

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **2 PETER LESSON 2 (Chapter 2)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

### **Ben Bailey:**

“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them” (2 Pet. 2:21). I’m Ben Bailey.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

And I’m Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of 2 Peter This lesson is being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. We invite you to visit the church of Christ in your area. You will find people who love God, and who are interested in going to Heaven. We are making each of these broadcasts available completely free of charge on CD or DVD. If you would like a complimentary copy of this lesson or any of our other lessons, you may log on to our website at [www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com), fill out the request form you will find there, and we will be happy to send to you whatever you need. We won’t even charge you for the postage. We would like to help you in your study of God’s Word in any way that we can.

The Book of 2 Peter is all about spiritual growth. In 2 Peter 1, we learned about things that **facilitate** spiritual growth. Now, in chapter 2, are going to learn about some things that **hinder** spiritual growth.

### **Ben Bailey:**

We might outline the Book of 2 Peter as follows. Chapter 1 would be “ingredients for spiritual growth.” Chapter 2 would be “impediments to spiritual growth.” And chapter 3 would be “incentives for spiritual growth.” It’s not pleasant to have to consider the types of things that Peter discusses in chapter 2. But we must be aware that there **are** false teachers who advocate things that, if believed and put into practice, can impede or stop spiritual growth. Peter discusses here some people who **knew** the way to truth, but failed to follow it. As a result, they carried others with them, down the road to destruction. We must be aware that not everything we hear is the truth as represented in the Gospel. In Acts 17:11, we find the example of the Bereans. Luke comments, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” We cannot believe everything we hear. If someone tells us something, and we can confirm it by the Bible, **then** we can believe it. If something is backed up by “book, chapter, and verse,” then we **must** believe it.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

When it comes to addressing the matter of false teachers, 2 Peter 2 and the Book of Jude share a definite kinship. Some have suggested that Peter may have borrowed from Jude's writings, or that Jude may have borrowed from Peter's. Even if either of those suggestions was true, it would not matter, since both writers were inspired by the same Holy Spirit. Thus, the author behind both 2 Peter 2 and the Book of Jude is...**God!** Both Peter and Jude focus on false teachers who were trying to pervert the grace of God. In 2 Peter 2:1-2, Peter wrote, “

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”

Thus, one of the great obstacles to, and impediments of, spiritual growth is false teachers. John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1). Paul wrote, “Test all things; hold fast what is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). We must be aware of the fact that not everyone who **claims** to teach the truth is actually teaching the truth.

### **Ben Bailey:**

Peter addresses the motives of some of the false teachers of his day when he writes, “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Pet. 2:3). Why were some of these false teachers doing what they were doing? It appears that they were “**in** it for what they could get **out** of it.” Greed is a dominating factor with many false teachers. Why would someone **want** to teach something that is not found within the Word of God? As sad as it is, some people do so for the money. They love the almighty dollar more than they love almighty God. When people who are searching for the truth see this type of thing occur, and they check what they hear or see versus the Word of God, they see a stark contrast that causes disunity, and that prevents people from having faith in God. False teachers have done much damage to the cause of Christ! Genuine Christians should love the lost, and want to see souls saved. They should not be “in it for what they can get out of it.” On the Day of Judgment, it's going to be very sad for false teachers. If they do not change their ways, they should be pitied because of the fate that awaits them.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

In 2 Peter 2:4-9, Peter addresses the fate of the false teacher, and others who willfully sin.

“If God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”

Before we address the false teacher, let us notice something interesting about Peter's comments in regard to Noah. Peter refers to Noah as “a preacher of righteousness.” We

learn from the context of 1 Peter 3 that when the global flood of Genesis 6 occurred, only eight people were saved in the ark (Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their three sons' wives). Today, some might look upon Noah as a "failed preacher," since during his entire lifetime of preaching, he was able to save **only eight souls** (and all of those were related to him!). But God apparently did not consider Noah to be a "failed preacher," since His Holy Spirit inspired Peter to refer to him as "a preacher of righteousness." Noah taught the truth. The fact that the people of his day did not **obey** that truth was no reflection on Noah. God expects us to teach the truth today, too. False teachers, however, do not do that. They spread lies and falsehoods. Peter's point in listing sinful angels, sinful antediluvians, and sinful sodomites, is this: If God did not spare **them**, He also will not spare **false teachers** who pervert His divine Word! Thus, we can see the importance of Peter's admonition in 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God."

