

An Exegesis of 2 Peter 2:10b-22

By, Paul M. Mose

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Introduction: This paper will look at a portion of Peter's second epistle. In this study, the following information is included to try to give as complete a picture of Peter's message as possible. First is the Greek text as presented in the combined Nestle-Aland text used by the Logos computer software available from Northwestern Publishing House. This is followed by a summary of the textual variants, if any are included in the verse. The sections of uncertain readings are underlined. Next is a study of key words, including the word as it appears in the text, the word dictionary form, a description of the word form, word meanings, and miscellaneous others notes. Each section continues with three translation options: the New International Version (NIV) presently used in the majority of Wisconsin Synod congregations, a more literal translation by the exegete, and a more fluent translation by the exegete. Each verse study concludes with a section of comments. In this section of Scripture, Peter describes false teachers. He uses very picturesque language as he does so. He piles up descriptive words, participles, and illustrations which point to characteristics of those who teach other than what God says. His bluntness can be a call to attention for all who proclaim a religious message. The same message with similar wordings is also found in the book of Jude.

2 Peter 2:10b αὐθάδεις, δόξας οὐ τρέμουσιν βλασφημοῦντες, (NA26)

Τολμηταί -Τολμητής

(nom. pl.) one who is bold; [in a bad sense] an audacious, presumptuous person [Note: The meaning of the related verb is "to dare, presume". This word relates only to false teachers (cf. Jude 9)]

αὐθάδεις –αὐθάδης

(nom. pl. masc.) self-willed, self-satisfied; stubborn; arrogant, shameless [Note: The word is the equivalent of αὐθάδης or αὐτῷ ἄδῶν; thus at its root meaning it indicates a 'pleaser of himself.']

δόξας -δόξα

(acc. pl.) glorious angelic being, [Note: As the cherubim bear the divine glory in Ezek. 9:3 etc., and Judaism ascribes glory to the angels, so Heb. 9:5 refers to the cherubim of glory, Rev. 18:1 mentions the glory of the angel, and Jude 8 and 2 Pet. 2:10 call the angelic powers "glorious ones"]

τρέμουσιν -τρέμω

(3 pl., pres. act. indic.) tremble, quiver, (fig.) be afraid, fear, stand in awe of

βλασφημοῦντες -βλασφημέω

(nom. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) blaspheme [in relation to a divine being]; injure the reputation of, revile, defame [in relation to men] [Note: Blasphemy is violation of God's power and majesty. It may be directed against God (Rev. 13:6), his name (Rom. 2:24), the Word (Titus 2:5), Moses (Acts 6:11), or angelic beings (Jude 8-10; 2 Peter 2:10-12)]

NIV: Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings;

Literally: Bold men, self-willed ones, they do not tremble, blaspheming glorious ones,

Translation: Bold, self-willed, they do not tremble while blaspheming glorious angelic beings.

Comment: Peter describes these false teachers as directing their attention toward themselves. They see themselves as over just about anything, even angels. Their attitude is, "What we say goes, even if it were to be

contradicted by an angel.” Luther includes the pope in this class of teachers who trust in their own statements. While we can still include the papacy in this group today, who else would be there? All those who place themselves as the judges of right and wrong. This might be done out of a background of human reason, “I think this is what God really means”, or out of a background of selfish feelings, “I don’t think God would really mean this applies to me. That wouldn’t be nice!” In the next verse, Peter contrasts these individuals with the angels they speak against without any fear.

2 Peter 2:11 ὅπου ἄγγελοι ἰσχυροὶ καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες οὐ φέρουσιν κατ’ αὐτῶν παρὰ κυρίου βλάσφημος κρίσιν. (NA26)

Textual variant: There are three main readings for this section. The first, printed in the text, is supported by few ancient texts. According to *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* edited by Bruce Metzger, this version was chosen because “a majority of the Committee preferred the latter as the more difficult reading.” The difficulties of this reading stem from the impression that it gives that blasphemous judgments come from the Lord. But just because it is the more difficult reading does not insure it is the original reading. The second reading, παρὰ κυρίῳ, has the most widespread support among the ancient texts and is preferred by the exegete. The third reading omits these two words but seems to be mainly Egyptian in origin.

ὅπου
(adv.) where, whereas, [i.e. in a situation in which]

ἄγγελοι -ἄγγελος
(nom. pl.) one sent, a messenger, angel

ἰσχυροί -ἰσχύς
(dat. sg.) strength, might, power ability; faculty [Note: Overlaps with δύναμις, but with greater stress on the power implied.]

