

## **2Peter 11-11-25b**

Let's resume our study now in 2nd Peter. We're going to take a look at why in the midst of these dumb brute beasts and donkeys and pigs and dogs and whatnot, you have Balaam mentioned as the prototypical false prophet or false teacher. You might first take a quick look at the parallel.

You can either look at the sheet that I provided a few weeks ago from Jude, where in his parallel account, he says there are clouds without water carried about by the winds, late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead. They are raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. And this is a pretty harsh judgment.

We will talk about this also before we leave this section in 2nd Peter. What does it mean that the blackness of darkness is reserved for them forever? But if you look in Jude verse 11, woe to them for they have gone in the way of Cain. They have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit and perished in the rebellion of Korah.

But there is a clue in that verse in Jude that you also find in 2nd Peter. The error of Balaam for profit. They have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit.

So you have two clues, greed and for profit. In the same way, when you look at our 2nd Peter passage, Peter says, following the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. The payoff of unrighteousness.

So for profit, greed, getting the wages, the compensation of unrighteousness. So with that in mind, turn with me back to the story of Balaam, which was extremely well known in New Testament days. This was one of the Bible stories that everybody knew, just like we know generally the story of Daniel and the story of Noah, the story of Moses and the bulrushes.

Well, they knew the story of Balaam. This is often treated in the Mishnah and in the oral traditions of Israel. Numbers chapter 22.

Numbers chapter 22. Then the children of Israel moved and camped in the plains of Moab, on the side of the Jordan, across from Jericho. No accident in terms of the location.

They're in the plains of Moab, on the side of the Jordan, across from Jericho. Of course, they're not in the land yet. That's long years away.

Balak, the son of Zippor, saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. Moab was exceedingly afraid of the people because there were many. Moab was sick with dread because of the children of Israel.

So Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now this company will lick up everything around us as an ox licks up the grass of the field. Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of the Moabites at that time.

He sent messengers to Balaam, the son of Baor, at Pathor, which is near the river in the land of the sons of his people.

Now, I'll give you some details here in a minute. To call him, saying, Look, a people has come up from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth and are settling next to me.

Therefore, please come at once. Curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner's fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak. They already know what Balaam typically charges. He's got a reputation.

He's been used by powers in the past. He has a typical charge. You know, for \$20,000, I'll curse the enemies of your nation, whatever it might be.

We're not told exactly what it is. So with the diviner's fee in their hand, they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak. He said to them, Lodge here tonight, and I will bring back word to you as the Lord speaks to me.

So the princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. Then God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men with you? Now, first point. The God and the Lord that Balaam is dealing with is the Lord God of Israel.

It's not a false god. It's not like the witch of Endor who typically treats with demons or something, and then God does a switch. Balaam is a prophet of God, but he's an expatriate prophet.

He's not with the people. The people don't need a prophet because they've got Moses. They've got the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and whatnot.

So this is a prophet of God. He is not the prophet of God, and he's not with the people. But he is an expatriate prophet.

So God comes and speaks to him when he says, Lodge here tonight, I'll bring back word as the Lord speaks to me. Well, that night, sure enough, the Lord speaks to him. God speaks and says, Who are these men with you? Balaam said to God, Balak, the son of Zipp.

Now, does God know who these men are? Does he have to ask Balaam? But Jesus does this routinely. God does this routinely. The first time there's a confrontation between God and man, Adam and Eve in the garden, what's the first thing out of God's mouth? Adam, why are you where you are? What are you doing hiding? God always starts with a question.

Why is this? It's not difficult. It's not a deep theological point. It's the same reason parents do it.

When you come into a room, you can see that your children, your small children have been up to some illegal activities. What do you do? You come in and you say, What have you been doing? Well, you can see what they've been doing, but you want them to tell you. You want them to acknowledge their understanding of the situation.

