

Discerning False Teachers

2 Peter 2:12-22

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2 Peter 2:12-22 (NIV)

¹² But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish. ¹³ They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. ¹⁴ With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! ¹⁵ They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. ¹⁶ But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness. ¹⁷ These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸ For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.” ²⁰ If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. ²² Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

v12 – How are those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh like unreasoning animals?

Like natural brute beasts: Since they function in the flesh, not the spirit, they are like animals.

- They are fit only for destruction (**made to be caught and destroyed**) and they are ignorant.

How do these rebellious people blaspheme in matters they do not understand?

They don’t know God so that makes the evil they speak about God all the more disrespectful.

- They usually have no concept of God and don’t believe He even exists so they don’t realize what they are doing when they slander Him.

What is blasphemy?

To blaspheme is 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.

What does God think of blasphemy?

Blasphemy was a serious crime in the law God gave to Moses. In Leviticus 24:10–16, a man who blasphemed God’s name was stoned to death.

- To the Hebrews, a name wasn’t just a label, it was a symbolic representation of a person’s character.

How has God punished blasphemy in the past?

Isaiah 36 tells the story of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and his attempt to demoralize Jerusalem before he attacked...

Isaiah 36:20 – *Who of all the gods of these countries have been able to save their lands from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?*

Sennacherib committed blasphemy by assuming Israel’s God was equal to the false gods of the surrounding nations.

- the angel of the LORD put to death 185,000 in the Assyrian camp.
- Sennacherib broke camp and withdrew.
- He returned to Nineveh and was murdered in the temple of his god Nisroch (Isaiah 37:38).

How should we respond to those who blaspheme God?

In Romans 2:17-24, Paul scolds those who claim to be saved through the law and yet still live in sin.

- Paul tells them, “*God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you*” (v 24, Isaiah 52:5).

In 1 Timothy 1:20 Paul explains that he had abandoned two false teachers to Satan so they would “*be taught not to blaspheme*”

- Promoting false doctrine and leading God’s people astray is also a form of blasphemy.

Why did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy?

In Matthew 26:65 they understood that Jesus was claiming to be God which would have been a reproach on God's character—if it wasn't true.

- If Jesus were just a man claiming to be God, He would have been a blasphemer.
- However, as the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus could truthfully claim deity (Philippians 2:6).

Is blasphemy an unforgivable sin?

It can be if not repented of... Paul was a blasphemer (1 Timothy 1:13) and tried to make others blaspheme (Acts 26:11). Jesus' own brothers thought He was insane (Mark 3:21). All repented, and all were forgiven.

- Jesus spoke of a special type of blasphemy—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—committed by the religious leaders of His day.
- The Pharisees were eyewitnesses to Jesus' miracles, but they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to the that of a demon (Mark 3:22-30).
- Their portrayal of the work of God as demonic was a deliberate, insulting rejection of Him and was thus unforgivable.

Can Christians blaspheme God?

Blasphemy, by definition, is both deliberate and direct. That being the case, a believer in Jesus Christ will not/cannot commit blasphemy.

- Even so, we should be careful to reflect God's holiness and never misrepresent the glory, authority, and character of God.

Why do people blaspheme God?

- They are under the influence of demons.
- They seek to offend Christians whom they hate.
- They are willfully ignorant of spiritual matters.

What will become of the ungodly?

And will receive the wages of unrighteousness: The ungodly will be "paid" for their evil — and their fleshly lives will be paid the **wages of unrighteousness**.

What is the problem with carousing in broad daylight?

They are so ungodly that they don't even attempt to hide their rebellious behavior under the cover of darkness.

How are the ungodly like blots and blemishes?

These ungodly false teachers are a dangerous and corrupting presence in the body of Christ, not only deceiving others but deceiving themselves also.

v14 – What else characterizes those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh?

Having eyes full of adultery: Their heart is set on the flesh, and their **eyes** on **adultery**, both spiritual and sexual. They prey on the unstable to join them in their ways (**enticing unstable souls**).

How are those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh experts in greed?

Their focus is not for ministry, but only for selfish gain — they are truly **accursed**.

- We all train our hearts in something, either training them in covetousness and lust, or in godliness.

v15-16 – How are those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh experts in greed like Balaam?

