

## 2 Peter 2:13b–14a

### Introduction

Peter’s main point in the passage that we started to look at last week—and that we’ll continue looking at this morning—is that if the Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment – *especially* those who go after the flesh in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority – then the false teachers and all who follow after them are doomed, because that’s the perfect description of them. These false teachers are the embodiment of exactly the kind of people that God is even now keeping under the sentence of punishment until the day of judgment. And so they’re the perfect model to us of what we *don’t* want to be – of what we want to at all costs stay as far away from as possible. We don’t just say, “I’m glad I’m not them.” We saw last week how Peter focused on the false teachers’ rejection of authority; this week we’ll see how Peter takes up the sensuality of the false teachers. He says in the second half of verse thirteen:

**I. 2 Peter 2:13b — They count it **pleasure** to revel...**

The first question we need to ask ourselves is “What’s wrong with this?” We might think the answer is obvious, but the Greek word for pleasure, here, is *hedone* and it refers very simply to “that which someone is fond of doing, [because] it produces enjoyment” (Louw-Nida). Now do we, *as Christians*, really say that it’s wrong to be fond of doing something just because it produces enjoyment? Does the Bible really teach that it’s a sin to enjoy something that’s pleasurable? Think about the many things you take special pleasure in doing. Playing a game? Reading a good book? Travelling? Attending a concert or a play? Eating a favorite meal? Partaking of a glass of wine or “strong drink”? Enjoying marriage and marital intimacy with your spouse? *All* of these things can be wholesome pleasures and sources of enjoyment. Those who translated the Old Testament into Greek used the word “*hedone*” to describe the pleasure of tasting and eating the manna that God gave to His people in the wilderness.

□ Numbers 11:8 — The people went through the field, and gathered, and ground it in the mill, or pounded it in a mortar, and baked it in a pan, and made cakes of it; and the **sweetness [pleasure/enjoyment; *hedone*]** of it was as the taste of wafer made with oil.

Another Jewish writer says:

□ Wisdom of Solomon 16:20 — You gave your people food of angels, and without their toil you supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat, providing every **pleasure [*hedone*]** and suited to every taste.

We read in the Greek translation of Proverbs seventeen, verse one:

□ Proverbs 17:1 [LXX] — Better is a morsel with **pleasure [*hedone*]** in peace, than a house full of many good things and unjust sacrifices, with strife.

And finally, another Jewish writer says:

- Wisdom of Solomon 7:1–2 (cf. 4 Macc. 9:31) — In the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh... from the seed of a man and the **pleasure [hedone]** of marriage.

Pleasure, here, is a euphemism for the physical intimacy enjoyed in marriage.

The Greek word for “pleasure” is clearly not in and of itself a “bad word.” And it’s certainly not a bad word for the Christian. The Bible never forbids “*true*” pleasure; it doesn’t say that we can’t be fond of doing something that produces “*true*” enjoyment. To the contrary. Listen to what the Lord says in Deuteronomy nineteen:

- Deuteronomy 14:24–26 — You shall... bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for **whatever you wish**—oxen or sheep or wine or strong drink, **whatever your appetite desires**. And you shall eat there before the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household.

And the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy:

- 1 Timothy 4:1–5 — Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith... [men] who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For **everything created by God is good [the pleasures of food; the pleasures of marriage], and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving**, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

Think about the fact that it’s *God* who made the eating of food to be a pleasurable experience, and likewise with the intimacy of marriage. This is the work and the gift of God. It’s *God*, the writer of Ecclesiastes says, who ultimately enables us to find *true* enjoyment and pleasure in anything at all (Eccl. 2:24-25; 9:7-9) – including the “little” things like playing a game and reading a book and enjoying a symphony or a play. The Apostle Paul reminds the rich not to set their hope on riches, but to remember that it’s God who richly provides us with all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). The Christian life is not incompatible with “pleasure” and enjoyment. In fact, it’s only *as Christians* that we’re fully enabled to experience “*true*” pleasure and “*true*” enjoyment. So how is this? What do we mean by “*true* pleasure” and “*true* enjoyment”? Before we try to answer that question, notice that Peter says of the false teachers:

**II. 2 Peter 2:13b** — They count it pleasure **to revel** [Gr. *truphe*; cf. v. 13c, “reveling” (*entruphao*)].

Once again, the question we have to ask ourselves is, “What’s wrong with this?” The Greek word here has the idea of indulging oneself in that which one finds pleasurable and enjoyable. And as we’re about to see, reveling and indulging isn’t necessarily a bad thing.

