

Looking Into the Face of Pure Evil

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[0 : 00] I'm going to try to finish this chapter today, God willing. We have been, what, two or three sermons so far? And Peter is talking all about the reality of how false teachers come into the church and try to do their damage as agents of the devil.

So, 2 Peter 2, verse 1. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you.

They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned. And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words.

Their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God, or since God, did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.

[1 : 15] Since God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

And since he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter.

And since he rescued righteous lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men. For by what he saw and heard, that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds.

Then, then, the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.

And especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority, daring, self-willed.

[2 : 19] 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, they counted 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, forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

But he received a rebuke for his own transgression. For a mule, a mute donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

- [3 : 35] These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity, they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of corruption.
- For by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.
- For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed down to them.
- It has happened to them, according to the true proverb, that a dog returns to its own vomit and a sow after washing returns to wallowing in the mire. Now, if you haven't been a student of scripture, we read through that and you might think, what in the world?
- I didn't even know that was in the Bible or that the Bible talked like that. It's pretty raw, isn't it? Peter is at the end of his life. Peter is an apostle of Jesus Christ.
- [4 : 58] He has walked with the Lord Jesus for three years, observing his life, learning from him, stumbling, falling desperately, failing desperately, and having Jesus restore him and tell him, go and minister to my people.
- Go and feed my lambs and tend my sheep, reinstating him in the ministry. Peter is now, after some 30 years of ministry in that way, coming to the end of his life.
- He's written to these people this last and final letter of his life, as far as we know, and he tells them, I know I'm about to be killed. I know I'm about to be martyred.
- He's imprisoned and he's about to be killed. And so this is the final thing that he wants to tell these people as he writes to them and pleads with them.
- It's hard for him to leave them. He's been their shepherd for so long, watching over them and protecting them with his very life and blood that he's about to give up on their behalf.
- [6 : 03] He doesn't want anything to happen to them, and he's tried to protect them from people like he's describing in chapter 2. We come to this chapter, and we need to be sobered by it, friends.
- We need to be brought into the reality of where we live, and that this is going on right now in many, many, many churches around the world. And we shouldn't be shocked or surprised to hear the reality that Satan has agents working his work against the church.
- For goodness sake, folks, remember what they did to the king of glory, the perfect man who'd never sinned, who did nothing but love them and tell them the truth, and it was the very religious leaders of Palestine that worked to put the Lord of glory on a cross and torture him to death.
- For what? For telling them the truth. And Jesus said, if they did this to me, they will persecute you also. So we shouldn't be surprised that we have an active enemy at war against our souls, against our families, and against this church's mission.
- They want to sneak in here and disrupt everything, distract us from our mission. Commentator Tom Schreiner gives a helpful formula for chapter 2, verses 1 through 16.
- [7 : 29] I forgot to cue you. Are we cued for the, we're all good? You guys have so got my back. They know their pastor too well. I have joked around and told our congregation many times between Greg and I, we have half a memory.
- At best, right? Right. Yeah, well, whatever. For the record, that was my wife. So I looked up and couldn't, and I saw the smirk and I said, oh, that's the voice.

Here's what Tom Schreiner did in the way of a formula for this passage. I thought it might be helpful, especially for the visitors who haven't been here to hear me work verse by verse into where we'll be today.

The sins of the false teachers recounted. We covered that in chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. And then he says, B, therefore the teachers will be judged, verses 4 through 10.

That was last week. And now this week, the sins of the false teachers elaborated. Verses 11 through 16. And we'll actually try to make our way down through the end of the chapter.

[8 : 33] Friends, from the depths, from the depths of their dark hearts, these deceivers, Peter is talking about, disguise but live out their burning hatred for God.

Their conceited contempt for God and His ways know no constraints. To leave us in no doubt about this danger, the Holy Spirit then leads the apostle Peter to descriptively unmask these people for us.

Peter elaborates on what he stated in verses 1 through 3 about their true motives and their true designs. They may look like us, they may talk like us, they may act like us, they may spend years with us, but they are false prophets, false teachers, fakes, camouflaging themselves in order to do the things that we're going to talk about this morning.

This is very real and in the 30 years of ministry that I've been doing this, we have had multiple encounters with these people. Stories that are so vile, so horrible, I wish I could forget them and I could never recount them from the pulpit to you.

These men are driven by their arrogance, greed, and materialism. They are carnal predators and agents of Satan.

