

If the theme of 1 Peter is **Your Holiness in Hardship matters, and is possible, in Christ.** Then the theme of 2 Peter is **Your Holiness in the face of heresy matters, and is possible, in Christ**

While having the similar tones of message to stand firm in their faith, the second letter moves focus onto false teachers and the necessity to identify sound teaching. He is immensely concerned for his brothers and sisters in Christ, that they would not be led astray by poor theology and teaching that feels good to their fleshly impulses, but he challenges them and us to listen with critical minds, test what is being spoken of, and follow those that preach in line with the apostolic teachers.

That's essentially the way chapter 1 ends. Peter challenges the audience and us with the claim that the teaching of the apostles, and prophetic word are reliable and trustworthy, but as we will see this morning, there are false prophets and teachers of the Bible who are not to be trusted. This is why it is incredibly important to not only have good theology, but to study that you may KNOW you have good and right theology.

Before we dive in, let's pray.

**2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.**

First thing we see here is that God is not just displeased with false teaching. God is furious with lies about him and his character. Verse one we see that the false prophets created lies of destruction and that their lies will actually destroy themselves! God is bringing about their destruction because of their lies.

And where are these false teachers? They are among the ones teaching truth. They look and sound like others who are telling the truth. Peter points out that this has always been the case. Liars and deceivers have been amongst God's people from the beginning. His reference of "among the people" is understood to be pointing to the Israelites. We see in Jeremiah 23:30 this is the case. God says: **Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal my words from one another.** They were facing the same thing. People taking God's words, twisting them for selfish and sinful gain, while stamping God's name to it. While the context here is speaking out against false teachers, we do the same thing often in justifying our sin. Rather than repenting and seeking forgiveness through humility, we often either hide our sin or justify our sin. Both revealing where our heart lies.

Jesus says in **Matthew 7:15** "**Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.** So these people do not stand out. It's not obvious. They look like us. You and I must do the work to identify them. Not just the individuals, but the lies themselves. This is hard work. It is not easy, but as one poet said, "**Satan only tells lies, when they are almost the truth.**"

The whole point of imitating truth is that it will be confused with the truth. So Peter is pointing out, be on guard. Be on the lookout for these people. Be on the lookout for these lies. These lies say the name of Jesus, but are not referring to the same Jesus. These lies talk about God, but do not bow to His authority.

We see in verse 2 that these people will lead others astray as well as tarnish the name of Jesus and Christianity. Because of these false teachers ability to articulate and persuade, they are great story tellers and great communicators, not only will many be deceived by them, but they tarnish the truth. The outside world begins see Christianity and our God as hypocritical and not trustworthy. So many people claiming to be Christians while preaching different messages. This is why God is so furious. They are spreading lies about him and causing the unbelieving world to distrust him.

The thing to remember is that these liars have condemned themselves and destruction is awaiting them. They will not get away with it, because God knows all things! You and I must be aware to not get caught up in the lies and destruction.

We MUST know the truth about God in order to discern a difference in the lies.

Verse 4-9

**<sup>4</sup> For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; <sup>5</sup> if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; <sup>6</sup> if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; <sup>7</sup> and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup> (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); <sup>9</sup> then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup> and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.**

In greek these verses are one long sentence as well. Which is why the ESV in particular translates these verses that we may know these are one connected and continuous thought. Here is Peters thought: God will judge the wicked and God can rescue those who are faithful to him then Peter gives us 3 examples of God acting in this way to provide proof for us.

First is the account of angels sinning and God **cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.**

If God did not spare the angels who are higher beings than you and I, He did not hesitate to set their date with destiny, which is banishment to the darkest corner of Hell or greek word Tartarses (the use of this greek word is pointing the audience of that day to the poetic writings of Homer on Hell to give greater imagery of this banishment). Homer illustrated this Tartarses as inmost darkness and place most void of anything good. God will certainly exercise his justice and wrath on those who are spreading lies about His character and leading people to damnation for their personal gain. Be careful that you do not follow in their path.

