

When Wolves Wear Wool

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[0 : 00] Okay, so here is 2 Peter chapter 2, starting in the middle of verse 10. And our sister Emily is going to read down through verse 22. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.

Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing.

They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin.

They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children. Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked in his own transgression.

A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. From them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

[1 : 15] For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them.

The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for your grace.

Blessed Holy Spirit, would you please come and give us so much help as we approach this text. Please keep me faithful. Please help your people to be discerning. Please keep us humble before your word.

[2 : 24] Help us to see our Savior Jesus. It is in his name that we pray and we give thanks. Amen. Samuel's not here this morning, so let me just preface this remark in this way in case he does listen to this podcast.

Samuel, I want you to know that I love you and that I am so proud of you, and I want to thank you for letting us hear this particular story. Thank you for the privilege of using this story.

When Samuel was a young teen, we got him a debit card and we connected it to his bank account. And for a while, things seemed just fine. Until I checked his balance and I saw that the balance of his bank account was deep in the red.

Children, that means it was negative. He had used, spent more money than he had in his account. Unbeknownst to us, Sam had added his card to an online game, and he was making little charge after little charge, a dollar here, a dollar there.

[3 : 37] But when his account hit zero, the bank didn't cut him off. Instead, they hit him with an NSF fee, a non-sufficient fund fee, and continued to let him make these dollar charges.

And every time he made this dollar charge, he was getting hit with another NSF fee. A debit that he could not cover, a charge that he could not pay.

Sam's debit card purchases are a picture of false teachers. Peter tells us that they are charging what they cannot pay, making promises that they cannot fulfill, promising blessing, but leaving followers spiritually bankrupt.

They look like leaders. But if you follow their example, their enticing example, you will be on a path that leads to destruction.

In the first half of chapter 2, Peter warns that there will be false teachers among God's people, just as there were false prophets among the people in the Old Testament.

[4 : 58] These false teachers seem like Christians, and yet their teaching is deceptive, and it's destructive, and their motives are selfish and greedy.

And since God didn't spare the angels who sinned, or the ungodly outside the ark, or the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, then we can be sure that God will eventually deal with those who deceive and domineer and manipulate his people with false teaching.

And since God preserved Noah, and since he rescued Lot, then we can be certain that God knows how to rescue the godly, including you, church.

He knows how to rescue you from trial, temptation, and the treachery of false teachers. Look at chapter 2 and verse 9, just to give us a couple phrases of that context to connect last week into this week.

Verse 9, Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

[6 : 35] As we move into the second half of chapter 2, Peter explains why God's judgment against these false teachers is right.

He is going to expose their character, their impact, and their end. So let's notice first the false teacher's character.

Notice their arrogant ignorance, starting where Emily started, middle of verse 10. Bold and willful. They do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones.

Now this can seem perhaps a little cryptic. I hope that this is helpful. Glorious ones here, Peter is referring to angels. The NIV says celestial beings.

I think that's pretty helpful, but this is likely the angels that Peter was referring to back in chapter 2 and verse 4. The angels whose authority and sphere of influence God has limited because of their sin.

[7 : 45] In other words, these are demonic forces. Fallen angels. Notice the contrast between the bombastic false teachers and good angels, starting in verse 11.

Whereas angels, though greater in might and power than the fallen angels, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction. Suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. False teachers pride themselves on their clever ideas, unique insights, fresh takes, fresh spins on truth, new perspectives on this or that.

But, Peter says, like unreasonable, irrational animals, unreasoning animals, they are driven by instinct and not by spiritual understanding.

[9 : 18] They reveal their foolishness in the way that they mock spiritual realities that they frankly don't understand, especially the existence and the power of demonic beings.

False teachers' character is marked by arrogant ignorance. And they can also be identified by their shameless sensuality.

Right in the middle of verse 13, they count it pleasure to revel in the daytime.

They are blots and blemishes reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you.

