

98-01-05b

We're back now from our break, and we concluded the first session by noting that these warning passages, and we have seen several of them over the course of many months in the parables and in 2 Peter and here in Jude, which is actually only our Scripture reading for this morning, but it is incredibly important for us to recognize the warning passages of Scripture. The warnings are there for our instruction and for our encouragement, and if you are the enemy, what is your best weapon? If you're Satan and his forces, what is your best weapon against believers? Well, distract from the Word of God. Pervert the Word of God.

Change the meaning of the Word of God. Deflect the force and the impact of warnings. And in my view, I think that this has happened with a lot of our Scriptures, and we have developed a tradition that sees many of these passages as talking about someone else.

And this is always the danger when we study the Word of God, isn't it? Oh, I wish so and so could hear this. They've been here every other Sunday, and now I wish they were here this Sunday to hear this, or I want to make sure somebody hears this, because it's a lot easier to say that something applies to someone else. Now, that can be a healthy thing also.

We can recognize that someone has the need to hear truth, and we haven't lost the ability to apply it to ourselves. I don't mean to imply that if anybody's ever said that, because I've said that, that there's something the matter with us. But we all know it's easy to think in terms of applying something to someone else, and we're not as ready and as willing to apply to ourselves.

And this has happened institutionally in the church. We've taken a lot of these warning passages and judgment passages, discipline passages, and said, oh boy, those unbelievers, they're really in for it. And we don't stop and think that we are Israel in the wilderness.

We are between Egypt and the promised land in many cases. Some of us have entered into the promised land, and we are facing the enemies that need to be driven out of the land even after crossing the Jordan. We still have enemies that need to be destroyed before the tabernacle of God can find its permanent resting place in our soul, before the temple can be permanently built and God can take up permanent residence there.

And we tend to think, oh well, it's just convenient. It's easy. It's simple.

You don't hit the rocks and shoals. And these are not things that come easily. I have been thinking recently that I should probably say something about the unorthodox or untraditional nature of some of the conclusions that we have drawn in our recent studies in the Word of God, because there are those of us as believers who sort of get hooked on

that kind of thing.

You like to find somebody who's constantly pulling back the curtain and showing you something you didn't see before in the Word of God, and this can be sort of stimulating. And sometimes it can even be an end unto itself. And a lot of us, myself included in the past, have thrilled.

You get the thrill of discovery that you just want to go keep on discovering, discovering, discovering, instead of saying, well, now that I have found this discovery, what does it mean? And the wonderful thing about archaeology is that very little of it is finding the door and breaking into King Tut's tomb, and here you've discovered this wonderful thing. The real work of archaeology is taking all of those treasures and learning about the culture that produced them, and learning the historical context, especially when it bears on important things like the history of Israel. But that's much more the day-to-day drudgery of carefully brushing away the sand and reading the inscriptions and studying and comparing evidence with evidence.

And that's really the meat and the productive part of the study of the Word of God. It's not just the discovery of something we didn't know before or a fresh insight into a passage, but what we do with that discovery and what we do with that insight. And we've discussed many times, are we possibly becoming some sort of a weird little offshoot and a strange sort of cult that has these bizarre ideas about the Word of God? It's important to guard against that and to not become that.

One of the measures of where we go in the Word of God and whether or not we're on the right track in terms of interpreting it properly is, do the conclusions that we draw fuel growth and fuel transformation of the mind and change? Do we draw closer to Christ and closer to bearing on a frequent basis, a daily basis, the fruit of the Spirit? That's the measure. It isn't, well, can I wow my friends with something? Or can I be the purveyor of some great unknown mystery? But what is this doing to me? Again, it's a wonderful thing to share truth, especially with those who are receptive and to those who may be stimulated to investigation in the Word of God. And there are occasions for that.

But we have to be careful that we're not just the entertainer drawing aside the curtain. This is especially true for those of us who are teachers or are communicators, that we don't just seek to tickle the ears or to stimulate the imagination of someone and say, wow, look at this. Here's a new view.

