

2 Peter 2

2 Peter 2
Tape #8230
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to Second Peter chapter two. This chapter really begins in the previous chapter or is just a continuation. And in reality that's what it was. There were no chapters and verses when they were originally written. It was just a letter written by Peter that was later divided into chapters and verses by godly men who wanted to help us to reference passages of scripture. And so by dividing it into chapters and verses, it's a lot easier to reference a particular thought or idea from the scriptures. But a lot of times the chapter divisions fell in the middle of a phrase or a paragraph and basically in the end of chapter one, Peter was telling us concerning the Bible, concerning the prophecies of the word of God and he declares that there was "no prophecy of scripture was of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

God does speak to man and God speaks to other men through men that He has spoken to. So it was the duty or the office of the prophet. He was a spokesman for God. He would tell the people what the Lord was saying to them, to the nation at the time. God's spokesmen. But along with the true prophets, there were also false prophets. And so he tells us,

There were false prophets also among the people (2:1),

As you go through the Old Testament, we read of so many false prophets in the Old Testament. The Lord knowing that there would always be men who would purport to speak for God, but whose motives were wrong and whose hearts were wrong and they would speak things out of their own hearts but to put an emphasis upon it they would say, Thus saith the Lord, and then they would speak out of their own hearts, their own thoughts. And so way back in the law, God gave certain laws regarding the testing of prophets.

In the New Testament, there is that gift of prophecy but it is interesting when Paul talks about the gift of prophecy in First Corinthians 13, he talks about the necessity of judging the prophecies that are given. In other words, just don't accept them but judge them. Is this really what God is saying to us? Is this truly inspired of God? God's message to the church.

In Deuteronomy 13, Moses gave certain rules in regards to the false prophets. He said, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams. And they give you a sign or a wonder, And the sign or wonder comes to pass, whereof he spake unto you, saying, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them. You shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God is proving you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

So the warning that there will be those and they'll be able to demonstrate certain wonders and you look at them and you stand sort of in amazement. They said something and it came to pass. But then if the bottomline, they then encourage you to veer from the truth to serve other gods, then the Lord said, Do not hearken to them. God has allowed them. Why does God allow people to speak in His name? If I were God and someone would misrepresent me saying, God is saying this, I would cut him off in a hurry. But God said, I'm just allowing them to prove you, to test you.

There was a situation in the time of Jeremiah (Jeremiah chapter 28), where there was a false prophet who was saying to the people, Babylon will never come to the city and don't listen to Jeremiah. Jeremiah is just a doomsday fellow, warning you that Babylon's going to take it but that's not so. They'll never shoot an

arrow into the city. Jeremiah said because this man and he named him, the false prophet is telling you words of comfort when God has not spoken, he will die within the year. And it said in the seventh month, he died. If I were there I'd say, He'll die now. Get over it. Get rid of him.

But God is so patient, so long-suffering. And I think for this we are all very grateful but in Jeremiah 14:13, Jeremiah said, "Then I said, Ah Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword, neither shall you have a famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I did not send them, neither have I commanded them, and neither did I speak unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision, a divination, and a thing of nothing, and the deceit of their heart" (Jeremiah 14:13,14).

And then in the twenty-third chapter of Jeremiah, and I like this, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not to the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they shall say unto every one that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil will come to you" (Jeremiah 23:16,17).

They are comforting the people falsely. God won't judge you. God is loving. God won't allow that to happen. And they were giving them a false sense of security. And God said, "I have heard what the prophets said, and they prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of deceit of their own heart; Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:25-29)?

The prophet has a dream, let him tell his dream. He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.

What a blessing and what a privilege it is to bring you the word of God, the scriptures. Not what I say, not what I think. But bring to you just God's word, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, bringing you the word of God. And I can speak with assurance when I say, Thus saith the Lord, and I quote the passages of scripture. This is what God has said.

