

FALSE WORDS DECEIVE UNBELIEVERS

Summary and Historical Background

In chapter one, Peter said the true knowledge of God was the key to developing a fruitful Christian life. Peter then proceeded to warn believers about the false teachers in chapter two. They were a serious threat to believers, because they would teach them damnable heresies - 2:1. This was comparable to the warning that Paul gave to the leaders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:29-30). These false teachers were motivated by covetousness for personal gain - 2:3. But Peter reminded them that false teachers would be judged by God as He had judged others in the past - 2:4-10a. These heretics were described as those who desired the lusts of the flesh instead of the fruits of the Spirit - 2:10b-14. They had forsaken God's Word as their standard for living.

Study Notes

After challenging these believers to develop their spiritual lives by the infallible Word (chapter 1), Peter cautions them in this chapter about false teachers that will come into their churches and secretly teach heresies to them (2:1-3). Peter gives them three examples where God condemned false teachers to show the danger of listening to them (2:4-10a). Peter exposes their corrupt nature (2:10b-19) and the calamity that awaits them when God judges them (2:20-22).

I. Caution Against False Teachers — 2:1-3

2:1 — "But" - Note the contrast between these false teachers and true believers. The false teachers corrupted the knowledge that believers were exhorted to seek - 1:5, 8; cf. Also 1:20-21.

"Among" — They arise from within the churches. False prophets in the Old Testament had the following reputation:

- a. Personal popularity — Told the people what they wanted to hear - Jer 6:14.
- b. Personal gain — Ministered for filthy lucre - Micah 3:11.
- c. Personal life — Were morally wicked - Isa 28:7; Jer 23:14, 32
- d. Personal influence — Led the people from God, not to God - Deut 13:1-5, 8-10.

"Privily" — The false teachers smuggled in their heresies stealthily; secretly - cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15.

"Damnable heresies" — "Heresy" comes from a Greek verb which means "to choose," so it came to mean choices which caused factions. These disrupt unity and harmony in a church. A heretic is one who has chosen to believe his lies instead of the truth of God. In Mt 7:15 Christ calls these heretics wolves in sheep's clothing.

"Denying the Lord that bought them" — 1 John 2:2 teaches that the Lord paid for the sins of everyone by His death on the cross. He bought salvation for all sinners, but only those that repent of their sins and receive His gift of salvation by faith in Him are saved. These false teachers did not lose their salvation, even though it was bought for them; they never received it. They never turned from their sins and received Jesus Christ as their Savior. Sadly, they denied the Lord that bought them.

"Bring upon themselves swift destruction" — Since they never received Jesus as their Savior and were teaching false doctrine, they will "bring upon themselves swift

destruction." God will not let them continue to corrupt His people, but will judge them with severe consequences. Their destruction will be "swift" because it will come with an untimely disease or death (see Jer 28:16-17).

2:2 — "Many shall follow" - Unfortunately, many from within the church will be led astray by false teachers. Some that follow false teachers may not have been saved. But those that are saved will be crippled in their faith and suffer much sorrow.

"Pernicious" — Refers to all excesses and extremes of immorality. The teachings and practices of the false prophets discredit the Gospel in the eyes of the unsaved (a contrast is given in Titus 2:5).

2:3 — "Covetousness" - It is a desire to have more in order to satisfy the desires of the flesh. It is a form of idolatry (Col 3:5).

"Feigned words" — Manufactured or well-turned arguments. This is the Greek word from which we get our word "plastic." Contrast these words with Peter's words in 1:16.

"Judgment . . . lingers not" — Judgment on the false teachers is coming. God has not overlooked their wicked teaching. They will not escape.

"Damnation slumbers not" — Their doom is not sleeping. It is awake and will come upon them when God's patience with them ends.

II. Condemnation of False Teachers — 2:4-10a

2:4 — Three examples are given to prove that sinners do not get away with sin: (1) the angels that sinned - 1:4; (2) Noah's world - 1:5; and (3) Sodom and Gomorrah - 1:6.

"Angels" — Refers to the angels that followed Satan in his rebellion and did not remain true to God - cf. Jude 6.

"Hell" — Lowest hades, a most terrible place.

"Chains" — Another word for "pit" is almost spelled the same as the word for "chains" and both are found in MSS. "Pit" seems to fit the context better, but both are possible.

2:5 — "Old world" - The people of Noah's day are Peter's second example – Gen 7:1ff.

"Noah the eighth" — Only Noah and his family escaped the judgment by the flood. He was the eighth member of his family to be spared.

