

2Peter 11-11-25a

This is Friday, the 25th of November, 2011, the day after Thanksgiving, and we're continuing our study in the letter of 2 Peter. We pick up tonight in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 15. We'll take a moment as we begin to prepare our hearts by going to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we have many things to be thankful for and we appreciate the opportunity to live in this country and have the heritage and the freedom that we enjoy to give thanks and to reflect on the many ways that you've provided for us and watched over us in the past year and in the past days and hours. We thank you for your provision. We thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus and the salvation we have through him, the opportunities that we have in this age as believers in him and as members of his body and bride.

We thank you for this passage of scripture from the New Testament, which is our unique heritage in this dispensation, and we thank you for the truth it contains, and we pray that as we study it together, that God the Holy Spirit will make it perspicacious, help us to see its meaning and its applicability to ourselves individually and to our collective lives as families and as a church. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus would be glorified, and we ask it in his name. Amen.

As I said, we pick up now in 2 Peter, right in the middle of chapter 2. We've seen Peter make this emphasis on communication and communicators. He began this really at the end of the last chapter. He said, in the old days there were prophets, in the new days there are apostles, but they are guided, motivated, and informed by the same spirit.

They write, they speak, they prophesy, they apostolize as they are carried along by the Holy Spirit. So this is his point, and he is going to return to this after we come up out of this little valley we're in right now. Look ahead just a little bit at chapter 3. He says, Beloved, I have written you this second epistle.

In both of these letters I am stirring up your pure minds by way of reminder, so that you may be mindful of the words. This is his purpose. John, in his gospel, says these things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that believing you might have life through his name.

John states his purpose. Peter states the purpose for his two letters right at the beginning of chapter 3. I am writing that you may keep in mind, that you won't forget, that you will pay attention to and apply what? The words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of us the apostles of your Lord and Savior. So, as Christians, as New Testament believers, we have the Old Testament and the New Testament.

We have the prophets and we have the apostles. That's our heritage. And Peter says, I don't want you to lose track of this.

Now, in what way could we be deflected from the words that were spoken by the holy apostles and prophets? Well, that's what he's talking about right now. That's this little detour in chapter 2. It's not a detour, but really kind of an expansion and explanation. What is it that can happen? In 1 Peter, in that letter, he talked about lifestyle and how important it was to have application in relationship with God, walk with God, walk with one another, and faith, hope, and love, and all the things we saw in the first chapter, in the first letter.

In this second letter, he says, this message is so important, what the apostles have said and what the prophets, the foundation that they built on that was laid by the prophets. It's very important. And what Peter could see is that as his apostolic ministry was winding down, there was an attack on the word itself, on the record of what the prophets and the apostles had said.

It was getting twisted. It was getting diverted. It was becoming corrupted.

It was being reworked into something that it was never intended to be. Well, that process has continued all the way down to the present day. What's helpful about chapter 2 is Peter tells us exactly how and why it is getting corrupted so that we can be on our guard.

How do we know what is the true message? You know, it would be ideal if as soon as you get saved, you immediately enroll in Greek and Hebrew, and you take three or four, five, six semesters of each language. You get a Hebrew Bible. You get a Greek Bible.

Take a semester or two of Aramaic so that you can handle Daniel and Ezra and those portions of scripture that are in Aramaic, and just study it right out of the texts. Of course, you'd also have to take some hermeneutics and some textual criticism because not all of the texts agree. How do you know which reading is right when the different manuscripts have variations? And then, if you're going to interpret it, how do you know that your interpretation is correct? You need some systematic theology.

You need to understand categorically what the Bible has to say about itself, about God, about theology proper, about Christ, Christology, about angels, angelology. What about the church? Ecclesiology. What about salvation? Soteriology.

What about sin? Everything the Bible has to say about sin. You've got Hamartiology. And what about the Spirit? The ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Old Testament and the New, so you really need to take some pneumatology.

And what about last things and properly interpreting prophecy and figuring out what's now and what's later? You need some eschatology. Well, it's impractical for all of us to do this. So God has said, look, you haven't got time.

You'd starve to death while you're all trying to get through seminary. It's just not reasonable. So I'll just take a few of you and have a guy here and a guy there go through this training and get this

preparation, and the rest of you get together, let him work out what a passage means, and then I'll have him present the thing, and you don't have to go to all that trouble.

And hence you have pastors and teachers. And that's what guys like me do is save everybody else the trouble of going through all these years of education and hopefully rightly divide the word of truth so that everybody else can be all of the other professions and all of the other places and portions that are allotted in the body of Christ and in life in general. So it's a wonderful convenience.

And it's also a special privilege for those of us that do get the chance to really delve in in depth because we're like the ox treading around and around in the upper and lower millstone area. You just tie the ox to it, and he just goes around and around in circles, and people come and get the flour, and they go off and use it for various things, and he just goes around and around. But he gets to eat the stuff that falls off, you know, that other people don't pick up and carry away.

