

"10 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, 11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. 12 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, 13 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, 14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; 15 forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 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. 17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. 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, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. 20 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. 21 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. 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.'" 2 Peter 2:10-22, NAS95.

Peter now begins a description of the character of the false prophets he is warning against. It is rather evident that we cannot classify all false prophets by these words. There are strong indicators that these particular prophets, Peter's use of "especially those who" promote the licentiousness and sensuality we discussed last week as an acceptable norm. He is placing a specific emphasis on especially those who indulge in the flesh and so on as our text states.

The text pictures these prophets in very explicit terms and even a simple understanding of their character proves them to be rather horrible people. And the question I must ask when reading this is, "why and how would people follow men like this and adhere to their teaching"?

Well there can be many reasons.

First of all God is made in their own image so all of us have that in common until we have been saved by grace. No man can have a full and proper view of God without

salvation. All men can know that God exists but that is a different revelation and the one that condemns all men according to Romans,

"18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Romans 1:18-25, NAS95.

Notice the three most salient points about these prophets, who by the way are not necessarily false Christians as we illustrated some false Christian doctrines that are widespread last week but by today's standard these types represent "New Age" religions as much as anything else and they want to destroy true Christian teaching and lure away people from Christ.

They are insolent, v. 10-12; they are licentious, v. 13; they are immoral, v. 14 and greedy, v.14-16

Peter condemns them on three counts:

1. the message sounds attractive but has no substance v.17
2. their approach attempts to lure Christians back to a sensual life of pleasure v.18
3. it is totally deceptive because it puts one back in bondage of sin v.19

Now let's dig a bit deeper into the descriptive words that Peter uses.

They are daring or bold. They have no concern for the consequences for themselves or others. They are self-willed, self-pleasing or arrogant so that nothing else can be taken into consideration. Poole the Puritan commentator says "they are addicted to their own ways". They have no regard for God's angels or God's dignities. This is a

little difficult. It could be that they would slander angels just like the men in Sodom had done when the angels came to Lot's house. Yet by current standards there is a lot of angel worship going on, just watch a TV program like Touched By An Angel. It could also mean they have no regard for any Christian church leaders including the Apostles.

Now notice how the angels, heavenly angels, who are more powerful and have greater dignity, in the sense of greatness, than these mere mortals react to them. They do not bring a reviling judgment, a blasphemous accusation, against them before the Lord.

Now if these are angelic beings, not church leaders, then they do not bring accusations against dignities ie. rulers, magistrates and princes . Angels have been used as guardians of kingdoms and destroyers of armies yet it is not their place to bring accusations against any. They cannot act autonomously even as God's agents.

Some may translate dignities as referring to angels themselves in which case angels are not even allowed to bring accusations against each other. And there is Scriptural proof for this in Jude1:9,

"9 But 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 1:9, NAS95.

In verse 12 Peter words are even harsher.

"12 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," 2 Peter 2:12, NAS95.

J. B. Philips put this way:

But these men, with no more sense than the unreasoning brute beasts which are born to be caught and killed, scoff at things outside their own experience, and will most certainly be destroyed in their own corruption.

How true this is of false prophets and those that follow them.

Today this reflects even more than the false prophets. Our societies and cultures that have been exposed to the true Gospel do the same. There are spokesman for all kinds of religions and philosophies of men that prove their lack of a true knowledge of Christ.

The current trend of not accepting any absolutes, which is called post-modernism, does scoff at things outside the relevant experience of individuals.

So all of the mocking, scoffing, reviling or howling like mad dogs or wolves that cannot reason, only brings destruction in the end.

"13 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," 2 Peter 2:13, NAS95.

Their end is exactly what they deserve.

The self-indulgences of these false prophets are not hidden. They delight in the light of day for all to see and to encourage all that their way is a safe way, because where is the judgment? The Christian is to be working for the cause of Christ because the night is coming. These foul persons contradict the Christian way of life in every way.

For them there is no thought of tomorrow. They have nothing to lose. They are spots and blemishes on the church if they are carousing with true believers. Weak new believers may be identifying with them and this is a stain on Christ's glory in the church. The beauty of His holiness in His body is marred and scarred.

They take absolute pleasure in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. They are perfect examples of what it means to be slaves to the sinful nature rather than being slaves of Christ who show the fruit of the Spirit.

