

## **The Teachers of Error – Part 2**

**2 Peter 2:4-22**

**Pastor John Miller**

Second Peter, as I said, as the main theme is the subject of false teachers. Jesus told Peter in John 21, “Feed my sheep.” Well, he’s doing just that in this epistle, 1 and 2 Peter, but he’s not just feeding the sheep, he’s also protecting the sheep. One of the jobs of the shepherd is not just to feed and lead, but it’s to protect. When the wolves come and the bears, they must protect the sheep from the wolves. A good pastor feeds the sheep, leads the sheep, and protects the sheep all using the Word of God.

Last Wednesday night we were together we looked at just verses 1-3. In verses 1-3 we saw their deception, we saw that they come with denial, we saw their sensuality, and we saw their greed. Let’s rehearse that real quick. I won’t comment on it. In verse 1, this way we’ll get the whole context of the whole chapter, it says, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you,”—I pointed out that in the Old Testament there were false prophets, in the New Testament there are false teachers, it says—“who privily”—privately—“shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.” They bring in heresies that damn souls, and they deny the Lord Jesus. Their Christology is not biblical, and you’ve got to make sure you have the right Jesus, if you’re going to follow a teacher of the Word of God.

Verse 2, “And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom they way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” ‘Pernicious ways’ is their immoral ways. Verse 3, “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”

As I said, there are four things we saw in their description. They are deception, and they have denial, verse 1. In verse 2, they have sensuality—with their false doctrine they are sensual or they were sexually immoral. Fourthly, they were filled with greed, verse 3, “. . . covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.”

Peter is not finished with these false teachers, so he wants to say some more things. He covers, from verses 4-22, three things. We’re going to take them one at a time: their condemnation, verses 4-9; their character, verses 10-16; and their claims, verses 17-22. The first thing we want to look at together in verses 4-9 is their condemnation. Follow with me, “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell”—we get our word ‘tartaró’ from that Greek word translated hell. It’s the only place it’s used in the New Testament. “. . . and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; 7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.”

When it says “just Lot,” by the way, it doesn’t mean just Lot; it was his wife who was turned into a pillar of salt, and there were his daughters. It means righteous Lot, the righteous man, Lot. “. . . vexed”—or tortured—“with the filthy conversation”—or manner of living—“of the wicked: 8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) 9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

Peter gives three Old Testament illustrations to prove that God will judge false teachers. This whole section, verses 4-9, that I just read, Peter has two main points he’s trying to convey. He’s trying to convey the certainty and terror of God’s retributive judgment, He’s going to bring retribution upon them, the false teachers; and secondly, that God lovingly cares and delivers His children. So, two things: false teachers will be judged, God is holy. The holiness of God is the number one chief attribute of God revealed about Him in the Bible, and that holiness involves His judging sin, so He’ll judge the false teachers. But it also conveys that He lovingly cares for His own and delivers His children. God judged before, basically Old Testament illustrations, and He will do it again.

Let’s look at these three examples. The first one is in verse 4, Peter mentions angels that sinned. He says, “For”—notice that the word “For” starts the third verse. If you go back as we just read, to verse 3, it says at the end of verse 3, “. . . whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” Then, without skipping a beat, he goes right into the fact that God will judge them and uses the example of the angels, “For if God spared not.” I’ve highlighted that little phrase there, “spared not.” It’s again repeated in verse 5, “spared not.” He’s giving us these Old Testament stories to illustrate that God brings judgment upon the wicked and the unrighteous and also upon those who are false apostles, or false teachers in this case. “For if God spared not,”—notice it’s what God is doing, judging because He’s holy—“the angels that sinned,”—he doesn’t tell us what angels these were that sinned, he doesn’t tell us when they sinned, and he doesn’t tell us how they sinned.

Angels were created by God. They’re spirit beings, and we do know there was what’s called the angelic rebellion, Isaiah 14, where Satan, Lucifer, who is the one who rebelled against God, was kicked out of heaven, fell, and he took with him a third of the host of the other angels. These other angels that fell, and rebelling with Lucifer against God, became demons.

