

Creatures Born to Be Killed, Part 2

Scripture: 2 Peter 2:15-18a

Code: 61-21

We turn again to the great privilege of hearing the Word spoken to us, 2 Peter chapter 2 is our text...2 Peter chapter 2. We're looking again at the verses, the middle of verse 10 down through verse 22 and we shall not be able to finish that even tonight. And you remember that this is a chapter in which Peter speaks adamantly against false teachers. His language is powerful, fierce, fiery. He doesn't hold anything back. He doesn't pull any punches. It is a blast of divine fury authored by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Peter that has really no equal in the Scriptures other than the book of Jude and Matthew 23, the words of Jesus Himself. A fierce diatribe against false teachers, exposing them for what they are, delineating the characteristics by which they can be recognized and pronouncing on them fatal and eternal judgment.

And the question has to be asked at this point...why is Peter so adamant in his attack? Why is he so unrelenting as to go on for 22 verses? And I might also ask myself the question, why do I share his passion? Why do I find myself so adamant, sometimes so vitriolic toward false teachers? Why do I have the same kind of zeal sometimes that he seems to have in confronting satanic agents and their lies? And the answer very simply is because it is our duty as pastors to protect the sheep. And that's really not new. Faithful pastors since Peter and up until today are still aware of the tremendous responsibility they have to protect the sheep.

In a wonderful new book written by J.I. Packer entitled *A Quest for Godliness*, he discusses the Puritans. In one paragraph he writes, "Pastors...the Puritans said...are responsible for rebuking heresy and defending truth, lest their flocks be misled and thereby inebled, if not worse. Biblical truth is nourishing. Human error is killing. So spiritual shepherds must guard sound doctrine at all costs." And then he quoted one of the Puritans, John Owen. "It is incumbent on pastors to preserve the truth or doctrine of the gospel received and professed in the church and to defend it against all opposition. This is one principle end of the ministry. And the sinful neglect of this duty is that which was the cause of most of the pernicious heresies and errors that have infested and ruined the church. Those whose duty it was to preserve the doctrine of the gospel entire and the public profession of it have many of them spoken perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Bishops, presbyters, public teachers have been the ring leaders in heresies. Wherefore this duty, especially at this time when the fundamental truths of the gospel are on all sides impugned from all sorts of adversaries is in a special manner to be attended unto," end quote.

And like John Owen, I have felt the strong duty to confront the error of false teachers. I'm reminded of Paul who ceased not to warn for a space of three years night and day the people in Ephesus, the leaders of that church, knowing that as soon as he left they would have perversion beyond anything they might have anticipated foisted upon them by false teachers. Whether it be Peter or whether it be Paul or John Owen or whoever it might be, all faithful shepherds have to learn from Peter's attitude and take a very serious and a very aggressive stance against the matter of false teaching and false teachers.

Now we have already found our way through the first half of the chapter. We had seen a pencil sketch outline in verses 1 to 3, giving us some kind of a basic description of false teachers. And then in verses 4 to 10a we noted the pronouncement of judgment upon them and now beginning in verse 10b and going to the end of the chapter, he goes back and colors in the original sketch with a full color portrait of false teachers.

We started into this section last Sunday night. And you'll remember our first point, starting in verse 10, was their presumption. Let me just read it to you. He says in the middle of verse 10, "Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord, but these like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong."

Just a brief review. He is concerned to delineate for us the presumption of false teachers. They are daring. They are bold. They are brazen. They are reckless. They're recklessness can be illustrated by the fact that they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties. They blaspheme angelic beings, even though they might be fallen angels, they nonetheless have a dignity and a majesty that belongs to them even though fallen as does man created in the image of God even though fallen. They underestimate the power and the personage of Satan and his demons and they recklessly attack them. Whereas holy angels, in verse 11, who are greater in might and power than these false teachers do not bring a reviling judgment against the demons before the Lord. But these people are so brash and brazen and reckless and bold, they act like animals without reason who are born creatures of instinct to serve man best when dead because they provide for him food at least.

And so the first thing we noted was their presumption. So presumptuous as to boldly blaspheme angelic dignities even holy angels won't revile...so presumptuous as to brashly blaspheme truths and realities they do not understand, and so presumptuous as to foolishly assume they will get paid for it but instead they pay and they pay dearly.

