

Take-Home • Session Eleven

False Teachers and the Way of Truth • 2 Peter 2:1-22

What We Found

The warning chapter gave us an instrument panel that works in every century: check the doctrine (does it quietly deny the Master?), the appetite, the wallet, and the fruit, because error never arrives labeled; it comes craftily decked in attractive dress. Judgment and rescue proved to be one operation: the Lord knows how to deliver Noah and even hesitating Lot while holding the unrighteous to account. Balaam stood as the permanent prototype of gifts without integrity. And 2:19 handed us the sharpest freedom test in Scripture: whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved, with St. Augustine's chain of habit as the century-tested testimony, and grace as the bolt cutter.

Voices of the Church

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St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202), *Against Heresies*, Book I, Preface

Confronting the Gnostics, St. Irenaeus observes that error never shows itself in its naked deformity, lest being thus exposed it should be detected; it is craftily decked out in attractive dress, so as to appear to the inexperienced more true than truth itself. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus gives the definitive early gloss on “secretly bring in”: heresy’s uniform is always the current fashion of plausibility.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Confessions*, Book VIII

Augustine describes his own bondage before conversion: he was bound not with another’s irons but by his own iron will; desire indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity, link by link a chain that held him fast. It is 2 Peter 2:19 written as autobiography: whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved, and it ends, in Book VIII’s garden, with the chain broken by grace.

Voices of the Church

St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

Newman faced the modern form of tonight’s question: how do you tell authentic growth of doctrine from corruption of it? His essay argues that a true development preserves the original type, maintains continuity of principle, and conserves the past while a corruption contradicts and dissolves it; living ideas grow, counterfeits mutate. His tests are the modern instrument panel for Peter’s ancient warning,

and following them led him into the Catholic Church.

Live It This Week

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This week: (1) Memorize 2 Peter 2:19 (or verse 9 if you prefer its comfort). (2) Take the stopping test to prayer, and if something has overcome you, take it to Confession, where the Master who bought you is waiting to prove who actually owns you. (3) Read Numbers 22-24 in full; watch the gift and the heart come apart. (4) Pray daily this week for teachers of the faith, your pastor, catechists, this group's leader, that gift and integrity stay welded.

Scripture Memory

"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved" (2 Peter 2:19, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 3:1-18 before Session Twelve, our final session. Come ready to harvest the whole study: bring all eleven of your take-home pages.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 817; 2089; 1730-1733; 1740-1742