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a *Grace Notes* course

## **2 Peter**

### **Lesson 8**

#### **2 Peter 2:17 to 22**

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## 2 Peter Lesson 8

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**2 Peter***Course Outline*

There are ten (10) lessons in the 2 Peter course. Each lesson has a Quiz, to be completed and returned to Grace Notes after studying the lesson. Here is a list showing the portion of 2 Peter to be studied in each lesson.

Lesson 1	Introduction; 2 Peter 1:1 to 4
Lesson 2	2 Peter 1 :5 to 6
Lesson 3	2 Peter 1:7 to 9
Lesson 4	2 Peter 1:10 to 14
Lesson 5	2 Peter 1:15 to 21
Lesson 6	2 Peter 2 :1 to 5
Lesson 7	2 Peter 2:6 to 16
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**2 Peter 2:17**

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

We now come to the indictment of false teachers.

**These are wells without water**

When ancient thirsty travelers would see a well far off in the distance, they would anticipate the promise of water. They would hope to quench their thirst. But when they got to the well, they found it dry. A dry well is a great disappointment.

False teachers are like dry wells. We look for spiritual refreshment from these false teachers, but the taste is empty in the end. We anticipate blessing, but we end in cursing. People who teach truth offer the refreshment of the truth of the Word. False teachers are dry because there is no truth in them. False teaching in the end is a big disappointment.

**clouds carried by a tempest**

There is no stability to a cloud. The wind carries the cloud wherever the wind chooses to take it. Buying into false teaching is like being in a squall. A squall is unstable. Apostates preach one thing and live another.

When we see a cloud coming, we expect a refreshing shower. There is promise of rain, but these clouds surrender no rain. Although they are driven by strong winds ["tempest"] and give a very powerful anticipation of rain, no rain comes. All this "tempest" is a lot of action but no substance. False doctrine often comes with a lot of bluster and high sounding hopes but, in the end, those hopes end in emptiness. These teachers are impressive from a distance.

Like wells that promise refreshing water, these clouds promise rain. All the promises are in vain. There is no water or rain. False teachers always promise more than they can deliver. In the meantime, people buy into their promise waiting to receive what they will never get.

**for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever**

God gives the vendors of false systems of belief a special reservation, a reservation in Hell.

"Blackness" is gloominess. Gloom is reserved for these teachers. False teachers teach darkness, but darkness is where they will spend eternity (2:1,3,12). They claim light but their teaching is darkness. They get a judgment like their teaching. Their teaching was dark, so they end in "darkness forever."

"And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Few people on earth do as much eternal damage as a false teacher does. Whenever we talk to authentic physicians about a quack medical doctor their blood rises. Nothing gets under their skin more than a fake physician does. When false teachers tell their people falsehoods, they cause eternal casualties. Nothing should get under the skin of a true preacher more than this. This is why Peter gives such strong descriptions of these false teachers.

**Principle**

Be warned that false teachers mislead and give false hopes.

**Application**

The Bible warns us everywhere about getting too close to false teachers. Separation is the order of the day when it comes to them because you cannot tell what they teach by what they say. They sound good at first, but their teaching is vacuous, obscured by religion.

Some man-made religions today claim that there is neither a Heaven nor a Hell. Jesus spoke more about Hell than Heaven. If we reject the idea of Hell, we reject the credibility of Christ.

There are many religious fairy tales out there. People love to believe fiction. They would rather believe fiction than the truth.

Unregenerate false teachers manufacture their own religions and claim to speak with authority but they are not consistent with biblical content. This is the opposite of Jesus who promised water that springs up into everlasting life (John 4:13,14) and backed up His claims by the authenticity of who He was and what He did.

**2 Peter 2:18**

"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"

**For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness**

The word "speak" literally means to call out loudly. The focus is on the verbal sound rather than the content of what is said. Peter used this word of Balaam's ass and now he uses it for false teachers. All heresy uses pompous words. False teachers try to impress their followers with pretentious and bombastic words.

"Emptiness" is something futile, purposeless, transitory or worthless. The words of these false teachers are high sounding but empty. They lack true content that comes from God; thus, their teaching is deceptive and pointless. In the Greek tragedies, the gods offered a partial answer to human purpose for life but the plurality and mutability of the gods undermined this answer. All the tragedies' grand oratory is useless for any good purpose. Their teachings were grandiose but without substance. Their verbose speech was futile in that it did not fulfill what it promised. False teaching is futile because it lacks content. All grandiose words do is to allure like bait and lead people into false teaching.

