

Lewis Grizzard was an American writer and a real funny guy with a strong Southern slant on life, and in his book, "The Last Bus to Albuquerque" he tells a story that prompts a question we need to ask in the church. Here's the story.

"For weeks, I had been seeing a television commercial for this certain chain of restaurants. The commercial claimed the restaurant served home cooking – the kind mom used to do. Now, I grew up at a fried chicken, pork chops, pot roast and fresh vegetable table, with corn bread or Mama's homemade biscuits on the side. I must have this sort of food at least once a week or be struck by the dreaded bland-food poisoning. So, I gave this chain a try. I walked into one of its restaurants and looked over the menu. There was no fried chicken or pork chops, but there was country-fried steak and pot roast. I decided to go for the pot roast. "Can I get mashed potatoes and gravy with the pot roast?" I asked the waitress. "Sure," she answered.

The pot roast was so-so. The gravy was suspect. One bite of the mashed potatoes, and I knew. I called the waitress back over. "I would take it as a personal favor if you would be perfectly honest with me," I said. "These mashed potatoes came out of a box, didn't they?" The waitress dropped her eyes for a brief second. Then she looked up and said apologetically, "Yes, they did."

I hate mashed potatoes that come out of a box. When God created the mashed potato, I am certain the Bible points out somewhere, he had no intention of anybody goofing around and coming up with mashed potatoes from a box. He meant for real potatoes to be used. You peel them, you cut them into little pieces and put them in a pot of boiling water. You put in some salt and pepper, and then you add some butter and maybe even a little sour cream, and then you beat them and stir them and you've got biblically correct mashed potatoes.

So, when I paid my bill, I had a word with the assistant manager, but he took my money anyway. "May the Lord forgive you – you potato ruiner," I said on my way out.

Mashed potatoes from a box. That's what's wrong with this country. That and canned biscuits, soybean anything, frozen French fries, fake flowers, and tanning salons. "What's real anymore?"

In a roundabout way, Peter is asking and answering that question as it pertains to the church. "What's real anymore?" because the false teachers in his day were not God's real messengers and they were not teaching the real gospel. They didn't

speak for God as they claimed, instead they did everything they could to confuse believers by teaching heresies which they presented alongside the truth to give the false impression their teaching was inspired by God. These false teachers – like mashed potatoes from a box, were cheap imitations of the real messengers of God, and they were dangerous – preying upon those who were not careful and cautious. So, Peter challenged the churches, and us as well, to know exactly who and what is real based on the truth found in God’s Word.

Now, last week we began 2 Peter Chapter 2, where Peter introduced us to these false teachers, and this morning we are going to continue to look at them, so, if you have your Bible, turn to **2 Peter 2** and we will begin with **verses 12-14**.

¹² But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, ¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, ¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

Okay, let’s stop here. There’s a lot in this passage where it seems that Peter is focused more on the sinful behaviors of these false teachers rather than on their doctrines, we considered last week. Wrong doctrine leads to wrong living, and it’s their wrong living that Peter now wants to expose for us.

Peter begins by telling us that these false teachers operate from **instinct** instead of reason. Like **animals**, they no longer see the difference between right and wrong, instead they are controlled by their sinful impulses, and they do what comes natural to them. We are told they make a lot of noise about things they know nothing about – things of a supernatural nature – deceiving others, and ironically, even deceiving themselves. They had twisted and distorted the truth so much to make it say what they wanted it to say – they had actually come to believe it themselves. They are caught in their own web of lies, leading to their corruption and their eternal **destruction**.

Peter says they **revel in the daytime**, and that needs a little explaining. The early church had times of food and fellowship much as we do in our church, and these gatherings were called “*love feasts*.” **Jude**, whose letter is very similar to 2 Peter Chapter 2, mentions these love feasts that were enjoyed in connection with the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It was a time when the poorer believers could

enjoy a decent meal because of the generosity of the Christians who were better off. It was supposed to be a time of true fellowship; however, the false teachers used these love feasts, and other gatherings as well, as opportunities to impress people and to flaunt their wealth. They used this time to seek out their prey, to openly flirt with women, to recruit people to support them and their cause, and they turned these gatherings into the kind of parties that would typically only occur at night, in the cover of darkness. In other words, they had no shame and didn't even hide their sin, which seems to suggest they taught that the grace of God was a license to do whatever they wanted to do.

In **verse 14**, if there was any thought that these false teachers might just be misguided and backslidden Christians, I think Peter gives us a clue they were not. Peter tells us these false teachers were **habitual sinners** – their way of life was characterized by sin, their eyes were constantly looking for sin – viewing every woman as an object with whom they might satisfy their sexual desires, and unfortunately, they succeeded in **enticing** some. That word “enticing” paints a picture of these false teachers moving amongst the church, like fishermen around a lake, casting one lure after another, trying to entice a fish to bite. And although the lures are fake – their bait is so enticing that hungry fish will still bite and get hooked. So, these false teachers are fishing and they are really good at it, and here's why.

