

A Portrait of a Wolf, Part 2

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2 Peter 2:2:3

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So, we're going to be back in 2 Peter, so if you want to take your Bibles, you can turn to 2 Peter chapter 2, and if you've got one of those blue bibles from the ushers, it's going to be on page 1121, and if you've been with us, you're familiar with this study that we've been going through. We've gone through chapter 1, we're into chapter 2, but if not, I just want to give us a short review to get us caught up to where we are. As we've noted before, this is the second letter, clearly, 2 Peter, the second letter that the apostle Peter is writing to this group of churches, dispersed Jews who settled into churches throughout Asia minor in the last stages of Peter's earthly ministry.

At this point in the writing, Peter is in Rome, he is in prison, and he knows he will be put to death any day. Knowing this, he pens this final letter, his last will and testament per se, and he doesn't do so begrudgingly saying like, woe is me. Why aren't you guys doing more to get me out of prison? I could really use some help here. I'm running out of hope. No, he says, "I want to encourage you and equip you, my fellow saints. I want to establish you in the truth" as he says in chapter 1:16, truth that they had already been taught. It's not something new for them. This is faithful ministry again, and again, and again, and I'm going to drive the point home for you so that you live it out and practice it even after my death. It's what Peter is saying.

Well, not only that, being a pastor and an apostle, Peter wrote this letter, Christian, if you are indeed a Christian in Christ, he wrote this letter to you. And we can't say that about every book of the New Testament or every book of the Bible. Some of these books are written... Paul writing to the Philippian Church, Paul writing to the Galatian Church, and we're not members of those churches. Now, they're principles that we can draw out and live and they're for us, but they're not to us.

Whereas this letter, Peter is looking throughout the ages that everyone who trusts and follows Christ and says, I want to leave a legacy for the big C Church, this letter is for you. And the apostle Peter has written a final letter of encouragement, and of equipping, and of hope with the goal that you would pursue Christ with all of your heart.

So, Peter spent the first chapter discussing the nature of the Christian life. He taught us how to be instructed by God's word, how to follow and live God's word, how to treasure God's word, how to trust God's word above all earthly experiences, and how to look, and see, and savor the glory of Christ from God's word.

And chapter 2 then Peter gives us a warning against false teachers, these wolves who would infiltrate the sheep pen. He outlines for us what they would look like, how they operate, what

their goals are, and also what their destructive judgment and end will look like for them and for all who would follow their lies, lies that cause people to disbelieve God and His word. That is why their destruction is sure.

Finally in chapter 3, we learn about the certainty of Jesus Christ's earthly return. You see, the hope of our salvation is not simply Jesus saying, I'm going to be nice to you and, yes, I'll forgive your sins and now I'm done with you. Philippians 1 tells us that "I'm confident of this very thing that he who began a good work, and you will bring it to completion." Christ will complete our salvation and bring us safely home. He will return and establish his earthly kingdom and reconcile all things to himself. The certainty of Jesus Christ's earthly return is our hope of salvation. He will rescue us all.

So even in this dark middle section of the saga, there is hope and there is light that awaits us. Christ will return and he will bring justice, and righteousness, and peace for all who enter his kingdom as his people, and judgment, and destruction, and wrath for all who follow, or all who fall rather, under God's heavy hand of judgment.

So as we find ourselves in chapter 2 today, last time we looked at chapter 2:1 and the beginning of Peter's first explanation of a portrait of a wolf. He has two of them in this book, and he has two explanations as well of what a false teacher's destiny is under the wrath of God, and all of those are in this chapter. So it can come across a little heavy, can come across a little dark. I chose to break up this first portrait of what a false teacher looks like into two parts, because the apostle is equipping us with so much truth. There is so much we need to pull out, and extract, and understand and I didn't want to breeze over any of it. We live in a time where we need 2 Peter 2 more than ever.

