

2nd Peter Chapter 2- John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is “God preserves and God judges”.
 - a) Chapter 2 of this letter focuses on the heavy-topic of God’s judgment. It also emphasizes how God “preserves” those who are his despite the judgment going on all around them.
 - b) Let me start by summarizing the whole chapter in a sentence or two: Peter says in effect, “Throughout the history of Israel there were false teachers around. Presently, (when Peter wrote this) there are false teachers within the Christian church. Until Jesus comes back, there will always be false teachers within the church. Here is the heavy judgment that has happened to them in the past, here is the heavenly judgment that will happen to them in the future. Further, here are some characteristics of false teachers so you can recognize them and avoid them like the plague. ☺ “
2. I’ll argue the most important thing to remember about Chapter 2 is that it is written to believers.
 - a) The chapter focuses on false teachers, how to recognize them, and their inevitable doom.
 - b) They have their rooms reserved for them in hell and their fate is sealed.
 - c) What is it important that you remember that this chapter is written to believers? Because it is another indication of how much God loves us.
 - i) Let me paraphrase God. “You Christians cannot comprehend how much I love you. One way to prove I love you is that I want to protect you from those who want to harm you. I will punish severely those who intend to do you harm. I want to warn you what they act like so you can avoid them. I’m telling you all of this not so you can see how I condemn people, but for you to see how much I love you by punishing those who want to harm you.”
3. Now let’s get into the specific topic of false teachers.
 - a) There is an illustration I use every now and then that is appropriate here: People who work as tellers in banks have to learn to recognize counterfeit money. Most banks spend a lot of time training bank tellers about paper money. They learn how it feels, they learn carefully what it looks like and they learn certain telltale signs what distinguishes real money from fake money. The reason tellers spend so much time with real-money is that is the best way to recognize counterfeit money.
 - b) The same applies with false-teachers. The best way to recognize false teachers is to spend a lot of time with the “real deal”. ☺ The more time one spends in the Word of God, the easier it is to recognize a false teacher when that person comes around. Remember Peter says that false teachers always have existed and always will exist. Therefore, we as Christians have to learn how to recognize them. That is a major point of this chapter.
 - c) Next, let’s define a false teacher. This is not about honest, God-fearing teachers who make mistakes. This is about people who intentionally mislead others away from God. It is about those who willfully want to lead people away from what the bible teaches.
 - i) In this chapter, we’ll deal with their motivation as well as how to recognize them.
4. OK, John, how do we recognize them? Do they wear “false-teacher” name tags? ☺
 - a) That’s the point. They don’t. Jesus himself actually answered this question:
 - b) “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.” (Matthew 7:15-20, NIV)

- i) Most trees bear fruit in the summer. In the wintertime, trees are barren. Unless you are an expert farmer, it might be tough to tell one type of fruit tree from another in the winter. However, pretty soon, summer rolls around, and you can see the fruit growing on a tree, and you then know for sure what type of tree it is.
 - ii) That is Jesus' point in Matthew 7. That is also Peter's main point in this chapter. We don't have to be paranoid that the person sitting next to us is a false teacher or false prophet. It will become obvious. Peter is going to explain the attributes of a false teacher and false prophet in this chapter. We are to learn what they are so we can avoid them at all costs.
 - iii) This is also a reminder that God does call on us to judge behavior. God does not expect us to judge people's hearts. We don't know who is saved and who isn't saved because we can't tell what is going on inside of people.
 - a) Jesus did say "Do not judge" in Matthew 7:1. What he meant was to not have a judgmental ("put down") attitude in life. Jesus says we are not to judge motives. The bible does teach us that we are to judge behavior.
 - iv) At the same time, God does expect us to judge each other's behavior. How can we tell what type of "fruit" other people are growing unless we judge their behavior?
5. Why does God allow these false teachers to exist?
- a) Remember that we are not talking about "outsiders" condemning Christianity. That will always exist. This is about people inside the church who are willfully seeking to draw people away from the fundamental principals of Christianity. These are people who don't believe it themselves and are working on the inside to draw others away.
 - b) Remember that Satan's goal is to stop, or at least slow down the growth of the church. One method is to get people to turn away from God so they become ineffective witnesses. Therefore, Satan is motivated to "infiltrate" the church.