[9 : 58] So Peter does this, he provides a scathing expose of these spiritual deceivers, and this is important, according to what God knows to be the operations of their hearts.

You and I cannot look into each other's eyes and lives today and tell what's going on in our hearts. That is in the deepest part of who we are that makes us who we are.

You and I can't do that. We don't have the ability to do that. But God does. God knows us in the intimate details of who we are. And so he sees these men for who they are from Jump Street.

They may come in and fool us for a time, but they don't fool God. And so what Peter is doing here is unmasking their hearts to us, something we can't see.

He's telling us on the front end, this is what's going on at the root level of who these people are. This is their nature. This is what drives them.

[11 : 02] Because after you hear this, you can come away and say, what in the world? Really? Really. Yes. Absolutely. To us, it's shocking.

It's shocking, not because we don't see this out in the world. This kind of stuff happens out in the world all the time.

We hear about it. They even make movies about it. But we're talking about this happening in the church, among us, with our lives, with our wives, with our widows, with our sons, with our daughters, with our sons.

So the first thing that I want to point out to us as God reveals these hearts to us of these particular people who want to sneak in and do damage on behalf of Satan is this.

We want to talk about the disregard of their hearts in the verses that I've mentioned here. We're exposing the hearts of the false teachers and the first point that we want to make from the text is the disregard of their hearts.

[12 : 12] What am I talking about? Well, let's read it again together. We're starting in the second half of verse 10 of chapter 2. Daring, my translation says, daring, self-willed, they, the false teachers, do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.

Whereas angels, who are greater in might and power, they don't even bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. but these, 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 them doing wrong.

They counted a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you.

What in the world is he talking about? Well, Peter says, they are daring and self-willed. According to the New American Standard translation, you may have a little bit of a nuance on that.

What are we talking about? Well, we're talking about these descriptions being the roots of their disregard, the root of their disregard for God and the truth of God, what's precious to God.

[13 : 34] The root of all of that is their daring and their self-will. What does he mean? Daring, if you'll look up here on the screen, daring has the idea of reckless rebellion.

Self-willed has the idea or the sense in the Greek of self-pleasing pride. Self-pleasing pride. So the two terms combine and they give the sense of self-pleasing rebellion.

That is at the very core, heart, and nature of who these people are and why they operate the way they do. They operate from a self-pleasing, rebellious spirit against God himself and all that is precious to God.

Their prideful rebellion and willful self-regard are foundational characteristics of their hearts. The center of who they are. They argue, they slander, they criticize, and they cannot be reasoned with because they are always right.

They see through the grid and lens of their own arrogance. You can't tell them anything. I've tried. I've tried time and time again.

[14 : 59] Now what does this self-pleasing rebellion bring about as far as what Peter wants to zero in on? Well, he says, daring self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.

They revile angelic majesties. What does that mean? Revile, revile here is the word blasphemon.

And I'm showing you here that we understand what blaspheme means. It's to degrade or disrespect or disgrace. They pridefully judge demonic spirits.

That's what they're doing. They despise authority and dominate by sheer force of will. That's what they do.

That's who they are. They blaspheme angelic spirits. In other words, these men exalt themselves by claiming to be more powerful than demonic forces.

[16 : 03] Now as we think about that and as I read this and studied it, I thought, Landon, wait a minute. These guys are playing on the same team with demons. They have the same master.

So why would they be reviling these demonic spirits? That's what is meant by angelic majesties. He's talking about demonic spirits here.

Why would they be doing that if they play for the same team? It's their pride. It's their arrogance. They really believe that they have greater power than fallen angels who are the demons that are loosed to tempt us today according to scripture.

That's how arrogant they are. But if you'll notice in verse 11, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.

Now we're switching it up a little bit here. What does he mean? Even the good angels who are greater in might and power than the demonic angels are careful not to step out of their realm to command or to mock or to bring a reviling judgment against evil spirits.

[17:16] And look folks, I don't know some of your backgrounds or where you've been from but this is rife in certain denominations and circles where people are encouraged and actually taught to look at what they believe to be some encounter with an evil spirit.

We need to understand what we're talking about from scripture when we say that. We're talking about demonic spirits. They're real. They're all around. When those people encounter something like that, they actually believe that they have been given some kind of Holy Spirit power to command those spirits and make those spirits do what they say.

Even invoking Jesus' name and saying, I command you in the name of Jesus. I'll show you where they get that from. Now the scripture is telling us here, even the good angels don't do that.