δυνάμει -δύναμις
(dat. sg.) power; strength, ability; might, power, majesty [Note: Connected with δύναμαι, “to be able”; therefore it means “ability”, then “possibility”, then “power” both physical and intellectual or spiritual.]

μείζοντες -μέγας
(nom. pl. masc. comparative) great, large in size

φέρουσιν -φέρω
(3 pl., pres. act. indic.) bear; bring, utter, make [a word, speech, announcement, charge, etc. as a judicial expression]

κατ - κατά
(with gen.) [figurative] down upon, against [someone or something]

παρά
(with gen.) from, from the side of; (with dat.) near, beside, with; [figuratively] before someone’s judgment seat

βλάσφημον -βλάσφημος (acc. sg. masc. or fem.) slanderous, blasphemous

κρίσιν - κρίσις ----- (acc. sg.) judging, judgment

NIV: yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.

Literally: where angels, being greater in strength and power, do not bring against them blasphemous judgments before the Lord.

Translation: Whereas angels, who are greater in strength and power, don't bring blasphemous judgments against them to the Lord.

Comment: Whichever variant reading is chosen, the main point remains. These blasphemous judgments are not spoken against these people, whether that would be spoken from God or spoken in God's presence by the angels. If such statements would need to be spoken, the angels would have more of a justifiable reason to speak such things than the false teachers. The angels are more powerful than they are. And the angels are certainly more holy than the false teachers; the angels were referred to in verse 10 as "the glories", those who reflect God's glory and holiness.

2 Peter 2:12, οἱ τοὶ δὲ, ὡς ἄλογα ζῶα γεγεννημένα φυσικὰ εἰς ἄλωσιν καὶ φθοράν, ἐν οἷς ἀγνοοῦσιν βλασφημοῦντες, ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν καὶ φθαρήσονται, (NA26)

ἄλογα -ἄλογος

(nom. pl. neut.) without speech or reason, irrational, brute

ζῶα -ζῷον

(nom. pl.) a living creature, animal

γεγεννημένα -γεννάω

(nom. pl. neut, perf. pass. ptc.) bear; [passive] to be born, produced

φυσικὰ -φυσικός

(nom. pl. neut.) natural, agreeable to nature; following the instincts of nature [as animals]; in accordance with nature [Note: 2 Peter uses φυσικός and the parallel Jude 10 has the adverb φυσικῶς. Jude 10 is arguing that the false teachers, who are probably claiming redemption from nature, are destroyed by things that they know only naturally and irrationally. 2 Peter 2:12 carries a similar comparison. Those who claim to have knowledge are in fact like irrational animals, creatures of instinct.]

ἄλωσιν -ἄλωσις

(acc. sg.) a taking, catching, capture

φθοράν -φθορά

(acc. sg.) ruin, destruction, dissolution, deterioration, corruption, decay; [of religious and moral] depravity; corruptibility, mortality; killing, slaughter

ἀγνοοῦσιν -ἀγνοέω

(dat. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) be ignorant, not to know, not to understand

φθαρήσονται -φθείρω

(3 pl. fut., pass. indic.) destroy, ruin, corrupt, spoil

NIV: But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

Literally: But these, like irrational animals born in accordance with nature for capture and ruin, blaspheming in things they are not knowing, in the ruin of them also will be ruined,

Translation: But these, like animals without reason who are born in accordance with nature for capture and destruction, are blaspheming in things they do not know; in their destruction they will be destroyed too.

Comment: Peter suddenly shifts our attention from the angels, the highest of all created beings besides mankind, to the animals, the lowest of created beings. He compares these false teachers to animals, who don't really think things through, but who act on instinct. What a powerful contrast. They think that they know so much, yet they are speaking about things they don't understand, just as animals really understand so very little of what they encounter. Their fates are also similar. In nature, animals are born and become a part of the food chain. Eventually they are attacked by other animals or by disease and they die. False teachers have their own destruction coming. They will not be able to maneuver out of it; it is their destruction and they will be destroyed. God's judgment clearly rests upon those who don't follow Him. That is what they've earned, even if they expect other rewards.

