

**King James Bible Study Correspondence Course**

*An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries*  
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

**II Peter Lesson 6****2 Peter 2:17-22**

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It was prayer meeting night. Robert stood up and testified about the salvation of a friend from work. Mike sighed. Robert often told about winning someone to CHRIST, but where were those people today? They would drop out of church after a short time, if they came at all, and then they returned to their old lifestyle. One of them even ended up in a cult! Mike knew, because, over the past few years, Robert had "won to Christ," several people that Mike knew. He sighed again. The Lord had been convicting him about his attitude. So instead of blowing off Robert's testimony, as he had so often in the past, he jot down the name, determined to pray consistently for this baby Christian.

Have you ever been in Robert or Mike's place? Someone you know has made a profession of faith but has not gone on with the Lord. What should you think? What should you do? What about yourself? How can you keep faithful in your Christian walk if you are a Christian?

**Pagans, Dogs, and Sows**

In 2 Peter 2:17-22, Peter continued his relentless exposure and denouncement of the doctrine and behavior of false teachers. He was a man on a mission. He was not, however, grinding an axe, although his writings express his own thoughts. Rather, he was writing God's Word (2 Peter 1:21). God Himself was exposing the men for who they were. In this lesson we will see how Peter went to the heart of the issue, the pagan hearts of false teachers. They were pagan by nature, for no spiritually transforming change had ever occurred within them. Just like dogs and sows, these men reverted to nature, regardless of their outward religiosity. And false teachers today are just the same.

**Wells and Clouds**

Although a former fisherman, Peter had an excellent use of words. His figures of speech are captivating and unforgettable. He used two clear metaphors to describe the spiritual bankruptcy of false teachers. With these metaphors, Peter was referring to the creedal pronouncements of false teachers.

**A person's actions are determined by a person's nature.**

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2 Pet 2:22

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.*

(KJV)

Their doctrinal teachings are as unsatisfying as wells without water. Their teachings also appear to promise blessing, but then they provide nothing at all.

Waterless wells are a tragic disappointment to people who travel in dry areas, such as deserts. Likewise people who need spiritual refreshment for their souls find no relief in false doctrine. Only sound doctrine can provide needed relief, because its source is in the springs of living water (John 4:13, 14). Believers are channels of living water as witnesses of Christ (7:37, 38). False teachers provide nothing at all, because they have nothing to give (2 Peter 2:17).

Clouds that promise rain but are blown away by a storm are unstable and transitory. The hopes of those needing rain are dashed. Likewise, false teachers appear to have good news to offer, but in reality their doctrines are empty of truth and are fleeting.

### Blackest Darkness

The phrase "the mist of darkness-" means "blackest darkness." It refers to Hell, where men are separated from the light of God's presence (Matthew 25:30). Hell is reserved for those who deny God's Word and promote false doctrine. In sharp contrast to Hell is the heavenly inheritance God has reserved for believers (1 Peter 1:4).

We can say that the bankruptcy of false teachers pays an eternal dividend after all, the dividend of eternal darkness, which is guaranteed by God (2 Peter 2:17). The false teachers claim to provide people with the light of truth, but their error becomes clear by the darkness of their own doom.

### Big Words

Another way to detect the error of false teachers is by evaluating their words, which are bloated but hollow (2 Peter 1:18). Their teachings are characterized by big words used to impress and allure their hearers. They make religious pronouncements that amount to nothing. In verse 18, Peter

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presented God as allowing all sorts of things for those who buy into the marketed error of the false teachers. Those who purchase the product will end up sadly disappointed.

False teachers use their verbosity, or theological jargon, to "allure" young Christians (v. 18). The word "allure" is a fishing term. They use their exaggerated words to angle in their catch. Their hooks are baited with "wantonness," which is unrestrained indulgence in lust and passion. "Physical and sexual appetites are God-given and should be satisfied," they claim. "The old ideas about morals need to be relaxed," they say. They provide religious arguments to support the practice of gratifying unrestrained sexual drives. Those who follow their ways will be led to unsatisfying sexual experiences, perversion, and, most terrible of all, the judgment of God (Romans 1:27,28).