You're trying to bring their tiny minds along, trying to give them some exercise in, let me help you do the thinking you should have done before this happened. So, God asks a question. Who are these men? Balaam says, Well, it's Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has sent to me saying, Look, a people has come out of Egypt.

They cover the face of the earth. Come now, curse them for me. Perhaps I shall be able to overpower them and drive them out.

God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed. You get the idea that Balaam kind of expected this? Because he didn't say, Oh, you need a curse? Sure, no problem.

Let's back up right now. Let me grab a few clothes and I'll be right with you. He said, I need to talk to God, because he already had an inkling.

You know, I've got to find out what the Lord says. So, the Lord says, In no uncertain terms, you shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people.

They are blessed. Now, you remember the Job story, right? Satan came, and at a certain point in the conversation, he says, Oh, you know, Job is upright, and so on. And God gave Satan permission to unbless Job.

God gives no such permission here. Different situation. Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princess of Balak, Go back to your land.

The Lord has refused to give me permission to go with you. Now, he didn't give them the whole message from God. He didn't say, It's pointless.

These people are blessed. He just said, I don't have permission to go with you. Some technicality has come up.

I can't go. But he leaves the issue in some doubt. He doesn't say, I'm not going with you now.

I'm never going with you. God says the people are blessed. There's no way to curse them.

Give up. You've got to come up with some other option. He just says, I don't have permission.

They say, Okay, fine. So they go back to Balak and say, Balaam refuses to come with us. Balak sent princes more numerous and more honorable than the first set.

They came to Balaam and said to him, Thus says Balak, the son of Zipporah, Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me. I will certainly honor you greatly. I will do whatever you say to me.

Please come curse this people for me. Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the Lord my God to do less or more. Now, therefore, please go back to Balak and tell him what I just said.

That's not what he says, is it? He says, well, stick around tonight. Let me just double check with the Lord. Because houses full of silver and gold are sounding pretty good.

So, that I may know what more the Lord will say to me. I'm not sure what more he thinks the Lord can say. If the people are blessed and can't be cursed, what is he expecting? So God came to Balaam and said to him, If the men come to call you, rise and go with them.

But only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do. So, Balaam rose in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. Now, it doesn't say that the men came to call him, does it? He said, if the men come to call you, go with them.

It says, Balaam rose up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the princes. I don't know if this is technically that he's disobeying God or not. But God said, if they call you, you go with them.

There's no record that they called him. But, for whatever reason, he goes with them. Now, there's no overt disobedience here, other than the possibility I just mentioned.

God said, if they call you, go with them, but only say what I tell you to say. So, Balaam gets up and he goes with them. But before he ever gets there, you know what's going to happen.

We're going to have this angel in the way and the donkey going off the road. God's anger was aroused because he went. Now, did God not tell him that if they called him, he could go? He did.

But God is angry because he went. Now, this is one of many reasons why you have people saying the God of the Old Testament is capricious, he changes his mind, he's petty, he tells a guy to do a thing, the guy does it, and then he gets mad at him for doing it. So, what is really going on here? If you look at it superficially, you could say, I don't understand.

If Balaam is doing what God gave him permission to do, why is God angry? Well, it isn't what Balaam is doing, it's why he is doing it. What does the New Testament tell us? What did Jude tell us? What does Peter tell us? He was greedy, he was doing it for profit, he coveted. Look at the other approved examples in the Old Testament.

Do you remember when Abraham went and delivered Lot from the kings, the confederation of kings? He delivered everybody in Sodom and Gomorrah that had all been captured and hauled

away to be slaves. Abraham and his servants went, attacked the kings, released everybody, and the king of Sodom said, let me give you some spoils and some booty. What did Abraham say? Well, thanks, king.

I could really use a little bit. There have been some expenses involved in this battle, and I appreciate that. That will kind of help compensate.

I'll take those cattle and those oxen and some of this grain and some of this gold and some of those precious stones. I can rebuild my herd. I probably lost a few while my servants were off.