And then in the middle of verse 13 we moved into their practices. "They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you,

having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children."

The second point from their presumption to their practice as we go from their attitude to their action. He says they count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. That is they engage in public wickedness in daylight. They pollute Christian fellowship with their very presence. They are stains and blemishes, they are scabs and filth spots, the Greek says.

And then there is their private wickedness and not only when they eat and feast with the believers do they blemish their fellowship, but verse 14, their private life is as bad as their public life. "Their eyes are full of adultery," that is every woman they see becomes an object for adulterous fantasy. And they never cease from sin, they can't control their flesh because no false truth can control the flesh. And with their sexual orientation and their heart trained to greed, they entice unstable souls and bring upon themselves the curse of God, for they are accursed children, damned to hell for their presumption and their wicked practices, both public and private.

Now that brings us to the third point and where we left off last time, and that is their premium. And I use that word just to match up the outline a little bit. The dictionary defines premium as a inducement to doing something. A premium is a reward, a prize, a payment that motivates someone. And they have motivation. They have a certain premium that they're after, a prize, a reward, a payment. We learned what it was back in verse 3, their sensuality drives them in verse 2, and it says in their greed in verse 3 they exploit you. The premium for them is personal gain...personal gain. They are in it for what they can gain.

Now Peter makes this very vivid...very vivid. Verse 15 and 16, "Forsaking the right way they have gone astray having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But he received a rebuke for his own transgression for a dumb donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

Now this is a fascinating, fascinating account of the Old Testament and also an important point for us to note as we think about these individuals. "They have forsaken the right way." The "right way," that little phrase, is an Old Testament metaphor and it refers to obedience to God's Word. The right way or the right path was to walk in obedience to God. They have forsaken the way of obedience, they have forsaken the way of duty before God. By the way, you find it also in Acts 13:10 where it says, "And you who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord, or the right ways of the Lord?" The way of obedience, the way of righteousness. And you will note here that forsaking the right way, forsaking is an act of deliberate intent. They have deliberately done this. They have gone astray willfully. By the way, that's the word planao from which we get planet. They have wandered off a straightway. It describes a direct act of rebellion against the Word of God. They have the Bible but they reject it.

They have access to what is right, but they refuse it. They deliberately went astray from it.

Jude describes them along the same lines by calling them wandering stars, reserved for blackness. Stars, by the way, don't wander. Stars have precise orbits and they shine all the time. These are wandering stars, reserved for blackness. They're out of proper orbit. They're out of the proper way. They're roaming and wandering loose and headed for darkness.

Now in going astray they have followed the pattern of the prototype false prophet, a man by the name of Balaam. They have followed his way. Jude makes reference to him as well. He says in verse 11 of his epistle, "They have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam." False teachers can be characterized by their premium, that is what it is they prize, what is it they are after, what payment they want. And all you have to do is go back to the story of Balaam, the son of Beor, and you'll find out.

What way was it? Well, Balaam had a prize and a payment that motivated him. If you go back to his story you'll find out what it is. I don't want to take the time to go all the way through Numbers 22, 23, and 24, let me just tell you the story and look at some passages toward the end.

He was a prophet. He had been given by God the ability to speak for God. He was a prophet.

The Moabites wanted victory over Israel. And so they came to Balaam who must have had a reputation as being a prophet for hire, a prophet who could be bought. That's not unusual, we have many such prophets today who will speak whatever the highest bidder wants to hear. And so they went to Balaam and they said, "We want you," this is the King Balak of Moab, he went to Balaam and he said, "We will pay you a great sum of money if you will pronounce a curse on Israel." And by the way, Balak kept upping the ante because Balaam said, "I can only speak the word of the Lord, I can only speak the word of the Lord." And if you read Numbers 22 it sounds good, he sounds like a very loyal man, he sounds like a very faithful guy. But behind the scenes you have the feeling that the reason he keeps saying that is so Balak will come back with a higher price. He's really pushing up the ante here. Even though he kept refusing what was offered and said, "I can only speak what God tells me to speak," and even though in the end he never did curse Israel, but rather blessed the nation, it is evident in the story that he wanted the money and God had to stop him from what he would have otherwise done, and that is cursing Israel.