Now there are a lot of people going around telling their dreams, telling their visions. Several years ago, there was a fellow and I forget his name now and it's just as well. He was in Phoenix, Arizona and he would send out these little mailers in which he would have fifteen visions. Visions of things that would be happening, who the next Pope will be and how the Pope is going to die and the date that he's going to die; and the Lord gave him a vision of all of these things. And for five dollars you could get the first five visions, for ten dollars you could get ten visions, and for fifteen dollars you could get all fifteen. These were the visions from God, and they were, it's sort of like the *Enquirer magazine* in that they were sort of alluring kind of spectacular things.

And they were coming to the church. We had a little postbox in front of the church down there on Walnut Street. I would go by the church and pull the thing out and look and of course, I would immediately just throw it and trash it because it was just trash to me. They kept coming and all of these fascinating kind of titles of these visions. So I went by the church and here was his little mailer and I pulled it out. I looked at it and as I was wadding it up, I was driving away from the church, and I thought to myself, I've always sought to keep an open mind. If God is truly speaking through someone, and if there is something worthwhile, I want to hear it. I don't want to be closed. I don't want to be myopic and just not be able to see

what God might be doing in other places or with other individuals. Give them perhaps the benefit of the doubt, at least, maybe I'll send five bucks. That's not a very big loss if the stuff is just off the wall but just sort of check it out. As I started to un-crumple the thing, thinking maybe I'll just send five bucks and see what these visions are about, this passage of scripture came to me. "He that hath a dream, let him tell his dream. But he that hath My Word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? Saith the Lord." And I said, Oh, thank You, Lord. I wadded the thing back up and tossed it.

How glorious it is to have the Word of God and to know that we have the Word of God. But unfortunately, there are always those who declare to have the Word of God but they really do not. And thus, in the Old Testament, "holy men wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit and as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." But there were false prophets among them.

In Ezekiel 13:2, the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither have you made a hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saith The LORD: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because you have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 13:2-8).

Micah went on to say that "the rulers judge for reward or they take bribes, and the priest teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money" (Micah 3:11). In other words, the motivation is money. And so Peter as he talks to us about the false teachers again tells us their motivation is money. So there were false prophets among the people,

even as there shall be false teachers among you, that shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2:1).

The Lord is just telling us that these things are going to be. In Matthew 7:15, Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." And then in prophesying the signs of His return, he said, "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah; and shall deceive many." And many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And "there shall arise false Messiahs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders;"—that's where the deception oftentimes lies, in the great signs and wonders—"insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:4,5,24).

And so Jesus is warning of these last days and men that would profess to be the Messiah. Men who would profess to be prophets of God but are speaking out of their own minds and hearts, rather than the word of the Lord. Peter tells us that they will even deny the Lord who bought us. And of course, one of the touchstones of any system of religious thought or Christian thought is the person of Jesus Christ. You see, the Bible declares that He is God manifested in the flesh. Over and over that assertion is made. John said, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Very plain, very straightforward.

When "Thomas saw the prints in His hands, he said, My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Paul said, "For our citizenship is in heaven. From whence we look for our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). In Hebrews it speaks of how in the Old Testament how God called Him God. And thus

throughout the Bible, there is the assertion that Jesus is God in the flesh. “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16).

The false teachers deny the deity of Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God. They will say that Jesus is a brother to Lucifer, or they will say that Jesus was Michael the archangel. They would reduce Him to the angelic class, a created being, and even Lucifer is in the angelic class. He was a cherubim. And so to say that Jesus was the brother to Lucifer is to say that He is a created being in the angel class, but it is making Him something less than God. Thus, from the Bible, Peter tells us they even deny the Lord. That is, the deity of our Lord who bought us. And “they bring in damnable heresies.”

And many shall follow their pernicious ways (2:2);

They can gather a lot of adherence.

by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2:2).

It is interesting that these people in these cult groups are constantly demeaning the church and the message of the church. They say if you just read the Bible, then you will end in darkness. But if you will read our explanations of the Bible, you really don’t need the Bible. You will understand the light. They will add other books to the Bible that supposedly will help you to understand how God would have us to live today. There’s always, and it’s a legitimate question, how can you say that you are right and these others are wrong? That’s a legitimate question. It’s a good question. My response and answer to it is we really don’t have any books to peddle to help you to understand the Bible. We encourage you, just read the Bible.

