

# Introduction to 2 Peter Chapter 2

*False Teachers Among You: Judgment Foretold, Ensamples From of Old, and the Dog Returned to His Vomit*

Chapter 2 turns from the settled foundation of eyewitness testimony and prophetic Scripture just established in chapter 1 to the specific danger that foundation exists to guard against: false teachers who, Peter warns, will arise among these believers exactly as false prophets once arose among Israel, privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the very Lord that bought them. This chapter shares extensive material with the New Testament letter of Jude, both drawing on a common body of warning against a similar or identical danger, and its argument proceeds not primarily through direct doctrinal refutation but through an extended demonstration, from Israel's own sacred history, that God has never left such rebellion unpunished, and will not now.

Peter marshals three Old Testament examples in swift succession, the angels that sinned, the ancient world destroyed in Noah's flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, each demonstrating the same pattern: certain judgment upon the ungodly, and certain deliverance for the godly caught in the midst of surrounding corruption. From this historical foundation the chapter turns to an unsparing character portrait of the false teachers themselves, presumptuous, selfwilled, driven by covetousness and by eyes full of adultery, promising liberty while themselves enslaved to corruption, a portrait whose vividness and severity is virtually unmatched elsewhere in the New Testament.

The chapter closes with one of Scripture's starkest warnings about apostasy, that it would have been better for such people never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them, illustrated by two blunt proverbial images, a dog returning to its own vomit and a washed sow returning to the mire, images whose deliberate crudeness matches the seriousness of the danger Peter is determined his readers will not underestimate.

## Opening Prayer

*Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*We ask for discernment against false teachers who would privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. Guard us from following pernicious ways, and from being made merchandise of through covetousness and feigned words. Thank you that you spared not the angels that sinned, nor the old world, but saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and that you delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, for you know how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment.*

*Lord, keep us from presumption and self-will, from covetous practices and from eyes that cannot cease from sin, and from forsaking the right way to follow the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Let us never be as wells without water, or clouds carried with a tempest, but let our knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ keep us from being entangled again in the pollutions of the world we have escaped.*

*And Lord, keep us from ever turning like a dog to his own vomit, or a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire, but let us hold fast the holy commandment delivered unto us, walking in the way of righteousness all our days. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## **2 Peter 2:1–3**

*False Teachers Among You: Damnable Heresies and Feigned Words That Make Merchandise of You*

*(1) But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

*(2) And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

*(3) And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

## **The Context**

Verse 1's "but there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you" establishes historical precedent before naming present danger, Israel's own repeated experience of false prophecy (compare Deuteronomy 13:1–5; Jeremiah 23:16) serving as the pattern this chapter insists will recur among the church. "Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" names the characteristic method, quiet, gradual introduction rather than open, immediately recognizable attack, and "even denying the Lord that bought them" names the substance of this heresy directly, a rejection of Christ's own redemptive lordship, striking language given that these false teachers are described as having been "bought" by the very Lord they now deny, raising, without fully resolving, the difficult question of professed faith that later proves false or apostate. "Bring upon themselves swift destruction" assures readers that this danger, however alarming, does not go unanswered.

Verse 2's "and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" names two further consequences, genuine numerical following among the vulnerable and a wider reputational cost to Christian truth itself, outsiders judging the whole faith by the visible corruption of these teachers and their followers, a concern for the faith's public reputation already voiced in First Peter's own concern for good conduct among the Gentiles (1 Peter 2:12).

Verse 3's "and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" names financial exploitation as a central, practical motive behind this false teaching, "feigned words" describing deliberately crafted, deceptive rhetoric designed to extract material gain from vulnerable believers, treating people as commodities to be traded upon rather than souls to be shepherded. "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not" closes the unit with assurance rather than mere warning, insisting that despite any present appearance of delay or impunity, judgment against these teachers is neither absent nor asleep, but already, actively, in motion.

## **Plain American English**

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. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

## Key Observations

**“false teachers... who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them”:** This signifies **Danger From Within Named as Quiet and Gradual Rather Than Open and Immediately Recognizable.**

The word “privily” characterizes false teaching as deliberately covert rather than announced, requiring discernment rather than mere vigilance against obvious attack, since the danger is designed specifically to avoid early detection.