They are more powerful and even they don't do that. Now we need to understand why and what Peter is telling us here. He's trying to let these people know, don't monkey with this.

This is not your little playground where you can showcase yourself. Don't do that. You don't understand what you're messing with if you get into that. Don't do it.

[18:30] Now that's the clear message that we're getting from this. Let me go a little further and I'll show you. If we have turned to the book of Jude a couple of chapters away several times in the previous messages, I'm just for sake of time going to move through this now, but I wanted you to see this.

This is from Jude 9. Jude verse 9. Look what it says. But Michael the archangel, now we're up as high as we can get now in the angelic realm, Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against Satan, him, a railing or reviling judgment, but said, the Lord rebuke you.

That's where many of the people in certain denominations get the idea that as long as they say or invoke, the Lord rebuke you, they have the power to do this as well. They don't realize what's the context of this happening?

It's the archangel. We're not there. That's not the realm we live in. I'm not looking into the faces of any angels that I know of. I'm sorry. We're just being honest.

You're not looking into the face of an angel, are you? Ask where's Suzanne. Suzanne, can I get a witness? No, she's just going to grin. Even Michael, the archangel, did not revile or rebuke Satan, but said the Lord.

[19:52] That's another way of saying the Lord will judge you. Michael is saying, I'm not going to step out of my realm. I know my place. It's not my place to command you or to judge you.

That's the Lord of glory who made you. God made the angels, so God has authority over them. Now, folks, that's sobering. We need to let that sink in and think about that.

So these men and their pride and arrogance want to showcase themselves in front of you and make themselves look all powerful and like they're super spiritual. They're above the hoi polloi, the common folk.

They have a greater spirituality than you do and they want to use it to intimidate you. So they do stuff like that. They're sinning against God in the process.

Notice again with me at verse 12. But these... Now, where does Peter go? Look at what Peter says, folks, and it'll just clear it right up. Am I off track here or am I on track? Look.

[20 : 51] But these like what? Unreasoning animals. That's a pretty big slam, don't you think? Like unreasoning beasts. Born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge.

You see? That's the scripture's estimation. That is God's estimation of these men in what they're trying to do as they try to command demons and nonsense like that.

They are reviling where they have no knowledge. But they will, in the destruction of those same creatures, also be destroyed themselves. What's he talking about?

Well, I'll tell you this. It's obvious. Peter's not impressed by their preposterous grandstanding, is he? He's not impressed. Against their prideful, blatant disregard for God's wisdom about the domain and the majesty and the power of demonic spirits, Peter makes a shocking, folks, this was shocking to me to dig into this and say, surely the Greeks got to be something different here and realize, nope, that's exactly right.

That's exactly spot on. Peter makes a shocking characterization about these false teachers. This is what he says. Notice the text. They are like unreasoning animals born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed.

[22 : 12] They are acting according to their nature and we need to allow the naked truth of this statement to warn our hearts about God's hatred of people who step forward to lead his people astray by twisting God's word and by speaking about spiritual matters that they pervert to their own advantage.

What does he say? What's the shocking reality? Like wild animals, these men prey on God's people and pursue their appetites for doing evil.

They offer society nothing. Now hear this. They do grievous harm and in the end, God says through the apostle Peter that they serve us best by being dead.

Yeah, I see some eyebrows going, whoa, that's exactly what God just said. like unreasoning animals born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed.

That's God's judgment on them and their followers. And friends, that's just what this means. But these, these, meaning the false teachers, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.

[23 : 53] What does he mean? Commentators were all over the map about what the antecedent to this idea of will in the destruction of those creatures. What's the antecedent of those creatures?

What's he referring to? Well, I believe that based on the study I made, those creatures most likely refer to the animals that are being captured and killed.

Just like these particular wild animals, these ravenous animals that are a threat to us are captured and killed, which is what we ought to do with them according to God's word.

Then finally, these men will also suffer a like fate. They too will be destroyed under God's judgment. Now we don't do this to them. We don't have a right to do that to them, to take them out.

That's God's job. So we're going to follow Michael, right? We're going to say, hey, I'm going to stay in my lane. I know what we've been given to do and what our boundaries are, Greg and I, and the men of our church.

[24 : 56] If any of these guys ever slip in here unawares and we sniff them out, we know what we're supposed to do, that we have something in place to do that. We're all good in that regard, but we don't take them out.

God does. God takes them out and we'll judge them. The point is that God will rain down on these people wrath and judgment.

