



# They Didn't Grow

## 2 Peter 2:10-22

1. They despise authority (verses 10-11).
2. They indulge the flesh (verses 12-14).
3. They have gone astray (verses 15-16).
4. They are empty talkers (verses 17-19).
5. They are worse than before (verses 20-22).

Our text this morning is one of the bleakest passages in all of the Bible. When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He did so to purchase a people for Himself the one day "He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:26). And yet, in the course of time, false teachers have arisen to stain and defile the church. We see Peter describing these people in verses 10-22. And it's not pretty. Peter will describe for us the sin of these false teachers in all their gory details. For 13 verses, Peter will go on and on and on about the ways in which these false teachers have engaged themselves in sinful activities.

What makes this passage particularly bleak is the fact that these men are in the church. When we hear names like Adolph Hitler and John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer, we cringe at their wickedness. However, should such men be in the church, we would cower even more. And that's what we see in 2 Peter, chapter 2. We see wicked men in positions of leadership in the church, pulling people away from the truth with their deceptions and lies.

Don't think that this is only something that happened in Peter's day. False teachers are alive and well in the church today. You need to be aware of them. You need to flee from them. In many ways, the words of Peter are applicable far beyond those who have official roles of teaching in the church. You can apply his words to anyone in the church who has influence: elder, deacon, Sunday school teacher, committee member, youth group helper. Peter's words are applicable to anyone who seeks to influence people away from their truth, particularly those who profess a life of godliness while living another.

Peter introduced these men for us at the beginning of chapter 2 (in verses 1-3). In those verses, Peter described them. They have risen up, just as the false prophets of long ago arose (verse 1). They have introduced destructive heresies (verse 1). They have denied the Master who bought them (verse 1). They have maligned the truth (verse 2). They have exploited many with their false words (verse 3).

In verse 3, Peter assures his readers that "their judgment from long ago is not idle, and [that] their destruction is not asleep." In other words, "God will deal with them." Verses 4-9 are proof of that fact. God knows what He's doing. He will indeed punish the wicked who lead others astray. And, lest you worry that the damage that these false teachers will do is too great, know that God will protect the righteous through the adversity caused by these men. God will preserve His church.

Peter summarizes this well in verse 9, "The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." God will protect the godly. And God will bring the unrighteous to a destructive end. In all reality, they have actually brought this all upon themselves in denying Christ. Back in verse 1, Peter said, that their denial of Christ has brought "swift destruction upon themselves" (verse 1).

Peter picks up the thought now of describing these false teachers in verse 10. But, his emphasis isn't so much upon their doom (as it was in verses 4-9), as much as it is upon their wickedness. It's not that their destruction is out of the question. It comes up on several occasions, like in verses 12 and 17 and 20. Rather, the emphasis here is upon their sin and wickedness, much like it was in verses 1 and 2. However, Peter's onslaught here is much broader and deeper than it was in the first three verses. In fact, from verses 10-22, I counted more than 30 sinful characteristics of these teachers that Peter chooses to bring to our attention.

### 2 Peter 2:10-22

and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

Now, before we actually dig into the text, I want for you to notice that verse 10 begins in the middle of a sentence. Peter writes, "... and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority" (verse 10). This is really the end of the sentence which Peter started in verse 4, where he described how God had kept the angels and the ancient world and Sodom and Gomorrah under punishment. He will do the same in the future, "and especially for those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority" (verse 10).

These words are particularly alarming, because they say that God's judging and condemning hand is **especially** upon the false teachers in the church. God's judgment is especially upon those in the church who would lead others astray. To be sure, God has bound the angels for future judgment. To be sure, God wiped away all of the planet with the flood. To be sure, God reduced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes. But, according to verse 10, God's hand is **especially** upon those false teachers in the church who "indulge the flesh and despise authority." Why? Because those in the church have a greater revelation. We have the Messiah. We have the New Testament Scriptures. We have the Spirit in all its fullness. We have the fullness of the gospel! With all this revelation comes more responsibility.