Peter says these false teachers are **trained in greed** like an athlete trains for a sport. They have mastered their craft – they've honed their skills in the art of persuasion and they've figured out who to fish for – the **unstable**, the weak in faith, the troubled, the struggling, the lonely, and the unwary – hooking them, all for the purpose of satisfying their own personal greed – to get more – more power, more prestige, more possessions, and more pleasure.

Then Peter gives us an example of their sinful behavior using an Old Testament character as a reference. Look at **verses 15-16**.

¹⁵ forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶ but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.

Balaam, like the false teachers in Peter's day, is an example of a person who leads people astray for his own personal gain and satisfaction, and his story is found in **Numbers Chapter 22-24**, but I will give you the highlights of it.

Balaam was a Gentile diviner – we might say “*a prophet for profit,*” who was known in the area for giving curses and blessings. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt and defeated the Amorites – the king of the Moabites who is Balak, heard about what had happened, and he was afraid of the Israelites, so he tried to hire Balaam to curse the Israelites and bring victory to the Moabites.

So, Balaam prays to God about whether or not he should curse the Israelites as the king requested, and God said *don't even think about it for they are blessed.* God forbade Balaam from cursing the Israelites or even going with the men to Moab. Balaam got his answer from God, he knew the truth, it was clear, and the matter should have been closed at that point – but the Moabite king would not give up, and he offered Balaam more money and greater honor, which prompted Balaam to go pray about it again. Balaam had already been given his answer by God, he knew God's will in the matter, but Balaam was motivated by greed and God knew it, so God told Balaam, ***“If the men have come to call you, rise up and go with them; but only the word which I speak to you shall you do.”***

Well, Balaam jumped at the chance because he was greedy, and on his way to Moab, the donkey he was riding saw an angel blocking their path and turned off the road into a field. Balaam struck his donkey to return her to the road. Then, in on a narrow path between two walls, the donkey once again saw the angel. This time the donkey pushed against the wall and crushed Balaam's foot, so he struck her again. Finally, the angel blocked the way where it was really narrow, so the donkey simply laid down on the road, which angered Balaam even more. As he struck his donkey, the LORD opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, ***“What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?”***

Balaam did not seem phased by the fact that his donkey was speaking, instead he responded angrily that she had made a fool of him and he wished he could kill her. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand; and Balaam hit the ground in fear.

Then the angel explained that the donkey had seen him, and if she had not stopped, the angel would have killed Balaam and let the donkey live. Balaam immediately recognized his sin and offered to turn back, but the angel said, ***“Go with the men, but speak only the word that I tell you.”***

Well, with this new insight, Balaam arrived in Moab and instead of cursing the Israelites as the Moabite king requested – Balaam blessed them three times. Of course, this angered the king; however, the king did not leave empty-handed.

Balaam gave him something he liked – advice in how to defeat the Israelites, and he essentially told the king, “*If you can’t beat them – join them.*” Take some of your pretty pagan women and have them parade before the men of Israel, enticing them, and seducing them into sexual immorality and intermarriage. And since these women were worshipers of false gods and pagan idols, they will also introduce false worship and pagan practices into the tribes of Israel. Unfortunately, this plan worked all too well and God’s people were enticed to sin and they became corrupted.

Like Balaam, the false teachers in Peter’s day already knew the truth, but they made an intentional choice to disregard it, and just like Balaam, the false teachers were motivated by greed, and they enticed and corrupted others through sensuality.

Then Peter says in **verses 17-19**.

¹⁷ These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. ¹⁸ For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, ¹⁹ promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

These false teachers were smooth talkers, they seemed enlightened, they made a lot of claims and promises – but all of them were empty. *They were like 400-pound men in girdles trying to sell diet plans.* Their teaching didn’t work for them nor would it help anyone else. Peter described them as **springs** that had run dry, they were like **storm** clouds that provided no rain for the fields. They couldn’t deliver, but people still followed them as they twisted their gracious Christian **freedom** into something it was not.

They taught that freedom in Christ was a license to do whatever a person wanted to do, and keep in mind who these false teachers were teaching.

These were the early churches, and many of the people in these churches were new Christians – weak in faith, who came from pagan backgrounds, where engaging in immoral practices was a routine part of their pagan worship. The false teachers knew this, so with a promise of freedom, these false teachers were enslaving these impressionable and vulnerable people all over again through the same sinful and immoral habits they had previously tried to escape.

True spiritual freedom in Christ is not the right to do as you please under grace, rather it is the right and the power to do as you should, based on God's Word. No one has the right to do as they please unless they please to do what is right.

