

OpenTheo

2 Peter 2:1 - 2:17



2 Peter - Steve Gregg

In this segment, Steve Gregg delves into 2 Peter 2:1-17, discussing false prophets and teachers who deceive the people with covetousness and exploit them with deceptive words. He emphasizes the importance of godliness and contentment as opposed to worldly wealth. Gregg also explores the idea of fallen angels and their relationship to humans, referencing both scripture and Jewish tradition. He concludes by focusing on the need to live righteously and avoid the judgment that awaits those who engage in dissolute living.

Transcript

We're turning now to 2 Peter chapter 2, which is of course, as we pointed out in our introduction, that section which describes false teachers or false prophets. Actually, false teachers are identified. The Bible talks about false prophets and false apostles, and even false elders who are called wolves in sheep's clothing.

But now we're going to be looking at false teachers. Generally speaking, when the Bible describes false ministers, although there is reference often to what they say and what they teach, the focus is more generally on how they live and their character. This is interesting because it corresponds also with those passages that talk about true qualifications for an elder, which are almost entirely about character.

Spiritual leadership is judged by character, even more than by what they say. Oratory ability, let's put it that way. A person's knowledge or his eloquence in presenting what he knows is not as important in qualifying someone to be a spiritual leader as is his godly character.

Because of course, everybody knows that you can say all the right things, but if your life is contrary to what you're saying, it basically neutralizes the power. Everybody who knows that you're not living the way you talk simply takes what you say with a grain of salt. But if you are living remarkably different than the rest of the world, and your life conforms to the special distinctives of the Christian teaching, then it causes people to want to hear what you have to say about that.

Or at least it causes them to respect your right to say it. In the description of false teachers, in passing there are references to what they teach, but the majority of the discussion is about what they do, how they live, because their character is bad. And that's made very clear by Peter.

At the end of chapter one, he's been talking about the reliability of the scriptural prophets. He says, But not all who prophesy fit the description that Peter has just given of the true prophets. There are false prophets, too.

And he says in chapter two, verse one, But there were also false prophets among the people. We had the true prophets, but there were other prophets who weren't true prophets, false ones. Just as there will be false teachers among you.

So there are genuine teachers and there are false teachers. And how do you know the one from the other? Well, Peter wants to make sure that there's no doubt in anyone's mind as to what constitutes a true and a false teacher. And by the way, we have every bit as much need of this instruction and information today as they had then, because there are even probably more false teachers in modern times than there were back then.

In those days, they at least had the apostles still living, so that it'd take a rather bold person to come to the church and teach what was knowingly false when the apostles were there who could bring correction. In the 2,000 years since the apostles died, many, many false doctrines have arisen and the apostles are not there to put it down. And it's encouraged all kinds of strange doctrines, but it's not even the doctrine so much.

It's the falsehood of the teacher as a person, as a Christian. The teaching of a false teacher can be false, but the man himself can be false. His character, false.

His profession of even being a Christian can be false. And that's as much a description of a false teacher as that he's teaching the wrong things. After all, there are good people who sometimes teach things that are not quite right.

And the reason for that is that, as Paul said, we know in part and we prophesy in part. None of us are perfect. And therefore, even the best of teachers and pastors will have some opinions about which probably they could improve their insights.

They could see better, more clearly. They might be teaching something that's not quite on, but they don't know it. They are honest men teaching what they believe to be true.

Of course, all of us have room for growth in what we understand to be true. None of us knows everything. So all of us might have some teaching that isn't quite on.

It's just that we don't know it because we're trying to teach the best we know. But there are people who are not trying to teach the best they know. It's not a matter of just making honest mistakes.

These are people who have an agenda to come in and corrupt the church with what they have to teach. Now, when we think of false teachers, we might think of Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and people like that that we encounter from time to time, who have a bad doctrine of the Trinity or a bad doctrine of this or that theological concept. But the false teaching that was so damaging in the early church and condemned by the apostles was not so much teachings about conceptual things.

I mean, like what you think about the Trinity, it matters, but it's still in the realm of conceptual things. You won't live your life very much differently if you have a different view of the Trinity than if you have this. I mean, after all, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons have very different views of the Trinity than we have.

Yet they live their lives probably more or less the way Christians should. I mean, they're not perfect anymore than we are, but the point is that they still are seeking to be obedient to God as they understand what he wants. We understand them to see things wrong, and I'm sure that they are wrong in the way they see things, but at least they're not out teaching that you can just live in sin and it's okay.

And that is actually the kind of teaching that was so damaging in the early church. The Gnostic teachers and those who were proto-Gnostics before the Gnostic movement was really fully developed were often teaching that it doesn't really matter how you live. And it's very clear that some of the teaching of these false teachers that Peter's concerned about is in the direction of leading people into sinfulness.

Or as Jude describes them, they turn the grace of God into licentiousness, suggesting that grace is such that it's basically a free pass into heaven and doesn't require anything of you. So you might as well party. You might as well eat, drink, and be merry, because after all, you're saved by grace.

Now, this kind of teaching, of course, is not just wrong conceptually, but it has serious ramifications in behavior. So that you'll meet people who are living in known sin in their life, and they don't have any conviction about it because their doctrine is that's really not a big issue to God. Now, this is the kind of false teaching that the New Testament writers are always warned against.

Yeah, there are wrong concepts here. If you understand grace wrong and think it means permission to sin, you definitely have a wrong concept. But worse than that, that concept leads you to live a life that's offensive to God.

