

If you would, please open up your Bibles to 2 Peter 2, 2 Peter 2, beginning in verse 14. 2 Peter 2, beginning in verse 14. Well, in this chapter, Peter, writing by divine inspiration, is addressing false teachers in the church, and he does not hold back. False teachers must be lovingly called to faith and repentance. And if they do not repent, they must be removed from office and excommunicated.

This is necessary for the glory of God, the love of Christ's church, and the protection of the flock of God. With this in mind, let us pray before reading this portion of God's word. Almighty God, we pray that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon the reading and the preaching of your word, such that we would not only be hearers of the word, but doers. We pray this all in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. 2 Peter 2, beginning in verse 14.

They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children, forsaking the right way. They have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression. A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them, the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire. This ends the reading of God's holy word. May he bless the reading and the proclamation of it to our lives. On this text, you see that false teachers are selfish, empty, and enslaving. False teachers are selfish, empty, and enslaving. First you see that they are selfish in verses 14 through 16.

Verse 14 begins, they have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. What does it mean to say that they have eyes full of adultery? Well, as one commentator put it, these are men who see every woman as a potential candidate for adultery. Every single woman they see, their hearts lust after as if she might be a potential candidate for their adulterous hearts. Sin is said to be insatiable here. This means that every adultery these false teachers commit only leads them to want to commit more adulteries.

They're like the woman we saw in Proverbs 30 already, who wipes her mouth and says, I have done nothing wrong. No matter what sin you indulge, though, this is true in that it is insatiable. No sin will ever satisfy the human heart. Every sin leaves you wanting, lacking, and miserable.

In Jeremiah 5, verse 8, God, speaking of the covenant community, says this, they were well-fed, lusty stallions. each neighing for his neighbor's wife. God says that of Jerusalem, the covenant community of God. They're all a bunch of horses who are looking over at their neighbor's wife, lusting after them. I'll never forget when I was a very

young boy, hearing my pastor say from the pulpit, any barnyard animal can copulate. And I want to ask you this morning, are you like a barnyard animal?

Are you lusting after all sorts of other people, all sorts of other women, other sorts of other men? Are you longing for them? Are you gravitating towards things that you know you ought not to be looking at with your eyes? Are you entertaining things that you do know is out of accord with the will of God for a Christian? Things that you should be fleeing from, but instead you're entertaining them. Are you guilty of heart adultery? Or are you guilty of physical adultery here this morning? Are you physically indulging in adultery? David committed adultery.

None of us is above it. If you are given over to the passions of the flesh, repent, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. But the text goes on, they entice unsteady souls. These false teachers prey on the weak. Notice it's specifically the unsteady souls that they are trying to entice in verse 14. They're not interested in steady souls. They're not interested in people who are firmly grounded in the faith and anchored. Because those people can't be enticed, at least not as easily. But the false teacher loves the weak, loves the vulnerable, loves the unsteady soul because they know that they can use them and they can abuse them for their own selfish ends. But how do you avoid being enticed by these sorts of people?

Well, if they love to entice the unsteady souls, it means you need to have a steady soul. You need to be established in the truth. You need to know the Lord Jesus Christ and you need to know your Bibles. The better you know the Lord Jesus Christ, the better you know the word of God, the harder it will be for you to be enticed by one of these false teachers.

And this word entice is actually the idea of bait. It's like when you go fishing and you bait a hook so that you might catch a fish. So these false teachers are baiting their false doctrines so that they might entice or catch unsteady souls. Now, one of the best ways that you can know a false teacher is to listen to how they talk about the Lord Jesus Christ.

When they talk of the Lord Jesus Christ, is he the only redeemer of God's elect? Is he the pearl of great price? Is he more wonderful to them than 10,000 worlds? When they speak of Christ, is it evident that this person really believes that if it weren't for Jesus Christ, they and every man, woman, and child would go straight to hell justly forever.

When they speak of the Lord Jesus Christ, is it evident by their affections that this is a person who understands that their works can do them no good, that they cannot merely reform themselves, that they don't need a moral teacher, they need a redeemer.