**“by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”:** This signifies **The Church’s Public Reputation Named as a Real Casualty of Internal Corruption, Not Merely a Private Doctrinal Matter.**

This concern for how outsiders perceive Christian truth based on the visible conduct of its false teachers echoes First Peter’s own concern for good conduct among unbelievers, naming internal corruption as having real, external consequence for the faith’s credibility.

**“their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”:** This signifies **Present Appearance of Delayed Judgment Directly Countered by the Assurance of Active, Ongoing Divine Response.**

Rather than allowing any impression that these teachers act with impunity, this closing assurance insists that judgment, though perhaps not yet visibly executed, is neither absent nor dormant but already, actively proceeding.

## What This Means for Us Today

**1. Cultivate Discernment for Quiet, Gradual Error Rather Than Only Obvious, Announced Heresy:** Because false teaching is characterized here as covert rather than open, contemporary believers do well to develop careful, ongoing discernment rather than assuming danger will always be easily recognizable when it arrives.

**2. Recognize That Financial Exploitation Dressed in Religious Language Remains a Genuine Contemporary Danger:** Verse 3’s naming of covetousness and feigned words as tools of false teaching speaks directly to any contemporary religious appeal that pressures believers financially, inviting healthy scrutiny of teaching that consistently centers material gain.

## How This Relates to Today

This passage's warning against teachers who exploit believers "through covetousness... with feigned words" remains strikingly relevant to contemporary concerns about religious fraud and manipulative fundraising, offering ancient, Spirit-inspired warning against a danger that has never fully disappeared from Christian history.

The concern that "the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" because of false teachers' conduct speaks to ongoing contemporary conversations about how visible scandal within Christian communities shapes public perception of the faith as a whole, underscoring that internal integrity carries real external consequence.

**Key Lesson:** *\*This opening unit warns that false teachers will arise among believers exactly as false prophets once arose among Israel, privily bringing in damnable heresies and denying the Lord that bought them, exploiting believers through covetousness and feigned words, while assuring readers that despite any present appearance of delay, judgment against such teachers is neither absent nor asleep but already actively proceeding.\**

## 2 Peter 2:4–9

*Angels That Sinned, the Old World, and Sodom and Gomorrha: The Lord Knoweth How to Deliver the Godly*

*(4) For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

*(5) And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

*(6) And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;*

*(7) And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:*

*(8) (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)*

*(9) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:*

## **The Context**

Verses 4 through 6 assemble three Old Testament examples of certain divine judgment in a single extended sentence, a rhetorical structure, “for if... and... and... the Lord knoweth,” building toward its climactic conclusion in verse 9. Verse 4’s “if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” refers to a tradition of angelic rebellion (compare Jude 6; Genesis 6:1–4’s enigmatic “sons of God”), naming even angelic status as no protection against judgment for sin, the most exalted class of created being still subject to God’s righteous response.

Verse 5’s “spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” recalls the same flood narrative already used in 1 Peter 3:20, now naming Noah specifically as “a preacher of righteousness,” a detail not explicit in Genesis itself but reflecting Jewish tradition’s understanding of Noah’s long labor calling his generation to repentance before judgment finally came, “the eighth person” meaning the eighth individual, Noah among seven family members, saved from that judgment.

Verse 6’s “turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly” names the third historical example (compare Genesis 19:1–29; Jude 7), explicitly identifying these cities’ destruction as a deliberate “ensample,” a pattern or warning example, meant to instruct every subsequent generation tempted toward similar ungodliness. Verses 7 and 8 pause within this pattern to highlight Lot specifically, “delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked... that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,” a portrait of genuine righteous distress at surrounding corruption, Lot’s own soul actively grieved rather than passively unaffected by the wickedness around him, softening what might otherwise be a purely severe passage with genuine pastoral sympathy for believers who likewise feel vexed by surrounding ungodliness.

Verse 9’s climactic conclusion, “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished,” draws the whole extended sentence to its point: these three examples together demonstrate a

single, reliable divine pattern, deliverance for the godly and reserved judgment for the unjust, offered specifically as assurance to readers currently living amid the very false teachers this chapter is describing.

### **Plain American English**

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; 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; 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; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless, for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.

