

2 Peter 2:12-14

“Enticing Unstable Souls”

Vs 12 of 2nd Peter Ch 2 brings us back into the flow of false teachers in the church. Often times when we “stereotype” false teachers or cultic activity we have a tendency to think of outrageously off weirdos out there supervising their compounds with an obviously whacked out theology; and it’s true those guys are out there. However the enemy is often times much more ambiguous than that; he’s subtle, he’s secret and he’s right here in the midst of the church. Should it really surprise us? No, here’s why; Jesus told us it was coming.

Perhaps you remember, it was a point in Jesus’ ministry whereby He’d been rejected conclusively by the religious leaders of the nation so He quit speaking plainly and began to speak parabolically, and in one of His parables found in Matt 13 He said, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.”* Matt 13:31-32 Now in order to properly unlock the mystery of that parable you have to have grip on the parable of the sower/soils. Because Jesus said that if we understood *that* parable we’d be able to get a grip *on* and wrap our understanding *around all* parables. Now you’ll have to check it out on your own time later if you’re interested, it’s found in Mark Ch 4. But you’ll find there that Jesus tells us plainly that the *birds of the air* in His parables speak of Satan and his cohorts and how they wage war against the fruitful outgrowth of the word of God in your heart. Here’s my point; Jesus made it clear that in the kingdom (His church on this earth) that it would grow to such an extent that Satan and his cohorts would effectively infiltrate its defenses and nest *among* us. That they would find themselves right in the very midst *of* us; they’re objective is to rip you off, take advantage of your vulnerability so as to profit from you personally. If your life is left in ruins in the wake of it all, so be it.

Paul said it like this to the Ephesian elders, *“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”* Acts 20:29-30 Jesus warned us, Paul warned us, you’ll find that Jude and John warned us, and here Peter is warning us, I think that God’s word makes it clear, we do well to be aware *of* it and alert *to* it so that we not be deceived *by* it, your eternal destiny depends on it, take it seriously. Get to know the word of God in its proper context so that you recognize when something isn’t lining up. Do you know your shepherd’s voice? Jesus said, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* John 10:27

Peter has told us the nature of these guys, these individuals; they work subtly, secretly, they deny in some way the Lord's sufficiency or His competency, ultimately His deity, they're driven by sensual pleasure and they're motivated by greed. They like to be in charge, they live only to please themselves and as to where even the very angels of God (who are greater in power and might) won't bring reviling accusation against *them*, *they* have no problem whatsoever in speaking evil of anyone or anything. So in contrast with the holiness and godly reaction of the angelic Peter says here in Vs 12 ...

Vs12

Several things here that we want to at least draw attention to and take note of. Peter likens these men to *natural brute beasts* whose end is only destruction.

He says that they speak evil of things they don't even understand and ultimately they will perish utterly. Actually there's a play on words there at the end of the verse, we might understand Peter to be saying that, "in their destroying they shall be destroyed" or even more literally, "in their corruption they shall be corrupted." Which is to say that their very nature will drag them down to destruction. Having sown in corruption they'll reap being corrupted, don't be deceived whatever a man sows that will he also reap, God is not mocked. The proverbs say it like this, "*Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.*" Prov 26:27 Or another way to understand that is that people will often times get caught in their own web, your plans backfire on you, they'll sow in corruption and reap the wages of the corrupt.

Notice Peter compares them to natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed. Couple things with that #1 They're *natural*; it means they're not *spiritual*, they haven't been born again, the Holy Spirit does not abide in them. The bible classifies 3 kinds of people, the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. The natural man is totally unregenerate, doesn't know the Lord, has never had a relationship *with* the Lord, they're just as they were the day they were born. The spiritual man is the one who has been born again, he's recognized his sin, seen his need for a Savior, has cried out *to* the Lord, has called *upon* the Lord, Jesus has come into him by the power of His Spirit and now he walks with Him, has a relationship with Him. He's turned from his sin and seeks to lead a life pleasing *to* the Lord, that's obedient *before* the Lord. Then there's the carnal man, this is the person who has given their heart to Christ, but isn't walking according to the Spirit, but is feeding the flesh, they're not really cultivating a life led in the Spirit, they've been saved, they *acknowledge* the Lord, but they grieve the Spirit being often times disobedient *to* the Lord. The men in the text here (these deceitful teachers) are *natural*; they've never had an encounter with Christ whereby He's changed their life.