2 Peter 2:13, ἀδικούμενοι μισθὸν ἀδικίας· ἡδονὴν ἠγούμενοι τὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τρυφήν, σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι ἐντρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ἀπάταις αὐτῶν συνευθχούμενοι ὑμῖν, (NA26)

Textual variants: Two words have variant readings. The first word of this verse is the first of these variants. Option one is included in the Nestle-Aland text: ἀδικούμενοι. Of the most ancient manuscripts, this reading only has support from the original version of \aleph and from B (both of Egyptian origin), and from the Armenian (of Syrian origin). Option two, κομιούμενοι, has more ancient and widespread representation and is preferred by the exegete. Option one is the more difficult Greek construction and is roughly translated, “being injured according to the wages of unrighteousness” or “being harmed by the wages of harm.” Because of the difficulty of this section, the Nestle-Aland editors felt it must be the original and the second a “less objectionable” introduction by copyists. Option one also has the support of the phrasing of this section, where Peter is using the same word or similar words to develop his pictures of false teachers. But that also leads to a possible explanation of its origin. In copying a manuscript, a scribe could have glanced ahead τοῦ ἀδικίας and copied the first portion of that word in at this point. The \aleph manuscript would seem to support this theory since it has been “corrected” to read the second version.

The second variant word of this verse is ἀπάταις. Its variant is ἀπάταις, “love feasts.” Both have ancient manuscripts from widespread areas, although the first seems to have a few more. It is also likely that Jude 12, which is similar to the second reading, might have affected how this verse was copied. Therefore, the first reading is preferred.

ἀδικούμενοι -ἀδικέω

(nom. pl. masc., pres. pass. ptc.) injure, wrong, treat unjustly, harm; do wrong or evil

κομιούμενοι -κομίδω

(nom. pl. masc., fut. mid. ptc for κομιούμενοι) [active] bring; [middle] carry off, get (for oneself), receive; get back, recover

μισθὸν -μισθός

(acc. sg.) pay, wages

ἀδικίας -ἀδικία

(gen. sg.) unrighteousness, wickedness, injustice, wrong

ἡδονὴν -ἡδονή

(acc. sg.) pleasure, enjoyment, pleasantness, gratification; [esp.] sensual pleasure

ἡγούμενοι - ἡγέομαι

(nom. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) think, consider, regard

τρυφήν -τρυφή

(acc. sg.) indulgence, reveling; luxury, splendor

σπίλοι -σπίλος

(nom. pl.) spot, stain, blemish, blot

μῶμοι -μῶμος

(nom. pl.) blemish, defect; a disgrace [to society]

ἐντρυφῶντες -ἐντρυφάω

(nom. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) revel, carouse; live luxuriously

ἀπάταις -ἀπάτη

(dat. pl.) deceit, deception, deceitfulness, delusion; pleasure, pleasantness [that involves one in sin]

ἀπάπαις -ἀγάπη

(dat. pl.) love, generosity, kindly concern, devotedness; [pl.] love-feasts

συνευθχούμενοι -συνευθχέομαι

(nom. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) feast together with

NIV: 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.

Literally: intending to carry off the wages of unrighteousness, considering the indulgence in the day [as] pleasure, spots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, feasting together with you,

Translation: They intend to carry off the wages of unrighteousness. They consider their indulgence in the day as pleasure. They are spots and blemishes! They revel in their deceptions as they feast together with you.

Comment: The false teachers have ideas about what they would like to receive. It might be “fame and fortune” or the opportunity to “eat, drink, and be merry”. The attitudes in their hearts shows in their lives. Often people might overindulge in personal pleasures from time to time in a way which doesn’t especially seek to draw attention to the excessive way in which they are living. Yet these false teachers openly live excessive lives, boldly “in the daylight”. They are visible spots, stains, and blemishes which need to be cleaned up. They reflect poorly on the Christian church, with which they are still connected. How many television evangelists and other “church leaders” might this describe? The similar section in Jude shows us an example of what Peter was likely addressing. Jude refers to false teachers feasting together with his readers at their agape love feasts. The early church often had fellowship meals in connection with the Lord’s Supper, possibly developing out of the connection between the institution of Communion and the Passover meal. Paul had to address problems with this agape love feast in 1 Corinthians 11:21. People were forgetting that they were gathering to remember Christ and His suffering and death and to celebrate His resurrection and gift of forgiveness. Instead, it appears as if some of them were focusing on these gatherings merely as an opportunity to have a party. The message still was “Celebrate!”, but it was really a good-sounding but deceptive twist on a beneficial practice.

