

Book: 2 Peter
Series: *True Faith vs. False Teaching:
Add To Your Faith, Knowledge*
Lesson 11: *Grim Details of False Teachers*
Text: 2 Peter 2:10b-22
Date: Sunday, November 11, 2012

Colonial Hills
ABE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

For questions that inevitably arise from verses 20-22, in particular, please see footnotes 37 and 39.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

2 Peter 3:1-10 – *A Case Study: Future Events and False Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

While “rant,” “yelling,” and “soapbox” all have a negative connotation, the idea underlying those terms is what we have discovered to be Peter’s purpose in 2 Peter 2. In this passage, he is attacking false teaching and repudiating false teachers because true faith and its progress of godliness, spiritual confidence, and eternal life is on the line. Therefore, his discussion is candid and at times animated. Verses 1-3 was just a simple fly-over of false teachers, pointing out some *general descriptions*. Verses 4-10a unpacked one aspect of false teaching, in particular, highlighting its *great destruction*. The final paragraph, verses 10b-22, dives into the heart of false teachers and reveals some incredibly *grim details* about them. In essence, this passage “rambles in a way that often betrays a great “vehemence of spirit” (A. T. Robertson, *Grammar*, 435). The author is obviously agitated at these false teachers who are to come.”¹

At one point, Peter condemns these false teachers as “cursed children” or literally “children of a curse” (cf. Ephesians 2:1-3; 4). As those who have flagrantly rejected Jesus’ lordship and have masterfully deceived others into doing the same, they are “rightly denounced as children of hell’s curse.”² Throughout this passage, Peter gives us at least five reasons why they are so indicted.

THEIR SPEECH IS SLANDEROUS (vv. 10b-13a).

Three times in these verses, Peter uses the Greek word *blasphemeo* (verb) / *blasphemos* (noun) to describe the speech of these false teachers (vv. 10, 12—“speak evil”; v. 11—“railing accusation”). The verb means to “slander, revile, defame, speak irreverently/impiously/disrespectfully of or about”³ or “to hurt the reputation or smite with reports or words, speak evil of, slander, rail.”⁴ This kind of communication characterizes false teachers. Notice three observations about such insulting and irreverent speech.

1. *Their speech is insolent.*

At the heart of such maligning slander is insolence. Our passage starts by describing their hearts as “presumptuous...[and] self-willed.” “Presumptuous” depicts an arrogant, audacious, daring, brazen individual; “self-willed” people are those who come across as arrogant, due to their stubbornness and self-focus. One lexicon contemporizes the latter term this way—“In a number of languages [‘self-willed’] may be expressed as ‘thinking one is so much better than everyone else’ or ‘always looking down on other people’ or ‘always saying, I am better.’”⁵ This kind of an individual is one who

*is pleased with himself and despises others, insolent, surly, the contrast of courteous or affable. A person who obstinately maintains his own opinion or asserts his own rights but is reckless of the rights, feelings, and interests of others. He regulates his life with no respect to others.*⁶


It is no wonder, then, that there is no pause in their spirits when these false teachers open their mouths to insult, defame, and revile.

2. *Their speech is irrational.*

Verses 10b-11 present an *a fortiori* (weaker to the stronger) contrast to illustrate just how ludicrous and irrational these men are when they speak this way. (Lit.) “They do not tremble when they slander the glorious ones, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a slanderous judgment against them before the Lord.”

Two possible interpretations are offered here:⁷ (1) these false teachers speak disrespectfully of evil angels (“glorious ones”), even though mightier holy angels refuse to bring a slanderous judgment against those evil angels (“them”); (2) the false teachers slander good angels (“glorious ones”), but these more powerful angels don’t even condemn the false teachers (“them”). While both interpretations are held and argued for within the church, and while it is true that holy angels do not malign evil angels (cf. Jude 9), we lean toward the second option, because the term “glorious ones” is an unnatural title for evil angels, never used as such throughout Jewish or Christian literature.