This is a real fascinating reference here just to the simple fact that these were angels that sinned. Some feel that the sin mentioned here, and it’s just speculation and it’s an interpretation that I don’t hold, that it’s the sin of these angels who when they in Genesis 6, they believed, which I don’t think is the case, but they cohabited with women and produced giants. They think that these are those angels, really bad angels, and they just kind of theorize that that’s the case. First, I don’t know that those were angels that cohabited with women.

Secondly, it doesn’t really tell us that in the text of Peter. In a way, we don’t know a lot about who these angels were, when it happened; but what we do know is that they were angels, they sinned in some fashion, God judged them, and He judged them by putting them in tartaró ὅ which

is evidently a compartment in hell or hades or somewhere in the underworld where they are incarcerated until the day of judgment. They will be brought out or will be let go, then they will be judged, and will no doubt end up in the lake of fire, which is in this case called Gehenna, and they will there be in hell for all eternity. Basically, he's saying, "Look, God judged these angels, and if God's going to judge angels, He did it before, He'll do it again."

Now, there's a lot of parallel tonight in our text of 2 Peter 2 with the book of Jude. If you study the book of Jude along with 2 Peter, you'll find a lot of parallels, some of the same kind of references. Jude has, as it's one short chapter, the whole theme as well of false teachers and apostasy and God's judgment upon them. We don't know a lot about these angels. Some feel that it could be that it's because of their pride in their rebellion with Satan. They were evidently really bad angels, so God has them incarcerated. Obviously, not all these wicked angels that fell with the devil are incarcerated because today they're what's known as "demons." Demonic spirits are fallen angels.

The second illustration is in verse 5, and it's that of what I've call the "old world," "And spared not the old world"—I think that's kind of a cool reference to the antediluvian, so called, those who lived before the Flood, the old world before the Flood of Noah. ". . . but saved Noah,"—that's the first reference to the loving care, and mercy of God, God provided an Ark. Now, with what's just recently happened with the flooding in Texas, it's an interesting story about God destroying the whole earth with the Flood. I'm not saying that that was God's judgment on those folks in Texas, we live in a fallen world. I've actually heard a couple of people say, "This is an act of God." Well, all the flooding and the disasters are the result of man's fall, and the creation is groaning and travailing in pain waiting for the Lord to return. It's called the "manifestation of the sons of God." Jesus will one day reverse the curse and for one thousand years He'll reign on the earth, and there'll be peace on earth. Then, that will flow into the eternal state, which is called the new heaven and the new earth. But, we live in a fallen world. I don't think they should call it an act of God, it's the result of the fall of man.

The story of Noah and his Ark is taken from Genesis 6, and we love the story of Noah and the Ark and 120 years. It's interesting that we decorate children's nurseries with Noah and the Ark with the animals because it's a story of God's judgment of wiping out the earth. So, you put Noah and the Ark and the Flood, the animals on the Ark, and then you tuck your little ones into bed and say, "Goodnight, sweet dreams." Pretty heavy. But for 120 years, I think before he started building his boat, he built a pulpit, and it says that he was preaching. He was a preacher of righteousness. Whenever the crowds would gather around, and no doubt laugh and mock at old Noah, he would put down his saw and hammer and begin to preach, "God's going to send judgment."

Now, they'd never seen rain, they didn't know what he was talking about, they were a long ways from the ocean, and they had no idea why he would build a boat out there. But for 120 years God's long-suffering and patience warned them and warned them and warned them and warned them, but they would not repent. Then, the floods came and wiped them all out. What a story that was of Noah and the Ark.