Balaam was guilty of the greatest of sins — leading others into sin, and that for the sake of his own gain.

- Balaam had to be restrained by a **dumb donkey** because he would not listen to God.

v17 – What is a spring without water?

Something we can readily identify with in West Texas... These ungodly false teachers are empty — as useless as **wells without water** — and like clouds that bring only darkness, and no nourishing rain.

To what does the blackest darkness refer?

This has to refer to eternal separation from God in hell.

Revelation 21:23 – *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

Those who will not have their home in the New Jerusalem will not have the glory of God to illuminate them.

v18 – What is the message of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh?

They speak great swelling words of emptiness: The message of the ungodly false teachers is empty of real spiritual content, though it is swollen big with words.

- Their allure is to the *lusts of the flesh* in their audience, just as those who wanted bread from Jesus, but not Jesus Himself (John 6:25-27, 6:47-66).

How do the ungodly false teachers appeal to those they deceive?

They prey on spiritually ungrounded... those who are seeking deliverance from their sinful condition but have not yet embraced the truth of Christ.

v19 – What are the false promises of the false teachers?

They promise freedom, but freedom can never be found in the flesh, only in God's Spirit. Freedom isn't found in what Jesus can give us, but only in Jesus Himself.

- When we seek freedom in the wrong way, we become **slaves of corruption** (decay and death).

How do people become slaves of depravity?

They allow depravity to master them. Not having divine help in resisting the lure of depravity, they give into it and it controls them.

v20 – How may the ungodly be worse off at the end than they were at the beginning?

It is better for a person to have never known a thing about Jesus than to hear some truth, hold to it for a season, and then later reject it.

Luke 12:48 – *everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required*

Greater revelation has a greater accountability.

So, is this an argument not to evangelize?

No, Jesus commanded us to do what we can so that others would get to know Him...

Matthew 28:19-20 – *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*

And we also have warnings such as this...

Ezekiel 33:9 – *if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.*

While this is in the context of the Lord telling His prophet to warn Israel about their wicked ways, there is a principle here that applies to us today: we are obligated to warn those facing the judgment of God.

How can we warn people facing God's judgment?

Should we carry signs saying "turn or burn"?

1 Corinthians 13:1 – *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*

The good news of Christ is offensive enough to the proud who wants to earn favor with God for salvation... this is the default doctrine of humanists.

- In-your-face proclamations of eternal damnation will turn people off before they are open to the gospel.
- People need to be reminded of the consequences for not accepting God's provision before they can really appreciate the good news,

Letting people know you are a Christian through normal speech and being ready to answer their questions is a great way to get an opportunity to be a witness...

1 Peter 3:15 – *always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*

How can we be more intentional about witnessing?

Build a common bond with new people, then ask questions that could lead to a discussion about spiritual matters...

some ideas:

- What brings you the most satisfaction in life?
- What do you believe about life after death?
- What is your church background?
- What initially led you to Christ?
- Are you sure you'll be going to heaven when you die?
- In what are you trusting to get to heaven?

v21 – Does this say a person can lose their salvation?

This describes a picture that certainly has the appearance of people losing their salvation.

- He speaks of those who **have escaped the pollutions of the world.**
- He speaks of those who did this **through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**
- He speaks of those who at one time had **known the way of righteousness.**

But we know that this can not describe a person who was born again because the Bible makes it clear that those who are saved have eternal security...

John 10:28 – *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*

Unsaved people can experience the benefits of knowing Jesus in the world such as avoiding the worldly consequences of sin.

- But since they don't have a relationship with Jesus, they will always wonder if they are truly saved.

v22 – How do these proverbs describe what happens to those only pretending to be Christians?

A dog returns to his own vomit: The nature of **dogs** is displayed by the way he returns to the **vomit** of the flesh and the world.

- The dog which has got rid of the corruption inside it through vomiting it up cannot leave well enough alone; it has to go sniffing around the vomit again.
- He is like the *brute beasts* described in 2 Peter 2:12, more animal than godly because he lives for the flesh.

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- False teachers are blasphemers; rebuke them!
- False teachers are ungodly; don't follow them!
- Look for opportunities to be a witness for Jesus and do so with humility!