And so the practical ramifications of these teachers often is the greater concern. If Paul would meet the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Mormons, he would, of course, try to correct their teaching. Or Jesus, I'm sure, would try to correct their teachings, their conceptual teachings.

But I don't think he'd be lambasting them as, you know, hypocrites, because they are actually trying to serve Jesus, trying to live holy lives, and so forth, as they understand it. But these teachers were trying to live sinful lives. They're adjusting their doctrines to encourage in themselves and their listeners immorality, sensuality, greed, and so forth.

And that's what we find, that it was corrupting the behavior of the church, not just the concepts. And usually when we think of false teaching, we're thinking of the conceptual theology being wrong. But really, there's something that's a much greater concern even than that.

And that is when a person's lives are wrong, because the teaching encourages wrong behavior. Now, these false teachers among you, verse 1 says, will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. Now, they deny the Lord.

Does that just mean that they deny Christ outright? Like saying, oh, Jesus isn't the Messiah. I doubt if it means that, because they wouldn't be... I seriously doubt if the church would follow someone who's verbally denying Christ. But denying his Lordship, denying the Lord, could be denying his Lordship.

And there are actually, even in Christian churches today, there are churches that emphasize that you don't have to have Jesus be your Lord, just your Savior. Just accept Jesus as your Savior. And if you insist on, well, he has to be your Lord too, they say, oh, you're being works-oriented, you're being legalistic.

But isn't the gospel that Jesus is Lord? Well, that's optional. Just accept Jesus as your Savior. And then if you don't accept him as your Lord, that's your business.

But they deny the Lordship of Christ as the central defining office that he holds in the life of the believer. And of course, if you deny Christ's Lordship, there remains very little, unless you bring in the Mosaic law in its place, there becomes very little to restrain someone's behavior. If you're not going to be obeying Jesus, and you're not necessarily going to be putting yourself under the Jewish law, some false teachers did that in the first century, you're going to have nothing else to restrain behavior.

You're going to just have wild self-indulgence. So the Lordship of Jesus, of course, taken seriously, is what governs a Christian's moral behavior. We want to do what the Lord says, because he's the Lord.

But these people are denying that role to him. And they bring on themselves swift destruction. Many will follow their destructive ways.

Remember here, Peter's talking in the future tense. He's not talking about teachers that are presently among them. He says there will be false teachers among you.

This is what you can expect. They'll come, but they'll have a short career. Sudden destruction will come upon them.

But not before they have had a negative influence, a damaging influence, because many will be influenced by them and follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. When Christians live immoral lives, it brings blasphemy upon the way of truth. It brings blasphemy upon, frankly, Jesus.

When David sinned with Bathsheba, he did not necessarily commit a sin that wasn't widely practiced among ordinary people and certainly among kings of other nations. But David was representing God. He was God's representative.

He was God's leader. And for him to do something like that brought reproach upon God. When he was confronted by Nathan, Nathan said, You have given the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme.

What, because he sinned? Yes, because he sinned and he was God's representative. He's the one writing scripture. He's writing psalms.

He's talking about the need to praise God and to glorify God and to follow God and to trust God. And then he does this, this inconsistent thing. When a Christian who names the name of Christ is publicly found in scandal, it gives the enemies of God occasion to blaspheme.

In Romans chapter 2, Paul is talking about the Jews who are inconsistent in their obedience to the law. Because although there were Jews who did keep the law, there were Jews who, just like there are Christians who compromise, there were Jews who compromised too. And Paul is writing to such Jews when he says to them in Romans 2 and 20, it says, You see yourself as an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. The Jews claim to represent Yahweh, and yet if they are seen to be hypocrites, that gives the Gentiles occasion to blaspheme God. And Peter says these false teachers, because of the destructive ways that they practice and that they influence others to practice, it says, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

Christianity will be given a bad name. And we can certainly see that that is true in our time. If you talk to some unbeliever about Christ, as like as not, they're probably going to bring up some case of a Christian they knew who wasn't very Christian-like at all.

And that's their argument against Christianity. You know, this guy I knew was a Christian. This guy was a pastor.

And, you know, he took off with the church secretary. This guy ripped me off in a business deal or whatever. I remember meeting a former Christian man.

He's a lawyer, very wealthy. He was the father of a friend of mine. The son was a Christian, but his father was a backslider.

And I was talking to this man, and he said, yeah, he says, when I was in business, he said, whenever a customer pulled up in front of my office and they had a silver fish on the window of their car, he said, I knew I was about to be ripped off. And he'd become very cynical about experiences with people who claimed to be Christians, but who were dishonest. So he just wrote off Christianity.

Now, that's not a logical thing to do, obviously, just because Christians or people who say they're Christians misbehave. It doesn't tell you anything about whether Christianity is really true. It may be that they are not true to Christianity.

Christianity may be very true, but them not. But people use it as an excuse to blaspheme God, to dishonor and debunk Christianity, because of the disobedient ways of people who call themselves Christians. Peter said, because of these false teachers, and because of those who follow the ways they teach, God's Word, God's truth is going to be blasphemed.

It's going to suffer in its reputation in the sight of the world. It says, verse 3, by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. For a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

It has not been idle and does not slumber. It's just a figure of speech saying, it may seem like their destruction is delayed, like God's sleeping, like judgment is idle, but it's not so. It's not idle.

It's going to awaken. It's going to spring up at the proper time and bring them down. Perhaps not soon enough, though.