He didn't say any of that, did he? He said, I would not accept anything from you, not even a shoelace. There is a sensual desire for stuff that we have, and God calls upon us to suppress it. Any brute animal can follow his base desires.

We are supposed to be better than that. We are called to something better, and we are called to rise above to fight against the desires of the flesh. Now, this doesn't mean we can never have any fun, never have any good stuff, got to run around in clothes full of holes and live in a shanty and kick our toe in the dirt and just quote verses and look skyward and be some kind of strange, sort of beat ourselves with whips and hurt ourselves a lot.

It's not that idea at all. Here's the thing. If God has made provision, and obviously Balaam is living well.

He's doing fine. He is not in need. It doesn't say, behold, Balaam had run out of flour and run out of oil, and here came the guys offering him some.

Balaam is doing fine. He doesn't have a need for wealth. He has a want for wealth.

He is going to be acclaimed. Here are these high and mighty princes from Balak. The Moabites are going to sing his praises.

The Midianites are going to sing his praises. He's going to gain prestige. He didn't tell these messengers, you know, it's really not me doing the blessing and the cursing.

You know, Balak says, who you bless gets blessed and who you curse gets cursed, as though Balaam's got the power. Balaam did not disabuse them of that notion and say, I am just a spokesman for the God of Israel, for the God of creation. He's the one who blesses and curses.

I simply communicate what he has chosen. And he doesn't tell the first set of messengers that. He doesn't tell the second set of messengers that.

And he's a prophet. That's the reason he's got the gift. His gift draws attention to him so that he can communicate to these pagans that there is a God to whom they are accountable.

And that's his job. He's the expatriate prophet. He's out amongst these people.

He's a witness to the Moabites. He's a witness to the Midianites. Why do you think God gives him this ability? Signed gifts are always to authenticate the message.

After he tries to go and is stopped, finally the donkey speaks. In verse 28, Numbers 22, the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times? Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have abused me, I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would kill you. Donkey says, Am I not your donkey in which you've ridden ever since I became yours to this day? Was I ever disposed to do this to you? And he said, No.

Now, what does this demonstrate? Here is a donkey speaking with the voice of a man, reasoning. Balaam, have you stopped and thought? What is not functioning in Balaam's soul? He's not reasoning. He's not thinking with the facts available to him.

And this dumb donkey, which God is basically ventriloquizing through, there is an angel speaking through this donkey. The donkey isn't suddenly sentient. But, there is a human voice coming out of the donkey.

It's a miracle that God performed, probably through the intermediate agency of the angel. And, God opens his eyes and he sees the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand. Balaam says, I wish I had a sword, I would kill the donkey.

God opens his eyes and he sees an angel with a sword ready to kill him, which is turnabout. Balaam has sunk to the level where an animal can out-reason him, so to speak. Symbolically, he is operating on his passion, on his base fleshly desire.

He hasn't thought about the message that God gave him the first time. He hasn't thought about his office as a prophet, why God gave him the ability to bless and curse people and nations, what his function should be. Why does God give him this ability and not a king or a prince or somebody else? He has stopped thinking.

He can only think about, wow, I've hit the jackpot. These kings are going to lay me down. It will take a caravan to bring back the loot.

And, he can think of nothing else. He's fantasizing about it as he's going down the road. And, when the donkey stops, all he can think is, you're getting in the way of my plan.

You're abusing me. The donkey stopped and refuses to take him forward, in his mind. And, to him, this is abuse.

I'm being abused because you're not letting me proceed. Well, from this passage alone, you can deduce, and in the Jewish traditional interpretations, and in the oral, you know, Mishnah and Talmud and so on, Balaam was as famous for his greed as, to us, Job is famous for his patience.

Anywhere in the Jewish world, if you said Balaam, they said greed.

His picture's in the dictionary next to greed. The Jews had figured this out, that his sin was greed. Now, God told him to go.

