

# Religious Lost Preachers

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I would like to invite you to look with in 2 Peter chapter two. Lord willing we will finish up our study in this very solemn chapter given to the title concerning false prophets and teachers and preachers.

It must have been quite an urgent matter that the Lord laid on Peter's heart to write an entire chapter here concerning the dangers. And this is written to those who were the Lord's, those who, even as the first epistle of Peter addresses, whom God had foreknown and by the Spirit brought to Christ and in whom, in Christ, grace and peace were multiplied through the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the question is: If it was such a needy subject then and God has caused it to be preserved here in his Word, is it not a needy matter for us as well? Let's never get lethargic. Let's never get presumptuous in what we profess or know and believe. And to realize that we have in our hearts that depravity and that corruption that is mentioned in these false preachers. And if it were not for God's grace, we would still be following after him. We would not know the truth.

And so I have entitled this particular study, "Religious, but lost." That is really what we see here. But I will begin in verse 10 where it speaks of those that:

...walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are

carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.<sup>1</sup>

Very descriptive language that we find here. So as we come back to these verses what is the description we find in Scripture concerning these religious lost preachers? And some might read this and think how uncharitable to speak of men in such strong language. Yet I would remind us that this is the Word of God. These are the words of the Spirit of God. And such is the disdain of God concerning any who would take the name of Christ on their lips even as we read concerning Balaam when he spoke to Balak even with wrong intent, but he used the name of the Lord, capital L O R D, Jehovah. For some to do that and yet not to know him in truth, there is no greater denunciation that can be made than what we find right here.

And so let's look at some of these characteristics. The first is in verses 11 and 12, these men's imposing their authority as preachers rather than declare the glory and authority of Christ. That is their characteristic, self glory. In fact, every one of these that we are going to look at you could put self in front of, self glory. That is why they hold the positions they do. You notice where it says presumptuous are they, self willed. They are afraid to speak evil of dignities. You will hear them denouncing Satan as if they have some power over Satan. They will denounce governments. Many of them use the pulpit to denounce government as if they speak for God. And all of this, again, comes from, as it says there, self will. I will. They presume that because they are preachers and because they command an audience and some do. When you consider the numbers of people that watch them on TV or listen to them on the radio that attend their places of worship. They build up great empires for themselves and they are proud of it. And, you know, they will use that authority to their advantage. And the contrast in verse 11, when you consider who we are as men, even when it speaks of Christ there in the Psalms that he was made a little lower than the angels, there is something about him becoming a man.

You know, here it speaks of angels that are have greater power and might. You know, Christ said if he so desired he could have called 10,000 angels to come and deliver him as a man. God has given angels charge over his elect to keep them lest they should dash their foot against a stone. These are powerful beings. And yet these men set themselves

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 2:11-22.

up. And that is really what the heart will do, set itself up against God. Even the angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these do.

So you can see how they are described here. Verse 12 really could be summed up as what it is to be unconverted.

“But these, as natural brute beasts...”<sup>2</sup>

It doesn't just say natural beasts, but brute beasts. Think of the most vicious beast that exists. Whatever the situation is, if you were one on one with a hyena that would be a brute beast, or a wild boar, a brute beast, an elephant or a lion, a bear. These are all brute beasts. It is in their nature to devour. It is in their nature to destroy. And this is how these are described here. They are made as or they reveal themselves as brute beasts, but notice in verse 12.

“...made to be taken and destroyed.”<sup>3</sup>

There is a lot of people out there that think because a person calls himself a preacher and has some authority over a congregation that they have given themselves to somehow their lords. Here it says they are made to be taken and destroyed. No matter what their nature is, they are made to be taken and destroyed. Their day is coming when the Lord will ultimately do away with them. But they speak of things that they understand not.

I can identify with that. There was a day when I was taught to open this book and read it and preach it and I was preaching what I had been taught. I spoke things that I did not understand and had the Lord not purposed me to be his and Christ redeemed me, I would be among this number. And if the Lord doesn't show his grace, there are many that he causes to be raised up just like he did pharaoh. And this is what is hard for people to understand as they drive by and see these huge monuments and churches, a church building so-called. I had one that I go buy every time I go to the office and I look at the architecture and I look at the amount of money that was poured into that building and the people that are drawn to it, attracted to it. Huge. Sits up on a hill. They picked one of the best spots that there is.

