

- **\*Read II Peter 2:12-22\*** The greatest of teachers have long used different kinds of figures of speech in order to help their listeners to be able to understand better the point they are trying to get across. Metaphors, similes, hyperboles, irony, parables, and proverbs have been put into good use in efforts to teach. The greatest teacher ever to walk this earth was no exception. Jesus Christ of Nazareth...the Son of God was well versed in using different figures of speech that would help the multitudes and His Apostles to grow in their knowledge of God and the coming Kingdom. Jesus's use of irony, metaphors, similes, metonymy, and the like are scattered all throughout His ministry. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the Apostles of Jesus would carry on the same kind of techniques in their teaching.
- In our text we just read a few minutes ago, we find the Apostle Peter using similes, metaphors, and proverbs in order to help the read to understand just how bad of a situation unfaithful Christians find themselves in. Peter uses many inanimate objects to describe the unfaithful disciple, but he also uses some animals in order to paint a clearer picture for the reader. This isn't the first time that Biblical writers have used animals in order to teach. The Psalmist uses the example of a deer panting for water to describe how he longs for the Lord. Jesus talks about how He desired to save and protect Jerusalem as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Again, all throughout Scripture we see this teaching tool being employed.
- What about this text, though? What message is Peter trying to get across about the unfaithful Christian? This morning I would like for us to look at 3 animalistic behaviors that Peter says are found within the life of the unfaithful Christian in order for us to truly understand just how horrible of a place that is for us to find ourselves in our spiritual lives.

### **3 Ways In Which Unfaithful Christians Behave Like Animals**

#### **I. They're like unreasoning animals.**

- A. Animals, unlike humans...or at least most humans, do not possess the ability to reason and make logical decisions.
  1. This fact (and our possession of a soul) is what separates mankind from the rest of the living organisms in this world. Sure we might have some things in common with wild animals, but we are far superior to them based upon our eternal value and our superior ability to reason and use logic.
  2. Think about animals such as cows. What is the life of a cow? Basically, they eat, they drink, they pass waste, and then they either produce milk, offspring, or meat for humans to consume. There really just isn't much thought, reason, or logic that is put into that type of life.
  3. These and other animals live and go about their days without much thought, and eventually they die. Sometimes their deaths are a result of them just being dumb and not knowing any better.
- B. I think the point Peter is trying to get across in using this simile is to show that unfaithful Christians are no smarter or logical than just any old animal out in the field.
  1. He's trying to get the readers to understand that the person who goes from a faithful disciple to unfaithful might as well turn off their abilities to reason and use logic because they obviously haven't understood the consequences of their decisions.
  2. Just a few verses down the chapter we see something that I believe ties into this idea of being unreasoning in their thinking. Notice in **II Peter 2:20** that Peter says that these people had escaped the defilements of this world. They knew the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that they could escape those defilements, yet they had been once again become entangled in those things.
  3. In fact, they were worse off at this point that they were before they knew Jesus. How could this be the case? Well, they knew better at this point! They had experienced freedom and grace in Jesus Christ, and yet they had turned their back on Him. They had determined that another way was the better way, and what foolishness that was.
  4. Anyone who has come to know Jesus and His better way surely ought to know that to go down any other road that the road that leads to heaven is absolute foolishness. Nothing can top Jesus and the salvation that is found in His name. Therefore, the unfaithful disciple might as well be an unreasoning animal in the way their think and the decisions they might. Certainly, we would never want to be considered in such a way, yet Peter says this is where the unfaithful Christian will find him or herself.