Therefore like animals they just do whatever they want, whenever they want to do it. According to Vs 10 they, “walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness.” They have no reservations with regard to ungodliness; they don’t have the inner conviction of the Holy Spirit at work in them. Therefore they’re presumptuous and self-willed, they speak evil of dignitaries and things they don’t even understand. Of course Jesus told us that it’s out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks, (Luke 6:45) evil is in their heart. Now, when you have a wild animal that acts out of sync or is following a passion that’s hurting, damaging and/or destroying others what’s the result of that? When you hear of a Mt lion on some hiking trail in California that’s stalking people and preying on people, doing damage to them if not totally destroying them. When you hear of a shark in swim zones at the beach and its attacking people, what kind of action is taken concerning that? They are caught, captured and killed; even so Peter says when these guys are on the loose, taking advantage of people doing damage and destroying people they too will be “caught” and destroyed.

“They speak evil of the things they do not understand.” Now even though Peter applies this to false teachers it’s obviously just as applicable to many others who seem to have no problem bad mouthing the bible or speaking ill of the word of God when in reality they don’t even understand what they’re talking about!

They may be incredibly brilliant people who excel both in life and in their given field of profession but when it comes to God’s word they don’t have a clue and the talk trash thinking that they’ve got the whole thing figured out and purport contradictions and inconsistencies and they’re clueless. They speak evil of things they don’t understand; I don’t try and blow buckshot through astrophysics, or for that matter something like music theory, even though I’m somewhat learned as a musician I know enough to know I don’t know very much in that field. So why then do so many others who aren’t even Christians much less carefully studied in the word of God with in its proper context feel such a liberty to bad mouth the bible? Be careful speaking evil of things you do not understand.

Peter says that they will utterly perish in their own corruption. 2 Things: #1 Again we note the verbiage that Peter is using, when he speaks of the believer back in Vs 4 of Ch 1 he says that we are partakers of the *divine nature* having escaped the *corruption* that is in the world through lust. When Peter speaks of these deceivers he says they’re like *natural* brute beasts which means they’re not partakers of the divine nature.

Remember Jesus said, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” John 3:5-6 Which is to say that before you can go to heaven 2 things have to happen, #1 you have to be born physically, there’s no closet in heaven that contains a bunch of souls that when conception takes place a soul is pulled out of the closet and placed into the womb, we don’t see that supported in the scriptures. Somehow and in some way the God causes the soul to be present at conception, it’s nothing short of a miracle. That’s why David said that in sin his mother conceived him, that doesn’t mean that she was in sin when he was conceived but that sin was present from the moment of conception, now if there was no soul present then there could be no sin present. Because God has said that the *soul* that sins shall surely die, well if there was sin there, there was a soul there. It’s like the saying, “There’s no smoke with out a fire” there’s no sin apart from a soul. So #1 You have to be born physically (that’s pretty much a given) (that’s not to say that babies that die in the womb don’t go to heaven, we most certainly believe that they do, I’m speaking specifically to the context of John 3:5) there needs to be a natural birth, but then *also* there needs to be a *supernatural* birth, one must be *born again* of the Spirit.

You must be born of the water and of the Spirit or you will not inherit the kingdom of God. How is one born again of the Spirit? That was the whole topic at hand there in John Ch 3 wasn’t it? Nicodemus had the same question and from that encounter we get the famous passage of scripture John 3:16; allow me to share with you beginning in John 3:14. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “... *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*” John 3:14-17 Now we don’t have time to rehearse the scene in Numbers 21 suffice it to say that Jesus was telling him that He had to be lifted up on a cross. In so doing He would bear the judgment of God on behalf of mankind, and because of that whoever would look *to* Him and by faith *believe in* Him for the forgiveness of sin, they would be “healed” of their affliction (that is cleansed of their sin) in the sight of God.