And so there is a compensation. If you're the ox that's going around in circles like I do, I get stuff, you know, that's sort of a bonus, a little compensation. But what is Peter talking about here? He says, look, you've got an awful lot of potential for problems.

What if somebody has got an agenda? What if they have other ideas? What if they are not rightly dividing the word of truth? What if they get co-opted or subverted or misdirected or confused? What then? Well, there are two sides of this coin. First of all, you have to be able to identify a guy that is messing it up. You have to identify a false teacher.

And Peter says, first of all, you've got to be aware of the fact that they're not going to come in with a great big black slouch hat on that says, you know, on a snidely whiplash mustache, I am a false teacher. They're not going to come in that way. No guy is going to come in and say, hi there, I'm a false teacher.

Just thought I'd infiltrate your group and lead everybody astray. Is that OK with you? I mean, that's not going to happen. So Peter says, look, first of all, you need to understand that these people are going to come in and not be easily identifiable.

It there's going to be a lot to commend and a lot to recommend them. You've got it there. There are subtler clues that you to watch for.

So what he's been telling us in chapter two is basically this is a crash course in false teacher identification. How can you know if somebody is messing it up? Because, you know, this I will tell you sort of an amusing come to pass in the church. Here's a church and old dear pastor so-and-so has has died or can't preach anymore.

Something's happened to him. So here's a church of, you know, many dozens of people and they need a new pastor. Got to shop for a new pastor because the old one is gone.

So they say, well, let's get some candidates. So they bring in candidates and. You've got to figure out, is this guy going to be any kind of a good pastor or not? So let's ask him some questions.

Well, it's kind of a catch 22, because if you know enough to test the pastor. Then. You know, he's you're acting like, you know, more than he does and you're going to test and see if his knowledge comes up to yours or not.

If you don't know as much as he does, which should be the case, so that he has something to teach you. How are you going to test him and and stump him? Well, what was Balaam's wife's name? You know, you're going to look up some trivia and try to try to stump him or, you know, are you going to ask him theological questions or you know what I mean? It's it's very difficult to just say, well, we're going to we're going to give a theological quiz and see if this guy can pass. If he if he believes what we believe and if he knows what we know, then we'll hire him as the pastor.

Well, the best you're going to get is what you already know. What you ought to do is say, OK. Tell me something I don't know and sit back and see if it makes any sense.

But of course, that's basically Bible class. That's every week. That's every every meeting.

So it's a challenge for a group to identify a pastor. Here's the thing in an ideal world. And in small churches, this happens and is much more possible than a large church.

What happens is that as time passes and as young men in the church grow up and mature, God will raise up someone inside the church who becomes a protege and a someone who can be brought along by your current pastor. And he pretty much can groom his own replacement and and teach him. And he's known to everybody.

And when the old guy kicks off, well, here's somebody else that's already been, you know, filling in when he's out of pocket or sick or whatever. And and he's a known quantity. You already know him.

You know what his theology is and, you know, hopefully he's been able to go get some training and get some tools and and can be prepared that the the elder pastor can equip him with a lot of the tools. He might need to take some Greek and Hebrew if he's going to really, you know, get into the exegetical side. But the theological and hermeneutical and.

Other kinds of training that are necessary to rightly divide the word of truth. The best place to get your pastor is from within your group. And he's already going to be of like mind.

He's going to be a known quantity. It's not like trying to date for a pastor. And, you know, on the basis of one or two dates, we're going to get married, which is pretty much what.

Trust me, it's what the candidating process is like. Well, Peter is saying, look, I can't tell you. And

he's not trying to tell us, here's how to find your pastor.

What he is saying is, here are the guys you don't want for a pastor. Here is a way to eliminate the bad ones. I can't tell you among the good ones which one you're going to choose.

He's not addressing that. But he's saying, here's a way to eliminate someone from consideration. And by the way, eliminate them from your fellowship because they are a destructive force, a false teacher, a minion from hell designed to to stop your progress.

So that's what chapter two is really about. He says, look, in the same way that there were false prophets that corrupted the people in the Old Testament, there will be false teachers in your day that are going to lead you astray. Now, you say, well, I don't think there are any false teachers in my church.

And I'm pretty sure there aren't any in our group. I think we would know by now. We're small enough.

We know everybody. We know each other. Nobody's spreading any heresies.

However, this information is still useful because what about the marketplace of ideas? What about ministries? What about all the other sources of potential teaching, radio, Internet, books, tapes, video? There's all kinds of other sources. And I have, as you know, encouraged you to get good teaching wherever you can find it. If you like the way Dr. Griswold preaches, listen to him preach.