But unless God has chosen some there and Christ has redeemed them, and if he has, he will bring them out in his time. These false preachers won't be able to hold those that are the Lord's. He is going to sovereignly move them in his time. But unless he does, they will all perish with all the wonder of their religious monuments.

And so ... but they love it. They love to have it so. There is a sense of power that men give themselves as preachers. Look at the number of politicians that run that have the name reverend in front of them, their name. It is a sense of power. They expect people to listen to them and to follow them and to obey them because of their self given titles.

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter 2:12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

But over in 1 Peter five in verses one and two, we have the contrast of those that are truly the Lords, those servants of his that he raises up. You know, that is a good title for one who is the Lord's, who preaches, his servants. They are bond slaves. They have been made to be bond slaves, bond servants of the Lord. And so Peter writes this.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."<sup>4</sup>

You see with what humility he speaks. He doesn't put himself above the people or above the others simply because he had walked with the Lord. Nowhere do we find any of these apostles calling themselves reverend or even accepting such a title. He speaks of being a witness of the sufferings of Christ. He has seen Christ crucified is what that means. The Lord, not just physically, but the Lord had opened his eyes to see Christ and him crucified and be partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, be partaker of Christ. Christ is the glory that shall be revealed. Right now the world doesn't know him. They talk about him, but they don't know the Christ. But he says here:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you."<sup>5</sup>

So, again, not putting the elder among or above the flock. The flock which is among you.

"...taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint."<sup>6</sup>

This isn't something that is done by force.

"... but willingly; not for filthy lucre,"<sup>7</sup>

Not for shameful gain is what that means.

"...but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."<sup>8</sup>

What a contrast we see between those who are the Lord's and those who are self willed religious lost preachers.

Secondly, coming back here to 2 Peter two, the second characteristic of these is that they desire ease and comfort. They prefer that to the isolation and opposition that preaching the gospel brings.

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:1.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 5:2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 5:2-3.

Now, when we are speaking or the Scriptures are speaking here of these false preachers it should be noted that these were men who were among the sheep. A lot of times you are thinking in terms of them being out there. But these are among the sheep. And they deceive. They are deceived and they deceive others.

You say, "Well, how are they recognized?"

Well, look at verses 13 and 14.

"[They] receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time."<sup>9</sup>

In other words, they have got a lot of time on their hands to live for themselves and means.

"Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you."<sup>10</sup>

So we have to beware that there are those whose desire is nothing but having a life of ease. And I will tell you. There is a certain ease in among preachers who get into the ministry, so-called, just to make a living. They like to climb the ladder. In fact, you know, we have seen it more than anything in so called mission service.

You know, they play the victim. They go around to raise their support and make people think that they are going out to serve the Lord. And it is a way of living to go around and constantly raise more money and put it away. They desire... it says there they sport themselves. What do you do in sports? It is entertainment. It is a time of entertainment and they are interested only in that luxurious living, that comfortable place. But such is not the case with those that are the Lord's.

There is a certain weightiness and a burden of standing up here and preaching Christ and endeavoring to point sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ that is not in those that preach, but don't know the Lord or that are not the Lord's.

There are some that make a pretty good living being itinerant preachers, going around and living off of love offerings. They, you know, they fare very well and they enjoy it because they are not accountable to anybody. You know, they call them evangelists. Go around and preach and get others to do the work for you and get them to come out and hear you and receive the praise and the applause. But here, again, the Scriptures put the finger right on what is the motive.

It says in verse 14:

"Having eyes full of adultery."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 2 Peter 2:13.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

And, again, that has to do with not having eyes to Christ, not having eyes to him crucified, but being idolaters by nature.

“...and that cannot cease from sin.”<sup>12</sup>

You know, the more they preach the more they sin. The more they draw people away, because they are not Christ’s and not known of him.

And notice who they beguile, unstable souls. You can move and manipulate and, you know, beguile unstable souls. Look at the number of people with emotional and psychological problems that preachers will draw in and schmooze and comfort. You know, make them feel better about themselves and cause them to look to themselves rather than to Christ. All of these, they prey on people that are themselves deceived. And it says here:

“...n heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children.”<sup>13</sup>

I don’t know about you, but when I go by book shelves and even places like Sam’s and you see some of these preachers that have set themselves up to be pretty much like coaches. They are there to preach positive thinking and make people feel better about themselves rather than cause them to consider that before a holy God they are sinners, like one that is well known and popular not too far from here. When someone asked him one time why he never preached about what it is to be lost or to be a sinner he said, “Why would I do that?” You know, our purpose in coming together is to be positive. We want to be positive in what we do.