Here is nothing but dishonor and disgrace if one is following or being corrupted by such men like these. They are self-deceived and full of themselves and take every opportunity in church gatherings, home meetings or any gathering to encourage the immature to follow their deceptions.

I recall in the 1970's there was a so-called evangelist by the name of Marjoe Gortner. He was groomed to be a fraud by his parents

When Marjoe was three, his father, a second generation evangelical minister, noticed his son's talent for mimicry and overall fearlessness of strangers and public settings. His parents claimed Marjoe had received a vision from God during a bath and began

training him to deliver sermons, complete with dramatic gestures and emphatic lunges. By the time Marjoe was four, his parents arranged for him to perform a marriage ceremony for a film crew from Paramount studios, referring to him as "the youngest ordained minister in history." Like much in Marjoe's early life it is hard to say for sure who exactly ordained him, if his father ordained him, or if he was even ordained at all.

Until the time he was a teenager, Marjoe and his parents traveled the rural United States, holding revival meetings. As well as teaching him scriptural passages, Marjoe's parents also taught him several money-making tactics, involving the sale of supposedly "holy" articles at revivals which promised to heal the sick and dying. By the time Marjoe was sixteen, he later estimated, his family had amassed maybe three million dollars; shortly after his sixteenth birthday, Marjoe's father absconded with the money, and a disillusioned Marjoe left his mother for San Francisco, where he was taken in by and became the lover of an older woman. Marjoe spent the remainder of his teenage years as an itinerant hippie until his early twenties, when, hard pressed for money, he decided to put his old skills to work and re-emerged on the evangelical circuit with a charismatic stage-show modeled after those of contemporary rockers, most notably Mick Jagger. Marjoe made enough to take six months off every year, during which he returned to California, surviving on the previous six months' earnings.

In the late 1960s, Marjoe suffered a crisis of conscience -- in particular about the threats of damnation he felt compelled to weave into his sermons -- and resolved to make one final tour, this time on film. Under the pretense of making a documentary on the evangelical and non-denominational faiths, Marjoe assembled a documentary film crew to follow him around the Southern United States during 1971; unbeknownst to everyone else involved -- including, at one point, his father -- Marjoe gave "backstage" interviews to the filmmakers in between sermons and revivals, explaining intimate details of how he and other ministers operated. After sermons, the filmmakers were invited back to Marjoe's hotel room to tape him counting the money he collected during the day. The resulting film, *Marjoe*, won the 1972 Academy Award for best documentary..

I saw the film soon after my conversion and was appalled by his boldness and even more so that after the film came out many people wrote to him begging him to just repent and keep preaching. One striking scene shows him sitting with a pastor and his wife being invited to come and take care of the church while they would be on vacation and you can see his laughing eyes.

These prophets, when attending the gatherings, always have a roving eye.

"14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;" 2 Peter 2:14, NAS95.

In verse 15 they are compared with Balaam, the son of Beor. He was a man of some rank among the Midianites Nu 31:8 comp. Nu 31:16 He resided at Pethor De 23:4 in Mesopotamia Nu 23:7. It is evident that though dwelling among idolaters he had some knowledge of the true God; and was held in such reputation that it was supposed that he whom he blessed was blessed, and he whom he cursed was cursed. When the Israelites were encamped on the plains of Moab, on the east of Jordan, by Jericho, Balak sent for Balaam "from Aram, out of the mountains of the east," to curse them; but by the remarkable interposition of God he was utterly unable to fulfil Balak's wish, however desirous he was to do so. In Mic 6:5 reference also is made to the relations between Balaam and Balak. Though Balaam could not curse Israel, yet he suggested a mode by which the divine displeasure might be caused to descend upon them Nu 25. In a battle between Israel and the Midianites (q.v.) Balaam was slain while fighting on the side of Balak Nu 31:8. The "doctrine of Balaam" is spoken of in Re 2:14 in allusion to the fact that it was through the teaching of Balaam that Balak learned the way by which the Israelites might be led into sin. Balaam was forced to utter prophecies regarding the future of Israel of wonderful magnificence and beauty of expression Nu 24:5-9,17.

In Verse 15 they have forsaken the right way because at some point they had heard of the right way but rather wallowed in their self deceit.