Last time we saw four actions that begin to define how false teachers, or wolves in this analogy, act, and they were these. In verse 1, number one, wolves will arise in the church. There is no doubt false teachers will show up at Redeemer Bible Church. They're not going to get up here, guarantee you that, but they will circulate among you. You must be aware.

Number two, wolves will tell lies to the church. This is a character quality. They're going to cause you to question God's word just like the snake did in the garden. Did God really say that? Is that what that really means? Shouldn't we think about this differently?

Number three, wolves will deny the Lord of the church. They will expose their heart by preaching to you a different version of Jesus, meaning a different Jesus who has no power to save.

Number four, wolves will die outside the church. Their judgment is sure. Jesus will reconcile all things to himself. But these actions began to paint a picture for us of who these people are, of how we can identify them, how we can mark and avoid them, and not fall victim to their influence.

Part two, then, in verses 2 and 3, we're going to see a continuation of Peter's explanation, expanding truth about this description, and giving us a firm biblical footing on which we can stand so that we can, with wisdom, discern truth from lies, and as we jump into our text for today in these two verses, Peter continues his expose of the attempts of false teachers to infiltrate the church and destroy the body of Christ from within by divisiveness. All the while, God is warning Christians not to follow them and is letting us know of the destruction that awaits them and their followers through four truths that continue God's description of the portrait of a wolf. So, you see those four in your outline.

As we get into the text, Peter continues by playing the role of protective shepherd. You see, shepherding is a joy, it's a privilege. We are called by God, and we are blessed by God, we have a high charge in calling, and it's a privilege, but it is also a role filled with difficulty, and discouragement, and danger, and quite often we are called to play defense. We must play defense. It's a role given to us to designed to protect the flock of God from men like this, described in these verses.

I want us to recall what we learned last time about how false prophets, we remember, verse one starts by saying "False prophets arose from among the people..." That's referring to Old Testament Israel. So we want to see what these false prophets look like, how they're described, and what God thinks of them. And I also want you to see that the false teachers' motive is similar to what the false prophets are doing, that is they invade the church by infiltration. They assume a role from the inside.

They're not outside the church throwing stones at us, they infiltrate the church and claim a title of teacher with authority and then begin to divide and what's happening here in the beginning of verse 1 is a callback to all those who claimed in ancient Israel to be true prophets of God. In fact, Jeremiah had to comment on this in Jeremiah 14:14 because this was so prevalent. He says, "And the Lord," that is Yahweh, "said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name.'"

Now we have a lot of prophets in the Bible. God's not speaking of them. These guys, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, the guys... All of these Old Testament prophets that wrote letters and wrote prophecies for Israel, He's not speaking of them. These are men who claimed that office and who were saying, "I have a word from the Lord for you." God is saying, "They're telling lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds."

Folks, if it can happen to Israel, it will happen to us and as we remember from Isaiah 30, the people were not offended at this. They actually enjoyed it. They embraced these false prophets. They killed the real prophets. Isaiah 30 verse 10 says, this is Israel speaking to the false prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us soothing things. Prophecy to us illusions."

You see, they wanted the soothing illusions of these false prophets because they did not want to face the truth of their own sin. They wanted to revel in it. They wanted affirmation in it. In the same manner, Peter says that false teachers will indeed arise in the church. They will come from

among the church, coming in, pretending to be in fellowship, to be of the body, in order to destroy the body of Christ from within like cancer.

So we recall all of this from verse 1, and as we move into verses 2 and 3, our vision about these false teachers will expand with these four truths about false teachers and their followers. So with that understanding, we want to read together 2 Peter 2:1-3, and our verses for today will be verses 2-3.

As we always do, we stand for the reading of God's word. If you are able, out of reverence for God's word, please stand with us. If you're not, you can stay seated. 2 Peter 2:1 to three say this, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of the truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." That is God's word. You may be seated.

As you are, I want to go to the Lord in prayer because this is a dark, difficult passage and we don't want to lose hope, but we want to understand God's heart here, that He is protecting us, and loving us, and we want to thank Him for that. So why don't you pray with me?

