

EXPOSITION OF II PETER

Message #9

II Peter 2:9b-14

You and I are living in a religious world that is losing its moral compass. The cry of this world is tolerance of anything and relevance to society. This mindset has infiltrated many churches. False teachers are energetic worshippers. They are charismatic personalities. They know how to promote and they know how to sell. They know how to twist the Scriptures in order to support their agenda “under the camouflage of relevance.” However, the Biblical truth is that they are religious heretics from hell and they are heading to hell.

Peter Davids called II Peter 2:1-22 a “condemnation of false teachers.” He said that when Peter started writing II Peter this was “his main concern” (*II Peter*, p. 216). Peter wanted God’s people focused on God’s written Word and he wanted them to realize that there are a bunch of phony religious leaders who do not have this focus.

The language Peter uses against these teachers is strong, and if we remember that Peter is writing inspired Scripture, the language is designed to communicate literal, eternal truth. J. H. Jowett said, “This is a dark and appalling chapter” (*The Epistles of Peter*, p. 279). For a false religious leader, this is a very scary passage. God is eventually going to pour out His ferocious wrath on these false religious leaders and teachers, and it would have been better for them to never have even known about anything from the Bible.

Now for us who love the Lord and love the Word, we need to know certain things about these guys. In this text Peter paints a very clear picture of religious phonies. God wants us to know how to spot them and we need to know what to look for. What Peter writes in this section is this:

GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO SPOT RELIGIOUS PHONIES BY CAREFULLY ANALYZING THEIR TEACHING, THEIR ATTITUDES, AND THEIR LIFESTYLE IN VIEW OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURE; AND GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT ONE DAY HE WILL DESTROY THEM ALL.

S. Lewis Johnson said there is nothing “more heinous than the rebellion of a religious man” (*II Peter 2:10-16*, p. 3). Just this past week I had someone say to me that the main thing about a church is that people get saved. I said I don’t agree. It is a wonderful thing, but God gave His Word to His people so that they might grow to become strong. He wants them so knowledgeable of His Word that they can spot phony religious leaders.

In this passage Peter graphically describes the attributes of a false religious leader. He gives us things for which we may look. Certainly we need to be on the lookout for religious phonies who have these traits. We need to be on the lookout for the many religious organizations and churches in which these things are taking place right now. But also we need to make sure that these things are not in our lives.

There are eight observable religious fraud attributes Peter presents here:

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #1 – Religious frauds continually indulge their flesh fulfilling their corrupt desires. **2:10a**

J. H. Jowett said, “The moral pollution” of these religious leaders is “overwhelming” (*Ibid.*, p. 279). This is a deep, dirty bog that is filled with dirty, religious, lustful leaders. The driving force of false religious leaders is the fulfillment of their fleshly lusts. They continually pursue this objective.

Now the truth is we all have a flesh and that flesh does have corrupt desires. But notice what the religious fraud does, he continually goes after the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. The participle “indulge” (πορευμενους) is a present tense middle voice participle. What this means is that these people continually, in and of themselves, go after the fulfillment of their flesh. This is their habitual pattern of life.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #2 – Religious frauds continually despise authority and are self-willed. **2:10b**

The participle “despise” (καταφρονουντας) is present tense and it means that they continually despise and think little of any who are in a dominion or lordship position (κυριοτης) (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 262). The actual Greek words used here indicate that they “despise lordship” (καταφρονουντας κυριοτητος). In other words, any person who has the character and quality of position or power, they continually despise and hate. Religious frauds hate any authority. They do not want to submit to anyone. They want the dominate power.

Religious phonies are proud, arrogant, and self-willed. They are not about to submit themselves to the Word of God or will of God. They are conceited. They are as proud and as arrogant as Satan who is their father. They look down upon and will not submit themselves to any authority.

They have no intention of ever bowing in reverence before the sovereignty of God. The man who will not kneel before God will never stand upright in life.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #3 – Religious frauds have no trembling fear of heavenly authority or any authority. **2:10c-11**

Peter Davids called this “an arrogant disrespect” (*II Peter*, p. 234). These phony religious frauds will speak lightly and profanely against sacred things. They are not afraid to boldly and arrogantly speak against and despise God’s authority. Jude gives an illustration of Michael, who is a high-ranking archangel, who would not even speak against Satan, because he recognized that God had created Satan to be higher in rank than he was (Jude 9). These arrogant religious leaders dare to open their mouths and say anything about any authority, even authority ordained by God.

Take reverence and fear out of a person’s life and you are left with arrogance, flippancy, and immorality. There is no greater need for churches right now than the need for a trembling fear and reverence of God. What is happening in most churches is a disgraceful shame, and it is being led by religious frauds who do not know God or His Word.

What I am about to say is probably not going to go over too well. But I say this to me and to you. You and I need to be very careful about saying negative things or demeaning things about any authority appointed by God, including politicians. There is a dangerous evil trend that is infiltrating churches and it is the trend to arrogantly speak against a leader we don't particularly like. These leaders have been put into office by God. E-mails are sent that are degrading, some of which are not even true. Don't you get this point - God puts into office and God takes out of office and the best thing we can do is to realize that and keep our mouth shut. Certainly you can have your opinion and certainly you can vote when given an opportunity, but be careful. When we dare to speak against authority of God, we are demonstrating the same kind of attributes of phony religious people who will end up in hell.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #4 – Religious frauds have the reasoning capacity of an animal. **2:12a**

God gives His people His Spirit and He expects us to develop to demonstrate a superhuman spirituality that is victorious over our flesh. False religious people demonstrate a subhuman spirituality that is worse than an animal.

The Greek here is interesting. The word “unreasoning” (*αλογος*) means these religious leaders are not only without reason and irrational, but they are actually those who do and say things contrary to reason (Smith, p. 22). They promote things contrary to logic. The text says they were born with the nature of an animal and they have been born to be captured and killed.