Here's a new perspective. And it is nowhere more true than these warning passages. The fact that these are addressed to believers is not well known.

And it is something, it is something to reclaim. It's something to recognize that we have lost as a church. Like so much of the truth of the Word of God, I sometimes want to quote John in 1 John where he says, I'm not teaching you something new.

I'm teaching you something old that we have had from the beginning. Jude here says, I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that believers can slip away through faithlessness. Believers can come under great discipline and judgment from God through faithlessness, through inattention, through apathy.

Patty and I heard a man on the radio this morning who was a Baptist preacher for many years and whose marriage ended up in divorce. And he went through a great period of what he described as brokenness and lost his ministry, lost his marriage, lost his two sons, came to a church here in the area and went through a process. He had many good things to say.

Many things that were very good and reflective of the truth. And I enjoyed listening to him very much. He had a very well crafted sermon, very good illustrations.

One of the things that he mentioned about his marriage was he said, you know, being a believer, being a pastor, there was never a point where I did not value marriage. There was never a point where I didn't recognize the Word of God on this subject and didn't want my marriage to be a success and want it to last and want it to be complete. But he used the illustration.

He said they had a hamster named Furball and they went through a move. This is with his second wife, his new family. And they went through a move and set the hamster over to the side while they were getting all this stuff in place and so forth.

And they kind of forgot about him. And they looked in the cage one day and he was four feet to the sky. And they said, oh my goodness, what happened to Furball here? And they looked and the little hamster water bottle was dry and apparently had been.

They got to checking and nobody had given him any water for a period of weeks. And this poor little hamster had died of thirst. This horrible death and they hadn't even noticed.

And he said, you know, we loved our hamster. It wasn't that we didn't understand the principles of hamster care or that we didn't know how important food and water are. We just got distracted from the basics.

We got busy and neglected something. It wasn't that we didn't value it or that we didn't believe it or that we didn't recognize it or that we didn't want to do it. We just forgot.

We got distracted. And I think that's an excellent illustration of what can happen in our spiritual life. Things can die in our soul because we get distracted, because we get busy.

And these warning passages addressed to believers are designed to wake us up. This is our bolt of lightning on the ground. This is our pillar of cloud and pillar of fire.

This is the thunder that shakes Mount Sinai for us. It's the word of God. It's living and it's powerful.

It's a sharp sword that cuts to the very center and we have to let the Holy Spirit use it. We have to want the Holy Spirit to use that sword in our souls. We have to want to be different.

This is what distinguishes believers who fulfill their calling from believers who do not. This is what's going to make the difference in our life today, tomorrow, the next day. This is what's going to make the difference when we stand reviewing the sum total of our days at the judgment seat of Christ.

So this passage is designed to remind us of the spectrum of possibilities, but it's not designed to discourage us and to say, my goodness, who then can be saved? Who then can be delivered? Who then can escape the pull of this present evil age? Who then can really be? I can never be an apostle. Paul, my goodness, better people than me have fallen by the wayside and dropped in the wilderness, so I'm just so depressed and discouraged. That's not the point.

And Jude doesn't end up that way. After talking about these people in verse 16, these grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own desires, mouthing great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage. This is a warning.

Do we find this in ourselves? If we don't want to end up this way, we need to look. Are we grumbling? Are we complaining? Are we finding fault with circumstance? Finding fault with people? Laying blame at the doorstep of others? Constantly looking for the cause of our misfortunes or the cause of things not going well? Are we grumbling and complaining? Are we walking according to our own desires? Do we measure the success of the day by whether or not we are fulfilled? We achieved our goal. We got what we were looking for.

Do we talk a great fight? Do we mouth great swelling words, but it doesn't reflect itself in our lives? Do we see these wonderful truths in the Word of God and think about that and talk about that, but it doesn't make a difference? That's what separates discovering the truth in the Word of God and doing nothing. That's what James is talking about. You can look into the perfect law of liberty and see wonderful things, but if you walk away and forget what you saw, what's the point of looking in the mirror? If it isn't going to make a difference, it isn't worth doing.