 - c) The reason God allows false teachers is that it keeps us close to Him. Remember the way to spot counterfeit money is to spend a lot of time with the genuine article. The same goes with our relationship with God. The only way to spot false teachers is to understand what the bible teaches about "true" Christianity as well as how to spot false teachers.
6. I realized that I'm using the terms "false-teachers and "false prophets" interchangeably. I better stop and define each one.
- a) A teacher in the biblical sense is one who desires to teach others about God. A false teacher is one who is claiming to teach about God, but is leading others astray. They may be 99% right-on the money, but there is a 1% that is definitely wrong and is stirring people off course. It would be like getting on an airplane that is going off course by one degree. Eventually you are going to miss your target.
 - b) A prophet, in the biblical sense is one who claims to be speaking on God's behalf. A prophet may also be a teacher, but a prophet can also just be sent to one person. There are cases in the Old Testament of false prophets who worked in Jewish King's court giving bad advice on whether or not to go to war. (e.g., 1st Kings 22:22).
7. Before I dive into each verse, again I want to remind you that this chapter is not written to false believers, but about them. Remember that this chapter is written to Christians. The main thing God wants us to learn here is how to recognize false-teachers so as to avoid them.
- a) Remember that God is punishing them for our sake. It is God saying in effect, "Those are my people down there on earth. Don't you false teachers harm them. You mess with them, then you're messing with me!"
 - b) Peter gives a very heavy judgment in this chapter. As we grow in Christianity, a character trait is that we love the things that God loves and yes, hate the sins (not the people) that God hates.

8. OK, John, how do we know you are not a false teacher? ☺
- a) This chapter in 2nd Peter says that false teacher's are obvious by their "fruit". Most of this chapter deals with the behavior characteristics of a false teacher. Every now and then I need to check myself against this list to keep me on the "straight and narrow". This doesn't mean I'm perfect. The fear of God and the realization that I'm accountable to God makes me diligent to attempt to teach the Word truthfully.
 - b) I don't charge money for this study because I don't want people to get the wrong idea about my motivation. I write because I can't stand not writing it. It's hard to explain, but somehow, the Holy Spirit kicks me in the rear end when I'm not writing. ☺
 - c) These studies help me to grow in my relationship with God. A selfish motivation for teaching is that the best way to learn the bible is to teach it. If you want to learn the bible better (or anything for that matter), go teach it to others.
 - d) Since I have thousands of pages posted on the internet, I can be examined as to whether or not I am truthful. These writings need to be compared to Scripture to see if I'm "rightly dividing the word of truth". (Reference: 2 Timothy 2:15)
 - e) OK, enough self-indulgence. ☺ Let's go to Verse 1.
9. Chapter 2, Verse 1: But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.
- a) The first word of the first verse says, "but". Therefore, we need to go back a few verses to Chapter 1 to see what Peter "butted". ☺
 - b) Peter ended the last chapter by saying in effect, "I was an eyewitness of who Jesus was. If you don't believe me, you have something even better. You have the words of the Old Testament prophets. This is Peter's way of saying the collective writings of the Old Testament predict every aspect of Jesus' purpose, life and ministry." With all of those predictions coming true, "statistically speaking" that is better than Peter's eyewitness.
 - c) The "but" of Verse is Peter saying, "Yes the Word of God is full of prophets. There ("but") were also false prophets at the same time. In the same way there are also false prophets about the church today.
 - d) It amazes me to think about the fact that when Peter wrote this, the "church" was only about 30 years old. Already Peter had to deal with the issue of false-teachers in the church. It is amazing the characteristics of false-teachers that Peter understood, even in that day. It shows that Satan didn't take long to infiltrate the church.
 - e) Now in the second sentence, we start to get into the characteristics of false teachers.
 - i) The first adjective term used is "secretly". In other words, they don't go shouting from the rooftops that Jesus was a phony. They sit next to you in church and whisper, "You don't really believe this stuff, do you?"
 - ii) The next term is "destructive heresies". A heresy is simply a false-idea. For example, to teach that Jesus is not God is a heresy. To teach that you can get into heaven by being a good person is a heresy. It is destructive in that it can lead a person to hell if one chooses to believe these heresies.
 - f) Next, Peter focuses on a specific heresy: Denying the Lord who bought them.
 - i) There are some who deny the existence of Jesus. This is tough to do as there is secular, historical evidence of Jesus' existence. Even religious Jews acknowledge the existence of Jesus, just not His deity.