### **Key Observations**

**“if God spared not the angels that sinned... nor the old world... nor Sodom and Gomorrah”:** This signifies **Three Escalating Historical Examples Demonstrating That No Class of Being, From Angels to Entire Civilizations, Escapes Divine Judgment for Sin.**

By moving from angels to a whole ancient world to specific cities, Peter builds a comprehensive case that judgment for persistent sin is a consistent, demonstrated pattern across every category of created being, not an isolated or unusual divine response.

**“that righteous man dwelling among them... vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds”:** This signifies **Genuine Righteous Distress at Surrounding Corruption Named as a Legitimate, Expected Experience Rather Than a Sign of Weak Faith.**

By highlighting Lot’s ongoing inner torment at the wickedness around him, this passage validates the real emotional cost of living faithfully amid pervasive corruption, rather than presenting righteousness as requiring indifference to surrounding evil.

**“the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment”:** This signifies **A Single Reliable Divine Pattern Drawn From Three Historical Examples and Offered as Present Assurance.**

This climactic conclusion transforms three separate ancient narratives into a single, dependable principle, offering readers currently surrounded by false teachers the same confidence that deliverance and judgment are both, in God’s hands, entirely certain.

## **What This Means for Us Today**

**1. Take Comfort From Scripture’s Consistent Historical Pattern of Divine Deliverance for the Godly Amid Surrounding Corruption:** Contemporary believers surrounded by ungodliness can draw genuine confidence from these three ancient examples, trusting that the same God who delivered Noah and Lot knows how to deliver believers today out of present trials.

**2. Permit Genuine Distress at Surrounding Wickedness Rather Than Suppressing It as a Failure of Faith:** Lot’s example validates ongoing grief and vexation at pervasive corruption as a legitimate righteous response, inviting contemporary believers to acknowledge similar distress honestly rather than feeling obligated to appear unaffected by it.

## **How This Relates to Today**

These three historical examples speak to any contemporary believer wondering whether God notices or will act against persistent, pervasive evil, offering a consistent scriptural pattern in which judgment, though sometimes seemingly delayed, has always eventually come.

Lot’s daily vexation at the corruption surrounding him offers real comfort to believers today who feel similarly worn down by pervasive ungodliness in their own culture, naming that weariness as a mark of genuine righteousness rather than a spiritual failing.

**Key Lesson:** *\*This unit marshals three escalating Old Testament examples, the angels that sinned, the ancient world destroyed by flood, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, each demonstrating certain divine judgment upon the ungodly, while highlighting Lot’s genuine righteous distress at surrounding corruption, and drawing the single reliable*

*conclusion that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.\**

## **2 Peter 2:10–16**

### *Spots and Blemishes: Presumptuous, Selfwilled, and the Way of Balaam*

*(10) But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

*(11) Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.*

*(12) But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*

*(13) And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;*

*(14) Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

*(15) Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

*(16) But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.*

## **The Context**

Verse 10's "but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" narrows the preceding judgment specifically onto these false teachers, naming sensual indulgence and contempt for legitimate authority as their defining marks, "dignities" likely referring to angelic powers or spiritual authorities rather than merely human officials, a reading confirmed by verse 11's comparison. Verse 11's "whereas

angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord” contrasts these presumptuous teachers with genuine angelic restraint, even angels of far greater power than any human declining to bring reckless accusation, exposing by contrast the reckless overreach of these false teachers’ own speech.

Verse 12’s “but these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption” escalates the description sharply, comparing these teachers to instinct-driven animals lacking genuine understanding, their own destructive corruption becoming, fittingly, the very means of their perishing. Verse 13’s “shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you” describes open, shameless indulgence, “riot in the day time” marking behavior so brazen it does not even wait for cover of darkness, and “spots and blemishes” naming their corrupting presence directly within the church’s own shared meals and fellowship.

Verse 14’s “having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” names both sexual and financial corruption as intertwined marks of this false teaching, “beguiling unstable souls” identifying their specific target, believers not yet firmly grounded, and “an heart they have exercised with covetous practices” picturing greed as a deliberately trained, practiced skill rather than an occasional lapse.

Verses 15 and 16 supply a specific Old Testament type for this pattern: “which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.” Balaam’s narrative (Numbers 22–24), a prophet who possessed genuine access to God yet was driven by love of payment to seek ways around God’s clear instruction, becomes the letter’s paradigm case for these teachers, motivated by identical love of unrighteous gain, with the detail of the speaking donkey (Numbers 22:28–30) underscoring the sheer absurdity of a professed prophet needing correction from an animal, a fittingly humiliating image for teachers whose own understanding this chapter has already compared to unreasoning beasts.