We as believers who see wonderful truths in the Word of God, in some cases forgotten truths in the Word of God, are under even greater condemnation if those truths don't do something to us and do something for us. It's got to make a difference. Or we will become a cult.

We'll become an ear-tickling society. We'll just be there for the stimulation. We'll just be there because we can think that we know something that other people don't know.

That is a terrible outcome from looking into the Word of God and discovering or rediscovering wonderful truths. These things are designed for a purpose. Look at what Jude says after describing these who have gone the way of Balaam, who have gone in the way of Cain, who have perished in the rebellion of Korah.

Each of those three examples is a strong biblical example of believers being distracted by self-gratification. Cain wanted to take pride in his gardening abilities. Balaam wanted to prophesy the Word of God, but he also wanted to get paid for it and get paid in a big way.

He was willing to do almost anything. He wasn't sensitive to the wishes of God, to the Word of God or the will of God. As soon as he could find an out around the prohibition, there he goes down the road on his donkey.

The rebellion of Korah is a fascinating study of self-justification. Why can't I be what this other person is? It has great application. This came up during the break.

It has great application for people who want to overturn the biblical order of things. Why can't women teach in church? Why can't a woman be an ordained pastor? This is sexist. We've grown past this as a culture and as a society.

Go back and study Korah. Why is it that God prohibited a Levite, who was otherwise perfectly qualified to serve as a priest, if he nipped... Maybe he was learning how to cut the throat of the animals for sacrifice and he inadvertently nips the end of his little finger off. If he did that, he is permanently disqualified from serving as a priest.

You could not be disfigured. You could not be in any way blemished physically and serve as a priest. How politically incorrect is God that the handicapped... He's not an equal opportunity employer.

If you're handicapped, you can't serve. If you're blemished, you can't serve. Got a cleft palate or a wayward eye or a drooping eyelid, you can't serve as a priest.

How insensitive God is to set that up as a regulation. That must be wrong. And we lose sight of what God is saying.

These things are designed to warn us. Look at verse 20. You, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith.

This is for believers after salvation. We are to be built up in the faith and we do it ourselves. We decide how far we go.

We avail ourselves of the boundless, endless grace of God. Building yourselves up on

your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God. The love of God is permanent.

The love of God is endless. But we keep ourselves in it or we walk out of it. And this is the love of God in the sense of its benefit, its blessing, its provision, the expressions of God's grace.

There is never a time when God does not want to love us in the beneficial, rewarding, blessing sense. But there are times when we don't care about that. And many times we would never walk up and say, you know, I really don't want the love of God.

I don't think I want the blessing of God. I don't want any reward. I don't want to succeed.

I think I want to be an evil, vicious, anti-God Christian. We never say that, do we? We never say, I think I'll make my hamster die of thirst. That'll be a fun exercise.

Let's do that. Let's sit by the cage and watch. We never do that.

How does it happen? It happens through distraction. It happens through deflection. It happens by getting preoccupied with other things.

Nobody who fails the grace of God as a believer, very few, I think, would ever set out to do that on purpose. It happens because we adopt some other purpose, some other goal. And inevitably it is a self-gratifying goal instead of seeking to please the Lord.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with a view toward. If your Bible says unto, this is the use of the Greek preposition *en*, and it means with a view toward. Looking toward eternal life.

This is the conditioning and motivating power of our hope. Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with a view toward eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction.

Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh. A lot of evangelists and people who teach evangelism have gone to this saying, here you are, you're going to share the gospel and pull people out of the fire. This is not the fire of the lake of fire.

This is the fire of God's judgment on believers. Go back and study the history of Israel. Go back and see Moses defending Israel against the wrath of God when he is prepared to consume them by fire.