They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls.

[10 : 22] They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children, forsaking the right way. They have gone astray.

Because of their willingness to deceive, false teachers often enjoy the benefit and the blessings of being part of the church.

Peter says, they're with you in your feasts. This is likely a meal-type gathering that the early church celebrated leading up to the time of the Lord's Supper.

A potluck, we might call it, that the church gathered together which would then culminate in a time of being together around the bread and the cup. They are there.

They're with you. But they're deceptive, Peter says. They are not without spot and blameless as God declares the church is. Instead, these false teachers are blots and blemishes.

[11 : 29] And they don't even try to hide their sin. Do you see that? Their sin is celebrated. It's out in the open. They delight in carousing in broad daylight. They look at every woman with lust.

They cannot relate to others without contemplating committing adultery. their appetite for sin is insatiable.

No wonder Peter calls these false teachers accursed children. Like, when you're on the interstate and you have to swerve at the last minute to make an exit, false teachers have veered from the way of truth.

And they have gone astray. And this would be bad enough, you know? This would be bad enough if they had just gone astray themselves. But the worst part about these individuals is not the false.

The worst part is the teacher. Because they are leading others astray. Greedily leading others astray.

[12 : 46] Notice verse 14 in the middle. They entice unsteady souls.

They have hearts trained in greed. When you're fishing with a lure and a worm, you want the fish to bite.

You want the fish to get hooked. trapped. When you're trying to trap a mouse, you put a bit of cheese whiz or peanut butter on the trap. You are wanting to entice the little critter to come and get caught by your trap.

that is the behavior of the false teachers. They are enticing unsteady souls. Those who are not steadfast.

Those who are not resolved. Those who are not well-grounded in their understanding of God's truth. And false teachers are good at enticing, Peter says, because they are training in it.

[13 : 57] Do you see that there in your Bible? This is like a sports team showing up at the field, at the gym, at the weight room, day after day after day, working hard, practicing plays, trying to get better and better and better at it.

The false teachers, Peter says, are trained in greed. they have practiced to perfection their grift.

Verse 15, forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression.

A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. In Numbers 22, a wicked king asked a false prophet named Balaam to come and curse God's people.

And the prophet responded, I think somewhat piously, but probably not genuinely faithful in his piety. He says, well, I can only say what God will allow me to say.

[15 : 29] Of course, God is not going to allow him to curse his people, but Balaam decides to go with the king's men anyway and just sort of see what happens.

Because he was greedy. was greedy. He was greedy. He was greedy. He was greedy. But along the way, his donkey saw something that Balaam did not see.

The donkey saw the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord. The pre-incarnate son of God, Jesus, before he became a man.

The donkey saw the angel of the Lord blocking the donkey's path. And when the donkey wisely tries to turn off the path, Balaam gets angry and begins abusing his donkey.

Numbers 22 and verse 28. Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, what have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?

[16 : 51] Remember, the donkey is seeing the angel of the Lord. I think the surprising thing about this text is not that the donkey spoke, but that Balaam talked back.

Verse 29, Balaam said to the donkey, because you have made a fool of me. Wow, wow. I think we would say this is the pot calling the kettle black.

You have made a fool of me. I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you. And the donkey said to Balaam, am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life long to this day?

Is it my habit to treat you this way? And Balaam said, no. What is Peter's point of mentioning this story?

Balaam's donkey had more spiritual insight, more sense than the prophet. The donkey speaks rationally, while the prophet behaves like an irrational animal.

[18 : 13] Like making purchases when your bank account is already empty. False teachers make promises that they cannot pay.

Notice, as we have considered their character, now, notice their impact. Verse 17. these are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm.

For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. for speaking loud, boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. for whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

False teachers are often boastful, assertive, and confident, but everything they offer is false advertising. They're like large, dark clouds, Peter says.