### **Plain American English**

This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings, yet even angels, although stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. But these people blaspheme in matters

they do not understand, like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish. 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. With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed, an accursed brood. They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey, a beast without speech, who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

### **Key Observations**

**“angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord”:** This signifies **Genuine Angelic Restraint Deliberately Contrasted With the Reckless Overreach of False Teachers' Own Speech.**

By noting that even far more powerful angelic beings decline to level reckless accusation, this comparison exposes the presumption of these teachers, whose bold speech against spiritual authority far exceeds any restraint shown by beings genuinely greater than themselves.

**“as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed... shall utterly perish in their own corruption”:** This signifies **Corrupting Behavior Named as Both the Character and, Fittingly, the Very Instrument of These Teachers' Own Destruction.**

By comparing these teachers to instinct-driven animals and noting that their perishing occurs specifically “in their own corruption,” Peter pictures a self-consuming pattern in which the very behavior that defines their false teaching becomes the direct means of their downfall.

**“following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness”:** This signifies **A Specific Old Testament Type Naming Love of Payment as the Recognizable Pattern Behind This False Teaching.**

By identifying Balaam, a genuine prophet corrupted by love of financial reward, as the defining type for these teachers, Peter names greed disguised as spiritual authority as an ancient, recurring, and identifiable pattern rather than a novel danger.

## What This Means for Us Today

**1. Evaluate Bold, Confident Religious Speech Against the Genuine Restraint Shown by Legitimate Spiritual Authority:** Verse 11's contrast between reckless human accusation and genuine angelic restraint invites contemporary believers to be suspicious of religious teachers who speak with excessive confidence or contempt toward whatever authority they oppose, recognizing genuine humility as a more reliable mark of legitimate spiritual authority.

**2. Watch for the Balaam Pattern of Genuine Gifting Corrupted by Love of Financial Reward:** Because Balaam possessed real prophetic access to God yet was driven by greed, contemporary believers should not assume that genuine talent, charisma, or apparent spiritual gifting guarantees trustworthy teaching, watching instead for whether love of gain shapes a teacher's message.

## How This Relates to Today

This passage's unsparing description of teachers who combine sensual indulgence, contempt for authority, and financial exploitation offers a still-relevant diagnostic for evaluating contemporary religious leaders, particularly those whose public confidence and charisma might otherwise obscure underlying corruption.

The Balaam narrative's enduring relevance, a gifted figure corrupted by love of payment, speaks pointedly to ongoing contemporary concerns about religious leaders whose ministry becomes primarily a vehicle for personal financial gain, offering ancient scriptural warning against a pattern that remains recognizable today.

**Key Lesson:** *\*This unit offers Scripture's most unsparing character portrait of false teachers, presumptuous and selfwilled, more reckless in accusation than even angels of far greater power, driven by sensual indulgence, covetous practice, and beguiling of unstable souls, and identifies their defining pattern in the ancient figure of Balaam, a genuine prophet corrupted by love of unrighteous wages, whose own madness required correction from a speaking donkey.\**

## 2 Peter 2:17–22

## *Wells Without Water: The Dog Turned to His Own Vomit Again*

*(17) These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

*(18) For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

*(19) While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

*(20) 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, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*

*(21) 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.*

*(22) But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

### **The Context**

Verse 17's "these are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever" names the essential emptiness behind these teachers' apparent promise, a well that appears to offer water but delivers none, and clouds that promise rain yet are merely driven, purposeless, by storm winds, images naming false hope and unfulfilled expectation as their defining false characteristic, with "the mist of darkness... reserved for ever" naming their ultimate destiny in the starkest possible terms.

Verse 18's "when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error" names their specific method and target, impressive-sounding but ultimately empty rhetoric, "great swelling words," aimed specifically at believers who had genuinely, recently escaped a former life of error, exploiting spiritual immaturity rather than confronting settled, mature faith. Verse 19's "while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" exposes a bitter irony at the heart of their message, promising

freedom while being themselves enslaved, a principle stated with proverbial clarity: whatever overcomes a person becomes that person's master, regardless of what freedom that mastery falsely claims to offer.