It seems sometimes like judgment is delayed, and false teachers go on a long time and have a lot of bad influence. Why does God even allow that, then? If God is going to judge them, if He's not really slumbering, and ultimately He's going to awake to judge them, why doesn't He do it before they do the damage they do? Why does He let them go on and do this harm to the church and to His own name, when He's ultimately going to judge them? Why not do it quicker and prevent this damage? The answer to that seems to be given in Deuteronomy 13. In Deuteronomy 13, Moses is warning that false prophets will come to Israel, just like Peter is saying false teachers will come to the church.

Similar situation. In Deuteronomy 13.1, it says, If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them. You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul.

In other words, this false teacher or false prophet is allowed to come and even do signs and wonders in Israel and try to lead them away from the truth of God. And God is allowing this because he's testing your loyalty. No doubt it's the same way, the reason he allows false teachers to go unpunished for a while.

He allows them to exert their influence. It tests the loyalty of the Christians. Do you love God or don't you? You're going to stick with the truth? You're going to stick with Jesus? Or are you going to go off after this fancy new doctrine, which allows you all kinds of carnal gratification? Obviously, even though it brings harm on the name of Christ, God has it in his mind to test people.

He does not want people to reign with him who have not been tested. And therefore the church has to be tested. Remember when Paul said that there were divisions in the church of Corinth, he said it in 1 Corinthians 11, he says, I hear there's divisions among you.

He says, I believe it because he says there must be divisions so that those who are approved may be identified. In other words, in a congregation, there are people that are true Christians who will indeed pass every test, but there are others that are not. And again, God causes sifting to take place, causes the false ones to fall away.

So the ones who are approved can be seen as the ones who endured the testing period. So even though there's great damage done by these teachers, God allows them because it tests the church loyalty and certain people will remain loyal. Some will not.

It says in verse 3, by covetousness, they will exploit you with deceptive words. Now, by covetousness could mean that that's what motivates them. They hope to get money out of you.

Almost certainly this is true. And there's indications elsewhere that they're doing this for gain. But also, it could mean that they are exploiting you by exploiting your covetousness.

I don't know if he's talking about that, but there certainly are false teachers like that today. They build big television ministries, great mega churches by promising that you can get rich if you learn the secrets of faith that they are teaching. If you learn how to exercise faith in the manner that they do and that they teach, you will be wealthy.

You'll never be sick. You'll never be poor. You'll prosper.

This kind of teaching is not biblical, but it draws huge crowds. The biggest television networks that are Christian in this country are committed to that particular teaching. Some of the biggest congregations in the country are committed to that kind of teaching.

It draws big crowds. The preacher gets rich because, of course, big crowds mean big takes in the offering. And a man who can bring big crowds, he can command a big salary from the church.

These men usually have their own jets and diamond rings they sport to show that they really are the men of faith that they are claiming to be, that God really does prosper. Of course, this is all by deception and manipulation. It's deceptive words, but it's exploiting that greed that's in the hearer.

I would like to be rich like him. I'd like to have that kind of diamond ring. I'd like to have a jet.

This man's faith works for him. I'll learn from him how to do this so I can be rich. This is appealing to something in people that is corrupt, their covetousness.

No doubt the teacher is motivated by covetousness and his own greed, but he's using covetousness as a lure for bringing people to his ministry and, of course, then supporting his ministry, which means supporting him. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul warns about this. Beginning at verse 3, Paul says, If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, and a long list of other things.

At the end of verse 5, he says, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. They suppose that faith, Christianity, is a means of getting rich. This is the modern prosperity teachers for sure, and apparently people back then too.

They suppose that godliness is a means of gain. Of course, it might be saying that they see using Christianity as a means of getting themselves rich by exploiting foolish sheep. Someone's got a message they can give that will get people to give money to them.

They're using godliness, or faking godliness, as a means of gain. But they also may be representing to their hearers that godliness is a means of getting rich. You can get rich from this religion I'm promoting.

He says in verse 6, But godliness with contentment is great gain. You don't need money too. If you have real godliness and you're content, you're a happy person, and you're as rich as anyone could wish to be.

More money won't make you happier once you're already content. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, from which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. So we see that Paul says there are people who teach that godliness brings gain.

They exploit the covetousness in others, and they themselves are governed by covetousness. They love money, and it brings destruction upon them. It's the root of all kinds of evil.

And Peter is talking about this same thing in the false teachers. Their love of money, and their exploitation of the love of money in their hearers. So you follow my ministry, and you get rich.

Or at least I will. If you don't, keep at it. Keep giving to me.

Keep giving to me. You know, I mean, do this seed faith thing. You need \$100? Send me \$10.

You need \$1,000? Send me \$100. You know, god's going to send you a hundredfold. If you want \$100,000, send me \$1,000.

Now, you wonder sometimes when these guys get on and say, we need money, why they don't send a few thousand bucks out, if they really believe that that's going to bring back a hundredfold. I always wondered about that. You know, we're building this big prayer cathedral, this big prayer tower.

We need money. We need money. If you give to us, god will, you know, multiply to you back a hundredfold.

Well, why don't you, if you need the money, why don't you give money to some missionaries? Maybe god will multiply it to you a hundredfold. The fact that they don't do this means they don't really believe the doctrine. They're just using it to fool people.

They're through deceptive words. They are exploiting people through their covetousness. They will be judged.