So, we learn here of the irrationality of these teachers: “the false teachers do not hesitate to bring vituperative accusations against their superiors; whereas the angels do not even dare to impugn their inferiors in such terms in the Lord’s presence.”⁸


 **Application:** What application does this point offer to Christians? “Peter is asserting that these men were more free with their language than the angels themselves, and it would be no bad thing if Christians remembered that any condemnations of others are necessarily uttered ‘before the Lord.’”⁹ This passage “should give pause to human beings who accuse and even pronounce judgment on other human beings, an activity that is quite common in the church, even among church leaders.”¹⁰

Furthermore, (lit). “these [false teachers]—as natural, unreasoning animals, who have been born to be caught and killed—do not understand [the things] in which they are slandering” (v. 12). These teachers “are comparable to beasts that have no rational capability, operating solely on self-indulgence and unthinking passion....They ridicule divine truth and heavenly authority, including things they do not even understand. Like animals, they make no positive contribution and would actually serve others best by being dead.”¹¹ What an indictment on their irrational slander!

3. *Their speech is injurious.*

As a result of the first two observations, (lit.) “they will be destroyed [Gk. *phthora*] with the destruction [Gk. *phtheiro*] of them [i.e., those animals¹²], being harmed [Gk. *adikeo*] as the wages of doing harm [Gk. *adikia*]” (vv. 12b-13a). However they may affect others, they irreversibly condemn themselves through their own deception and corruption. They have done harm (i.e., they have done wickedly—*adikia* is usually translated as “unrighteousness” in our New Testaments [cf. Romans 1:18]); therefore, they will suffer harm (i.e., be damaged or injured).

 **Application:** Where have you seen this kind of godless speech from false teachers? *In social media, on the blogosphere, etc; open discussion*

 How do the qualifications for church leaders guard the church against such insolent irreverence (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2-13; 2 Timothy 2:22-26; Titus 1:6-14)? *open discussion (consider specific characteristics that replace the wickedness in our passage—the church must be diligent in holding their leaders to this standard)*

Transition: False teachers are “cursed children” because their speech is slanderous and, secondly, because their character is corrupt.

THEIR CHARACTER IS CORRUPT (vv. 13b-14).

We previewed the character of these false teachers in verses 1-3. Now we return to it in greater detail.

1. *They are hedonistic.*

These people are pleasure-driven,¹³ for their perverted and irrational thought process leads them to (lit.) “consider [“count” in the KJV] self-indulgence [or revelry, carousing, intemperance; “riot” in the KJV] in the daytime a pleasure” (v. 13). Therefore, they “self-indulge [same word family as above; “sport themselves” in KJV] in their deceptions” (v. 13). Whatever is pleasurable, enjoyable, delightful, desirable—that is their god.

2. *They are unrestrained.*

MacArthur explains,

As a general rule, sinners tend to engage in debauchery at night: “For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night” (1 Thess. 5:7). According to historians, pagan Roman society tolerated dissipation and revelry as long as it was discreetly confined to the cover of darkness. But it frowned on and disapproved of debauchery during the daytime when it could be viewed by everyone. Because of its public nature, such behavior was considered inappropriate, even by Roman unbelievers. Nonetheless, the false teachers of Peter’s day were so consumed with lust, greed, and vice that they considered it a pleasure to revel in the daytime, not wanting to wait until nightfall.¹⁴

3. They are deceived.

It is no surprise after all that Peter has written so far to discover that at the heart of such self-centered, unrestrained carousing is deception. Having already demonstrated the natural progression and differing paths of truth vs. deception, Peter reminds us that these false teachers started with a denial of truth. They are self-indulging in “their own deceivings,” for they spurn the truth that (1) “the pleasures of sin” last only “for a season” (Hebrews 11:25); and (2) “the way of transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15). It is not the enjoyment of pleasure that is sinful (cf. Ecclesiastes; Isaiah 55:2); these teachers sin in that they take pleasure in “deceivings,” “which in contexts such as this means ‘deceitful pleasure’ or ‘a pleasure that involves one in sin.’”¹⁵

4. They are perverted.

These first three characteristics are a recipe for debauchery of the worst kind, even though these teachers claim to be religious. Verse 14 describes them as “having eyes full of an adulteress and unceasing sin.” BDAG explains these terms as “always looking for a woman with whom to commit adultery”¹⁶ and “unceasingly looking for sin.”¹⁷ Unbridled immorality climaxed the depravity of these men.¹⁸

Verse 14 adds that they (lit.) “have a heart exercised in covetousness.” We get our word “gymnasium” from the term “exercise.” Refusing to “exercise themselves unto godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7), they practice lust.