God, please help us in our study. We love you. You are a father, you protect us, you've given us this passage to understand how to defend ourselves from those who would deceive us into following them and away from Jesus. May we be wise. May we learn from your word today and see your sovereign, kind, and guiding hand from this text. And may Christ be honored. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So as we turn then to the text, I want you to see in your outline, the first truth that we see comes in the first part of verse 2, and that is this: many, many, ***Many WILL Follow Wolves Into Sensuality***. I cannot overstate this word, because the position in the verse this word has is a position of prominence. It is emphasized. In fact, it's repeated again. This is not just a few people who will be deceived by these false teachers.

Most of us think of infiltration like, well that will never happen to us. By the way it's happened here. It has in the past and it will happen again. I'm sure it's not far off, this is close. We're insulated from this. No, we're not. We must be aware, and this is not some small number. God chose to use this word to describe how this word is used elsewhere as a great multitude, not like some casual crowd, fringe group of Christians, this is a multitude, large stadiums full of people.

So the question must be asked, then, and answered, how are these people being deceived? Why are they so easily deceived? What is so enticing? Aren't these false teachers wicked? Aren't they easy to mark out? They walk in with red horns on their head and they're evil. They're easy to identify, we'll be able to find them. We're not going to be fooled by these guys.

Many, many will be fooled. So why is it so easy for them to be enticed? Well, expository preaching is a wonderful thing. Look at the next word. "Many will follow their sensuality." This is an interesting word. It's actually designed to be the exact opposite of the word that's in the dictionary form and that word says this. 'The word itself refers to the character quality of those people who lived in a city called Pisidia. And those citizens were known for their extreme strictness of moral quality.'

They were good, upstanding people. So much so that the very description of their nature, of their person, of their culture, was that if you are an upright moral person, you are like them. That word describes them, and so we're going to use it to describe you, too. They had scruples, they were moral. This word in our context, you take that word and in Greek you put the word "awe" at the front and what does that do? It makes it the exact opposite. These false teachers are defined by a lack of God's morality, a lack of biblical faithfulness and strictness in their desire to follow God's law.

And the mass crowd who follows them are enticed, then, by the freedom of the flesh that is offered through this amorality. In short, these false teachers come in and say, hey, you can have God and your sexual identity. You can have God and all of your licentiousness. You can have God and any fleshly or mental indulgence that you want. You can define your life as it is.

And frankly for those who are enticed by the flesh, this is an intriguing offer. It's like they're saying like, wait a minute, wait a minute. You're telling me that I can have God's grace, and His forgiveness, and His mercy for free and I can keep gratifying the flesh? Done. That's easy. Sign me up. There's no problem with that. That's great. That's the heart's attitude of the masses who have not committed to submit their hearts, their minds, their souls, their wills, and their flesh to being disciples of Christ who are following him in humility.

Jesus describes his disciples and says of them in Matthew 16:24, "If anyone would come after me, let him first deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." You can't even start following Jesus until you are humble, and broken, and deny yourself. Add this to the list of things Jesus never said, you can have me and your sin. I'll take you as you are. I'm just wanting you to grow my influence. Will you just follow me? In my kingdom you can do what you want as you are.

On the contrary, Jesus says, you must first die to self. Paul says it this way of himself in 1 Corinthians 9:27 as an example. He says, "But I discipline my body and keep it under control." This is a picture of... We've all seen Rocky and the montage of him training, and running, and jump rope and boxing. You take all of that boxing action and Paul's directing it back at himself. He's literally saying, I'm punching my flesh into submission. Why? Lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

That's a fascinating statement and revealed because what he's saying effectively is anyone is disqualified if they're living a life of sensuality from ministry. They're disqualified. And that is not accidentally stumble once, twice, it's living a patterned life of rebellion, high-handed

rebellion against God. You are disqualified from ministry and Paul says, "I better keep myself under control, because the flesh will take over if I'm not careful and I will be disqualified from ministry."