In some cases he does consume them by fire and they are believers. We study this concept of fire in connection with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. There are those, and we can't save anybody can we? We can't deliver anybody from the lake of fire, but we can speak the truth to one another in love.

We can encourage one another to love and good works. We can minister our spiritual gift, whatever it may be, to our fellow believers and be an instrument of deliverance for believers. This is the exhortation.

Have compassion on brethren, especially believers who are being led astray. Deliver them with fear. This means in humility, not in arrogance, not let me tell you what I've learned and what you don't know, but this is communication of the truth for the purpose of deliverance.

People need to hear the truth of the grace of God as believers. They need to hear the meaning of the Christian life and that they are not bad and insignificant and unimportant and fruitless if they are not out engaging in the false gospel of impact on the world and evangelism and so forth. Deliver them with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment, defiled by the flesh.

Once again, defilement is something that happens to the people of God. Defilement is something that happens to someone who was once clean. And then this beautiful doxology, to him who is able to keep you from stumbling.

Why does he start out with that? Because this whole short letter is about stumbling. There is one who is able to keep us from stumbling, and he can present us faultless regardless of our sins, regardless of our failures. The wonderful grace of God, the blood of Jesus Christ cleansing us from all sin when we turn, when we acknowledge, when we repent, enables us to be presented faultless.

God is able to do that. He is able to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To God, our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever.

Amen. Turn with me back to Numbers chapter 22. We saw last week the link that brings us here, the many elements that are repeated here that we find in Genesis chapter 2 and 3, the talking animal, the blessing versus cursing motif, the presence of the serpent, the crushing of the foot, the confession of sin, the absolute cleansing that takes place as a result.

We ended last time, for those who follow along on tape, I think it cut off, and of course we cut off immediately after that, noticing that the acknowledgement of sin on the part of Adam and Eve made it possible for God to bless even in the midst of the consequences of their sin. Here in Numbers, right after the plague on Egypt, if you just go back and scan your paragraph headings in Numbers, you have the 40 years of wandering that are a result of faithlessness. You have the different times when they complain, and when they marabah in Numbers chapter 20, and Moses striking the rock and his failure, the sin of Edom, and so forth.

This most recent one in Numbers 21 where they complain, there's no food and no water, our soul loathes this worthless bread, and the Lord sends fiery serpents among them. The plague is stopped when they look at the bronze serpent up on the pole. Then you have Balaam.

Balaam is an interesting character. He is not an Israelite, but he is a believer. He is a Mesopotamian, just as Abraham was.

Balaam is from that same region, but he has migrated down to this area, to the land that was promised to Abraham, and he has hired out his gift. He will soothsay for pay. He has a relationship with the living God.

He recognizes the living God, and he knows the living God, but he has hired himself out for profit. This is the error of Balaam that Jude just mentioned. You review this story.

It covers two or three chapters here, but you have the oracles of Balaam, and we noticed last time that Balaam stands on the mountain and looks over Israel and says, speaking for the Lord, that he sees no unrighteousness in Israel. There is no reason to curse, and he cannot curse. He can only bless.

God puts great emphasis on this episode in the history of Israel. If you turn over to Joshua chapter 24 and verse 9, this is the last chapter of Joshua, and it is Joshua's swan song, his final oracle and prophecy and statement of truth to Israel. He reviews their history in chapter 24.

He calls for the elders of Israel, their heads, their judges, and their officers. They present themselves before God. In Joshua chapter 24, Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the river in old times, and they served other gods.

Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the river, led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants, and gave him Isaac. To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.

Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out. Then I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea.

So they cried out to the Lord, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, brought the sea upon them, and covered them. And your eyes saw what I did in Egypt. Then you dwelt in the wilderness a long time.

Look at verse 8. I brought you into the land of the Amorites, who dwelt on the other side

of the Jordan, and they fought with you. But I gave them into your hand that you might possess their land, and I destroyed them from before you. Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose to make war against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you.

But I would not listen to Balaam. Therefore he continued to bless you. So I delivered you out of his hand.