As I sought to outline this passage, I found it very difficult, because Peter's thought isn't linear. He doesn't say, "I'm going to address the issue of false teachers. Here, let me tell you about their character. Now, let me tell you about their theology. Now, let me tell you about their way with people. Now, let me tell you about their lusts." He doesn't do that. Instead, he meanders around, from sin to sin. Now, at times, he elaborates upon their sin and illustrates it (he compares these men with Balaam and clouds and springs of water and dogs and pigs). At times, he shows the results of their sin (verses 12, 16, 17, 20). At times, he shows the methods of their seduction (verses 14, 18, 19).

So, it's difficult to categorize everything in this passage. And yet, I have tried my best to give some organization to this passage with five points, which characterize false teachers. Everything doesn't exactly fit really neatly into these points. There is some overlap among each of them. When you see that, simply be reminded of the difficulty in piecing together an outline. But these five points are the best that I can do to give you some hooks to hang your thoughts on.

Here are five ways in which false teachers sin in the church. It must be noted that every characteristic that Peter gives of these false teachers isn't true of every false teacher. But, Peter's points give us a good flavor as to their wickedness. First of all, ...

## **1. They despise authority (verses 10-11).**

I pick up this phrase from the middle of verse 10. They "despise authority." They hate authority. They don't understand authority.

This is because false teachers are in the church for themselves. They aren't a part of the team. They are like the athlete, who is on the team, only to advance his own cause. Selfish athletes are only concerned for their own statistics. They want the glory. They want the reward. So, they clash with the coach when they don't get the ball. They complain against the coach when they don't get to play. Because, it's not about the team, it's all about them.

You Peter say this in the phrase toward the end of verse 10, which describes these men as "self-willed." In other words, they are governed by their own desires and pleasures. As a result, they do not submit themselves to the authorities around them. They are a rule unto themselves. And in this way, they come to despise the authority in the church.

According to Titus 1:7, this ought not to be a characteristic of an elder in the church, because the church isn't about any one person. The church is a body, which God has put together to grow together into Him. But false teachers are like the false prophets of old, who "rule on their own authority" (Jeremiah 5:31).

But, not only do false teachers resist authority. They also don't understand authority. They are not fearful of authority. We read in the middle of verse 10 that they are "daring ... they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties."

Verse 10 is addressing the willingness of false teachers to rush headlong into encounters with angelic beings without fear. They willingly rebuke the angelic world without the slightest apprehension. Peter explains why this is so wrong in verse 11. He says, "angels, who are greater in might and power, do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord" ... but false teachers do, because they don't understand the authority and power of the spiritual world that is beyond us. [\[1\]](#)

Jude gives us an illustration of this in Jude 9 of what took place near the time of the death of Moses. He died alone on Mount Nebo. Apparently, there was a dispute about his body, between Michael the archangel and Satan, himself. But, Michael kept his proper distance, because he respected the authority and power of Satan. Jude says, "Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 7).

And yet, how many of you have seen a preacher on television binding Satan or demons or casting demons out of people? They don't realize the power of these beings. We have no reason to tread so boldly (as many do) in their presence. This is one reason why I believe that there are so many false teachers in the charismatic movement, because they are not afraid of the demonic world as they ought to be.

Let's continue on. Not only do false teachers despise authority (verses 10-11). Secondly, ...

## **2. They indulge the flesh (verses 12-14).**

Perhaps this is one of the most dominant characteristics of false teachers. They are driven by their own flesh, rather than by the Spirit of God. This is demonstrated in verses 12-14. Like my previous point, I have pulled this phrase from the middle of verse 10, "they indulge the flesh."

In the beginning of verse 12, Peter compares these men to "unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed." By in large, animals are creatures of instinct. They are driven by their lusts. They are driven by their will to survive. Farm cats think nothing of killing mice, so that they can eat and live. Lions think nothing of killing wildebeests, so that they can eat and live. They are driven by their sexual lusts. They will fight fiercely for the right to reproduce. They are living for themselves. So also are false teachers creatures of instinct. They are driven by their own lusts. It's what they want. It's what's best for them that matters most. They don't live for others. They live for themselves.

When animals, like dogs and horses, serve us, it's not because their service comes naturally to them. Rather, it's because they have been trained. Dogs need to be trained to protect us. Horses need to be broken, so that they will be willing to take a cowboy upon their backs. Dogs and horses have been trained that failing in obedience to these things will result in punishment. So also false teachers aren't seeking to serve the church, because it's natural for them. Rather, they have come to understand that any "service" that they may be giving for the good of others is only because they have learned that it's good for the promoting of their own end. They haven't learned to heart of self-sacrifice for the good of others.