Peter says, you know, in the Dedicatio, which is that early document that was written around the turn of the first century, it was a very early Christian document written by the second generation of Christians. And it described the normal church practices of the time. And it was considered to be an authoritative document, not like a New Testament

book, although some early Christians did want to put the Dedicae in the New Testament.

It was considered for canonization. But even though it was not accepted, all early Christians respected the Dedicae as a true manual of church order. And there's sections of the Dedicae where it talks about what do you do if a prophet comes and speaks at your church? And there's several ways to know if he's a false prophet.

One is if he stays more than three days, he's a false prophet. Another is if he asks for money, he's a false prophet, it says. This is how the early church saw it.

If a preacher comes and asks you for money, he's not the real thing. Real preachers don't do that. Which makes you, you know, I mean, it's a dead giveaway about many of the people who are teachers in the church today.

The early church would have just considered them false teachers, false prophets, just by virtue of their asking you to give money to them. Now verse 4. This is one sentence. There's been not a period yet.

Then, see there's big ifs. God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. And if God delivers him, if all this is true, then the sentence now finally ends in verse 9. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.

And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed, they're not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

Well, now we've come to a place where we can stop and go back and look over it. But verses 5 through 10 are one sentence. With a lot of if clauses.

If God did this, and if God did that, and if God did that, and if God did this, then you know this about God. What do you know? What's the final lesson of the sentence? Then you know that the Lord knows, verse 9, how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. Now, why does he say that? Because he has just said about these false teachers, in the end of verse 3, that their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber.

What this seems to be saying is, God doesn't quickly judge these people so that judgment seems to be deactivated. God's judgment seems to be asleep. We say, oh, don't think that's the case.

They're just storing up. God knows how to reserve the ungodly under judgment. That's what verse 9 says.

He knows how to reserve the unjust under judgment for the day of judgment. What he's saying is, God's judgment isn't immediate. God will deliver those who are faithful to him, but the ungodly, they may seem to be getting away with it.

Judgment seems to be delayed, but it's not really delayed. God is reserving them under judgment. They're already under judgment until the day of judgment.

What he's arguing is, God's judgment is inevitable, but it's not always, as we would think, timely. He seems to let these people go a long time. The examples he gives are the example of angels who fell, the example of Noah's day, and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

All these are examples of God's judgment upon the wicked. All of them probably are examples also of God's waiting before judging. We don't know exactly what he's referring to when he talks about the angels that fell.

It says, God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to, the word here that's translated hell is Tartarus. It's the only place in the Bible that the word Tartarus appears. When you find the word hell in the New Testament, it's always either Hades, Gehenna, or Tartarus.

Those are the only three Greek words in the Greek New Testament that are translated hell in our New Testament. If you find the word hell in the Old Testament, it's always the Hebrew word Sheol. There are no other words in the Bible that are translated hell except these four words.

The Hebrew word Sheol in the Old Testament, it's equivalent in the New Testament as Hades. In the New Testament, the word Hades is used almost exclusively when it's quoting something in the Old Testament about Sheol. In other words, when someone in the New Testament is quoting an Old Testament verse that says Sheol, the New Testament is giving it in Greek, it renders it Hades instead.

Jesus' words about hell, at least translated as hell in the Gospels, are the word Gehenna. But the word Tartarus is the only remaining word for hell, and it's used here and only here. Tartarus is a word out of Greek mythology, so is Hades for that matter.

These words had meaning in the Greek language, which means in the Greek culture, which means in Greek mythology. Before Christianity came along, the Greeks had their mythologies, and they had Hades, they had Tartarus, they had these things. In choosing words for the Christian concepts, the biblical writers chose words that were Greek words, because that's the language they were writing in.

And the Greek words, of course, had their own range of meaning within their mythology, but the Christians were trying to make it understood, well, we'll use these same words, but we've got to put our own Christian theological cast upon it. The Titans in Greek

mythology, which I think were a mixture between the gods and men and grew up, they were punished in a place called Tartarus. That's what Tartarus was in the Greek mythology, the place where the Titans were punished.

Now, we only have Tartarus once in the New Testament, and here it's a place where fallen angels are punished. Peter assumes that we know about fallen angels, but we don't. Not from the Old Testament, we don't.

We have no actual record in the Old Testament of angels falling. You might say, well, what about Satan? Isn't he a fallen angel? Not necessarily. There's certainly nothing in the Old Testament that says so.

What about the evil spirits? Aren't they fallen angels? They might be, but the Old Testament doesn't tell us so. We read of evil spirits, but we don't read anything about them having been angels. We don't have any Old Testament information about angels falling.

We do have, of course, in Genesis 6, a statement about sons of God being seduced by their own lusts to marry inappropriately with daughters of men. That's in Genesis 6. Whether sons of God are angels or not has been disputed. Sons of God is a term that can refer to angels, but it doesn't have to.

It can refer to godly people, and therefore there are different views on that particular passage. Anyone who's heard me discuss it knows that I personally favor the view that they are humans, godly humans. In that view, I do not hold the same view as the rabbis held.

The rabbis held the view that they were angels who married women. Many of the early Christians believed that too. It originated, apparently, in Enoch.

First Enoch is a very important book written a couple of centuries before Christ. It was not an inspired book, and it was not written by Enoch. It claimed to be written by Enoch, who lived before the time of Noah.

But since the book was written only two centuries before Christ, at least 2,000 years too late to be Enoch's work. Although Enoch didn't die. Maybe he did send it down from heaven.