By the way, with all these stories, and especially this Noah and the Ark, I believe they were true, factual, historical events. They're not a myth. They're not fairy tale. They're not make believe. They're not just allegory. They're not just to be spiritualized, they're actual events where the wickedness of man became so great that God decided He would take Noah, his wife, his three sons and daughter-in-laws, so there were eight of them total, and He would save them in the Ark. You talk about a brand new world. Can you imagine stepping off that Ark, and you're the only human beings on planet earth, and it's all going to start with you. What an amazing story. But God wiped out the people of Noah's day with that great Flood. They were living wicked lives in rebellion.

In the New Testament, in what's called the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24-25, but in Matthew 24, Jesus warns, "But as the days of Noah were, so"—shall it be at the end of the age.

Now, a lot of times people will take that verse, by the way, this is a footnote, it just popped in my little pea brain, they'll take that verse and try to parallel the conditions of Noah's day with the specific sins and population growth and all that stuff to try to predict that we're living in the last days. But I think when Jesus used that in Matthew 24, He was talking about His Second Coming, which will be preceded by the tribulation, and what's going to happen when He comes back is that people won't expect Him to return. They will not be looking for Him. So, even as in the days of Noah, when they were caught unawares, that's the message of the days of Noah—they were caught unawares. They were not looking for the judgment to come, and when the Ark was shut, the Bible says that there was only one door, which had some symbolism even though it was an actual Ark, and that was there's only one way to heaven, there's only one way of salvation. Jesus is, " . . . the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father," except through Him, and then that door was shut by the hand of God, and that Jesus also is our Ark of safety, that in Christ we're safe, we're saved from the judgment and the wrath of God.

But the message in Matthew 24 is that they were not expecting, " . . . they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage"—which basically means that they were living as though the Lord would not return, the end was not near, judgment was not imminent, so that's the message. But again, God destroyed the people around Noah's time and spared Noah.

The third illustration is in verses 6-9. We move from, " . . . the angels that sinned"—to—" . . . the old world,"—to verses 6-9—" . . . Sodom and Gomorrha." Verse 6, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha"—and he uses the phrase—"into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." Again, we go to " . . . the old world,"—the antediluvians, the Flood of Noah, and now we go to " . . . the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha." Again, I believe that this is an actual story. It really took place, that archaeology has found evidence of the spot of Sodom and Gomorrha in the south end of the Dead Sea.

Some say they found Noah's Ark, and that's possible. I have no doubt that it's still probably resting maybe on Mount Ararat, we can't be sure, but there is evidence that there is a wooden boat under the ice there. I believe, again, that this is a historical event that there really was a

Noah, there really was a big boat, there really was a judgment of God. God did it before, He'll do it again, and He won't destroy the earth by flood, He'll destroy it by fire, " . . . the elements will melt with fervent heat."

I also believe that there were two cities called Sodom and the other one called Gomorrha. We know the story of Sodom and Gomorrha and of their sexual perversion and sensuality. It's "sodomy" is where the term comes from Sodom and Gomorrha, that they had abandoned God, their minds had become, Romans 1, reprobate, they could not discern right from wrong. As I look around America today, especially during the month of June, and I see people parading in the streets in broad daylight without any clothes on and it's acceptable—men with men, women with women. To think God judged...have we forgotten Sodom and Gomorrha? Have we forgotten the Flood? God is holy. God is righteous. "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." People do all kinds of gymnastics with the text trying to explain away that it wasn't homosexuality that caused the judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrha—no way around the story to soften that truth that they were committing sodomy and God judged them because the sins of Sodom were so great.

Notice it says, " . . . that after should live ungodly," verse 6. And, what did He do? Here's the mercy of God, "And delivered [righteous] Lot,"—again, verse 9, we'll get there—"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." It says, "And delivered [righteous] Lot,"—notice Lot was—"vexed." The word there in my King James Bible has "vexed." In the Greek it means tortured. He was being tortured. He was just grieving. We look around our culture today and we grieve as well. He was "vexed with the filthy"—manner of living—"of the wicked." And then it calls him a " . . . righteous man dwelling among them,"—I don't know why he didn't move out of town and go somewhere else, but it says vexed by their sin—" . . . seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds,"—very clearly that they were sinning.