God has a message that he's going to use Balaam to deliver. But, Balaam has got to be in the right frame of mind. Balaam has to be going because God wants him to go, not because of what he's going to get, right? Just the going is not good enough.

You can't just do it with any old motive. You have to be going with the proper spiritual orientation. Now, back to 2 Peter, back to Jude.

Why would Balaam be mentioned by both of them in the context of false teachers? God wants teaching to take place. He wants a message to be delivered. But it's got to be delivered for the right reasons.

If you're delivering a message because you're cashing in on it, you're gilding your bathtub faucets, and you're driving fancy cars, and your ministry is raking in millions, this is a hazard. This is a sign. Any ministry, I don't care who it is, and I don't care what they're teaching, if the minister is profiting, it is the error of Balaam.

Look at the apostles. Did any of the apostles ever profit by the gospel? Did anyone ever make merchandise of the Word of God? Never. Did the Lord Jesus? No.

He accepted support from ladies who enabled Him to go about teaching and preaching and healing and ministering and presenting the kingdom to His people. But Jesus didn't have any finery. The birds have nests, the foxes have holes, the Son of Man doesn't have a place to lay His head.

He didn't say, well, I'm going to take some of that money that these ladies have fronted, and I'm going to get the best hotel in town, and I and my disciples will stay there. Jesus never did that. Did He? Any ministry, and I tell you this from the Word of God, any ministry that ends up putting shekels in the pocket of the minister has got a flaw, has got a biblical problem.

Ministry should never result in profit to the minister. Never. What did Jesus tell the disciples when He sent them out in pairs? Take a cloak, take a staff in your hand.

If somebody allows you to stay in their house, stay in their house, and don't be changing from house to house. Stay there until it's time to leave. Don't take anything extra, and the implication is, I don't expect you to come back with anything extra.

The disciples didn't come back and say, look, Lord, we left with just a staff in our hand, and now we've got bags of gold and silver, and Jesus said, oh, I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning when you collected all of this loot. Let's put it all in the treasury, and we can spread the gospel all

through Israel. It's anathema to everything that the New Testament teaches, and yet it's acceptable, and no notice is taken, no eyebrow is raised, when ministries, and what do the ministries say? Well, we're going to use this to spread the Word.

I'll do this, and I'll do that. I am telling you from the Word of God, the minister, the ministry, should not profit. Anything that comes in, this, I was, one of the football players that was on the last couple of days has started some sort of a charity, and he didn't say, you know, it's not like United Way or any of the others where a bunch of the money just goes into overhead to run the organization.

This is for disadvantaged young boys. I think it might be Jones who was playing for the Detroit Lions. I think he has started a ministry because he was a troubled young boy, and people looked out for him and enabled him to turn out all right.

They end up as a professional football player, but he knows what it's like to be on the streets. He's got a couple of organizations that help young boys that are in that situation, and 100% of the donations go to helping the boys. Not 90%, not 95%.

He doesn't keep a little for starting it. Every single penny that is donated to that goes directly to helping those boys. They don't keep a nickel.

They don't keep a penny. It all goes into those services, and that's the right way. A church, whatever it accumulates, ought to plow that back into ministry, into something that furthers the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ.

That's all it ought to be. I think that's the great thing about it. It's one of the things I appreciate about our church is that we don't spend hardly anything on overhead.

We spend the bare minimum to do the things that are a necessity, to broadcast, to have some resources to study from. That's about all we spend on it, and to help other gospel and Bible-oriented ministries. We're really careful, and we always have been, that that's the only place anything that's contributed to our church goes.

That's biblical. Any teacher, one of the ways you say, I've got to watch out, this is what Peter was warning about, is if you see money starting to go other places, and all of a sudden somebody's driving a nicer car, wearing a nicer suit, moving up in the world, oh, we're going to do this and we're going to do that, this is the error of Balaam. There is a materialistic element.