False teachers will not have a burning affection for the Lord Jesus Christ. But the true teacher of the Bible is someone where it is evident that Christ is lovelier to them than anyone or anything else in the world. The false teacher can perhaps quote the scriptures and articulate many doctrines, but they will never have real affection in their hearts for the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when they speak of Christ, it will never be as though he is the only Redeemer, the only Savior. It will never be that that he is the only one who can pick them up from the pit of their sin. There will always be some sense in which if they even speak of Christ, Christ is merely a crutch to something else, not the end for which they exist. This is the man who knows Christ. The false teacher will not live this way or speak this way. They are mechanical. They are fake. They are frauds. But they are never affection in their heart for Christ. And so they lure and entice unsteady souls to all sorts of things, even good things, but they do not lure and entice them to Christ.

So let me ask you this morning, have you been following someone or something other than the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you been baited? Have you been enticed to think that your supposed law-keeping or righteousness is somehow worthy of the holy eyes of God? That's a false teaching. Don't believe that lie. Have you been baited to follow the flesh and seek wickedness and godlessness, thinking that God doesn't care how you live? That's a lie.

He wants you to live for his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer of God's elect. Repent and turn to Jesus Christ. Do you know Christ here this morning? He is better than gold, even much fine gold. He is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. You see, Jesus Christ did not come to entice unsteady souls. Jesus Christ came to save unworthy souls through his life, death, and resurrection. Do you know Jesus Christ?

Well, we see here again their selfishness. They have hearts trained in greed, verse 14. The word trained here literally is the word from which we get our word, gymnasium. They're going to the gym, so to speak, in their hearts. But it's not to be trained in godliness, it's to be trained in greediness. You see them being trained in greed here, in their hearts. Now this greed in the text should not be limited to excessive desire for wealth. Certainly that is included, But greed here goes beyond merely excessive desire for wealth. It's an excessive desire for this world. That is greed. It can be for popularity. It can be for money.

It can be for possessions, it can be for power, but whatever it is, these false teachers are wanting more and more of this world, and they're using their pulpit, their position, to make their own names great, which is the very antithesis of one who has come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. What does John the Baptist say? Let me increase that he may decrease.

That's the heart of a true teacher of the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't care about their own name. They're not worried about their reputation. They would frankly rather not be known so long as Christ is known. That's the heart of a true teacher of the word of God.

But the false teacher always wants his name to be known, his name to be thought well of, his possessions, his power. He wants great things in this world. It can happen very easily that you can fall into this way of thinking. It can be as simple as, well, I'll just buy a couple things with the church's money for my own personal use. Church won't miss it. After all, they're doing well. Or it can be, I poured out my heart so much for these people and they don't give me any respect. That's just selfishness.

And what every pastor needs to be told and needs to know about himself is that whatever pastorate he has been called to, whether it is to 10 people or to 1,000 people, he is not worthy of that pulpit. He is not worthy of that calling because it is only by the mercy of God that he is getting to serve in Christ's church in that role. And so he

should be humbled and honored wherever God would call him to serve the flock of God and to preach the gospel of God and to administer the sacraments. He deserves nothing but the wrath and curse of God, and he needs to remember that.

Verse 14 goes on and says, accursed children. He is saying they are children of wrath. That's what he means here. They are under the condemning wrath of God. As Peter is writing at this point, He is saying these people have not had any evidence of repentance. They are underneath the wrath and curse of God.

And the only way anyone can ever go from being under the wrath and curse of God, children of wrath, to being children of grace, is if Christ Jesus takes the wrath and curse of God on himself in their place. These men are not looking to Christ to take away the damnation they deserve for their souls and their sins. They aren't looking to Jesus.

And that's the only way anyone will ever have the wrath and curse of God removed from him. For you here this morning, that's the only way. Christ takes it on himself or you take it on yourself. That is the very tip of the iceberg of the glories of the gospel. And these men are not repenting and looking to Jesus. So they are accursed children.

And he compares them in verses 15 and 16 to the false teacher, Balaam. The false prophet, we might say Balaam. He was an Old Testament false prophet. You read about him in the book of Numbers in particular. This man, Balaam, was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, to try to curse the Israelites. And there's a lot to the story, but here's the really pertinent part for 2 Peter. During his attempts to curse the Israelites, you may remember, and it's alluded to here in 2 Peter, his donkey actually rebukes him.