Verse 12 continues, "reviling where they have no knowledge." Animals don't really understand what's going on with life. They have some thought about their own little world. But, really, they don't understand. Neither do false teachers understand about the power of the angelic world. They freely revile without knowledge of what's really true about the spiritual dimension of this world.

And their end is not pretty. Verse 12 finishes with these words, "[false teachers] ... will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong." False teachers will be destroyed. This was the point of verses 4-9, which we looked at last week. Like animals, they will perish. Because, like animals, they are driven merely by their own lusts. They will reap what they have sown (Gal. 6:8). They have sown their own flesh. They will reap the corruption that it yields.

The animal world has been created to help the human world. Often, the animals help us by dying. We raise chickens so that we can eat them. We raise cows so that we can eat them and use their skin to cover our furniture. Such is the fate of false teachers. They too will be destroyed.

Continuing on in verses 13 and 14, we see Peter continuing to describe their lusts. He writes, "They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime." Even unsaved people understand that wickedness is best kept in the darkness and hidden. When do the bars flourish? Late at night, under the cover of darkness, when most are sleeping and cannot see what they are doing. It was the same in Bible times. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:7, "Those who get drunk get drunk at night." But, these false teachers are so wicked that they practice their wickedness in the daytime, in the broad daylight for all to see. Such behavior is a sign of a seared conscience.

Peter continues in verse 13, "They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you." The church was created to be spotless and blameless, but these men come in and pollute it. They walk into the house with muddy shoes. They spill the Kool-Aid on the carpet. They let the rotten bananas sit on the counter for weeks.

To make matters worse, they rejoice in their sin. "reveling in their deceptions." To them, their wickedness is like a sport. They love to engage in it. They love to talk about their triumphs afterwards.

What makes this so awful is that they are in the church! It says in verse 13 that they "carouse with you." Some translations say, they "feast with you," which is the literal meaning of the word. However we translate it, the word denotes that these false teachers are living and dwelling and sinning in close proximity to you. It's not that they are out there, somewhere. They are engaging in wickedness in the very place where such things ought not to be.

This is one of the things that Paul mourned over the church in Corinth. They had a man cohabitating with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1). Rather than removing such a man from their midst, they boasted of their open-mindedness to be able to tolerate such sin (1 Cor. 5:2). Paul rebuked them strongly, saying, "Your boasting is not good" (1 Cor. 5:6). He says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough" (1 Cor. 5:6). So, he turned the man over to Satan, "for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

To be sure, the church is comprised of sinners. However, we are redeemed sinners, who have been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. Though we stumble in many ways, our hearts hate sin of all kinds. We hate it in ourselves. We hate it in our assembly. That's why we love the cross of Christ, because it's there that our sin become righteousness. As we believe in Christ, our sins are wiped away. We rejoice in the cross because we hate our sin. As our sin is removed we are filled with joy. So, we boast in the cross.

As a body, we ought never to tolerate rejoicing in sin. Rather, we ought to mourn over our sin. But, these false teachers rejoice in sin.

Verse 14 continues to compound their wickedness, "having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin." In writing these things, I'm sure that Peter had in mind the words of Jesus, who said that if you look on a woman with lust for her, you have committed adultery in your heart (Matt. 5:28). These men think nothing of committing such sin. It's not just a one-time occurrence. Peter says that their eyes, "never cease from sin." It's always on their heart. It's always in their mind. It's always in their eyes.

Their sin isn't merely kept to themselves either. They exploit others. Verse 14 continues, "enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children." They search out the weakest, most unstable people in the church and entice them to follow after them. Beware the man who gains a following of the weakest people in the church. (We'll address this in our next point).

They have "a heart trained in greed." They are practiced in the art of taking money from others. Beware the man who is always asking for money. They are, "accursed children." Their fate is secure. They will face the curse of God. Why? because they indulge the flesh (verses 12-14). They have no constraints. They follow the lusts of their flesh. A third characteristic of false teachers comes in verses 15 and 16.