*Pleonexia (greed [or covetousness or lust—cf. Luke 12:15; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5]) is a difficult word to translate fully. It means unbridled desire for more and more things; things you have no right to, things you have no need of. It is often used of money, often of illicit or unnatural intercourse. These men had schooled themselves in the desire for forbidden things.*¹⁹

5. They are infectious.

As if none of this was enough, we are reminded here that these men infect others with their wickedness and eventual destruction. They are “stains” (“spots” in KJV) and “blemishes” (v. 13)—they soil Christ’s church by working against His recreation (cf. Ephesians 5:27), and they disease His body by infecting it with the subtlety of deception. “These people are unfit for the service of God (Lev 1:3; 21:21). They are the opposite of what the people of God as a whole is to be (2 Pet 3:14, where one has the negative of both of these words, a word choice that is hardly accidental).”²⁰


Also in verse 13, we learn that their hedonistic, unrestrained carousing spilled over into their “feasts with you.”²¹ MacArthur explains, “Here it may refer to the church’s love feast that accompanied the Lord’s table [cf. Jude 12]. By feigning faith in Christ, the false teachers pretended to have a rightful place at the table. But in fact they were a polluting influence.”²²


Verse 14 rounds out their infectious character by stating that they are “beguiling unstable souls.” Again, MacArthur fleshes out the idea:

*The word [beguiling or] enticing (deleazō) literally means “to catch with bait” [cf. James 1:14], and the apostle’s word picture is unmistakable. The false teachers, like fishermen using a lure, tricked their victims to believe their deceptions. Under the guise of authentic ministry, they targeted the unsuspecting (cf. 2 Tim. 3:6-8 [cf. Ephesians 4:14])—the spiritually immature, undiscerning, or unbelieving.*²³



Application: If the unstable are particularly vulnerable, how do we stabilize ourselves (cf. 2 Peter 1:12 and Luke 22:32)? *through a ministry of memory with one another, which will strengthen our faith in God (James 1:16)*

 Whereas believers add to their faith excellence, chapter 2 teaches us that false teachers add to their deception lust. Compare and contrast “excellence” and “lust”: *both have to do with lordship; both naturally lead somewhere—excellence to greater righteousness (1:5-7) and lust to greater wickedness due to the law of diminishing returns;*²⁴ *excellence can be neglected due to a focus on religiosity and lust can be cloaked in religiosity; open discussion*

 How does a false teacher escape from the path of false teaching entirely? *“There is only one way out, the way of death to sin and rising to newness of life; the only alternative to denying Christ is to be identified with him in his death and resurrection. It is this way of victorious living to which Peter refers in 1 Peter 4:1–3, ‘he who has suffered in his body (i.e. died to sin) is done with sin’. The verb he uses for ‘ceased from’ in 1 Peter is cognate to the rare word akatapaustus here.”*²⁵

Transition: “Children of a curse” are these false teachers, for they slander with their speech and are corrupt in their character. Thirdly, they are motivated by money.

THEIR MOTIVATION IS MONEY (vv. 15-16).


The first fourteen verses are now summarized by a simple statement: the false teachers “have forsaken the right way and are gone astray” (v. 15; cf. v. 2; Acts 13:10).²⁶ But, why? When they should have known the destinies of the two roads diverging in front of them, why did they choose the deceptive, depraved, and destructive path?

According to verses 15-16, these men are motivated by money, like the Old Testament prophet, Balaam.²⁷ In Numbers 22, Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (cf. “wages” in v. 13) so much that he was willing to financially profit from Balak, the king of Moab, who hired him to curse the Israelites. God’s grace confronted the “madness” of this prophet, for he had risked his

very life for this financial gain—God had clearly warned that He would curse any who cursed His people. And, yet, he would pay for his “iniquity” with a harsh death according to Numbers 31:8.