We’re not afraid of anything you will come to believe by just reading the Bible. But you see, these others have to press their books above the Bible because you’ll never come to the same crazy, weird conclusions that they have unless you were directed to those conclusions by their teachings. And so, just go home and read the Bible. You’ll be okay. Just stick with the Bible. Sometimes people come up to me and they say one of these off-the-wall things and I said, Where in the world did you get that? Well, I just was reading the Bible. I said, No, no, no. Don’t lie to me. You can’t get that by just reading the Bible.

Where do you get that you’re the hundred and forty-four thousand? Well, it’s there in Revelation. Just read it in Revelation. Oh, what tribe are you from? That’s spiritual. Who said it was spiritual? The fact that it says there are twelve thousand from each tribe and there are twelve tribes and it names the tribes, you see, to say we are the hundred and forty-four thousand, you have to twist it and read that in. You’ll never get it from just reading the book of Revelation.

“Many though follow their pernicious ways; of whom the truth shall be evil spoken of.” But here’s their motive,

Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you (2:3):

The bottomline is that they’re making money off of you. They put you out on the street corners selling magazines that they publish and they get the profit from the sale of the magazines. You don’t get any commission for selling those magazines or their books. But their motive, bottomline, is covetousness. With feigned words make merchandise of you. And of course, this art has been carried to the extreme by television evangelists and the mailings that they send out. They’ve really made a real art out of this.

In fact, there are men who are professional writers who dream up the ideas for these letters that they send out. And they get a percentage of the money that comes back. That’s how they are paid. The fellow that came up with the idea for seed faith money—plant the seed, it will bring forth thirty, sixty, a hundredfold—

the fellow that came up with that idea of seed faith, plant the seed faith, send ten dollars and God will give you thirty or sixty or a hundred dollars back, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold, or actually, three hundred, six hundred or a thousand, the guy that came up with that made close to a hundred thousand dollars for that idea. He sold it. It worked. It was great. It raised tremendous amount of funds.

But they're always with feigned words; that is, deceitful words. Trying to make merchandise out of you. The shepherd when he looks at the flock, his heart and desire is to feed the flock of God in obedience to the command of Jesus, Feed my sheep. Or as Peter said in the previous epistle, "Feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2). The wolf always when he sees the flock is trying to figure out how he can fleece the flock of God. There are those whose whole attempt and goal is to fleece the flock of God. A true shepherd seeks to feed the flock of God. And so they will make merchandise of you and then Peter's telling us their day is coming. God is patient. God gives them the chance to repent. Just like He gave us opportunities to repent from our sin, He gives them opportunities to repent.

but their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbers not (2:3).

In other words, their day is coming. And now he goes to the Old Testament to show that though God is patient, there comes a time when you can exhaust the patience of God.

There is a time we know not when, a line we know not where that marks the destiny of men twixt sorrow and despair. There is a line though by men unseen, once it has been crossed even God Himself in all His love has sworn that all is lost.

A person can go over that line. Their damnation slumbers not. God is patient. God is long-suffering. But going back to the Old Testament,

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2:4);

There is a day of judgment coming for the unrighteous. For those that rebel against the authority of God. And those angels that rebelled against the authority of God, it says, "God did not spare them, those that sinned, but He cast them down to Tartarus. This is the only place where this word is used in the Bible, the word Tartarus. It is translated hell but it is the darkest place of Hades. It's a place where the fallen angels have been incarcerated. "But cast them into Tartarus, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

This is an interesting phrase and an interesting thought. In the book of Revelation when God's judgment comes upon the earth, John sees a star fall from heaven with a key to the bottomless pit. And he opens the bottomless pit and there comes the smoke out of it and out of it these hordes of spirit beings, demonic beings that are released to torment people upon the earth.

There are some who believe that these angels, who are kept in Tartarus are so fierce that God has chained them for man's sake but that they will be released for a short time during the great tribulation period and will bring havoc upon the earth such as the world has never seen. We do know that that time of great tribulation will be a time of God's wrath and judgment and it will be a time of great tribulation such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again.