Translation: “Born again of the Spirit of God.” What does the bible say? “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 Or to understand that another way? You’ve become a partaker of the divine nature having escaped the *corruption* that is in the world through lust. But such is not the case of these whom Peter is speaking of here, they will utterly perish in their own *corruption*, they haven’t escaped it, they’ll perish in it.

The 2nd thing that I want to point out here is this: even though Peter is emphasizing the end of the false teacher; we do well to realize and not be ignorant to the fact that equally true is that the same will result for *all* who do not know Christ, who've never entered into the saving knowledge of Jesus but rather have preferred to walk in their sin. We'll see this more next time, but the sad fact is that they don't take the time to soberly consider their end. They sacrifice forever for the here and now...and it's tragic. Life is but a vapor, it's so futile, so short sighted even to blindness to live for the here and now, set your sights on eternity; consider the end (the eternal outcome) of your ways... *"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."* Isa 1:18 God is not willing (not wanting) that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance, to see their sin for the self destruction that it is and turn from it and trust in Him, however many never will...and they will utterly perish in their own corruption.

Vs13-14

In light of the "work" that the ungodly has done, Peter says they'll receive appropriate "wages" they'll be paid for the work they've done. They'll receive the wages "of unrighteousness." The bible tells us that the wages of sin is death, eternal separation from God in outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. When Isaiah prophesied of the fall of the king of Babylon (leading into a passage concerning the fall of Satan) he said, *"Hell from beneath is excited about you, To meet you at your coming; It stirs up the dead for you, All the chief ones of the earth; It has raised up from their thrones All the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: 'Have you also become as weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, And the sound of your stringed instruments; The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you."* Isa 14:9-11 Not a pretty picture of the wages of unrighteousness, when Jesus spoke of hell He said, *"Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched."* Mark 9:44 In the book of Revelation we read, *"And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night,"* Rev 14:11 The ungodly, the unrepentant will all receive the wages of unrighteousness.

"...as those who count in pleasure to carouse in the daytime" the picture here is that of a complete reprobate. "They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you." Of course a spot and/or a blemish would make that which you presented to God an unworthy sacrifice, the sacrifice that you were to bring to God had to be with out spot and with out blemish. The very fact of their malicious presence marred their time of gathering before the Lord, seeking to fellowship *with* the Lord.

Now don't be confused here Peter isn't saying that someone who is not born again is a stain on the body of Christ, a blemish in the presence of God. He's talking about people who know the truth but who are deliberate in their efforts to lead people *away* from the truth for personal profit of some kind. Be it they want money, or to lead them into an adulterous relationship or whatever. We want this place to be *filled* with people who don't know the Lord that they might hear *of* the Lord in truth and so surrender their lives to Him.

But as for the heretic, as for the one who knows what the bible says but simply rejects it so as to draw away disciples after themselves, those guys need to be dealt with swiftly and sent packin... Because they prey on weak believers, seeking to plant doubt, questions and confusion that they might "liberate" them and lead them in the "right" way (we'll see that next time). They mask they're true motive to take advantage of you...notice

Vs14

You see, they seek to entice unstable souls; what does that mean? We'll get back to that but before we do let's look just a little bit more at the attributes, the characteristics of these people that Peter is talking about because they're more attributes of the unregenerate. This is the overflow of the utter corruption of the human heart. The way a man thinks will demonstrate itself in the way he leads his life, Vs 13 shows us that this guy leads the life of the reprobate, Vs 14 tells us that he has eyes "full of adultery" "that cannot cease from sin" that they "entice unstable souls" "have a heart trained in covetous practices" which is to say that they're not "God's children" they're not partakers of the "divine nature" they're "accursed children" they're under God's judgment.

What does it mean to have eyes "full of adultery"? 2 Things, #1 Physically it means that every woman they see is to them a candidate for adultery, they're always looking for the opportunity to take advantage of some vulnerability and seduce them. Now if you've ever known a pastor or a person to have fallen into sin that doesn't mean that they're a reprobate, unregenerate heretic, we're considering here the unrelenting motive of this man's heart. He wasn't deceived himself, he wasn't taken prisoner of the enemy, he belongs *to* the enemy, he's an accursed child, his motive was malicious from the start. Paul sought to warn the Philippians when he said, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things.*" Phil 3:17-19 These guys are slaves to the appetites of their own flesh, they're "worldly" their glory is in their shame and the enemies of the cross of Christ...and their end is destruction.