Peter says about Balaam, looking into the past and right into Balaam's heart by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says, "Balaam, the son of Beor, loved the wages of unrighteousness." He loved to get paid for doing evil. He preferred money to obeying God. He preferred pay to faithfulness. And God had to intervene to prevent him from pronouncing a curse on Israel because his true premium in life was the love of money.

In Deuteronomy chapter 23, listen to verses 4 and 5. "Because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you, nevertheless the Lord your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loves you." That verse says beyond equivocation that Balaam wanted to curse them and God had to stop him from doing it. And so all of the times he kept saying, "Well, no, I can only speak for God...I can only speak for God," were just ploys to get Balak to raise the price. He was a prophet for profit. He was in it for the money.

Now what means did the Lord use to stop him? He finally said I'm going to go and I'm going to make this prophecy, I'm going to prophesy the right thing, he said that verbally. I'm going to go and I'm going to prophesy rightly only what God says, but on the way God knew his heart and so God wasn't about to let him go and curse Israel. What did God do? Verse 16, "He received a rebuke for his own transgression." Now there was no outward transgression yet because he hadn't prophesied anything, but it was the wretchedness of his greedy heart. And what did God use to rebuke him but a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man who restrained the madness of the prophet.

Even though he said verbally that he would only speak the word of God, it was obvious his heart was wicked. He wanted to curse Israel to get Balak's fortune that he was going to give him. So as he was riding on his dumb donkey, the Lord had to stop him. The word "restrain" means to hinder him. And "madness" simply means literally to be out and beside your own mind. We would say, "He was beside himself." He was beyond comprehension. He was beyond understanding. He was so money mad, he was so greedy that he uses the Greek word paraphroneo which means to be alongside your mind, or we would say out of your head.

And as he's riding his donkey out of his mind with the anticipation of money and saying all the right things on the surface, a dumb donkey had more sense than he did. And a dumb donkey had more sound prophetic vision than Balaam, whose reason and moral sense had been perverted by his sin.

Let's see the end of the story, now you can go to Numbers chapter 22, this is absolutely fascinating, one of the most interesting accounts in all of Scripture. In chapter 22 verse 21, "So Balaam arose in the morning and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab. And God was angry because he was going." Why? Because the Lord knew his heart. "And the angel of the Lord took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. All of a sudden the angel of the Lord stands in the road. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him." Now look at this, "When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field. But Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way. Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path of the vineyard with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she pressed herself to

the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall so he struck her again. And the angel of the Lord went further and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she laid down under Balaam. So Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick." This poor donkey is doing what is reasonably instinctive in reacting to a flaming angel with a sword in hand.

Finally the donkey just collapses, and Balaam who is oblivious to all spiritual sense because of his madness was so angry he now begins to hammer the donkey with his stick. "And the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey and she said to Balaam, 'What have I done to you that you have struck me these three times?'" Now that's a shocking moment in the life of Balaam. This is not a new donkey, this is an old donkey, we assume, whose carried him many him many times and never had a comment on anything.

Balaam is so caught up in it that he responds. "Then Balaam said to the donkey, 'Because you made a mockery of me. If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now.' And the donkey said to Balaam, 'Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?' And he said no." You've been a good donkey. You've never done this before. The donkey is trying to get the message across...don't you think there might be a reason why I veered into the field and the wall and why I finally collapsed?

God makes an absolute fool out of this mad prophet. God stops him because he was ready to prostitute his prophetic gift.

You say, "Well what was the phenomena of the donkey speaking? What is this, Mr. Ed? What was this?" Well, you remember in John chapter 12 that there was the noise of thunder that the people heard but Jesus heard the voice of God. And you remember in Acts 9:4 that Paul heard the Lord speak to him in a way that others didn't hear. I'm sure that what the people with him, the servants with him, heard was some noise of braying, but God made the normal braying of a donkey very clear to the mad prophet. There was Balaam, greedy Balaam, the prototype false teacher. Why do they do it? For money, folks. They prophesy for money. They want to get wealthy. They want to take it out of your pockets and put it in theirs, that's the bottom line. They are greedy. They are in it for filthy lucre's sake, as Peter says in 1 Peter 5 we are not to be. They do it for money. They've always done it for money, from Balaam the prototype all the way through history.