Who knows? But maybe that's what they thought. But in any case, there were a lot of pseudepigraphal books written in the intertestamental period, where an author claimed to be somebody he wasn't, and the book of Enoch was one of them. But the Jews liked the book of Enoch.

It was sort of like the book of Revelation. If you read the book of Enoch, it's sort of like reading an Old Testament version of the book of Revelation. And just like Christians like

the book of Revelation because it's so sensational, the Jews really liked Enoch.

In fact, the early Christians did too. Now, Enoch was the first Jewish book to depict certain things that we have in our even Christian ideas. For example, the idea that Hades has two compartments, a place of fire and a place that's Abraham's bosom.

Jesus used that imagery in his story of Lazarus the rich man, but it originated in the book of Enoch and was very common among the rabbis of Jesus' day, that imagery of Hades. Likewise, the idea that the sons of God in Genesis 6 were angels originates with the book of Enoch as well. The book of Enoch tells this story as if angels came down and married women.

Now, this view of things, of course, could be true, but we can't trust it just because Enoch said so because we don't know who wrote the book of Enoch. It's a false attribution of the author. And therefore, Christians do not recognize the book of Enoch as inspired.

I actually don't think the Jews did either, but they liked it. And a number of stories from the book of Enoch and books written at the same time appear in the book of Jude. In fact, a prophecy of Enoch appears in the book of Jude, right from the book of Enoch.

Jude quotes it. We're not there yet. We're going to get to Jude later.

But it's in the section of Jude where he's talking very much like 2 Peter 2. In fact, both Jude and Peter mention the angels that fell being kept in Tartarus. There is a possibility that this story came from the book of Enoch. Although, of course, there's a possibility also that it came from Genesis 6 and that Peter was seeing that as the fall of the angels.

Though Genesis 6 doesn't tell us they were angels and it doesn't tell us what happened to those. It doesn't say they're in Tartarus. So he's getting that information from somewhere else.

Probably the book of Enoch. Now, this raises questions. If Peter and Jude quote from the book of Enoch or allude to it, Jude actually quotes from it and alludes to it, does that mean we should accept the book of Enoch as inspired? Did Peter accept it as inspired? Did Peter believe these stories were true? This we can't say with certainty.

And I'll have more to say about this point when we come to Jude because Jude has more instances of this kind of thing, him making references to the apocryphal books. But there's at least one possibility we should consider and that is that the early Christian writers did the same things we do. And that is they quote from popular religious literature to make illustrations without necessarily agreeing that the story is true.

Lots of preachers nowadays like to quote lines from *The Shack*. *The Shack* was a best-selling Christian novel a few years back. And it had some rather thought-provoking

things in it, including some conversations between the main character and God, the Father, and God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And some of the things that the words put into God's mouth in these stories are interesting. Not reliable, of course, but some of them people think are insightful. If a preacher would say, you know, in *The Shack*, God said blah, blah, blah, that would not mean that the preacher really thought that God said that or that *The Shack* was an inspired work.

He'd be saying, you all have heard of *The Shack*. You've all read *The Shack*. This is a familiar story.

Remember in *The Shack* God said this. I want to make this point about that. Like there's something really quotable in *The Shack* I really like.

Like at one point, God seems to be sounding like he's said that everyone's saved or something like that. And the main character says, so is it true then that all religions lead to you? And God says, no, all religions don't lead to me, but I can travel through any path, through any religion to reach them. Now that's an interesting concept.

I don't even know if it's a reliable one, but it's interesting. And preachers will quote that. I've quoted that before, because it's an interesting thought-provoking thing.

People can't reach God through various religions, but God can reach them any way he wants to. Maybe even traveling through the path of their religious notions, just like Paul said this to the Athenians, you're worshiping this unknown God, I want to tell you about him. God's going to find you through this superstition of yours.

You just never know. But the point is that a quotation from a book like *The Shack* doesn't mean that the person who's quoting it really believes that story is a true story. It's just that if everybody in the congregation has read it, or most people have, to give an illustration from it, lots of preachers give illustrations from the *Chronicles of Narnia*, or from *Pilgrim's Progress*, or from other fiction.

In doing so, they speak of it as if it's a true story, because they know that their audience, and they have a shared awareness that it's not a true story. But everyone's familiar with the conversations in those stories, and quoting them to make a valid point is not an invalid thing to do. The question is, did Peter and his audience think the *Book of Enoch* was true? If so, then if it wasn't, he made a mistake.

But he could have written things and alluded to things in the *Book of Enoch*, even if he didn't believe it was true. If he and his audience all knew this is not true, but it's interesting. This is good religious fiction.

The *Book of Enoch* was good religious fiction, and everybody had read it. So for him to

say, remember those angels that fell, how they got thrown into Tartarus? That's a good example of what I'm talking about here. Now see, this would not necessarily confirm authoritatively that the Book of Enoch was correct in identifying the sons of God with the angels.

You've all read about this story. There's a good example in this story of God tolerating these sinners for a while, these sinful angels. After all, if he is referring to the sons of God in Genesis 6, we know that after they did that, it was another 120 years before God sent the flood.

So it would be an example of God tolerating something abominable, but only for a while, ultimately bringing judgment upon them, but delaying judgment. These are the examples he's giving. Delayed judgment.

The judgment on these false teachers is delayed, but don't think it's permanently canceled. There are examples in reality and in literature of sinners who eventually got punished, but not immediately. The angels who fell, I will say this, I have a hard time believing that the sons of God in Genesis 6 are angels, or that Peter meant to affirm that to be true.