### **Ben Bailey:**

A "preacher of righteousness" is not necessarily a person who converts a lot of people. Rather, he is simply a person who teaches the unadulterated Word of God. That is what we must do today. As servants of the Almighty, we are not "in it merely for the numbers." We are not interested in converting millions of people **just** for the sake of "big numbers" alone. Certainly, we would be happy if we preached the Gospel and millions of people responded positively to it. But our job is to preach the Word. If we do that, the Gospel **will** generate a response. Isaiah said, in speaking for God, "So shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). If God's Word falls on good and honest hearts, they will receive it and respond accordingly. But we must not come to a point where we are "in it just for the numbers." This is where so many false teachers miss the mark. They have the attitude that, in order for something to work and be successful, there must be a lot of money, and there must be "big numbers." In their way of thinking, then, Noah would have been a complete and utter failure. Yet God called him "a preacher of righteousness." So what is it that makes a man a faithful proclaimer of God's Word? It is whether or not he holds true to what the Bible says. So much of the world today wants to hear a "social Gospel" that is designed to make people feel good. That is not what is important. Yes, if we obey the Gospel, we will "feel good." But more important is the fact that if we obey the Gospel and remain faithful, we will be able to go to Heaven to live with God. Peter says of these false teachers, "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption" (2 Pet. 2:12).

### **Timothy Sparks:**

The tragedy of false teaching is not just that it causes the one who advocates it to lose his soul, but also that it causes those who accept it to lose their souls as well. In the context of 2 Peter, the apostle mentions "righteous Lot." What is his point in doing this? Peter speaks of "righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)" [vss. 7-8]. Lot was both righteous **and** perplexed by the evil around him. God spared Lot. Peter goes on to say, "Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (vs. 9). Lot probably erred when he "pitched his tents toward Sodom." And Abraham obviously chose wisely by **not** doing that. But Lot did not agree with what was going on around him in Sodom. Peter says that if God delivered

erring-but-spiritual Lot, then He most assuredly can deliver the godly! But if we want God to deliver us, we must completely and submissively yield our will to God's will. We need to have the attitude of the people of Joshua's day, who said, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go" (Josh. 1:16). Paul told the Christians in Ephesus, "We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Eph. 4:14). We must not follow false teachers! Rather, we should be rooted, grounded, and established in the truth.

### **Ben Bailey:**

False teachers certainly are not rooted, grounded, and established in the truth. In fact, Peter describes them in verse 14 as "having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children." False teachers are experts at "enticing unstable souls." They prey on the gullible and the vulnerable. Instead of enticing people, they ought to be helping people learn more about God and His Word. False teachers frequently do what they do for greed. We've all heard of televangelists who have embezzled millions of dollars from their viewers. Or, false teachers may be in it for fleshly pursuits, in an attempt to have their "mansion on the hill" now, as well as in eternity. False teachers are numerous today. And so are the erroneous doctrines that they have spawned and that they advocate. For example, if we heard someone say today that God created the world, but that He used evolution to do it (i.e., the idea of theistic evolution), that person is a false teacher. Genesis teaches us that God created the Earth in six literal days. In Exodus 20:11, the idea of "day" is clearly a 24-hour time period. Or, we may hear someone suggest that the Word of God is "partially true, and partially filled with errors." That, according to Jesus' teaching in John 17:17, is false doctrine. What if someone tells you that they will "perform a miracle for you" if you will "just send them some money"? That's false doctrine. No one in the Bible **ever** performed a miracle for money! We are being told today that the miraculous works of the Spirit are still available. That is false doctrine. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Paul said,

"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away."

When Paul referred to "that which is perfect," he was referring to the completed Word of God—"the perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25). Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:3 that we already have "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Another false doctrine is that we are saved by "faith (belief) only." There are numerous things, according to God's Word, that save us. But the Bible **never** says that "faith only" or "belief only" saves us! The Bible refutes false doctrines before they ever rear their ugly heads. There is only one time that the phrase "faith only" is used—James 2:24. There, James writes, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and **not by faith only.**" When people suggest that all we have to do is "believe," then they are saying less than what the Bible says, because the Bible says there is more to salvation than "just" faith (or belief). Jesus taught, "He who believes **and** is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Today, we can identify false teachers in two ways. First, we can identify them by their conduct. Why are they doing what they are doing? Second, we can identify them by their words. Are they saying more, or less, than God's Word? If so, they are false teachers. It is a good thing that we have chapters

such as 2 Peter 2, so that we can know how to handle false doctrine and those who espouse it.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

It is strange how, when faithful proclaimers of the Gospel point out the false doctrine being advocated by some, **they** are the ones who are attacked as being unkind or unloving. In actuality, the false teacher is the one who is causing the problem—not the ones who oppose the false teachers. When a false teacher attacks the Word of God, we must take the stance advocated by Jude and “contend earnestly for the faith” (vs. 3). We must come to the defense of the Gospel. We are commanded, “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). In 2 Peter 2, we learn a lot about the false attitudes of false teachers. We learn about their false ways of living, about their false teaching, and about their false promises. Such false promises, said Jude, are like “clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots” (vs. 12). Peter says, “They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage” (2 Pet 2:18-19). False teachers today frequently suggest that we are “free in Christ” to do whatever we want to do. But that is **not** freedom. It is slavery—slavery to sin! Paul asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not” (Rom. 6:1-2). God’s grace does not give us the right to do whatever we want to do. Rather, God’s grace gives us the ability to be free from sin. The false teachers whom Peter mentioned promised “liberty,” but delivered slavery.