By extension, then every false teacher is disqualified from your allegiance, disqualified from ministry. Why? What standard is Paul saying here he is trying to commit himself to? Well, Jesus said that we must be perfect as our father in heaven is perfect. That's the standard. We must be perfect. Now we can't do that, that's why Christ came, but we are not our own. We've been bought with a price according to 1 Corinthians 6:20. We do not get to remain dead in our sins and be alive in Christ.

However, those false teachers, those liars, those wolves who understand the enticing nature of sin, they'll try to convince you that you can have it all. They'll try to say, hey, God is gracious. It is forgiven. Sin's not really that big of a deal. There's not really that many in the Bible anyway. It's not listed. Only fundamentalists think those things are sins, don't worry about it, and so many will follow. Their sensuality, their amorality. I can engage my flesh in whatever I want. They'll follow their heart; they'll follow their feelings. They'll follow their desire to define their own identity and they'll lie to you and tell you can do the same without consequence.

Well, this is the first of the truths that is shown to us in this passage. Many are going to fall victim... Pardon me. ... To their own fleshly calls to continue in sin without consequence." Because hey, God will forgive. That's the excuse. That's what they're going to say. But what does Paul say in Romans 6:1? He says this, "What shall we say then are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be."

And by the way, if you could boil the Greek language down to what's the strongest possible way, I could say this? It's right here. So allow me to scream, because the pages of scripture cannot scream, never! That's what Paul is saying with his pen right here, and we can't see that in the text, because the Bible won't yell at us. I'm going to yell at you, though.

This is the absolute strongest way. We don't want to lose this in translation. He would never ever allow that! Anyone who says so is a liar and must be rejected. In fact, that's exactly what God said of these people in Jeremiah 14:14. "They are liars. They're not speaking my message." No. Instead, "We must strive for righteousness. We must follow Jesus and be a light to the nations through the transformed life that the spirit is giving us. Amen."

Not through our sinful inclinations, that would lead no one to the truth. In case anyone came to church today looking for the meaning of life. Thank you, sir. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says this, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come."

It's a beautiful expression of what Jesus does for us with the Gospel. The old life has passed away and the new has come. We are now new creations and that is our meaning. False teachers will tell you; you can have Jesus and your sin. Jesus will tell you that sin cannot dwell where

holiness dwells. We are to be holy, for God has holy, therefore we must not sin. We must be moral. That is following God's morality, not for our own good, and not accomplishing it for our righteousness, but accomplishing it reflecting our salvation. We must follow God's commands for God's sake, because he uses our lives for his glory.

Now, none of us will do this perfect and we're not going to nitpick each other in sin, but what this means is we're not going to allow in dwelling sin and abiding sin in your life without calling you to faithfulness and repentance. In restoration, not in like, look at you in the sin you're doing. No brother, sister, that's dishonoring to the Lord, and we need to put that off and put on righteousness. You need to confess that, repent, and be made right.

Why? How? We'll get to. The question is your heart's desire to follow Jesus or is your heart's desire to indulge the flesh? Because you cannot have both. Galatians 2:20 says this, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." Your old man, the old man that passed away, was nailed to the cross with Jesus and it is now Christ who lives in you. Let me ask you a question. If it is Christ who lives in you, is Christ driving you towards sensuality?

No! May it never be! Christ drives you towards righteousness, and that's what Paul says here in Galatians 2:20, and by the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God. He's done it for me. I live just by faith in him who loved me and gave himself for me. He's not doing this to accomplish his redemption, that's already been accomplished, he's doing this out of love for the father and for the Savior who came to rescue him who he wants to now represent in the world he's putting to death sin in the flesh. That is what we are to do. We are to not indulge it.

