

¹⁰This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority.

Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; ¹¹yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. ¹²But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.

¹³They 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. ¹⁴With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed—an accursed brood! ¹⁵They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Bezer, who loved the wages of wickedness. ¹⁶But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet’s madness.

¹⁷These people are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them. ¹⁸For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.” ²⁰If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹It 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. ²²Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

Review the context.

- Verses 10-13 review the sinful motivations of false teachers. In their boldness and arrogance, they place themselves in authority over the angels, *who are God’s eternal messengers*. What is the danger of assuming such superiority over God’s messengers?
- Where do the Apostles derive their authority? Why does this matter? And how is their authority similar to/different from those of the angels?

Understand it.

- The words *carouse*, *reveling*, *seduce*, and *greed* illustrate the exploitation of sensual desires. How are these so enticing to those who have found freedom in Christ?
- How are the *boastful* promises of freedom **empty** (v.18-19)?
- If a Christian follows sin’s seduction into carelessness (i.e. “*permissive grace*”) how does he/she cheapen the gospel message? (See also Romans 6:1 and Hebrews 6:4-6)
- Verse 20-21 raise a controversial claim that those who return to sin’s entanglement are “worse off” than in their faithless beginnings. What do you think Peter means by this?
- How does the Spirit of God help those who are repentant of sin? How does careless sinfulness (among Christians) invite God’s punishment?

The “way of Balaam”

Balaam is initially mentioned as someone who God prevents from cursing Israel (Numbers 22-24). He is remembered as one who “practiced divination” (Joshua 13:22) and “chased profit” (Jude 1:11). In the New Testament, it is clear that some Christians are reminiscent of Balaam’s infamy – where they too were enticing the faithful into open sinfulness and permissiveness (Rev 2:14). Such teaching opposes orthodoxy and deserves Peter’s rebuke.

Apply it.

- Re-read 1 Peter 2:10-12 and write this verse on a card. Spend time this week reflecting upon the desires that entice you into sin and pray/journal through your motivations to “abstain from sinful desires” and pursue a life of holiness and goodness.
- Answer the following: “When people look at my life, I want them to see (my spiritual fruit) . I want them to see this because (my motivation) .”