- Genesis 3:24–25 [LXX] — So the Lord God sent him forth out of the garden of **Delight [Revelry/luxury; truphe]**... And he cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the garden of **Delight [Revelry/luxury; truphe]**.
- Isaiah 55:1–2 — “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and **delight yourselves [revel and indulge yourselves; entruphao]** in rich food.
- Isaiah 66:10–11 — Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her; that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with **delight [with luxurious reveling; truphao]** from her glorious abundance.
- Nehemiah 9:25 — They captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and **delighted themselves [reveled and indulged themselves; truphao]** in your great goodness.
- Ezekiel 34:14 [LXX] — I will feed them in a good pasture, on a high mountain of Israel: and their folds shall be there, and they shall lie down, and there shall they rest in perfect **prosperity [luxury/revelry; truphe]**, and they shall feed in a fat pasture on the mountains of Israel.

The Christian life is not incompatible with a “true” reveling and a “true” indulging. In fact, it’s the opposite that’s true. No one knows how to revel and indulge in “true” pleasure and “true” enjoyment more than the Christian. And so we come back again to the question we asked a moment ago: “What do we mean by ‘true pleasure’ and ‘true enjoyment’?” What is the meaning of “true” reveling and “true” indulging? Peter writes:

**III. 2 Peter 2:13b** — They count it pleasure to revel **in the daytime**.

So here’s the key. Here’s the real problem. The picture Peter describes is one of people feasting and indulging and reveling during the time when they ought to be working and laboring and being productive. They count it (consider it / think it) pleasure to revel *in the daytime*. Here’s the emphasis. Instead of getting up and going to work first thing, and then feasting and indulging perhaps at the end of the day, these people get up in the morning and the very first thing they do is spread the feast. Solomon says, in Ecclesiastes:

- Ecclesiastes 10:16–17 — Woe to you, O land, when... your princes feast in the morning!  
Happy are you, O land, when... your princes feast at the proper time...!

An uninspired Jewish writer from the first century says this:

- Assumption of Moses 7:4 — They will be deceitful men, pleasing only themselves ... loving feasts at any hour of the day—devouring, gluttonous...

Isaiah says:

- Isaiah 5:11 — Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!

The point Peter's making is not that all feasting is wrong, or that Christians can never revel or indulge themselves in that which is pleasurable and enjoyable. The problem, here, is that these false teachers count it pleasure to revel *in the daytime* — the real point being that they've made pleasure their "god"; they're worshipping and they're bowing down before the idol of self-indulgence. And so in this way *hedone* is turned into a *philosophy* of life called "hedonism" — the teaching that pleasure or happiness (in and of itself and divorced from God) is really the sole or chief good in life (cf. Webster).

But now we need to ask ourselves this question: "When the pursuit of pleasure becomes the "god" that we worship, is it really *true* pleasure any longer? Is it *really*? What happens when we make pleasure our idol? What happens when we make self-indulgence the "god" that we bow down to? Peter continues in verse thirteen:

**IV. 2 Peter 2:13c** — They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.

Notice first of all that the *church* is "feasting." Peter says, "while they [the false teachers] feast *with you*." In the early church, the Lord's Supper was taken in the context of a larger meal where the Christians were feasting and drinking together (1 Cor. 11:17-22). We could say they were reveling and indulging in that which was pleasurable and that which brought them enjoyment — not only the food and the wine, but also the love and the fellowship that they shared with each other *around* the feast as those who had been redeemed by the body and blood of Christ given for them. This feast was a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb which God's people will sit down to and enjoy throughout all eternity (cf. Rev. 19:9). It was a feast that foreshadowed the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah chapter 25:

- Isaiah 25:6 — On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

Certainly, God only prepares a feast like this in order that it might be pleasurable and enjoyable — so that His people might revel and indulge themselves in it. In the same way, we could say that in their feasting together, the Christians Peter writes to were reveling and even indulging in "*true pleasures*" — both physical and spiritual.

But then there were the false teachers who were also feasting along with them, and *they* were stains and blemishes, Peter says, *reveling* in their *deceptions*. The feasts in the early church that went with the Lord's Supper were called "love feasts," or "fellowship meals." The Greek word for these feasts was *agapais* (cf. Jude 12). The Greek word for "deceptions," on the other hand, is "*apatais*." It would have been obvious to Peter's first readers that he was making a play on words here in order to help us see the terrible irony. While the true believers were reveling and indulging together in true pleasures at their love feasts (their *agapais*), the false teachers were

also reveling and indulging, but they were reveling and indulging only in their deceptions (their *apatais*).

