

“By What is a Man Enslaved?” **2 Peter 2:10-22**

Context: Peter writes his last encyclical that warns the Christian community of the danger of false teachers. The warning describes three characteristics about which Peter was primarily concerned: (1) rejection of the return of Jesus as Messiah, (2) a rejection of the word of God as prophetic truth, and (3) a promotion of a libertine, licentious lifestyle. After focusing on a life of specific Christian virtues, Peter gives attestation and warrant for the veracity and authority of his letter. The section that follows provides not only a contrast to the teachings of false teachers but, more importantly, the place where truth can be found. The verses that follow this pericope contrast the Scriptural truth with the constant procession of false teachers that have paraded their heresies before the faith community, even from long ago.

Pivotal verse: Be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness (cf. 2 Peter 3:17).

1. Arrogance of creatures of instinct – 2 Peter 2:10-13a

The individual caged within his or her own reasoning becomes delusional about their power and importance. Sadly, ignorance blinds them until unforeseen mortality ends their deception.

2. Actions of creatures of instinct – 2 Peter 2:13b-16

Balaam's donkey, a brute beast of instinct, is used as an example to reveal that she had more insight than her unreasoning master. Balaam's ignorance is placed in synonymous parallel with the overindulgent, godless false prophets that are accursed by Peter. All are categorized as unreasoning brute beasts.

3. Judgment of creatures of instinct – 2 Peter 2:17-22

Those who let their creaturely instincts direct their life choices and directions find themselves going from one entanglement to the next. Like scuba diving in a bed of kelp, they risk ever greater entanglements and perhaps even an ill-timed mortality.

For Further Study:

- As a **Theological study method**, find the definition of “natural” in [Vine’s NT Expository Dictionary](#), translated from “*phusikos*.” Describe what part of your constitution as a person is expressed by natural instincts. How does the ability to spiritually reason deliver a person from capture and destruction (cf. Ephesians 3:13-14; Daniel 5:18-30)?

- As a **Bible study method** to better understand 2 Peter 2:15-16, look up the story referred to as “the way of Balaam” (cf. Numbers 22:1-31:16; Revelation 2:14). What are the wages of unrighteousness that Balaam loved? What do those wages look like in modern day terms?

- An ugly graphic metaphor of a dog eating its vomit depicts a backslider in 2 Peter 2:22. Why do dogs eat their [own vomit](#)? How does Peter apply the metaphor? How would you apply the metaphor?

Transformation exercise:

Ask the Spirit to bring show you one of the Christian virtues from 2 Peter 1:5-8 to practice as a spiritual discipline in order to recognize a false prophet or teacher in the community of faith (cf. 2 Peter 2:12, 18).