And then you went over the Jordan and came to Jericho. And he rehearses the history of their victories. But you think about all the episodes that occurred in the wilderness to Israel during those 40 years.

What is it that God chooses to emphasize when Joshua speaks here? Their deliverance out of the land of Egypt, their deliverance from the armies of Egypt, and the very next episode is the threat that came from Balak, from the Moabites and the Ammonites, and God's deliverance from them. The Moabites and Ammonites are sort of cousins to Israel. You'll recall that Moab and Ammon are the two sons of Lot by his daughters.

They are his sons and his grandsons, both. And this occurs right after the episode of Sodom and Gomorrah that we reviewed in the first session. This threat of corruption and defeat from these polluted sources is put away by God.

Balak wants Balaam to come out and curse Israel so that he can achieve a victory, but they have confessed their sins and God does not permit them to be overtaken and controlled by these things. But if you go on in Numbers, you find that although they are not cursed by God, Balaam is not able to invoke a curse from God on them. They trip themselves up.

They don't need a curse from God to fall away from God. And what Balaam does, after blessing Israel, God's will and God's pronouncements from each of these four places, Balaam pronounces four oracles and each of them is an oracle of blessing on Israel. There's no cursing at all.

There's no discipline. There's no judgment. There's no rehearsing of their old sins.

He says, I look down upon this people and I see no iniquity. I see only righteousness and I will only bless. But the people themselves forfeit that blessing from God.

And after these chapters in chapter 22 and chapter 23 and chapter 24 in Numbers, look at chapter 25 of Numbers. Right after Balaam's prophecy from Peor of the Messianic kingdom and he says that Israel is going to do valiantly and out of Jacob one shall have dominion and destroy the remains of the city in verse 19. You come down to chapter 25.

Israel remained in the new, King James says, Acacia Grove. I guess they're uncomfortable with Shittim. And the people began to commit harlotry with the women of

Moab.

They just got through surviving the fiery serpent plague because of their complaining and their disobedience. All the things we saw in Jude. The grumbling, the complaining, the pursuing their own desires.

And God sends the plague of fiery serpents. Many of them die. The bronze serpent goes up.

The plague is stayed. They have four pronouncements of blessing from one who was hired to curse them. And now in chapter 25, Israel stays there and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.

The Moabites who could not get God to curse them, who could not defeat them militarily, defeat them morally. They invited the people to sacrifices of their gods and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor.

Balaam has just stood on the Mount of Peor and pronounced blessing. This is the same mount later on. Balaam has stood on Mount Pisgah, the same mountain that Moses is going to stand on and look across to the land.

And he has blessed Israel. But here they have been joined to Baal of Peor. They used to do idolatry on the high places.

And instead of availing themselves of the blessing that was pronounced on that spot, they serve the false god that has been erected on that spot. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. Then the Lord said to Moses, take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord out in the sun that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.

So Moses said to the judges of Israel, every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor. And indeed one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And when Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand.

And he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. Three chapters ago we had the plague spreading through Israel of the fiery serpents.

And you had the pole erected with the bronze serpent and the plague is stopped. Here you have the plague of false worship. And here this man is so brazen as to bring this Midianite harlot right into the camp, walks right through the assembly of the people who

are weeping at the door of the tabernacle and begins to commit an act of fornication with her in his tent.

And it's a great section of scripture when Phineas takes his javelin in there and even as they are engaged in the act, he pierces them through and pins them to the ground, both of them with a single thrust of the javelin. And the Lord sees that act of obedience and that act of righteous indignation and the plague is stopped. Those who died in the plague were 24,000.

But what does this tell us? We as believers are capable of completely missing the grace of God, completely missing the deliverance of God, completely missing the blessing of God because we choose otherwise. It isn't that God is not gracious. It isn't that God is not active in our lives, removing cursing and bringing blessing.

It's that in the presence of that, we choose differently. These things were written for our instruction, the New Testament tells us. The entire history of Israel has been recorded for our instruction.