Just as animals are hunted and killed, the false teachers will also be judged and damned to hell. Now folks, that is the Bible's take on God's hatred for people who twist his truth and use it for their own gain against God's people.

That's how God feels about it. That's what God's going to do about it. The text goes on to say, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.

That's the beginning of verse 13. Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. As payment for the harm and injury that they sow against other people through their false teaching and their hypocritical lies and greed and sensuality, they will then reap what they sow.

[26 : 08] They will reap the harm and injury of God's just judgment against them. Sometimes these guys do things and I've seen this in my own life. These guys do this.

They create all this damage and even if they're discovered and put out of the church like the example I gave you when I started my message, the harm is still done and they seem to get away with it. There's only so much you can do.

If they don't break the law, they can't be put in prison. So what do you do? You can only do so much and then what do they do? They leave you and they leave your church and they move away to some other place and what do you think they do again?

They just find another group of people to exploit and on it goes. And I'll tell you, as a pastor, that frustrates me to death. It makes me want to be able to do more and safeguard it because I think to myself, now wait a minute, we just found out this guy had a track record of this, that this has happened in his life before.

Why didn't somebody take care of this so that it wouldn't get, see, you can only do so much. And that's where we trust the Lord, isn't it? That's when we go to the scripture and see that God tells us, don't worry, don't get, Jeff, don't get yourself all twisted up about that.

[27 : 24] That's not your problem and your domain. You do what you can do. You and Greg are shepherding Grace Church Williamsburg, not all these other churches. You need to deal with Grace Church Williamsburg.

That's what we do. And God says, I'm going to take care of them. They're not getting away with anything. I know who they are. I know what they've done. And we trust the will of the Lord.

I can't explain to you all the reasons that God ordains for these kinds of things to happen. But I know this. I know that it causes you and I to look to Jesus Christ and to depend on the truth in an even greater and deeper way.

Amen. We run to Jesus and run to his truth and we pray humbly before the Lord. God, help us. Protect us from these men. That's why we read Psalm 140 this morning together. God, protect your people from evil men.

Why? Because they exist. Because they're here. And as you saw in the first sermon, if you were here for our church, the first sermon several weeks ago, one of the points Peter made is they're among us.

[28 : 27] They're not coming from all over out there. They come in and they sit with us and they stay with us. They're among us. It's a sobering proposition, folks.

In verse 13b, the latter half, they counted a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you.

Just everything about that part of the verse sounds terrible. What is he talking about? Well, they revel in their deceptions just like they revile angelic majesties.

They revel in their deceptions. They counted a pleasure to revel in the daytime. And listen to this, reveling in their deceptions as they carouse with you.

Revel, revel is true fame. True fame. It's used negatively as overindulgence. Overindulgence.

[29 : 26] Now, literally, literally in the Greek, this is what it comes out to. It reads, reveling in their deceitfulness while they feast with you. That is a literal, stiff translation of what the text says in the Greek.

They revel in their deceitfulness while they feast. What is he talking about? Now, you've, it's very, very, look, Peter is not saying get into their heads.

We don't want to get into their heads. I don't want to get into their heads. But God is revealing their hearts to us, something that we can't see. So he's making it known. Here he is telling us one of the things that drive these men, what they get off on, what they like, what does it for them, what's the adrenaline rush, what is this?

What kind of a person do you have to be to like this kind of thing? Taking advantage of people and destroying their lives. That's a great question. Peter's answering it.

Here, they revel in their deceitfulness. You and I try to live our lives probably at some measure by the truth. Trying to be truthful people, honest people, not hypocrites.

[30 : 35] Not saying one thing and living another in a secret lie. We're working on it. We're trying. We have a heart for that. Not these guys. Revel in their deceitfulness. They absolutely love it.

When they can mingle with us like what we're about to do when we leave this place and we go get together at the Hogue home and we fellowship together and take a meal together and sit together and get to know each other and laugh and enjoy life and then have...

They love getting into that kind of thing. Knowing what they are. Knowing who they are. Knowing how they look down on and disdain you while they smile at you and use Jesus talk with you and be syrupy with you.

They absolutely love the idea that while they're doing that they have got you completely fooled. They love it. It makes them feel so proud and arrogant and puffed up.

You have no idea who I am, do you? No, you don't. You sap. That's their... They hate you.

[31 : 46] They hate you. They will throw you under the bus and cut your throat and half a heartbeat and everybody that is precious to you and I've seen them do it.

It's maddening. This is Peter. They're like animals. They're like unreasoning beasts who've lost all touch with reality and rationality.

