

Spiritual Survival: False Teachers Part 2

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Date: 04 August 2013

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- [0 : 0 0] 2 Peter 2, verse 12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed.
- And like beasts, they too will perish. They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to crouse in broad daylight. Their blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.
- But eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning. They seduce the unstable. They are experts in greed and a cursed brood. They have left the straightway and wandered off to follow Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness.
- But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey, a beast without speech, who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, blackest darkness is reserved for them.
- For they mouth empty, boastful words, and by appealing to the lustful desires of a sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promised them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity.
- [1 : 1 7] For a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.
- It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it, and then to turn their backs on the sacred command which was passed on to them. Of them the Proverbs are true, a dog returns to its vomit, and the sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.
- Okay, just ask Alex to come up now, and he'll be speaking to us from the other day. Just pray for him before he speaks.
- Alex? Okay, let's pray. Loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, and thank you for its availability to us in our own language.
- Lord, we just pray that you would teach us from it. We pray that you would help Alex this morning as he opens up this passage, Lord, and explains it to us, and explains to us what you have been teaching him from it, Lord, and pray that we would learn from it.
- [2 : 3 0] Help us, Lord, as I said already, not to be just hearers of the word, to be doers of it, and to be mindful and guardful against false teachers. And just pray that you would just bless Alex as he speaks to us, and bless us as we listen.
- We ask these things, Lord Jesus, in your name. Amen. Amen. Thanks, Ian. So before I start, if you'd like to just keep your Bibles open, because we're going to be really spending a lot of time looking at exactly what that passage says.
- So keep your Bibles open, and if you have your notice sheet, there's a blank sheet at the back of it, I think, so you can take notes, and there are pencils and pens at the back. If you'd like to put your hand up, Shane might give you one.

So you can take notes. Thank you. So it's been great, these last few weeks, preparing this, because this is a passage that, when I first looked at weeks ago, I was scratching my head, and I had no idea what it was on about.

So it was a great opportunity to really spend time looking at this passage, praying through it, speaking with people about it, and just have the Spirit, through the Word, and through other people, explain it to me.

[4 : 18] So that's what I'm going to try and do this morning, is to pass that message on to you, with the grace of God. So, my parents are keen gardeners, maybe that's where I get it from, but as a child, they would ask me, all that they would ask me to do in the garden, was to pull weeds.

I hated pulling weeds. It was boring and slow, and no matter what I did, no matter how good a job I did, I'd come back a week later, and they'd all be back again. But living on a farm, my parents are fairly clued in to what is a wanted plant, and what is not wanted.

So they know the difference, for example, between a rose and a buttercup, a hogweed, and a hollyhock. However, a while ago, they asked me to identify a flower.

It's up there on the screen, and it's there on top of the elephant. They were admiring the beauty of its colour, of its shape, of its texture, of its symmetry, but they weren't sure what it was.

They didn't know what it was called, and they couldn't remember planting it anywhere. I took one look at them, and I warned them, get rid of it straight away, dispose of it, root it out, dig it out, kill it.

[5 : 44] Any roots that might still exist, rip them out as well. In fact, once they had done that, I advised them to keep watch, and at the very first sign of it re-emerging, to spray it with weed killer, so they would kill it down to the roots, and destroy it completely.

You see, the false teachers in today's passage, are very much like this nuisance weed, called bindweed. They took, they look the part, they fit comfortably into our gardens, even leaving a lovely floral display, so we don't think they're harmful.

The weeds are there in the ground, waiting for the right conditions, or the right plants, to latch onto. They wind their way onto, or into, a host plant, and they start taking it over, stopping its growth, as it robs the plant of daylight, air, and often, its very life.

Today, this passage, also comes with a stark warning, to us all. We, the church, or the family of Jesus Christ, are in danger, of being taken over, having our growth stunted, or worse, stopped, by false teachers.

Parading is harmless, if not beautiful, and very often, plausible, they let us believe, that there is no danger, and they might even improve us, or add something, to our church.