"16 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." 2 Peter 2:16, NAS95. "17 These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved." 2 Peter 2:17, NAS95.

They look and sound like they are full of knowledge but in the end they are empty, there is no refreshment and nothing of substance. We see many clouds and hope for rain and often they just are carried away and do not leave a drop behind. All these prophets bring comes from them, there is no truth, there is only cloudiness of mind they do no good and only bring the damage a storm may bring.

Peter then tells us how damaging their teaching can be,

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, 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved." 2 Peter 2:16-19, NAS95.

Their arrogant words are nothing but nonsense but it captivates others because of the sensual attraction. Their teaching pulls at the passionate desires to attract those who were just beginning to get away from the false teaching. The most horrible aspect of the teaching is that it promotes being slaves to sin and the corrupt nature which believers in Christ have been able to escape. The very things we have escaped from are waiting to overcome us and enslave us again, the corruption that is in the world through lust.

These prophets proclaim that liberty is licentiousness and sensuality. Real freedom is being corrupt. But they are slaves to this corruption. They have no freedom or liberty. They are slaves to the nature that ultimately condemns them.

Now Peter addresses not the prophets but those they seek to corrupt, those who are professing Christians.

"20 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." 2 Peter 2:20, NAS95.

This is another difficult passage as to who is being described. Is it the false prophets, their followers or both? It seems harder to accept the prophets because these sensuous type of false prophets never seem to have claimed any truth of Christ. Their followers or targets are those new in the faith and some may have not yet proved to

be genuine. Everyone who says they are a Christians are not necessarily genuinely converted. And so here we have this warning passage. If you have had any understanding of the way of Christ and forsake it for the way of the world you will be worse off than you were before. Peter may be referring to an external conformity to Christ without a new heart as Jesus taught in

"26 "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 11:26, NAS95.

Any false understanding of overcoming sin usually leads to a more sinful life when one forsakes that understanding for self gratification.

It is similar to Hebrews 6:4-8 and Heb 10:26-31 where the writer warns those who appear to be believers and started out well but are now considering to the Old Covenant practices that there is no other way of salvation other than Christ.

"21 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." 2 Peter 2:21, NAS95.

Does this mean there are degrees of punishment based on what a person knew about Christ? Some believe so in some passages of Scripture. But in this text I am not convinced. It means that having learned of Christ's morality as opposed to the immorality they have been taught that their rebellion is now even more deliberate than before. Now not only are they natural sinners but they are deliberate and determined mockers of God. Such deliberate immorality can have so many more consequences because the nature of the sinful activities will increase and the more sin and kinds of immorality we expose ourselves to the more consequences we may suffer.

Jesus once told a man who was diseased and whom He healed to go and sin no more or it will be even worse for you. Jesus did not offer the man salvation. He made a connection to sin and his particular infirmity and told him to stop the sin that caused it or it will be worse next time.

"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." 2 Peter 2:22, NAS95.

This is added as another harsh warning. It is not to be wondered at that they are again entangled in and overcome by their former sins, when there never was a thorough change wrought in their hearts. Dogs and swine here could be an allusion for Jewish believers (beasts unclean by the law) and to gentiles who were considered dogs by Jews, they still were, under the greatest appearances of reformation, and such they now show themselves to be by their rejecting Christ.

The dog is turned to his own vomit again: as dogs vomit up what is burdensome to them, but, still being dogs, and not having changed their natures by easing their stomachs, lick up their own vomit again; so these, under a fit of conviction, through the power of the word, disgorge those sins which burdened their consciences, but having thereby gotten some ease, and their old nature and love to their former lusts still remaining, they again return to the same sins they had for a time forsaken.

The sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire: as swine, that naturally love the dirt and mire, if sometimes they be washed from it, yet, still retaining their former disposition, return again to it; so likewise these here mentioned, however they may be washed from the pollutions of the world, and by the preaching of the gospel brought off from their former ways of sin, and brought into a profession of holiness, yet, still retaining their old nature and corrupt dispositions, they are easily prevailed over by them, and so relapse into their former abominations.

We must guard the fellowship of believers from such as these. Where this occurs, membership is usually not a requirement and people are assigned to teaching home bible studies and so on with no leadership supervision.

Be careful, be diligent, look to Christ and know the Word.