So why are new Christians attracted to these bloated, false words? As "babes" in Christ, they are just escaping the moral corruption of their unsaved lives. They have experienced a change of heart, and they need to leave the immoral behavior of their unsaved lives behind them. As unsaved people they lived in error, but now they are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, when someone comes along and says that it is proper for Christians to continue to indulge in unrestrained sexual activities, these new believers are caught. The appeal to them to continue in their sinful passions is very strong. And their shallow level of understanding makes them vulnerable.

So we see that the creed of false teachers is filled with verbal nothingness, for their words are depleted of God's truth (2 Peter 2:18). The void is filled with their sensually permissive doctrine of morality that leads only to damaged lives and the eternal judgment of God.

### **The Big Gap**

A deadly gap exists between what the false teachers promise and what they themselves experience (2 Peter 2:19). While they promise freedom, they themselves are slaves. When a person lives in sensual permissiveness, he or she really is not free. False teachers are themselves enslaved to morally corrupt living. The same is true of their followers. They are tossed about powerless to gain control, like small boats facing a storm on a lake.

The only true freedom is found in a relationship with Christ (Galatians 5:1). We are free in Christ to serve Him and not to serve sin. Christians have been set free from abject slavery to sin to become slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:16-18). Our freedom has come through Christ's redemption (John 8:36).

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### Slavery

Peter reminded his readers of the principle that people are slaves to whatever has mastered them (2 Peter 2:19). False teachers are slaves to their own passions and lusts. They are like men in chains who offer freedom to others also imprisoned in chains. The irony is that freedom is not theirs to offer, for they are not free themselves. They are held in the death grip of their own depravity.

### Entangled Again

The apostle described false teachers as those who have for a time escaped from moral pollution but then reverted to their old paganism (2 Peter 2:20). They have even sunken lower morally than before, for Peter says their last state is worse than the first. Christ gave a warning about religious reformation (Matthew 12:43- 45). The man in the parable had an evil spirit return to him, along with seven other evil spirits. The man had apparently experienced a religious reformation of some sort, but his state was worse after the unclean spirit and his companions returned.

What Peter said of the false teachers is true of their followers as well. They are the doctrinally unstable who turn from a morally corrupt life to a lifestyle of righteousness. They then, at some point, embrace the permissive teachings of the false teachers. The resulting moral relapse is worse than their lifestyle prior to their Christian profession.

The false teachers knew about Christ, but their knowledge was only intellectual. But it was not a knowledge rooted by faith in their hearts. Whatever we humans believe to be the truth we confess from our hearts (Romans 10:10). This is true even if the person believes something false. False teachers do not believe what they know. They, in fact, reject the truth (2 Peter 2:1). In reference to them, Peter used no terms that would affirm their salvation.

The spiritual bankruptcy of false teachers also points to an absence of genuine faith. For this reason, Peter exhorted believers earlier in his letter to make their salvation certain (2 Peter 1:10). Christians need to make sure that their knowledge of God is rooted deeply in their hearts.

The entanglement of these religious errorists into immorality again is like that of an animal caught in a hunter's trap. (2 Peter 2:20). The paradox is that the trap is their own uncontrollable lusts and passions.

### Worse Off

The moral entanglement of false teachers does not forfeit their salvation, for they were never saved. And what little reformation they might have experienced was terminated when they out-rightly rejected the

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redemptive work of Christ (Hebrews 10:29). False teachers are worse off because they reject the truth that is the only source of their salvation. Their latter end is an awful state of affairs. There can be no doubt about their ultimate destiny.

Peter's conclusion about these men is one of the most startling statements to be found in Scripture (2 Peter 2:21). Peter's statement underscores the seriousness of departing from God by rejecting the truth after having made a profession of faith in the gospel.

The apostle did not elucidate on how false teachers are worse off than before (2 Peter 2:21). We can conclude that their hearts are more hardened against Christ, their minds more cynical about God's truth, and their slavery to sin more intense than ever. All of this befalls them because they reject the truth, which they really had never embraced by faith.