It doesn't have to be the whole reason. I'm sure Balaam knew that he'd better deliver the Word of the Lord, but it's a mixed message. It's a compromise.

It's a mixed motivation. And God will not tolerate even a mix. You either do it for love of God, and out of dedication, obedience, and service, or don't do it.

Don't do it because it's a way to make a living, or it's a way to make a better living, or maybe if I publish some books, I can get an income stream, and of course I'll all contribute to the ministry. The better I dress, the more it reflects the glory of Christ. Nonsense.

Not at all. This is the error of Balaam. So this is one of the telltales.

How do you identify a suspect ministry, a false teaching ministry? They will mishandle money. There will be an element of greed. There will be an element of for-profit.

There will be an element of, we're going to fleece the sheep, we're going to trim some of the wool as the sheep come in for their food, we'll get a little wool, and we'll sell the wool, we'll get some money, and then we can have more sheep, and do more things, and more troughs, and more feed, and more... Nonsense. God says, your motivation has to be pure. That's why he stopped Balaam on the road.

So Balaam is doing what God told him to do, but his heart is not right. His motivation is wrong. Balaam's got visions of grandeur, and God says, look, you'll die for that.

And that sword is a sword of judgment. Balaam is operating on sensuality. This is what will make my flesh feel good.

I can buy nicer clothes. I can be in greater comfort. I can buy nicer food.

Why would he want wealth? Why would he want what these kings have to offer? It's finery. It's luxury. It's softness in life.

He can ease his path. He can better himself. He can receive acclaim and fame.

God says, you better wash all of that stuff out of your head. And there's nothing like an angel standing there with a sword, saying, your life can end any second that God decrees it, to realize that it's foolish. It's foolishness.

This is what Peter is talking about. This is what Jude is talking about. So, back to our passage, as we conclude for tonight.

This is the error of Balaam. And it is specifically, generally, it is the lust of the flesh. Specifically, it is greed, for profit, materialism.

I can get something out of this. The Lord Jesus didn't go to the cross for what he could get out of it. He didn't preach the kingdom for three plus years to his people, for what he could get out of it.

If I can just get these people to accept me, I can be the king. Jesus was doing the work that his father gave him to do. Delivering the message that his father gave him to deliver.

Suffering the death that was in the cup that his father handed him. And that's entirely his

motivation. It was love for the father and love for us.

Love that is sacrificial toward self and beneficial toward others. Not beneficial toward self at the expense of others. And anytime that equation starts to reverse, steer clear of that ministry.

Steer clear of that church. Steer clear of that teacher, that pastor. I don't care how much it seems as though the words are dripping with honey from heaven.

If the finances are going in the wrong direction, get away. Light fuse, get away. Just like black cats.

Because sooner or later, it is going to affect the message. The message is going to change. The message will be compromised.

As soon as the motivation is compromised, the message is compromised. Don't want to talk about sin, we'll lose some people. The income stream will drop.

Don't want to give the rebuke and correction. Don't want to tread on any toes. Don't want anybody to be offended.

If we give offense, we might lose some people. We might have to turn some things off and shut some things down. Change the budget downward.

Can't have that. It compromises the message. Do you seriously think if Balaam had arrived without the angel stopping him, and here's a big pile of, here's a caravan full of riches, and Balaam says, well, I can either stand up here and bless these Israelites, or I can say, damn you Israelites, come on donkeys.

And away he goes back home. What is he going to say? He will compromise the message. He's not going to bless Israel and say, can I please have those camels and donkeys now.

Because he knows if he delivers the message of God, the caravan isn't coming back with him. So it's a choice. Well, he's made the choice before he ever left home.

And God stops him before he ever gets there and says, you better fix this, or you're not going to arrive. Well, God doesn't do that anymore. And we have false teachers that are marked by, one of their most prominent and easily identifiable characteristics is, there is an illicit flow of goods in the wrong direction.

So, a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. This is madness. Now, this is the most important thing I will say tonight.