Verse 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment." So, this is the story of Sodom and Gomorrha, that God saved Lot and brought him out of the city. Now, I like this last verse, I don't want to miss it, verse 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations"—that word "temptations" could be translated trial or testing or tribulation—"and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The reason I wanted to read that verse and go back to it was because a lot of people who, like myself, believe in a pretribulational rapture point to that verse, and I think rightfully so, that God knows how to save, God knows how to deliver, God knows how to preserve, God knows how to keep the righteous, " . . . and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment."

In 1 Thessalonians Paul said, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." I know that a pretribulational rapture in that matter, the doctrine of the rapture, is not popular with a lot of people today. I think that's unfortunate because they think the word isn't in the Bible, which it is if you have a Latin Vulgate, rapturo, in 1 Thessalonians 4. It's just a word describing that we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

I'm totally convinced that the Church—the Bride of Christ, the body of Christ—will be raptured harpáz ÔÀ “ . . . caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air,” before the 70th week of Daniel, which is a seven-year period not in the middle of the tribulation, not at the end of the tribulation, but before the Antichrist can even be revealed. The man of sin cannot be revealed until the Church is taken out and then the man of sin, the Antichrist, will be revealed; and he'll make a covenant with Israel for seven years.

At the end of that seven-year period, Christ returns in the Second Coming and, Revelation 19, we come back with Him. In Revelation 4 and 5 we're in heaven; in Revelation 6-19, the tribulation is on earth; at the end of Revelation 19, we come back with Jesus Christ in the Second Coming. So, I believe in a pretribulational rapture, and I believe in a premillennial Second Coming of Jesus Christ, but the doctrine there of He knows how to preserve the just from the wrath and from the judgment and from the tribulation time.

Now, we move, secondly, in our text to verses 10-16. In this section we see their character. We don't need to tarry on this, but I want to read it, verse 10, “But chiefly them that walk after the flesh”—he's gonna be describing the character of these false teachers that he is warning the sheep about—“that walk after the flesh.” What does that mean? It means they're walking after their sinful, carnal, Adamic nature. It doesn't mean that they walk in physical bodies, it means that they walk after their lust and their sinful desires. That's how he uses “flesh.” Verse 10, “ . . . in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government”—or they despise leadership. Some feel that this is a reference to leaders in the church, they despise God-ordained leadership. “Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” Some feel that that's a reference to angels. Verse 11, “Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them.”

I want to take this section by section, and they're going to be some five characteristics of their nature and character. The first is in verses 10-11 and would be summarized by their presumption or what we would call arrogance. They are very arrogant or they're very proud. They are walking in “ . . . uncleanness, and despise”—leadership, they are arrogant or —“Presumptuous are they”—and proud—“selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. 11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.” They're doing what even angels do not do. If you're taking notes, write that down, verses 10-11, they will be characterized by arrogance. They despise authority. They despise dignitaries or supernatural beings.

You know, I think it's interesting that a lot of Christians today think that they have the power to bind the devil. Do you ever hear people say, “I bind you, Satan”? It's pretty popular today, especially in the charismatic Pentecostal TBN kind of circuit. If you can bind the devil, why don't you just bind him? Why do you let him get unbound? Why don't you just bind him for good? “Well, I don't know if I can bind him that long.” What nonsense.

In the book of Jude it says that Michael the archangel doesn't even bring a railing accusation against the devil. But what does Michael say? “The Lord rebuke thee.” There it is. You can

say, "The Lord rebuke you," and "The Lord can bind you," but you don't say, "I bind you, Satan." He's laughing when you do that. You don't have the power or the ability to do that. You say, "But we're children of God, we have the Holy Spirit," that's true and " . . . greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." But there's no biblical instruction for binding the devil. You say, "Well, didn't Jesus say whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven?" Yeah, and if you looked that up in the Greek, it's actually in the tense of whatever you bind on earth has already been bound in heaven. Whatever you bind on earth has already been bound in heaven. We only have the ability to proclaim what God has already done. We can't usurp our will over the devil, and we need to be careful. These people are arrogant and speak like they have authority and power over the devil.