 - ii) What is more common is to state the existence of Jesus, but then to deny His purpose. For example, there are New Age teachers that say, we need to be on a higher plain "like Jesus" and let the inner-Jesus in us come out.

- iii) What the false-teachers are denying is the necessity of Jesus having to die for our sins. That is what Peter meant by "The Lord who bought them". Most false-teachers want to elevate our ego's by saying we are good people or are capable of being good people if we just learn to be "like" Jesus as opposed to accepting His death as payments for our sins.
 - g) The last phrase is the intense one: "Bringing swift destruction on themselves".
 - i) Does this mean that a lightning bolt comes out of the sky and zaps false teachers? I've yet to see one. At the same time, this verse tells me not to stand too close to these people as they are talking. ☺
 - ii) To understand this phrase, one has to go back to the 10 Commandments. One of them is to "Not take God's name in vain". (Ref. Exodus 20:7). We tend to think of that commandment as to invoke God's name when we stub our toe. ☺ That is not what the verse means. That Commandment is all about God's reputation being "on the line" through those who claim to be followers of God.
 - a) In other words, if you are going to publicly claim to be following God, you better do so correctly because God's "reputation" is at stake. If you claim to be a Christian, but then go around lying all the time, or having sex with everything that moves, or are drunk all the time, what type of "witness" are you for God? Those bad behavior characteristics are examples of taking God's name in vain and a violation of that commandment.
 - b) The same goes for false-teachers within the church. These are people claiming to be Christians, but willfully want to lead people astray. God won't stand long for them as He cares about His name, His reputation and protecting those who are following Him.
 - h) So how and when does "swift destruction" come?
 - i) I've yet to see a false-teacher within the church last very long. Remember, I'm not talking about "outside" cults, just false teachers within the church. Usually, they are exposed. Usually they fall and fall soon.
 - ii) I recently read of a prominent pastor who embraced the idea that "everyone is saved". I was an admirer of this pastor years ago and was saddened to see of his change. I also read that his church decrease in size from 5,000 to 1,000 currently, and is in financial trouble. That is "swift destruction".
 - iii) I remember years ago of a prominent television evangelist who said he had a vision that God would strike him dead if he didn't raise one million dollars or some amount like that. Well, God didn't strike him dead, but he did eventually lose his ministry and was caught in adultery. This guy violated the commandment of "taking God's name in vain".
10. Verse 2: Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.
- a) Unfortunately, some people will follow false-teachers. The main appeal is to our ego's. They will argue we can be "better people" and be "more mature Christians" by following them. Remember that false-doctrines will always be mixed in with some truth. They will be flattering, great speakers and have a mixture of truth and false teaching.
 - b) This is a good time to bring up the topic of "once saved, always saved".
 - i) Verse 2 says that false teachers will lead some astray. Does that mean that one can be saved and then lose one's salvation?
 - ii) The answer gets back to what I stated earlier: We can judge people's behavior, but we can't judge people's hearts. In other words, we're not mind readers, but we can certainly observe how people act.

- iii) It is “God’s problem” as to who is saved and who is not. We have enough problems trying to deal with our own behavior and our own sins and not have to judge other’s eternal salvation.
- iv) Therefore, is the person next to you in church saved? That is God’s problem and not yours. What about the person who was in church for years and is now walking away? Were they ever saved? The answer is you’re not God and neither am I. We are to judge behavior and not try to read thoughts.
- c) So what do we do when someone is lead away by a false teacher?
 - i) Remember Jesus parable about the “one lost sheep out of 100” (Matthew 18:12-14). Jesus says that if one of God’s “100 sheep” goes astray, God does not say, “Oh, too bad for that sheep, time to focus on the other 99”. God stops and goes to look for that one missing sheep. God knows who are his “100” and preserves them.
 - ii) God never gives up on those are “truly” His. God knows who will spend eternity with Him, but we don’t. What that means that if one goes astray, and we know them, we can pray for them, we can grieve for them, but if God intends for them to come back, they will. God does not abandon those who are His, period. God may want them to “learn some lessons” from walking away, but if that person truly has a heart for God, they will come back. They may suffer in this lifetime and may lose rewards in heaven, but no “lost sheep” stays lost forever.