False teachers will tell you otherwise. Mark and avoid such people. Why? Because of what we see as their destiny in the next verse. But before we get there, the question that is begged by this phrase is answered in the following phrase, I would ask this question, why can't we have both? Why are false teachers wrong about this? Why can't we have Christ and our sin? And the answer is found in *truth #2* in your outline. ***The Truth Will Be Blasphemed by The Wolves' Followers.*** Now this is important to see, and I worded it this way on purpose because I read this wrong when I first read this.

Verse 2 says, "And many will follow their sensuality and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed." I thought that the way of truth is blasphemed by the false teachers. Well, that's true. However, the "them" are not the false teachers in this verse. The them are the followers. The followers will blaspheme the truth. The Apostle now turns and exposes the reason for why it is such an egregious error for Christians who follow Jesus faithfully to allow themselves to be swayed by false teachers and why fake Christians, those professing Christ, who have not bowed the knee to Christ, do so much damage for the witness of Christ.

People who follow false teachers, who teach different doctrine from what scripture says, who encourage people that they can live licentious lives of sensuality in the flesh, profane the name of Christ with their supposed witness. Verse 2 goes on to say, "And because of them..." That's the

followers "the way of truth will be blasphemed." You follow these false teachers; you'll blaspheme Christ with your life. "Because many will follow the sensuality of false teachers. The way of truth will be blasphemed" is what Peter is saying. This is the negating of your gospel witness. If you do this.

What Peter means is this: you have one witness in this world and that is your life in Christ before a broken world. They are going to give you one chance to prove it. And they're going to say, oh, you're transformed in Christ? I'll put that to the test. We'll throw every temptation, sensuality, your way and see if you hold up. You really transformed by Christ?" When you walk in the flesh, when you follow your heart, when you fall victim to this lie, the truth of the Gospel and the reality of your transformed life, church look up, becomes trashed in the eyes of the world.

They're like, "Yeah, just another hypocrite. You're not really transformed, are you?" They'll say, you're just like me. Why would I need Jesus to be any more like me? I like myself. I'm fine with my life. I don't see a problem. I've seen your life. You sin just like I do. Jesus doesn't change anything.

Do you see how the way of truth is blasphemed through a sensuous life? And do you see the dilemma? Because nowhere in scripture are we called to that. In fact, we're called to the opposite. If the meaning of life is found in 2 Corinthians 5:17, the purpose of life is found in verse 19, 2 Corinthians 5:19 says that we're to be entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation. We are to call men who are at enmity with God, to be at peace with God, and to be reconciled to God through Christ.

We know that dead, sinful, lost, hopeless man can only be reconciled to God through Christ. That we can be made righteous through Christ, righteous before the law, the law by which we will be judged, the law that Christ perfectly fulfilled in his life, that we blasphemed by our sin, and we can be reconciled to God through Christ, receive His righteousness, be transformed into His likeness. That is our message and that is the truth of the gospel.

And the way and the message of false teachers is what? The way of their followers is what? Is to blaspheme that truth with their continuation of high-handed, sinful rebellion against God, unrepentant, unrelenting. And the sinful world around them will look at them and simply say, that's no ministry of reconciliation. If it is, then I'm already this way. I don't need to be transformed by Christ. I can come to your church and hang out, and God will accept me for who I am. Why? Because He's clearly accepted you for how you are: an unrepentant sinner just like me. I can have Christ and my sin. Way of truth, blasphemed.

See, our lives before Christ and in witness to His transforming power matter, your walk with Jesus matters, your witness to a lost and dying world matters. Whether you like it or not, whether you pursue it or not, if you are in Christ, you are an ambassador for him and an ambassador for righteousness. You are not a licentious fake who blasphemes the truth with your amorality, and if you are, then you are not in Christ.

Jesus said of his followers that we are to be salt and light to this world. We are to preserve; we are to purify. We shine light into the darkness of this world. We illuminate the truth from God's word. How? Through the example of our transformed lives, while expressing the word of God to people. Our moral following of God's righteous ways, not our own ways, not for our own self-righteousness, and we don't do this perfectly, but listen to this, even when we fail our repentance, and our asking God for cleansing and restoration, demonstrates righteousness through those actions. You see that? Even in our failure, God's grace, when we return to the Lord, He is gracious and restores us and we demonstrate God's goodness.