They have one objective. Harm. They feed on it and they try to create opportunities for it and they love the fact that they can revel in their deceitfulness.

Makes them feel powerful. Like they're getting away with something. Notice the text while they feast with you, while they carouse with you. These men delight in the hunt.

Camouflaged then, camouflaged by their pseudo-spirituality, fellowship meals, fellowship gatherings, they become opportunities for these men to stalk and to take measure of their prey.

[32 : 52] You. They are stains and blemishes on a people who are called to be spotless and blameless. And so they hover and they stalk and they watch and they wait.

Constantly taking measure of you. Constantly looking for the weak link. Constantly listening. In the case of the example that I gave you earlier, it didn't take this so-called pastor very long to figure out that this other pastor's wife was lonely and she was struggling with her husband being away all the time.

I don't even know if she knew that about herself. But guess what, friends? That false teacher knew it. He sniffed it out in a heartbeat and he began to wiggle his way in to her life and say things to her.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, he should be here, right? I mean, come on. I know that you've got to be struggling with that to some degree. Well, you know, I mean, he's making a living and he's helping us and, you know, this is what God's called him to do.

Yeah, I'm sure that's the case, but that still doesn't take away from the fact that he's kind of lonely, right? I mean, you're lonely, he's lonely. It's just, it's tough, isn't it? Well, I'm here for you. Side hug.

[34 : 16] Didn't take long for that side hug to change. And off it went. That's what they do. They're super, super good at it.

We're going to see. Peter's going to tell us how good. He's going to tell us how good and why. I just love it that scripture doesn't leave any of this stuff out because as pastors, Greg and I read this and study this and we say, thank you, God.

Thank you for opening our eyes to the reality. We need to be watching for this. We need to be careful. This is real. This could happen to us. Nothing is sacred to these men.

Nothing. Even the Lord's table, even taking communion together was a time for them to hide and to delight themselves in their deceit by impressing people with their sense of their superior spirituality.

Remember, these are false teachers. These are men who are up in front of you. These are men who are leading in the communion, passing out the elements. Speaking, reading from the Bible, that kind of thing.

[35 : 19] That's who these guys are. Then I'll give you this one. Peter talks about the desires of their hearts. What does the text tell us in these verses from 14 to 16?

Having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin. Boy, that's revealing. Enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children.

Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But he received a rebuke for his own transgression for a mute donkey, speaking with the voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

That's kind of a weird story. That's in Numbers, beginning about Numbers 22, and it takes you through, I think, all the way to 30 or 31, right in there. It's a fascinating story.

It's a weird story. Don't read that story and think that Balaam was a good guy. The scriptures make it clear he wasn't. He was a prophet of God, but he was a prophet who sold out.

[36 : 24] And this is what can happen. This is what can happen. Verse 14, he says, Eyes full of adultery. Eyes full of adultery. It's literally eyes full of an adulterous woman.

Eyes full of reflects that you are focused on. It reflects what you are occupied with so that you pursue it. So that you pursue it. Peter says, They're consumed with fantasizing about every woman they see as a possible candidate for adultery.

Now, guys, that just ought to put the blood boiling in your veins. Every woman these men see, from small to big to grown up to whatever, they are fantasizing about how to objectify them and be with them.

Eyes full of an adulterous woman. That's what it means. They never cease from sin. They are ravenous animals constantly seeking to slake their lusts by enticing unstable souls.

You see entice up there. And they are experts at this, folks. How are they experts? Having a heart trained in greed. Entice means to lure, to bait, to catch by bait.

[37 : 39] That's literally what the Greek word picture is. And they've trained their hearts to get what they want. Trained is from the root word gymnazo or gubnazo.

It's where we get our word. You hear it here. Gymnasium. Now, men, let me tell you, just speaking to you directly. Men, these deceivers have so seared and steeled their hearts with so many layers of lust, layer upon layer upon layer over time.

They have fed so intensely and for so long on sexual impurity and sexual greed just ruminating, marinating themselves and their minds and hearts on this, constantly reflecting on it.

It just, it has consumed who they are. And they're finally to the point where they fed on it for so long they're like animals driven by raw instinct. They are trained experts in baiting their victims into traps of moral compromise and immorality.

They have their sights set on our Christian sisters. They have their sights set on our widows. They have their sights set on your wives and your daughters.

[38 : 55] Men, the question then is what are you doing about it? Greg and I can do what we can do but we need you to come alongside of us to help guard, safeguard the women of our church, our Christian sisters.