[7 : 16] False teachers, are as prevalent today, as they were, at the time of Peter, writing this letter. This warning, is not just for teachers, in churches, or Sunday schools.

We all play a teaching role, in some ways. Be it on a Sunday morning, or at home with our kids. How we live out our daily lives, in work, or at home, will be seen, and noticed, as what our teaching is, and what our message is.

So we need to be very careful, that our lifestyle, speaks well of Jesus, and reflects our message, and that our message, about Jesus, is backed up, by our lifestyle, or our actions.

So how do we recognize, a false teacher? Who will they be? Let's look at the word. Chapter 2, verse 1.

But there were also, false prophets, among the people. Just as, there will be, false teachers, among you. They will secretly, introduce, destructive heresies, even denying, the sovereign Lord, who brought, who bought them, bringing swift destruction, on themselves.

[8 : 33] Who will they be? They will be among us. They will be, teachers of the word, church leaders, youth club leaders, Sunday school teachers, parents.

They are people, who claim to know Christ, but whose lifestyle, and message, show that they are not, living as Christians. Those who live, in such a way, that they have surrendered, to God's word, his authority, and those, whose very nature, has been transformed, by the grace, of Jesus.

Their lifestyle, and their behavior, will give them away. Let's read verse 12. But these men, blaspheme in matters, they do not understand.

They are like, brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught, and destroyed. And like beasts, they too will perish. This means, that they are insolent.

They are guilty, of arrogant conduct, or insulting, bold behavior, or attitude. To blaspheme, is to simply, speak evil of. A brute beast, is translated, literally as, irrational.

[9 : 45] Verse 13. They will be paid back, with harm, for the harm, they have done. Their idea of pleasure, is to carouse, in broad daylight. They are blots, and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures, while they feast with you.

Well, that means simply, that they are licentious. They are lacking restraint, or ignoring societal standards. Disregarding, accepted rules, particularly, with regard to, sexual conduct.

They do, during the daytime, what others would, shamefully do, during the night. Such is their disregard, for societal standards. Verse 14.

With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning. They seduce the unstable, they are experts in greed, and a cursed brood. They're immoral.

Their eyes are full of adultery, means that they are always, looking for a woman, with which to commit adultery. Always. They are completely immoral. Every time they see a woman, there's only one thing on their mind.

[10 : 51] And these people, are in our churches, and they think it's okay. Verse 14b, to 16, says, they are experts in greed, and a cursed brood.

They have left a straight way, and wandered off, to follow the way, of Balaam, son of Beor, who loved the wages, of wickedness. But he was rebuked, for his wrongdoing, by a donkey.

A beast without speech, who spoke with a man's voice, and restrained, the prophet's madness. They are greedy, looking for ways, to feather their own nest.

They are ruled, by money and personal gain. So that very quickly, is a snapshot, of a false teacher's, lifestyle, or their behaviour.

But what does all this, actually look like? Well, very simply put, they're sleazy. They're men, checking out women, all the time, and lusting after them. They are women, who romanticise, about either, how they wish, men would behave, or how they, themselves, could look.

[12 : 00] Obsessing about, physical appearance, and self-gratification, and doing so blatantly, during daytime hours, shamelessly, not even hiding it, until the privacy of darkness, or night time.

Jesus isn't their God, they worship themselves. They are also, obsessed with money. Now I don't mean, for example, those who meet, along the street, and say, oh, I love that top you're wearing, oh, thanks, pennies, fiver.

No, these people, are more the Balaam type. Seriously greedy. I didn't know much, about Balaam either, until I started reading, but it's a story, found in the book of Numbers, chapters 22 to 24, we don't have time, to read it now, but I tried to pick out, the main points.

So here we go, as a quick summary. King Balak, is intimidated, by the Israelites, so he sends word, to the prophet Balaam, to come to him. He asked Balaam, to curse the Israelites, and offered him, great wealth, and great status.

God made it, very clear to Balaam, that he was not to go, or to curse the Israelites. But Balaam went anyway, lured by the promise, of riches, and status. Such was his insistence, on doing things, his own way.

