

A Study of The Epistle of 2nd Peter
Theme: “Grow in Grace and Knowledge”

Trinity Lutheran Church - Norman, OK.

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Lesson: 15 Chapter 2:15-22 Date: 11-7-21



BIBLE TEXT and STUDY NOTES

(15) Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, (16) but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. (17) These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved.

(Num chap 22-24; 31:16; Dt 23:4; Neh 13:2; Ezek 14:11; Jude 11; Rev 2:14)

(18) For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. (19) They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved.

(Lk 11:24-26; Jn 8:31-34; Rom 6:16; 1 Cor 6:12,13; Gal 5:13; Jas 1:25)

(20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of **our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

(Mt 12:45; Php 3:7,8; Heb 10:26,27)

(21) For it would have been better for them never to have known **the way of righteousness** than after knowing it to turn back from **the holy commandment** delivered to them. (22) What the true proverb says has happened to them: “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

(Prov 26:11; Ezek 18:24; Mt 28:20; Lk 12:47,48; Ac 9:2; 18:25; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; Rom 7:2; 1 Tim 6:14; Heb 6:4-6; 10:26,27; Jas 4:17)

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They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing but was rebuked for his own transgressions; a dumb donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

“Here he introduces an illustration from Num. 22; 23, and 24. When the Children of Israel had departed from Egypt and came into the land of the Moabites, King Balak sent messengers to a prophet in Syria, named Balaam, and asked him to come and curse the Jewish people, in order that they might become weak and he could defeat them. Then **God** came to Balaam and forbade him to curse the people. Therefore the prophet refused to go with the messengers. Then the king sent messengers to the prophet again and promised to reward him richly; and **God** permitted him to go to him, but He ordered him not to say anything except what He would tell him.

Then Balaam set out and rode on a donkey. Now **the angel of God** appeared on the road and stood before him “with a drawn sword in his hand.” The donkey saw this “and turned aside out of the road.” Then Balaam struck the donkey to turn her into the road. At this juncture the angel stood in a narrow place in the road, where the donkey could not turn aside. She pressed against the wall and bruised the prophet's foot, and she had to fall on her knees under Balaam. This made Balaam angry, so that in his rage he struck her with his staff. Then **God** opened the beast's mouth, so that she spoke with a human voice and said: “What have I done to you that you strike me this way?” Then Balaam said: “I wish I had a sword in my hand, for then I would kill you.” The donkey answered and said: “Am I not your donkey, upon which you have ridden all your lifelong to this day? Was I ever accustomed to do so to you?” Then

the prophet's eyes were opened, and he saw **the angel with the drawn sword**, He became frightened and wanted to go back. **The angel** commanded Balaam to proceed. At the same time, however, he ordered Balaam not to say anything else than what he would tell him.

When the prophet came to the king, the latter took him up to a mountaintop from which he could see all the people of Israel. Then the prophet ordered seven altars to be built and an offering to be placed on each altar, and he went and asked **the Lord** what he should say. Then **God** put the words into His mouth, and Balaam began to bless and praise the people of Israel with beautiful words. This he did three times in succession. At this juncture the king became angry and said: "Did I not call you to curse my enemies, and yet you have blessed them three times? I intended to honor you, but **the Lord** has held you back from honor." Balaam replied: "Did I not tell you in advance that even if you gave me your house filled with silver and gold, I could not say anything else than **what God would tell me?**"

Later, however, the prophet advised the king how he should deal with the people. He did so because he was not able to curse them and to persuade them by force to sin against **God**. Then the king erected an idol called Baal of Peor, and brought it about that the women of the Moabites, the daughters of lords and princes, invited the people to the sacrifice to their idols; and when the people came to where they were, they worshiped the idol, ate, drank, and sinned with the women. Then **God** became angry, gave orders that the chiefs of the people be hanged on the gallows, and let 24,000 men perish on one day. This prophet Balaam did this for the sake of money.

When St. Peter speaks here about this, he wants to say that our clerics are really the children and disciples of Balaam. For just as Balaam gave the evil advice to erect an idol, so that the Children of Israel were induced to sin, **made God angry**, and were smitten, so our bishops have also erected an idol **in God's name**, namely, their human doctrine of their own works. They abandon faith and seize the Christian souls. These they ravish, and in this way they arouse **God's anger**, so that He has punished the world with blindness and impenitence. We can thank our spiritual junkers for all this.

Thus Peter actually compares these false teachers to the prophet Balaam; for, like Balaam, they establish such idolatry and destroy souls. Furthermore, his real name is fitting; for in Hebrew Bileam or Balaam denotes one who devours or who squanders on drink, one who opens his jaws and devours and consumes everything. Balaam bore this disgraceful name because he caused so many people to sin, so that they were slain and perished.

Our bishops and clergy are Balaamites of this kind. They are the devil's jaws with which he seizes and devours innumerable souls. But this prophet's surname was *filius Bosor*, which means "flesh" or as Moses says *filius Beor*, that is, "of a fool." His father is a fool. Thus these, too, are blind, mad, and foolish people. They themselves need to be ruled. The flesh gives birth to such people, for the spirit produces people who are different. Thus **God** has given them their real name in Scripture and has portrayed them in this way in order that we may know what to think of them.

Now the dumb beast of burden, the donkey, stands for the people, who permit themselves to be tamed and ridden, and who go blindly as they are led. Just as the ass was urged on and hit hard when it turned aside on the narrow path and had to return to the road until it could no longer evade the angel or turn aside and had to fall down, so the seducers have driven the people. Then the people found this unbearable and realized that the treatment they received was not right. They wanted to turn aside. But the might with which the people were oppressed was too great.

Finally **God opened our mouths** and put words into them so that even the children talk about it. In this way their folly was revealed, and they had to be ashamed. With this one should confront them when they come along and say that it is not proper for the laity to read Scripture and talk about it, but that one should listen to what the councils decree. Then you can answer: "Did not **God** speak even through a donkey? Be satisfied with our admission that you **preached God's Word** in times past. But now that you have become fools and are in the grip of greed, why is it surprising that now the common people are being **awakened by God** and are beginning to speak the truth, which was burdened and weighed down by you like a dumb beast of burden?" This is the comparison to the prophet Balaam."

LIFE APPLICATION

How can we steer away from the love of gain from wrongdoing?