### **3. They have gone astray (verses 15-16).**

Consider these two verses, "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

What's so shameful about these false teachers is that they have the right way in front of them. They have every opportunity to walk in it. But, instead, they turn aside and they go the wrong way. It is their active choice. They chose to rebel against the Lord.

Peter brings up the imagery of Balaam, the son of Beor. From all we can tell, it appears as if he knew much about the LORD. His reputation was known far and wide as one who was able to invoke God. When he pronounced a blessing upon people, they were blessed. When he pronounced a curse upon people, they were cursed (Num. 22:6). And yet, Balaam wasn't with the people of God. He lived in upper Mesopotamia, among pagan people. So, it may have been that he was a diviner, who used the name of Jehovah.

Balaam's story is told in Numbers 22-24. Balaam lived during the days when Israel was wandering the desert. Balaak, king of Moab, was aware of this nation that came out of Egypt and was wandering in the desert (Num. 22:6). He heard about how they had fought against the Amorites in the wilderness and had conquered them. He was worried about Israel doing even worse to them, because he knew that the Israelites were too strong for his country. And so, Balaak, summoned Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel. With the request came a financial incentive. It came with the appropriate "fees for divination" (Numbers 22:7).

When Balaak's messengers initially came to Balaam to make this request, He said, "Spend the night here, and I will bring word back to you as the LORD may speak to me" (Num. 22:8). Right there was his error. If He indeed were a true prophet of God, he would have known that He wasn't to go with them. But, it was the lure of money that tempted him to think about it. Now, to his credit, he sent Balaak's messengers home empty handed (Num. 22:13-14). He made the right decision.

However, Balaak was persistent and sent more men to summon Balaam to come and curse the people of Israel. This time, it was with more money. Here was Balaak's plea, "Let nothing, I beg you, hinder you from coming to me; for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you say to me. Please come then, curse this people for me" (Num. 22:16-17). Again, Balaam made the same error. He said, "Please ... stay here tonight, and I will find out what else the LORD will speak to me." He should have turned them away right then and there.

But, the lure of money was too great. He ended up going with them. [\[2\]](#) This fact identifies Balaam's error. He was a slave to money. Peter says, "He loved the wages of unrighteousness." He went with these men to pronounce a curse upon Israel. And as Peter said, "he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet" (verse 16).

Do you remember the story? He was riding along on top of his trustworthy donkey (Num. 22:30). While riding along the path, the angel of the LORD appeared in front of the donkey, with a sword in his hand, which caused the donkey to turn away into the field (Num. 22:23). "Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way" (Num. 22:23).

A little bit later, Balaam and his donkey was passing through "a narrow path of the vineyards with a wall on [both sides]" (Num. 22:24). Then, again, the angel of the LORD stood in front of the donkey and caused it to stop and press Balaam's foot against the wall of the vineyard (Num. 22:25). Again, Balaam struck the donkey again (Num. 22:25).

Yet a third time, the angel of the LORD appeared in front of the donkey. This time, they were in a narrow place with no place for the donkey to turn to the right or the left, and so the donkey lay down on the ground (Num. 22:26-27). Balaam was angry and struck the donkey again (Num. 22:27). At this point, "the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?'" (Num. 22:28). Amazingly, Balaam continued the conversation. He said, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now" (Num. 22:29). The donkey replied, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" (Num. 22:30). Balaam admitted, "No." Thus was his rebuke.

However, there was more to come. For, it was at that moment that "The LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand" (Num. 22:31). And the angel of the LORD rebuked Balaam as well.

Now, we don't have time to tell all that took place in the life of Balaam. Only that his end was ugly. He died when Israel conquered Midian with the sword (Num. 31:7-8). But, we have seen enough to see that Balaam was just like many false teachers. They are preachers for hire. If you have the goods, they will deliver the message. Because, they "love the wages of unrighteousness." But, a true prophet and a true teacher isn't for hire. They ought to be the LORD's messenger, preaching the word, "in season and out of season; reproving, rebuking, exhorting, with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2), regardless of whether or not there is a financial reward at the end of the day. Any who follow the money trail, have deviated from the right way and have gone astray from the LORD's path. Let's look at our next point about these false teachers.

### **4. They are empty talkers (verses 17-19).**

Verse 17 says, "These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved."