If he did, then I would have to change my view, but I don't mind doing so. I'm just not convinced of it. It is possible that angels really fell through some other circumstance.

It's unrecorded elsewhere. Some people think that a third of the angels fell when Lucifer fell. That's one theory.

That's a different theory than that it was the sons of God in Genesis 6. The assumption in that case is that Lucifer was an angel before Adam and Eve even were created, certainly long before Genesis 6, and that when Lucifer fell, he took a third of the angels with him. That tradition is very widespread among Christians today. It's not actually mentioned in Scripture, but it's something that a lot of Christians think is true.

It is at least an alternative scenario for there being actual fallen angels. It wouldn't have to be Genesis 6 that Peter's alluding to. He could be referring to something before the creation of man.

On the other hand, we have to ask, how would Peter and his audience know about this if it's not recorded in Scripture? He must be alluding to something they're all familiar with because he doesn't argue that this is true. He takes it for granted that he and his readers know this is true. If, in fact, God did this to the angels, as we all know, and if God did this to the people of Noah's day, as we all know, then we can also know this lesson from all these examples that he gives.

In verses 9 and 10 is the lesson. But the examples, the three examples he gave, are given as if it's a matter-of-fact thing. Everyone knows this.

Now, they might all know it. They might all know the story and know that it's fiction, but it still makes a good illustration or not. But the point is he seems to be referring to something familiar.

And since the Old Testament makes no clear reference to angels falling anywhere, it would seem that he's getting it from other literature. And we happen to know of some extremely popular literature in the early church and in the Judaism of the time that actually did have that story in it, the Book of Enoch. So the likelihood is he's talking about a familiar story from Enoch, not necessarily making his comments as to whether it's true or not.

That's not the important point. The important point is we know this story, and it's a good example of what I'm talking about. I have a pastor.

My former pastor gave a great sermon illustration from the Iliad and the Odyssey about how Ulysses went by the Island of the Sirens successfully. And he compared that with resisting temptation. And so he made a great sermon illustration from that.

And he told the story as if it was a true story. You know, well, there was this place called the Island of Sirens in Greek mythology, and you couldn't sail past it without dying because if you heard them sing, you couldn't resist, and your ship would be torn up in the rocks if you tried to turn in. And Ulysses made it by because he had himself bound to the mast of his ship, and he wanted to turn in, but he couldn't.

But another guy whose name eludes me right now, though I know it, starts with an O, the great musician, the god of music in Greek mythology, he made it by there because he played more beautiful music than the Island of the Sirens. And so he heard their music, and his shipmates wanted to turn in irresistibly, but he took out his instrument and played a better song, more beautiful music. So you can see how that makes a wonderful sermon illustration about resisting temptation.

But the pastor told it as a storyteller tells a story which if no one knew otherwise, we'd think it was a true story. But no, everyone knows it's not. That's Greek mythology.

There's no Island of the Sirens. But see, this is very common and legitimate. As long as your audience doesn't think that you're affirming the historicity of the account, as long as it's a shared awareness that everyone has, this is not really true, but it's a great illustration for what we're talking about.

Then there's nothing illegitimate about this. And he says about these angels that they are in Tartarus, in chains of darkness to be reserved for the judgment. Clearly, he knows that the judgment day has not yet happened.

That happens when Jesus comes back. Therefore, Tartarus is not the place of final judgment. It's not the Lake of Fire, for example.

It would be to the fallen angels. If this is actually true, it would be to the fallen angels what Hades is to people, the place where they are reserved for the judgment. After the final judgment, if they're evil, they go to the Lake of Fire, according to Revelation.

Now it says another example. He didn't spare the angels that sinned. He also didn't spare the ancient world before the time of Noah.

Of course, he did give them 120 years. Again, it's a case of delayed judgment. God announced judgment 120 years before he brought judgment.

In other words, God was committed, but he delayed, just like is the case with these false teachers. God is determined that he's going to judge these people, but he's not doing it right away. These are examples of the similar phenomenon in God, in his dealings.

Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He mentions Noah, too. This is something Jude doesn't do.

Jude does mention the flood, but he does not... No, I take it back. He doesn't mention the flood. Jude mentions Sodom and Gomorrah.

But in mentioning the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah, Peter brings out not only the case of God judging them, but also of him sparing the righteous remnant. He says in verse 6, or actually verse 5, he saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness. This is the only place we learn that Noah preached.

Bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, a third example, into ashes, he condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly. So here we have these cases where God judged societies after enduring them for a very long time. And therefore, it says... It does say he delivered Lot.

We need to point that out, too. Lot was delivered. It says in verse 7 that Lot was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked.

For that righteous man dwelling among them tormented his righteous soul from day to day, seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. Now, I'm not sure where Peter got this information. It may be from an extra-biblical source, too.

We do know that Noah was a good man, and Peter might have just assumed that Lot was a good man, too, because he was delivered. Lot was Abraham's nephew, but we read of nothing about him in the book of Genesis that would tell us he's a good man. However, he did stand against the pressure to turn the angels over, his guests over, to the men of Sodom.

That was a righteous choice, though his means of doing so by offering his daughters was

not exactly commendable. Lot is not described in the Old Testament as a man to emulate. He is a man essentially compromised.