In this context, what the word (*apatais*) really means is “deceitful pleasures” – pleasures that lure and entice people with an illusion of happiness, but that never finally satisfy (no true, deep down satisfaction; cf. Bauckham). The false teachers weren’t indulging or reveling with true thankfulness to the Lord as the giver of every good gift; instead, they were indulging and reveling—and that was it; as an end in itself. They counted it pleasure to revel *in the daytime*. And so they were “hedonists”; they were living as though their own pleasure or happiness—divorced from God (and therefore also divorced from others and from true love for other)—was the chief good in life.

But the problem is that these are *deceitful* pleasures, and as deceitful pleasures they’re also *sin*. Not only do they fail to truly satisfy, but Peter says that those who revel in them are “*stains* and *blemishes*.” Once again, Peter’s play on words is meant to help us see the real ugliness and filthiness of these stains and blemishes: The false teachers are reveling in their *apatais* (deceitful pleasures) as they feast *together with* the Christians at their *agapais* (love feasts). There’s a really vivid sense here of something spoiling and defiling – of something filthy and corrupt.

In the Old Testament, a physical blemish in an animal meant that it couldn’t be offered to God on the altar.

□ Leviticus 1:3 — If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish.

In the same way, a physical blemish in one of the descendants of Aaron meant that he was barred from entering the tabernacle or approaching the altar.

□ Leviticus 21:17–23 — No man of the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the LORD’s food offerings; since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God... he shall not go through the veil or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries, for I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

The physically unblemished sacrificial animal or the physically unblemished offspring of Aaron in the Old Testament is a picture of the moral purity and inward holiness of the heart that God requires of all those who would draw near to Him. So we read in 1 Peter:

□ 1 Peter 1:18–19 — ...you were ransomed... with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb *without* blemish or stain.

Here in 2 Peter—in the third chapter—Peter says:

□ 2 Peter 3:14 — Therefore, beloved... be diligent to be found by him *without* stain or blemish...

And so now it's against this backdrop that Peter tells us that the false teachers, reveling in their deceitful pleasures, are themselves *stains* and *blemishes* – sinful, and corrupt, and morally defiled. That's not an attractive picture, is it? We're meant to *feel*, here, that it's wholly ugly, and repulsive, and revolting. The Bible doesn't say that pleasure in and of itself is sin, but that deceitful pleasures are always sinful – pleasures pursued as an end in themselves, without conscious regard to God as the only source of all “true” pleasures because He's the only one who has life and true fullness of joy in Himself (cf. Jn. 5:26). Or we could put it this way: When we pursue pleasure, rather than the God who is the source of all *true* pleasures, then the pleasures we pursue are only *deceitful* pleasures – pleasures that stain and defile and never, ever give what they promise. So Peter goes on to say of the false teachers in verse fourteen:

**V. 2 Peter 2:14a** — They have eyes full of an adulteress, [eyes] insatiable for sin.

That's literally what Peter says: “They have eyes full of an adulteress.” There was a well-known saying in Peter's day that went something like this: “The shameless man does not have *koras* (a word that means *either* ‘pupils’ or ‘maidens’) in his eyes, but *pornas* (“harlots”). Isn't that the very essence of all pornography? But even apart from pornography, the point here is the inner thoughts and desires of the heart. The false teachers have bowed down to pleasure as their *god*, and *so* now they can't help but to look at every woman as an object—a potential partner in sexual immorality—even *while* they're feasting with the Christians around the Lord's table. Stains and blemishes, indeed.

Are you *seeing*, again, the difference between *true* pleasures and *deceitful* pleasures? The false teacher's eyes are *full* of an adulteress and therefore, Peter says, their eyes “never stop sinning.” I think the ESV does a good job of capturing the real meaning: Their eyes are “insatiable” for sin. Does that really sound like the life any sane person would want? And so we see again just how insane and irrational we, as fallen human beings, can be. Deceitful pleasures are pleasures to which we're enslaved; they're pleasures that never truly, finally satisfy and that therefore leave their thralls always craving for more – always “insatiable” for more. One commentator says: “Pleasure... is a goal never reached; it is always somewhere in the distance, urging one on to new and usually more sinful practices” (cf. Moo). When pleasure is an end in itself—the “god” that we worship—then it becomes our master, enslaving us and controlling us without ever, finally giving what it promises to give. To the contrary, as we see over, and over again in 2 Peter, not only do these deceitful pleasures never finally give what they promise, not only do they bind and enslave those who worship them, but because they're morally corrupt and sinful they also lead in the end to final judgment and destruction. *Deceitful* pleasures! *Deceitful* indeed. And so we read in the New Testament:

□ Luke 8:14 — As for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and **pleasures** of life.