[19 : 39] Clouds that you're expecting are just going to unload, a deluge of rain, and yet they dissipate, and the clouds disappear, and there is no rain to be had from them.

Like a long forgotten water fountain at the playground that you run up to, and you're hoping that there's going to be some water in it to refresh you, and there is no water in it.

False teachers say, go ahead and just be yourself. Do what feels good. Don't let anyone stop you. They are offering freedom, but they themselves are hypocrites, Peter says, because they are slaves.

They are not in control. Sin is in control of them. They have access to the truth. They know the way, but instead of following Jesus, they veer off into ungodliness, and then they entice others to indulge in their perversion.

And if we are still not convinced that we should take Peter's warnings seriously, he asserts what I think is a stunning truth.

[21 : 05] truth, it is better not to know the truth at all than to know truth and turn away from it.

Notice the false teacher's end in verse 20. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome the last state, the last state, has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, righteousness, then after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.

Peter. It is possible that in this closing portion, Peter refers to the recent converts that he has mentioned, those who are barely escaping from among those who live in error.

[22 : 45] I think Peter has the false teachers in mind in this section, and here's why. First, false teachers are the primary subject of this entire chapter.

But second, the word overcome in verse 19 refers to the false teachers, and that word is repeated again in verse 20.

And third, Peter says that the proverb has happened to them, past tense. Do you remember that word that I gave you last week, phenomenological language?

I think we see that again in verse 20. This is when an author describes what can be seen, what can be observed, what can be heard, what can be experienced.

Christ? I think we see that in verse 20. It seems that they have escaped the defilements of the world.

[23 : 53] It seems that through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, they have become Christians. It seems that way because they participate with us in our feasts,!

in our celebrations, in our worship gatherings. They say the right words. They know some truth. The false teachers appear to be Christians, and yet sin still has control of them.

They're still entangled, Peter says, in the world's defilement, like wild dogs returning to their vomit, and like a freshly bathed pig wiggling back down into the mud, false teachers are more attracted by what we would consider disgusting than the way of righteousness and the holy command.

Better to not know the truth at all than to know the truth, pretend to believe it, and then return to filthy behaviors.

Why? Because every time, every time you veer away from God's truth, it gets a little easier until one day you find that you're just driving in the exit only lane, and you don't even have to veer.

[25 : 34] You just stay in the lane, and without another thought, you have found yourself on the way to destruction. Ignorance is not better than salvation, but repeatedly hearing the truth and rejecting, rejecting God's truth, self-deception, and self-deception has devastating consequences.

Would you answer this question in your own head or in your own heart? How many times have you heard the gospel? How many times have you been called to repent and believe in Jesus?

Jesus. I urge you to beg God to soften your heart so that you hear this gospel message again as though it was the very first time Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

And you are a sinner in need of a Savior. Jesus, bore his people's sins in his body on the tree.

And the message of the gospel is believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

[27 : 14] false teachers and their deceptive, destructive behavior are not harmless, they are not neutral.

They betray the gospel that they claim to believe. Please do not follow a false teacher. The exit that you are taking descends steeply into destruction.

And returning back to the way of truth becomes increasingly impossible because those who repeatedly exit off into deception and ungodliness eventually lose the desire to come back.

Who do you follow? who shapes your thinking about God and yourself and the church and the world?

Do you follow voices that make you feel good but lead you away from godliness? Do you prefer charisma or convenience or crowds over character?

[28 : 34] having spent the last two weeks with you describing false teachers it feels heavy and weighty and oppressive to me and it is my privilege to point you to Jesus.

He is the better and true teacher. He is the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He is the gentle healer who will never use his authority to exploit your weakness.

Jesus looks with pure eyes at the woman at the well. The woman caught in adultery and the woman washing his feet with her tears in Simon's house.

He speaks with tenderness to the woman with the issue of blood who had searched and searched to find help and found no help at all but comes to him in the middle of a crowd and touches his garment.