## II. They're like dogs returning to their vomit.

- A. This verse probably ranks right near the top in regards to teaching points that we might have been able to do without. We could probably do without the imagery of a dog returning to its vomit, but Peter certainly was doing what he could to truly get across the seriousness of a Christian leaving their faith by describing them in this manner.
1. For those of us that own dogs, especially since they were puppies...we know that sound that will wake us up from the deadest of sleeps...hearing our puppy throwing up anything and everything that was within its stomach. We jump out of bed real fast and we hope we don't step on it...and we hope and pray that the dog hasn't tried to turn around and eat it.
  2. Let's be real for a second...is there really anything more disgusting than this type of thing? Can you think of anything that makes you cringe the way you do imagining a dog doing this type of thing? Certainly, Peter was trying to make the readers cringe. He was trying to get them to understand just how sad and disgusting of a place the unfaithful disciple finds themselves in in their unbelief.
- B. The unfaithful Christian, in returning to their past sins, has in essence turned around and ingested his or her vomit of sins.
1. Think about this for a second...why is it that a dog or anyone throws up? Normally, we regurgitate because something is unsettling within us. Something isn't quite sitting well within our stomachs. We don't feel good, and sometimes the only relief we can find is to get that stuff that is bothering us out.
  2. If that is the case, then just how foolish is it to consider the fact that a dog will get rid of those things that make it sick, but then turn right around and ingest it again? It's crazy and illogical! The same is true for the Christian who gives up the sins of his/her old life, but then decides to return to them. How silly is that?
  3. That's Peter's point I believe. These people had given up the sins of their old lives. They had gotten rid of those things that were making them sick within their spirit. They had put those things away from themselves, but Peter says that just as a dog returns to its vomit...so are these Christians returning to their old sins.
  4. In this context of dogs and vomit, we certainly understand what Peter said just the verse before. **(II Peter 2:21)** These people were so much worse off than they were before. I won't get to graphic, but which time do you think was worse for that food or whatever it was to go down? When it was originally eaten? Or when it went down the hatch that second time? I think we all know that answer.
  5. Let's continue to be honest...this discussion is pretty disgusting. It's not fun to talk about something like this. It probably wasn't enjoyable for the original recipients to read about this either, but Peter wrote in this way for a reason. It wanted the readers to understand the seriousness of a Christian return to his/her old life of sin.

## III. They're like sows returning to wallow in the mire.

- A. Finally, probably the easiest of these three to understand. The Apostle Peter says that the disciple who leaves their faith is doing the same thing that a pig does after being washed and it then return to the mud pit.
1. If we have pets or small children, what is one of the most frustrating things they can do? You put in all the work to wash them, get them clean, and dry them off.....and then they run straight outside and jump in some dirt or mud and get all messy and dirty, again.
  2. Especially think about it from the standpoint of a pig. Pigs are probably one of the dirtiest animals there are because they like to spend all of that time in the dirt and mud. Could you imagine what a person would feel like if they put all that time and effort to first off drag a pig to a place where they could wash it. And then how they would feel to wash the pig, let it go, and then see it beeline straight for the mud you just clean off of its big body? Surely it would be infuriating and you'd feel like you wasted your time and efforts.
- B. Surely, we see exactly what the Apostle Peter is trying to say when he uses this proverb to describe the unfaithful Christian who has turned his/her back on God.
1. We must remember that much effort was put into washing and cleansing us from our sins. Jesus Christ left His home and glory in heaven in order to come to this earth and to save us from our sins. He did so to the extent that He would give Himself on the cross. **(Phil. 2:5-8)**

2. The person who has been saved has taken the efforts of Jesus and has validated them. The person who has been cleansed of his/her sins has made good on the efforts of Jesus. To them, the actions and sacrifice of Jesus means something and they show that through their decision to be cleansed of their past sins and to no longer hold the guilt of those things. That old life is not behind them, and they are no longer a part of their character. They will no longer be held accountable for them. **(I Cor. 6:9-11)**
3. However, what is said by those who decide to go back to that life of sin and wickedness? What are they saying about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? How do they view His marvelous love? It must be said that they don't see His actions as being worth anything. His hard work and efforts mean nothing because they just turn around and head right back to the sin that had covered them for so long. They have wasted the grace and love of Jesus Christ. They have once again crucified and shamed Him by their wicked deeds. **(Heb. 6:6)**
4. What a sad way to be described as having wasted the effort of Jesus to cleanse and wash us of our sins, but is exactly what Peter says takes place a disciple of Jesus decides to return to the mire of sin, guilt, and shame. They're no better than than dirty old pig laying out in the mud.

The use of metaphors, similes, and the life can certainly help us to see a fuller picture of exactly what an inspired writer might be trying to get across to us. Some of them paint very vivid pictures. Some paint very discouraging pictures. And some even paint outright disgusting pictures. Yet, we get the point don't we? We get just how awful is is for a disciple of Jesus to leave the flock. We see just how sad of a place they find themselves in. When we find ourselves faced with decisions to either remain faithful or to leave Jesus...think about these things. Do we want to be described as senseless animals. Do we want to be known as a dog who has return to his vomit or a sow who has returned back to the mud after being cleaned? Certainly, we wouldn't want to be described in such a horrible way. May God help us to be pure and holy. May He help us to walk the narrow way and live for Jesus in all that we do as faithful servant of our Lord and King most high.