The sin is not the riches and pleasures of this life, but the worshiping of these pleasures so that they choke out the word. The Apostle Paul writes:

- 2 Timothy 3:1–5 — But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money... **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

The sin is not “pleasure” in and of itself, but being *lovers* of pleasure *rather than* lovers of God. But then, again, there’s the irony that to be lovers of pleasure is ultimately to be enslaved to pleasure – which is, in the end, a cruel master.

- Titus 3:3 — We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and **pleasures**...

In being enslaved to pleasure, what we inevitably end up pursuing are “pleasures” that are deceitful and sinful, defiling stains and blemishes that leave us guilty before God and that lead to destruction. Do we realize that deceitful pleasures leave us stained and blemished and defiled? Do we *feel* this. Furthermore, this slavery to pleasure causes our hearts to be turned inward in ultimate selfishness – killing all true love for others. James writes:

- James 4:1–4 — What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your **passions [your (idolatrous) desires for pleasure; NKJV]** are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder [hate and anger]. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your **passions [your (idolatrous) desires for pleasure]**. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

How do we know when we’ve made pleasure our god? When we pursue pleasure apart from God and without reference to His good and holy will. In speaking of the false teachers, Peter says: “They have eyes full of an adulteress, [eyes] insatiable for sin.” And then he says:

**VI. 2 Peter 2:14b** — They entice unsteady souls.

So now we’re reminded again of the real reason *why* Peter’s so “worked up.” Peter’s goal, here, isn’t just to attack and discredit the false teachers. It’s not like he hates the false teachers and just loves exposing them only for the sake of exposing them. Peter is deeply concerned for the Christians that he’s writing to – that they *not* be *unsteady* and that they *not* be *enticed*. When Peter says, “They entice unsteady souls,” we’re not meant to think to ourselves: “Well, at least I’m not one of those unsteady souls; at least I can’t be enticed.” Instead, we’re meant to think to ourselves: “I need to make sure that I’m never enticed or lured away by deceitful pleasures. I need to make sure that I truly am firmly grounded in the faith so that I’m always indulging and reveling in all the *true* pleasures that I receive with thanksgiving from God’s hand and that I always enjoy, as it were, before Him and in His presence. I think of the passage we read earlier in Deuteronomy:

- Deuteronomy 14:24–26 — You shall... bind up the money in your hand and go to the place that the LORD your God chooses and spend the money for **whatever you wish**—oxen or

sheep or wine or strong drink, **whatever your appetite desires**. And you shall eat there **before the LORD your God and rejoice**.

In the end, I must be sure that all of the pleasures I enjoy and revel in are ultimately just a means to the enjoying of God – who alone satisfies. And so I’m reminded of the passage we read earlier in Nehemiah:

- Nehemiah 9:25 — They captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and **delighted themselves [reveled and indulged themselves] in your great goodness**.

The only *true* pleasures are those that are received with thankfulness from the hand of God – whether it’s reading a good book, enjoying a concert, a meal, or the gift of marriage. These are the only pleasures that satisfy because they’re not divorced from God, but rather always and only enjoyed as gifts that *He* gives – the only one who has life and joy in Himself.

Don’t believe the lie that Christianity robs us of pleasure when really it only saves us from deceitful pleasures – pleasures that never finally give what they promise, pleasures that enslave, and pleasures that stain and defile with sin and lead to destruction. Don’t believe the lie that Christianity robs us of pleasure when really it’s only **as Christians** that we’re fully enabled to experience “*TRUE*” pleasure and “*TRUE*” enjoyment. I think of the words of God in Jeremiah chapter two:

- Jeremiah 2:10–13 — Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see, or send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has been such a thing. Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

In other words, “deceitful pleasures” – versus the true pleasures that are found only in obedience and submission to God. Truly, this isn’t the way our fallen and sinful minds think. So may God, in His mercy and grace, daily renew our minds and help us to learn *by faith and by experience* the truth and the rightness and the beauty of His word and His ways.