Green comments on the irony that false teachers can become so debased in their judgment that they actually become less reasonable than unthinking animals (cf. v. 12):

Peter makes a good deal of the Balaam incident in order to encourage the simple orthodox among his readers, who might easily be overwhelmed by the specious arguments of their seductive teachers. “A dumb [donkey] possessed sounder prophetic vision than a religious official whose moral sense had been perverted by gain from wrongdoing” (Barnett).²⁸

 **Application:** What parallels do you see between this passage and 1 Timothy 6:9-12? *open discussion (don’t miss, however, that in the 1 Timothy passage, the emphasis is on people who set out to be rich, not to be false teachers, but who ended up going that direction because of their love for money)*


Transition: Here are the grim details about false teachers—their speech is slanderous, their character is corrupt, their motivation is money, and, fourthly, their promises are perilous.

THEIR PROMISES ARE PERILOUS (vv. 17-19).

We return to the speech of these false teachers in verses 17-19, this time considering their promises to those who follow them. We uncover three realities about their promises in these verses.

1. *They are enticing.*


Peter writes that they “speak great swelling words” (v. 17). The adjective here literally refers to something that is oversized or swollen (WSDNT), but is used figuratively here to describe their words as haughty and pompous (BDAG) or bigheaded and boastful (WSDNT).

 What are some of these promising, but wrong messages that we learn of in chapter 3? *“that the old way of life was not really wrong in God’s eyes [and] that there will be no final judgment for them”*²⁹

With such awe-inspiring, cleverly-crafted, and seemingly wise words, accompanied³⁰ by their “lusts of the flesh [i.e., fleshly lusts]...[and] wantonness [lit. “debauchery” as in 2:2, 7],” these leaders “allure...those that were clean escaped from them who live in error” (v. 18). The word “allure” is the same word as “beguile” in verse 14 and means “entice” with bait and hook. The word “clean” is only used here in our New Testament and means “barely,” suggesting either that they recently escaped or have not yet fully escaped. Those “who live in error” refer to the outright unbelieving and unregenerate people around us. So, these who are being enticed are those who either just became or who are almost believers—those who are the “unstable” of verse 14.

The following section (vv. 20-22) seems to suggest that these are not actually believers, but are those who have been inquiring, seeking, learning, and coming to understand the nature of true faith and a relationship with Jesus (cf. v. 20). MacArthur describes these individuals:

*They are men and women who through moral resolution are trying to better themselves. They include people who struggle with broken relationships, wrestle with emotional “felt needs” and spiritual problems, and desperately desire relief from guilt, anxiety, and stress. They...seek some better way to live (cf. Mark 10:17–22) or some form of religious experience (cf. Acts 8:18–24). But that does not mean they are truly redeemed. In fact, in their dissatisfaction, loneliness, and self-betterment attempts, they are highly vulnerable to the seductive exploitations of false teachers.*³¹

 **Application:** How does this description of the false teachers show the pastoral heart of 2 Peter? *“[Peter’s] concern with the teachers is not that he is angry at their behavior per se (they will suffer for it, so it should be more a cause for sadness than anger), but that he is upset at the damage that they can do to others.”*³²

2. **They are empty.**

Peter makes it clear that their high-sounding messages are “words of vanity” (v. 18). There is no ring of truth to their sermons, but only valuelessness and emptiness. MacArthur draws the contemporary parallels: “In today’s church, these words of vanity (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5–6; 6:3–5; 2 Tim. 2:14–18; Titus 3:9) include the flowery vocabulary of religious ritualism, the convoluted doctrines of pseudo-Christian cults, and the academic arguments of mainstream liberalism.”³³

Peter illustrates their emptiness by describing them as “wells [or springs] without water” and “[rainless] clouds that are carried with a tempest” (cf. Jude 12)—both promise refreshment, but a dry spring and passing clouds offer no satisfaction.

The reason that their messages and promises are empty is that they have repudiated truth and given themselves to sin, as Peter reasons next.