"God did not spare the angels who sinned,"

And He spared not the old world, but He saved Noah and the eighth person [the seven other family members], a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood upon the world of the ungodly (2:5);

God waited a long time. Noah was close to a hundred years building the ark in which God was giving man opportunity to repent. But there came that day when Noah went into the ark and God shut the door and then God spared not the old world, but destroyed it with the flood, sparing only Noah and his family.

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes He condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that afterwards should live ungodly lives (2:6);

So the flood is an example to people, a warning to people who are living ungodly lives. God will let you get by with it for a while. But there will come a day of judgment whose damnation slumbers not. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the wickedness, the evil of the cities, the wanton lifestyles, the public pressure by the homosexuals. God allowed that to happen. He allowed it to go on. But then He destroyed the city as an example to those who would seek to live this ungodly lifestyle.

And He delivered that just Lot, who was vexed with the filthy manner of living of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing (2:7,8),

He saw what was going on. He heard the filth that was coming out.

and it vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds (2:8);)

Some of you that are in the workplace and you hear the things and you see the things that people of the world are doing, the things that they're talking about and you find that inside, it is vexing to your righteous spirit. It's hard and it's difficult to see the things that are happening and to hear what they are saying. Actually, if you're just watching the news, the same thing is true. What they are saying and what you see, it vexes your righteous spirit. And so Lot, living among these people, living among this ungodliness, found that he was stirred up within. His righteous spirit was vexed by what was going on. But God delivered Lot before He brought the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And Peter says,

For the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2:9):

Lot becomes a classic illustration and a type of the church. Noah is a type of the hundred and forty-four thousand Israelites who will be sealed of God to survive through the great tribulation. We do know that God will seal a hundred and forty-four thousand and they will be protected from these judgments that are coming and God will preserve them through the great tribulation period. Noah becomes the type. God sealed him and he weathered the flood.

Lot is a type of the church whom God delivered before He brought His judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. You remember when the angels were heading down to Sodom to destroy the city, and they stopped by Abraham there in Hebron, and they said, Shall we reveal to him what we're going to do? And they said, Well, yeah, I suppose. And so they shared with Abraham that they had been dispatched because the wickedness of Sodom had come to the attention of God and they were dispatched to destroy the city because of its wickedness.

And you remember Abraham questioned and he said, Shall not the Lord of the earth be just? Shouldn't God be fair? What if there are fifty righteous men, he started on high and came down. What if there are fifty righteous men in the city? Would you destroy the righteous with the wicked? That doesn't seem to be fair. God assured him that if there were fifty righteous, the city would be spared. Abraham went for forty, thirty, twenty, down to ten. And he received the promise, If there are ten righteous that God will spare the city for the ten righteous.

When they came to the city of Sodom and the men of Sodom sought to sexually rape them, they smote the men with blindness and they said to Lot, Get out of here, Lot, we're going to destroy this place. And in the morning, the angels led Lot and his two daughters and his wife out. They said, Hurry, we cannot destroy this place until you are out of here. Why? Because God when He brings His judgment will not destroy the righteous with the wicked.

We the church do experience tribulation. Jesus said, "In this world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). But there's a vast difference between the tribulation that you have as a child of God and the great tribulation that's going to come upon the world. For as a child of God the tribulation that you face comes from Satan. He is the originator, the author of the tribulation that we face. The great tribulation will come and proceed from God. They cry, "The day of His wrath has come; who shall be able to stand" (Revelation 6:17)?

Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by the judgment of God. And thus, God delivered that righteous man Lot for "God knows how to deliver the righteous, but to reserve the ungodly for that day of judgment to be punished." So God knows how.

But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government (2:10).

Now he's coming back to these false teachers. God is going to deal with them. Their damnation slumbers not. He didn't spare the angels that sinned. He didn't spare the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah nor the pre-flood generation. And "chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government."

They are presumptuous, they are selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas the angels, which are greater in power and might, do not bring railing accusations against them before the Lord (2:10,11).

Jude speaks about how when Michael the archangel, he and Satan were having a dispute over the body of Moses. It would appear that Michael and Satan were on the same level as far as angelic beings go. They seem to be in the same category, the same class. Both of them extremely powerful, influential angels. And here they are contending with each other over the body of Moses. We do read that in the final analysis and in the final end, it will be Michael and Satan again. Michael and his angels fighting against Satan and his angels and Michael prevails and God's kingdom of righteousness will stand forever.

But in the dispute, it said that Michael did not bring a railing accusation against him but said, The Lord rebuke thee (Jude 1:9). So these people, though they're not afraid to make railing accusations against the angels or against Satan. And I'm sort of bothered when they make light of Satan and they talk about how they're going to do this and that against him. I really don't want any direct dealings with that fellow at all. I with Michael want to keep the Lord between him and me. I don't want direct dealings, just the Lord rebuke thee. And keep the Lord, that's a safe distance. If you're behind the Lord, you're alright.

But these, as natural brute beasts (2:12),

These are like animals, natural brute beasts, oxen and so forth, lions, wolves. "But these, as natural brute beasts,"

made to be taken and destroyed, they speak evil of the things that they don't understand; and they shall utterly perish in their own corruption [their destiny]; and they shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. These are spots and are blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you (2:12,13);

Spots and blemishes. The spot was an inherent defect; the blemish was an acquired defect. We read that “Jesus who was our sacrifice was as a Lamb without spot or blemish” (1 Peter 1:19). No sin, no inherent sin. Born of the Father’s seed, and no acquired blemish, a perfect Lamb. But “these people are spots and blemishes when they feast with you.”

Their eyes are full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin (2:14);

It’s just their whole life. It just seems to be inbred, ingrained in them.

and they beguile unstable souls: a heart they have that’s exercised with covetous practices; they are cursed children (2:14):

And so these false teachers, their destiny is awaiting them. They are a curse to the church.

They have forsaken the right way, and they’ve gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But he was rebuked for his iniquity: that dumb donkey speaking with a man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet (2:15,16).

Balaam (Numbers chapters 22-25), an extremely interesting character that I confess I don’t understand, this fellow was sort of into, it would appear, witchcraft, divining. Sort of a witch doctor who could put curses on people. And he developed quite a reputation for his ability to put curses on people. When Balak, the king of Moab, saw that the children of Israel were going to pass through his land, he wanted to curse them. And so he sent his servants over to Mesopotamia to contact Balaam and offered him certain sums if he would come and curse these people that were passing through his land. And Balaam prayed and the Lord spoke to him. Now this is the difficulty that I have. Here’s this guy using divinations and enchantments and so forth, and yet God spoke to him. And God told him, You’re not to go and you’re not to curse these people. These are my people. And so Balaam went out and he told the messengers from Balak, I’m sorry I can’t come and there’s no curse or enchantment that I can bring against these people. These are God’s people. Nothing I can do.

The messengers came back to King Balak and they said, He won’t come. And Balak said, We didn’t offer him enough. Go back and offer him a lot more. Tell him we’ll make him a very rich man if he’ll come and curse these people. And with this offer of great riches, and they say every man has his price and the offer of great riches, Balaam was enticed by that. And he prayed again. Now the Lord revealed His direct will the first time he prayed. But now in the permissive will, God said, Alright, if you insist, go. But just be careful, don’t go beyond my word. And so Balaam began the journey the next morning on his donkey and you know the story. How that the donkey saw the angel of the Lord and three times he stopped until Balaam took his stick and began to beat the donkey and that’s when the donkey turned and said, Do you think it’s right to beat me these three times? Ever since you owned me, have I ever been predisposed to do something like this before? And then his eyes were opened. He saw the angel standing there and the angel said, You better be thankful for that little donkey. Had he not stopped, I would have had your head. And Balaam said, I’ll go back, I’ll go back. And the Lord warned him, No, you’ve come this far. You go ahead and go but don’t go beyond the word of the Lord.

So when Balaam got there, he had the king build an altar on the mountain overlooking the children of Israel and he began to prophesy as they offered the sacrifices and he prophesied blessings upon Israel. The king stopped him and said, No, no, no, I brought you to curse them. Don’t bless them. Took him to another hill and the same thing. Took him to another hill, same thing. Another hill, and this time he didn’t even wait for the sacrifice. He just began to prophesy the blessings. And so the king clapped his hands and he said, Stop, stop. He said, I intended to make you a wealthy man. But your God has kept you from the riches.

Now Balaam saw these great riches flying away. And so he said, I told your messengers in the beginning I couldn't curse them. There's no divination or enchantment because they're God's people. But I'll tell you what. I can counsel you and advise you on how to bring a curse on them. The God that they serve is a jealous God, He doesn't want them serving any other gods. And if you can entice them to serve your gods, then their God will smite them. I can't do it directly. But this ungodly horrible advice from this man Balaam.

And so he is used here as an example of these false teachers because it was for the money, for the greed, the desire for the rewards that had been offered which he could not get legitimately through a legitimate prophecy. And so he went to the false teaching in order to bring the curse upon the people. And we know the results as we read it there in the book of Numbers.

These false teachers are wells without water (2:17),

If you were going through a long stretch of desert in the days of the people who were coming west in their covered wagons, it's been hot, it's been dry, the horses are tired and you're weary and you're thirsty. The kids are asking for water. And someone has said, You pass them and you're saying, Do you know of any water? Yeah, up about five miles there's supposed to be a spring. And so you head for that spring. You get there and it's dry. Wells without water. There's no life-giving water. And the things that these people say don't quench the real thirst of the Spirit. They leave you dry, they leave you dying, really.

they are clouds that are carried with a tempest (2:17);

That is, no rain. You see the clouds coming and there's hope, maybe we'll get some rain. But they're carried by the tempest but no rain.

to whom the mist [or the blackness] of darkness is reserved for ever (2:17).

It is interesting. We have one word, Tartarus, where the angels who sinned were being incarcerated. There's another word, abusso, which is translated the pit or sometimes the bottomless pit. And that is a place also for the incarceration of spirit beings. Satan will be incarcerated in the abusso for a thousand years while Jesus is reigning on the earth.

There is another place called Hades and that's in the center of the earth and Jesus spoke about it in Luke chapter sixteen. But then the final place of judgment for the wicked, for the ungodly will not be hell or Hades, but it will be a place called Gehenna. So one day, death and Hades will deliver up the dead that are in them to stand before the great white throne judgment of God and death and Hades will be cast into Gehenna. This is the second death.

Jesus described Gehenna as a place of outer darkness. Man has been probing for the limits of space. The more we are able to refine the capacities of the telescopes, the further we are able to probe into space, we find that there are galaxies out there. How far would you have to go until you came to an area so far out even of the universe that no light from the universe would reach there? That's probably where Gehenna is. Outer darkness, Jesus said.

Men, He said, will not come to me because "they love darkness rather than light" (John 3:19). Men who love darkness rather than light will be spending eternity in outer darkness. Years ago when I was a boy, we took a vacation up into Oregon, we went into the Oregon caves. Down there in the Oregon caves, the ranger who was guiding us through brought us to a place deep there within the caves and he said, Now we're going to turn off all the lights and don't anyone use a flashlight or whatever. All the lights are going to be turned off and you are going to experience total darkness. And I'll tell you what, total darkness is a very weird kind of an experience. Absolute total darkness.

As a kid, of course, we would wave our hands in front of our faces to see if we could see any kind of a movement and nothing, nothing, total darkness. And after a little bit, it begins to press on you. Gehenna. Here it says the blackness to whom the blackness of darkness. The word translated mist is actually blackness. The blackness of darkness is reserved forever.