Okay, let's look at our last passage, **verses 20-22**.

²⁰ For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. ²² It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."

This is a difficult passage for many, largely because it is often taken out of context, put in a vacuum, and people try to make it say something it just doesn't say. In context, this passage is talking about false teachers. This entire chapter is about false teachers – they are Peter's main focus, and that's who the "**they**" are in this passage – these false teachers.

Peter goes on and describes these false teachers as those had **knowledge** about Christ – in the same way Judas had knowledge about Christ, they *professed* to be followers, they claimed to have had a spiritual experience, they even used church words, and **if** for a time, and that's a big if, if they **escaped the defilements of this world** by turning to religion and going through the motions – that's still not a real relationship with Christ, and in time – the truth is revealed. In time, their real character and true nature becomes evident.

They rejected Christ as Savior and Lord, they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, they returned to their sinful lifestyle, and therefore, gave proof they were never saved in the first place. The Apostle John speaks about this in **1 John 2:19**,

"They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

John is speaking about perseverance of the saints, and because these false teachers abandoned the faith, rejected Christ, and denied the truth, they proved they were never truly born-again in Christ.

I was reminded of the parable of the wheat and tares told by Jesus found in **Matthew 13**, where an enemy had sowed tares in a wheat field of a farmer. Tares are toxic weeds, sometimes called “false wheat” because they look just like actual wheat at first, but it’s not until they produce grain that their difference really becomes obvious. The wheat grain is brown and it’s edible, the grain of a tare is purple and it’s bitter and it shouldn’t be eaten. The tare looks exactly like wheat at first, but it was never a wheat plant, and in time, that fact becomes obvious by its fruit.

Just like a tare, in time, the true character of these false teachers becomes evident as they drift back to their worldly and corrupt ways, and according to Peter, because they knew the truth and rejected it, their fate is worse than never knowing the truth at all, and let me explain that.

Everyone is accountable for the truth they have received about Christ, and the more that is revealed to you, the greater the responsibility and the greater the judgment for rejecting the truth about Christ, and what I think Peter is saying is that these false teachers knew about Christ, and as a result their fate is worse than knowing Him at all. If you recall in **Matthew 26:24**, when Jesus spoke about Judas, He said,

“The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

The knowledge of Christ increases our responsibility to respond to Him and like these false teachers, it also increases judgment if we know about Christ and still reject Him. In time, our character and our nature will reveal who we really are and what we truly believe, and that’s what Peter is talking about when he mentions **dogs** returning to their vomit and **pigs** going back to the mud. It’s in their true nature. They may profess to be Christians and they may go through the religious motions; however, their false teaching and their sinful lifestyle give evidence that they never truly belonged to Jesus Christ.

No one ever expected it would happen, especially with this model congregation. They provided a heated swimming pool for underprivileged kids, horses for inner-city children to ride, gave scholarships for deserving students, and provided housing for senior citizens. They even had an animal shelter, medical facility, an out-patient care facility, and a drug rehabilitation program.

Walter Mondale wrote that the pastor was “an inspiration to us all.” The Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare cited the pastor’s outstanding contributions: “He knew how to inspire hope. He was committed to people in need; he counseled prisoners and juvenile delinquents. He started a job placement center; he opened rest homes and homes for the mentally ill; he had a health clinic; he organized a vocational training center; he provided free legal aid; he founded a community center; he preached about God. He even claimed to cast out demons, do miracles, and heal.”

*Lofty words. A lengthy resume for what appeared to be a mighty spiritual leader and his church. **Where is that congregation today? What is it doing now?** The church is dead ... literally.*

Death occurred the day the pastor called the members to the pavilion. They heard his hypnotic voice over the speaker system, and from all corners of the farm they came. He sat in his large chair and spoke into a hand-held microphone about the beauty of death and the certainty that they would meet again. The people were surrounded by armed guards. A vat of cyanide-laced Kool-Aid was brought out. Most of the members drank the poison with no resistance. Those who did resist were forced to drink or they were shot as they tried to run away.

First, the babies and children, about eighty in number, were given the fatal drink. Then the adults, women and men, leaders and followers, and finally the pastor. Everything was calm for a few minutes. Then the convulsions began; screams filled the sky; mass confusion broke out. In a few minutes, it was over. The members of the Peoples Temple Christian Church were all dead. All 780 of them. So was their leader, Jim Jones.

Mark it down, and be on your guard for there are false teachers in the Christian community. Using false teacher mathematics, they *add* heresy to Scripture to support their agenda, they *subtract* from the deity and the completed work of Christ, they *multiply* ways to be right with God, and they *divide* the church. It was true in Peter’s day, it was true in 1978 with Jim Jones in Jonestown, and it’s just as true today.

Source Material:

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