 - iii) As a pastor or a minister, one must focus their energy on the “99 sheep”. One must still pray and reach out to the lost, but one must also have confidence that God himself is not allowing the “one sheep” to stray.
 - iv) At the same time, we are not to be passive about false teachers. We are not to sit there and allow them to lead others astray just because God “knows who are is”. This chapter is all about teaching how to recognize them and avoid them.
- 11. Verse 3: In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.
 - a) The key word here is “greed”. This is the motivation for false teachers.
 - b) For some it is the greed of money. For others, it is the greed of power. The point is that false teachers are ones that desire to serve themselves and not God.
 - i) Remember a purpose of this chapter is to teach Christians how to recognize false-teachers. One way is to study their motivation. How obsessed is their teaching with money and power? A false-teacher will spend an “unproportional” amount of time on money than the bible does.
 - c) If you have been a Christian for a while the “letters” come. The false teachers beg you to financially support their hurting ministry and “lives will be spared by your generous support”. ☺ It is amazing how you’ve never heard of these people until their letters.
 - d) I don’t give to every Christian group that asks me. If anything, I want to “examine their fruit”, before I support it by prayer or money. I don’t expect perfection in a person, but at the same time, I watch behavior and judge their actions.
 - e) Someone once said that our “giving” should be playing the stock market. We want buy stocks that bring a good return on investment. The same goes with the ministries we support. I look for ones that are already “bringing a good return on investment”. Support ministries where one can see their behavior is good and they are “bearing fruit” for God.
 - f) Getting back to the verse, notice the emphasis on the false teachers “doom”.
 - i) Peter is stating in effect, “these guys have a reserved spot in hell and there is no way they can avoid their fate”. Again, remember that this letter is written to us and not to them. Peter is reminding us not to follow them and what is their punishment for trying to lead Christians astray.

12. Verse 4: For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;
- a) From Verses 4 through 9, we have one long, complicated sentence by Peter.
 - b) The sentence is an “if...then” style of a sentence. Peter is saying, “If this happens and if that happens, then this has to happen. Some argue the sentence should read “since’s this is happening and since that is happening, “then” this will happening.
 - c) The “if” statements are complicated. It would probably help if we jump ahead to the conclusion (the “then” statement). Verse 9 says, “If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.
 - i) This means that the next four verses, the “if” statements, are all examples of how God 1) can rescue Godly people from the trials of the false teachers and 2) how God will judge and punish those false believers.
 - ii) With that understood, the next four verses are Old Testament examples of “God preserving and God judging” at the same time. They are examples of how God preserves and rescues believers (out of His love for us!) from those who want to do them harm and at the same time, God will punish those who want to harm us.
 - d) Verse 4 says “If God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell”.
 - i) This leaves us with lots of questions: Who are these angels that sinned? Does that mean angels can sin? Apparently so! Why were these angels locked in dungeons (see Verse 4 again) and not just sent to hell now? Why are other demonic angels still roaming around? What was their specific sin and why was it so bad that they were locked up for eternity? The text does not give us direct answers to those questions, so we have to speculate.
 - ii) First of all, Notice Peter’s examples in Verses 4 through 8 are in chronological order. All the examples in Verses 4-8 follow the time-order laid out in Genesis. Verse 5, right after this verse, mentions Noah. Therefore, the speculation is that these angels get punished prior to the flood (Noah) reference in the next verse.
 - e) OK, so what did the angels do that was so bad? We don’t know. The only clue we have is in Genesis Chapter 6: The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose....The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterward – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. (Genesis 6:2, 4 NIV)
 - i) There is a theory (take it at that) that the condemned angels are the “Nephilim” that are mentioned in Genesis 6:4. This is a classical Christian debate as to just who are these “Nephilim”.
 - ii) Whatever happened, it was bad enough that it corrupted everyone on earth and God deemed it necessary to flood the earth to judge everyone.
 - iii) A similar theory is the “Sons of God” in Genesis 6:2 are just wicked people who managed to corrupt the world so bad that the flood was necessary. The angels of that day were punished for either allowing it to happen or were somehow involved. Either way, these angels are now in prison.
 - iv) The point is not the details of what exactly happened prior to the flood. The point is if God was willing to condemn angels that sin, what do you think God is going to do with false teachers?
