

## Recognizing Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

1  **Detecting the wolves among the sheep**

2 PETER 2:10-18

2  **2 Peter 2:10-16**

*Bold and arrogant, they do not tremble in awe as they blaspheme majestic beings, whereas angels, who are greater in strength and power, do not bring against them a demeaning judgment. But these persons, like irrational animals born only with natural instincts for capture and killing, blaspheming about things they do not understand, in their destruction will also be destroyed, being harmed as the wages of unrighteousness. Considering reveling in the daytime a pleasure, they are stains and blemishes, carousing in their deceitful pleasures when they feast together with you, having eyes full of desire for an adulteress and unceasing from sin, enticing unstable persons, and having hearts trained for greediness. Accursed children! By leaving the straight path, they have gone astray, because they followed the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but received a rebuke for his own lawlessness: a speechless donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:10–16, LEB)*

3  **Peter's passionate description of false teachers**

- ▶ In this passage, Peter basically says that false teachers are like animals who have no rational capability, that operate solely on self-indulgence and unthinking passion. He says that they cannot think and cannot reason and cannot make intellectual contributions to the life of men.
- ▶ In this invective, Peter says that the purpose of their existence is solely to be killed. They are like animals that are part of the food chain that died to sustain the life of other creatures. But while the death of animals provide physical food, Peter says that false teachers are mindless driven by their instincts and of no benefit to others.

4  **What do we know about these false teachers?**

- ▶ We are given few details about the false teachers of Peter's day from history.
- ▶ The only thing that we can truly glean about these false teachers is that they had a libertine theology. That theology states that you can believe and live any way that you want to. It is a theology of antinomianism. It is the "do what feels good" theology that is so much loved by the world even today.

5  **A message for today?**

- ▶ Michael Greene writes, "Covetousness, sophisticated arguments, pride in knowledge, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, arrogance against authority of all kinds and most of all the danger of denying the lordship of the Redeemer, are these not all the paramount temptations of money mad, sex mad, materialistic, anti-authoritarian, twentieth century and I might add false teachers?"
- ▶ Really nothing has changed. False teachers are the same today as they were then.

6  **Why is Peter so upset?**

- ▶ Peter is a pastor or Shepherd that loves the sheep.
- ▶ Three times Jesus told Peter, "*feed my sheep, feed my lambs, feed my sheep.*" – John 21
- ▶ Peter takes that calling seriously and he has a heart for those who are under his care.
- ▶ Peter has become a true shepherd and goes on the attack against the false shepherds were feeding poison to the sheep.

7  **False teachers are rebellious**

- ▶ *and especially those who go after the flesh in defiling lust and who despise authority. Bold and arrogant, they do not tremble in awe as they blaspheme majestic beings,* (2 Peter 2:10, LEB)
- ▶ The apostles and godly teachers throughout the ages have emphasized purity and holiness before

## Recognizing Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

God. This message is often not popular because it asks discipline and self-control from the listeners.

- ▶ False teachers in the church deny the standards and demonstrate their desire to indulge the flesh and to follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

8  **False teachers are self-willed**

- ▶ False teachers live by their own desires and make choices based on their own lusts. They neither think nor care about the will of God given authorities.
- ▶ They are stubborn and obstinate in their behavior and they do not tremble about mocking or attacking biblical authorities.
- ▶ They will attack God's very truth and call His revelation a myth, the virgin birth a legend, and despised the atoning work of the son of God.
- ▶ These false teachers have never been born again and so they follow the flesh even under the guise of culture and learning.

9 10  **False teachers disrespect spiritual authority**

- ▶ They hold authority in contempt – particularly the authority of the Lord Himself.
- ▶ They are presumptuous and self-willed to the point that they speak slander of the angels and of God's ministers. Unlike the angels who refused to criticize even fallen angels, false teachers know no bounds in their attack on all who disagree with their teachings. They attacked the authority of the Lord, the ministry of angels, and the godly ministers among the flock while remaining ignorant of the very things that they blaspheme.
- ▶ False teachers teach that indulging your lusts is actually the will of God and they do so under the excuse of "spiritual freedom." This message is often more popular. Today this is often the "health and wealth gospel."

