

*10b Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, 11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. 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; 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.*

*17These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. 18For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 19promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. 20For 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. 21For 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. 22It 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."*

As I've thought about these words of Peter's in this section, I've thought about both subtlety and in-your-face directness. Because recognizing both types of communication is important to this argument.

Peter unleashes a diatribe of words here. Nobody is standing around the water fountain after Peter drops this carpet bomb, saying, I wonder what exactly Peter meant?

Peter is direct. Peter is in your face. In their face. Peter is in attack mode. Peter's words are blistering! Shocking! Brutally straight forward.

Today's evangelicals would say, whoa! Peter! Where's the love, brother. I think you need to get some love. This is a blistering frontal attack. Bad form Peter.

Our parallel passage in Jude, in vs. 2 states the battle guidelines. Vs. 3 *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Jude says, I wanted to write a feel good letter about our common salvation, but instead I decided it was deadly important to write you and tell you that you need to engage in battle to protect the treasure.

What treasure? The once for all delivered to the saints faith. The gospel. The pure message that can lift people out of sin, out of judgement, out of this very condemned world. That treasure is priceless and it is relentlessly under attack.

Satan's strategy is to come up with a counterfeit gospel, oh so close, but counterfeit that looks close enough to be confusing, and that is brought to us by people who are . . . church people.

A gospel that is as close as it can get to the real thing in sense and smell and feel, yet falls just short of the true gospel, and it gathers thousands of people who think they're OK, think they're christians, onto the wide road to hell.

Thus my opening thoughts. Subtlety and directness. Satan must be subtle. His message must be so subtly wrong that he can fool witless unsuspecting people into thinking they're OK while in fact they're on the broad road to hell.

Our response must be like Peter's. A direct frontal low pass with carpet

bombing and all of the 50 calibre machine guns blaring. And yes, we're going to be accused of being un-loving. And yes, the possibility of collateral damage seems great, except for one truth. Sovereign God is in ultimate control of who survives the battle and who does not.

The gospel treasure must be fought for and protected with everything we have.

I was looking for an example to use to help make the sense of what I'm trying to say here. Something current that shows the extreme danger and great subtlety of how this works. And I spent some time taking an in depth look at a breaking news story this week. April 9th.

A group of 300+ Red Letter Christians met together in Tennessee and had a revival! There's a picture of a whole bunch of people obviously having a very emotional laying on of hands ceremony in the front of an auditorium. And at first glance, man, it looks really really good.

But then you say; What's a "Red Letter Christian". Well, first and foremost, they hate Donald Trump. And that's OK. I've got room in my theology for christians to hate Donald Trump. Or maybe just his behaviour. We need to love him and pray for him no matter what he is or does. That commandment is clear. Or is it?

Wait a minute. That was Paul that told us to do that. Not Jesus. And then you burrow in a little deeper and you find out;

Red Letter Christians dis-regard Paul. And Peter. And anybody else. They only subscribe to the red letters. Jesus words. Hmmm. Dig even deeper.

At that revival, the opening statements were by a preacher named Brenda. Who lives with her partner.

There were breakout sessions led by a LGBTQ+ "christian" about inclusion and acceptance and recognition for those folks.

There was a breakout talk by an American Indian lady preacher who

was teaching about spirituality . . . everywhere . . . all around us . . . in everything . . . outside of the Bible. Beyond the bible. Break down those old barriers and boundaries. Be spiritual.

Do you see where this is headed. Get rid of Paul who is in your face clear about egalitarianism and sexual sin, and gender, and redefine Jesus to be inclusive of everything you want him to be inclusive of.

It's a new Jesus. A Jesus not bound by all of the errors Paul and Peter and James and John and Jude piled onto the pure stuff after he left. Sweet christian folks having an emotional very spiritual moment, laying on hands.