 - v) There are those who think, “Well, God is a god-of-love. In the end, He will forgive everyone.” Nonsense. Peter’s point here is that if God won’t forgive angels that did something horrible, He’ll also judge people.

13. Verse 5: if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;
- a) Peter's second example is the flood itself. We don't know how many people died in the flood, but most likely it was in the millions or billions. Apparently, the world had gotten so corrupt, that no one but Noah and his family worshipped God.
 - b) It took Noah 120 years to build the ark. (Ref. Genesis 6:3). That the was time frame between the day Noah was called ark and the day of the flood. For 120 years, Noah had this half-finished thing sitting in his driveway. ☺ Yet no one but his own family choose to believe Noah and desired to join him. The flood is God saying in effect, "I've given you 120 years to repent and warn you judgment is coming. You're not willfully choosing to follow me? Well, ok, here comes the rain! ☺
 - c) The verse calls Noah a "preacher of righteousness". I don't know if Noah had a day job as a preacher or maybe it was just the fact he spent every day working on this boat trusting in God's judgment to come.
 - d) Again, the point of all of this is not to do a review of the flood story, but to understand that God was willing to judge the entire earth and only save Noah. If God was willing to do that, he is also willing to judge those who refuse to follow Him.
 - e) Why doesn't God "regularly" flood the world of bad people? Part of the answer is many of those we think as bad people will turn their lives to God. Think about how we were before we were born again! The flood story is a true story, but it is there as a learning example for us. It is designed to teach us that God will judge people one day and God will condemn many to hell for refusing to follow Him.
14. Verse 6: if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly;
- a) Peter's next example of how God judges is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their specific crimes are hinted at in Genesis but not bluntly stated. The sins of the city was they became sexually deviant. The great sin was the public tolerance of this sin.
 - b) The Evangelist Billy Graham is famous for the quote: "If God does not judge the United States of America, he owes Sodom and Gomorrah an apology." God will judge Americans, as all other nations. God left Sodom and Gomorrah as examples for us to learn about God's judgment.
 - c) With that understood, let's get back to Verse 6. Peter says, "Made them as an example".
 - i) Sodom and Gomorrah are true historical stories designed as examples for us. They are there to teach us what type of behavior God expects of believers. Further, it teaches of the judgment to come for nonbelievers.
15. Verse 7: and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)–
- a) The final example of this long sentence is Lot. Lot was Abraham's nephew. Lot lived in Sodom prior to its destruction. When you read about Lot in Genesis, you're not too impressed. ☺ Basically, the guy believes in God, but then chooses to compromise his commitment to God by living among the ungodly. His "good moments" in Genesis is when he protects God's angels as the men of Sodom want to have sexual relations with those angels (Genesis 19:5).
 - b) Yet here in Peter, Lot is called "righteous" and he was "tormented" by the actions of those living in Sodom. We don't read of that in Genesis. Peter's point here that despite the influence of Sodom, Lot was saved. The same applies to believers living amongst the ungodly. If you are trusting in God, you are "preserved" for heavenly salvation.

16. Verse 9: if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.
- a) We finally get to the “then” statement of this sentence. The whole sentence, beginning with Verse 4 is saying, “If the pre-flood angels are condemned, if Noah was spared while everyone around him were judged by the flood, if Lot was spared while Sodom and Gomorrah were judged, then we know God can spare those who are committed to Him from judgment and at the same time judge others. (There, that was a lot shorter than Peter’s five verses. ☺)
 - b) The main point is God does separate for eternity those who follow Him and those who willfully choose to turn from God. Just as our behavior separates us in this lifetime, that separation will continue for all of eternity.
 - c) Again, remember that this whole chapter is written to believers. It is meant to teach us not to fear when false teachers come around as we are “preserved” in God. At the same time, we are to judge other’s behavior to see if they are false teachers. We are also to be aware of their inevitable judgment.
17. Verse 10: This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority.
- a) Peter emphasizes those are “especially” sent to hell. Does this mean false teachers are worse sinners than those who don’t try to convert Christians with false teaching? I don’t know. I believe Peter’s point is the evidence of the false-teacher’s lives are more obvious than others that they deserve to be punished for their actions.
 - b) This is a good time to discuss just “who” is sent to hell?
 - i) The basic answer is those who reject God’s commandments.