The other thing it means is that spiritually they're not true to God at all, it's all a front, a smoke screen. They have no intention whatsoever of being faithful to God, they're looking to capitalize on people who *think* they're godly so that they can take advantage of them in *ungodly* ways.

Another attribute of the unregenerate? "Cannot cease from sin." They can't stop sinning if they want to; they're in bondage to the flesh. Allow me to draw a quick application apart from the text, how many people say things like, "I want to quit being this way, I want to quit doing those things, I don't want to be about *that* anymore, but I can't quit." They're in bondage to their own flesh we read in Jer 13:23 "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil.*" The point is that what's impossible with man is possible with God, we can't change ourselves, we can't "clean up our act" then come to God, we can't get a few things right and then we'll be ready, we're sinners, that's who we are.

Only God can cleanse the inner man, create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit with in us. Only God can take our heart of stone and give to us a heart of flesh, one that pulsates with life and true vitality.

They have a heart "*trained* in covetous practices." What does that mean? The word *trained* is the Greek word from which we get our word "gymnasium" it speaks of being exercised, it means they're master manipulators, they've perfected the technique of getting what they want, they're experts at the art of seduction. What kind of *training* do you supply to your heart? We're all training our heart in one exercise or another, are you training your heart in self indulgence? In a tolerant attitude toward sin; or in holiness, to meditate upon God's word and let it soak in and permeate who you are... Their heart is trained in covetous practices.

They're "accursed children." They might succeed in building their bank account but the day will come when they will take their place before God only to be declared spiritually bankrupt. Jesus said that those who don't know Him will on that day hear the words, "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:*" Matt 25:41 He said, "*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" Matt 16:26 People sell out so cheap... When Jesus said that He was saying that all of creation isn't worth the purchase price of your soul, your soul is worth more to God than all the earth and anything in it. Why? Because the earth is temporary, it's passing away, your soul is eternal, yet people will sell out for far less than this world. They'll sell out for a few simple passing pleasures *in* it, much less the whole *of* it.

They entice “unstable souls.” Who takes their bait, who is it that falls into their manipulative endeavors? “Unstable souls” who are unstable souls? They’re people who don’t really know the word of God. Often times they’re new believers (though they’re not limited to new believers, it could be someone who’s been a Christian for a long time, they just don’t spend time in God’s word, so they’re easily led astray by the smooth talk of a deceiver). Stability is such an important factor when it comes to having what we might deem a “successful” Christian life. As a Christian it’s absolutely imperative that you learn what it means to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph Ch 6) that you learn what it means to take up the whole armor of God that you might be able to stand and to *with stand* in the evil day. You need to be established in the faith, I can’t stress it enough. Peter made sure that His readers were established in the present truth yet he still warned them of the impending danger of deceivers. Get to know the word of God, that you not be tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, but that you might be rooted and grounded in the truth. (That is in the scriptures). One day Jesus was praying, He was preparing His heart to go to the cross; and as He stood in the gap on the behalf of His disciples He prayed to the Father and said, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*” John 17:17 God’s word will set you free, don’t be baited by deceivers, don’t be enticed by their lies, establish yourself in the word of God...

Prayer Points:

God increase our appetite for Your word. Jesus teach us what it means to drink of Your blood, to eat of Your flesh...the Bread of life come down from heaven. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth. Establish us, help us to stand and to with stand, to be strong Lord in You, and in the power of Your might; and though the wages of sin is death, we thank You that Your gift God to us in Christ Jesus our Lord is eternal life, and we give You praise.

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, if you’re with in the sound of my voice it’s because God isn’t finished with you, He’s seeking to deal with you, that rather than receiving the wages of unrighteousness you might on that day hear, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” Matt 25:34

If God is dealing with you today and you’re willing to turn from your sin, and let Him take that heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, tender and full of life, everlasting life, than do it today and you’ll never be the same in Jesus name.