

L 6 ... Countering Counterfeit Preachers

2 Peter 2:17-22

How are we to respond to compelling pleas for financial support from counterfeit TV and radio preachers? Much of the Lord's money that should be going to local churches is instead being sent to these cronies of Satan. Peter warns, *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you (2:1a)*. The root word translated *false* (PSEUDOMAI, soo-doe-my') is the word from which we get our word "pseudo," which means fake, imitation, or counterfeit. **Countering counterfeit preachers** requires at least **two** actions.

Resist their enticement (2:17-19)

Peter informs us that false teachers *are wells without water (2:17a)*. Like false teachers today, they have lots of glamour and gimmicks that appear spiritual, but they are like mirages in a hot, dry desert. Spiritually thirsty people come to them but find nothing to drink.

In contrast, what does Jesus tell the Samaritan woman at the well in [John 4:14a](#)?

False teachers and preachers are also like *clouds that are carried with a tempest (2:17b)*. Peter is referring to mist, or fog, blown by a breeze off the Mediterranean Sea. It appears to bring a much-needed rain to the dry, parched inhabitants of Palestine. However, the mist *carried* by the sea breeze often disappears without any rain. Like those *clouds*, false teachers provide nothing spiritually refreshing or nourishing. In other words, their messages offer much but deliver nothing.

For false teachers and preachers, *the mist of darkness is reserved for ever (2:17c)*. The *mist of darkness* refers to hell ([Mt 8:12](#)). They will be forever banned from God's light to the darkest darkness in hell.

Why, according to [James 3:1c](#)?

False teachers and preachers speak with *great swelling words of vanity (2:18a)*. This probably means they claim to get special revelations, visions, or messages from God. They attract followers by luring them *through the lusts of the flesh (2:18b)*. We see this tactic today in the false teachers and preachers who spiritualize selfishness and greed. They teach that following Christ leads to health and wealth. They teach we should follow Jesus to gratify self.

But what does Jesus declare in [Luke 9:23b-c](#)?

Some false teachers also *allure* people who have barely *escaped from them who live in error* ([2:18c](#)). They are able to draw new and unstable believers away from the truth.

They are not concerned with teaching God's Word; instead, they target the selfishness and greed of their listeners. They teach what appeals to the selfish desires of the flesh.

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption ([2:19a](#)). False preachers promise *liberty* to live as you please, or to live for self. However, that is not freedom at all. Freedom is not obsession with perfect health or with wealth. I have known very wealthy people who thought they were free, but they were actually slaves to their wealth. You can become addicted, or a slave, to making money or being successful. As Peter puts it, *for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage* ([2:19b](#)). We are slaves to whatever controls us.

Jesus says, *Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*. Then, our Lord says, *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed* ([Jn 8:34](#), [36](#)). Yet, there is a good kind of slavery that leads to true *liberty*.

How does [Romans 6:18](#) describe it?

True believers are servants to *righteousness*, or Christ, which means we are totally obedient to Him and therefore, *free from sin*.

To counter counterfeit preachers, **resist their enticement** and ...

Recognize their entanglement (2:20-22)

The false teachers of Peter's day, like those of all generations, were outwardly religious. They claimed to know Christ and to be able to share special words from God. Though not truly converted, they do change, or have a moral reformation, and gain a following.

Peter continues, *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome* (2:20a–c). The key word here is *knowledge*. It translates a Greek word (EPIGNŌSIS, ep-ig'-no-sis) that means recognition or acknowledgement. This refers to **head** knowledge of Christ but not **saving** knowledge of Him ([Mt 7:21-23](#)).

Such people may have a superficial moral reform, but they have never been truly saved.

Of these people, Peter writes, *the latter end is worse with them than the beginning* ([2:20d](#)). It is better to have never known the Gospel than to know it and turn away from it or use it as a means to exploit people.

[Verse 20](#) doesn't refer to people losing their salvation. John wrote that some who claimed to be true believers *went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us* ([1 Jn. 2:19a–d](#)).

Then, what does he write in the last sentence of [1 John 2:19](#)?

False teachers are *entangled in the pollutions of the world* ([2 Pet. 2:20a](#)). The word translated *pollutions* (MIASMA, me'-as-mah) means they are corrupted by the ways of the world. They also corrupt Bible verses to spiritualize and legitimize selfishness, greed, and immorality.

Of such people, Peter also writes, *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them* ([2:21](#)). The Bible teaches it is better to never know the truth of Christ than to know it and reject it or pervert it for personal gain.

This is because the degree of eternal punishment will be based on *knowledge*. One day Jesus sends out the Twelve on a preaching tour to the lost sheep of Israel. Jesus tells them to proclaim: *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*. He gives them the power to *heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils* ([Mt 10:5-8](#)).

What does Jesus tell His disciples about the cities that would not listen to them ([10:15](#))?

Peter concludes his denunciation of false teachers by quoting two proverbs. The first is from [Proverbs 26:11](#): *The dog is turned to his own vomit again* ([2:22b](#)). When a dog vomits something up, it will eat it again.

Next, he quotes a commonly known proverb not found in the Bible: *the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire* ([2:22c](#)). The Jews consider dogs and pigs to be among the lowest and dirtiest of animals.

That's why Jesus makes what declaration in [Matthew 7:6a-b](#)?

So, Peter uses dogs and pigs to describe the lowest form of people—those who know the truth of the Gospel but pervert it. The principle is the same in both proverbs. Those who make only outward professions of faith, without truly being transformed by the power of the Gospel, will soon return to their old ways.

The fact Peter calls them dogs and pigs makes it clear they were not true believers who had gone astray. If they were, Peter would have encouraged his readers to follow what command in [Galatians 6:1a-c](#)?

However, these false teachers had nothing spiritual to *restore* because they were not true believers. Sadly, still today we have many false teachers and preachers who seem genuine but, like dogs and pigs, they eventually return to their old ways, having rejected the Gospel in their hearts. That's why famous pastors are sometimes exposed as adulterers, practicing homosexuals, and common frauds.

Therefore, it is very important for us to heed Peter's words so we can discern between those who really teach the truth of God's Word and those who don't. The only way to do this is by following the example of the Jews in Berea.

What did they do after they heard the preaching of Paul and Silas ([Acts 17:11c](#))?

One reason God has given us the Bible is to protect us from counterfeit preachers. However, this protection depends on us reading, studying, and listening to the Bible preached or taught by a true believer.

To counter counterfeit preachers,

RESIST THEIR ENTICEMENT

RECOGNIZE THEIR ENTANGLEMENT.