Do you see how subtle that is? It looks Oh So Good, but ultimately, it's a different Jesus they've invented. A no holds barred Jesus unchained from all of the errors piled onto our religion later. The pure Jesus who loves everybody, no matter what sin, or non sin, since it was Paul that called it sin, someone's lifestyle emulates. "Anything goes" jesus.

I'm not so sure what they do about the not one jot or tittle from the law Jesus, but that's their problem, not mine. What they've done is nullify the "Once for all delivered to the saints faith" and invented a new christianity brought to you by their jesus. The red letter christian jesus.

Subtle and deadly. Like every cult, they jettison parts of the Bible, and re-write the rest. Mormons have Jesus, but he's a different Jesus than the New Testament Jesus. Red Letter christians are reinventing a Jesus that's different from the new testament Jesus.

That's our introduction and as we quickly go through Peter's red hot poker words, I think you'll realize why he's so angry. Peter is furious here. Well, since we're not red letter christians, maybe we can say; The Holy Spirit is furious here.

These words of Peter's are God breathed. Just like Pauls and the other apostles who wrote the New Testament, and the prophets who wrote the old testament.

*10b Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, 11 whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.*

ignorant audacity. We've all experienced someone like that first hand. Someone that the writer of Proverbs would simply define as a fool. They talk real big about what they'd do about whatever it is.

And you're thinking to yourself, this is a foolish simplistic ignorant boaster that is clueless about the complexities of whatever it is they would charge in and fix.

I've got a niece who's on facebook all day long solving all of our national and global problems. It's painful to read. So I don't.

That's what we've got going on here, but it's on a spiritual level. They don't have a clue. People who are binding satan all over the place all the time give me the heebee-jeebees. I'm thinking to myself, THINKING, not saying, you're not binding anybody. You don't have a clue.

Angels on the other hand are NOT fools. And they don't undignify themselves by doing the same thing. Angels know they're not binding anybody, unless the King of King allows it for His purposes.

I'll say it again. One of the defining marks of some, but not all, false teachers is ignorant audacity. Arrogantly teaching about things they have no real knowledge. Keep that in mind as we go through all of these traits that Peter is going to throw out for us.

Not every false teacher has every trait. And some of the toughest ones are so subtle, it's difficult to see these traits. On the surface. I had to go to the the website and dig a little to find out about the red letter folks. It's not glaring on the surface. The simple might be fooled. Some will have ignorant audacity.

*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.*

Peter says the ignorant revilers and the demons will be destroyed together. The angels may be smarter, more beautiful and more complex, but they and the false teachers will ultimately all be in the same lake of fire.

By the way, neither the word destruction or destroyed means a final going out of existence. The word means decay. Corruption. Decomposition of something dead. They will suffer harm for eternity for doing harm

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

In greek culture and writing this was an abnormality. Reveling was always considered a night time activity. Cover of darkness. But these folks, these good church folks, take reveling a step further than even the corrupt culture around them. Shocking.

*They are stains and blemishes;* remember, this is going on in the midst of church. The church, the congregation of the real believers, even though intermixed with false teachers, is pure, and these false teachers are like a stain spoiling what is otherwise pure.

The word describes a malignant sore. An oozing sore that isn't going to get well. *reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you*

By lying, by deception, they get some to join with them in their sinfulness.

*14 having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;*

Here are the two main characteristics of false teachers. Their eyes are windows into their souls. And since sensual sin of every kind dwells inside, their eyes are always full of adultery. Every woman is a possible target. Or not, these days, they may not be looking at the ladies.

And second characteristic. The money. Always the money. They want power and control over people, and they'll use it to gain sensory pleasures outside of marriage and they'll use it to gain money.

It can be very subtle. Hidden from most everybody. But the payment they are after is not to hear "well done good and faithful slave". They have no interest in that. They want sex and they want money. Those are their motivating factors. Rightly does Peter call them; *accursed children*

Notice that their victims are the easiest prey. Unstable souls. We'll visit this again later in this description. They prey on the weak. Needy women who don't know much. It's funny, they never come knocking on my door. They go for the weak, the unstable, the easy marks.