The second example we see is the great flood. God, seeing the wickedness of the people, wiped out the entire earth except Noah and his family. 8 people in total. In this account, Noah was proclaiming the truth and calling people to repentance as he was building the ark, but they only mocked him. If God will wipe out the world for ungodliness, will He not destroy false teachers from today? And if he will save Noah, trusting in God and built the ark despite the ridicule, will he not also rescue you who are faithful to Him?!

The third example in Gods track record of punishing wicked and saving righteous, is Sodom and Gomorrah. Here we have Lot who trusted God and put his life in Gods hands when it mattered. So the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were so ungodly, that God **condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.**

Then verse 9 ties a bow around it for us, if those accounts are true, and they are, then we can trust that the Lord will punish those who do evil and will rescue those who are faithful to him and He will do it all in his perfect timing. Just as he has set a reservation up for the disobedient angels to be judged, so is a time set for those leading others away from Jesus! So it must be said the work is on us to hear with our minds not just our hearts, because many speakers out there claiming to be pastors are articulate and winsome. They are skilled in their craft of misleading. They know what to say in order to get you to come back for more. And if we listen to them more and more, our theology is off. Then our lives look less and less like Jesus.

**R.C. Sproul say: "False doctrine, produces ungodly living."**

If we believe the wrong things about God, we will live a life He does not desire his people to live. I think of the apostle Paul. Before his encounter with Jesus, Paul believed his persecution of Christians was God honoring. It wasnt until Jesus corrected Pauls doctrine of the Messiah, that he began to live a life truly honoring to Jesus.

Verses 10-16.

**Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones,<sup>11</sup> whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.<sup>12</sup> But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction,<sup>13</sup> suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you.<sup>14</sup> They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!<sup>15</sup> Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing,<sup>16</sup> but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.**

Peter helps us out here. He articulates 3 ways of identifying a false teacher or whether someone is worthy of your trust, but I would also say these questions are good for you to ask of yourself this morning.

1. What they say with their mouth
2. What they see with their eyes
3. What they seek with their heart

What they say is bold and blasphemous. This word, blasphemous, meaning against God and sacred things. They boldly talk as though God and sacred things are flippant and unimportant. They talk as though obedience doesn't really matter because Jesus' death saves everyone. They talk as though reverence for God is not important.

We must pay attention to not only what is being said but also what is being implied by what is being said.

R.C. Sproul: **When people say, "All I need is Jesus," they are failing to see that there are a multitude of heretical views of Jesus. We need to know the truth about Jesus, about God, and about the Holy Spirit."**

The people Peter is referring to are bold in their claims. They are willfully making claims that are not true and they are also saying things in their pride that even the angels are hesitant to proclaim and they are **"greater in might and power"**

Jude, addressing something similar, expands Peter's thought from vs 10-11 which is very helpful for us today.

**Jude 8-10 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. <sup>9</sup> But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." <sup>10</sup> But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.**

Jude probably used 2 Peter as a guide in writing this which explains the overlap, but what Jude adds in there about Michael is helpful in our understanding of what this might look like today.

What it looks like today is those who will proclaim judgement over "glorious ones" with a power they do not have. Even Michael the archangel when facing the devil would not proclaim a judgement himself, but made a request of the Lord.

We would be wise to avoid people that make these claims of rebuking spirits of sickness or rebuking evil spirits. Jude is saying, Michael the archangel is cautious doing that, so should we. Having been in the room when these types of proclamations are made, it sounds good in the moment and feels right to be able to say that, but we must test and approve it all according to God's Word.

Peter and Jude are saying, these types of doctrines of God are making these claims on emotional ideals with uneducated foundations. Do not follow suit. They are leading themselves and others down a path that leads to destruction because their theology is based on what feels right and sounds good, not what is right and is good.

Next Peter tells us that their eyes will also tell you much about their hearts. Eyes are the window to the soul.

**David Helms says "Follow a mans eyes and they will lead you to the hidden desires of his heart."**

These wondering eyes of false teachers use their power and influence for their insatiable appetite of sin. The greek here referencing both sexual sin and financial greed being impossible to satisfy.

We have seen it in recent history. The eyes have lead church leaders away from the glory of God and into the arms of sensuality and greed. They take advantage of the disenfranchised in the name of Jesus. Just turn on the tv and watch and listen closely to those teaching. From one to the next you will notice not only do they seem to be talking about a different Jesus, but often they are not asking for repentance, they are asking for your money.