11  **False teachers do what angels will not do**

- ▶ It might seem that the stronger and powerful holy angels of God would criticize the one third of the angels that fell with Lucifer. But that is not allowed in the presence of the Lord.
- ▶ *Despite that, in the same way also these men, because of their dreams, defile the flesh and reject authority and blaspheme majestic beings. But Michael the archangel, when he argued with the devil, disputing concerning the body of Moses, did not dare to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 8–9, LEB)*

12  **False teachers are on the attack**

- ▶ While angels refuse to criticize even fallen angels, false teachers know no bounds in their attack on all who disagree with their teachings.
- ▶ They attack the notions of spiritual authority, personal holiness, and the ugly ministers among them. Yet, they are totally ignorant of the very things that they blaspheme.
- ▶ *But these persons, like irrational animals born only with natural instincts for capture and killing, blaspheming about things they do not understand (2 Peter 2:12a, LEB)*

13  **False teachers are animalistic**

- ▶ The false teachers of Peter's day were like brute beasts. They operated from instinct which was locked into their sin nature. They did not make rational choices based on spiritual principles.
- ▶ Peter says that they are "belonging to nature." They followed their natural desires like animals in the jungle. Their only value was in being caught and destroyed. Like beasts they too will perish is literally, "in their corruption (*phthora*) they too shall be corrupted" (*pharēsontai*) – probably a

## Recognizing Wolves in Sheep's Clothing

reference to eternal punishment.

14  **False teachers are deceitful**

- ▶ *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; (2 Peter 2:13, KJV 1900)*
- ▶ Peter likens their deceit to a web and says that they will be caught in their own webs and paid back with harm for the harm they have done to others.
- ▶ These teachers did not hide their own immorality, but they reveled in their pleasures or deceptions. They joined the love feasts of the church at the same time that they engaged in immorality. They marred the Lord's supper by their very presence.

15  **False teachers are chronic sinners**

- ▶ Peter uses a series of short staccato phrases to condemn these heretics.
  - ▶ He removes all doubt about whether these teachers are saved by indicating they were habitual sinners.
  - ▶ Their eyes consistently look toward sinning. Their eyes are full of an adulterous. They only think of adultery when they see women.
  - ▶ They never cease to sin – which probably refers to sinning by their lustfulness.
- ▶ Habitual sinning does not mark one who was born by God. *Everyone who is fathered by God does not practice sin, because his seed resides in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been fathered by God. (1 John 3:9, LEB)*
- ▶ Their aim is to seduce others. Their hearts are exercised in greed. They are "exercised" in covetousness and practice their skills to deceive and take advantage of others.

16  **False teachers are mercenary**

- ▶ *By leaving the straight path, they have gone astray, because they followed the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but received a rebuke for his own lawlessness: a speechless donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the prophet's madness. (2 Peter 2:15–16, LEB)*
- ▶ Refers to the account of Balaam from Numbers 22-24 who was reproved by a donkey that had more sense than he did.
- ▶ Balaam was in the ministry for the money. When God would not allow him to curse Israel, Balaam told the Moabites how to get Israel to lose their blessing from the Lord by tricking their men into illicit relationships with Moabite women.
- ▶ Peter believes false teachers have a form of insanity because they live for lust and lucre instead of for something that will benefit them in eternity.

17  **So what does that mean for us?**

- ▶ 2 Peter 1 – You have to know your salvation and know your Scripture.
- ▶ 2 Peter 2 – You have to know how to recognize false teachers
- ▶ 2 Peter 3 – You have to know your Scripture and understand how sanctification works in your life.
- ▶ THEN, you have a defense against false teachers and will not fall prey to their influence.

18