And by the way, that can't happen if we continue in sinful rebellion. We cannot demonstrate the Lord's goodness, and grace, and mercy. Well, that's just verse 2. We got verse 3 to go. We got nine minutes, but I'm going to go long. Sorry. We got two more truths to cover. One more truth about the false teachers and their followers and one about their eternal destiny.

Number three, *point #3*, in your outline, *Many Will Be Exploited by The Lies of The Wolves*. These many who are enticed by the sensuality will be exploited. And I want to show you that through a selfish motivation and a deceptive intent. First, the selfish motivation. Verse 3 says, "And in their greed they will exploit you." There's a lot we can say here, but we want to begin with the nature of the fact that they are greedy. This is their motivation. This word means a desire to have more. It's a covetousness, or an avarice, an insatiable desire for more, and this gets to the heart of why they would want to deceive the church.

The why in their hearts is plainly exposed in the text. They want more, and they will use you to get more. They'll promise you freedom and enslave you to get more of their own desires. More what? More influence, more power, more money, more sex, more fame. Whatever it is that is driving them, more satisfaction of their ego, they will exploit you. They will enslave you. Pardon my French, they will pimp you as shills of their false narrative. They will use you to be their evangelist for their false message in order to get more of what gratifies their flesh.

Their goal is not to honor Christ. You want to see a difference between a pastor and a false teacher? Is he honoring Christ or himself? False teachers aren't like John the Baptist saying, there's Jesus, just look at Jesus. I'm just the messenger. There's Jesus. It's to gain for themselves the glory due to God and to gratify their own flesh in the process.

How do they do this? The verse tells us. They will exploit you with false words. They'll take a deceptive version of the truth and make you think you're looking at the truth and reading the truth, and they will deceive you with lies. That's their deceptive intent. They, the deceivers, will deceive. Many, this is what this verse is telling us, by the flesh with lies enticing, deceit designed why to destroy your witness for Christ and nullify your ability to fulfill your ministry of reconciliation.

You fall into sin, into gross immorality. The world sees you, and now all of a sudden, you're going to try to reconcile men to God. They're like, yeah, you're a hypocrite. Now, God can restore that brokenness, but it's the enemy's goal to make the church useless in the world. Don't

fall for it. Don't fall victim. Instead, believe the truth of God's word. Follow men committed to pointing you to Jesus. Commit to live scripture, commit to know Jesus who is crucified for you to redeem you and has called you to a higher purpose, to be salt and light to this world, not to mimic it and fall victim to the slavery of sin.

By the way, the same slavery, these false teachers are still enslaved in. How do I know that? How do I know they're children of wrath according to Ephesians 2:3 and not just "mistaken brethren who just need correction?" Folks, this is why Peter is writing to us. We do not get to determine who the false teachers are. I don't like him, or his theology, or his church. He's a false teacher!

That is called slander. Scripture teaches us who false teachers are, and how we can identify them, and if we identify them in this way, we are to remove them from our influence. Wolves will lure you away from Christ with all moral sensuality, with fleshly indulgences of all types, promising that God has forgiven. They will entice you and cause you to blaspheme the truth. This may be through pride. Well, I'm the only one who has the right interpretation of this passage and you got to follow me otherwise, and I'll give you some of my glory if you follow me because you recognize the same thing. It's not always just a fleshly expression, sometimes it is that pharisaical, self-righteous expression as well. You'll be enticed. You'll blaspheme the truth with your life, the truth that God has transformed you into a new creation. The world will look at you and say, no, it hasn't. No, no, you're just like us.

To what end are these false teachers working? Why is this happening? Are they just bored? Ultimately, we need to understand this. Wolves, or false teachers, don't work for themselves. They think they do. They think they're autonomous. They're just doing their own thing. They're going to build their own kingdom, but according to Ephesians 2:1-3, they are slaves to sin. They are following the course of this world.