The imagery of this verse can easily be lost on us in the land of moisture, especially when our winter is on record pace for the most snow in a winter. We get more than 30 inches of rainfall every year. We don't have water shortages here in the Midwest. But, for those in Israel, it's a different story. For the most part, they live in a desert. Springs and clouds are their lifelines. Without water, they die in Israel.

Imagine yourself, out in the desert, in desperate need of water, and you come upon a spring, where you think you will get your needed water to survive. And then, you find it without water. You are disappointed. You had placed your hope in the spring, but the spring didn't come through. Or, imagine yourself a farmer. You see a cloud coming, which might bring water. It's coming closer and closer. Your hopes are up that it might rain. But then, the wind picks up and the cloud blows away. Your hopes are dashed.

Whether looking for water from a spring or from clouds, in both cases, you are hoping for water to keep you (or your crops) alive. When you get nothing, the results are devastating. So it is with false teachers. You come to them, desperately looking for life. You say, "Teach me. Lead me. Guide me." But, what do you get? You get nothing. To be sure, they may be speaking, but their words mean nothing.

Peter continues in verse 18, "For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved." Their words are "arrogant words of vanity." That is, they speak empty words. They speak meaningless words. They don't have the words of life. Rather, they have seductive, seducing words.

They seduce by fleshly desires. "Do you want to get rich? Then follow my advice! Do you want to live a healthy life? Then follow my advice! Do you want to live a life of ease? Then follow my advice!" And who gets sucked away into their schemes? Those who are weak. Peter says that it is those "who barely escape from the ones who live in error." I think that he's talking about those who are barely out of the world, and one foot in the church. They are unstable. They are easily led astray. See, the strong don't follow the false teachers. Rather, it's the weak who follow the false teachers.

When a lion looks to attack a herd of wildebeests, it doesn't go after the strongest and fastest in the herd. Rather, he looks for the weakest, and the slowest. They are easy prey. So also do false teachers go after the weak in the flock. The mature see their words. They may promise freedom, but the fact that they are "slaves of corruption" demonstrates that you can't trust their words. It's like a man in prison telling you how to enjoy a day in the park. They can't enjoy a day in the park. Why would you listen to them to learn about what it's like? Because you aren't strong.

Here's a great place of application. Do you want to protect yourself from false teachers and their crafty ways? Then, grow in grace. Know your Bibles. Trust in the Lord. That will protect you. Finally, ...

## **5. They are worse than before (verses 20-22).**

It's really at this point that the entire text begins to become clear to us as Peter describes the history of these false teachers. Peter writes, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" (verses 20-21).

These false teachers have come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ. After all, they are in the church! These are professing Christian teachers. They aren't psychic readers. They aren't Hindu gurus. They aren't new age thinkers. They are teaching others about Jesus.

And their knowledge of Jesus Christ has helped them. Verse 20 says that "they have escaped the defilements of the world through this knowledge of Christ." Albeit, their escape was only temporary. Because verse 20 tells us that "they are again entangled in them and are overcome." For the last ten verses, we have seen how they are again entangled in the ways of the world. They despise authority (verses 10-11). They indulge the flesh (verses 12-14). They have gone astray (verses 15-16). They are empty talkers (verses 17-19). And the result is this: they are worse than before (verses 20-22).

You can see this at the end of verse 20, "the last state has become worse for them than the first." It means that they are in a worse position now, than they were before they ever heard anything about Jesus. Verse 21 even clarifies the issue a bit for us. Peter writes, "For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them."

The men have been exposed to the truth, and they have rejected the truth. They have turned from the "holy commandment." They have turned from the Scriptures. They have turned from the gospel of Christ. And it is worse for them now, than it was before.

This is not a new thought. It's throughout the New Testament. Mostly, this comes out of the mouth of Jesus, Himself. For instance, when Judas betrayed Jesus, after being a first-hand witness to the life and teaching of Jesus, Jesus said, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21).

When Jesus walked through the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, he performed many miracles in those cities. And yet, the people didn't repent of their wickedness. As a result, Jesus spoke of how much greater the condemnation will be upon them. He said, ...