3. **They are enslaved.**

Verse 19 unveils the hypocrisy of their message: “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are [lit. slaves] of corruption.” They have succumbed to (i.e., KJV—have been “overcome” by) depraved deception; this proves that they themselves are not free men, but are slaves “in bondage” to that very “same” problem. “Although they offer freedom, they are slaves to sin, utterly unable to bestow true spiritual freedom because they reject Jesus Christ—the only One who

can truly liberate the soul (John 8:31–32, 36; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:1; Heb. 2:14–15; cf. James 1:25).³⁴ They have no hope of light and life, for they themselves serve that which has rendered them as “reserved” for the “mist [or gloom] of darkness...forever” (v. 17).



Application: Contrast the water metaphors used of the false teachers in verse 17 with the water metaphor that Jesus used of Himself in John 7:37–38. Also, why would water metaphors have been so appropriate for these people? *Jesus’ message was not empty (a rainless cloud), but satisfying (living water); the Middle East is an arid land, in which water is a precious commodity*

Transition: Children of God must beware of the “children of a curse,” for not only are they slanderous, corrupt, financially motivated, and empty in their promises, but they also betray a tragic trajectory.

THEIR TRAJECTORY IS TRAGIC (vv. 20–22)

It is best to take the “they” in verse 20 as referring primarily to the false teachers and secondarily to those following them, who will naturally experience similar consequences.³⁵ Verse 20 uses language strikingly similar to 2 Peter 1:3–4 to describe the “beginning” of these false teachers. In some way, they had “escaped the pollutions of the world” and enjoyed “the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” However, their “latter end” or last state was drastically different—after experiencing the fullness of the path of false teaching described throughout chapter 2, these leaders “are again entangled [in]...and overcome [lit. defeated, v.19]” by those pollutions. Indeed, even though there had been some previous connection to Christ, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (cf. Matthew 12:43–45). Like Judas, who was a disciple of Jesus and a close participant in all He said and did, “it would be better for [them] if [they] had never been born” (NET, Matthew 26:24; John 17:12).³⁶

Such a sad epitaph is explained in the next verse. “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn [back] from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (v. 21). Since they reject the “holy commandment,” they repudiate the only source of saving hope that they had. Furthermore, “those who understand the truth and still turn away will face far greater judgment than those who have never heard (cf. Matt. 10:14–15; 11:22–24; Mark 6:11; Luke 12:47–48).”³⁷

That these were never regenerate teachers is demonstrated by the proverbs of verse 22—like dogs and swine, they eventually returned to that which fed their true heart’s nature (cf. Titus 1:15–16).³⁸



Application: While this passage is not an explicit warning, what warning should a wise believer glean from these verses and practice in His daily relationship with Jesus? *“For this reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith...”—persevere in the practice of your profession*

CONCLUSION

“Why has Peter expended so much powder and shot on the false teachers in this chapter? Because he is primarily a pastor. He is concerned to feed his Master’s sheep (cf. John 21:15–17; 1 Pet. 5:1ff.), and he is furious to find them being poisoned by lust masquerading as religion....It does our generation little credit that such passion for truth and holiness strikes an alien note in our minds. Peter’s plain speaking in this chapter has a very practical purpose, just as Jesus’ warnings had: ‘What I say to you I say to everyone: “watch”!’ We would be mistaken to assume, ‘It could never happen to us.’ Both Scripture and experience assure us that it could. ‘So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall’ (1 Cor. 10:12). Covetousness, sophisticated arguments, pride in knowledge, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, arrogance against authority of all kinds, and, most of all, the danger of denying the lordship of the Redeemer—are these not all the paramount temptations of money-mad, sex-mad, materialistic, anti-authoritarian, [twenty-first]-century man?”³⁹

ENDNOTES

¹ *The NET Bible*, First Edition (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Note #42 in verse 12.

² John F. MacArthur, Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 102.

³ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 178.

⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, electronic ed. (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000).

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 763.

⁶ Zodhiates.