Today others might try to get us to change our focus from God and His eternal love for sinful mankind. A good example of this is the social gospel message. It talks about God and His love for mankind, but it leaves out the most important gift and example of that love: our Savior from sin. As in the past, it is important for us to still look out for spots and blemishes which need to be cleaned up, lest they distract us from our real purpose as Christians.

2 Peter 2:14 ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες μεστοὺς μοιχαλίδος καὶ ἀκαταπαύστους ἀμαρτίας, δελεάζοντες ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας ἔχοντες, κατάρας τέκνα (NA26)

μεστοὺς -μεστός
(acc. pl. masc.) full, full of, filled with [fig. with gen.]

μοιχαλίδος -μοιχαλίσ
(gen. sg.) adulteress

ἀκαταπαύστους -ἀκαταπαύστος
(acc. pl. masc.) [with gen.] unceasing, restless; which cannot be restrained [from a thing]

ἀμαρτίας -ἀμαρτία
(gen. sg.) error; offense, sin

δελεάζοντες -δελεάζω
(nom. pl. masc., pres. act. ptc.) [properly] entrap, take or catch [with a bait]; [metaphorically] lure, entice, delude

ψυχὰς -ψυχή
(acc. pl.) breath; life, soul

ἀστηρίκτους -ἀστήρικτος
(acc. pl. fem.) unstable, unsteady, weak

γεγυμνασμένην -γυμνάζω
(acc. sg. fem., perf pass. ptc.) [properly] train in gymnastic discipline; [hence] exercise [in anything], train to use, discipline

πλεονεξίας -πλεονεξία
(gen. sg.) greediness, insatiableness, avarice, covetousness [Note: The idea one is of having or desiring to possess some advantage over another.]

κατάρας -κατάρα
(gen. sg.) curse, condemnation, doom

τέκνα -τέκνον
(nom./acc. pl.) child; a child of, one characterized by [some condition or quality]

NIV: With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood!

Literally: having eyes full of an adulteress and [eyes] unceasing of sin, luring unstable souls, having hearts trained of insatiableness, children of a curse,

Translation: They have eyes which are full of an adulteress and which cannot be restrained from sin. They entice unstable souls. They have hearts trained with greediness, those cursed children!

Comment: The false teachers Peter writes about have a deeper defect than a mere surface blemish. It goes down into their very hearts. They have hearts full of a desire for adultery. Peter doesn't use the abstract word "adultery"; he uses the concrete word "adulteress". Their desire is so great that it fills all that they can see. It is so all-encompassing that they become set into this pattern of sinning and don't come out of it. In the process, they bring others into their fold who were weak and will likely end up lost also. The process continues, almost like training for athletic events, which is the picture behind the word translated "trained". In sports, someone becomes involved in a type of game, spends time at it, and gets other people involved in playing that game with them. Even after that first athlete can no longer play, those whom he has recruited will get others so that they can keep playing the game. But the 'game' being played by these false teachers is greed, a desire for things one does not have. Instead of the rhythmic pattern of a bouncing ball comes the repetitious greedy thought, "More, more, more, more!" People who have such hearts will not experience the blessing of true happiness, for there will always be something else for them to get. Indeed, they are living under a curse.

2 Peter 2:15 καταλείποντες εὐθεϊαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανηθησαν, ἐξακολουθήσαντες τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ βαλαὰμ τοῦ βοσόπ, ὃς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν (NA26)

Textual variant: The best supported reading from the ancient manuscripts is that printed in the text. The variant, βεώρ, is only in a few manuscripts and could easily have been put there accidentally by a scribe who knew that the Old Testament says that Balaam was the son of Beor. It should not upset us that Balaam's father is referred to by more than one name. Other Old Testament individuals also had multiple names, such as Abram/Abraham and Jacob/Israel.

καταλείποντες -καταλείπω

(nom. pl., pres. act. ptc.) leave behind; quit, depart from, forsake

εὐθεϊαν –εὐθύς

(acc. sg. fem.) straight; [metaphorically] right, upright, true

ἐπλανηθησαν -πλανάω

(3 pl., aor. pass. indic.) [act.] deceive; lead astray, cause to wander; [pass.] go astray, stray, be misled, wander about

ἐξακολουθήσαντες -ἐξακολουθέω

(nom. pl. masc., aor. act. ptc.) follow, pursue [with dat]

ἠγάπησεν -ἀγαπάω

(3 sg., aor. act. indic.) love, value, esteem; delight in

NIV: They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.