 - ii) God is perfect by definition. Therefore, He will judge all people “perfectly”. People will be judged based on what “information” about God they do have. This is why I don’t “worry” about babies who die or those living in the jungle who never heard of God. That is God’s problem and I walk by faith that a perfect God will judge people fairly and perfectly.
 - iii) Let me describe our “entrance exam” for heaven as an essay question:
 - a) Question #1. The evidence of the God’s existence is evident in creation. What did you do with that knowledge of God’s existence?
 - b) Question #2: You adults who living today have incredible evidence as to the existence of Jesus. You have bible radio, television, books, newspapers and the internet. You have no excuse for claiming naivety. OK, what have you done with that knowledge about my son Jesus?
 - c) I will argue over and over again that Christianity is all about behavior. Yes, we are saved by faith and faith alone, but if we have that faith, it becomes obvious by our behavior. If our behavior doesn’t change, that is evidence that we never had “faith” to begin with.
 - iv) So who is sent to hell? The basic answer is those who willfully choose to ignore God’s free gift of salvation. To those who never heard of Jesus, or are not old enough to understand that message, then God judges them fairly based on what information they do have about God.
 - a) C.S. Lewis once remarked, “The gates of hell are locked from the inside”. That means that hell is a place for those who willfully choose to turn from God and don’t want God in their lives.

18. Verse 10 (part 2): Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; ¹¹ yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.
- a) From Verse 10 to the end of the chapter, we are going to read of the characteristics of a false teacher. I can go at a pretty quick pace at this point, partially, because I've already written eight pages. ☺ The other reason is to remember that again, these verses are written for Christians about false teachers. It is to show the characteristics of false teachers so we can recognize them and avoid them.
 - b) It begins with "bold and arrogant". This means they are not afraid of the "accountability factor" to state their opinions. The idea is that false teachers don't think about the consequences of their teaching. In contrast, for example, I teach with great "fear" knowing that teachers get judged (as in heavenly judgment) more severely than non-teachers. (Ref.: James 3:1). Therefore, I want to be diligent in my preparation. A false teacher is the opposite in that they don't care what God or others, thinks of their teaching.
 - c) The last part says "They're not afraid to slander celestial beings".
 - i) In the one chapter book of Jude, there is a strange sentence about how the archangel Michael would not rebuke Satan, but instead stated, "The Lord rebuke you". (Ref. Jude 1:9). The point is that we are to "respect" Satan and demonic forces as being powerful. We are not to challenge them in our own authority, but by God's authority. In other words, we're "no match" for Satan and his forces under our own power. We need God to defend us.
 - a) A sign of false teachers is they're not afraid to challenge angelic powers, be it God's forces or Satan's forces.
 - ii) It is a great mistake to blame all of our sins on Satan. Often times, it's just our own rebellious nature that turns us away from God. A sign of these false teachers in a sense is "I don't need God, I don't need Satan, pooh-pooh on all of these guys!" ☺ They verbally choose to rebel against anybody in authority over them, be it God or demonic forces.
19. Verse 12: But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.
- a) Peter is saying false teachers don't think about the consequences of their speech. They are like animals in that they are only living off of instinct and what feels good that moment.
 - b) A sign of a false-teacher is that they don't think about the long-term consequences of their actions. One of the basic principals of Christianity as well as Judaism is a "fear of God". This does not mean we walk in fear all day. It means that we are aware that our actions are accountable to God and therefore fear His judgment upon us. The false-teacher is the opposite of that. He or she could care less of the impact of their actions.
 - c) Finally, Peter says since these people act like animals, they will die like animals. Peter compares false teachers to "beast animals" that are inevitably caught in traps.
20. Verse 13: They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.
- a) Peter says, "They (false teachers) will be harmed (by God) for the harm they do". The first sentence of Verse 13 reminds us that God will judge them. Peter states this because we watch people "get away with stuff" and wonder when God is going to do something about it. Peter is reassuring us that God is working on His timing and not ours.
 - b) The next sentence emphasizes "broad daylight". The idea is that when they sin, they have gotten so bold as they no longer care if anyone sees them or not.

- i) I find that “inevitable broad daylight behavior” applies to Christians and non-Christians alike. When we first get saved as adults, we are often embarrassed to express our faith. As we mature, we become bolder and lose that sense of embarrassment. We are no longer afraid to stand up for God “in the daytime”. The same applies for those who reject God. Their sins may start by “doing them in hiding”, but if they choose to continue down that path, they get to a point where they no longer care who is watching them.