[13 : 19] He didn't even seem, to be aware, that eventually, he was arguing, with a donkey. God had to speak to him, through a donkey, to get his attention. It's a great story, and I do encourage you, to read it, in Numbers 22 to 24, when you get the chance.

But, who's the donkey now? Thankfully, Balaam realised, he had sinned, and had been driven, by greed, for the wealth, and status, that had been promised.

These false teachers, that we're talking about today, they too are experts, in greed. They're an accursed brood, who love the wages, or the pleasure, of wickedness.

Do we, let the pursuit of money, drive us blindly, into compromising situations? Do we, perk up our ears, and smile, when we hear things like, if you follow Jesus, he will bless you, and make you happy, and rich?

This is how, false teachers operate. They lure us in, by appealing, to our innermost desires, and making them, seem good. So, having looked at, some of the ways, to identify, a false teacher, by their lifestyle, or their behaviour, let's now take a look, at their message, or their boasting.

[14 : 42] What do they say, about what they believe? What is their message? Verse 17, if you, if you would follow. These men, are springs without water, and mists, driven by a storm.

Blackest darkness, is reserved for them. They promise, lots of attractive, and satisfying things, like lovely, cool springs of water, which really is a treat, when you're travelling, in the hot, Turkey area, as the readers, of this letter were.

Verse 18, for they mouth, empty, boastful words, and, by appealing, to the lustful desires, of sinful human nature, they entice people, who are just escaping, from those, who live in error.

They promise them, freedom, from moral restraint, telling them, that because, they have been saved, they can now, do whatever they want, because they're saved, by grace. God is a loving, and a forgiving God, so all you need to do, is say sorry, after a slip up, and then just, carry on as before, doing what you want.

They speak, impressive words, enticing new believers, away from their, unbelieving friends, appealing to their, lustful desires, as they do this. You're going to have, to use your imagination, we're going to take, a walk down, at main street, and I do apologise, in advance, for my, very poor attempt, at street talk.

[16 : 15] So imagine this, you're walking down the street, as a new believer, a guy comes up to you, and says, hey dude, you're looking, particularly, smiley, and slick today, what has you, grooving like that?

You innocently say, what's not to be happy about? Last week, at a camp, I heard the good news, about Jesus, opened up for me, and explained clearly, in response, logically, I submitted my life, hopes and plans, to him, as my Lord, and my saviour, trusting in what he did, on the cross, to make me right, with God.

Not by anything, I have done, or might do in the future, but what Jesus, has done on the cross, for me. Now, because of that, I'm confident, that I have life, in its fullness, now and forever, because he has forgiven me, and he loves me.

Oh cool, I'm a Christian too dude. Hey, you should come to my church, it's so cool and trendy. All the young people go there, I'm the worship leader. Hey, I see you've got calluses, on your digits, so you obviously, play the guitar.

So I'm sure, there'll be space, for you in the band. We is hip to the hop. And a person like you, could definitely, find a lady there. That sounds interesting, but what's the teaching like?

[17 : 39] Do you, do people, look out for each other, like a family? Is the life of the church, based on Jesus' teaching? His life, his death, his resurrection? Is the Bible central, to all that you do, and say?

Are you excited, about reaching out, in the community, to see those who are lost, reached by the good news? Oh dude, the teaching is awesome. We just sit around, and like, love Jesus.

Jesus. Our church, our church, spins, on spiritual freedom. It's what the Bible's, all about. We just want to be happy, and make each other happy, chillaxed, in our spirituality.

We don't have any, stodgy rules, or structure. The Christian life, is so liberating, and all because, our BFF, our best friend forever, JC, died, so we can be forgiven, and go to heaven.

It's what grace is all about. We are confident, of forgiveness, so live in freedom, and do what we want, with whoever we want. It's an awesome church.