Literally: leaving behind the straight way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam [son] of Bosor, who loved the wage of unrighteousness

Translation: They have left behind the straight way and have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wage of unrighteousness.

Comment: Balaam’s story is found in Numbers 22-24. Balak, king of Moab, wanted him to place a curse on the Israelites as they were near his land on the way to the Promised Land. At first, at God’s direction, he refused to go with Balak’s servants. When they came back, offering a generous reward for placing this curse on the Israelites, the Lord granted permission for him to go, but only if Balaam did what the Lord said. The Lord was angry as Balaam went; probably he was thinking about that generous reward for saying the curse anyway, that payment for disobeying God, that “wage of unrighteousness”.

I recently had someone tell me about a Missouri Synod congregation’s new pastor. It seems that there had been problems with the previous pastor, and the new one was liked much better. Among other things, the new pastor didn’t follow the practice of close communion. The comment from the person telling the story was, “He knows who is paying his salary and will give them what they want!” The temptation is there for us to be like Balaam and be more concerned with the desires of those who are giving us our paycheck than with the need to keep considering what the true word of the Lord is.

2 Peter 2:16 ἔλεγξιν δὲ ἔσχεν ἰδίας παρανομίας· ὑποζύγιον ἄφωνον ἐς ἀνθρώπου φωνῆ φθεγζάμενον ἐκόλυσεν τὴν τοῦ προφήτου παραφρονίαν. (NA26)

ἔλεγξιν -ἐλεγξίς
(acc. sg.) rebuke, conviction, reproof

ἔσχεν -ἔχω
(3 sg., aor. act. indic.) have, be, be situated

ἰδίας -ἴδιος
(gen. sg. fem.) one’s own, belonging to one, personal

παρανομίας – παρανομία
(gen. sg.) evil-doing, transgression, violation of the law; lawlessness

ὑποζύγιον
(nom. sg.) pack animal, beast of burden, donkey [Note: This word is properly the neuter of ὑποζύγιος, “under a yoke”, from ὑπο and ζύγιον, therefore indicating “an animal subject to the yoke”.]

ἄφωνον -ἄφωνος
(nom. sg. neut.) incapable of speech; silent, mute, uttering no voice

φθεγζάμενον -φθέγγομαι
(nom. sg. neut., aor. mid. deponent ptc.) [literally] produce a sound, [then] call out loudly; [generally] speak, utter, proclaim [something]

ἐκόλυσεν -κελύω
(3 sg, aor. act. indic) hinder, restrain, prevent, forbid [something]

παραφρονίαν - παραφρονία
(acc. sg.) madness, insanity [a hapax legomenon] [Possible root meanings = φρονέω think ...Τραπα beside/along] *NIV:* But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man’s voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

Literally: and he had a rebuke of his own evil-doing. A donkey, incapable of speech, speaking in a human voice, hindered the madness of the prophet.

Translation: But he received a rebuke of his own evil doing. A donkey, incapable of speech, speaking in a human voice, hindered the madness of the prophet.

Comment: Balaam was kept from trying to say the curses on the Israelites for Balak. Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord on the road barring the way. The donkey went off the road and later into a wall to keep from going in a way God was not allowing. God miraculously allowed this animal the ability to speak to Balaam to tell him what was going on. Balaam didn't go through with his mad plan to curse the Israelites. While we don't notice such miraculous events today, God still uses situations in people's lives to help them stay on the path which follows Him. Trying to go contrary to God's plans is insanity. We need to keep viewing it this way and presenting it in this way to others.

2 Peter 2:17 Οὗτοί εἰσιν πηγαὶ ἄνυδροι καὶ ὀμίχλαι ὑπὸ λαίλαπος ἐλαυνόμεναι, οἷς ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους τετήρηται. (NA26)

πηγαὶ -πηγή
(nom. pl.) fountain, spring of water

ἄνυδροι -ἄνυδροις
(nom. pl. fem.) waterless, without water, dry oft i

ὀμίχλαι -ὀμίχλη
(nom. pl.) mist, fog, cloud

λαίλαπος -λαῖλαψ
(gen. sg.) whirlwind, a squall of wind, hurricane

ἐλαυνόμεναι -ἐλαύνω
(nom. pl. fem., pres. pass. ptc.) drive [of the wind, which drives clouds or ships]; urge forward, spur on

ζόφος
(nom. sg.) darkness, gloom

σκότους -σκότος
(gen. sg.) darkness, gloom [literally, of the darkness in the depths of the sea] [Note: This is the more common word of these two words for darkness.]