If you like any of the other guys that you hear on the radio, I encourage you, please listen. Get the truth wherever you can. I think you know enough to be able to separate the wheat from the chaff.

I am not worried about somebody leading you into a cult. We've all studied together for a long time. And I think you're qualified to discern what is truth and what is error.

This is kind of what Peter is telling his group. He says, look, let me tell you the signs of false teachers. As you go out into the world, you're going to go into a community.

You might get scattered somewhere in Pontus or Galatia or Cappadocia. Maybe there's already a synagogue there. Maybe there's a group of Messianic believers there.

And maybe they've got a teacher. Well, should you join that group or should you move on to another town? How do you know? Here are the telltale characteristics of false teachers. So, after assuring them that God will preserve them, God knows how to preserve the godly for deliverance and how to reserve the unjust for punishment.

Don't try to punish them. Don't say, oh, there's a false teacher in this town. I better stay here and

pull the rug out from under him and make sure he doesn't lead anybody astray.

God knows how to reserve the ungodly for punishment. Let God deal with the false teachers. It's not your mission to put up a big sign and start a campaign and get him off the radio or get him out of the public eye or find some way to besmirch him.

Leave him in God's hands. Teachers get double blessing and they get double discipline from God anyway. And you don't want to be getting in the way of the double discipline.

So, that's what that first part is about. Even the angels don't go around bad-mouthing the evil. They know better than that.

They say the Lord will rebuke you. So, then we pick up in verse 12 where he says, These false teachers like natural brute beasts. Now, if you're unafraid to mark your Bible, I would make a mark where it says, Brute beasts.

De-circle beasts. You remember that. That's the living things.

The zoa. They're just living things. They are creatures that are here for food and for common use.

Right? If you come on down, we've seen this. They receive the wages of unrighteousness. They count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime.

Spots and blemishes. Carousing in their deceptions. Having eyes full of an adulterous literally.

Cannot cease from sin. Enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained.

Remember the gymnastics? The Gumnadzo idea? They have a heart that is exercised. It is fit in the area of covetousness. It's done it so long that it's really good at it.

It doesn't just want things. It knows how to get the things it wants. In another place in Hebrews, it says, The mature have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

Well, these people have their hearts exercised to acquire. Acquisitiveness. And it doesn't have to be material things.

It can be the acquisition of status. Or the acquisition of the good opinion of people. Or the acquisition of social things.

But they've gone to the gym for this. They've worked out. They have figured it out.

Figured out the best ways to do it. And they are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way.

Gone astray. Following the way of Balaam, the son of Baor. Who loved the wages of sin.

The wages of unrighteousness. But he was rebuked for his iniquity. A dumb donkey.

Speaking with the voice of a man. Circle donkey. Speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet.

We'll talk about that a little bit tonight. What is the error of Balaam? And also spoken of by Jude. So then when you get to verse 17.

Where we're kind of picking up tonight. These are wells without water. Clouds carried by a tempest.

For whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness. They allure through the lusts of the flesh.

Through lewdness. Ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. They promise them liberty.

They themselves are slaves of corruption. For by whom a person is overcome. By him also he is brought into bondage.

You know if someone defeats you. They enslave you. That's basically it.

Especially in the ancient world. If after they've escaped the pollutions of the world. Through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

They are again entangled in them and overcome. The latter end is worse for them than the beginning. This is something else we'll hopefully talk about tonight.

Would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness. Than having known it. To turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

But verse 22. Get ready to mark again. It has happened to them according to the true proverb.

A dog returns to its vomit. Circle dog. And a sow having washed to her wallowing in the mire.

You can see the next thing to circle. So if you look at this passage. You've got natural brute beast.

You've got the donkey. You've got the dog. And you've got the sow.

Four different comparisons. And anytime you have repetition like this. There is an important principle to be grasped.

What would it be? What's the difference in human beings and animals? Natural brute beasts, donkeys, dogs and pigs. What's the difference? They do not reason at any sort of level of

sophistication. They've got some basic understanding of cause and effect.

You know, if the man says hyah and I don't hyah. He's going to whack me so I'd better hyah. And a donkey knows that much.

You know, dogs have a level of intelligence. But what is the normal modus operandi for the animals? They operate on instinct. They're sort of pre-programmed.

Their flesh tells them what to do. Right? Dogs eat all kinds of disgusting stuff. Because they're dogs.

That's what dogs do. Dogs eat the foulest things sometimes. You know, what is tasty about a squirrel? There's nothing tasty about squirrels.

But dogs chase them at an insane level of interest. And, you know, people used to have to hunt squirrels and eat them out in the wilderness. I mean, that's kind of a meal of last resort.