Matthew 11:21-24

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

On another occasion, Jesus had an encounter with the Pharisees, who said that He was casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Luke 11:15; Matt. 11:24). In that context, Jesus spoke about the sin which will not be forgiven: "blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Matt. 12:31). I believe this to be a clear manifestation of Jesus, which people attribute to the work of Satan.

In that same context, Jesus said, "When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

The idea is the same. The man had one demon, who left him. Certainly, his life was improved. But, as the demon returned, he came with seven others. The man was worse off than before. Better to have only one demon, than eight.

The writer to the Hebrews says it this way: "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28).

Likewise, these false teachers will face a severer punishment. Because they knew the way of the truth, but turned their back upon it. It's one thing to turn away from Moses. But, it's another thing to turn away from Christ! At one time, their knowledge of Christ helped pull them out of their former sins. But, they have returned to their cesspool. And thus, they await a worse judgment.

Peter illustrates what happens to these guys in verse 22, "It has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and 'A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.'" He talks about dogs and hogs. In the days of the apostles, dogs weren't man's best friend. Rather, they were mangy mutts that roamed around the city. In the days of the apostles, pigs weren't looked upon with favor, either.

Peter says that these false teachers are like dogs, in that they return to their own vomit. This is a quote from Proverbs 26:11. That's why Peter calls it a "true proverb."

I've never seen this before, but, I have seen a cat return to its vomit. (This is probably the only time that I'll get to tell this story in church.) Anyway, my family was out in California at my in-laws. It was late one night, and everyone had gone to bed, except for Yvonne and me. We were sitting there, working on our computers or watching television or reading or something. All of a sudden, we heard this awful sound. At first, it sounded like someone was growing. Then, it sounded like someone was coughing. But, then, it sounded more like someone was gagging. We didn't know what it was. Suddenly, we realized that it was the cat, which was in the middle of the living room floor having these convulsion.

I had no idea what was going on. But, Yvonne was on top of things. She brought a throw rug over to where the cat was. Soon after that, the cat vomited up this fur ball onto this throw rug, a little bit smaller than a ping-pong ball. It was gross. It was just sitting there on this throw rug. Needless to say, Yvonne and I went to bed soon afterwards. (This is why we don't have any pets in the Brandon house). We could have cleaned it up, but we didn't, figuring that the cat is Grandma Lola's cat. Grandparents never have to change diapers. Nor do guests have to clean up after the household cat.

Anyway, when we awoke in the morning, we found the location of the fur ball clean. We asked Grandma if she cleaned it up. She said that she didn't. So, the cat returned to its vomit. It's a disgusting story. But, the text is disgusting.

Talking with my family last night about this, my son, SR, said that he was visiting a friend, whose dog was sick and vomited all over the floor. (Again, this is why we don't have any pets). SR said that this dog then went back and licked up all the vomit off the floor. He said that it was pretty disgusting.

That's the point we are supposed to feel. These false teachers escaped their corruption. They vomited it up. It was no longer a part of them, for a season. But, then, they returned to their former practices. This time, they returned in full knowledge that what they were doing was wrong! It's like they have returned to their vomit.

Peter then quotes another Proverb that circled in his day. He says, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire" (verse 22). In other words, the sow that was once cleansed from the filth that covered him, returned once more to the filth, which he loves.

The natural question that comes out of these verses is this: "Were these false teachers saved? Did they lose their salvation?" My answer is that they were not saved. So, they never lost their salvation. To be sure, they came to a knowledge of Christ (verse 20 says this). They even came to a knowledge of "the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But, the verse speaks nothing about their faith or their trust in Him. It only speaks about something that they knew. To be sure, these false teachers experienced a change in their lives. But, they were never changed in nature. It was all external. The Proverbs that Peter quotes are good examples of this.

The dog that vomited, was still a dog, who willingly returned to the scene of the crime. The pig that was cleansed, was still a pig, who loved the mud and slop, and given the opportunity, went back into the mire. So also, these false teachers never experienced the new birth. They were never changed by God. It was only their morality that changed. They experienced nothing of the new birth.

So ends chapter 2. The descriptions of the false teachers is terrible. Before I close my message this morning, I do want to spend a few moments stepping back from the text and considering it in light of the flow of 2 Peter.