[18 : 47] Okay, that sounds, pretty good, I think. I'm just going to go away, and think about that, and maybe come along, next Sunday. The speaker at camp, last week, was actually talking, about something, in 2nd Peter, and I just want, to check something out, first, that doesn't, quite sit right, with me.

Being in a church family, is kind of important, to me, so I want to make sure, that what you have, is what I need, and what is good, and what is right. Totally mate, and don't forget, if you come along, look out for me, you can't miss me, I'll be up the front, plucking the strings, and I'll get you hooked up, with some of our singles.

Ooh, ooh, ooh, before you go, have you heard of a writer, called Christopher Ash? He says in his book, Bible Delight, that the prosperity gospel, claims, if you become a Christian, God wants to bless you, and therefore, your bank statement, will become fatter, your house, will get better, bigger, your car, will get faster, your wife, if you have one, will get prettier, your husband, if you have one, will get more handsome, your children, if you have them, will get cleverer, and your health, will get better.

End of quote. So, come along, come along, and all will be well with you. You'll prosper. Come to us. End of street talk.

Well, maybe that's the kind of church you're looking for. Maybe it's worth a shot. Maybe that's why you're here this morning, checking us out. I hope not.

[20 : 23] It stinks. of two of the main issues in our churches today in Ireland. Liberal theology, where everything or anything goes, and the prosperity gospel, which claims that the Christian life is meant to be easy, plain sailing, and full of blessings.

Yes, there are blessings, but that's not what the Christian life is about. Let's go back to God's word. Verse 17. These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.

Blackest darkness is reserved for them. The promises that this dude was on about are just like the springs. Dry. These men are like springs without water and mists driven by a storm.

they promise satisfaction and success and completely disappoint. They are flitting here and there like a little pocket of mist caught in a storm blown all over the place.

They have no grounding. They have nothing to offer other than empty words which sound attractive but crumble when tested. They have no authority to promise us anything, let alone guarantee us wealth, success, or satisfaction.

[21 : 43] They are dry. Verse 19. They promise freedom while they themselves are slaves of depravity for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

They promise freedom but their promises are baseless because they themselves are slaves of depravity. Other translations say that they are slaves to sin and to corruption.

They are slaves to whatever has mastered them. And we've already learned what does master them. Insolence speaking evil of what they don't understand.

Licentiousness lacking any personal restraint and ignoring societal standards. Immorality eyes full of lust and greed ruled by money and personal gain.

They have nothing to offer us. Compare that with the precious promises we were reminded of in chapter 1 verse 3 when Simon was speaking. It says his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

[22 : 57] How? Is it through this bogus hipster church we've been offered? No. Read on. What does it say? Through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

That's a promise which is well grounded in biblical truth. Not in the baseless lies which can be offered by the latest fad. We have everything we need for life and for godliness.

He alone is sufficient for us. Not God plus something else but God alone is sufficient. How?

By our knowing him who called us by his own glory and goodness. If the lifestyle and the message of these teachers is false then they are living and talking contrary to the bible and its truth about that same sufficiency of Christ.

Therefore the consequences are clear and dire. Judgment will come on them and separation from God is guaranteed. It is one thing to turn your back on Christ but it's another one altogether to lead others astray.

[24 : 22] To lead others away from him. Look at verse 12 again they too will perish they will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done.

Verse 17 warns us further blackest darkness is reserved for them. The second half of verse 20 again they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

Last week we looked at the first part of this chapter. The warning was that the path of the false teachers leads to destruction. There is no sugar coating this truth I'm afraid.

False teachers will be destroyed. Has anyone noticed the elephant in the room? Well let's read verses 20 to 22.

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning.

[25 : 45] It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true.

A dog returns to its vomit and a sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud. It is a reasonable question to ask if these false teachers were in fact saved before they started to entice others away from the truth.

It says that they would have been better not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then turn their backs on it. This is a big question.

Is it possible to lose your salvation? It's a question that has had many books and probably libraries written about it. So to throw it in just towards the end of this talk is a little bit unfair but I can't ignore it completely.