### Knowing the Truth

Peter repeated the fact of their knowledge of the gospel (2 Peter 2:21). To know Christ in truth and by faith is to be committed to Him with both our mind and our heart. We know Him in truth only when we come to Him in repentance, faith, and obedience. What we profess to be in relationship to God is demonstrated by how we conduct our lives morally and ethically. Christians live by faith in God's truth and do not draw back in rejection of it (Hebrews 10:38, 39). To draw back is to draw back into the judgment of eternal perdition. False teachers and those committed to their pernicious doctrines have only a head knowledge of the gospel, while their hearts are far from a commitment to it.

### A True Proverb

Peter's denunciation of false teachers was devastating to them (2 Peter 2:22). He used two final illustrations to conclude his penetrating exposure of their doctrinal error and inner character. These two illustrations together describe why false teachers make the choice to reject God's truth and return to the moral corruption of a pagan lifestyle. The first is taken from a text of Scripture (Proverbs 26:11), while the second is extra-Biblical. The Jewish people detested both dogs and pigs. A dog was a scavenger (1 Kings 21:19), while a pig was ritually unclean according to the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 11:7).

Proverbs 26:11 states, "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly." A sow goes back to wallowing in the mud after a bath. Likewise, false teachers give an initial display of repentance and outward change as though they had embraced the truth. It becomes evident eventually that their nature has not changed. This, coupled with their rejection

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of the truth, indicates that they were never spiritually transformed (Titus 3:5). They are still pagan in nature. Animals do not change their nature. So the dog by nature returns to its own vomit, while the sow by its nature returns to the pigpen. The false teachers with their religious profession, along with some outward change, soon revert to the dictates of their real nature. Individually, each one of them is still the corrupt "old man," controlled by his lusts (see Ephesians 4:22).

Peter had explained the dynamics of the new nature earlier in his letter (2 Peter 1:3, 4). The new nature produces godly living, which brings glory to God. The new nature prevents believers from ever returning to the filth and immorality of paganism. We have escaped the pigpen of the world, and God intends that we remain free from it.

**Time for Action**

1. Thank God that He has saved you from a life of living in error.
2. Pray for unsaved people whom you know. Regardless of the outward extent to which they are living according to their sin nature, they are lost and need God's transforming grace.
3. Pray as you study the Bible that God will help you to be diligent and faithful in your study.
4. Pray as you study the Bible that God will enable you to understand His Word (Psalm 119:18) and to obey it day by day (v. 33).
5. Develop your own arguments from the study of God's Word as to why sexual permissiveness is contrary to God's will. Along with this, develop your reasons for sexual morality and purity from the text of Scripture.
6. Determine, if you have not already, how you will respond to the attractions to return to a pagan lifestyle.

**Notes**

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**2 Peter  
Lesson 6**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did he describe them as (2 Peter 2:17)?
2. According to 2 Peter 2:17, what is reserved for these false, carnal, pagan teachers?
3. How can people who think they are free from moral restraints really be enslaved instead?
4. How could these people have had a religious transformation? (See 2 Peter 2:20.)
5. How do false teachers compare to the ground in the parable of the seed and the sower in Matthew 13:20 and 21 ?
6. What is that statement (in your own words)?
7. How are young Christians allured by false teachers?
8. What two illustrations from nature does Peter use to describe false teachers?
9. Why do those who experience religious reformation return to their pagan lifestyle?

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10. How do false teachers know the Gospel?
11. How are false teachers like a dog or a sow?
12. How do we anticipate the dangers of false teachers?
13. How do we protect our doctrinal position from corruption by false teachers or from any other teachers?
14. How do we prepare, protect, and care for our church teachers, who have such a great responsibility for handling GOD's Word?
15. What can learners do to help protect the church from false teachers?
16. What is the key verse in this lesson?

Key memory verses: (write these verses on the back page) 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:16-18; II Peter 2:22

Write any questions you may have concerning the subjects in this lesson or any other lesson.