Well, these guys are deceivers. And they beguile unstable souls. Cursed children is how it is described there. And that is where we come down to what we read just not too long ago in Numbers chapter 22, the example of Balaam.

It says:

“Which have forsaken the right way.”<sup>14</sup>

You know, when you stop and consider Balaam there in Numbers 22. How was it that he even used the name of the Lord? Well, he must have known something of it. He must have heard something of him, something of the truth. And yet at a given moment, turned away. I find that to be very tell tale down through this portion of Scripture. We are not talking about people who are ignorant of the truth. They have heard it at one point. And yet they purpose to go another way, forsaking the right way.

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Peter 2:14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Peter 2:15.

Is it possible that somebody for a season, for a while give credence to the right way and yet ultimately turn away? It must be, because that is what Peter speaks of here in verse 20, at least by profession.

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

So they gave at least acquiescence to the Scriptures and to the truth and yet:

“...they are again entangled therein.”<sup>16</sup>

In the pollutions of the world.

There it is talking about the pollutions of the religious world, of works being mixed with grace, a little leaven leavening the whole lump. They are, again entangled therein and what? Overcome and the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. Why is that? Well, they become more hardened.

I will tell you that in my experience I have never found people that are more hardened against the gospel of free grace in the Lord Jesus Christ than those that for a while sat under it or at least heard of it and then left. There is no ... it seems like it is a turning point that they don't even realize, but they become indifferent. They become hardened, gospel hardened. In their minds they say, “I have already heard that.” It makes no difference to me. And they become hardened.

Peter relates it there in verse 22 to a dog returning to his own vomit again. That is a pretty disgusting image, but that is how it is described. And so that is why we need warn people not to turn away, not to make up their mind to refuse to hear the message of God's free grace in Christ unmixed with men's will, unmixed with men's works, unmixed with men's ways. But giving all the glory to Christ alone. It is a very solemn and important message that we have. And Balaam is given as an example. You know, what was it that caused Balaam ultimately to keep going even though the Lord had purposed to stop him? Well, it wasn't the promise of great reward? It wasn't the promise of honor as we read in Numbers 22. And the thing that I find interesting if you go back there to Numbers 22—when we were reading it, I wanted to read through and not stop—but it is even though Balaam acknowledged that he was wrong, where he said in verse 34 of Numbers 22, he said unto the angel of the Lord.

“I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.”<sup>17</sup>

I will turn and go back.

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<sup>15</sup> 2 Peter 2:20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Numbers 22:34.

“And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men.”<sup>18</sup>

See, this is where some will find some contradiction. They will say, “Well, the Lord said to go with him.” And yet when he went he chastened him for going. What the Lord is doing is showing Balaam what his true nature is. If he had truly been following the Lord he would have said, “I am going to go back. I am not going to continue to walk with these men.”

But look at the end over verse 35.

“So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.”<sup>19</sup>

Why did he go with them? Because his heart was still with him. He was still hoping for that reward. You know, it reminds me of some who, you know, on the one hand they give lip service to the message of grace. They give lip service to Christ and him crucified. On the one hand they will profess to believe it and say amen, that is the truth. And yet they continue to walk with me that deny him. They continue to associate with preachers and men that deny. They can’t give it up. And that is what I believe Peter is talking about here when he says, “They cannot cease from sin,” in verse 14.

“Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.”<sup>20</sup>

There is too much at stake for them to give it up and to identify with a small number and a very exclusive message. And it is because of their covetousness and that is why they forsake the right way, the way of truth, the gospel of truth for what are called rewards of unrighteousness. Basically, you know, self glory or self gain are the two reasons why people continue the way they do.

But there is a third characteristic coming back here to 2 Peter chapter two and verse 17. Here is the real problem. They are unconverted. They have a form of godliness that impresses men, but no power thereof, godliness in the sense of fearing God. Here they are described as wells without water. You know, they dig deep and yet there is no water in those wells. In the end they prove to be empty and dry. Why? Because Christ is the well of living water and to drink of him is never to thirst again, but these do not have Christ. In fact, you will see in verse 17 it again describes them as clouds that are carried with the wind, large, you know. We have seen this before, dark clouds over head. You expect some rain on a parched land, but then you discover that the clouds are nothing but empty and only driven by a dry wind. These men excite in people and their hearers some hope and expectations, but only to disappoint, because it cannot bring peace. And that is why you see people just bouncing from one place to another, because after a while you hear them talking about it. They got tired of the preacher. They realized afterwards there was

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<sup>18</sup> Numbers 22:35.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> 2 Peter 2:14.



nothing to it. So they move on trying to find someone else. But they go from the frying pan into the fire.