But perhaps he's called Righteous Lot, and that is what he's called in verse 7, not because he was so exceptionally virtuous, but because he did believe in Yahweh, as his uncle Abraham did, and Abraham was accounted righteous for his faith. He was imputed righteous based on his faith in Yahweh. Lot believed in Yahweh, too, and therefore, Peter may be just saying he certainly stood out from the Sodomites in that, A, he didn't want to rape the guests.

He apparently was not a homosexual. He had a wife and children. He was a believer in Yahweh, not a very good example of a follower of Yahweh, but let's face it, he didn't even have a Bible, for crying out loud.

We see Christians behaving as badly as Lot, and we have Bibles. There was no Bible written in his day. He didn't have any word of God, any revelation from God.

All he knew is that his uncle Abraham had heard from this guy named Yahweh, his God, and told him, made some promises. But they had parted company. The fact that he had any link to God still in his heart or in mind is amazing.

But he was a believer in Yahweh, and that made him counted a righteous man. And we're told here that he every day vexed his righteous spirit with the unlawful deeds of the people of Sodom. That certainly is a righteous response to a corrupt culture and society.

Anyone who can live in such a corrupt society as that of Sodom and not be vexed inwardly on a regular basis by their corrupt deeds has become numb. It's not a good direction to go. Moral numbness, spiritual numbness is not a desirable condition.

Even Lot, who was greatly compromised, was not completely spiritually numb. He was bothered by the sinfulness of his surroundings. It says, now, if all these stories set examples of one truth, what the truth is in verse 9 is that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, because in two of those three examples, there was somebody who has saved Noah and Lot and to reserve the unjust under punishment.

He's not just saying that God punishes people, but he reserves them for a period of time under punishment until the appropriate time of judgment. This is what he's trying to explain in these examples. Why does God not judge right away? In a way, he has.

These people are being reserved for the day of judgment, but they are already under judgment. He reserves them under judgment. Even now they are under judgment.

The boom has not fallen upon them yet. He has not lowered the boom upon them, but they have wrath hovering over them. They're living their lives under the unrevealed

wrath of God.

Or maybe it is revealed. It says in Romans chapter 1 that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men who suppress the truth in their unrighteousness. It goes on to explain in Romans 1 how the wrath of God is revealed to us on these people.

It says he's given them over. He's given them over to do their own thing. He's given them over to their lusts.

The fact that they are living totally dissolute lives without conviction from God means he's given up on them. And that's his wrath. They are continuing.

There will be a greater punishment for them in the future. In the meantime, they're already under wrath. They're already under punishment of a sort.

Their own hardness of heart is a punishment. And there's something more too coming. And that's the day of judgment, as he mentions in verse 9. And this is especially, he says, those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority.

Now, it's suggesting these teachers have this as their principal notable feature. They are lustful. They're walking according to their lusts.

They are despising authority. The authority of Christ, certainly, because if you're under the authority of Christ, you wouldn't be living according to your lusts. But apparently, not only of Christ, but of human authorities that are legitimate who should be honored, because he says, they're presumptuous, self-willed.

They're not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. The word dignitaries here is the word glories in the Greek. Occasionally, Paul, in his writings, refers to his fellow workers as the glory of Christ.

These men are the glory of Christ. And so, commentators feel like glories here refers to, it's sort of a strange word for it, but for ministers. They speak evil of genuine church leaders.

But then he says, whereas angels, verse 11, which are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. Them would seem to mean the glories or the church leaders. If it is church leaders he's referring to.

Now, it's possible that the dignitaries here are not church leaders, but angelic beings. Because if verse 11, when it says them, means the dignitaries, the idea in verse 11 is brought out in Jude, as being the example of Michael, the archangel, did not rebuke Satan when disputing over the body of Moses. This is given by Jude as an example of this

principle, which Peter states as a principle or a generic statement, but doesn't give that example of it.

But the angels themselves don't bring reviling accusation against them. Who? The dignitaries. These dignitaries might be angelic beings.

If so, then in what sense do these false teachers, they're not afraid to speak evil of these powers. Is it the angels they're speaking against? Is it the demons? Is it Satan himself? Even the angels don't bring reviling accusations against Satan. As Jude points out, even Michael doesn't do that.

But some people do. It may be that he's saying that it's a feature of these people's strange brand of religion, that they call down curses on the demons or things like that, because there are actually, in some Pentecostal circles, this tendency to rebuke Satan, rebuke the principalities and the powers, and give commands to them and bind them and so forth, none of which is modeled in Scripture. And so it may be that they're just a little bolder than they should be toward the demonic powers.

Even the angels, even Michael, didn't play fast and loose with Satan. And maybe these people are being a little too... It can be a certain amount of bravado in their attitude, that they don't take the demons seriously enough. These demons really are dangerous, and they're not afraid to just hurl insults at the demons or order the demons around, to impress people, of course.

It's very possible for a certain kind of minister to feel like he can impress his audience by dissing the devil or commanding the devil or rebuking the devil or binding the devil. It's just plain like the devil is an easy adversary for him, and that makes him look like he's spiritually pretty cool. It may be that that's what's in mind.

It's not clear whether it's talking about them not recognizing or not having a proper fear toward heavenly beings, even the evil ones, or whether it means ministers of God. But verse 12 says, But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of things they don't understand and will utterly perish in their own corruption. These people are no better than animals, animals that you catch only to destroy, perhaps a marauding lion that's been bothering a village, the tribesmen go out and they kill it.

It's of no use but to be destroyed. It's a danger to society. Or else it could be referring to animals that are killed for food.

