

(10b) Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though great in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.

(13b) They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

(17) These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

(20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

(21) For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." (~Proverbs 26:11)

Think on these things:

- 1) "Bold and willful" (v. 10b) is NOT a complement. It relates to being reckless and foolhardy. Scholars believe the "glorious ones" seem likely to refer to fallen angels (w/Satan, and "their destruction", v. 12). God's angels, though, do not revile these fallen ones (see Jude 8-9). Yet, the false prophets and teachers spoken about here have no reluctance to speak rebukingly about the fallen angels, though these are far more powerful than human beings (see Acts 19:11-17 and Ephesians 6:12). How does Peter refer to the false prophets, and what will be their end (v. 12)?

Peter refers to them as "irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed." He means that they lack reasoning abilities, driven by instincts like animals. Their teachings include ignorantly blaspheming matters of the spiritual realm! Peter says that these teachers will suffer eternal destruction in keeping with their false teachings.

- 2) Reading vs. 13b-16, what are two key motivations for these church leaders? Peter refers to them as "blots and blemishes" to the fellowship, saying they have "forsaken the right way."

Insatiably driven (i.e., can't get enough...) by adultery (sex) and greed (money, v. 14), they entice unsteady souls (NIV – seduce the unstable). These leaders set out to deceive others and delight in being successful.

- 3) Quickly scan the story of Balaam in Numbers 22:7-34 (especially v. 32). Still in Numbers 22, what did God say to Balaam in vs. 12-13? Why did Balaam change his mind (see vs. 15-17)?

God said, "You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." In a follow-up request by King Balak, v. 17 says he promised Balaam great 'honors' if he would come. Balaam responded that even if Balak gave him a house full of gold and silver, he could only say what God told him to say. Then, Balaam hosted these men again overnight and returned to God to ask for permission to go. God told him to go, but He was very angry with Balaam (v. 22). This is when He sent an angel to stop the donkey and confront Balaam for his compromise, referring to Balaam's actions as 'perverse' (v. 32).

- 4) V. 17 is a condemnation of the value of their messages and teachings in churches. What does Peter compare them to, and what do you think this means? See Jude 11-13.

Peter says they are "waterless springs and mists driven by storms." Though promising water (i.e., "hope" in their teachings), they only bring soul emptiness. They offer nothing of value.

- 5) These people are also often guilty of sexual sins "within" the church. Who are they preying on (vs. 14, 18)? Why do you think these victims are so vulnerable to being misled?

They are preying on "unsteady souls" (v. 14) and those just escaping from sinful living to a life of salvation (new, still learning believers, v. 18). These folks haven't learned or practiced holy living, so they are more easily duped by charismatic leaders with warped motives.

- 6) V. 19 says their message is freedom, but the result of their ministry is enslavement. Why is this?

"Whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved." The leaders are "slaves of corruption" who are now bringing fellow church goers into their corruption.

- 7) V. 19b is an important definition. What does Peter teach about "enslavement?" Would my issue be the same as your issue?

Anything that dominates my life and my activities can be thought of as "enslaving" me. Good or bad, it may interfere with my worship of God and faith practice. Our issues probably differ.

- 8) Vs. 20-21 are complicated verses, theologically. Calvinist doctrine (the Church majority) would say these people were never truly saved, that, with time, their unsaved real self becomes clear to the fellowship. Wesleyan-Arminian doctrine (the Church minority) would say that these folks came to faith, and then departed from faith (by their choice) --- and that, in the end, they fall back into God's judgment for unbelievers. From v. 20, what happened to them to cause their failure? How is their "last state" described? See also a teaching of Jesus in Matthew 12:43-45.

After coming to Jesus for salvation, they are then later entangled and "overcome" by worldly defilements. This post-Salvation state is considered worse for them than their pre-Salvation state, before they've experienced God's deliverance and righteousness and know better. In Matthew, Jesus taught that being taken by a defiled spirit after being saved is much worse!

- 9) When the true nature of their character comes out, to what does Peter compare these false prophets and teachers (v. 22)? Peter's thoughts seem to mirror a teaching of Jesus (see also Matthew 7:6). It seems that in both citations, there is reference to people who "turn" on us...!

He compares them to dogs returning to vomit, and cleaned pigs returning to mud puddles.

People and situations I want to pray for this week: