

“The corruption false teachers have.” (7)

You can't help but notice that Peter has been speaking really harshly and strongly about these false teachers so far in his **second letter**. He informed us about the damage these false teachers can and do cause in **2 Peter 2:1-3**. He informed us that God sees what they are doing and they will certainly not go unpunished for it in **2 Peter 2:4-9**. And today in **2 Peter 2:10-17** Peter is going to inform us of just how corrupt these false teachers can be.

Now please remember a false teacher is not someone who is teaching something out of ignorance. A false teacher is not someone who holds a different opinion from you. These people are very much aware that what they are teaching is false, they are very much aware that they are using deception to gain a following. And so Peter is describing a specific type of person here, a person who was once a true Christian but has now fallen from grace.

Before we get into our text today let me share with you a story about a government official who was brought before the court for corruption charges. At the height of a political corruption trial, the prosecuting attorney attacked a witness. "Isn't it true," he bellowed, "that you accepted five thousand pounds to compromise this case?" The witness stared out the window, as though he hadn't heard the question. The prosecutor again blared, "Isn't it true that you accepted five thousand pounds to compromise this case?" The witness still did not respond. Finally, the judge leaned over and said, "Sir, please answer the question." "Oh," the startled witness said, "I thought he was talking to you."

Now I don't know about you but if I were that judge I would find that very insulting. And insulting those who are in authority is something that these false teachers are very good at doing. **2 Peter 2:10-12** "Especially those who indulge their fleshly desires and who despise authority. Brazen and insolent, they are not afraid to insult the glorious ones, yet even angels, who are much more powerful, do not bring a slanderous judgment against them before the Lord. But these men, like irrational animals – creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed – do not understand whom they are insulting, and consequently in their destruction they will be destroyed."

Now notice how Peter describes these false teachers. He says they indulge in their fleshly desires, he says they are brazen and insolent. And as a result of their inner character they behave more or less like irrational animals. And let me tell you loved ones people who behave like irrational animals have absolutely no respect for authority. Peter talked about submission to our local authorities in **1 Peter 2:13-17** but here in **2 Peter 2:10** Peter says these false teachers despise authority. Submission is not in their vocabulary but what is in their vocabulary is the way they speak about the glorious ones.

Now who are the glorious ones that Peter has in mind here? Well if we keep the text in its context, it's clear he's speaking about angelic beings. In a parallel passage to this, **Jude** describes the very same situation in **Jude 8+9** "Yet these men, as a result of their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and insult the glorious ones. But even when Michael the archangel was arguing with the devil and debating with him concerning Moses' body, he did not dare to bring a slanderous judgment, but said, "May the Lord rebuke you!"

In other words Peter is saying that these false teachers would speak evil of fallen angels which is something that the angels who have greater power would never do. Look again at **2 Peter 2:12** "But these men, like irrational animals – creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed – do not understand whom they are insulting, and consequently in their destruction they will be destroyed."

Once upon a time, a donkey found a lion's skin. He tried it on, strutted around, and frightened many animals. Soon a fox came along, and the donkey tried to scare him, too. But the fox, hearing the donkey's voice, said, "If you want to terrify me, you'll have to disguise your voice."

You see loved ones, clothes may disguise a fool, but their words will give them away. And all that comes from these false teacher's lips is corruption. So not only are they speaking evil against fallen angelic beings, Peter says they are speaking evil of things that they haven't got a clue about. I've known people who have come into our assemblies and made a condemning judgment statement on a certain person or situation.

And not only did they condemn the person or the situation they went ahead and condemned the leadership too, totally unaware that the leadership was already dealing with the situation. And they do all that without knowing the whole situation. They come in and condemn a one month old Christian for smoking, totally oblivious to the fact of where that person has come from. Totally oblivious to fact that, that very same Christian has in one month stopped smoking cannabis and getting drunk.

I was driving along the road the other day when I got stuck behind a learner driver and as I was getting frustrated I saw a sticker on the back of the car which says, 'You too were once a learner driver. Please be patient.' And I think we very often forget as Christians what our journey was like in the beginning. And so these false teachers have this condemning attitude and despise authority.

They speak evil about things they don't know the whole story about and in doing so they corrupt themselves. **Jude 10** "But these men do not understand the things they slander, and they are being destroyed by the very things that, like irrational animals, they instinctively comprehend." And just as a side note loved ones, if the Bible condemns those who speak evil of fallen angels, what does that say of those who speak evil of fallen individuals? We shouldn't be in the business of speaking evil against those who have fallen away or gone astray with their teaching.

Peter continues in **2 Peter 2:13** "Suffering harm as the wages for their harmful ways. By considering it a pleasure to carouse in broad daylight, they are stains and blemishes, indulging in their deceitful pleasures when they feast together with you."

Have you ever wondered how a worm gets inside an apple? Now you might think the worm burrows in from the outside. But it doesn't, scientists have discovered that the worm comes from inside. But how does he get in there? Simple. An insect lays an egg in the apple blossom. Sometime later, the worm hatches in the heart of the apple, then eats his way out.

You see loved ones, sin, like the worm, begins in the heart and works out through a person's thoughts, words, and actions. And these false teachers are not afraid to speak evil of others or even show it in their lives. Peter says these guys revel with great pleasure, they love to carouse. Have you ever seen those police programmes where they follow the police around at night in certain city centres?

You can't help but notice the mess that some of these young people get into, they get drunk. They curse and swear and end up talking their clothes off for the cameras and then they usually end up in a fight somewhere. Well in some ways that's what Peter has in mind here. These false teachers revel in pleasure; it's the idea of going out and painting the town red as we would say.

But this is taking it to the extreme, it's extreme because they don't hide it; they think its great acting like this even during the day. Peter says, like stains and blemishes, they carouse in their deceptions while they feast with you. Now what does Peter mean here? He means they take advantage of gathering Christians.

We've had some interesting visitors here at Great Barr over the years, we've had a few men who have come in and said, 'God has a message for them to deliver to the Christians here today!' And I usually ask them when God told them they were to speak to us and they would say two nights ago and so I would usually say well I guess my message is more important because God told me last night.

Now obviously I made that second part up, but there are people who come into our worship assemblies expecting something from us, whether its money or a special place of spiritual honour. But we always need to be careful because these false teachers are very skilled in the art of deception, and so they will come in and take advantage us.

Listen to how Peter describes how they work and how corrupted they are. **2 Peter 2:14** "Their eyes, full of adultery, never stop sinning; they entice unstable people. They have trained their hearts for greed, these cursed children!" Peter says these guys are full of corruption, their eyes are full of adultery, their eyes and their heart are so corrupt. So these false teachers come into our assemblies teaching one thing but practising another.

What did Jesus say about adultery? Jesus says in **Matthew 5:28** "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart". You see loved ones; these people are a danger not only to themselves but also to other Christians, especially the young immature Christian or unstable people as Peter tells us next.

**1 Peter 2:14** "Their eyes, full of adultery, never stop sinning; they entice unstable people. They have trained their hearts for greed, these cursed children!" Peter says they can't help themselves, they can't stop sinning, which again tells us just how corrupt they are. They take advantage of unstable people but notice what Peter says about their heart here. He says they have trained their hearts for greed, now what does that mean?

She owns a string of hotels. She owns the Empire State Building. She is a billionaire. Yet, in **September 1989** **Leona Mindy Rosenthal Helmsley** was convicted of 33 counts of tax evasion, for which she spent time in prison. According to **Time magazine**, she emerged as a penny-pinching tyrant who tried to stiff just about everybody. No amount of money was too small to fight over. After the sudden death of her only son at age 40 in **1982**, she sued and won the lion's share of his estate, **\$149,000**, leaving his four children with **\$432** each and his widow with **\$2,171**.

Now this is a woman who knows what she wants and will go to any length to get it. She has become very skilled at getting money out of people and any situation she can. These false teachers are also very skilled in the art of deception in order to get what they want. No wonder Peter calls them cursed children. No wonder Peter says to us grow Christian but be careful.

Now I've suggested a few times that I believe that these false teachers were once true Christians and one of the reasons I believe this is because of what Peter says next. **2 Peter 2:15+16** **"By forsaking the right path they have gone astray, because they followed the way of Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet was rebuked for his own transgression (a dumb donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the prophet's madness)"**.

Peter says they have forsaken the right path and gone astray. Think about it, it is hard to forsake what you never had or to go astray if you were never in the right way in the first place. This is a very sad picture **isn't it?** Most people when they fall away we never see them again, some go back into the world and some go along to some other religious group. But this just shows us how far a person can fall from the Lord.

You know I used to wonder how anyone can get to that level of corruption, especially knowing they were faithful Christians for many years. But now I don't have to wonder anymore because Peter has just told us. Peter says just like the prophet Balaam, they were swayed by the wages of unrighteousness.

It's interesting that Peter mentions the wages of unrighteousness in **2 Peter 2:13** in terms of the eternal compensation one receives for their sins. But here in **verse 15**, the wages of unrighteousness refers to the momentary compensation one receives for their sins. In other words there's a price for everything in this world, the question is **how much is your soul worth?**

After Jesus was pleading with Judas not to betray Him, Jesus gave a command to Judas, He said in **John 13:27**, **"What you are about to do, do quickly."** By the way it's the only time in the Bible God and Satan gave a man the same command. **And do you know what John says?** John says in **John 13:30**, **"When I look back on it, what I remember is how dark it was when he left, the last thing I ever remember of Judas is walking out in the darkness"**. Because it's always dark when you sell out Jesus loved ones.

Over the centuries Judas has been so despised that we can't relate to him but we need to remember that the disciples could. The question they asked when Jesus said, **"One of you is going to betray me"** is **"Is it I? Could it be me?"** I think that's the question we're supposed to ask because I think if we look deep into our hearts, we will admit that there have been times in our lives when we have made some bad decisions for Jesus.

Think about it loved ones, Judas sold out Jesus for 30 pitiful pieces of silver but do you know something I've sold Jesus out for less than that. **Haven't you?** There have been times at work when someone starts a filthy joke and looking a little weird wasn't important to me. So I stayed there and listened to the joke and I sold out Jesus for a couple of minutes of thinking I was cool with my workmates. One of your friends says something that is absolutely blasphemous towards God and part of you wants to jump up and defend God but part of you says, **"I don't want my friends to think I'm a weirdo"**, so you keep your mouth shut. **Didn't you just sell out Jesus for a lot less than 30 pieces of silver?**

Or maybe you find yourself in bed with somebody you shouldn't be with; in a place you shouldn't be and for a couple of hours of physical pleasure you traded Jesus. Or you're late for an appointment and you know you ought to tell the truth, **"Well sorry I was irresponsible; I should have been here no matter what."** And so you say, **"Oh man, the traffic was so bad, sorry I just couldn't get here on time."** And for a few seconds of pride, you told Jesus to leave the room.

I mean loved ones we do it all the time for a lot less than 30 pieces of silver. Everyday Satan comes into your life and he comes into my life and says, **"Would you make a trade for Jesus today? What could I give you today for Jesus that would be a good deal?"**

These false teachers sold out Jesus on many levels and if we're not careful we too can sell out Jesus in much the same way. Now you remember the story of Balaam **don't you?** The story is found in **Numbers 22:22-35**, now we're not going to read it but let me give you a quick summary of what's happening.

Balaam is a seer and diviner who has been hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel, because Balak fears Israel's growing strength. And in the story we find a talking donkey, which God uses to make Balaam see the danger of following Balak's order. God turns Balaam's curses into blessings, and Israel will continue safely on its way, altogether unaware of either its danger or its rescue. Having seen the angel of the Lord with his threatening sword, the donkey tries three times to keep Balaam from going down that path. The tension heightens each time, but Balaam perseveres. Finally, God opens the animal's mouth, and it argues with Balaam, but the amazing thing is that it is Balaam who has misunderstood everything.

Now the point I want us to get from this is that Balaam was rebuked and restrained by a dumb donkey who spoke. Peter is saying how much more should we pay attention when it is the voice of an inspired apostle who seeks to rebuke and restrain the madness of false teachers.

Grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ but be careful Christian. If you listen to God and do what He says you will grow but if you listen to these false teachers, they will promise much but deliver nothing. **2 Peter 2:17 "These men are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm, for whom the utter depths of darkness have been reserved".**

There are people who promise the world to their children but they never deliver on the promise. There are some preachers who say come to Jesus and your life will be worry free. Come to Jesus and you will become rich in material goods. Peter says they are springs without water, they are mists carried by a storm and their eternal fate is awaiting them.

And so loved ones, it's my hope and prayer that everyone here will be like the Bereans. **Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."**

I want to encourage everyone here to examine everything I have preached today to see if what I'm preaching is true. Now Peter isn't finished talking about these false teachers yet, the next time we're together he is going to describe and explain what he means when he says they promise much but deliver nothing.