to curse the Israelites but each time God would not allow it. Every time Balaam opened his mouth, a blessing came out instead. Finally he returned home, but not before getting his reward. He never cursed the Israelites and he never spoke a false word. What Balaam did for the love of money was much worse. He taught Balak how to entice the Israelites to bring God's curse upon themselves.

Numbers 25:1-3 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. [2] And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. [3] And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

Numbers 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Revelation 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Balaam was a prophet for sale. His love for money was his downfall, and it is the fame for false teachers today. They are consumed by greed and will do whatever it takes to grow their wealth so they might live in luxury and indulge their fleshly desires.

Conclusion

You can see why the influence of these people is so dangerous. They are not concerned about what is best for you. They are consumed by the lusts of their flesh. They think they are better than you and everyone else, even to the point of defying God-given authority. They want to rob you so they can live in pleasure and satisfy their immoral desires. They would willingly sell you out to pad their own pockets. It is of the utmost importance that we develop godly discernment and not allow false teachers to influence us with their deeds or their doctrines.