It is no more mad for a prophet or an apostle or a teacher or a pastor or any other minister. It is no less mad for you or I to pursue personal gain at the expense of the plan and purpose of God. It is just as mad.

We are just as much in need of the angel to stop us with a sword as any prophet or any apostle or any other teacher. It is madness to trade eternal truth, eternal inheritance, walking with the Lord Jesus in white, having the hidden manna, the white stone, the new name, riding with him on a white horse, serving him as he comes to judge the world and bring in the millennial kingdom and honor all of the promises to the Old Testament saints and move into the kingdom of the Father and to be a part of that, an active, useful, valuable part of that. Give that all away for some sort of new toaster, better tires on your car, fancier shoes.

It's madness. God sent the angel with the sword, projecting that voice through the donkey that Balaam was riding to restrain his madness. It is insanity for us to do this.

We know better. Now, this is a key thing to grasp, because we have coming up in the next section, which we'll look at next time, if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them, you were in the pollutions of the world, gospel came and you escaped it, and you see the narrow road, you see the straight gate that leads to life, you see the promise of inheritance and of reward and opportunity and service and closeness with the Lord Jesus Christ, and you fall back and are again entangled in the pollutions of the world. Peter says it would have been better if you were never delivered.

You say, whoa, wait a minute. It would have been better to have never... Didn't I at least get something out of that brief time when I was doing the right thing? No, it would be better to never see the narrow road, never see the straight gate, never become apprised of the inheritance and the rewards and the possibilities, never see the glory of God, than to see it and fall back. Now, this is kind of a hard concept.

We say, but, I mean, wouldn't it be better, you know, better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all? Better to have served and failed than never to have served at all? Better to have at least caught a glimpse and been faithful for a while than never to... Not in God's economy. Why? Think of it this way, and we'll go through these verses, but I'm going to go ahead and give the point now because it ties in with this brute beast, angel with the sword idea. Why did God put that angel with the sword there? Before he ever got there, it would be better to kill you now than to have you go and complete this, show up in front of Balak and have me have to kill you there.

Think of it this way. If you were, and I have to think in these terms, and you'll just have to forgive me. If you were commissioned as a Marine Corps officer and you went through the training and you got your blues and you got your sword and you served as a lieutenant and you were on the right path and you were on your way upward and you're serving with distinction and doing a good job, and then you suddenly decide you are going to sell classified material to the enemy.

You're going to betray your country. You're going to betray your oath. You're going to betray your rank.

You're going to betray the Marine Corps. You're going to betray your fellow Marines. You're going to sell out to the enemy.

Would it be better that you were at least a good Marine for a while, or would it have been better if you had never been commissioned in the first place? Achieving that status and that opportunity and then betraying it is worse than if you had never been it at all. If you betrothed yourself to someone and get married and you pledge your fidelity and your loyalty and you are a wonderful wife or a wonderful husband for two years, then you fall madly in love with somebody and you go commit adultery and run off and leave them, you say, well, at least I gave my spouse two good years. It would have been better if you had never met them and never married them than to marry them and earn their trust and then rip their guts and their heart out and scar them for life.

It would have been better had you never started than to start and then trash it and betray it and destroy it. And God says it's the same, spiritually speaking. If you have once been enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift and the good word of God, you remember Hebrews chapter 6, if you fall away, it's worse.

Don't even start if you're not going to finish. Don't betray. Ask yourself about Judas.

Would it have been better if Judas had never been a disciple than to be a disciple and be in the trusted inner circle and betray the Lord Jesus into the hands of sinners to be slain? It is necessary that he be betrayed, but woe to the man who does it. It would be better for that man if he had never been born. The one who harms one of these little ones, whose angels constantly behold the face of my Father, it would be better for that man if you put a millstone around his neck and threw him into the sea.

It would be better to have never started than to start and reverse. This is where Peter is going with this argument. This is why he's talking about the brute beast.