And the point there is that Balaam's donkey is more in tune with spiritual things than the prophet Balaam himself. The animal is outdoing Balaam, his owner. And so he's being rebuked and he is told by this donkey he is going the wrong way. He is told essentially by the donkey, repent and turn back. Turn from your sins, Balaam. But he's an unrepentant false teacher. But here's the point, Balaam's donkey still speaks today. Balaam's donkey has something to say to pastors today.

For the pastor today, who thinks that their position can be used for them to somehow be cleansed on judgment day, who thinks that his position can somehow make him acceptable on the side of God, Balaam's donkey says to that pastor, repent. You're going the wrong way. Your title will do you no good on the judgment day. You will die in your sins. false pastor, if you do not repent and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ." That donkey is still speaking to every false teacher today, telling them, just like he said to Balaam, you're going the wrong way.

And here's the point. Many men go into the ministry for selfish gain. They go into the ministry for their own name's sake. They use God's name, not for God's glory, but for their glory. They need to repent and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. But here's the other thing. That principle doesn't just apply to pastors and false teachers. It applies to anyone who is selfishly using the name of Christ for their own gain. And here in the South, That is not an unforeign concept. It is not uncommon, especially in regions like where God has called us to live, for people to use the name of Christ for selfish gain.

They use the name of Christ and they don't even know the Christ of whom they speak. They use the name of Jesus and they don't even know about their need of a savior. They don't believe they're sinners. They don't believe that they actually can do nothing. They somehow believe that Christ is a good teacher or they really don't even know anything about him, but they use his name.

That's using the name of Christ for selfish gain. That's what Balaam did. And if you're here this morning and that's where you are, Christ will save you. Repent and turn to him. Come to know the Christ that maybe you've spoken of, but you didn't know. Christ saves sinners.

But thirdly, you see, or secondly, rather, you see false teachers are empty. So we've seen they're selfish. Now we see they're empty, verse 17. He calls them in verse 17, springs without water. Now think about this imagery, springs without water. A spring without water is just empty.

It doesn't provide you with what it promises. It's useless. It's actually less than useless because it promises you something and then leaves you disappointed. It promises refreshment to the weary traveler and then the weary traveler walks away thirsty.

And that's what's happening with people who are coming to these false teachers. They're coming to these false teachers thinking that they're going to get the nourishment that their soul needs. And then when they get to the false teachers, they find themselves leaving parched.

Now, why are the false teachers called springs without water? What makes them springs without water? Well, they are springs without water. They're ultimately not providing nourishment to those who come to them. Ultimately, for one single reason, because they are Christless.

See, whatever they preached, whatever it was, they did not preach the soul-satisfying Lord Jesus Christ. Because if they preached the Lord Jesus Christ, they could not have been called Springs Without Water. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who can bring soul-satisfying water to your heart. And these men, whatever they preached, and we have some ideas in some particulars, and we could get into that, but the biggest and most important thing that we need to know about their preaching is they didn't preach the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn't preach the soul-satisfying water of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Jesus says of himself, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. He says, whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. He says, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me. In the book of Revelation we read, the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water. Isaiah declares, come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and he who has no money, come buy and eat.

Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. And in Jeremiah, God calls himself a spring of living water and everything else is an empty cistern. But all these false teachers are empty, and they are empty because they will not preach the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is the only spring that can satisfy the human soul. He is a water-filled spring for the thirsty, dirty, dead sinner. There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains. I want to ask you this morning, what is your spring? What is your source of life? Come to the water-filled spring of Jesus Christ daily. Drink up.

Are you coming to the Lord Jesus Christ daily? Are you coming to the Lord Jesus Christ even now as you hear Him being preached from this pulpit? Are you coming to Him in utter amazement that He died for your sins? He died for your sins who are in Christ this morning. Are you astonished at that? Are you moved by that? Are you in marvel and wonder that the God who upholds the universe was crushed in his body on the tree for your sins, that he was raised for your justification? You need to drink of him daily. Fill your soul with Jesus Christ daily.

