

“ARE FALSE TEACHER ANIMALS?”

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Scripture Texts: II Peter 2.10-16

Introduction.

I admit to succumbing to the temptation to being relevant and up to date, using a sermon title taken from the political controversy of the past few weeks when President Trump referred to the wicked actions of some evil people as animal like, he called them animals.

I couldn't help but notice Peter's use of similar strong language for false teachers is verse 12.

“But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant.”

Peter uses very strong language and makes a bunch of very serious accusations. In fact, it almost seems like Peter goes on a rant, using inflammatory words. Why did Peter write this to his church and why did God write it for us? What is Peter's intention and what is God's intention?

Remember the context. Go back to chapter one. Peter is promoting pursuing godliness. In the first chapter he gave those eight qualities that build faith and godliness.

The false teachers are saying godliness doesn't matter, it is way over rated. They are denying Jesus and his coming again, and people who go off the rails on doctrine soon go off the rails on behavior.

Peter is standing up to a terrible tide of ungodliness. His inflammatory speech is necessary to serve as a warning. Just as Jesus called out the religious leaders, the senior pastors and elders, calling them vipers and wolves in sheep's clothing.

He paints a very ugly picture of false teachers. He makes them ugly because what they teach and do is ugly. This is necessary because false teachers don't usually look bad, they don't look like Darth Vader or the Joker.

Peter has already summed up the character of false teachers as arrogant, despising authority; sensual, engaging in defiling passions; and greedy. False teachers have false mouths, false eyes and false hearts. After his summary he now gets more specific, he goes into great detail, all for the sake of warning because there is great danger to our souls here. This is an expression of love and pastoral care.

False mouths, arrogance, 10-13.

First, he exposes their reviling mouths. They go so far as to blaspheme the glorious ones. Our tendency is to think they are speaking against God's holy angels, but that's not the case. It's actually the opposite, they are speaking with arrogant audacity against the fallen angels.

We know this because of Jude. Jude helps us understand II Peter.

Jude 1:8-10 ... these people ... defile the flesh, reject authority, and *blaspheme the glorious ones*. 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." 10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

In other words, angels are careful, they know their place, they leave judgment to God. But these fools rush in and presumptuously take God's prerogative.

Michael would not blaspheme the glorious ones (bad angels). The good angels saw what the bad angels were doing but they left it in God's hands.

The point isn't what the angels were doing so much, but rather how arrogant and presumptuous these teachers are. Pride is a mark of bad character. They lack humility.

Arrogance is most often a result of ignorance. They refuse to acknowledge the truth about God or themselves. If I boast about anything, I have lost sight of who God is and who I really am.

Peter says something apparently politically incorrect today. He compares them to animals. By that he means they are acting like animals who have no souls, who have no moral sense and act on instinct. They follow their flesh and show no spiritual awareness. They are like brutes.

They are flippant. They don't take seriously sin and darkness and the devil. They have no fear of God or holy things or spiritual things.

Those who say, "The devil made me do it" are flippant about sin and spiritual things.

Those who say they are going to hell if they don't change their ways are being flippant.

If I say I would never do this or that sin, I am being flippant, not taking sin seriously.

To be causal about such matters shows we are fools who don't see the real spiritual dangers.

False eyes, sensuality, 13-14.

Next, Peter exposes or reveals their reveling under the word sensuality or false eyes.

Sensuality is a word that refers to gratifying the flesh or the senses, indulging the appetites.

Peter piles up phrases to show what they are like.

First, they do their reveling in broad daylight. The shame is gone, their consciences are seared.

The naked bicycle ride in Bellingham on Friday is just a small example. Our culture is pushing the limits, becoming more brazen and bold and blatant. There is no more fear of God, no sense of modesty or propriety, no sense of decency. We are losing our sense of shame and are openly celebrating sin. Gay Pride Parades are just one example. New Orleans, Key West, Las Vegas.

Another word for this is hedonism, or self-indulgent, pleasure seeking.