But in any case, you don't treat an animal like a person. You kill an animal without any impunity. These people are not much worth more than animals, the animals you just go out and kill.

Their lives aren't worth much. They speak evil of things they don't understand, they'll

utterly perish in their own corruption and will receive the wages of unrighteousness. The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6.23 says, They'll receive those wages. As those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime, Now carousing, lots of people like to carouse, but parties are usually at night. Those who carouse in the daytime are alcoholics.

Those who drink all day are people who just, their whole life is given over to their self-gratification. It's not a sideline for them. It's not something they do after the day's work is done.

It's something they do all day long. They're just living for pleasure and self-gratification. It says, They are spots and blemishes.

The body of Christ, the church is like a body and these are like blemishes on the body. Carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you. The church often ate together.

They had love feasts. And actually Jude makes reference to these people being at the love feasts. The love feast was just a communal dinner and they'd take communion there, apparently, in the early church.

A lot of church was done over a table with food rather than sitting in pews looking at a platform. Having eyes full of adultery. Now, it's already been stated earlier that they walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness in verse 10.

That uncleanness leads them to adultery. At least their eyes, they're looking lustfully at other men's wives. And they cannot cease from sin.

They're not Christians. They don't have power over sin. It has power over them.

They can't cease from it. He's going to say later, in a verse we won't get to until our next session but further down in the same chapter, it says in verse 19, They promise liberty but they themselves are slaves of corruption. They don't have power over sin.

They may profess to have power over demons but they don't have power over their own demons, their own sin, and their own bondages, their own addictions. They're addicted to adultery. They can't stop.

They beguile unstable souls which may simply mean they lead people astray into wrong religious ideas or it may speak of, since it's talking about adultery, it might speak of seducing women who are susceptible. They have a heart trained in covetous practices. So they not only are covetous but they've learned how to practice covetousness effectively in such a way as to satisfy it, to get money out of people.

And they're accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray

following the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. But he was rebuked for his iniquity.

A dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. Now the story of Balaam is the story of a man who had a spiritual gift and used it to make money even in compromising ways. God told him not to use his gift to curse Israel but there was a king who wanted to pay him to curse Israel.

And Balaam, wishing to be paid, was willing to disobey God and use his gift to go out and curse Israel. He didn't succeed because God overrode him. And every time he sought to curse Israel, God put him into a trance and made him speak out blessings to Israel.

But it was in his heart to curse Israel for money. And in fact, when he found himself unable to verbally curse Israel, he said to his employer, Listen, I can't do this. God won't let me do it.

But you can do this. Send your young, beautiful women into the camp of Israel. Seduce the men and have them bring them in over to worship our gods, Baal Peor.

And then their God will curse them. God won't curse them right now but if you lead them into idolatry and fornication, their God will curse them. Sure enough, that happened.

And there was a great plague that God sent on them. So Balaam got his pay. He sought the wages of unrighteousness.

These are people like that. They have maybe some spiritual eloquence. Maybe they have some ability to sway people.

But they're using it to get rich and to satisfy their lusts. And it says, Such people are no better than Balaam. If you want to know how low Balaam is, God used a donkey to rebuke him.

The only time in history when a donkey ever spoke that we know of and that God used it to rebuke him, which Peter mentions no doubt in order to say, this is how low a man can get. But even a donkey can tell him he's wrong. Even a donkey is smarter than he is, can correct him.

And that's how these people are. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever. The clouds carried by the tempest, they don't have any roots.

They're tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. As Paul said, immature people are. In Ephesians 4 he said, We should be no longer children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

These people are tossed by the winds, every which way. They are wells without water. A

well is where you go to get water.

A well is where you go when you're thirsty and you hope to find water. A well is a promise of water. You see a well, you say, Oh good, now I can get a drink.

And when there's no water in the well, it's a great disappointment. They're a great disappointment. They promise things.

They promise spiritual things, but can't deliver. And of course we see that mentioned in verse 19. They promise liberty.

Everyone's craving liberty like a thirsty person craves water, but these people are wells that don't have any water in them. They make a promise, but they don't deliver on the promise. Well, we're out of time, and we're going to take the rest of this chapter and probably move into chapter 3 in our next session.

So we've mostly found a full description of the false teachers, and we see that there's not much focus on what they're teaching. It's more their attitude and their lifestyle. They're dominated by covetousness, their love for money, by lust and adultery that they're involved in.

These are the two things that drive many people in their lives, unbelievers. And frankly, many ministers have been less driven by both of these, golden gals, you know, women and money. Almost all charlatans who have ever been exposed in the ministry have been caught not so much that they were reading the wrong Bible or something like that, but they were asleep with the wrong women or gathering money that was not supposed to be theirs.

And that is really pretty much almost a cliché in some circles. A lot of traveling ministers, especially, are guilty of this because they don't have much accountability on the road. People who have tent revivals sometimes fell into this.

Marjo is a good example. Marjo Gortner, who made a movie about his own misbehavior after he stopped being a traveling preacher. It's these two things.

Peter was smart. He knew these are the things that you're going to find in the false teachers, exploiting people for money and for sex, very largely. Paul is a good example of the opposite.

He was chaste, he was single, he was celibate, and he didn't take any money from people. And these are the marks of a person who's a genuine minister as opposed to a false one. It's interesting because there is virtually nothing said about what they teach, except that they teach the same lifestyle that they're living.

That's what they're teaching that's wrong. All right, we'll stop there and come back to

finish up this chapter next time.