### **Ben Bailey:**

In 2 Peter 2:20-22, Peter discusses the eternal state of these false teachers. He writes,

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”

There are people today who teach a false doctrine known as “once saved, always saved.” Such a concept cannot be true as long as 2 Peter 2:20-22 is still in your Bible! The people of whom Peter spoke in these verses had returned to their former sinful state, and were going to be lost if they remained in that state! The concept of “once saved, always saved” is simply not true, according the Word of God. When we say this, we are not trying to be mean, harsh, or unkind. We simply have enough love for people’s souls to say what the Bible says. The Proverbs writer said, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed” (Prov. 27:5). It is far better indeed to rebuke sin openly, than to simply ignore it and pretend that everything is right—when it is not! Paul asked in Galatians 4:16, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” Those who tell you the truth are not your enemy, but your friend. We do not want to leave the impression that we must always be “in the objective case, and in the kickative mood,” as the old saying suggests. But whenever false doctrine is taught, it must be opposed.

### **Timothy Sparks:**

God has not set any one man, or group of men, in the position of “policing the church.” The Word of God will do that. Our job is to faithfully preach and teach the Word of God. We are obligated to call to people’s attention the fact that there **are** false teachers around who are not teaching the Word of God. None of us should take any man’s word as “Gospel truth.” Rather, we should take only **God’s Word** as Gospel truth. Every person can come to the Bible and learn what needs to be learned—for salvation, for worshiping God, for what to do to be saved, for understanding the unique and singular nature of the Lord’s church, and so on. We all need to be concerned about what we are taught, because we cannot be taught wrongly, and obey correctly. We cannot be taught error, and somehow expect to obey the truth of the Gospel. If you are taught error, you will obey error. But if you are taught the truth, you will obey the truth. Peter admonishes us to have a genuine concern for the souls of others, and to be people who will oppose false teachers and their false doctrines.

We learn from Proverbs 14:12, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” God’s Word should be our guide in **all** that we do. If we are going to know what God wants us to do, then we must consult the Bible. In 2 Timothy 1:13, Paul makes it clear that we have a charge to keep. We are to “hold fast to sound words.” God sent His son, Jesus Christ to die for you. If you are willing to believe in Jesus, repent of your sins, confess Him as the Son of God, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins, then you can be saved. We urge you to do that today.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 2 PETER LESSON 2 (CHAPTER 2)

1. If you were to be asked to briefly describe the contents of the Book of 2 Peter, how would you summarize each chapter?
2. What did the Bereans do in Acts 17:11 that elicited an apostolic commendation?
3. There are some similarities between the wording of 2 Peter 2 and the Book of Jude. Explain what is wrong with that.
4. Why did John urge Christians to “test every spirit” (1 Jn. 4:1)?
5. What did Peter mean when he said that false teachers, “by covetousness, will exploit you with deceptive words” (2 Pet. 2:3)?
6. Explain the point Peter was making in the lengthy section of Scripture contained in 2 Peter 2:4-9.
7. Explain the connection between Isaiah 55:11 and 1 Peter 4:11.
8. Peter referred to false teachers as being “like natural brute beasts.” Explain, in the context of 2 Peter 2:12, what he meant by such a comparison.
9. There is a double tragedy associated with false teaching. The first part of that tragedy is the false teacher will cause his own soul to be lost. What is the second part of the tragedy?
10. In 2 Peter 2:7-8, Peter draws a mild contrast between Lot and those who are godly. Explain his point.
11. What did Peter mean when he said that false teachers “entice unstable souls” (2 Pet. 2:14)?
12. According to James 1:25, what is “the perfect law of liberty”?
13. In 2 Peter 2, we learn at least three things about false teachers. First, we learn about their false way of living. Second, we learn about their false teaching. What is the third thing we learn?
14. What two “true proverbs” did Peter use in 2 Peter 2:20-22 to refer to people who once were saved, but are now lost?
15. Explain what the writer of Proverbs meant when he said, “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed” (Prov. 27:5).
16. If someone, or something, is going to “police the church,” what should that someone/something be?
17. Explain the connection between 2 Peter 2:20-22 and Proverbs 14:12.