And God help us. Gentlemen, God help us that we would become one of those men secretly exploiting our Christian sisters by lusting after them.

But I'll tell you what will do this. Pornography will do this. Whatever you feed your soul on, that's what's going to define you in those moments. Whatever you seek to worship in those moments will define you in those moments.

Because that's what you're giving your heart and mind to. I want to warn you against the dangers of flirting with sexual sin in any form for any length of time.

The longer you feed on it, the longer you let it into your life, the more likely you are to become a victim to what I'm talking about right here. It will begin to turn you into nothing more than a beast where you can't turn it off.

[40 : 10] You can't switch it off. So every woman you see becomes objectified by what you've been looking at. And what's come to define your soul. Don't let that happen to you.

I want to make one other appeal that I know my brother and I have made together with each other. We're accountable to each other in this area. But also we want to appeal to you. Gentlemen, if you're struggling with this, you have two men here who want to be your friends and your pastors.

Please come to us and let us help you. Please come to us and tell us that you're struggling and let us struggle alongside of you. let us come alongside and put our arms around you and walk with you and help hold you accountable so that this won't ruin your life and rob you of the joy that you need as you walk with Jesus that Jesus has purchased for you with his blood.

So you're not hearing a message up here where we're slamming you to the ground and telling you how terrible you are. You're hearing a message that says this is what drives these men. Don't become one of them.

even in secret. Don't do that. You're in a dangerous place if you are. Come and let us minister to you. Enticement, baiting, abusing trust, exploiting weakness in others.

[41 : 31] These men are expertly trained in applying these things as they are agents of Satan trying to pollute what is precious to God.

Verse 15, 16, forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. Well, friends, this is the point Peter makes in his own illustration from the life of Balaam.

Now, I don't have time to turn to that section and read it all out, but I can give you the gist. In cahoots with a pagan king, who was willing to pay Balaam handsomely for his betrayal, the prophet literally sold out to sin by enticing God's people into wholesale immorality.

He spoke to this pagan king about how to tempt God's people. God has made the command that said, do not marry the women of these pagan nations. Stay away from them, they'll corrupt your hearts and they'll drag you into pagan worship with them because much of pagan worship revolved around sexual immorality.

They would get together and they would have these things that go on all night long or all day long and it would all be about them using sexuality and sexual acts in order to quote unquote worship.

[42 : 49] It's just like people who drink in cases like that and say that that helps them get in touch with the Lord. It's the same kind of experience and God said, don't do that.

Don't marry these women, they will drag you down and sure enough, that's exactly what happened and Balaam was a huge part of helping it to happen. Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness, it says.

He was driven along in the sinful insanity of his wicked, wicked heart. Now, just as a postscript, Balaam was killed by the sword while actually fighting against Israel.

The point that he's using here and using Balaam as an example, this is the same path and plight of false teachers. God will destroy them.

That is all through this chapter. Peter's trying to tell us God is going to judge these people, they're not going to get away with it. Then I want you to notice, please, the deceptions of their hearts in verses 17 through 19.

[43 : 57] These are springs without water, mist driven by a storm for whom the black darkness is reserved. They speak out arrogant words of vanity and enticed by fleshly desires and sensuality.

Those who barely escape from the ones who live in error. Oh, they promise them freedom while they themselves, though, are slaves of corruption. For by what a man has overcome by this, he is enslaved.

Friends, verse 17 emphasizes again the deceptive and empty nature of their lives and their message. These word pictures are clear enough, I think.

The false teachers aren't what they say and aren't what they pretend to be. They are empty themselves. They have nothing of value to offer and only harm in its place.

They speak hollow words from hollow hearts, but they do it so very, very seductively. Verses 18 and 19, Peter spells out the human targets of these false teachers more clearly for us.

[45 : 01] He instructively clarifies how these men so successfully bait and catch people in the church. You may be sitting there thinking, I just don't think they could do this to me.

I don't think this could happen to me. Everybody says that. Everybody thinks that. I'm sure that my pastor friend's wife felt the same way. We knew them. These men are very, very patient.

They are very skilled and trained and adept at doing this. They're not to be trifled with. How do they do this?

How do they accomplish this? First, they speak out arrogant words of vanity. Do you see that there in the text? They speak out arrogant words of vanity.

What does he mean? They use their intellectualism to speak assertively and confidently and winsomely and charmingly to us.