It's like a roller coaster. You see the car going down the roller coaster. It's not controlling its own destiny. The track is. The world is controlling these individuals and the prince of the power of the air, who is Satan, is their master. They have no freedom, and though they offer freedom through their approach, they are enslaving you to the flesh.

Indeed, the rest of verse 3 tells us another truth and it tells us of their fate. And not just their fate, but consequently the fate of all of those who follow them down this deceptive path, and that is ***truth #4, The Destruction of Wolves WILL Happen***. Make no mistake, Christian, God allows them for a time to manifest their own wickedness for a season, but they will not go unpunished. Those who rebel against God's righteous decrees, God is actively preparing their destruction. Verse 3 goes on to say, "Their condemnation from long ago is not idle."

Think about this: the eternal, holy God of the universe has been planning how to destroy these people since before time began. Do you want to be anywhere near them when that destruction falls? It's a sobering thought and it's the thought Paul illustrates well in 2 Timothy 2:20 when he says this, "Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood

and clay..." This is a house, there are going to be Christians following Christ and there are going to be fakes. "Some are made for honorable use and some for dishonorable." Guys, this is a statement about the sovereignty and plan of God. By the way, these vessels of wood and clay for dishonorable use didn't get in the house by accident. God is allowing these false teachers into the church to manifest his perfect justice and righteousness through their destruction.

Those who practice such things, those who are the false teachers, the wolves infiltrating for destructive purposes, have been destined, planned from long ago to perish in their sins, to face destruction and judgment. Yet God in His mercy has given them, even them, a solution should these individuals living in rebellion repent.

The very next verse in 2 Timothy 2, from 2:20 to 2:21 says this, "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable..." anyone, "If anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful for the master of the house, ready for every good work." Now, that sounds to me like Ephesians 2:10 where after God transforms, brings to spiritual life. This person, they're ready for every good work. It sounds like a true heart transformation. Cleanse yourself from what is dishonorable, be a vessel for honorable use.

This is such a beautiful truth, because nobody is beyond the scope of God's redemptive reach. Nobody is so dead, so sinful, so rebellious that God couldn't possibly save them, and we would hope and pray, even these false teachers who are maligning the name of Christ actively in the church today, we would pray that God would truly save them, but only God knows who he's going to save. Only God knows who will repent, and we cannot change that possibility. We are only called to protect ourselves from those acting like this.

So when I call out a false teacher, I'm saying, "he's acting this way. Stay away from him." We can only judge based on what the text tells us. We're not determining their eternal destiny, we're simply obeying the Lord by practicing wisdom and discernment, removing the influence of such people from our midst, and praying for their salvation.

Well, not only is God actively preparing their destruction; it is not simply a matter of this could happen, in God's perfect timing it will happen. God has perfectly timed their destruction. In the same manner though that God has delayed the judgment so that the elect can be gathered into the harvest according to Matthew 13:30, in the same manner that God is gathering in the fullness of the nations, the fullness of the Gentiles, in Romans 11:25, and in the same manner that God describes himself, and my favorite way, that he describes himself, that he is patient and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast, covenant love and that he desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. God's character is to be gracious and allow for repentance and faith to take hold.

But for those who don't, the rest of verse 3 concludes and their destruction is not asleep. This is God's way of saying, guys, I have not forgotten. I'm not asleep at the wheel. None of this is by accident. I have a perfect plan that I will execute in my perfect timing for my glory. I will

destroy them. I will bring that to pass exactly when I say, not a second late, and not a second early. Church, listen up. The destruction of these individuals who persist in this behavior and who do not bow the knee to Christ is sure.