 - c) The third sentence includes the phrase “while they feast with you”.
 - i) The emphasis is that these people hang around with Christians. They’re not in the building across the street trying to attract nonbelievers. They are sitting in the seat next to you! This sentence is a reminder to be aware that false teachers are not afraid to be among Christians. They prey on weak believers. We don’t have to be paranoid about this, just be aware that they exist.
- 21. Verse 14: With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed--an accursed brood!
 - a) The idea of “eyes full of adultery” is that they look at any member of the opposite sex as a potential sexual encounter. Does that mean that everyone who makes a pass at you is a false teacher? No. ☺ Remember that this is a sign of a false-teacher, and does not mean everyone guilty of adultery or fornication (sex outside of marriage) is a false-teacher.
 - b) Remember Peter is trying to teach us how to recognize false teachers. Signs of a false teacher include the fact they are always trying to sexually seduce people. They are also greedy for their own gain.
 - i) What this means practically, is that when they teach, watch their behavior. Do they practice what God commands us to practice? Do they appear to teach “truth” but then act in ways opposite of God’s commandments?
 - ii) This verse is also a reminder for pastors and teachers to watch our behavior. People want to see if we “walk the walk” of what we preach.
- 22. Verse 15: They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. ¹⁶ But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey--a beast without speech--who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.
 - a) In these verses, we get another Old Testament reference – The Story of Balaam. This story takes place in Numbers 22-24. It is a strange story of a non-Jewish prophet who definitely has the gift of prophecy. There is a king who wants to pay Balaam to curse the Israelites. Balaam agrees under the condition that he can’t disobey his “power source” of prophecy. Balaam must speak whatever thoughts God puts into his head. Those speeches are “Pro-Israel” when this king wants to curse the Israelites.
 - b) The problem with Balaam is that “he’s only in it for the money”. He agrees to travel to this king to curse God’s people in exchange for money.
 - c) The story gets even stranger when his donkey starts verbally speaking out loud and rebukes Balaam for his actions. The donkey essentially tells Balaam what an ass he is. ☺ (Sorry, that was bad.) Balaam never ponders how the donkey can suddenly speak as Balaam is too obsessed with the money for his actions. (Ref. Numbers 22, Verses 21-33).
 - d) The point Peter’s making here is Balaam was so obsessed with money he ignored the advice of a speaking donkey! False teachers also ignore the evidence around them (i.e., what the bible says, what other Christians preach to them) and do whatever “feels good”.

23. Verse 17: These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.
- a) We tend to forget that Israel is desert country. The weather is hot and water is sparse.
 - i) To have a spring (or well) that is empty is a waste of a well. Imagine walking up to a well when you're really thirsty and finding only dirt inside.
 - ii) The same applies to rain clouds that don't give off rain. The King James translates the word "mists" as "clouds that are carried with a tempest". The idea is clouds that look like rain clouds, but don't actually produce any real rain.
 - iii) The idea is that their teaching is a "waste of time" in the same way an empty well is a "waste of a well".
 - b) This verse reminds me of another classic Christian joke. There was a preacher who didn't have time to prepare one Sunday. He made up for his lack of substance with a lot of passion and emotion. In the crowd was an old (American) Indian who became a Christian. Someone asked the Indian what he thought of the sermon. The Indian responded, "Loud thunder, dark clouds, no rain". That analogy fits Peter's point here.
24. Verse 18: For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.
- a) We've spent verse after verse dealing with the negative traits of a false teacher. A new question to ask is "What is their appeal? What draws people to them?"
 - b) The answer is in Verse 18: "Appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature".
 - i) These false teachers appeal to our old human nature to draw people away from God. Let me give you an illustration. "As a Christian, you are free from all sin. God has forgiven you of everything you will ever do. That means you now have the freedom to go live however you want. You can enjoy all that life has to offer knowing you are free from the chains of sin".
 - ii) In other words, false teachers are saying God doesn't care about our behavior because He forgives our sins. That is heresy. Paul himself contradicts that argument in Chapter 6 of Romans.
 - c) Also notice the phrase, "entice people who are just escaping".
 - i) What does that mean? It means false teachers prey on the naïve. The word "escaping" refers to someone who has just become a born-again Christian and escaped the damnation of hell.