Second, blots and blemishes.

This ugliness contrasts to spotless and blameless.

II Peter 3:14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these [new heaven and new earth], be diligent to be found by him *without spot or blemish*.

Third, reveling in pleasure, in sinful delights. Coming from the nightclub to communion without any thought. They do vile things and they come into your fellowship like it doesn't matter, no shame.

This is why church discipline is so important. Not taking sin lightly.

Fourth, eyes full of adultery, constantly sinning, eyes always looking for ways to sin. Not jealous for God but jealous for sin.

Eyes full of adultery is as simple a definition of pornography as you will find. It like all sin has an insatiable appetite. And people who give themselves over to sin, encourage others to.

These pleasures are all false pleasures, Satan shows the worm, but never the hook.

Fifth, they seduce the unstable, making prey of those not firmly established in the truth.

False teachers trade in ideas, new ideas, novel ideas, things that tickle the ears, say what we like to hear. Especially things what make us feel good, better about ourselves.

It is an old illustration but it serves the point well. When they are training the RCMP on how to spot counterfeit money, they don't show them counterfeits, they show them the real thing and make them learn it well. Then they can see the fraud.

Are you devoted to sound doctrine (I Timothy 4:6-8) so you can spot false doctrine? Are we steady, stable? Are we built on solid rock? Do we have keel? Or are you easily persuaded, are you taken by the last thing you heard or read?

False hearts, greed, 14-16.

Finally, Peter exposed their greed and the way they have revolted from the right way.

Greed can be for lots of things besides money. Greed is a desire for more, more of whatever their sinful desire is, things, power, popularity, food.

Peter calls them full of greed, experts in greed, they practice it. It is rooted in their hearts.

They forsake what is right and have gone after what is wrong. Like Balaam, that prophet in the OT the king of the Moabites paid to curse the Israelites. Balaam said OK, glad to. Balaam was blocked from doing so, but he tried three times.

His donkey had more spiritual sense than he did. False teachers are spiritual fools, not restrained from going wrong way, showing willful ignorance, and willful blindness.

I realize prosperity preachers and health and wealth teachers are the low hanging fruit of false preachers and teachers. Their greed is easy to point out and it was in the news again this week.

The health and wealth televangelist preacher from New Orleans Jesse Duplantis shamelessly asked people to help him buy a new \$54 million private jet.

“If the Lord Jesus Christ was physically on the earth today, he wouldn’t be riding a donkey, He’d be in an airplane flying all over the world.”

Three years ago another prosperity preacher, megachurch pastor Creflo Dollar, asked people to help him buy a \$65 million private jet.

Do you have eyes to see what is false and ugly about this? According to a 2006 Time poll 17% of American Christians identify with this false movement, while 31% believe that “if you give your money to God, God will bless you with more money.”

This is why your shepherds should live among you, why you should only follow and support those you know. You need to be able to see their lives, see the fruit. There must be accountability and accountability takes place best locally.

Implications and applications.

Solomon once lamented, “There is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9) and perhaps nowhere is that more true than when it comes to talking about false prophets and false teachers. There have always been them and there will always be them until Christ returns.

We should never be surprised when they appear and we must always be vigilant and discerning, anticipating their appearance. There will always be those who depart from the faith, who twist the truth. Peter started with chapter saying, “there will be false teachers among you.”

But not only are false teachers nothing new under the sun, so also what they teach is nothing new under the sun. In Peter’s day it was money, sex, and power, and guess what, it still is in our day.

False teaching never leads to true living. False teaching always begets false living. Bad trees produce bad fruit. It is a principle hardwired into the spiritual universe.

Test the spirits, weigh prophecy, examine what is said against Scripture, watch their lives, check out their fruit. Does their doctrine line up with Scripture? Is there ethical compromise?

Three takeaways from our passage. Can we see what is ugly in our own hearts?