Verses 20 and 21 issue the chapter's most severe warning: "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, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning... 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." This describes genuine escape followed by genuine relapse into worse bondage than before, the comparative severity resting not on the sin's content but on its occurring after genuine knowledge of the way of righteousness, a knowing rejection carrying greater weight than an original, uninformed corruption.

Verse 22's closing double proverb, "the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," the first drawn directly from Proverbs 26:11, illustrates this reversal with deliberately unflattering, visceral imagery: the dog's vomit represents what was rightly expelled now voluntarily reconsumed, and the washed sow's return to mire pictures an external cleansing that never touched or changed the animal's own essential nature, together closing the chapter's severe warning with images whose crudeness is entirely intentional, matching the gravity of the danger this letter refuses to soften or minimize.

### **Plain American English**

These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity, for a person is a slave to whatever has mastered them. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: A dog returns to its vomit, and a sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.

### **Key Observations**

**“wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest”:** This signifies **False Hope and Unfulfilled Expectation Named as the Essential, Defining Characteristic Beneath These Teachers’ Apparent Promise.**

These images strip away any appearance of substance behind false teaching, naming its outward promise as fundamentally empty, offering the appearance of provision, water, rain, without ever actually delivering it.

**“while they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage”:** This signifies **A Bitter Irony in Which the Very Freedom Promised Conceals the Teacher’s Own Genuine Enslavement.**

This proverbial principle, that whatever overcomes a person becomes their master, exposes the fundamental self-contradiction of false teachers who claim to offer liberty while being themselves demonstrably enslaved to the very corruption they promise to free others from.

**“it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than... to turn from the holy commandment”:** This signifies **Knowing Rejection After Genuine Escape Named as Carrying Greater Weight Than an Original, Uninformed Corruption.**

This severe comparison does not minimize the seriousness of never having known righteousness at all, but insists that willful return to corruption after genuine knowledge of Christ represents an even graver condition, the informed rejection of a truth once genuinely grasped.

## **What This Means for Us Today**

**1. Evaluate Religious Promises by Whether They Actually Deliver Substance Rather Than by Their Rhetorical Impressiveness:** The image of wells without water and clouds without rain invites contemporary believers to test religious claims not by how confidently or eloquently they are presented but by whether they genuinely deliver the substance they promise.

**2. Take Seriously the Real Danger of Relapse for Those Recently Escaped From a Former Way of Life:** Verse 18’s naming of “those that were clean escaped” as the

specific target of false teachers' allure highlights the particular vulnerability of new or recovering believers, inviting churches today to provide especially attentive care and support during this early, unstable period.

### **How This Relates to Today**

The proverbial images of the dog and the vomit, and the washed sow and the mire, though deliberately crude, speak with real honesty to the genuine difficulty of relapse after apparent spiritual progress, a struggle familiar to contemporary believers and to anyone who has watched loved ones return to destructive patterns after a period of real, hopeful change.

The warning against teachers who promise liberty while being themselves enslaved speaks pointedly to a contemporary spiritual marketplace often built around promises of freedom, self-actualization, or personal empowerment, inviting careful examination of whether such promises are matched by any genuine evidence of the teacher's own freedom from the very things being promised to others.

**Key Lesson:** *\*This closing unit names false teachers as wells without water and storm-driven clouds, empty of the substance they appear to promise, exposes the bitter irony of their offering liberty while themselves enslaved to corruption, and issues Scripture's starkest warning against willful relapse after genuine escape, that it would have been better never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back, a reversal pictured with deliberately unflattering honesty in the proverb of the dog returned to its vomit and the washed sow returned to the mire.\**

### **Closing Prayer**

*Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*Guard us from false teachers who would privily bring in damnable heresies, and from following pernicious ways that cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of. Keep us from*

*being made merchandise of through covetousness and feigned words, and let us trust that judgment against such deceivers lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

*Lord, you spared not the angels that sinned, nor the old world, nor Sodom and Gomorrha, yet you delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, for you know how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment. Keep us from presumption and self-will, from covetous practices, and from the way of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.*

*And Lord, let us never be as wells without water or clouds carried with a tempest, promising what we cannot give. If we have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, keep us from ever being entangled therein again, and let us hold fast the holy commandment delivered unto us, never turning like a dog to his own vomit, or a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

*In Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Soli Deo Gloria**

*Glory to God Alone*