τετήρηται -τηρέω
(3 sg., perf pass. indic.) keep, uphold, reserve, preserve [someone or something for a suitable purpose]

NIV: These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.
Literally: These [men] are springs of water without water and mists driven by the whirlwind; for them the darkness of darkness is kept.

Translation: These men are springs of water without water and mists driven by the whirlwind. For them the deepest darkness is kept.

Comment: Peter now turns to another picture. These false teachers are presenting themselves as having the answers and spiritual refreshment for people. But there is nothing to quench that thirst. Like a dried up spring,

they can do no good. If there are elements of relief to be found in their words, they don't really do much good, perhaps because there is so little truth there. You can't really use it. It would be like trying to get a drink from a storm which is more wind than rain.

The destruction mentioned in verse 12 is mentioned again, here pictured as the deepest, blackest darkness. This refers to hell, being outside of heaven in "the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 22:13b)

2 Peter 2:18 ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθεγγόμενοι δελεάζουσιν ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκὸς ἀσελγείαις τοὺς ὀλίγως ἀποφεύγοντας τοὺς ἐν πλάνῃ ἀναστρεφομένους, (NA26)

Textual variant: The reading in the text appears to be the original instead of the variant, ὄντως, for a couple reasons. First, the majority of ancient texts include it. Second, it is a rare word which is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, and scribes might be more likely to accidentally use a more familiar word.

ὑπέρογκα -ὑπέρογκος
(acc. pl. neut.) [properly] of excessive size, puffed up, swollen; [of language] haughty, bombastic, pompous, boastful

ματαιότητος -ματαιότης
(gen. sg.) emptiness, futility, purposelessness, transitoriness, vanity, folly; [religious] error

φθεγγόμενοι -φθέγγομαι
(nom. pl. masc., pres. mid. deponent ptc.) cf. v. 16

δελεάζουσιν -δελεάζω
(3 pl. pres act. indic.) cf. v. 14

ἐπιθυμίαις -ἐπιθυμία
(dat. pl.) desire, longing, craving

σαρκὸς -σάρξ
(gen. sg.) body, flesh [Note: In this context, the flesh is the willing instrument of sin, and is subject to sin to such a degree that wherever flesh is, all forms of sin are likewise present, and no good thing can live in the flesh.]

ἀσελγείαις -ἀσέλγεια
(dat. pl.) licentiousness, debauchery. Sensuality

ὀλίγως
(adv.) scarcely, barely

ὄντως
(adv.) really, certainly, in truth

ἀποφεύγοντας -ἀποφεύγω
(acc. pl. masc., pres act. ptc.) free from; escape, escape from [with acc. of person or thing from which one escapes]

πλάνῃ -πλανή (dat. sg.) wandering, roaming; [fig. of] wandering [from the path of truth], error, delusion, deceit, deception

ἀναστρεφομενους -ἀναστρέφω (acc. pl. masc., pres. mid. ptc.) live, act, behave, conduct oneself

NIV: For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.

Literally: For speaking haughty [words] of emptiness, they lure in desires of the flesh for debauchery the ones scarcely escaping from the ones living in error,

Translation: For they speak haughty, empty words and, with desires of the flesh for debauchery, they entice the ones barely escaping from the ones living in error.

Comment: This verse elaborates on why the destination of false teachers is hell while restating some of their characteristics which Peter has mentioned earlier. Their message is really nothing but empty words, good for accomplishing nothing. They focus their attention on the desires of the sinful flesh. In the process, they lure in others who are new to hearing the truth about Jesus but who don't continue to listen to it and become caught up in error instead.

2 Peter 2:19 ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελλόμενοι, αὐτοὶ, αὐλοὶ ὑπάρχοντες τῆς φθορᾶς· ᾧ γὰρ τις ἥττηται, τούτῳ δεδούλωται. (NA26)

ἐλευθερίαν - ἐλευθερία
(acc. sg.) freedom, liberty

ἐπαγγελλόμενοι -ἐπαγγέλλομαι
(nom. pl. masc., pres. mid. ptc.) [active] announce, proclaim; [middle] promise, offer

ὑπάρχοντες -ὑπάρχω
(nom. pl. masc., pres act. ptc.) be; begin; come into existence; exist

φθορᾶς -φθορά
(gen. sg.) cf. v. 12

ἥττηται -ἡττάομαι
(3 sg., perf. pass. indic.) to be less, inferior to; to fare worse, to be in a less favored condition; [by implication] to be overcome, be defeated, succumb

δεδούλωται -δουλώω
(3 sg., perf. pass. indic.) become a slave to someone [of one who is defeated in battle]

NIV: They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

Literally: promising freedom to them, they themselves being slaves of ruin; for by what anyone is defeated, to that he has become a slave.