False religious leaders are beasts. They are creatures of instinct. They are driven by their instinctive, natural, evil desires. They do not have God's Spirit in them. They make no intellectual or spiritual contribution to anything. In the end they will be captured and destroyed. A religious person who is living in sin and saying he has liberty to do it, has sunk to a low level below animals.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #5 – Religious frauds revile with no knowledge of what they are even talking about. **2:12b**

Don't be duped; false religious teachers have no real knowledge of anything they are even talking about, especially when it comes to God and His Word. The word “no knowledge” (*αγνοεω*) means these phonies do not understand and are totally ignorant of true knowledge of God's Word (Smith, p. 6).

These are leaders who are heading up religious organizations and churches and they have no true knowledge at all. They have no sense of sin or guilt. They have no sense of a need for repentance. They do not see man as spiritually bankrupt.

In fact, many of these religious leaders teach that if you educate man, give him culture and art and positive thought, his problems will vanish. These religious people are out of their minds. Unless you understand how holy God is and how depraved you are, and unless you understand your need for Jesus Christ in your life, you are lost and condemned and religious frauds have no concept or knowledge about this reality.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #6 – Religious frauds revel in their deceptions as they carouse with you. **2:13b**

The Greek words “suffering wrong” mean that these men are involved in pursuing what is wicked and wrong, what is unrighteous. The word “reveling” (τρυφην) means these guys are given to a luxurious lifestyle (Smith, p. 451). Religious frauds are devoted to the luxurious and the extravagant.

False religious leaders are not just consumed with their evil pursuits at night, they pursue them every day. They cannot even wait for night to fall. They revel in their deceptions. Now there is certainly nothing wrong with setting down in the evening and having a nice meal. The emphasis here is that these religious frauds will come and eat with you during the day and neglect their real work which should be to study the Word of God so they can feed their flocks. They are deceptive. They appear to be good old boys who will go to breakfast, lunch and dinner to live out their deceptions.

The word “carouse” means these are people who will entertain you and eat a meal with you, but their motivation is not pure; it is evil.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #7 – Religious frauds are always looking for immoral sex. **2:14a**

When Peter says they have “eyes full of adultery,” it means that they see every person as a potential sexual conquest. They do not care about the person’s soul or her/his relationship with God. They are looking at the person, trying to figure out a way to get her/him into bed. They go after “unstable” souls, which means they go after those who are unstable and unsettled in their faith (Smith, p. 65). They try to “lure” or “entice” these kinds of people into immorality.

I know a case where a young lady in a church was going to be dropped off at her home after attending a meeting at church. The man who was to drop her off was kind of a seedy guy and when he learned that her parents weren’t home, he tried to insinuate that he could go in the house. Fortunately, the young lady had good wits to her and said “no.” Now this was done in a context of a church activity with a church leader. That is exactly what Peter is addressing here.

Here is what is really happening in the mind of a false religious person; they are on the prowl looking for sex. Their lusts are “overpowering and insatiable.” They specifically go after unstable, fragile, emotional people. They prey on the spiritually unstable and the spiritually weak. They try to capture them and lure them into their immorality.

When you are in ministry, you get many opportunities to help struggling and hurting people. It is a privilege to be able to point these people to Jesus Christ and the truth of God’s Word. Sometimes these people will open up to you and actually tell you things that at times you don’t even need to know or want to know. If you are a godless manipulator, you can take advantage of these kinds of people and there are plenty of religious leaders who do.

Not long ago, I was told by a very reliable leader of a church that he had talked to a man whose wife said that a minister had contacted her and tried to lure her into an immoral sexual relationship. The minister was pastoring a church at the time and was using his position to pursue his evil, immoral activity.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said that he believed that one of the religious groups where this continually is taking place is in the charismatic movement and in Pentecostal churches (*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5). He observed that the Pentecostal movement is a parasite movement. He said in studying the history of it, they move into an area where there are established churches, and like a parasite they try to pull them away from the truth into their false system of doctrine. Most of the leaders are untrained and unskilled in the Word of God and many follow their destructive ways. Behind the scenes, there is a lot of immorality in the charismatic movement and Pentecostalism. Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker, and Benny Hinn prove that.

This is why it is so important that we stick to the Scriptures. False teaching leads to false living, but sound teaching leads to sound lives. This is why God's people need to go through books of the Bible. We develop a sound, stable, settled spirituality by understanding the Word of God. When you know the books of the Bible and the doctrines of the faith, you can spot these heretics in a moment. Religious frauds don't know truth and they don't want you to know it either.

RELIGIOUS FRAUD ATTRIBUTE #8 – Religious frauds have hearts that are given to greed. **2:14b**

Beyond the sexual immorality is another driving force and it is money. They have hearts that are trained in greed. As Douglas Moo said, "they are experts at greed" (*II Peter*, p. 126). The word "train" means these guys have literally figured out ways to get people's money. They have studied the maneuvers they need to make in order to get it.

A while back I saw a telethon that was designed to raise money for a heretical charismatic religious network, and they specifically said that they were bringing in a certain minister because he knew how to raise funds. He could get those phone lines to light up. He came on and actually said things contrary to the Bible and the phone lines lit up. He is trained in greed.

I was just informed a couple of weeks ago of a minister who tried to convince people in his church to give him their checkbooks so that he could straighten out and control their finances. This is a religious leader who is evil.

These frauds are committing crimes of premeditated immorality and greed. This is not just a slip of character. This is not a moment of time slipup that got the better of them. They have masterminded this whole thing.

God wants His people to be able to spot religious frauds. Do not be deceived - many religious people and many religious leaders will go to hell. One can be a religious fraud all of his or her life and in the end burn forever.