I heard one preacher talking the other day who doesn't believe that we can bind the devil. He said he was on vacation and visited a church. He was sitting in the back with his family because he had a whole bunch of kids, he didn't want to interrupt the service, had no idea what kind of a church it was, but he said that they were having problems with the sound system or the PA system. It was giving them fits, and they were working on it. The pastor got up and said, "We need to bind the devil, he's gotten into the PA system. It's the devil messing up the sound system." He told the ushers, "Open the back doors of the church, and we're going to chase the devil out." This pastor that I know turned to his wife and said, "Let's leave with the devil." I thought, Man, if he split right then, they'll say, 'There goes the devil right there.'

We get so bound up in, "The devil made me do it," or "The devil's in the person," or "The devil, devil, devil." There is a devil, but we need to be careful that all we do is think about the devil, talk to the devil, try to bind the devil, be all focused on the devil. We need to, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." We need to, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Be careful, these false teachers do things that even angels don't do.

The second characteristic is in verse 12. It is what I call brutishness or they're like "brute beasts" my King James says. Verse 12, "But these, as natural brute beasts,"—in other words, they're just like wild animals—"made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption." That's a pretty powerful statement about these false teachers—they're like "brute beasts."

The third characteristic is in verse 13, they will be marked by debauchery, "And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time." I find it interesting that they have these gay pride parades in the middle of the day, and in the middle of the day they're parading their decadency and their sin and their wickedness, " . . . they count it a pleasure to riot in the day time." Peter says, "Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings"—desires and own cravings—"while they feast with you,"—this would be their love feasts. They come in and pollute the church. It's interesting that in Ephesians 5:27 Paul says that the church is without blemish and without spot. He uses the same phrases that Peter uses here speaking that they are spots, they are blemishes. They're not the true church.

So, they come in with debauchery, which I looked up is meaning they live in luxury and softness and extravagance. It also conveys sensual living. They are sensual and sexually perverted at the expense of those who support them, verse 3. Back in verse 3, “. . . they . . . make merchandise of you.” They don’t, like Jesus, live a simple life; they live sensually and extravagantly.

I’ve seen Word Faith teachers, prosperity health and wealth teachers, interviewed. They boast and glory in the jet airplanes, and the luxury cars, the Rolex watches, the fine clothes that they wear, and their many million-dollar mansions and homes that they live in, and, “I’m a King’s kid, and I should live royally.” Jesus said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” I’ve even heard one of the Word Faith teachers saying, “Jesus had a house, and Jesus had a big house.” I thought, That’s fascinating. Do you know what verse they use to defend that? When they asked Jesus, “Where do You dwell?” He said, “Come and see.” “Where are You dwelling?” “Come and see.”

First, how do you know He’s taking them to His house? Secondly, how do you know He didn’t just point to a bedroll under an olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus lived under the stars. He didn’t own a home. He didn’t own a donkey. He had to borrow a donkey on Palm Sunday. He had to borrow an upper room to have the Last Supper. Jesus came in poverty to identify with us. It’s so sad that they use these Scriptures and they twist them out of context. So, they live in debauchery and luxury and extravagance.

Fourthly, verse 14, they’re marked by sensuality and greed. It’s so amazing to me that along with their false doctrine very often comes sexual perversion and sexual immorality. Look at verse 14, “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices,”—that phrase ‘covetous practices’ means sensually coveting sexual sin—“cursed children.” Make it clear, in verse 14, “cursed children,” they are not children of God—they’re not saved, they’re not born again, they have not the Holy Spirit.