Now the example Peter is going to give is a fascinating one. Balaam.

*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 was a prophet for hire. You can read the whole story in Numbers around chapter 22 I think.

When Israel was camped beyond the Jordan just north of the midianites, Balak, king of the midianites was terrified. Israel outnumbered them and God was with them. He needed to find a prophet to pronounce a curse.

And Balaam was a prophet for hire. Sound familiar. So Balak sent his man to get Balaam and Balaam told him to tell the King, I can't speak anything that God doesn't allow me to speak. Sounds real spiritual. But Balaam was just getting the price up.

I can't resist reading some of the story right from the text. This was on

the second try, more important messengers, more money to be had.

*20God came to Balaam at night and said to him, "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."*

*21So Balaam arose in the morning, and saddled his donkey and went with the leaders of Moab.*

*22But God was angry because he was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand in the way as an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey and his two servants were with him. 23When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand, the donkey turned off from the way and went into the field; but Balaam struck the donkey to turn her back into the way. 24Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path of the vineyards, with a wall on this side and a wall on that side. 25When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed herself to the wall and pressed Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck her again. 26The angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place where there was no way to turn to the right hand or the left. 27When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam; so Balaam was angry and struck the donkey with his stick. 28And 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?" 29Then Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a mockery of me! If there had been a sword in my hand, I would have killed you by now." 30The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey on which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I ever been accustomed to do so to you?" And he said, "No."*

*31Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground. 32The angel of the LORD said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come out as an adversary, because your way was contrary to me. 33"But the donkey saw me and turned aside from me these three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would surely have killed you just now, and let her live." 34Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the way against me.*



*Now then, if it is displeasing to you, I will turn back.” 35But the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, “Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I tell you.” So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak.*

It's almost comical. Balaam speaking to a donkey. You made a fool of me and if I had a sword I would have killed you. And the Angel of the Lord; He did have a sword and Balaam was about to make a mockery of God. Balaam becomes the donkey that is close to being killed by the sword.

Balaam becomes the type of all false prophets. Money and sexual sin is the pattern with Balaam and is still the pattern to this day. He blessed Israel 3 times because God had control of his mouth, but then he told Balak what to do to trip up Israel. Sexual sin and idolatry.

In Revelation 2:14 we read of false teachers at Pergamum who held the *"teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication."*

One other thing I want to pause on just for a moment. Nobody ever questions that the donkey spoke with a human voice to Balaam. Jesus says so in His letter to Pergammum and Peter says so here. It just isn't a problem. The new testament writers never question God's miracles.

The author's don't apologize and say, now I know this is going to sound ridiculous and impossible, but the donkey spoke to Balaam. It wasn't until liberal theologians in the 19th century that a donkey who speaks is questioned.

If God can create the world from nothing, why would this trouble anybody.

Balaam was driven by greed for money, and when his plan failed, he told king Balak how to trip up Israel. Sexual immorality inflicted on God's people by a false prophet after money. Nothing new under the sun.

*17These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.*

In Israel as in Tonopah, water is precious. We don't respect that in modern times. We turn on the faucet and it's always there. Nice clean beautiful water.

But for most of history, that hasn't been the case. And if you lived in Israel, you depended on two sources for the most necessary thing to humans. Water came from springs and crops to eat come from rain. Both are precious in Israel. It's as dry as Tonopah.

So nothing is more dis-appointing than someone who is going to quench your spiritual thirst and bring abundance, and you find out they don't. You're dying of thirst and you come to the spring and it's sand. No water.

The rain clouds you were depending on to save your parched crop passes overhead, driven by winds and leaving no moisture. Jude says these folks are clouds without water.

That's what was happening Thursday out at work. Black clouds that looked like they were full of moisture, but the wind blew them into Utah. Dry as a bone in Tonopah.