And the same is true for us. What do we spend our time looking at. What do we see when we look at the world around us? Is it broken people who need Jesus or is it tons of toys and sexuality?

Their eyes, our eyes will lead you to what is truly desired.

Lastly, Peter emphasizes their hearts. You will know a false teacher by their hearts desires. **"They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!"** Their eyes, our eyes train our hearts to desire something. What is it that your eyes are training your heart to desire? These false teachers are leading their hearts towards the desires of the flesh and away from the righteousness of Gods design. Whether that be lust or greed, their eyes are training their heart to love this world and the fleeting pleasures on it.

Peter says that these false teachers are accursed, meaning there is impending judgement on them awaiting, just as the angels from earlier in verse 4. There is a time set and God will judge them.

Where are your eyes leading your heart? Are your eyes leading your heart to seek holiness or to seek the insatiable appetites of lust and greed? Be careful little eyes what you see. It matters.

And Peters uses an OT prophet as his example here. Balaam. You can read more details in Numbers 21-22 but essentially he was a prophet who fell to greed and prophesied falsely against Gods people for money and riches, and also was a leading voice in a cultural shift away from Gods design for marriage and sexuality. Peters uses his account of disobedience and rebellion as a warning.

Peter lands the plane for us today with the ultimate reminder. The lies from the enemy, through these false teachers do not deliver on what is promised and cannot save!

**<sup>17</sup> These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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.”**

Like a spring without water or a mist that promises rain and is blown away by the storm, the words of the enemy and these false teachers and doctrines are the exact same. Peter says their words elicit a response out of the flesh and entice our sensual passions of those who are living in sin or are not saved by grace through faith.

John MacArthur writes on this text **"Their message of independence, personal freedom, and self exaltation is inherently appealing to fallen human hearts who would rather serve themselves than submit to Christ."**

False teachers always appeal to the humanity within us. You are the captain of your own ship. You are the savior of your story. You are the king and priest and warrior sent by God to save. These sound great and make feel important, but are quite the opposite of the Biblical narrative. We must always remember, that we are not David slaying Goliath with Gods help. It is Christ who saves as David did and we are the Israelites who partake in the spoils of his victory.

The people mentioned in verse 20 were not saved, then unsaved for that is not possible. What has happened here is they knew enough about Jesus to act as though they were saved, but they were not repentant. We know this because Peters words are reflective of Jesus's words in Matthew 12:43-45 where he tells of a demon possessed man, and the demon leaves a man, the demon comes back to find the mans soul is cleaned up, but empty still so he repossess with seven other spirits. Just as Peter writes, the enemy comes back stronger and the heart is hardened even more when we attempt to save ourselves by cleaning up our act before coming to Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon's Commentary on that text **“The devil has no objection to his house being swept and garnished; for a moralist may be as truly his slave as the man of debauched habits. So long as the heart is not occupied by his great foe (Jesus), and he can use the man for his own purposes, the adversary of souls will let him reform as much as he pleases.”**

So these people were not repentant and therefore saved then lost salvation. They were moral and therefore damned to an even harder heart because they heard the truth of real freedom and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus and denied it still. They preferred to rely on their own morality.

The last portion of todays text is quoting a proverb, that first off a dog returning to its vomit is a real thing and pretty gross, but even more to the early Christians for they viewed dogs as scavengers, not members of the family. And they despised pigs as well. And these fools who both preach heresy and follow heresy are like these disgusting animals. They ultimately love their filthiness or morality more than Jesus.

So be watchful that you are not deceived. Consider what is being said and what is implied by what is said. Don't be lulled to sleep with articulate communication. Be weary of those you listen

to that they are not false teachers. Stand aware and study to know that the truth you believe in is the truth that saves.

R.C. Sproul **"Truth divides because it is important, and it is important because the consequences are eternal."**

Only through Jesus will you find what you are longing for. Only in Jesus will you find salvation! Freedom, joy, peace, in any circumstance can only be found in the good news and loving arms of Jesus!

Peter ends his second letter this way: **17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.**