He is the only spring. But you say to yourself, I have neglected this spring. I have not come to him where I'm not coming to him often. I'm not coming to him daily. I've been filling my soul with other things. Well, then here's what you do. You come now. You drink of him right now. You come to Jesus now. He saves sinners. Do not let Your previous or even your current neglect of drinking of the water of Christ for your soul, don't let that keep you from coming this moment.

Why not? Well, think about it at a material level, a physical level. When you are weary, does that weariness make you want water less or more? You want it more. You go to it as fast as you can because you know that you need it. Christ is like that for your soul. Don't let previous neglect of daily feasting on the Lord Jesus Christ be a hindrance to your coming and feasting on him by faith now. Because you know you need him. And he is the only one who can satisfy your soul, your marriage, your friends, your family. No one and nothing else will satisfy the soul.

You will always be discontent and miserable outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come and drink of him. Did you drink of him yesterday? Well, then drink of him again today. If you drink of him today, drink of him again tomorrow. If you drink of him tomorrow, drink of him again the next day. Keep coming back to him. Why? Because How often do you drink a cup of water? You drink it daily because you know you need it every single day. Jesus Christ is the water that alone can satisfy your soul. And just like you need physical water daily for your physical life, you need the Lord Jesus Christ daily for your spiritual life. False teachers are empty because they won't preach this Christ. They won't preach a Christ that is the satisfier of souls.

Thirdly, the false teachers are enslaving, verses 18 through 22. As we turn to this final section, verses 18 through 22, and we see that these false teachers are enslaving, verse 18 starts by showing us again that they pick on the weak, the vulnerable. For it says in verse 18, for speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh, those who are barely escaping from those who live in error, they're again picking upon the vulnerable just like they were back in verse 14.

I once called a false teacher I had seen on TV when I was 15 years old, and when I called this false teacher, his ministry sent me an eraser after we got off the phone. And the eraser was shaped, had looked like a \$100 bill. Now, it was not a \$100 bill, but it looked like one. And it was an eraser. And I had some instructions. Here's what I was supposed to do. I take the eraser. I get all my debt together. And I put it in a pile. And I put the eraser on top of my debt. And all I needed to do was send the eraser back the next day with as much money as I could. And voila. my debt would be removed. It was a great scheme. They would get their eraser back with as much money as I could give them, and I would leave with more debt than when I called them.

But you see what they were doing. They were preying on who? The weak, the financially unstable. And they were using their instability and their lust for wealth. The greedy, though poor, loving and living for wealth in this world. And they were taking those people and leaving them in their sins. There was no gospel. There was no Christ. They left people enslaved and miserable. Now, not all false teachers are going to be that blatantly obvious as that guy. But verse 19 tells you they promise them freedom, but they are slaves of corruption. And Jesus says, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.

The Christian, on the other hand, is free from something and free to something. The Christian is free from the guilt of sin. The Christian is free from the dominion of sin. The Christian is free from the sting of death. The Christian is free from the wrath of God. The Christian is free from eternal damnation. And the Christian is free to something. The Christian is free to access his Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is free to obey his Heavenly Father out of childlike fear and reverence. But you see, the false teacher always makes you more and more enslaved because they lead you to more and more sin. Whereas Christ, the true teacher, frees you to live as his dutiful servant. Now on verses 20 through 22, I'm gonna read them again, and I want us to think about who. Who are these verses talking about, verses 20 through 22?

For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit and the sow after washing herself returns to wallow in the mire." So are these verses describing someone who was once saved? had repented in their sins and placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then later lost their salvation. Is that the type of person that this text is talking about?

Well, the answer to that has to be no, because Jesus Christ says, all that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. This means that those whom God calls savingly to himself through his Son, by his Holy Spirit, will persevere to the end. Now, it will be a daily battle, but God Almighty holds them with his omnipotent grip such that though they stumble, they will never, God, rather, will never let them go.