We need to be rebuked and corrected and instructed in righteousness through these things. Why is it that this passage about Balaam is linked back to the early days east of Eden, the early days out of the garden, linked to Genesis chapter 3? Because this is the issue. This is what it means to have enemyship between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

This is the conflict and it's not over once we're saved. It's such a tragic thing that we think that the conflict is over once we accept the gospel. The conflict has just begun.

The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have a relationship and it's enemyship. And Satan and the forces of Satan and the philosophies of Satan and the deceit of Satan are constantly there to try to drag us away from fulfilling our calling and fulfilling our purpose. You see it in the history of Israel over and over again.

It is summed up in this episode with Balaam. And Balaam has himself, having pronounced these blessings on Israel, you have the example of Israel before, during and after this being subverted and led astray. And it certainly is not at God's behest.

If there was ever an example that it's not God's sovereignty that determines how these things turn out, God speaks for blessing and Israel chooses cursing. And God has no choice in their fate. But this is constantly a reminder in the scripture for both Old Testament saints and for us in this age.

Because of the pollution, because of what Moab and Ammon represent to Israel, going all the way back to their origin in the days of Lot, you can look at Deuteronomy chapter 23 and verse 4 to see the regulation in the law. And once again we might say this is so insensitive of God. This is so uncompassionate and unpolitically correct in our day.

He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. Now this could be a plowing accident. This could be a construction accident.

There might be a wonderful believer, wonderful servant of God out there. It could be a priest moving one of the oxen up for sacrifice and he gets kicked or a boar gets hit and falls or some accident happens. It could be a mighty man of valor out there fighting the battles of the Lord and a sword thrust is deflected off of his armor and hits him and he is wounded in this area.

He is emasculated or mutilated in this area. The law says he will not enter the assembly of the Lord. This means he is not allowed in for tabernacle worship.

He cannot approach the presence of God. One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. It is not that person's fault.

He had no control over how he was conceived or how he came into the world. But if he is not the product of a valid union of husband and wife, he is not allowed into the assembly. How unfair.

How insensitive this seems. One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord.

Wow. That basically means indefinitely, ten generations. It is pretty hard to keep track.

How many of you can name your great-great-grandfather? Your great-great-grandfather? Your grandfather's granddad? Well, how many generations back is that? It is not ten generations, is it? Can you name back ten generations? How would you know if ten generations back there was an illegitimate birth? This basically means that your entire family line is disqualified from entering the assembly if it originates with an illegitimate birth. Look at verse three. An Ammonite or Moabite.

Now, who is Balak? King of the Moabites. The Moabites and the Ammonites join together against Israel on this occasion. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.

Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came up out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Baor from Pthor of Mesopotamia to curse you. Nevertheless, the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

Now, how many sermons have we heard with our altruism and our desire to go out and

minister to a lost and broken dying world and so forth about not seeking someone's peace and not seeking someone's prosperity because they are an enemy of the Lord, because they promote and practice and believe in things that are abominations to God. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. But look at verse 7, you shall not abhor an Edomite.

What's an Edomite? It's a descendant of Esau. Remember earlier when it said that God gave Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and God gave Esau the mountains of Seir, the mountains of Edom, and sent Jacob down to Egypt. You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.

You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord. So, this episode with Balak and with Balaam is very significant in God's eyes in the history of Israel, isn't it? He cites it in Joshua's swan song.

He cites it here in the law. It's also interesting just to provoke your thinking after we leave today. Verse 3, an Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord, even to the tenth generation.

None of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever. What was Ruth's nationality? The great-great-grandmother of David. Moabite.

What was Ruth's nationality? Hmm. I just thought I'd bring that up. David was well within ten generations of Ruth, wasn't he? The point being, God makes a distinction, just like Jude encourages the believers to whom he writes.

Making a distinction. Have discernment. Those who are susceptible, those who will respond, communicate the truth.