"Preacher of righteousness" — Emphasis is on Noah, a faithful and obedient preacher.

"Bringing in the flood" — This shows both the goodness and holiness of God. It was good of God to cleanse the earth of rampant wickedness; it was holy of God to judge the world for its sin.

2:6 — "Sodom and Gomorrah" - These two cities were destroyed for their immorality (sodomy was predominant) - Gen 19.

2:7, 8 — Lot lived in this sinful society but was distressed in his soul, because he was "just" (saved). As a result, the Lord graciously delivered him from the city and its ungodliness before He destroyed it. He was spared along with his two daughters, but he paid a price for living in Sodom. He lost his wife, his goods and his testimony. He lived in a cave with his two daughters. Later they made him drunk and he had immoral sex with them that produced two sons that became the fathers of ungodly nations - Gen 19:30-38.

2:9 — "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly" - The Lord promises to deliver the godly from their trials. In this case those caused by false teachers.

"Reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be judged" — God will judge the wicked and no one will escape, not even Satan.

2:10a — "Lust of uncleanness" - These false teachers had a desire for defilement. Instead of resisting it, they sought after it and desired others to join them in it (Rom1:32).

"Despise government" — Refers to their ungodly attitude toward authority. They are lawless, a law to themselves. This may refer to their rejection of the Lord's authority.

III. Corruption of False Teachers — 2:10b-19

2:10b — "Presumptuous" - They are arrogant and dare to live contrary to the known will of God.

"Self-willed" — They are self-pleasing. Logic or common sense made no difference to them. They do not respect anyone.

"Dignities" — Could be a reference to angelic beings or to church leaders - most likely to fallen angels. They probably taught that angels live under no restraints from practicing their lustful desires; thus, it is God's will for man to do the same.

2:11 — Not even good angels, who are "greater in power", bring accusation against the fallen angels, but leave that business in the Lord's hands.

2:12 — "Brute beasts" - They are slaves to their lusts like animals which have no restraints.

"Speak evil of things they understand not" — They claim to have special knowledge, but they show their ignorance by blaspheming things they do not understand.

"Perish" — They will perish twice. Their present body will perish in a painful disease or an untimely death and at the final judgment they will perish in the Lake of Fire, which is second death (Rev 21:8). In this life they will not lay hold on the pleasures that they seek, but the pleasures they seek will turn to ashes.

2:13 — "Shall receive the reward of unrighteousness" - These false teachers will be paid back for the harm they have done to others - Gal 6:7.

"Riot in the day time" — They seek to fulfill their lusts, even without the cover of darkness to hide their sin.

"They feast with you" — Even worse, they will spread their false doctrine while dining with believers.

2:14 — "Eyes full of adultery" - Every woman was considered a possible adulteress and their eyes could not cease from sin - cf. Job 31:1.

"Beguiling unstable souls" — They entice or bait unstable people to participate in sin with them.

"Exercised" — They were well-trained in covetous practices.

2:15 — "Following the way of Balaam" - They had forsaken the way of obedience to God to follow a way of disobedience in order to obtain the wages of unrighteousness - Num 22-26. Balaam was known as the man who taught Israel to sin.

2:17 — "Wells without water" - They promise refreshment to their followers, but they are unable to quench their thirst with lies. They have no water to give because they have received no water from the Lord i.e., the Holy Spirit - cf. Jn 4:13-14; 7:37-39.

"Mist of darkness" — These false teachers have a reservation, but it is in the Lake of Fire forever (Rev 20:11-15; 2 Thess 1:8-9).

2:18 — "Speak great swelling words of vanity" - Their words are full of emptiness, bloated with empty promises, designed to capture new converts who "were clean escaped" from paganism.

"Wantonness" — Excesses of fleshly desires.

2:19 — "They promise them liberty" - Their promises are vain, because they themselves have not been liberated. They are still slaves to sin.

IV. Calamity of False Teachers — 2:20-22

2:20 — "They" - Peter seems to be referring to apostates who truly knew the right way but deliberately chose to be false teachers. They were never saved, but, no doubt, had once professed to be saved - 1 Jn 2:19.

2:21 — "Better . . . not to have known" - Refers to the apostates because they willingly and knowingly rejected the light they were given. Therefore, they shall receive more severe judgments from God (Lk 12:47-48).

2:22 — These men are compared to the "dog" that returns to lick its vomit (fleshly lusts - Prov 26:11), and to the "sow" that returns to the mud after it was washed.