"Give us help from trouble, For the help of man is useless" (Psalms 60: 11).

This verse in Psalms uses the same Greek word in 2 Peter. It states baldly that human help is vain. The one and only true and living God can save us from futility. The reason we must look to God is that human help offers only nothingness.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind..." (Ephesians 4: 17).

The New Testament asserts that the thoughts of the wise are empty (1 Corinthians 3:20). The New Testament claims of itself that if the historical fact of the resurrection is not real, then Christianity itself is a fake. But the truth of the resurrection guarantees that believers no longer have to "walk in futility of their mind."

**they allure through the lusts of the flesh through lewdness**

False teachers often find their victims among dissatisfied church members who never understood the grace of God in salvation. They could not tell the difference between truth and error. That is why Peter calls them "unstable souls" (2:14). Grandiose words that dazzle the mind are not enough to mislead people. False teachers have to appeal to people's dark side. They take the restraints off the flesh so their followers can run wild. Unstable people can be lured into false doctrine by means of their lust patterns. They want truth to match their desires.

**the ones who have actually escaped**

"Escape" means to flee away from. New Christians flee to what they think is safety. They think that they can get acquittal from God by means of escape into religion. Their methodology is avoidance. This is the philosophy of sticking your head in the sand and hoping that reality will go away.

from those who live in error

"Those who live in error" were contemporary pagans of that day. A pagan is someone who rejects Christianity. They heard the gospel but they rejected it. Usually they are susceptible to false teaching.

"Error" means literally wandering. Those led astray roam here and there without fixing truth. They operate in delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11; Jude 11) and wander off the path of truth. False teachers caused them to wander off biblical truth and mislead them to mistaken ideas.

"And Jesus answered and said to them: 'Take heed that no one deceives you'" (Matthew 24: 4).

"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" ( 2 Timothy 3:13).

The Bible never divides doctrine and morals by a sharp line (Matthew 27:64). Distortion in doctrine is often the effect of ill-made morality (Ephesians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:11). Chapter three talks of the "error of unprincipled men (3:17)." These men twist thoughts so that immorality looks like morality. What is false

seems like it is true. They make a lie appear true. This is perversion of truth.

### Principle

False teachers make lies appear true.

### Application

Generally false teachers are eloquent or people would probably not listen to them. They are good speakers. People are deceived by false teachers' ability to speak rather than the content of what they say. They use insincere words (2:3) to mislead their followers.

"Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words" (Colossians 2: 4).

Most of what they say sounds so plausible, so feasible. It seems to add up.

"We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4: 6).

### 2 Peter 2:19

"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"

### While they promise them liberty

The liberty that false teachers promised here is freedom from moral constraint. Preaching sensual pleasure must have been popular even in that day.

There is an ever-recurring confusion between liberty and license. Legalistic repression is no biblical value. The Bible asserts the right of individuals to make their own decisions. However, the Bible also asserts that the decisions we make need to be responsible decisions. We need to be responsible for the decisions we make. Freedom must operate under the framework of principle. We make choices based on principle.

False teachers promise liberty but they cannot produce liberty. Politicians cannot produce liberty. Only God can produce true liberty.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5: 1).

God bases true liberty on the principle of grace. Legalism attacks liberty. We cannot bully people into absolutes. Taboos will not produce absolutes. Neither can social action produce spirituality.

Bible freedom also must operate within overarching principles of God such as human government or the family.

### they themselves are slaves of corruption

What a contradiction! False teachers promise liberty while they themselves are under slavery to their "corruption." Their slavery was slavery to sin. Sin vanquished their freedom.

No one can promise liberty without dealing with the root of slavery – sin. They are slaves to their own "corruption." This is why politics (liberal or conservative) cannot solve human's problems. Eliminating poverty, establishing a minimum income or raising social security will not resolve the problem of humanity. Legislation cannot deliver us from sin.

### for by whom a person is overcome

In the name of political freedom, people are in political bondage all over the world. If we let religious leaders "overcome" or defeat us, we become their slaves!

### by him also he is brought into bondage

The very people who say that they are giving us liberty enslave us. The very thing they promise us is the very thing they take from us. False teachers promises liberty, but takes freedoms from the people to whom they promise it.