You know, when I read these things, I am thankful for the grace and mercy of God. I am thankful that he did not leave me alone. And I am thankful that he gave me the grace and continues to give me the grace to walk away to men and associations whenever, in the end, it just proves... it is proven that they are nothing but wells without water or clouds that are carried about that have no water to water.

Verses 18 and 19, again, these are great orators. You can go out on SermonAudio. You can go out on the internet and Google and listen to a lot of preachers that are great orators. They bestow flattering words and titles. I came across one the other day that I had listened to years ago. We used to listen to him and think was a great preacher. And I listened to about 20 minutes of this man now that the Lord has taught me the gospel and I couldn't finish. It was a joke. It was somebody that I had ... that had always been elevated in our minds and eyes to be a great speaker. He was invited everywhere, well known. And that is what verse 18 speaks of.

“For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh.”<sup>21</sup>

In their style and their manner.

“...through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.”<sup>22</sup>

What they do is attract people who live in error. Error attracts error. And that is why they have such followings as they do.

“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.”<sup>23</sup>

In other words, again, unconverted. They prey upon the ignorant and the untaught. And they have outwardly, perhaps, reformed lives, but inwardly they are just .... they are whited sepulchres is the way Christ speaks of them. They go about to establish a righteousness before God but cannot and will not preach the one righteousness that God has ever accepted. And that is the righteousness of his Son that he came to work out. They attract people who are themselves in great bondage, because they are in bondage. Like attracts like. Having this sort of dealings right now with a particular preacher that, you know, he is back and forth. He will contact me every once in a while and when he is with me we will talk about the things that rejoice my heart and I will think that, you know, the Lord has truly taught him. And yet given some time I will hear about some of the associations that he has and where he is going and who he is identifying with and I am in my mind trying to put two and two together. How can he say one thing when he is

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Peter 2:18.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Peter 2:19.

with and yet identify with these others who are clearly opposed to the message of Christ and him crucified?

But that is what it is to be double minded. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways and these preachers are just like the people that follow them. They return again unto the vomit and become entangled therein, verse 20.

The grace of God doesn't entangle. It frees. To know and understand that when Christ laid down his life and paid that debt, my sin was put away forever. And that God in seeing the death of his Son was satisfied and that righteousness imputed to the account of everyone that he had given to his Son. That is a freeing message. That is one that gives me peace knowing myself to be a sinner and eyes to behold Christ and to see him. But there are so many that will give lip service to it and yet there is leaven. There is conditional preaching. They will tell you something you need to do to continue to keep your standing before a holy God.

It says there in verse 21 a truth.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.”<sup>24</sup>

This is talking about people that have thought about it, heard it, thought about it, but then gone another way.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.”<sup>25</sup>

Why? Well, not being the Lord's and being cast into utter darkness in judgment of God, men's minds will not stop functioning. You know, where the worm dieth not. Those who are separated from God and cast into the hell, they will never stop existing and the very point of their grievance that caused them to walk away in this life will continue to be a point of disagreement in their minds and hearts throughout eternity. They will not bow. And there is nothing they can do about it because the sovereign God has put them exactly where they deserve to be, separated from this very God that they despise and this Christ that they despise by putting their works up with his or adding to in any way, making conditional any part of his work upon something they do. It is a serious matter.

So, you know, let's be in prayer. You know, I pray for everybody that comes to hear me, especially with this truth in mind.

“For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness.”<sup>26</sup>

And yet I am accountable to preach it. And unless the Lord gives them repentance to bow, they are going to go their way, some angry and mad, upset. But ultimately if the Lord doesn't deliver them, that is how they will die and they will continue throughout

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<sup>24</sup> 2 Peter 2:21.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

eternity and the Scriptures says weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is not in repentance, but it is in anger, anger over this very God who is sovereign and does his will and if he gives us grace to remove us from a false refuge and truly to look to Christ alone, then we bless his name.

All right. Let's take our hymnbooks and sing number 309.