When it says, “Having eyes full of adultery,” it means eyes full of adulterous women. It means that they view each woman that they see as a potential for an adulterous. They’re just consumed by this. They seduce “. . . unstable souls,” people who have just come out of the world and they are trying to seduce them to the world, beguiling. It means to catch with bait. Remember, they come with deception. They’re experts in greed, verse 14, and they are “. . . cursed children.”

Here’s a fifth characteristic, they are covetous. Verses 15-16, “Which have forsaken the right way,”—which means there is a right way and a wrong way, that’s why they’re apostates. They are heretics. They have “. . . forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam”—we have another Old Testament reference, Balaam—“the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb [donkey] speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.”



Don't you love the story of Balaam? An amazing story, the story of Balaam. They were covetous, verses 15-16. The story of Balaam is found in Numbers 22, spills over into 23. He's also mentioned in the book of Jude, as I said, a lot of parallels with the book of Jude, verse 11. The story of Balaam is interesting. He's an interesting man. The King Balak of Moab tried to get Balaam to curse the children of Israel. He wanted Balaam to come and curse the children of Israel. Balaam said, "King, I can't do that. They're God's people. You can't curse them. It's just not going to work." So, the king sent this donkey to Balaam with all this gold, silver, and loot piled on this donkey. He said to Balaam, "I'll give you all this wealth, if you'll curse the children of Israel."

It's interesting that Balaam, seeing all this gold, which was actually the 'way of Balaam' is greed. When he saw the gold and the silver he said, "Well, you know, that's a lot of gold. That's a lot of wealth. Maybe, just maybe I could curse them. We could give it a try." So, he prayed and said, "Lord, just pray that if it's Your will that I could just go and do as the king wants and curse the children of Israel." He knew it was not God's will.

You know, you're always in danger—listen carefully—when you're praying about something that God has already said is not His will. When you're praying for God's will when you already know it's not God's will in the Word...I've had people say, "Well, I really prayed about it, and God told me to divorce my wife." Now, they have no biblical basis for that, but they just say, "I just prayed about it, and I had a peace." You did not have a peace. You did not have a peace. That's your flesh, "God says, 'Yes, divorce your wife and run off with that other woman.'" That's not God's will. You don't pray and say, "Lord, we just pray that as we rob this bank that You'll watch over us, protect us, and help us to have a smooth getaway, and we'll give You ten percent." No. Slap that dude. It doesn't work that way.

Balaam is praying about something that God already told him not to do. Finally, some call it the permissive will of God, God told Balaam, "Okay, you can go, but only speak what I put in your mouth." So he says, "Okay, great." He goes and gets on his little donkey. On the way, actually before the Lord told him that he could go, he's riding his donkey to go in rebellion to God, and the donkey started smashing his foot against the side of the mountain on the trail, and then the donkey finally just sat down on the ground. We know the story is because there was an angel in the path with a drawn sword going to wipe Balaam out, but Balaam couldn't see the angel. The donkey could see what Balaam could not see. The donkey had sense that the prophet did not. Balaam jumps off the donkey and begins to beat the donkey. Again, I believe this is actually how the story went—true story—the donkey started to talk to Balaam. He said, "Why are you beating me? Haven't I always been a good donkey?" Rather than freaking out that the donkey was talking, Balaam starts to dialogue with the donkey, "I do well to beat you, you dumb beast! My leg is killing me!" Then, his eyes were opened and he saw the angel. He said, "I'll go back." God said, "No, you go, but remember I told you, don't speak anything unless what I put in your mouth."

Balaam went on the mountain and started to pronounce a curse and all that came out was a blessing. The king got all upset and said, "You know, that's not what I want." "Let's try another

mountain. Maybe it's the angle of the mountain. Let's try another mountain." He got on another mountain and opened his mouth, and Balaam had nothing but blessing come out for Israel. Then, they tried another mountain. It just wasn't working. Balaam wanted the money so bad, his sin was greed and covetousness, he says, "I can't curse them, they're God's people. But, I'll tell you how to bring a curse on them. Send the Moabite women into the camp to the men's tents, and when they get the men enticed and they bring them into their tent, tell the women to bring out their false gods, their little gods, and get the men to worship these false gods with the Moabite women, and it will bring a curse upon them." The doctrine of Balaam is idolatry, and the way of Balaam is covetousness, so that's characteristic of again the false teachers that Peter is warning them about, and that we even have today in the church—idolatrous and covetousness. It's so sad. It's so very, very sad.