Jesus invites doubting Thomas. He commissions betraying Peter. He disciplines those sons of thunder who were committed to calling down fire.

[30 : 08] He expels the glorious ones who torment the man naked living in the cemetery and restores him to his right mind.

Though the man lying by the pool of Bethesda was looking for an angel in the water what he got was God in the flesh and that was so much better.

Because her daughter was oppressed by a demon the Canaanite woman asks him for mercy and initially Jesus doesn't answer her but when she continues begging for his help Jesus says this it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs and surprisingly this woman agrees with him she's a Canaanite dog undeserving she's just begging for crumbs falling from the master's table Jesus honors her humility and her great faith and heals!

her daughter the prodigal son he comes to his senses while he is feeding the pigs he returns home humbly repentant and he receives his father's warm embrace Jesus he's the better older brother though it cost him his life he joyfully celebrates the return of the prodigal from the pig pen he celebrates the lost being found the dead being made alive if you have been misled or deceived or wounded by a false teacher hear this Jesus is not like them he doesn't take from you he gives and he gave his life for you he won't manipulate you he renews you Jesus doesn't over promise and under deliver like the false teachers in him in

Jesus we have all of God's precious and very great promises we are partakers of the divine nature because of our connection with Jesus and because of him we will escape that is the corruption that is in this world because of lust Jesus doesn't drive or domineer his flock he leads us beside still waters restoring our souls again and again and again he doesn't treat his church like an organization to be managed for his own gain no Jesus cherishes!

[33 : 10] the church as his spotless bride Jesus is that blessed man from Psalm 1 that we talked about earlier the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked and he invites us into this same blessing by rejecting the empty promises of false teachers and finding our delight in the law of the Lord the scripture and this makes perfect sense doesn't it that we would meditate on the

scripture day and night because it points us again and again and again to Jesus the lover the savior the healer the keeper of your soul friends I don't think Peter's intention in this text is to scare you he wants to spare you he wants to spare you from the eternal destruction that awaits those who abandon the truth of the gospel but he also wants to spare you from expecting payment on an account that has no money in it

Peter doesn't write so that you would merely be informed about false teachers he wants you to be anchored in your savior the lord jesus christ jesus isn't just more right than the false teachers he is more beautiful more satisfying more trustworthy he never writes a check that you can't cash in jesus every promise is yes and amen so let me invite you to follow jesus follow him with fresh awareness of the presence and influence of false teachers but more importantly follow jesus with your heart freshly opened wide to who he is false teachers promise freedom and provide slavery but jesus died to set you free false teachers deceptively use people for their own selfish gain but jesus gave himself for your good false teachers revel in leading others into sin jesus leads you into a life of godliness so whether it is from a book a pulpit a podcast or a social media post maybe it's even a whisper of desire in your own head or heart when you hear a voice that sounds enticing but leads you away from godliness remember the good shepherd's words my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me followers of jesus my sisters and my brothers be discerning and be wise stay on the way of righteousness keep to the holy commandment grow in the grace and the knowledge of our lord jesus christ let his word dwell in you richly let his spirit keep you steady let his example make you humble let his gospel shape your thoughts and your loves and your words and your ways wolves may wear wool but the shepherd is near and he knows how to rescue the godly let's pray father we are grateful and humble again at the privilege of having your word thank you holy spirit for being with us thank you for helping me think clearly and to speak with whatever gifts you have given would you please take what

I consider just to be some saltine crackers and would you make this fresh wholesome bread to feed your people thank you for your kindness to give us your word thank you for pointing us back to our savior jesus would you please help us as we consider these things and as we recenter our attention on him and as we consider whether we are in that exit only lane and as we consider how many times have I heard the gospel message and continued to stiff arm and reject it holy spirit would you please soften hearts would you please grant life and repentance so that we respond by repenting and believing this gospel we ask this for our good and for your glory in the beautiful wonderful matchless remarkable name of our savior
Jesus amen