They're in it for money, but there's always a corollary, and there was with Balaam. Going along with their greed is immorality. Fleshly carnality shows up in these two areas in the false teachers consistently. And to see that in the case of Balaam, look at Revelation chapter 2...Revelation chapter 2 and this will bring the story of Balaam full in our thinking. And here the Lord writes to the church of Pergamum and He says in verse 14 that He has a few things against them. And He says this, "Because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam." What is the teaching of Balaam?

Now we know he was greedy, but what was his teaching? He doesn't do any teaching in Numbers. What was this?

Well he kept on teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit immorality. This is a fascinating continuation of the story. Balaam prophesied a blessing on Israel. Guess what? He didn't get any money from Balak. He wanted money. God had restrained him and made him prophesy a blessing. And he needed some way to make money. So when he couldn't curse Israel, he tried to corrupt Israel. And what he did was use his powers and his influence to get the men of Israel to be seduced by the women of Moab so that those seductions could pull them into the Moabitish idolatry and intermarriage, advocating orgies of prostitution, orgies of idolatry that would lead to pagan intermarriage that would lead to the destruction of the Jewish race as it would be blended and lost in paganism. He knew this would get him the money. And so he was part and parcel of the seduction of the men of Israel by the Moabitish women and it sucked them right into their idolatry, right into their immorality, right into idolatrous intermarriage.

If we go back to the book of Numbers, if we go back to Numbers 31, listen to what we read. Verse 9, Numbers 31, "And the sons of Israel captured the women of Midian and their little ones and all their cattle and all their flocks and all their goods they plundered. And they burned all their cities where they lived and all their camps with fire and they took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of beast, and they brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses and Eleazar the priest and to the congregation of the sons of Israel to the camp at the plains of Moab which are by the Jordan opposite Jericho. And Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the congregation went out to meet them outside the camp and Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. And Moses said to them, `Have you spared all the women? Behold, these cause the sons of Israel through the counsel of Balaam to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord."

What had these stupid soldiers done? They had gone out to destroy all of these sons of Israel and Moabitish women that had entered into this thing and then they bring back more Moabite women to repeat the same thing. And verse 17 says, "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, kill every woman who has known man intimately, but all the girls who have not known man intimately, spare for yourselves. And you camp outside the camp seven days whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves, you and your captives, on the third day and on the seventh." Don't you bring back any women who are going to seduce, only those women who have not done that, the rest of them you slaughter.

Here was a holy war against apostasy that had been generated by Balaam. It was a threat to the holiness of God, to the sanctify of His purposes and to the existence of His people.

Back up to verse 8, as a footnote. "They killed the kings of Midian along with the rest of their slain, Evi, and Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, they killed the five kings of Midian...listen to this...they also killed...whom?...Balaam, the son of Beor with the sword."

He tried to get the people of Israel involved in immorality. And the death sentence would halt the destructive ways of the sinners, the death sentence would recover the holiness of the community of Israel and remind them that the way of the transgressor is hard...as Proverbs 13:15 says.

So, Balaam is a prototype false teacher, characterized by two dominating premiums. He sought money and he sought sexual immorality. Invariably, beloved, I submit to you that false teachers follow the very same track. You remember in our study of 1 Thessalonians I pointed out to you that Paul was receiving criticism from those in Thessalonica and they were saying that he was just like all the rest of the teachers running around loose, they would find themselves drawn to women, to teach women, to convert women to their ways so that they could seduce women and gain sexual favors. That has always been the pathway of false teachers. They're in it for the money, they're in it for the women they can seduce.

On the other side, there are plenty of women false teachers who are in it for the money and the men they can seduce as well. Not as many as men, but nonetheless they have their presence also.

So the four features, if we can sum it up, in these verses give us insight into how false teachers follow the path of Balaam. First, there is a right way with which they are acquainted and which maybe on the outside they even identify themselves...they say we're prophets of God, we're Christians, we're pastors, we're preachers, we're teachers, therein lies their subtlety and their deception. But by definite decision they have gone astray from the straight path, the right way, and they're running around wandering loose.

Secondly, they accept error rather than healthy doctrine. They practice evil dressed up in religious robes and teach others contrary to the faith.

Thirdly, they are in it for the money and they are in it for the sexual gratification they can get. That's the pattern.

And fourthly, they encourage others to follow in the same pathway. So we note the false teachers as to their presumption, as to their practices, as to their premium.