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity (2:18),

That is, these false teachers and what an apt description, great swelling words of vanity. Actually in the Old Testament, of the false prophets, one of their hallmarks were words of vanity. In Ezekiel 13:8 it said, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because you have spoken vanity, and has seen lies, behold, I am against you." And so they speak great swelling words of vanity or nothingness.

they allure through the lusts of the flesh (2:18),

They use the lust of man's flesh for their bait. They bait you. They know how to touch the buttons that get you excited. And they appeal to the lust of our flesh. The lust for money or power. In the Satanic cults, the thing that they are promising these kids is power. You can control other people and you can have the powers of darkness and so forth and bring curses and all. And this thought of power is attractive and thus, "they allure or they bait through the lusts of the flesh,"

and through much wantonness (2:18),

Wantonness is an open flaunting of sin. They deceive and draw back into captivity,

those who have once escaped and they have once been in error but they are brought back into the life that they had once escaped from. For while they promise them liberty (2:18,19),

Freedom, free sex, free love. Appealing to the lusts of the flesh. Yet in reality,

they themselves are slaves of corruption (2:19):

And they bring you into corruption. As we pointed out this morning, the more you feed lust, the more it grows. You don't dare feed any lust of the flesh because any lust that you feed only grows and as it grows, demands more until it ultimately takes you over and becomes your master and you become its slave. Look around the world today and see how many people who have become enslaved by their own lust! They are a slave to their own lust and passions.

And he tells us,

for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (2:19).

Whatever it is that takes control over your life, you become in bondage to it. We are in a sense slaves to Jesus Christ. We've accepted Him as our Lord and as our Master. We have willingly submitted ourselves to be His slaves. And we've discovered, to be a slave of Jesus Christ is much better than to be a slave of Satan or to be a slave even to our own flesh. Because in becoming a slave to Jesus Christ, I become free. This glorious freedom that we have in Jesus that I am no longer forced by my lust to do those things that were destroying me! And so the glorious freedom that we have in Christ as a servant and as a slave of Jesus Christ!

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein (2:20),

They've been delivered once. They've "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And they are again entangled therein,"

and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 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 (2:20,21).

They're actually in worse condition in that state of going back into the things from which you had once been delivered. And that is the fruit of the false teaching. It brings you back into the bondage of the things of the flesh.

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned again to his own vomit; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2:22).

They're following their nature. It's just the nature of a dog to return to its vomit. It's just the nature of the pig to wallow in the mud. Just his nature. And so they follow the things of the human nature, turning back to the old ways. Brings up an issue that I'm not really prepared to deal with because I think that there are scriptures on both sides of the issue and thus I refuse to take an issue or take a side.

If they return to their old nature, does that mean they were always a pig? And when they were in church and going through the motions they had been washed and they looked like the rest of us but really inside they were still pigs. And they return to the wallowing in the mire. Don't know. Is it possible to lose one's salvation? Don't know.

But I'll tell you what. I don't intend to take a chance. I'm not going to presume upon the grace of God. I'm not going to say let us sin freely that grace may abound. I'm not going to leave my Savior's side. I'm not going to cease from abiding in Him. And to me the whole issue is settled by abiding in Jesus and there's no issue. Abide in Christ, no problem. You're eternally secure. And so I stay away from taking that issue because I don't want to give anybody a false assurance.

The false teachers were assuring people, You can go ahead and do that. That's alright. No problem. Go ahead. And through the encouragement of the false teacher, they were being ensnared from the things that they once escaped from. And thus went back to the wallowing in the mire.

I don't want to encourage anybody in sin or in following after the lust of their flesh. That you're going to be alright. I don't know that you're going to be alright. There's a lot of scriptures that would seem to indicate that you're not going to be alright. And thus the false teachers gave assurances to them and as the result, they were ensnared again from the things from which they were once delivered. It had been better for them never to have known the knowledge of Jesus Christ than to know it and to turn back from it. Back to the old ways.

Father, we thank You again for the privilege of studying the word and Lord, help us to be true to the word. And Lord, help us to be on guard against the false teachers, the deceivers. Those who would make merchandise of the Gospel and of the people, taking financial advantage, doing it for filthy lucre's sake. Lord, You said that we have freely received, we should freely give. Help us, Lord, to do just that. In Jesus' name, Amen.