First, watch how people talk about spiritual beings like angels. Is there Biblical balance or is there a preoccupation with either good angels or evil angels? Is there a denial of them or too strong an interest in them at the neglect of the Trinity?

Is someone dabbling in astrology, horoscopes, Ouija boards, spiritualists, and other occultic powers and influences, like Masons and masonic groups, certain role-playing activities and games and videos.

Jesus disarmed the principalities and powers and authorities on the cross, we should have no part in rearming them or giving them influence in our lives. Resist the devil and make him flee.

Is there pride and boasting in our own hearts? Do we think we are better than or above others?

Second, watch how people interact with our sensual culture, the movies we watch, the shows on TV, the series we watch on cable or Netflix. We live in a culture that is bowing down to the idols of sinful passions and pleasures, that is awash in sexual immorality.

Our culture is pursuing more and more of everything that is evil, wicked, an abomination to God. Our world has an insatiable appetite for sin, “some is good, more is better and too much is just right.”

The law of diminishing returns rules the day, rules the entertainment world. What was scandalous ten years ago is boring today. We have to keep pushing the edges, the boundaries. Sinful pleasures and passions are a goal that can never be reached, it always wants more.

Just look at the size of TVs. The first dozen years of our marriage we had a 12 inch black and white. It was deeper than it was wide. Now we have a 39 inch and we are behind the times.

I’m not prepared to say it is a sin to have a 100 inch TV, but it is a picture or illustration of how sin works, more is not enough, we are always reaching for too much.

The most common false Gospel today in our evangelical and Reformed world is all the subtle compromises being made to make the Gospel more palatable to a postmodern culture. Compromising on what God’s Word says about sexual immorality and marriage.

Third, watch how people talk about money and the desire for more of the comforts, pleasures and security we get from money.

I have to constantly tame this beast in my own heart. By the world’s standards, I have a lot of money, but it’s never enough, and will it last long enough. I have to fight constantly with the shield of faith that God will provide, He can watch the bottom line way better than I can.

We all have to keep money in its place. As someone said, money in the wallet or purse is good, money in the heart is bad. And one way you know it is in your heart is when you are anxious about it. Go back and read what Jesus said in Matthew 6.

May we be wise, vigilant, discerning of the evil in our own hearts as well as in the world.

Let me close with the wisdom of a great old English pastor, **Bishop J.C. Ryle** (1816-1900) whose warnings are as true today as when spoken over a hundred years ago.

“You live in a world where your soul is in constant danger. Enemies are round you on every side. Your own heart is deceitful. Bad examples are numerous. Satan is always laboring to lead you astray. Above all false doctrine and false teachers of every kind abound. This is your great danger.

To be safe you must be well armed. You must provide yourself with the weapons which God has given you for your help. You must store your mind with Holy Scripture. This is to be well armed.

Arm yourself with a thorough knowledge of the written word of God. Read your Bible regularly. Become familiar with your Bible. . . . Neglect your Bible and nothing that I know of can prevent you from error if a plausible advocate of false teaching shall happen to meet you. Make it a rule to believe nothing except it can be proved from Scripture. The Bible alone is infallible. . . . Do you really use your Bible as much as you ought?

If you neglect your Bible...

... you are the man that is unlikely to become established in the truth. I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questions about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, etc. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. He can quote Scripture readily enough when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons to fight a good fight with him. . . . Your sword is held loosely in your hand.

If so, you are the man that is likely to make mistakes in life. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have problems in your marriage, problems with your children, problems about the conduct of your family and about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks, shoals and sandbanks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with lighthouses or charts.

You are in need of ballast (truth); no wonder if you are tossed to and fro like a cork on the waves.

... Take the advice I offer you today. Do not merely read your Bible a little—but read it a great deal. . . . Remember your many enemies. Be armed! God has mercifully given us a book which is "able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15)”

(<http://www.biblebb.com/files/ryle/PRACT5.HTM>; see also: J. I. Packer, *God's Words*, pp. 40-41).