At one point in their lives, these false teachers knew the truth of God. As verse 20 says, "they have escaped the defilements of the world." They have come to a knowledge of Christ. And, they have progressed in their knowledge of Christ to the point that they have become teachers in church. But, now, they have been entangled and overcome by the defilements of the world. They turned away from the way of righteousness. They have been governed by their flesh. They had denied the Master who bought them.

To make matters worse, they are still hanging around the church, doing great damage to the church. They have secretly introduced destructive heresies. They are carousing with you. They are enticing the unstable souls. They are promising others freedom. They are exploiting others with false words. Furthermore, they are polluting the church, putting forth a terrible example with their lives. They are indulging the flesh, having eyes of adultery, having a heart trained in greed, being self-willed, and acting like unreasoning animals. They are speaking arrogantly. They are stains and blemishes in their moral character. They are slaves of corruption.

Many questions flow from these men. Perhaps foremost of all is this: why do these people taste righteousness, truth, and then deny it, and forsake it? When it comes down to it, I believe that they are driven by their lusts, far more than they are driven by the truth of God. The development of false theology always follows a change in lifestyle. In other words, people fall into false theology, not by reading the Bible and coming to wrong conclusions. Rather, they want to justify their lifestyle. So, they discover a theology that will allow them live the way that they want to live.

Another question: Why do such false hang around, trying to pull others down with them and be destructive? The simple answer to this is that Satan wants to destroy the church. He will use whatever means available to him to do this. One of the most effective is to infiltrate the church with those who are false.

What was their fatal flaw. When you place all of it into the context of 2 Peter, I believe that their fatal flaw was that they didn't grow in godliness. Back in chapter 1, verse 3, Peter has told us that in Christ, God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." Peter then calls us to "apply all diligence in [our] faith," by practicing moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (verses 5-7). As we practice these things, we make sure about God's "calling and choosing" us (verse 10). In other words, as we see the evidences of God's grace in our lives, we are sure that we have believed and trusted in Christ.

The flip side is true as well. If we aren't growing in our godliness, then, we have no assurance that we are believers at all. In the case of these false teachers, it is their lives that give them away. They weren't growing. Thus, we conclude, they weren't saved. Based upon Peter's theme in his epistle, my message this morning was entitled, "**They didn't grow.**" [3]

I have one final question: how can we guard against this sort of hardening in our own lives? Peter gives us some great counsel in the last two verses of his epistle. He writes, ...

2 Peter 3:17-18

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Peter tells us to be on our guard. We are to be as the centry, who is taking watch duty. We aren't supposed to drift into the church with our minds disengaged. Rather, we are to come with our minds ready to see what's there in the Scriptures for us to believe. We are to grow in our knowledge of Him. And as we know more of Him, Peter calls us to to grow in God's grace, experiencing Him working in our lives.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on January 18, 2009 by Steve Brandon.  
For more information see [www.rvbc.cc](http://www.rvbc.cc).

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[1] I need to mention here that there is a debate regarding the meaning of verse 10, because of the of the word translated here, "angelic majesties." Literally, the word is "glories." It may refer to demonic beings or to angels. Obviously, I have taken the reference to mean the former.

[2] Upon reading Numbers 22, it seems a bit confusing as to why the LORD was so angry with Balaam. God's counsel to Balaam in the night was, "If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do" (Num. 22:20). The next two verses read, "So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab. But God was angry because he was going and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him" (Num. 22:21-22). I believe that the best way to understand these verses is to take the "if" of verse 20 seriously. The LORD gave Balaam a clear sign to follow, "If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them" (verse 20). Perhaps the LORD was referring to their calling of Balaam in the morning (which never happened). However, Balaam merely picked up and went. Thus explains the LORD's anger in verse 22.

[3] At this point in my message, I reminded the congregation about the plants that I handed out to each family at the beginning of 2 Peter. In each of the plants, we placed a sign that said, "2 Peter Know and Grow." Those in the congregation are to see the plant and allow themselves to be reminded of the theme of 2 Peter. Then, I pulled out a plant that we have in our home that isn't doing so well. In fact, it's wilting and dying. I held it up for all to see and said, "This is a false teacher." He isn't growing. Instead of growing in their faith and seeing God's grace evidence itself in their lives, they turned to their wickedness.