Translation: They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of destruction, for by whatever anyone is defeated, to that he has become a slave.

Comment: False teachers promise freedom from so many things: guilt, fear, sadness. But they are in no position to promise relief from these, for they are caught under these destructive things themselves. They promote the basic message of entering into heaven by works. They keep trying to do enough to get themselves into its wonderful dwellings, but they will always be unsuccessful.

2 Peter 2:20 εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τούτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἠττιπῶνται, γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ἔσχατα χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων. (NA26)

Textual variant: Many ancient and widespread manuscripts have the word ἡμῶν here, some later manuscripts have it in different spots, and some ancient manuscripts omit it. Because of the strength of the appearances in the manuscripts and the fact that Peter uses this same phrase in 1:11 and 3:18, the printed text is preferable.

ἀποφυγόντες -ἀποφεύγω
(nom. pl. masc. aor. act. ptc.) cf. v. 18

μιάσματα -μιάσμα
(acc. pl.) defilement, corruption

ἐπιγνώσει -ἐπιγνωσις
(dat. sg.) knowledge, recognition

ἐμπλακέντες -ἐμπλέκω
(nom. pl. masc., aor. pass. ptc.) [Properly] intertwine; [metaphorically] entangle, involve [passive] be involved, entangle one's self in

ἠττιπῶνται -ἠττάομαι
(3 pl., pres act. indic.) cf. v. 19

γέγονεν -γίνομαι
(3 sg., perf. act. indic.) become, be; happen, take place, arise

ἔσχατα -ἔσχατος
(nom./acc. pl. neut.) last, latest; farthest

χεῖρονα -χείρων
(nom. pl. neut.) worse, more severe [with gen. of comparison]

πρώτων -πρῶτος
(gen. pl.) first [in time, order, etc.]

NIV: If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

Literally: For if, having escaped the corruption of the world in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and by these things again having become entangled, they are defeated, the last things have become for them worse than the first ones.

Translation: For if, having escaped the corruption of the world in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and by these things again having become entangled, they are defeated, then the last state has become worse for them than the first.

Comment: Here is a clear statement against the “once saved, always saved” idea which many people cling to. As Jesus says in the parable of the sower, some “believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.” (Luke 8:13b) It is possible to have escaped the corruption of the world and its destructive eternal consequences by knowing Jesus. We know Him as Christ, who was anointed and sent to us. We know Him as Lord, who rules over us and guides our lives. We know Him as Savior, who came and served us with the most precious gift of all, the sacrifice of His perfect life by His innocent suffering and death. But it is also possible for a person who has escaped from being a slave to his sins to then become entangled in them again. That person is in worse shape than he started out in. Now, he is not only sinning by disobeying what God says, he is also rejecting what God says and what he had heard and believed. This brings consequences, that God “also will punish those who willfully turn away from the holy commandment, and again entangle themselves in the filth of the world, 2 Pet. 2,20, and garnish their hearts for Satan, Luke 11,25f., and do despite unto the Spirit of God, Heb. 10.29, and that they shall be hardened, blinded, and eternally condemned if they persist therein. (Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration XI, 83 [Concordia Triglotta, p. 1091.])

2 Peter 2:21 κρείττον γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς μὴ ἐπεγνωκέναί τῃν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἢ ἐπιγνοῦσιν ὑποστρέψαι ἐκ τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς ἀγίας ἐντολῆς. (NA26)

Textual variant: The translations for the variants are virtually identical, “to turn back”. The two main divisions of the variations are ὑποστρέψαι (or ἐπιστρέψαι) ἐκ and εἰς τὰ σπώσω ἀκάμψαι ἀπό. The first version found in the text is preferable because the second has the appearance of an explanatory gloss. The second version also seems to gain widespread usage in the 4th century while the first version reading includes the Byzantine text, which might predate that into the 2nd century.