⁷ The interpretational issues in this phrase are several, especially in light of the parallel passage in Jude 6-10: (1) who are the “glorious ones”? (2) who does “them” refer to in verse 11—the “glorious ones” or the false teachers? (3) was the original phrase at the end of verse 11 “from the Lord” (where “Lord” is genitive) or “before [or in the presence of] the Lord” (where “Lord” is dative)? See the NET Bible notes #37, 39, and 41 on verses 10-11; Bruce Manning Metzger and United Bible Societies, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.)* (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 633; Michael Green, vol. 18, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 127-130; and Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2006), 234-36. Regarding interpretational issue #3 above, Michel Green argues for the latter reading, commenting, “Unlike the false teachers who are careless of the lordship of Christ and are free with their insults, the angels so revere their Lord as they live all their lives in his presence, that no insulting language is allowed to pass their lips, even though it would be richly deserved” (129). For notes on the parallel Jude passage, see Davids, 56-59.

⁸ Green, 128.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁰ Davids, 236.

¹¹ MacArthur, 99.

¹² This, however, is just one of three possible interpretations. The most common and best-supported interpretations are: (1) “they will be destroyed in their own destruction” (a Hebraism, like Exod 18:18; Isa 24:3; Mic 2:10), (2) “they will be destroyed in the same destruction with them” (either in the suddenness/sureness of the final judgment/slaughter of the animals or in that the final judgment will destroy animals as well as the teachers),⁴³ or (3) “they will be destroyed in the same destruction [with the evil angels, whom they slander]” (Davids, 237-238).

¹³ Hedonism is “the pursuit of pleasure; sensual self-indulgence” (*The New Oxford American Dictionary*).

¹⁴ MacArthur, 100.

¹⁵ Davids, 240.

¹⁶ Arndt, 656.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 35.

¹⁸ “While 2 Peter does not say it explicitly, part of the agenda of these teachers at the celebrations of the Lord’s Supper may have been the women (although we would not want to

rule out self-indulgent eating, for that went on in Corinth, although for other reasons, as 1 Corinthians 11 shows), since his next charge is that they have ‘eyes full of adultery.’ Whether the context is the Lord’s Supper or not, our author’s point is that these men are not safe. The expression itself is possibly a play on a saying found in Plutarch, *Moralia* 528E, in which, using a play on words, the shameless person does not have pupils in his eyes but prostitutes, while the virtuous sees the purity of womanhood. Whether or not this or a similar expression is in our author’s mind, he clearly views these teachers as sexual predators and thus unsafe for the community, for they are compulsive” (Davids, 240).

¹⁹ Green, 134.

²⁰ Davids, 239.

²¹ “Indeed, since they were feasting with believers...they were turning the Lord’s Supper into something deceitful. They were not there celebrating in the presence of their living Lord, but rather they were there indulging their own selves, having their own agendas, for Jesus was not their Lord. Our author knows that Jesus was not their Lord since they were not apprentices to him, evident in the fact that they refused to follow his ethical instruction” (Davids, 240).

²² MacArthur, 100.

²³ *Ibid.*, 101.

²⁴ “The gravity of their debauchery is the main point, and Peter makes this acute observation. Lust is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Soon mere drunkenness fails to satisfy; it must be drunkenness in the daytime. Fornication, likewise, is not enough; it must be rape at the meal-table. Doubtless the heretics rationalized it as sacred prostitution, enacting in the cultic meal the unity between Christ and his church—but lust, naked lust, was their driving force. And lust often delights to deck itself out in religious garb” (Green, 133).

“They lust after every girl they see; they view every female as potential adulteress. Peter makes another shrewd psychological observation. Lascivious thoughts, if dwelt upon and acted upon, become dominant. It becomes impossible for them to look at any woman without reflecting on her likely sexual performance, and on the possibilities of persuading her to gratify their lusts. Not only does lust act as an irritant; it never satisfies. It always leaves a man restless, longing for more (which in its turn, equally fails to satisfy). [Thus, he finds himself ‘unceasing in sin’ for he is a slave to it.]” (*Ibid.*).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁶ “The right way is an Old Testament metaphor indicating obedience to God’s Word (Gen. 18:19; 1 Sam. 12:23; Job 8:19; Pss. 18:30; 25:9; 119:14, 33; Prov. 8:20, 22; cf. Acts 13:10). Forsaking describes a direct, deliberate rebellion against Scripture. By rejecting God’s Word, the false teachers of Peter’s day refused to walk in obedience, choosing instead to wander away in spite of the eternal consequences (cf. Jude 13)” (MacArthur, 102).