 - ii) Peter ends the sentence with "live in error". When one turns their life over to God, they are no longer living in the error of trusting in their own goodness in order to have eternal salvation.
 - iii) When I first got saved, I took a "New Believers" class. The class focused on the fundamentals of Christianity. (Remember my question of how does a bank teller spot counterfeit money? By playing with the genuine article! Christians are protected from false teachers by learning the "genuine article".) That class also gave me information on cults and their false teachings. That church understood that false teachers prey on naïve Christians and they combated that reality with information on what the most popular cults teach.
25. Verse 19: They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.
- a) Let's start with the phrase, "they promise them freedom". This goes back to the illustration I used earlier where a false prophet will say something like, "As a Christian, you are free to do whatever you want."
 - b) That leads to the second statement by Peter that says they are "slaves of depravity" and "man is a slave to whatever has mastered him".

- c) There is a biblical concept that whatever sin becomes your indulgence, you end up being a slave to that sin. For example, no alcoholic ever says on the first day of drinking, "I think I'll be a slobbering drunk all the time and ruin my life." One goes downhill slowly and before one realizes it, one becomes a "slave" to that sin. That is Peter's idea that he is trying to get across here.
26. Verse 20: If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.
- a) These two verses reads "as if" these false teachers were saved at one point, and then lose their salvation when they became false teachers. (Don't worry, I'm not going to get started on the "once saved always saved" debate again. ☺)
- b) What this verse does seem to imply is that false teachers may initially seek Christ to avoid the immorality of the world, and when they discover what it "really" cost to be a Christian (i.e., everything you own now belongs to Jesus and we must live in full obedience to His commands), then they don't like it and want to be a false teacher.
- i) There are other reasons people become a false-teacher, but here Peter is focusing upon those who "join" the church, and then turn away.
- c) Peter says they are "worse off" more as false-teachers than before they even discovered Christianity. That implies some people are punished more severely than others in hell.
- i) When Jesus was criticizing the Pharisee's, he stated they will receive (on judgment day) "greater condemnation" (Ref. Matthew 23:14, et.al.) Someone can't receive greater condemnation unless others receive "less condemnation". That means, somehow, someway, some people receive greater punishment in hell than others.
- ii) I notice Jesus dishes out the toughest judgment sentences on those who should know better. In Jesus case, it was the Pharisee's because they knew their Old Testament. My view is the false-teachers fall in the same group of "greater judgment" because often they know their bible and deliberately teach falsely.
27. Verse 22: Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."
- a) Peter quotes two proverbs here. The first is from Proverbs 26:11, and the second is from an unknown non-biblical source. The latter may have been a proverb in Peter's day.
- b) There is a classic (non-biblical) joke that applies here: "Never try to teach a pig to sing, it makes one look stupid and it irritates the pig." That is similar to what Peter is trying to get across here. You can dress up a pig, but it is still a pig and wants to roll in the mud.
- i) Similarity, you may have a smart dog, but for some strange reason, dogs like to return to their own vomit. You can't "make" a dog into a human no matter how you dress them up.
- c) What's Peter's point? "You will recognize false teachers. It will be obvious. The same way Jesus taught that a fruit tree will be obvious by the type of fruit, so will a false teacher become obvious by his or her character traits. The comparison to a pig and a dog are meant as insults. In Hebrew culture, dogs (more like wild street dogs) and pigs (i.e., non-kosher) are the "bottom-rung" of the animal chain.
28. OK, enough beating up false teachers. ☺ Remember Peter's motivation for writing this:
- a) Peter is going to die soon and he knows it. He is live a loving father trying to protect his children. He is trying to protect us from those who want to do us harm.

- b) A God that loves us also wants to protect us. He does not do that by “zapping” false teachers as they approach us. God protects by saying, “Here in the bible is a set of instruction on how to recognize a false teacher. Learn them, so when you encounter one, you will recognize them and avoid them.
29. Let’s pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your protection against those who want to do us harm. We thank you for loving us so much as to want to protect us. Give us discernment to recognize false teachers and help us to be careful who we accuse and how we approach people on this topic. Help us in our own particularly ministry to diligently prepare, so that we don’t lead others astray. Help all of us as Christians work together to mature and protect “your flock”, which is the Christian church. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.