Fourthly, as to their prophecies. Here Peter continues the portrait by describing what it is that they emphasize in their teaching, or better yet the character of their teaching. As I've told you, we don't know specifically what their heresy was, we just know the character of it. And here we find the

deceptive nature of it made very clear. Verse 17, very interesting verse. He characterizes their teaching in this way, "These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm for whom the black darkness has been reserved."

You've noticed all the way along that he injects these statements about doom and judgment, every few verses there's one. There's one in verse 13. There's one at the end of verse 14. And here comes another one at the end of verse 17. Just keeps injecting their doom, their curse. But here he uses two poetic figures that represent two very precious things, by the way, in the Middle East. Those of you who have traveled in the land of Israel and east of Israel where the focus of the world is now, what is called the Persian Gulf area, know that it is a very arid place and it can be a very, very hot place, a very difficult place. In fact, throughout the history of war in Israel, the conquerors and enemies of Israel have most commonly come from the north because even enemies to the east can't cross the desert, they have to go to the north and come down through the much more docile land of Lebanon. It is a very formidable place...the desert of the Middle East.

There are two very precious things there. One, springs and two, rain. Without that the people cannot survive. And when in the midst of thirst a man pursues the place where the spring is supposed to be, but it's a spring without water, it is a major disappointment. And that is the intent of Peter's words. Here is the most precious commodity in that part of the world, water. And thirsty people living in a hot and dry land go to the spring with the promise of having their thirst quenched. But the spring is a major disappointment because it promises water but it doesn't have any water to give.

That is true of false teachers. There is a lot of promises but there's no water. There is a lot of hope in the hearts of the people who go but there is no water...a far cry from the words of our Lord Jesus who said, "If you drink of this well you'll never thirst again." Who said, "If you come to Me the living water out of your own belly will flow rivers of living water," in John's gospel.

They have a pretense of water to quench the thirsty soul but they have no water. It's a spring with no water. There's nothing for them to give. It's deception.

And then mists driven by a storm. Nothing looks more promising in that arid land than when fog or mist rolls in. And when the people begin to see the fog and the mist, the hope is...and we understand that sometimes in Southern California, we see a lot of that but very little of the rain that's supposed to follow it. It's the same. In fact, the climate of Israel would be very similar to ours. And sometimes when the mist comes we feel maybe this means the rain follows. And in that part of the world when there were no pipelines and no ways to deliver the water from other places, it was vital. What happened was, the fog came and the mist came and it hung just a little while and the storm blew it right on through. It was there very briefly. No water, driven away rapidly, leaving the land dry and hot, even worse, humid.

And again he is saying these people come and they make promises they're going to give you water, they're going to bring water to the parched land, they're going to bring water to the thirsty soul. They are flimsy, they are non-substantial. They have no refreshment to offer. They have no water themselves. They are dry wells. In fact, Jude 12 calls them clouds without water. The same word is used in Matthew 12:43 of the dry places where demons roam and wander. They're all show, the false teachers. They're all show and no substance. They have no real water to give. They cannot quench the thirsty heart. They cannot parch the dry ground. They may stir your emotion, they're good at that. But they don't give you any water, they don't bring you any true life-changing knowledge. False teachers come along and they promise people water, they promise them rain. They have nothing to give.

Again quoting from The Quest for Godliness by J.I. Packer, he writes, "All the Puritans regarded religious feeling and pious emotion without knowledge as worse than useless. Only when the truth was being felt was emotion in any way desirable. When men felt and obeyed the truth, they knew it was the work of the Spirit of God. But when they were swayed by feeling without knowledge, it was sure sign that the devil was at work. For feeling divorced from knowledge and urgings to action in darkness of mind were both as ruinous to the soul as was knowledge without obedience. So the teaching of truth was the pastor's first task as the learning of it was the laymen's," end quote.

False teachers are like John Milton's shepherds whose hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. They promise a gospel, they have none. They promise water, they're dry.

And I believe there are many churches, there are many people sitting in religious meetings where their souls are parched and they go to find not water but dirt, sand, sawdust because the spring has no water and the fog of emotion provides no refreshing truth. And again their judgment, "For whom the black darkness has been reserved."

Jude says it as well. "For whom the black darkness has been reserved forever," Jude 13. What is the black darkness? That's hell...that's hell...the blackest darkness. Hell is a strange mixture, isn't it? It's a mixture of fire and darkness.