Now, what is the answer to the question so what for you and me? You say, well, thank goodness I'm not a teacher. I don't want to start a teacher and then get all messed up. The principle is the same.

You and I have been shown the light of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been shown the nature of our calling. We have seen in the pages of Scripture who we are and why we're here.

We have been given those wonderful, precious promises from the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 2 and 3. To him that overcomes, I will grant. Time after time, week after week, month after month, year after year, we have seen these wonderful, precious truths from the Word of God. If we have seen all of this and we dismiss it and pursue the desires of our flesh and the

shallow, short-term goals of this life, if we do that, it would be better for us if we had never attended a Bible class, never understood anything from the Word of God.

The latter end for us will be worse than the beginning. A sow returning to the wallow, a dog returning to its vomit doesn't even begin to cover it. You think about that angel standing there with a sword.

Balaam is a prophet of God. There's all kinds of reprobate, rebellious people in Israel. But how many of them does God send an angel with a sword to slay them in the way? From those to whom much is given, much is expected, much is required.

We are heirs of promise. We have been purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We belong to Him.

We are a part of Him. And we have a responsibility to live up to that, to be true to our covenant, to be true to our calling. And if we dismiss it as unimportant, sell it for a mess of pottage, return to our vomit, fall back into the old superficial ways, it would be better for us if we had never learned anything.

It's just a fact of the Word of God. However, as the author of Hebrews says, we are convinced of better things of you, brethren. That's the hypothetical downside.

But we are not of those who fall back unto perdition, but those who by faith and patience inherit the promises. Who would want to go back down that stupid road and be again entangled in the bondages and the superficialities and the empty ashes-in-the-mouth life that unbelievers and wayward believers are enmeshed in? We've been delivered. We've been set free.

We have been ennobled. We have been made royal family of God. We've been anointed as priests.

We are in the service of the great God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Why would we give that up? Why would we like Lucifer walk out of the throne room of God and choose darkness? It's madness. It's insane.

God will chastise us. God will discipline us. God will guide us and lead us and encourage us in the right way.

But there are those believers who just refuse instruction at every turn. All day long I've held up my hands to disobedient and stiff-necked people. Why will you die, O house of Israel? There are generations and there are people who just refuse just bow their neck and go the other way.

Well, let's learn from their example rather than following it and pursue those things that pertain to life and godliness and upward opportunity. We love God. We love the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is our great opportunity. We can look at these counter examples and these negative illustrations like Balaam and say, Thank you, Lord, for your grace. Thank you for letting me be born in an age and in a time with the resources to move in such an opposite direction from that and to enter into all of the great upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

I am so thankful. I am so grateful. Help me to be worthy of that calling.

Help me to fulfill it. Help me to exploit every opportunity and avail myself of every gracious resource you have provided. Reveal to me my secret faults.

Correct me where I need correction. Rebuke me where I need rebuke. Instruct me where I need instruction.

I want to serve. I want to grow. I want to reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of my life.

If we pray that prayer, God absolutely will answer it. He is our Father. He loves us.

The Lord Jesus Christ loved us and died for us. Why would anybody want to go down this road? It's insane. God will attempt to restrain our madness, but only up to a point.

It's up to us to lay hold of that for which we were laid hold of, which is eternal life. We'll close here and pick up and finish this chapter next week. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for these powerful examples ministered to us by the Apostle Peter, by Jude, and by the record of events in the Old Testament. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will be our teacher, will remind us, and show us the pertinence and the applicability of these things in our experience, in our lives, and enable us to fulfill every potential that is ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are hopeless and helpless and useless apart from Him, but in Christ all things are possible.

There is nothing preventing us except our own motivation, our own choices. We pray that you will be with us, lead us and guide us in the days ahead. May we be a blessing to each other and to the world.

May the light of the Lord Jesus shine out of the darkness of this generation through us as individuals, through our church, through the preaching and teaching of your word here and around the world. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.