κρείττον -κρείττων

(nom./acc. sg. neut.) [Used as the comparative of ἀγαθος] better, more useful or profitable, more conducive to good

ἦν –εἰμι

(3 sg., imperf. act indic) be, exist

ἐπεγνωκέναί -ἐπεγινώσκω

(perf. act. inf.) know, understand, recognize; know exactly, completely, through and through; learn to know

ἐπιγνοῦσιν -ἐπεγινώσκω

(dat. pl. masc., aor. act. ptc.) cf. above

ὑποστρέψαι -ὑποστρέφω

(aor. act. inf.) turn back, return

παραδοθείσης -παραδέδωμι

(gen. sg. fem., aor. pass. ptc.) give over; hand down, pass on, transmit, relate, teach

ἀγίας -ἅγιος

(gen. sg. fem.) dedicated to God, holy, sacred

ἐντολῆς -ἐντολή

(gen. sg.) command, commandment, order

NIV: It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

Literally: For it was better for them not to know the way of righteousness than knowing to turn back from the holy command handed down to them.

Translation: For it was better for them not to know the way of righteousness than to have know it and turned back from the holy command handed down to them.

Comment: Is this section implying that we should not try to share God’s Word with others because they might turn from it and be worse off? Of course not. But perhaps you can relate to this type of situation. You have spent many hours with a prospect, teaching him the truths of the Bible. He is confirmed, maybe even baptized as an adult. And then the fire which seemed to be burning so hot cools. He doesn’t come to worship services very much. Pretty soon you find out that he is involved with something he had said he never would be, perhaps an affair or getting a divorce without Biblical cause. He’s worse off than he was before because he should know better than to do that. He’s no longer sinning out of ignorance. This is rejecting what he knew and believed. There is no comfort in this verse. Just a warning for us and for everyone who has received the Word of God, “Don’t turn your back on God’s Word which He has given to you.”

2 Peter 2:22 συμβέβηκεν οὐτοῖς τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς παροιμίας,
 Κύων ἐπιστρέψας ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον ἐξέραμα, καὶ
 ἤΥς λουσμένη εἰς κυλισμὸν βορβόρου. (NA26)

συμβέβηκεν -συμβαίνω
 (3 sg., perf. act. indic.) meet, happen, come about

ἀληθοῦς -ἀληθής
 (gen. sg.) true; worthy of credit, truthful

παροιμίας -παροιμία
 (gen. sg.) proverb, maxim, adage

Κύων
 (nom. sg.) dog

ἐπιστρέψας -ἐπιστρέφω
 (nom. sg. masc., aor. act. ptc.)

ἐξέραμα
 (nom./acc. sg.) vomit, what has been vomited

ἤΥς -ῥῆς
 (nom. sg.) hog, swing, boar or sow [depending on article or modifiers]

λουσμένη -λούω
 (nom. sg. fem., aor. mid. ptc.) bathe, wash

κυλισμὸν -κυλισμός
 (acc. sg. masc.) rolling, wallowing; [Possibly in N.T.] a place of rolling or wallowing, wallowing-place

βορβόρου -βορβόρος

(gen. sg.) mud, mire, dung, filth, slime

NIV: Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”

Literally: It has come about for them the [word] of the true proverb, “A dog turning back to its own vomit,” and, “a sow, having bathed, to rolling of mud.”

Translation: For them the word of the true proverb has come about, “A dog turning back to its own vomit,” and “a sow, having bathed, to its rolling in the mud.”

Comment: Peter closes this section with two pictures of animals getting rid of something not beneficial but then taking it back again. Luther commented on this section, “Through Baptism these people threw out unbelief, had their unclean way of life washed away, and entered into a pure life of faith and love. Now they fall away into unbelief and their own works, and they soil themselves again in filth.” (Luther’s Works, American Edition, Vol. 30, p. 190) When we are made children of God, we get rid of the approach to life which says that my works will get me into heaven somehow. Are we to make that a part of us again? Of course not. Does this let us stand by and ignore when it is happening to others? No. Verses 20-22 might be good verses to be studied by our Boards of Elders or whoever is involved in trying to reclaim the straying sheep in our congregations. We have people in our congregations who were taught the truth of God’s Word and have wandered off. If we don’t work on reclaiming them, they are in grave danger.

Conclusion: There are many other spiritual teachers around who will try to lead our people astray. This whole section can help us in our efforts. It is good to “know the enemy”, and the leaders of the enemies of God are described throughout this section of Scripture. It is good for us to remember the importance of reclaiming the straying, for if they are not reclaimed, they are lost forever. It is comforting to be told once again the way out from these traps: “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”.