You say, "How can that be?" Anybody who knows anything about fire will tell you the worse kind of fire is the black fire that you can't see that consumes you.

Well Peter continues to inject direct statements of eternal damnation because he is so righteously angry against the false teachers. And back to the description. Verse 18, he says, "For speaking out arrogant words of vanity." This is another characteristic of their teaching, and I think with this one we'll stop.

They have ostentatious verbosity. This is their weapon, to tickle the ears of people who are enthralled by their pompous words, but don't know what they mean. They deceive with high-sounding words that masquerade as scholarship, and masquerade as deep spiritual profound insight, or masquerade as direct revelation from God. They attempt to dazzle people with their...with their truth. They want to dazzle the minds of their victims. In reality, they say absolutely nothing spiritual and nothing divine. This goes all the way from the pompous incantations of the ritualist who speak Latin or English in Roman Catholic ceremonies that are meaningless, all the way to the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons and all the other isms and chisms whose demonic theology is all a system of Satan to damn people to the hell of darkness where demons and false teachers will spend forever, all the way to the religious liberals whose stock and trade is to sit in judgment on the Bible under the guise of their clever understanding and scholarship, all the way to the self-styled, untrained, ignorant preachers who make up their theology even as they speak. All of them, words full of sound and fury signifying nothing, just verbosity.

And so, says Peter, when you look at their teaching for what it really is, it is promise with major disappointment. It is words without meaning. And sadly, their empty words entice people...sadly. And people follow. You know, there are so many who speak meaninglessly.

Over a hundred years ago, an article by Charles Finney was entitled, "Mastering the Art of Preaching so as to Convert Nobody." In it there were some ways to be sure you could preach so as to convert nobody. I paraphrased some of them. Here's a few.

Let your supreme motive be to secure your own popularity and success. If you preach that way you're not going to say anything to offend and if you don't offend you can't convert anybody. Aim at pleasing for money and sexual favors, rather than correcting for holiness. Let your sermons be literary, flowery, ornate, flowing beautifully so your hearers never remember the lack of content. Be sparing of thought lest your sermon contain enough truth to convert someone. Avoid preaching doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind. Deal with sin in the abstract and make no allusion to the sins of your audience. Preach salvation by grace but ignore the condemned and lost condition of the sinner, lest he should understand what you mean by grace and sense his need of it. Make no appeal to the fears of sinners, but make the impression that they have no reason to fear, God loves them. Preach the love of God and ignore the holiness of His love. Do not rebuke the worldly tendencies of the church, lest you should hurt their feelings and convert some of them. Select your themes and so present them as to attract and flatter the wealthy, aristocratic, self-indulgent, extravagant, pleasure-seeking classes and you won't convert any of them to the cross-bearing religion of Christ. Ridicule solemn earnestness in pulling sinners out of the fire and recommend by precept or example that jovial, fun-loving religion and sinners will have little respect for serious preaching. Cultivate fastidious tastes in your people by avoiding all disagreeable allusions to the last judgment and final retribution. Treat old and uncomfortable doctrines as obsolete and out of place.

And so exhibit religion as to encourage the selfish pursuit of it. Make the impression upon sinners that their own safety and happiness is the supreme motive of being religious. And see to it that you say nothing to any of your hearers to demean him or her, but only what is flattering.

That's the way they preach. You have to listen carefully to be able to discern it. Words full of nothing that convicts and nothing that converts. And nothing of truth that changes lives. And they entice, people are sucked up in masses to their empty wells.

More next time. Let's pray.

Father, we're just working this passage through in our study. The truths keep exploding on our minds and each of us can perhaps see vivid illustrations of the kind of people that are like this that have come across our paths in our own experiences. Lord, we feel much better armed because we understand these things. And we pray that we might be faithful, defenders of the faith, the faith once for all delivered to the saints, that we might be soldiers and champions of the truth, that we might not be guilty by our lack of watchfulness and our failure to keep the gate closed of allowing heresy to come in and entice people away.

Father deliver this congregation from the false by giving them the discernment of the Spirit and the Word that they might follow in the way of truth those who speak the Word faithfully. And we pray, too, that You would bring down the false teachers and lift up the true that Your name might be glorified. Amen.

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