If the best you can do is squirrel, you know, what happened to the rabbits? What happened to the bears? What happened to the deer? What happened to anything but a squirrel? The only thing worse than squirrel that I know of is possum. But here's the thing. These animals are at a very basic level, and they're driven by their fleshly programming.

They are biological machines. Now, nothing against people that love their dogs and cats and believe they look deep into their eyes and see a soul and all that. You know, go be warmed, be fed.

I hear you, and I grant you however much belief in that you want. I'm just saying. The scripture says there's a difference between people and the brute beasts.

They don't reason. They don't think in abstract terms. They don't.

Animals do not deal in the immaterial. If you tell a dog, it's a beautiful day outside. He doesn't know a beautiful day.

If you say there's a squirrel outside, now he's ready to go. That's concrete. Duck, squirrel, cat, whatever it is they like to chase.

A pig, if you say, hey pig, beautiful day outside. Pig doesn't care. If the pig sees a wallow, he's going to head for it.

If you've washed him and cleaned him all up, sent him down to the county fair and won a prize, first mud he sees, he is driven by every fiber of his being to go get in the wallow. Dogs, if they spit up, you've got to drag them away, or they're going to try to reconsume what they just irked. That's what dogs do.

Donkeys don't think in poetic terms. They don't abstract. They don't look around and say, wow, nature at its finest.

What a beautiful barn. I love my master. They just don't think in those terms.

So why would Peter use these four comparisons? What is it that the false teachers have sacrificed? These false teachers are reducing themselves to the animal level. They do what they do because they have given in to the lusts of the flesh. There's a memory verse.

I don't remember where it is. You can look it up. When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

When it is finished, it's kind of like in terms of a pregnancy, when it comes to term. When lust has conceived, the fetus inside is sin. Sin, when it grows to term and comes out and is born, is death.

It's just the opposite of God's design, where there's conception, there's growth, and then there's a wonderful new life that comes out at birth. Lust, fleshly desire, conceives. The product of that conception is not a new wonderful life.

The product is sin. And the sin grows and grows and grows. And when it comes to term, what comes out is death, not life.

It's just the opposite. It's a very graphic thing in the original. So, these false teachers, like natural brute beasts that are just there for the convenience of man, they're there to be food, they're there to be tractors, they're there to be plows, plow pullers, they're there to haul carts, they're just there for the consuming, they're there for the using.

They don't have any eternal prospect. They have no sensation of eternity, they're not built for eternity, they're just biological machines. Very sophisticated, very wonderful, they reflect the glory of God in a lot of ways.

I love my dog as much as anybody loves their dog, but he's a biological machine. He doesn't have a soul, he can't get saved, he can't appreciate the Lord Jesus, he has no concept of eternity. His idea of eternity is waiting for somebody to take him on a walk.

That's eternity. It takes forever for the humans to get around to take him where he wants to go. Well, these teachers have sacrificed everything that raises us above the animals, they've thrown it away, and they've said, I'm content to live in the present, I'm content to live in the moment with the material, and to satisfy my immediate sensory desires.

You sacrifice your humanity on the altar of pleasure, that's what they have done, and they are no better than animals, they are no more use to God than the animals, simply to be consumed, just grist for the mill, fodder will keep you around and make you a test for somebody else, but you yourself have no potential, you have no eternity, you have no prospects, you have no real future.

You've reduced yourself to an animal. Now, this happens to you, and it happens to me, every time we get off track in our spiritual life and we start pleasing our senses.

We do what we do because it feels good. It feels good to, if you get hurt, to hurt somebody back. It feels good if you are tired and want to do something different, to throw away your responsibilities and just go do something stimulating.

It feels good, there's a huge pornography problem, the internet has just made things worse, because now you don't have to go buy a magazine with a brown wrapper on it or something, you don't have to go to an adult store, you don't have to make a trip anywhere. Now, all you have to do is a few mouse clicks and here's all this trash just pouring right into your brain, pouring into your soul, right over your computer screen. It's a huge problem.

It's a problem for all kinds of people in all walks of life, no less so in young men that are even studying for the ministry and so on. Satan has brought this stuff right up to the door. If you open the door a crack, in it comes.

The watertight seal is broken, in it comes. Filth of every shape, size and description. You can hardly turn your TV on without something coming across that you don't want to.

You hear language, you hear allusions and double entendres and racy and pathetic bathroom humor and worse coming over the television. If it's not in the program you're trying to watch, it's in the commercials. So, these like natural brute beasts.

And so when he gets down to verse 15 where we're picking up, they have forsaken the right way and gone astray. Following the way of Balaam the son of Baor. This is right in the middle of our brute beast passage, right? Brute beast, donkey, dog, pig.

Balaam. It's the other definite thing that's mentioned in this context. What did Balaam do wrong? We're going to pause and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see why Balaam is right in the middle. Hopefully my voice will be back. Well, one...