Sometimes we might be tempted to say, Lord, just come fix it now. Cleanse your church now, and he's saying, the harvest isn't done yet, but it absolutely is going to happen. But not only that, all those people who follow them will face the same destructive end as these wolves. Satan will stop at nothing to drag as many souls made in the image of God to hell with him, because he hates God, he hates you, he hates Christ in his church. He will seek to destroy and devour you and he will use false teachers inside the church to do so.

We've reached the end of this first portrait of a wolf presented in this chapter. I warned you last time, and I told you again, it's the dark middle part of the saga. Chapter 1 is Star Wars; this is Empire Strikes back. The empire's on the march. Vader's got his lightsaber out, it looks like he's going to win, but I want to encourage you that there's light and hope at the end of the tunnel. We've still got some way to go to see the remainder of what these false teachers look like, and what's their fate, and how God cannot and will not abide their rebellion forever. He will execute justice and righteousness in this world when He returns for His bride and His nation according to Isaiah 42. He will bring it to pass, but in the meantime, I want to leave us with a hopeful word from Peter in chapter three, because I don't want us to lose sight of the hope we have in the return of Christ and in his control.

So, there's a question in chapter 3:11 with an answer in 14 and 15. The question asks, since all these things are to be dissolved... Peter's just talking about the destruction of the world. What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness? I'm sorry, Peter, did you mean in sensuality and licentiousness? That's not an option you gave. Oh, because the assumption is those of us in Christ will live lives of holiness and godliness. That's our only option.

How do we do that? Verses 14 and 15, "Therefore, beloved..." Beloved Christian, "... Since you are waiting for these things..." Since you're waiting patiently for Christ's return. "Be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish." This isn't the apostle saying, you'd better do this! You'd better do this for my sake! He's saying, "Beloved, be diligent to pursue Christ as much as you can, be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace, at peace with other men and putting other men at peace with God and count the patience of our Lord as salvation."

Don't lose hope in the fact that he's not here yet. Count God's patience as more people being added to his kingdom. "Live upright lives of righteousness, obedient to Christ. Make sure that you have been made right with God through Christ." Colossians 1:20 says that "Christ through His life, death, and resurrection is making peace with God by the blood of His cross."

Be sure first that Christ has made peace with God for your life. That is, you've been declared righteous by God because of Christ's work. That only happens when you humble yourself. Confess Christ as Lord, repent of your sins, turn from evil, and follow Christ. Place all of your

hope in His saving power and his resurrection from the dead. If you've never done that, God has you here for a reason.

You are being presented with the meaning of life, the most important thing that you could ever consider. God has you here to bow the knee to Christ and confess him as Lord and Savior. He is your Lord and God, whether you want him or not. He came as a sacrifice, as a savior, to pay the penalty for the sin, for the cost that you owe to an eternal God, and the truth of the matter is whether you believe it or not, this will happen. Either Christ paid it all, or you will pay it all, and the God of the universe, who loves all, says in Isaiah 1, Isaiah quotes God saying, "Come, let us reason together." God, the eternal, perfect holy God of this universe who created you, against whom you are rebelling actively, who you hate, is saying, "Come, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, though you have offended my law to an infinite degree, I will cleanse you. You'll be white as snow."

God will cleanse you, declare you righteous, and rescue you from death, and you've got Christians all around you who want to share that truth with you. If you don't know how to do that, we want to share that with you. Don't leave this place without considering Christ and accepting that sacrifice that He made on your behalf to bring you into God's kingdom.

These false teachers and their followers, if they persist in sin, will face destruction. Those of us in Christ will face God with a clean conscience and will find perfect rest in Christ, and joy in his kingdom forever. Amen? Amen. Let's pray.

Father, it's a joy, it's indeed a challenge, but a true joy to come to passages like this and see your intent, your heart to teach us and instruct us in a loving, fatherly warning to not fall victim to those who are going to lie about the truth. We're so thankful that you have shown us this, that even though this is that dark, heavy middle section that you're bringing us through with the hope of the gospel. May that always be the case. I pray, father, that this truth would be an encouragement to everyone here for the honor of Christ. Amen.