²⁷ They are “following” Balaam’s example. See the use of this term (Gk. *exakoloutheo*) in 1:16; 2:2. “Now it is quite true that the main point of the Balaam account in Numbers 22–24 is his avarice; but Numbers 31:16 attributes to his influence the immorality of the Israelites at Baal-Peor (Num. 25). These two factors surely combined to make him a most useful prototype of the immoral false teacher out for gain” (Green, 135).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁹ Davids, 245.

³⁰ “They do not care about bringing the truth to people’s minds; instead, they target people’s lusts—offering a carnal, feelings-oriented message that feeds the sensual instincts of its hearers. Often such teachers possess a personal charm and charismatic appeal that other people, especially vulnerable women, find attractive (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1–6; 4:3–4)” (MacArthur, 105).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Davids, 245-46.

³³ MacArthur, 105.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 105-06.

³⁵ “it refers basically to false teachers because (1) proximity makes the false teachers (spoken of in v. 19) the normal antecedent of ‘they,’ (2) the conjunction *gar* (untranslated in NIV) in v. 20 (*ei gar*, ‘for if’) logically connects v. 20 with v. 19, (3) ‘mastered’ (*hëttëtai*) in v. 19 is verbally linked to ‘overcome’ (*hëttötai*) in v. 20, and (4) the teachers are the main subject of the whole chapter” (Edwin A. Blum, “2 Peter” In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 12: Hebrews Through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981], 282).

³⁶ “Like Judas Iscariot, they breed in close proximity to Jesus Christ and His Word—cloaking themselves in the feigned righteousness of hypocrisy. Ultimately, they use the church solely for their own selfish purposes, like spiritual parasites, seductively seeking to drag as many as possible down with them, to the fiendish satisfaction of the hosts of Satan (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1–2)” (MacArthur, 108).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁸ “Is it possible, then, for Christians to lose their salvation? Many would answer affirmatively on the basis of this and similar texts (e.g., Heb 6:4–6; 10:26). But this verse asserts only that false teachers who have for a time escaped from worldly corruption through knowing Christ and then turn away from the light of the Christian faith are worse off than they were before knowing Christ. It uses no terminology affirming that they were Christians in reality (e.g., ‘sons of God,’ ‘children,’ ‘born again,’ ‘regenerate,’ ‘redeemed’). The NT makes a distinction between those who are in the churches and those who are regenerate (cf. 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Tim 2:18–19; 1 John 3:7–8; 2:19: ‘They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us... but their going showed that none of them belonged to us’). So when Peter says, ‘They are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning,’ The reference is to a lost apostate.” (Blum, 282).

And, “The best solution is to say that the language used in 2 Peter is phenomenological. In other words, Peter used the language of ‘Christians’ to describe those who fell away because they gave every appearance of being Christians. They confessed Christ as Lord and Savior, were baptized, and joined the church. But the false teachers and some of those they seduced, though still present physically in the church, were no longer considered to be genuine believers by Peter. Nonetheless, he used ‘Christian’ language to describe them, precisely because of their participation in the church, because they gave some evidence initially of genuine faith. Those who had apostatized revealed that they were never truly part of the people of God, for remaining true to the faith is one sign that one truly belongs to God. The words of 1 John apply well to what has happened in 2 Peter: ‘They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us’ (1 John 2:19). Peter pointed in the same direction in the illustration of the dog and pig. In the final analysis, those who fell away never really changed their nature. They remained dogs and pigs inside. They may have washed up on the outside and appeared to be different, but fundamentally they were dogs and pigs. In other words, they were always unclean; they only seemed to have changed. Perseverance, therefore, is the test of authenticity. Scholars will continue to disagree on whether believers can apostatize, but it is hoped that all will agree that believers must persevere to the end to be saved. In this respect there is a remarkable agreement between Arminians and Calvinists” (Thomas R. Schreiner, vol. 37, 1, 2 *Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003], 364-65).

³⁹ Green, 144.