Billy Graham said there are three great dangers for men in the ministry: 1) pride, 2) money, 3) women. Pride, money, and women, those are three prominent areas of downfall of many men of God that have been used by God. The false teachers are given over to these kind of sins and lust.

Notice also their claims, verses 17-22. It says, "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity,"—just great, empty words—"they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness,"—which is shameless immorality, they're immoral without shame—"those that were clean escaped from them who live in error." They were recently delivered from the world, and now the false teachers try to take them back into their sinful ways. Verse 19, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

There are two sections from verses 17-22. The first is verses 17-19, they make false promises. Jesus alone can set them free. So, they make a promise that they cannot keep, ". . . they themselves are the servants of corruption." Now, why are their claims of freedom false? Because they're false promises. They cannot be delivered without Jesus Christ, and they don't have the Lord, so they make false promises.

Secondly, they have a false profession, verses 20-22. It says, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"—so they have been given a knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but again, from verses 20-22, it's going to be made clear here they were not really saved. They weren't really born again. They weren't regenerated. They had a knowledge, but they weren't born again. They had a ". . . knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." It's like the demon comes out, but there's no Holy Spirit, comes in, so they go get seven other demons ". . . more wicked than himself, and they enter in and," finds the house swept and clean and he goes in, ". . . the latter end is worse . . . than the beginning."

Notice verse 21, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,

than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” So, they knew about Jesus, they knew the truth, but they didn’t get born again, they didn’t have the Holy Spirit, so they apostatize, they fell away from the truth that they had professed but did not possess.

Verse 22, “But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb,”—Proverbs 26:11—“The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” So, they make false promises, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of . . . bondage.” They have empty words, vain speech, empty words. They use big words that make no sense at all. Sometimes I’ve listened to these guys preach, and I’ve literally said, “I have no idea what they are talking about.” Complete nonsense, nothing. People are cheering, clapping, “Amen!” They’re on their feet, excited. It’s like a pep rally, and I’m scratching my head thinking, I don’t even know what he’s talking about. I don’t even know what he’s saying. It’s just amazing to me. So, they have these vain, empty speeches and they are corrupt in their ways.

Notice this picture in closing. It’s pretty graphic. They’re like the dog that has vomited and then goes back to his vomit again. They’re like, “. . . the sow”—or the pig—“that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” This is why I’ve said that I think it’s clear that an apostate is one who professes to believe and then apostatize from what he professed. That is a non-Christian. They’re not born again. They’re not regenerated. John said, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would . . . have continued with us.”

Now, can a true Christian backslide? Yes, but like the Prodigal Son, they won’t lie in the pig pen. They’ll say, “. . . my father’s have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.” We’re going to get there Sunday morning in Luke 15 on the Prodigal Son, and he went back to the father because he was not a pig, he was the son. Again, in this text, “. . . the sow,”—or the pig—“that was washed”—goes back—“to her wallowing in the mire.”

Have you ever seen a pig in a tuxedo? I’ve seen pigs in tuxedos—a little bowtie, put a little cologne on it. Then, you let the pig go. What is it gonna do? Jump right back into the mud, right? The pig’s not going to say, “I shall live a nice life now because I have a tuxedo on.” No, it’s just gonna go right for the mud because it’s not a sheep, it’s a pig. Pigs do what pigs do; dogs do what dogs do; sheep do what sheep do. Their nature has not been changed. This whole chapter is one indictment that these false teachers are under the wrath and judgment of God. But God knows how to preserve the righteous and to keep them to the day of salvation. Amen?