[46 : 02] Their words and their manner, they sound deep and so they wow people with their biblical knowledge, with their ability to talk about spiritual things.

They just sound like they're on a different spiritual level and so they wow us. they deftly use their verbal skills to disarm people and to make people feel, listen to this, dependent on them.

They love the sound of their own voices. Now you may hear that and think, well Jeff, there's some of that that's true about how we feel about you and Greg. And I'm like, okay.

We want you to have respect for us. Of course, the scripture calls on you to have respect for your pastors and to love them well in the Lord as we love you and lead you in the Lord.

And we are people who run our mouths a lot like I'm doing. So I know we're teachers, we're counselors, we're disciplers, we're always trying to speak and teach in the name of the Lord and talk about the things of God and draw you out in those ways as well.

[47 : 09] So what's the difference between us doing that and them doing that? What do you think is the difference based on the text that we've seen so far? Our concern in doing that is to help you grow in your love for Jesus and fight against impurity in your life.

Theirs is to incite impurity in your life. To get you traveling along the path of fulfilling those desires instead of fighting them. Moving you further and further away from devotion to Jesus and more and more into devotion to them and yourself.

If they can get you more and more devoted to you then they've got an ally in you because that's exactly where they live. Fully devoted to themselves. I hope those are the differences.

We try to point you to the Lord Jesus and help you fight against your sin in devotion to him. And they do just the opposite but they do it so cleverly and so seductively.

The second thing, the second thing, they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality. That's the next thing Peter says. They make sexual sin sound normal, fun, and freeing.

[48 : 24] They smoothly seduce people to indulge their sexual desires in illicit sinful ways. things. You think, come on.

No. Third, they cleverly convinced that theirs is a better path to freedom and fulfillment than the path of the gospel.

They are seducers, friends. And that's what they teach. They bring you to the place in your life where they want you to begin to doubt the truth of the scripture, doubt what Greg and Jeff are teaching you, take you to different places and say, I know they said this, but you know, there's an alternate rendering here.

Those kind, and they sound so deep. They sound so sophisticated in what they do. They're clever, clever people. They're formidable, formidable foes.

Friends, a quick story. I don't often do this. If you're a member of our church, you know I don't often do this, but I think it's warranted here, and I prayed and prayed about it.

[49 : 29] About 10 years ago, while I was serving in, actually in the church that I was a pastor in before I came to pastor here in Williamsburg, this very scenario that I've got up on the screen was exposed in the ministry I was a part of.

It had been happening on a scale that even to this day, as I have reflected on it the last few weeks, still arrests and sickens my soul, and again, I'm constrained by wisdom and discernment not to divulge the vile details of this.

It's a horrible, horrible story, but I'll give you the gist of it. I'm going to be the founding pastor of the church who brought me in to be a fellow elder. The church was probably a little over 10 years old, and the other elder that had joined the team years before me was getting ready to go on the mission field, and so they needed another pastor to come in and replace him, and so I was that guy.

And so this other pastor was transitioning out in about a year, and then I'd step in, and I'd be the guy with the founding pastor. Now, to make a very long, detailed, and horrible story short, this founding pastor, it came out through much, much toil and effort and lots and lots of hurt.

This man, for 10 years, had set up an entire system and network in the church, with the church, and by the church to lure and to groom young men for his exploits.

[51 : 23] By the time I was finished looking into it, by the time it all got shut down, they fired me and all that kind of stuff, try to run us out of town.

By the time that all concluded, there were 10 young men over 10 years that he had done this with, all of them 18 or older. All of them were brought into the church by this network that he had created to find them and lure them, and in every single case, he had gotten into their lives under the auspices of discipling them and lured them into sexual immorality with him.

10 of them. He had successfully done this behind the scenes for 10 years. That man was getting in the pulpit every Sunday and preaching.

That man was leading people in communion. Every single Sunday, Suzanne, did they have a fellowship meal? Was it after church? After church, the church would end every single Sunday.

We would all gather and do a potluck after church every Sunday. And he was in that midst. What do you think he was doing? Surveying.

[52 : 45] The church was located on the family property. The person's house, this pastor's house, was on the same property. The other elder that I was replacing was living in a house on the family property.

Are you starting to get the picture here? This family owned and controlled everything that happened about that church, and this man had built this entire network in order to do what I just described to you.

And you think, how is that even possible? It's possible because of what Peter's telling us. This man was a false teacher. He exploited the church for his own gain.

They're very, very good about what they do. Verse 19 is a warning to us, friends. By what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

This is the Bible's label for what the world calls addiction. It's enslavement with a spiritual root.