Deliver them out of the fire. There are others from whom we separate. They're not interested.

They're not seeking. They're not asking. They're not knocking.

You don't go out and give an answer to someone who didn't ask the question. You don't cast pearls before swine. And this can happen.

When I was a little boy, I was always taught, well, you know, if somebody rejects the gospel, you don't keep telling them. Once they reject it, you're casting pearls before swine. This is talking about the people of God who have defiled themselves and who have no desire to change, who have what they want.

And Israel was to make a distinction between those who were susceptible, the Edomites, even the Egyptians. After three generations, they could be accepted into the assembly.

But there are others who are never accepted.

And you can look at Nehemiah chapter 13. The law of God was rediscovered when the people returned to the land. And they read from the book of Moses, Nehemiah chapter 13, verse 1. They consecrated the Levites and so forth.

On that day, they read from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God. Notice it doesn't say after ten generations here.

It says no Moabite or Ammonite should ever come into the assembly of God. Because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. They had a choice when Israel came out on what to think about the God of Israel and how to treat the people of God.

And they chose to curse instead of to bless, to defeat and to subvert instead of to support and to encourage. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. This is three times where this very same history has been reiterated in Israel, isn't it? And even after they return from their captivity, they're reminded.

And of all the things they could have read in Deuteronomy on that day, what do they find in Nehemiah 13? The book of Moses is read in the hearing of the people and it is found that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever come into the assembly of God. Because they had not met the children of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing.

So it was when they had heard the law that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel. They purified themselves. They applied this doctrine of separation.

Look at 2 Peter 2. God emphasizes this episode. He ties it back to Genesis. He refers to it throughout the Old Testament and even in the New Testament.

2 Peter 2, very similar passage to what Jude has offered to his readers. Look at verse 12 of 2 Peter 2. These, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.

They have a heart trained in covetous practices and are accursed children. Notice that last word in verse 14. They are children, but they are accursed children.

They have forsaken the right way. Notice that word. They have forsaken the right way.

It doesn't say they have never known the right way. They refused to come to the right way. They were on the right way and have left it.

They have forsaken. You can't forsake something that you were never on. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray following the way of Balaam the son of Beor who loved the wages of unrighteousness, the payback, the pseudo fulfillment.

But he was rebuked for his iniquity. A dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. And this pull and being led by the nose by our own desires, whatever they may be, is called madness here.

It's crazy. It doesn't make any sense. But he's a prophet.

He's called a prophet. He's a man of God. He has the Word of God.

He speaks the oracles of God. He pronounces four blessings on Israel. God's not going to use an unbeliever to stand up and communicate the blessings of God.

There are and have been prophets all down through history in the Old Testament and Balaam is one of them. And to go down the way of Balaam is to be a believer distracted by something other than pleasing God. These are wells, in verse 17, without water, clouds carried by a tempest, just like in Ephesians 4, carried about by every wind of doctrine.

For whom is reserved the blackness of darkness. And the word forever appears to have been added here by looking at Jude. It doesn't appear to be original to Peter here.

It just says, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness. Now, when you reserve something for someone, you can either put them in it or you can give it to them. And this can just as easily be their possession, like it says in Revelation, that their portion, their allotment, their inheritance is the smoke of the lake of fire.

It doesn't necessarily mean that they have to be in it. But this blackness and darkness is the opposite of light. It's the opposite of the glory of God.

This is our choice. And as we move from Genesis 3 to Genesis 4, as we study Cain and Abel, we're going to see in that chapter two believers who make this choice. Two believers who face this issue.

And all of these scriptures condition us and prepare us to rightly divide the word of truth and to understand in our lives where that issue is. There is nothing stronger than these passages to wake us up and to set us on the path that leads to God's approval and to reflecting the glory of God. Let's close in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the opportunity that you have given us to live in this life, to be sustained by your grace, to avail ourselves of

all of the resources you have placed at our disposal. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will use the sharp sword of the word to rebuke, correct, and instruct us that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.