The elephant needs to be dealt with. So I'll try and shed a small bit of light on that question by referring to a pastor and an author named John Piper who says very well that Peter explains to us in a proverb that we shouldn't be surprised at dogs characteristically return to their vomit and no matter how clean you make a pig on the outside if it is still a pig it will return to the muck or the mire.

[27 : 22] In other words those who leave the way of righteousness never to return simply show that their inner nature had never been changed. That's the end of the quote.

So it seems to me that what Mr. Piper, John, is saying is that true faith in Jesus changes us inwardly. Our very nature has been altered so that we cannot return to our old way of life.

Yes, we may slip up but we return to the cross in confession with gratitude as we'll be doing later as we meet around the Lord's table.

How do I know that I'm not a false teacher? How do you know that you're not? Because it all sounds scary when we start looking at ourselves especially when I look at my lifestyle and my message.

If I look deep enough into my own life I can easily find things that just don't add up. Sometimes I feel like I'm doing okay. That my lifestyle speaks clearly of my faith and my dependence on Jesus.

[28 : 37] I get good times with him. I'm putting him first in my decisions. I'm having good times of prayer and chat with him. I'm getting to church home group.

I'm wanting to see Jesus made famous by how I live and how I act. But then one little slip up. I go away for the weekend.

I break my routine and before I know it I've ignored God for two weeks, a month, half a year. I feel like I had been a nice clean pig but now I've just returned to the muck and I'm back to square one again.

Dirty and very piggy. it. So maybe I'm not saved after all. And all that punishment, destruction and harm is waiting for me too.

And maybe this is the same for some of you today and you think that you have no hope. And now we're all feeling slightly vulnerable and squirmish in our seats, aren't we? Our lifestyle just doesn't add up sometimes to what we say our message is.

[29 : 45] So how can we be sure that we are not false teachers? Well what is it we are teaching? What is our message? Let's look back at chapter 1 verse 3.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

So if that's not our message we're off the mark. If we are not saying that Jesus is enough that he has given us all we need that he is sufficient if we are saying that we are saved by grace but then we continue to live lacking any personal restraint or humility we have both our lifestyle and our message out of kilter with the message that God has given us all we need.

What are we to do with false teachers or false teaching? We cut out and remove the problem.

Like the bindweed in our garden we need to constantly be rooting it out at the first sign. Now I'm not suggesting we go around with a knapsack sprayer and we start dousing all these false teachers with weed killer or we start attacking them with a hoe but what we do is not let them get a grip in our church or in our thinking.

[31 : 17] We need to be looking out for it in our teachers, in our homes and in our own lives. We need to hold them to account, questioning them and what they say.

We measure every fine sounding argument against the truth of scripture. We check what the teacher teaches and how he or she lives.

In our own lives we need to be immersing ourselves in the truths of scripture so we will recognize false teaching. Chapter 1 verses 5 to 8 say make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to goodness knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance and to perseverance godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness and love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And if we skip ahead to verse 10 it says be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[32 : 48] We need our lifestyle and our message to be mastered by the Lord Jesus putting to death sin and untruth, living with an attitude of gratitude and confession.

confession. Let's pray. Heavenly Father thank you for your word.

Thank you for the scriptures. Thank you for the teachers that we have here in this church. Thank you for the truths that we have heard over the years and have brought us to a point of repentance, confession and thanksgiving.

thank you that your scripture, your word is true. It's been tested and it's trustworthy. And Lord please after what we've read this morning help us in our lives to be discerning, to discern the truth from the lies that we hear around us.

Please help us in this church to rise up good teachers of the word. That we will bring the truth of scripture into the places that we go in our work, in our home, as we meet together here, as our kids are taught upstairs in Sunday school.

[34 : 16] Help us to be raising up people who can use your word well, that can discern the truth from the lies. God's grace.

And thank you for Jesus, that he has made all this possible, that he has given us all that we need for life and godliness, all because of what he did for us on the cross, coming so that we can have forgiveness, that we can be raised to life anew by trusting in him and what he has done on the cross.

And we pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks, Ian.