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15: 14 )

### Principle

Where we eliminate the absolutes of the Bible, we enslave ourselves to sin.

### Application

The false teaching mode of operation is to promise liberty yet enslave their converts in sin. False teachers say, "We will set you free from your medieval religion. We will emancipate you from Victorian Christianity. We will free you so that you can do what you please. The puritanical

morals of the Bible are passe." What they do not tell you is that they are enslaving you to another system.

People eat this up. They love to hear it because it appeals to their lower nature. Little do they realize that this enslaves them to "corruption."

### 2 Peter 2:20

"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"

#### For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world

The "they" of verse nineteen [false teachers] is the "they" of this verse. These are also the false teachers of verse one.

The word "escaped" occurs three times in the New Testament and all three times in this little book (1:4; 2:18). Those who "escaped" here are people who were at one time positive to Christianity, but never embraced it. They had significant exposure to the gospel, but were never true converts.

The Greeks used the word "pollutions" for the odors that came off a swamp. We get our English word "miasma" from this Greek word. The Greeks used "pollutions" especially for cultic pollution of pagan practices. What is the nature of this sin? Some think that Christians can lose their salvation by reverting into the lifestyle they led before they became Christians. However, both the context and explicit statements (2:22) portray these people as those who completely reject Christ.

#### through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

For a time, these people were exposed to the truth. The word "knowledge" implies that they had full exposure to the "Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This unique word for "knowledge" means full and intimate knowledge. Ancient Greek uses "knowledge" in legal contexts referring to careful investigation and interrogation. It is amazing that these false teachers could gain a full dose of Jesus and His work and still reject Him as their Savior.

#### they are again entangled in them

The word "entangled" means to weave in. These false teachers relapsed back into false religion. They went back to the pollutions of paganism. They forsook false religion for a while when they came to an exposure of Christ and then became entangled again in it. They left false religion for a time only to return to it again.

#### and overcome

"Overcome" carries the ideas of subjection and enslavement. Therefore, false teaching controls them. They were enslaved to false religion. False religion defeated them and they were led away into a prison of false teaching.

#### the latter end is worse for them than the beginning

To hear the truth and revert to false religion it is worse than never hearing it at all (Matthew 12:45).

"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. So shall it also be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12: 45).

Peter's point is that to receive a "full" exposure to Jesus and His work and to finally reject it, is a worse condition than having never heard of Jesus in the first place. False teachers repudiate the Lord Jesus in the face of knowing fully who He is and what He did.

The "beginning" here is the point of exposure to salvation in Christ. The "latter end" is the corruption of reversion to paganism. To receive a full exposure to Jesus and to reject Him in the end is worse because it flies in the face of truth. The more light we sin against, the more responsibility we carry. It is amazing how much of the Bible you can know and still go to hell.

#### Principle

Those who rejected God find security in false teaching.

#### Application

False teachers prey on unstable people. They cannot get away with their deception with anyone but the naïve who were previously described as "unstable" earlier in the chapter.

Not everyone who hears the gospels believes the gospel. You must believe after you hear. If you hear it and do not believe it, it did not do you any good to hear it. In fact, it may do you harm.

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).

### 2 Peter 2:21

"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"

#### For

Peter introduces the word "for" to explain verse twenty. These false teachers knew the truth. "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray (2:15)."

#### it would have been better

The Greek syntax conveys something that we cannot see in the English. This statement ["it would have been better..."] is contrary to the fact. The statement that Peter makes here is not true although he hypothesizes it as a possibility. He states it in simple hypothesis: "It is better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, but it is."

We can render this phrase as "It would be almost better not to have known the way of righteousness than...." By returning to false religion, a false teacher is more culpable to truth. The professed essence of apostasy results in deadly illusion.

#### for them not to have known the way of righteousness

To receive full exposure to Christ and yet reject him is worse than being fully culpable to that knowledge. Apostasy is worse than ignorance. Apostasy brings others into error.

#### than having known it,

It is one thing to know the Lord personally and it is another thing to have mental acquiescence toward him as non-Christians do. Proud natural people do not want to yield to God's truth. They know truth, but they reject it.

False teachers are double losers, both in time and eternity. They will know for eternity what they missed in time. They are the prize fools of all history. They were exposed thoroughly to who Jesus is, and yet rejected him.

#### to turn from the holy commandment

The noble influence of the Bible acted as a deterrent for these false teachers. However, they persisted in the false teaching and reverted to type. Initial exposure to Jesus Christ does not mean that someone fully embraces Him as the Savior.