These folks look so promising. Big talkers. Promising more than what you usually get. And you let them in and there's no water. Promise unfulfilled. No rain. Only sin and they take your money. *for whom the black darkness has been reserved.*

*18For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error,*

We began to talk about this before. They go for the easiest and weakest prey. Let me give you a scenario. Single mom's. Perhaps they've had some problems and they're looking for something better so they come to

church. Full of hurts and challenges and hope. And some false teacher's going to give them the counseling they need to make it all better.

These guys go for the easy prey to get what they're after. Long counseling sessions. Alone. You see where this is going. And Peter says, the ones who are barely escaping error. They left error behind hoping to find something better at church. And some false teacher entices them with arrogant puffed up promises. They play on their needs. They entice them by fleshly desires that we all have.

The false prophet gets what he wants, and the poor weak needy folks end up worse off than when they escaped the ones in error. It's a tragic thing. Our hearts go out to someone who is harmed and damaged like that. The church is riddled with those stories.

The insurance companies are requiring background checks. Pretty bad when a secular insurance company is taking a deeper look than the church. *These for whom the black darkness has been reserved.*

*Vs. 19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.*

False teachers promise freedom. Freedom to sin. It'll be OK. But sin enslaves people. Ultimately the false teachers and their victims are all enslaved. Peter repeats an axiom. *for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.*

Sin is a cruel taskmaster. Peter says these people and their resulting followers are slaves of corruption. Slaves of death. Same word as above. Slave of rotting flesh. Paul says; *Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death.* Ro. 7:24 Next verse; *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

Jesus delivers from death and corruption and sin. But you can't be delivered from the slave taskmaster of sin and still live in it. But what happens when someone is delivered and then returns again to corruption? They'd rather be a slave to their sin and their corruption.

*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.*

This always raises questions with people? Did they lose their salvation? Can you lose your salvation?

None of those words we just read are defining of real salvation. Lots of people come to church. They hang out with the Christians. They learn about Jesus. They learn about what He can do for them. They learn that righteousness is available in the substitutionary death of Jesus.

They experience the Holy Spirit wooing them to come all the way to Christ. Come out of this world. Leave the sin behind.

But they never invite Him in. They never give themselves to the master. They stop short of real salvation. They want their sin.

This can be a real troubling and confusing situation. Some of these folks hang around a long time. We're all convinced they're the real deal. They take up teaching positions and positions of authority sometimes. Very religious folks.

I can't see inside anyone's heart. Paul tells me to give every professor the benefit of the doubt. Listen to 1 Corinthians 13. The love chapter;

*4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, **believes all things**, hopes all things, endures all things.*

If you claim to be a Christian and you're not involved in a life pattern of continuous sin, my job is to believe you.

2 Tim. 2:19 *Nevertheless, God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must turn away from iniquity."*

But then you turn aside into disobedience continually. You won't turn back from iniquity. You find some loosey goosey doctrine that allows your sin to continue. You eventually start teaching those lies.

At that point, no matter what I thought before, I have to relinquish the belief that you were a christian and embrace the possibility that you are an apostate. You didn't lose salvation, what's happened is that it has become apparent that you never had it. You never belonged to the Lord Jesus at all.

*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.*

Matthew 12: Jesus says; 43 *"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. 44 "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. 45 "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.*

I'm positive Peter had this exact passage in mind when he wrote what he did in vss. 20 21. This is apostasy. They come. They get all spiffed up. They learn the truth. They look good to us. But they stop short of regeneration by receiving Jesus into their hearts and giving themselves completely to Him as Lord.

Then they walk away. Some just leave and we never hear about them again. But some become purveyors of false doctrine. Doctrine from the

pit of hell. Only Jesus words count. Paul doesn't matter. Nothing else matters. And Jesus never said homosexuals are bad. Jesus loves everybody. You can be a lady preacher and live with your partner and it's OK with Jesus.

Peter has one final word for those folks. OK, two final words.

*Vs. 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.”*

J. Vernon McGee used to say in his inimitable way; You got the parable of the prodigal son, well this is the parable of the prodigal pig.

Truly.