The perseverance of the saints, as a brief aside, is not the same thing as easy believism. Perseverance is not easy. If you've ever done anything where you had to persevere, maybe you've run track or you played some sport, you've done anything. Perseverance doesn't mean easy. It means you're safe, but it's going to be really hard. God will hold on to you though. That's the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. He's going to hold you. So these people here, all that to say, these people in verses 20 through 22 can't have been believers who then became unbelievers because that category doesn't exist because of the perseverance of the saints.

But what should we make of these people? I believe that Matthew chapter 12, verses 43 through 45 provide an illuminating commentary on these types of people. I'm not saying in every single way these people in Matthew 12, 43 through 45 are exactly the same, but I am saying that there are similarities between these types of people in Matthew 12, 43 and 45 and those in 2 Peter 20 through 22. And frankly, I was very pleased because this was already where my mind had gone. And then the commentaries went there too, and that just helped affirm that this is a healthy way of trying to think through this text. So listen to the people Jesus describes here in Matthew 12, 43 through 45.

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, I will return to my house from which I came. And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself. And they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be with this evil generation." Notice how similar that is to so much of the language that we just read.

For example, in 2 Peter 2.21, "For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment. So what you see here really then is just this in verses 20 through 22. You see people who had an intellectual ascent to Christ, but not an experiential knowledge of Christ. You see, they knew Christ at some level in their minds at a bare intellectual ascent, but they did not have a relational knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as a result, verse 21 indicates they receive a stricter judgment.

Have you ever known a person like this? I would imagine you have known some people like this. I have known people like this too. One of my closest friends growing up, a man with whom I prayed many times, actually we took our vows to become communing members of the local church together at 16 years old.

This friend later left the faith and was excommunicated. I got coffee with him several years after he had left the faith and apostatized. And what he told me was shocking. Here is a man who is a self-proclaimed atheist, and he said to me, Matt, when I left the church, something in me died. There is something real in the church, and I can't explain it. And that died in me when I left the church. But I want to ask you this question. I ask myself this question.

Why haven't I left the church? Why haven't I apostatized? Why, if you are a Christian here this morning, why haven't you left the church? Why haven't you apostatized here this morning? Haven't you stumbled many, many times? Why do you keep getting up? Why do you keep repenting? Why do you keep going back to the blood of the cross and Christ and his resurrection? Why do you do that? Why haven't you died yet? Why haven't you left the faith? I will tell you why.

It is a miracle. God has held on to you and he will never let you go. There is no good reason why I or why you should still be walking with the Lord today if you're a Christian. There's no reason that you should be here and my friend should be a fraud other than that Christ God the Father and the Holy Spirit will not let you go. It's incredible. But the warning of this text must be heard. And the warning is this. Do not leave this building today having heard this sermon and go to hell. Repent and turn to Christ.

He will save you. I'm not concerned about what you've done. That doesn't matter. What matters is knowing the Lord Jesus Christ savingly, truly, really. Spoke to somebody on the phone, and you will never know this person. They are in another state. And this person shared with me that they have had two abortions. Now, if that doesn't break your heart, then it's sad, it should break your heart. And what I told this person was, you've committed murder.

And then I told them that Christ Jesus came to save sinners. Turn to Christ. Is Christ that good to you? Do you believe in a Christ? that good, because that's the Christ of the Bible. He saves people who are utterly unworthy, and then he keeps them, though they're utterly unworthy, all the way to the end. If you are in Christ this morning, you are in Christ and you will remain in Christ, because the God of the universe will not let a child go.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we do praise you that we get to be children of a God who holds on to us even when we do not hold on to him. Father, we praise you that you are faithful, and that you are just, and that you love your children, and that you have made us know you savingly, that we can say we love you and we want to live for you. And though, oh God, we believe, help our unbelief. Sanctify us in thy truth, thy word is truth.

And oh Lord, you are the only one who knows hearts. You are the only one who can open eyes. Father, if there be anyone here who doesn't know Christ, we pray that you would give them eyes to see and ears to hear that he is the savior of sinners. And that whatever their sins may be, the Christ of the scriptures can atone for those sins. For he indeed is God. and his sacrifice is infinitely valuable. Oh God, we praise you and we thank you for your saving and holding onto us. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray, amen.