To reject the message of Jesus Christ is the most tragic mistake anyone could make in life. It would be handy if we could somehow force people to receive Jesus as their Savior. It just does not work that way. Only the Holy Spirit can change hearts and make the facts of the gospel relevant. False teachers fly in the face of the facts of the gospel.

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Colossians 13:5).

#### delivered to them

In the Greek, the action of the word "delivered" precedes the action of the Greek word "to turn from." False teachers were taught the truth, but they turned from it. Some people can be exposed to Christianity all their lives without embracing it for themselves, just as some people can get a doctor's degree in philosophy without being educated.

#### Principle

It is not enough to know the facts of the gospel; we must embrace the gospel itself.

#### Application

We must know the gospel before we embrace it. We can know about investing for retirement, but if we do not invest then we may live as paupers in our retirement. We may know about good nutrition. We may know about vitamins and minerals, but if we do not take them, we will not be as healthy as we might be. It is not enough to know these things; we must do something about them. It is not enough to know the gospel; we



must make an act of commitment to believe on Him.

## 2 Peter 2:22

"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'"

This verse clinches the idea that these latter verses deal with non-Christian false teachers. God never calls His own people "dogs" or "sows" anywhere in the Bible. Non-believers are everywhere called dogs, sows, goats, donkeys, foxes and wolves. The latter are unclean animals. God calls His own people sheep, lambs and oxen. God forbids a donkey and an ox to plow together because one is a clean and the other an unclean animal. God never mixes the two.

### **But it has happened to them according to the true proverb:**

Both dogs and pigs in the first century were unclean animals and creatures to be avoided. People did not have dogs for pets.

This verse explains how a person can become thoroughly acquainted with the person and work of Christ and still not accept His message. This verse explains why false teachers are lost.

### **'A dog returns to his own vomit,'**

Peter quotes this phrase from Proverbs 26:11.

Watching a dog eat his vomit is a gross sight. Most of us who have had dogs have watched this spectacle. The vomit here is false religion. The dog reverts to type. He never was anything but a dog. His dog nature determines his eating habit. Dogs eat vomit. False teachers teach false doctrine. They are true to type.

The Bible depicts Gentiles as "dogs." The dog represents Gentile false teachers. A Gentile is an unbeliever. For a dog to behave any differently, you would have to give the dog a different nature. It needs something different than a dog nature. False teachers need something different than their own natural natures.

### **and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'**

False prophets are never what they seem to be and they always return to their true nature. We can clean a pig but the pig will return to his pigsty. False teachers will always revert to false teaching. The pigsty is the natural habitat of the pig. False teaching is the natural habitat of the false teacher.

The "sow" represents the Jewish false teachers. They can clean themselves but they will revert to their false teaching. They always goes back to their false teaching. False teachers clean up the outside. They try to reform their overt behavior, but they never came to a place of personal regeneration. Without regeneration, they always revert to false religion.

Peter mentions a return for both the dog and the sow. When religionists go back to their false religion before they came to exposure to Christ, they act like a dog or sow – they always revert to type. If you want the sow to act differently than a sow, you have to give it a nature different from a sow nature. In that case, he would no longer be a sow.

We are naturally born with a proclivity to hate God and love false religion. We are born selfish. We want our own way. Then we become renegades by choice. We revolt against God's truth. That is the way it is unless something intervenes to change our hearts (1:4). The longer we stay in revolt against God, the more difficult it is to change. We cannot change unless God changes us. Otherwise, everything in us will revolt against God.

Both the dog and the sow "return" to their former state. They revert to type. Note what Peter said in his first epistle,

"For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

A true sheep returns to his Shepherd. There is a big difference between a reformed false teacher and a true Christian. There is all the difference in the world between a washed sow and dirty sheep! One returns to it's mire and the other to it's Shepherd.

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**Principle**

There is all the difference in the world between a dirty sheep and a washed sow.

**Application**

It is love's labors lost to clean someone who's nature and desire is to reject Jesus as their Savior.

Many ministries are in the business of washing sows and amusing goats, instead of presenting an

unvarnished gospel. These ministries also leave true sheep famished for spiritual food. Sheep cannot find green grass or water for their soul. False teachers trod down the grass and pollute the water with distortions of God's Word. All they find is the "vomit" of false teaching.

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