[53 : 51] Your heart is enslaved, and you live out of that enslavement. When we soberly and sadly ask ourselves, how in the world can stuff like this happen?

We have Peter's answer that's staring us right back in the face, and it's the last and final point. I'm finished. The depravity of their hearts. The depravity of their hearts. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than having known it, to turn away from it, turning away from the holy commandment handed on to them. All of this that Peter's been describing, all of this is due to the depravity of their hearts.

So powerful is this spiritual reality about them that it compels them then to do what scripture says, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. You understand, folks, what it's saying?

These men heard the truth, claimed to know the truth and even taught the truth to God's people, but the truth was not in them. Turning away from Christ as their only hope for salvation, these men pursued their own ways.

[55 : 13] They drug Jesus through the muck and they ruined people's lives along the way. The proverb of verse 22 sums up Peter's thought.

Because these men are like brute beasts in their hearts, Peter uses animal analogies in a very fitting way, I think, to describe what their hearts lead them to live like.

They live like mongrel dogs and filthy pigs. They are like dogs willing to eat their own vomit because they can't control their own appetites.

They are like pigs who don't want to be clean, but can only be content as they seek out places to wallow in the muck and in the mire of their own waste mixed with the mud.

That's the picture here in Greek. It's not pretty, is it? They just can't get enough. Of what you and I would call the poison of life.

[56 : 13] They can't get enough of it. They're willing to sacrifice you and everything else. To satiate their appetites, no matter how long they fake their faith in Christ, these wicked seducers ultimately do what is only natural to them.

They act out the inner workings of their hearts in greediness and sexual lust. I told our folks in last week's sermon, the two main things that these men are after are money and sexual fulfillment.

I started to say our women. I think that's what I said last time, but I just gave you an illustration where it's not limited to that. Those are the days we live in. So what can you do against such seductive and powerful enemies?

Well, look how Peter begins and ends chapter three, which is where I hope to pick up next Lord's day at the beginning of chapter three. Look at the beginning in verses one and two of chapter three.

We're answering the question. What can we do about such powerful and seductive enemies? This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

[57 : 37] What's he saying? Turn your heart to the truth that's been handed down to you by God's true prophets and apostles. The scriptures. Turn your heart to the truth. Take power.

Take protection in the truth of the Lord and follow the people who point you to the truth and do a good job of helping you understand it so that you can fight your sin and be devoted to Jesus.

It really does come down to that. Notice how he ends chapter three. This is where he's going next as he answers all of what he just said in chapter two. Look at the end of chapter three.

Verse 17. You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, knowing all this that he's been covering beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness.

But, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.

[58 : 43] Amen. So we'll continue to point each other to the truth of God's word and help each other walk in that truth, understand it, apply it, love it, serve it.

And all of that so that we can come to Jesus and serve the Lord Jesus with joy and thankfulness in our hearts. Not in the fear of man. We are, look, Greg and I, we'll lead, we're not scared of them, but we sure respect the reality that they exist.

But we are not afraid of them. We know that God has an answer for them. And we know that God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ to love and to follow. And we trust him to be the Lord of Grace Church Williamsburg and to love his people well, don't we?

Amen. We trust the Lord and look to the Lord. Will you pray with me? Dear Father in heaven, as your people now transition a bit in their hearts, they have been so kind and so attentive.

I thank you for the way the Holy Spirit has worked in them to listen to this difficult message. Difficult to preach. Difficult to hear. The reality of it is, Lord, we admit terrifying.

[59 : 56] But we pray that you will help the reality sober us. Help it be a warning to us. Warning us away from private, personal sin, secret sin.

Knowing the destructive power that it has in our lives. But also, Lord, warning us that while these men exist, while this is a real attack on our church family, and that it is coming, help us, Father, to take great joy with thankful hearts that we can trust you as the Lord of our church.

You, you wield authority over our church. So help us to be people of the Bible, people of the truth of Scripture, and help us to turn to love each other well, not lust after each other, not envy each other, not be jealous of each other, not gossip and backbite and be malicious toward each other.

Help us to fight self and lay aside the trappings of the flesh and help us to be on guard in our spirits and in our lives against any error, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant that might come through the mouths of these kind of people.

We pray that you would give Greg and I discerning hearts to follow you and to love your people, Lord, as under shepherds of the great shepherd who is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

[61 : 20] In his name we pray and for his glory alone. Amen. Amen.